

THE SARNIA

WAR REMEMBRANCE PROJECT



THE BOER WAR • WORLD WAR I • WORLD WAR II
KOREAN WAR • AFGHANISTAN WAR

TOM SLATER

The Sarnia War Remembrance Project is a completely volunteer, non-profit undertaking by its author.

The *Project* was initiated in 2012 when the author discovered that no formal record existed of those individuals from Sarnia who had lost their lives while serving in the military during times of war.

Sarnia, like thousands of other communities across Canada, had many of its sons and daughters answer the call of duty to serve their country during times of war.

These “ordinary” local citizens left the comforts of their homes,
as well as their schools, farms, jobs, trades and careers.

They left their loved ones—grandparents, parents, brothers, sisters, husbands and wives,
children and friends—in response to a nation’s call to fight in far off lands.

In the fight to save the oppressed and occupied, to defeat evil forces, and to secure for others the peace,
liberty and freedoms that we enjoy in this great country, some made the supreme sacrifice.

The author’s hope is that the courage, fortitude and sacrifices of the fallen and their families
will be forever commemorated and remembered.

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Back cover photograph: Glenn Ogilvie

Printed by: Haines Frontier Printing Ltd., Sarnia

DEDICATION

Though this project’s focus is on Sarnia’s fallen soldiers from the aforementioned wars, it is dedicated to all the young men and women who served, as well as to their families, who all sacrificed so much.

“LEST WE FORGET”

**The Sarnia War Remembrance Project – 3rd Edition
November 2020**



A letter from the Mayor of the City of Sarnia:

It is an honour as Mayor of the City of Sarnia to write the foreword for *The Sarnia War Remembrance Project*.

A poignant book that contains the life stories of those Sarnians and Lambton County residents who served their country from the Boer War to Afghanistan and who paid the ultimate sacrifice. *The Sarnia War Remembrance Project* gives us grateful citizens the opportunity to look back and to remember those who volunteered to serve their country and who rest today forever in eternal peace. This project is a labour of love which ensures that the memory of those who died protecting our liberty and freedom will live on.

For generations, Sarnians have gathered every Remembrance Day in Veterans Park to mourn and to honour our fallen. Each year as we stand at the cenotaph, who of us has not wondered about the personal stories behind the 288 names inscribed on it? Who were these men? What did they do in civilian life? What were their hopes and dreams? Now we know through *The Sarnia War Remembrance Project* that they were ordinary men who had the courage to serve their country. They were men from all walks of life and backgrounds who left family and friends and sadly never returned. We know their passing left deep grief and forever changed the lives of their loved ones. We know also their sacrifice left Canada a diminished nation without their youth, intelligence and talents.

As we remember and honour the heroes of our past, *The Sarnia War Remembrance Project* will ensure in the words from Ecclesiasticus 44:14: "Their bodies are buried in peace; but their name liveth for evermore." We will remember them.

Mayor Mike Bradley
November 2020



Message from the Project author:

Mayor Mike Bradley and the City of Sarnia; Bluewater Power Group of Companies; the Royal Canadian Legion, Branch #62, Sarnia; and the Sarnia Historical Society generously provided financial support for the printing of this 3rd edition of the two-volume *The Sarnia War Remembrance Project*.

All printed copies have been donated to various local groups and organizations throughout the Sarnia-Lambton area including to: the City of Sarnia records; the Corporation of the County of Lambton; Aamjiwnaang First Nations; Lambton County Library; Sarnia Library; Lambton County Archives; Lambton Heritage Museum; Plympton-Wyoming Museum; local military service organizations including the Sarnia and the Corunna Royal Canadian Legions, the First Hussars (Sarnia), the Royal Canadian Naval Association (Sarnia), and the Point Edward Ex-Servicemen's Association; all Sarnia and Lambton County High Schools; retirement and long-term care residences; St. Joseph's Hospice; and local media including *The Sarnia Observer*, *The Sarnia Journal*, *Sarnia This Week*, and Blackburn Radio Inc. Sarnia.

A PDF of all of *The Sarnia War Remembrance Project* research has also been donated to the City of Sarnia; the Sarnia Historical Society; the Sarnia and Lambton County Libraries; and Lambton County Archives. The research is available to all and can be accessed for free through their websites.

Tom Slater
November 2020

The following provided financial support for the printing of this two-volume project. All printed copies have been donated to local groups and organizations including city and county government records, libraries, museums, archives, military service groups, schools, and retirement & long-term care residences.

The generosity of these donors has ensured that there is a lasting record of Sarnia's wartime contributions; and that the sacrifices made by those who served and those who have fallen, as well as the families of all servicemen and servicewomen, will always be remembered.



Bluewater Power Group of Companies



The City of Sarnia



The Royal Canadian Legion, Branch #62, Sarnia



Sarnia Historical Society

The Sarnia Historical Society

*Individual patrons are on page 1244.

O Valiant Hearts

*O valiant hearts who to your glory came
Through dust of conflict and through battle flame;
Tranquil you lie, your knightly virtue proved,
Your memory hallowed in the land you loved.*

*Proudly you gathered, rank on rank, to war
As who had heard God's message from afar;
All you had hoped for, all you had, you gave,
To save mankind – yourselves you scorned to save.*

*Splendid you passed, the great surrender made;
Into the light that nevermore shall fade;
Deep your contentment in that blest abode,
Who wait the last clear trumpet call of God.*

*Long years ago, as earth lay dark and still,
Rose a loud cry upon a lonely hill,
While in the frailty of our human clay,
Christ, our Redeemer, passed the self same way.*

*Still stands His cross from that dread hour to this,
Like some bright star above the dark abyss;
Still, through the veil, the Victor's pitying eyes
Look down to bless our less Calvaries.*

*These were His servants, in His steps they trod,
Following through death the martyred Son of God:
Victor, He rose; victorious too shall rise
They who have drunk His cup of sacrifice.*

*O risen Lord, O Shepherd of our dead,
Whose cross has bought them and Whose staff has led,
In glorious hope their proud and sorrowing land
Commits her children to Thy gracious hand.*

Sir John Stanhope Arkwright, 1917

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Autumn, 1917 (portion of)

*Are there young hearts in France recalling
These dream-filled, blue Canadian days,
When gold and scarlet flames are falling
From beech and maple set ablaze?*

*Pluck they again the pale, wild aster,
The bending plume of golden-rod?
And do their exiled hearts beat faster
Roaming in thought their native sod?*

*Dream they of Canada crowned and golden,
Flushed with her Autumn diadem?
In years to come when time is olden,
Canada's dream shall be of them -*

*Shall be of them who gave for others
The ardour of their radiant years; -
Your name in Canada's heart, my brothers,
Shall be remembered long with tears!*

By Helena Coleman, 1917

PREFACE

The Origin of this Project: The idea for this project originated in the spring of 2012 when project author Tom Slater, a teacher at St. Patrick's Catholic High School at the time, was attending a meeting at Sarnia Collegiate Institute and Technical School (SCITS). On a wall outside of the main office, Slater noticed a plaque with the names of former SCITS students who had made the ultimate sacrifice during World War II.

Knowing that St. Patrick's, founded in 1935, was the only other secondary school in Sarnia during World War II (1939-1945) and the Korean War (1950-1953), he wondered why St. Patrick's High School did not have a similar plaque to honour its former students. So Slater set out to find the names of former St. Patrick's students who had served and those who had fallen during these two wars. Slater's goal initially was to create a war memorial plaque for St. Patrick's School that would recognize and honour these heroes.

One of the starting points for his war memorial project was to search for a complete list of all of Sarnia's war fallen; namely, those individuals who had volunteered, fought and died while serving Canada during times of war. Initial sources sought for such a list included the Sarnia Cenotaph War Memorial in Veterans Park; the Sarnia Public Library; Lambton County Archives; Lambton Heritage Museum; the Royal Canadian Legion Sarnia Branch 62; the Sarnia Royal Canadian Naval Association; the #403 Sarnia Wing (Airmen's Association); the Sarnia Armoury (the 1st Hussars Association); and Sarnia City Hall records. Slater was shocked and surprised to find that no record of Sarnia's fallen soldiers existed, at least not in the form that he had hoped. Sarnia's only record of its fallen soldiers was the list of names inscribed on the Sarnia cenotaph. The cenotaph records only a last name and an initial (or two). No first names are provided.

Project Objective: With the above discovery, Slater decided to change his objective. He began to create a comprehensive list of all of Sarnia's soldiers who had lost their lives while in service to this country during the Boer War, World War I, World War II, the Korean War and the Afghanistan War.

Slater sought to uncover as much information as he could about each individual soldier. His plan was to collect this information and to create a permanent record of Sarnia's local heroes. This entirely volunteer project would be made available for the City of Sarnia records; for local military service clubs; for Lambton County Archives; for all Sarnia and Lambton County libraries; for local churches; and for all Lambton County elementary and high schools.

Desired goal: Slater's desire was that Sarnia-Lambton residents would use *The Sarnia War Remembrance Project* to take a deeper interest in the lives of Sarnia's fallen. He hoped that the general public would be interested in learning about these local heroes; that teachers would advocate and encourage local students to learn about the young men and women who sacrificed for their country; and that family members of the fallen, some generations removed from the men and women who died, might discover new information about their relatives.

The more Slater researched, the more he appreciated the incredible sacrifices that these brave young souls made. These individuals were active in local churches, in local sports, in volunteer activities, in cultural societies and in community organizations. They voluntarily left their homes, their schools, their farms, their jobs, their trades and careers; and they left their loved ones—grandparents, parents, aunts, uncles, brothers, sisters, wives, children and friends. They responded to a call by this nation to fight in far off lands to save the oppressed; to defeat evil forces; and in the defense of liberty and freedom. Sarnia's fallen lost the opportunity to live full lives, enriched by friends and family. Their deaths affected their loved ones and the Sarnia and Lambton community as a whole for decades.

Fallen vs. Veteran soldier: A note regarding two key terms; a **"Fallen"** soldier refers to any individual who fought and died while in service (war dead); a **"Veteran"** soldier refers to any who served, survived war and returned home. This project's focus is on the fallen soldiers. These heroes who made the ultimate sacrifice deserve the honour of being remembered by their full names. Slater has always believed that it is very important to remember who these people were, what deeds they accomplished, and what sacrifices they made. If we don't remember them, Slater reasoned, it would be as if they never existed. And that would be wrong.

Creating the Project: Beginning with the original list of last names with initials on the Sarnia Cenotaph, Slater undertook extensive research using as many reference sources as he could uncover. Sources of information included numerous government, military, war museum and war memorial websites and a myriad of written sources

such as military history books, reference magazines and reference books. A number of local churches had Honour Rolls that helped in verifying names of the fallen. Slater spent countless hours at the Sarnia library reading and transcribing old *Sarnia Observer* newspaper articles from microfilm. Local media made the community aware of the project, and as a result, many family members of the fallen contacted Slater to provide information on their fallen loved ones.

First and Second Editions: After 18 months of research, Slater released the 170-page first edition of *The Sarnia War Remembrance Project* in the fall of 2013. The first edition included information on the Boer War and World War I, but focused primarily on Sarnia's fallen soldiers from World War II, the Korean War and the Afghanistan War. Not long after its release, many more family members came forward offering new information.

Slater, newly retired, now had more time to devote to research. Local historian, Randy Evans, also helped search for any World War I names that may have been missed on the cenotaph. After another year of research, in November 2014, Slater released a 400-page Second Edition of *The Sarnia War Remembrance Project*. This edition was a more detailed record of all of Sarnia's fallen soldiers, from the Boer War, World War I, World War II, the Korean War and the Afghanistan War.

Third Edition of the Project: After the November 2014 release, Slater continued his war research. He gathered more information on Sarnia and Canada's many contributions and sacrifices made during times of war, along with accumulating additional input from more relatives of Sarnia's fallen. In 2016, two new major sources of information became available to the public: the Service Files of World War II Fallen Soldiers became available on-line through Ancestry.ca; and Library and Archives Canada began the process of digitizing and making available the Personnel Records of every one of Canada's First World War soldiers. Slater then researched the Personnel Records and Service Files of every one of Sarnia's fallen soldiers. He also explored the family genealogical records of all of the fallen; collected more information from family members; and continued to explore dozens of other new sources of information. Slater's final edition of *The Sarnia War Remembrance Project*, a comprehensive record of the contributions and sacrifices Sarnians made during times of war, was completed in November 2020.

Included in this Project are the history of Veterans Park and its Sarnia cenotaph; an overview of those who sacrificed; details on key events and summaries of the major battles and important campaigns in which Canadians participated in during the Boer War, two World Wars, the Korean War, the Afghanistan War, as Peacekeepers, and In the Service of Canada; local news stories relating to these key war events; descriptions providing insight into the conditions and experiences of soldiers; letters local soldiers wrote home; biographies on over 300 of Sarnia's fallen; Sarnia war facts and statistics; a Sarnia and Canada at War key events timeline; epitaphs of all of Sarnia's fallen; and a record of all the war memorials, plaques, and honour rolls located throughout the City.

For the most part, the events are organized in chronological order (based on the start date of the event, battle or campaign). Sarnians served in almost every major battle and campaign that Canada participated in during all of these wars. Summaries of the battles and campaigns provide a preamble for the biographies of Sarnia's fallen and offer a perspective as well as a broader view of the big picture for context. What, for example, was it like to spend time in the WWI trenches, to be aboard a WWII corvette during the Battle of the Atlantic, or to fly in a Lancaster as part of Bomber Command? The goal is not only to relate events but also to provide insight into the conditions endured by the soldiers and a sense of what they were experiencing.

About the Project author: Tom Slater was born in Thunder Bay (Fort William), Ontario, the younger of two sons, to parents Oliver and Frances Slater. In 1941, Manitoba-born Oliver, 16, enlisted with the Canadian Army Militia in Kenora. At age 17, he joined the Royal Canadian Navy and served during WWII as a member of the RCNVR off the east coast of Canada and Newfoundland and on convoy duty across the Atlantic Ocean to Ireland and Great Britain. In 1948, he married Frances, who during the war worked for a time at Canadian Car and Foundry in Fort William where Hawker Hurricane fighter aircraft for the Royal Air Force were built.

Raised and educated in Thunder Bay, Tom obtained a Bachelor of Science (Biology) degree from Lakehead University followed by his Bachelor of Education degree from Nipissing University in North Bay. His wife, Jodi, and he began their teaching careers in Northern Alberta before moving to Lambton County. Tom was a teacher with the St. Clair Catholic District School Board and spent most of his career at St. Patrick's Catholic High School where he taught science, biology and special education. Tom is the proud father of daughter Megan and son Bennett and has always surrounded himself with loving pets.

Veteran Soldiers: This project does not include biographical information on the thousands of Sarnia veteran soldiers who survived any of these wars. Many returned home bearing the physical, psychological and emotional wounds of their experiences. The vast majority of Sarnia's veteran and fallen soldiers volunteered to serve their country and their families with pride and honour. Their loyalty to country, faith, family, to their unit and comrades is commendable.

Source of names in this Project: As mentioned previously, the initial source of names used in this project was derived from the Sarnia Cenotaph War Memorial in Veterans Park. Through the course of research, Slater discovered a number of names not on the Sarnia cenotaph, but connected to Sarnia. Sources for these additional names included: local newspaper (*Sarnia Observer*) reports on their deaths at the time; local Sarnia church honour rolls; local memorial plaques including at Sarnia Collegiate (SCITS), the Sarnia Imperial Refinery and the Sarnia Bank of Commerce; Canadian government websites; various Canadian military and war memorial websites (where "Sarnia" was used as a search item); the Personnel Records and Service Files of the fallen; and information from relatives of the fallen soldiers.

For the fallen soldiers profiled in this project, being linked to Sarnia means one of the following: they were born and/or raised here; they or their families moved here; they were employed here; they enlisted here; or they married someone from Sarnia and resided here.

The Sarnia Cenotaph War Memorial has 288 inscribed names in total: 112 from WWI, 169 from WWII, 4 from Korea, 1 from In Service to Canada and 2 from Afghanistan.

The Sarnia War Remembrance Project has **312 names** in total: 1 from the Boer War, 119 from WWI, 185 from WWII, 4 from Korea, 1 from In Service to Canada and 2 from Afghanistan. The following names are not inscribed on the Sarnia Cenotaph in Veterans Park, but are included in this project:

Boer War:

Daniel Crone (the Boer War Memorial lists the names of 16 men who participated in that war. D. Crone is included)

World War I:

Nelson Brown	Thomas Creighton	Walter McKenzie	John D.B. Rae
Earl S. Simmons	George Turner	John Wilson	

World War II:

Robert Alexander	Jack Brunette	Carl Burke	Maurice Church
Ross E. Clark	John Esselment	Frederick Irwin	Rowland Jamieson
William Lavers	Charles McIsaac	John McKernan	John McLagan
Donald Neal	William Rogers	Jack Thurlow	John Yorke

NOTE: Though this project lists the names of 119 Sarnia World War I fallen, the details of 114 are included. The author could not verify with absolute certainty the true identities of five individuals whose names are inscribed on the World War I section of the Sarnia cenotaph. Despite using all the Canadian WWI Personnel Records and military files available, Mr. Slater could not prove conclusively that A. Bell; G.J. Janes; M.J. Summers; W. Wilkinson; and C.B. Wilson were linked to Sarnia.

Every effort has been made to ensure that the list of Sarnia's fallen is complete and accurate. If an individual is missing or inaccuracies exist, the omissions and errors are unintentional. Researching documents and records that in some cases are over a century old elicits the possibility of errors. As much as possible, all information was corroborated by using multiple sources.

Sarnia cenotaph omissions and errors: The Sarnia Cenotaph has a few omissions and a number of spelling errors on it—not unusual for that time. No official government body or military agency was in charge of recording the names of the fallen or in matching them to specific home centers. Across the country, these kinds of lists were generally assembled by word of mouth rather than through official documents. The lists were often compiled years after the end of a war by volunteer groups, typically committees consisting in part of parents who had lost a son or widows who had lost a husband. Also, a number of the fallen had no real roots or family in the community; for example, they might have been labourers who came to work in Sarnia. As well, the inconsistencies may be the result of, for instance, a misunderstood or a mispronounced name. Note: 26 names were added to the cenotaph in the fall of 2019 as a result of this research project.

The spelling of names used in this project is based on the official Canadian Military and Government websites: Library and Archives Canada; Commonwealth War Graves Commission; Veterans Affairs Canada (The Canadian Virtual War Memorial); Canada At War (Online War Memorial); and official Province of Ontario Certificates of Registrations of Death, and most importantly, on the men's actual signatures on their Attestation (enlistment) Papers and in their Personnel Records and Service Files.

Below are the spelling errors associated with World War I and World War II soldiers on the Sarnia Cenotaph:

World War I cenotaph section:

- N. Benward – should be **N. Benware** (Neil Benware)
- N. Brearly – should be **N. Brearley** (Norman Osborne Brearley)
- F.J. Chester – should be **F.A. Chester** (Frederick Aloysius Chester)
- F.W. Edwards – should be **F.C. Edwards** (Fred Christopher Edwards)
- G.D. Hazen – should be **T.D. Hazen** (Thomas Douglas Hazen)
- A. Ireson – should be **A. Iveson** (Amos Iveson)
- F. Johnston – should be **F. Johnson** (Frederick Johnson)
- L.C. McMullen – should be **L.C. McMullin** (Leonard Calvin McMullin)
- J.M. Pierrie – should be **J.M. Pirrie** (James Miller Pirrie)
- J. Salisbury – should be **J. Salsbury** (John Reginald Sergeant Salsbury)
- H. Wallis – should be **C. Vallis** (Clifford George Vallis)
- C. Weatherill – should be **B. Weatherill** (Bertrand Peter Weatherill)
- A. Wiseman – should be **A. Wyseman** (Andrew Wyseman)

World War II cenotaph section:

- J.C. Bell – should be **J.G. Bell** (Joseph Griffiths Bell)
- A.J. Campbell – should be **A.W. Campbell** (Allan William Campbell)
- T.H. Elliot – should be **T.H. Elliott** (Thomas Harold Elliott)
- H.F. Haggerty – should be **H.F. Hegarty** (Hugh Francis Hegarty)
- J.S. Johnson – should be **J.S. Johnston** (Jay Syver Johnston)
- H. Legarrie – should be **H. Legare** (Hector LeGare)
- G.A. Nash – should be **C.A. Nash** (Charles Arthur Nash)
- M. Paithouski – should be **M. Paithowski** (Michael Joseph Paithowski)
- F.F. Thompson – should be **H.F. Thompson** (Howard Fraser Thompson)

Soldiers' Addresses: The residential addresses in the soldier biography section come from various sources and would have been the home addresses of either the fallen soldier, his wife, and/or his parent(s) as they were recorded in their enlistment documentation, Personnel Records, Service Files, Circumstances of Casualty Records or their obituaries.

Regimental (Service) Numbers: In the soldier biography section, a number follows the names of a majority of the fallen soldiers. This is the soldier's regimental or service number. It would have been assigned to the soldier at the time of his enlistment, a number unique to them as a means of identification. It would also appear on any of that soldier's records, such as military awards, death certificates and official communication home informing a family member of the loss of their child, husband or father. For a few of the fallen, no regimental number exists. This is because, for example, in WWI, officers did not have regimental numbers unless they had first enlisted as a Private, Corporal or Non-commissioned Officer.

Lambton County fallen: This project does not include information on the fallen soldiers from surrounding Lambton County; however, it is important to note that a number of the names on the Sarnia cenotaph are from surrounding communities in Lambton County. If one is interested in finding the names of "fallen" soldiers from other parts of Lambton County, an excellent resource is the book *Lambton Remembers*, by John M. Collins of the Lambton Branch of the Ontario Genealogical Society, Sarnia, Ontario (1998). It provides information on all the War Memorials throughout the County of Lambton, Ontario. It also includes a detailed list of all names recorded on every Lambton County Cenotaph and Memorial, covering the Boer War, World War I, World War II, and the Korean War.

Comprehensive Sarnia War Record: The names covered in the content of *The Sarnia War Remembrance Project* are a comprehensive record of the men from Sarnia-Lambton who made the supreme sacrifice in war, a

permanent record long overdue. Every name represents a young man, a son, a grandson, a brother, a father, an uncle, a neighbor, a best friend—each one sacrificed his life for us. Reading the stories and looking at the photographs of the faces of these soldiers, one cannot but be inspired and humbled by their youth and innocence, their self-sacrifice, their sparkling eyes and bright smiles looking back at the camera. So many were very young; they had their whole lives ahead of them. Future careers, wives, children and grandchildren were never to come to fruition.

LAC Databases: The Government of Canada's Library and Archives Canada (LAC) holds an extensive collection of records of the Canadian men and women who have served their country in the military. The records include unit war diaries, medal registers, photographic collections and military service files. The LAC website is; <http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/military-heritage/Pages/military-heritage.aspx>

Personnel Records of the First World War: In 2016, Library and Archives Canada began work on digitizing World War I Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF) Personnel Records. The project to digitize over 620,000 files was completed in 2018, allowing family members and researchers to find new information on the details of these soldiers military service. Also available from LAC are digitized World War I Circumstances of Death Registers, Commonwealth War Graves Registers and Veterans Death Cards.

Service Files of the Second World War (and beyond): The Service Files of World War II War Dead (fallen) are available through Ancestry.ca and some are available through Library and Archives Canada. No online database of military records for veteran soldiers of World War II or for veteran or fallen soldiers beyond WWII exists. The personal information contained in their restricted files is protected by the provisions of privacy legislation.

Requests for Military Service Files: Family members and researchers can submit a request for restricted records held by LAC. Considerations and Access restrictions apply that can be found on their website. These restrictions vary on the situation. For individuals still living, personal information cannot be released without the written consent of the individual; for individuals deceased fewer than 20 years, limited personal information will be released to an immediate family member; and for individuals deceased more than 20 years, proof of death is required.

Family members and researchers should be aware of possible peculiarities when going through Personnel Records/Service Files; for example, attestation papers completed at the time of enlistment contain much useful information, but cannot always be trusted when it comes to verifying date of birth, since some individuals, if they were underage, gave a false year of birth at their enlistment. The same inconsistencies apply to the official provincial Death Certificates, filled in by the Canadian military to provide the dates of birth and death but based on information taken from the soldier's Service Files.

For anyone accessing WWI Personnel Records or WWII Service Files, a useful LAC website is: Military Abbreviations used in Service Files <http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/military-heritage/pages/military-abbreviations.aspx>.

War Memorial Websites: Many military/war memorial websites exist dedicated to honouring & preserving the memory of Canada's fallen soldiers. They usually provide only basic information such as rank, service number, force, regiment, cemetery and grave or memorial reference. Information on the details of their lives, their service, or the circumstances of their deaths are limited. In some cases, family members have submitted information to sites such as The Canadian Virtual War Memorial (CVWM) and the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC).

More Information: A story exists for every fallen or veteran soldier: Who these people were? Who their families were? Why they joined the military? What were their experiences at home before going overseas and once there? For the fallen, what were the circumstances of their deaths? These sailors, soldiers and airmen made sacrifices, and so did their families back home in Canada. Their loved ones coped each day with the possibility that those whom they loved might not return, and many ultimately had to face the terrible reality that their worst fears were realized. Government and war memorial websites do not provide this personal information.

The dwindling number of veterans themselves, the family members of fallen and veteran soldiers, and historians and amateur researchers would be ideal sources for this additional information. It is hoped that these individuals will submit information such as stories, photographs, documents or personal memorabilia to websites dedicated to honouring all those who served. In this way, the stories of these brave souls and their memories will live on forever. It is a way to honour and to pay tribute to the brave men and women of Sarnia-Lambton who served, and

those who made the ultimate sacrifice for their love of home and country, during a very different and difficult time in Canada's history.

Recommended authors: For anyone interested in learning more about Canada's military contributions and sacrifices in wartime and in peacekeeping missions, countless websites and books are dedicated to this topic. Canada has a wealth of talented writers telling the tales of Canada's military history. Some of the outstanding Canadian war historian/authors include J.L. Granatstein, Mark Zuehlke, Terry Copp, Ted Barris, Pierre Berton and John Nadler. One military historian/author's work highly recommended by this author is Tim Cook. His series of books on Canada in World War I and World War II, the battles fought and the experiences of the front line soldiers, are particularly engrossing and invaluable informative.

Other Local Projects: Over the course of his research, the author, along with other volunteers and contributors including Lou Giancarlo and Tom St. Amand, completed a number of local projects derived from the SWRP. These projects further honoured those who served in the Boer War, in both World Wars, in Korea, in Afghanistan and In Service to Canada. Extensions of the SWRP include: the return of the "Big Tom" cannon to Veterans Park; a number of storyboards installed in Veterans Park; a Catholic Soldiers Honour Roll installed in St. Patrick's High School; the addition of 26 new names to the Sarnia cenotaph; special "Sarnia Remembers" issues of the *Sarnia Journal*; and the secondary designation of a 4 kilometre section of Highway 40 as "Veterans Parkway".

Front Cover Illustration: The front cover illustration of this Project was created by Sarnia-born artist Bennett Slater. Bennett incorporated the Maple Leaf and the Red Poppy in his design for a variety of reasons.

Maple Leaf: In the mid-1800's, the (sugar) maple leaf was already an emblem of Canada. By 1860, it was incorporated into the badge of the 100th Regiment (Royal Canadian Regiment). Canadian soldiers serving in the South African Boer War in 1899 wore a maple leaf cap-badge, which became a rallying symbol for the Dominion troops. During World War I, the maple leaf was included in the badge of the Canadian Expeditionary Force. This badge with the word "CANADA" superimposed in the maple leaf was proudly worn by all Canadian soldiers. In World War II, the maple leaf was worn with pride by all members in every branch of the Canadian military. Canadian troops have continued to use the maple leaf as a distinctive sign on regimental badges and equipment.

In 1917, the Imperial War Graves Commission (now Commonwealth War Graves Commission - CWGC) decided to commemorate all Commonwealth war dead individually and equally in a uniform fashion. Canadian soldiers' headstones would be engraved with a common Maple Leaf emblem. *The shape of the maple leaf on the front cover of this project is based on the Maple Leaf emblem chosen by the CWGC that is engraved on the gravestones of tens of thousands of Canadian soldiers buried in locations all around the world.

Red Poppy: The bright red poppy is a wildflower that flourishes in fields and along roadsides through Belgium, France and Gallipoli. Each spring during the Great War, on the devastated battlefields in these countries, the tenacious qualities of this red flower allowed it to grow in clusters in the churned up soil. The sight of these delicate, vibrant scarlet flowers growing on the shattered ground surrounded by death and destruction caught the attention of many of the soldiers. In soldiers' folklore, the vivid red of the poppy came from the blood of their comrades soaking the ground. One of the soldiers moved by the sight of the poppies on the battlefield was Canadian Lieutenant Colonel John McCrae. Following the death of a close friend at the Second Battle of Ypres in the spring 1915, John McCrae wrote the poem *In Flanders Fields*. His famous poem was the inspiration that led to the red poppy becoming a widely recognized international symbol of Remembrance.

Canada adopted the poppy as its national flower of Remembrance in July of 1921. The red poppy is a simple tribute to those who laid down their lives in the service of their country during war and military operations. Throughout Commonwealth nations, the wearing of a red poppy is a way to demonstrate gratitude to those who served, and a pledge to always remember those who gave their lives for the freedoms we enjoy.



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Act of Remembrance

*They shall grow not old,
 as we that are left grow old;
 Age shall not weary them,
 nor the years condemn.
 At the going down of the sun
 and in the morning
 We will remember them.*

*(excerpt from "For the Fallen")
 by Robert Laurence Binyon, 1914*

VETERANS PARK and THE SARNIA CENOTAPH

As mentioned previously, the primary source of names included in this project was derived from the Sarnia cenotaph. There are three War Memorial Monuments that reside in Sarnia's Veterans Park on the corner of Wellington Street and Christina Street: The Boer War Memorial Fountain, lists the names of sixteen Lambton men who served in the Boer War; the Sarnia-Lambton Afghanistan Monument, a memorial dedicated to those who served in Afghanistan; and the more familiar Sarnia Cenotaph War Memorial which has 288 inscribed names of fallen soldiers from World War I, World War II, the Korean War, In Service to Canada and Afghanistan Peacekeeping. Also mentioned previously, the Sarnia Cenotaph has a few omissions and a number of spelling errors on it—not an unusual occurrence based on when and how these lists were derived. *The Sarnia War Remembrance Project* records 312 names of Sarnia fallen soldiers in total.

The names as they are inscribed on the Boer War Memorial Fountain; on the plaques on the Sarnia-Lambton Afghanistan Monument; and on the Sarnia Cenotaph, are all included in this Project and are recorded beginning on page 1154. Following is information on the history of Veterans Park and Sarnia's war monuments and memorials in the park.

- **VETERANS PARK:** Prior to the time of Canada's Confederation in 1867, what is now Veterans Park, was known as the South Ward Market or **Market Square** (at that time, Sarnia was Port Sarnia). On a local map of the area from the early 1880's, the north-east corner of what is now Wellington and Christina streets notes it as being in the south ward, and is recorded on the map as "Market Square." The Square was used by everyone, for example: First Nations people would come to the square to trade their goods and to rest after their journey.

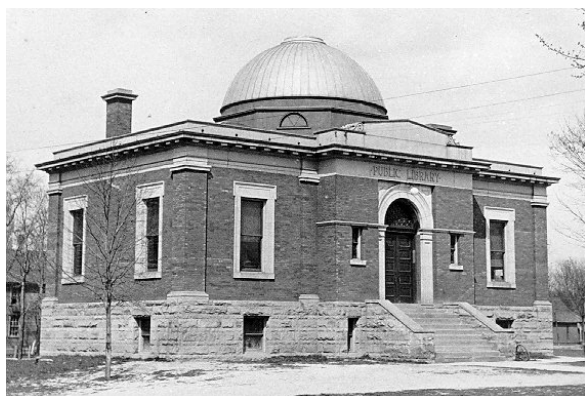
One of the first big events to take place in the park was the **Dominion Day** celebrations on July 1, 1867. On that date, with the enactment of the British North America Act, the three British North American colonies of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and the United Province of Canada (Quebec and Ontario) were united into a federation of four provinces under the name 'Dominion of Canada'. In Sarnia, the first Dominion Day celebrations included a parade that featured two Moore Infantry Companies; two Grand Trunk Rifle Companies from Point Edward; the Sarnia Infantry and Artillery Company; the Sarnia Cornet Band; Dominion Day committee volunteers; the Town Clerk in a carriage bearing Her Majesty Queen Victoria's Proclamation; four young women dressed in white in a carriage representing the four provinces; the Ministers of the Town; the Veterans of 1812; Sarnia and Port Huron fire brigades; Sarnia and Port Huron civic officials in carriages; the Sabbath School Children; and the citizens of the Town and visitors from the county. The parade proceeded from the parade ground, down Christina Street, George, Front, Francis (later Davis) and back to Christina Street to Market Square, where people assembled to hear a number of speeches in the hot summer sun. In the Square, the densely packed crowd listened to speeches from Mayor Frederick Davis of Sarnia, the Honourable Mr. Mitchell of Port Huron, and Alexander MacKenzie (who was soon to be elected as member of Canadian Parliament for Lambton). At its conclusion, crowd members adjourned Market Square for refreshments, while the various groups were conducted to either the Town Hall or a number of local hotels for dinner.



Victoria Park 1900 – "Welcome Home To Our Boys" Celebration
(soldiers returning from the Boer War)

Market Square, referred to by some as Wellington Square, was the only park in existence in Sarnia in 1888, when the Board of Park Management was organized. In 1891, the park was renamed **Victoria Park** in honour of Queen Victoria, who would reign as Queen of the United Kingdom from the age of eighteen in 1837 until her death in 1901.

The first public library in Sarnia was opened in Victoria Park on December 1, 1903, thanks to a generous donation of \$20,000 made in January 1902 from Scottish-American philanthropist **Andrew Carnegie**. Carnegie, an industrialist and business magnate, had led the expansion of the American steel industry in the late 19th century. As a leading philanthropist, he was driven by his strong belief and passion for free education for all. Carnegie donated \$56 million to fund 2,509 free public libraries around the world between 1883 and 1929. Between 1903 and 1922, 125 Carnegie libraries were built across Canada, of which 111 were built in Ontario. Carnegie's philanthropist initiative contributed significantly to the development of literacy in small communities across this province. The Sarnia "**Carnegie Library**" (architect M.R. Burrowes) was located in the centre of the park, and was designed to hold 4,000 books for a population of 8,000 people.



Sarnia's Carnegie Public Library

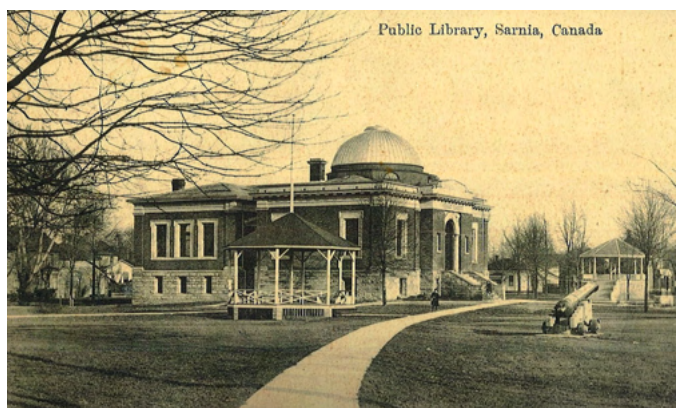
In late May 1907, the latest planned improvements for Victoria Park were announced in the (*Sarnia Canadian Observer*). Following is a portion of the report;

Park Improvements

GRANOLITHIC WALKS AND A NEW BAND STAND

The parks commissioners met last evening and awarded the contract for a number of improvements which are contemplated at Victoria square. The contract for the new granolithic walks, which will be laid through the park in the shape of a maltese cross from the four corners of the park, was awarded to Mr. Petkett, at 8 3-4 cents. The walks will be five feet in width and will total up to about 5000 feet of sidewalk. Mr. Petkett was also awarded the contract for the cement foundation for the proposed new fountain (Boer War Fountain) and the old Russian cannon (Big Tom), a relic of the Crimean war.

The park commission also decided to have a new band stand erected and awarded the contract to Thos. Grace at \$430. It is said to be the intention of the park commissioners to have the new band stand, which will be a permanent structure, erected on the east side of the public library building.



The Sarnia Carnegie Public Library

(Note: On the right side is the "Big Tom" cannon, the bandstand and the Boer War Memorial Fountain)

On **May 7th, 1914**, Prince Arthur William Patrick Albert, who was the Duke of Connaught and Governor General of Canada, planted a ceremonial hard maple tree near the west end of Victoria Park. Prince Arthur was the seventh child of the nine born by Queen Victoria, whom the park was named after. The planting of the maple tree was part of the ceremony on that date in which the Duke of Connaught officially declared the municipality of **Sarnia a city**. Unfortunately the maple tree was cut down years later during park renovations. More information on the May 7, 1914 “Sarnia becomes a city” ceremony is on page 59.

In the **early 1900’s**, along with being a location for patriotic events, the three-acre Victoria Park was a focal point in the city for concerts, ceremonies, picnics, special events and open-air church services, centered around the park bandshell, park benches, cannon and flagpole. Victoria Park, while still considered a site of beauty and a place to gather, had also become a location for items of historical significance, such as the Boer War Memorial, the “Long Tom” cannon and the Centennial Anniversary Cairn.

Sarnia’s Centennial 1936: On Saturday, August 1, 1936, Sarnia celebrated its one-hundredth birthday, commemorating the 100th anniversary of the naming of (Port) Sarnia in January 1836. The Centennial celebration began with a parade through the downtown section of the city, ending at Victoria Park. There, hundreds of citizens witnessed the centennial ceremony, with the band of the Lambton Regiment providing the music. The climax of the Victoria Park ceremony was the unveiling of the **Centennial Anniversary Cairn**, in the southeastern section of the park, a short distance from the north sidewalk on Wellington Street. Mayor Crompton, Rev. L.A. Wemple of St. Joseph’s Catholic Church, Rev. R. Charles Brown of Canon Davis Anglican Church, William Guthrie, M.L.A., and Ross Gray M.P. for West Lambton took part in the Victoria Park ceremony. The actual unveiling of the cairn, concealed beneath a Union Jack flag, was conducted by Mrs. Charlotte J. Nisbet, a descendant of one of the earliest leaders in the community.



Sarnia Centennial Cairn in Victoria Park

The Centennial Cairn was built of fieldstone, and mounted on top was a large art deco thermometer with two faces, showing to the north and south. On the face of it, fronting Wellington Street, was a stone plaque with the inscription, “COMMEMORATING OUR ANNIVERSARY, 1836-SARNIA-1936. ERECTED BY THE CITIZENS.” At night, floodlights illuminated the cairn and mounted thermometer. On that August 1, 1936 night, thousands of citizens attended a centennial service in Victoria Park. From the *Sarnia Observer*; *Three thousand people gathered under the stately elm and maple trees of Victoria Park Sunday evening for the impressive thanksgiving services on the occasion of the one hundredth anniversary of the municipality of Sarnia. With bowed heads the crowd murmured a prayer for the blessings already bestowed on the city and thousands of voices blended singing ‘O God our help in ages past...’*

Like the “Long Tom” cannon, the Cairn Thermometer was removed from the park during construction of the present-day Sarnia Library in the early 1960’s. A replica Cairn Thermometer, with the original granite plaque, was erected in 2002, and is located adjacent to Sarnia City Hall on the corner of George and Front Streets.



Sarnia's Victoria Park 1930's

In 1959, work on a new **Sarnia Public library** began, its location moved slightly west, to the corner of Christina and Wellington streets. The "old" Carnegie Library was demolished in 1960. Renovations were made to Victoria Park, including the moving of the various monuments to new locations: the cenotaph was re-positioned slightly; the Centennial Cairn thermometer was removed; the Boer War Memorial Fountain was moved and damaged slightly; the I.O.D.E. Memorial plaque was removed from the library foyer; the ceremonial maple tree planted in 1914 by Prince Arthur was cut down; and the old "Long Tom" cannon was moved to Canatara Park. By 1961, Victoria Park was approximately one acre in size and the cost of maintenance was shared equally by the Parks Board and the Sarnia Library Board.¹¹

Victoria Park has had a long historical connection with the **military**. The park was used as a training ground for the local militia; a parade ground for thousands of soldiers stationed here during the Fenian scare of 1866; a marshaling ground for troops; a gathering place for troops before being sent off to war; a place for citizens to hold services to pray for the safe return of their family members; a place to celebrate when the soldiers first returned home from war; and a place to honour all those who served and sacrificed. For example, in 1900, a crowd of Sarnians gathered in the park for a "Welcome Home to Our Boys" celebration, to welcome those men who had returned from active duty in South Africa during the Boer War (see page 1).^{5G}

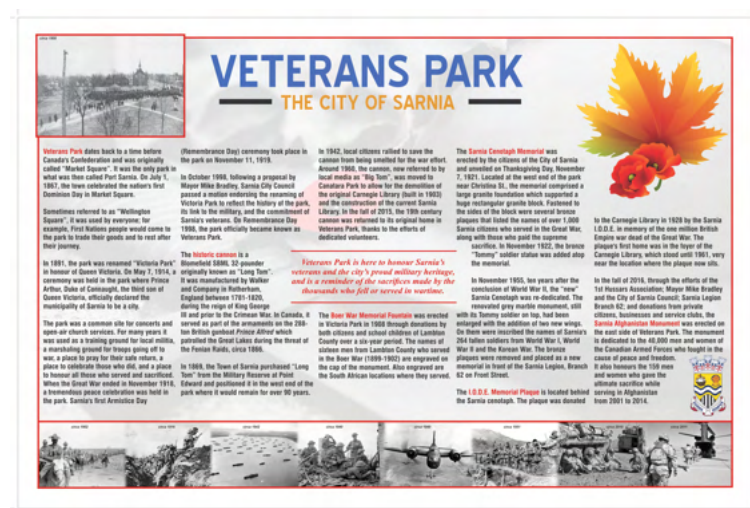
On May 29, 1916, the force of 800 volunteers of Sarnia's own Lambton 149th Battalion paraded to Victoria Park for a special church service, and a farewell to family and friends. The men then marched to the Cromwell Station, where they boarded trains on the first leg of their journey to fight in France and Belgium. Many of these men would never return to Sarnia. The First World War would end on November 11, 1918. On the day after the Armistice, on the evening of November 12, a tremendous peace celebration was held, starting in Victoria Park. Thousands of cheering citizens from Sarnia and surrounding communities gathered there, forming a huge torchlight parade that then moved along the darkened streets making its way through the downtown to the golf grounds.

On November 11, 1919, the first Armistice Day (now called Remembrance Day), was declared by King George V, taking place throughout the Commonwealth. It was designated to be a day to remember all those who had made the supreme sacrifice in service to their country. From that date on, the annual Sarnia Remembrance Day ceremonies have taken place in the park.

Veterans Park: In its long history, the park has been inherently linked to the military, and a location to honour those who fought and those who lost their lives in war during Sarnia's annual Remembrance Day ceremonies. In October 1998, following a proposal by Mayor Mike Bradley, Sarnia City Council passed a motion endorsing that Victoria Park would be renamed "Veterans Park", to reflect the history of the park and as a way to honour those who served. On Remembrance Day 1998, the park officially became known as Veterans Park. Veterans Park has continually been a place for the community to gather to pay their respects, to remember and to honour those who served and those who made the supreme sacrifice.

Veterans Park Storyboard and Sign: In late 2015, a committee of volunteers led by Lou Giancarlo and Tom Slater, brought forward the idea of creating and erecting a storyboard in Veterans Park. With the full support of Sarnia 1st Hussars Association, along with the City of Sarnia, the committee along with sign-maker Ken Hall, designed a Veterans Park storyboard that was installed in the park in late October 2016. The storyboard provides a brief history of the park itself, and information on all of the military artifacts in the park. Along the bottom portion of the storyboard are eight photographs representing the wars commemorated on the memorials to the fallen in Veterans Park—the Boer War, World War I, World War II (Army, Navy and Air Force), Korea and Afghanistan. In the top left corner of the storyboard is a photograph of the park in 1900, taken during a “Welcome Home to Our Boys” celebration, as local citizens welcomed those who returned from the Boer War. In the top right corner of the storyboard is the maple leaf/poppy logo designed for the cover of the 2nd Edition of this Project (logo by Sarnia-born artist Bennett Slater). The design of the maple leaf is based on the same maple leaf emblem that is engraved on the gravestones of thousands of Canadian soldiers buried in locations all around the world. The poppy is the widely recognized international symbol of Remembrance, and is used as a tribute to those who laid down their lives in the service of their country during war and military operations.

In August 2018, a new Veterans Park sign was added to the Park. Created by Dave Beatty and paid for by Communities in Bloom Committee, the City of Sarnia designed the landscaping that surrounds it.



Veterans Park Storyboard
October 2016



Veterans Park Sign
August 2018

• **THE “BIG TOM” CANNON:** Sarnia’s Market Square, now called Veterans Park, has been around since Canada’s Confederation in 1867. In 1869, an old cannon, a British-made “32-pounder” originally nicknamed “Long Tom”, was placed in the park.

Manufacture: Walker and Company of Rotherham, Yorkshire, England manufactured the “Long Tom” cannon sometime before 1820. Brothers Samuel, Jonathan and Aaron Walker, along with their brother-in-law, John Crawshaw, established their small iron making business near Sheffield, England in 1741 before moving it to Masborough, Rotherham in 1746. The new site enabled them to take full advantage of a nearby canal system, with access to the sea and nearby waterways. In those days, before the development of railway systems, the only feasible method of regular transportation for large volume, heavy iron products was by ship. By 1771, with access to both coal and iron ore in the vicinity, the company was making iron bridges and began the casting of more iron guns, and the new business of Messrs. Samuel Walker & Company quickly blossomed. With a labour force of nearly 1,000 men, Rotherham was, for a time, the main producer of cannons in the United Kingdom.^{5S, 5T, 5V}

Walker cannons were made of cast iron and, being a one-piece unit, they had to be cast in a single pour into an upright mould. Successful castings were left to cool a number of days, and then workers bored them to the correct calibre and drilled touchholes (vents). The weight by which the cannons could be identified was a reference to the size of standard shot that could be fired from the barrel; for example, 2,6,9,12,18,24 and 32 pounders. The cannons were supplied to both land and sea services where they were fitted to carriages, ranging from all cast iron parts for land garrisons and to all wood parts for sea service. Beginning in 1781, manufacturers received a steady order for

guns along with ever increasing demands for improved quality due to the development of ever more powerful gunpowders. By 1795, they were making something like 22,000 cannons a year. Production was carried on in Rotherham until 1820, when the Walker Company then moved its cannon manufacturing to Staffordshire, England.⁵⁵



Sarnia's "Big Tom" Cannon - November 2015

Firing: In the midst of battle, successful gunners required a disciplined firing routine. A crew of from 6-men up to 14-men, were responsible for the firing of each cannon. Using special instruments, special gunners first cleaned the bore of the cannon using a wet swab and then drying it, cooling the barrel and extinguishing any embers from a previous firing. Then other gunners placed in the barrel the pre-packed gunpowder charge (cartridge), the shot and the cloth wadding, each of which were rammed into the muzzle of the barrel. Simultaneously, the gun captain pushed a wire spike down the touchhole (vent) so as to pierce the flannel-lined cartridge; then priming powder was poured into the vent. The gun captain would then point the gun with the help of other gunners on each side, and by using ropes and tackles to move it to its forward position. With the loaded gun in the forward position, the captain, standing safely beyond its range of recoil, pulled the lanyard to fire the flintlock mechanism, creating a spark that, in turn, ignited the priming powder which in turn set off the main charge, and the shot was propelled forward. The explosion in the barrel hurled the shot out of the gun and on to the target. In the heat, smoke, noise, and smell the massive counter force caused the cannon to move backwards (recoil). If unrestrained, a 3-ton gun with a full charge could recoil over 50 feet. The Royal Navy trained their artillery crews hard and well, and could reload the guns in 90 seconds. According to the long standing authority "The Artillerist's Manual and British Soldier's Compendium" by Major Frederick A. Griffiths (1856), a 32-pound cannonball fired on level ground from a 56-cwt SBML at six degrees elevation, and propelled by a full 10 to 11 pound gunpowder charge, had an extreme range of 2,160 yards. There would be many variables effecting this maximum range: less elevation meant less distance; weight of shot varied up to ten percent affecting the range; the quantity and quality of the gunpowder used; and the wear and windage in the barrel also played a role in distance and accuracy. The Royal Navy preferred to close to about 200-300 yards before engaging with the enemy.^{55, 7L, 2f}

Identification: "Long Tom" is a Blomefield SBML 32-pounder 56-cwt cannon, cast by Samuel Walker & Company in Rotherham, England sometime between 1787 and 1820. Blomefield refers to Thomas Blomefield who was appointed England's Inspector of Artillery and Superintendent of the Royal Brass Foundry in 1780. He condemned many new artillery pieces as unsuitable before they were sent to the army or navy, and developed an improved standard for the manufacture of big British guns. Around 1783, he began experimenting with the design of artillery pieces. By 1787, cast iron guns of Blomefield's own design were being produced, with alterations to the previous (Armstrong) design. Blomefield design changes included; decorative features at the cascabel were done away with ensuring a uniform thickness of metal and making the breech more rounded, and the addition of a ring, a "cascabel loop", at the breech end of the barrel. This was used to improve the free movement of ropes used to restrict the cannon's recoil aboard ships. On earlier cannons, ropes were wrapped around a knob on the breech end, which were prone to slipping off. SBML stands for smooth-bored muzzle loading, which means that the cannons were loaded with shot from the muzzle. 32-pounder refers to the size of shot fired, in this case, a 32-pound cannonball (just over six inches in diameter). The 56-cwt refers to its weight; cwt stands for Hundredweight (old Imperial

measure), meaning the Big Tom barrel weighs slightly over 3 tons. The barrel is approximately ten feet long. Identification of “Long Tom” as a Walker Company cannon, manufactured in Rotherham, is based on the special marks placed on it during the casting process: on the end face of the left trunnion is the mark ‘WCo’ which stands for Walker and Company; on the end face of the right trunnion is the casting number 375; on the top of the barrel is an embossed crown above a stylized mark of a 3, G and R entwined (this stands for '3 George Rex' and is the royal symbol of King George III who reigned between 1760–1820); and also on the barrel is a broad arrow stamp signifying British government ownership. After 1820, Walker cannons were produced in Staffordshire and bear a George IV cypher (George IV was the eldest son of George III).



‘3 George Rex’ symbol



Walker and Company mark on left trunnion

The Sarnia cannon is mounted on a concrete field carriage (not the original carriage) with iron wheels. A small metal plaque is on the carriage located below the cascabel (the breech end of the barrel). It has the engraved markings No 1519 and 6.12. It is believed that this plaque is not connected to “Long Tom”, but is the mounting plate that held the base of the elevating screw on a field carriage—the other end was attached to the cascabel. The No. 1519 may have been the carriage number. Although not located on “Long Tom”, other markings often found on this era of cannon included: the weight of the gun in Hundredweights, Quarters and Stones (the old Imperial Measure), located usually on the lower part of the cascabel of the barrel; and occasionally, various notches in the barrel, these being used by the gunners for the purpose of ranging the gun onto its target.^{50, 5S, 5U, 2f}

Weapons of War: Walker Company cannons were manufactured for naval and garrison use and were scattered around the world. Most notably, they were used by the British Royal Artillery and the British Royal Navy in the American War of Independence (1775-1783); by the Royal Navy on Lord Nelson’s flagship *HMS Victory* in the Battle of Trafalgar (1805)—in fact, 80 of the 105 guns aboard the *Victory* were Walker and Company of Rotherham cannons; and by the British during the Crimean War (1853-1856). The Crimean War was the world’s first “media war,” with extensive reporting on the battles. Not only did Canadians follow the reports in newspapers, but several thousand Canadian volunteers served in British units. Lieutenant Alexander Dunn of York (Toronto) received the first Victoria Cross awarded to a Canadian for his part in the infamous “Charge of the Light Brigade” at Balaclava in 1854. In Halifax, a monument was erected in 1860 in memory of two Halifax men who perished during the war. It is the only Crimean War monument in North America.

During “Long Tom’s” history in Sarnia, rumours abounded that it was used against the Russians in the Crimean War, even being nicknamed locally the “Sevastopol cannon”. The Siege at Sevastopol (October 1854-September 1855) was the culminating struggle by the British and French against this strategic Russian base on the Black Sea and was the final episode in the Crimean War. After the war, Queen Victoria and the British Government decided to distribute many of the captured Russian cannons and British cannons (some copper, most iron) across the British Isles and her Empire; therefore, Australia, New Zealand and Canada received them as memorials of the allied victory in Crimea. Some of the guns were melted down to make other forms of memorials. Another use for the captured brass cannons was to provide metal for the new order of valour, the Victoria Cross, instituted in 1856 by Queen Victoria, and first awarded to meritorious Crimean veterans. During the Second World War, many of the Crimean War cannons would fall victim to the government’s drive to collect scrap metal.^{5S, 5T, 5V, 5W} Whether Sarnia’s

“Long Tom” was ever used against the Russians in the Crimean War is unknown, but it is relatively unlikely; however, it did manage to avoid the fate of being smelted as scrap in World War II.

Nickname: Over the countless years of military history, many artillery pieces have been nicknamed “Long Tom”. The origin of the nickname “Long Tom” was derived from the British forces. During the time of Queen Elizabeth I’s reign (1558-1603), the Royal Gun-founder from 1584 until 1595 was Thomas Johnson. The Royal Gun-founder was responsible for all armaments manufacture, ammunition proofing and explosives research for the British forces. During this time, warships—naval and privateer—usually had one or two long, heavy guns mounted on a swivel at the ship’s bow to act as a chase gun, with shorter, lighter guns along the broadside. In the days when guns were denoted by their range, the chase gun became the “Long Thomas”, after the Royal Gun-founder. During the Second Boer War (1899-1902), the Boers used several French-built 155-mm Creusot field guns against the British that outranged any field artillery the British possessed. The British forces nicknamed the Boer long barrel guns “Long Toms”. The British had other nicknames for the Boer War artillery, including “Fiddling Jimmy”, “Puffing Billy”, “Silent Susan”, “Bloody Mary”, “Lady Anne”, and “Long Cecile” (after Cecil John Rhodes, a governor of the Cape Colony). The term “Long Tom” became a generic identification for any long barreled cannon with long range, with no attachment to calibre. Today, one of the pieces most often associated with this nickname is a long-barrel towed 155-mm Long Tom field gun that was used by the United States military during World War II and the Korean War.

From the moment the historic cannon was brought to Victoria Park (now Veterans Park) in Sarnia, it was nicknamed “Long Tom”. When there was talk of smelting the cannon to support the Second World War effort, the *Sarnia Observer* in a May 1942 article referred to the Victoria Park cannon as “Big Tom”, a name “conferred on it a half a century ago by the boys who played around and on it”. After that, local media continued to refer to the cannon as “Big Tom”, a name that seemed to stick.^N

Cannon comes to Sarnia: The “Long Tom” cannon came over from England to Canada for defence purposes during the time of the Fenian uprising. The threat of a Fenian invasion from the United States was so serious to the colonials in the area that a garrison of militia volunteers was stationed in Point Edward. To supplement the garrison, the Upper Canadian government purchased several small vessels to defend the Great Lakes. “Long Tom” would end up on one of these boats, one that was constructed in Sarnia in 1859. The boat, originally christened the *Michigan*, was built as a rail ferry for use in Sarnia-Port Huron by the Grand Trunk Railroad, but was later converted to a steam powered passenger tug in 1862. At the height of the Fenian crisis in 1866, the *Michigan* was chartered by the Provincial Gunboat Service (British government) and refitted for use as a 288-ton gunboat as part of the system of defence of the Great Lakes. The British gunboat was renamed the *Prince Alfred* after Queen Victoria’s second son and, in 1866, along with the *Cherub*, and *The Rescue*, went into duty patrolling the Great Lakes waterways. The *Rescue*, a steam powered tug converted to a gunboat, was based out of Toronto. She briefly had a 32-pounder cannon mounted on her main deck, but after experiencing a heavy storm in June 1866 off Port Stanley where the cannon threatened to break loose, the ship was rearmed with smaller Armstrong ship guns (9 and 12-pounders).

Prince Alfred was the largest of the Dominion gunboats, with a crew of 5 officers and 47 crewmen. Along with patrol duty from the Niagara River and Windsor to Port Sarnia and into Lake Huron, the *Prince Alfred* was also used as a training ship for gun drills for artillery units including the Sarnia Battery. Between 1867 and 1871 the *Prince Alfred* was stationed in the Goderich (Ontario) harbour. At various times, the vessel was equipped with different artillery pieces including two “Armstrong” guns and four brass “howitzer” guns. When the Fenian threat subsided, one of *Prince Alfred*’s cannons was moved off the boat, retired and stored in the Military Reserve base in Point Edward.

In 1869, two years after the nation’s Confederation, the retired cannon, reportedly “reposed near Point Edward, partly covered by sand and underbrush” was purchased and brought to Sarnia, and placed in the west end of Sarnia’s Market Square Park (now Veterans Park) facing east.^N The cannon was the lone occupant of the park. Part of a (*Sarnia*) *Observer* report from late June 1869 stated; *The big gun, which was expected to be here for use on Dominion Day, but failed to put in an appearance on time, arrived in town on Tuesday last and has been placed on the south ward Market Square, there to remain permanently. It is a ponderous looking instrument, some nine feet in length, and by way of distinction, we propose that HE shall be known in the future as “Long Tom.” It is expected that when he speaks that he will cause the south ward to quake to its centre.*^N The final fate of the *Prince Alfred* is unclear. One source reports that she went aground in Lake Huron near Point Edward in 1874, yet she was for sale by the government in March 1875 (while lying in Sarnia); another source reports she was sold to a Detroit concern and

converted into a tug; another source reports that she was broken up in 1885; and another source reports that she “passed out of existence” in 1894.^{N, 5X, 5Y, 7N, q, t}

In the early 1940s, the federal government, as part of a nationwide scrap and metal drive during World War II, suggested that the “Big Tom” cannon in Victoria Park be smelted down for the war effort. In a concerted effort, local Sarnia residents fought back against the government, saying the cannon didn’t belong to Ottawa because it had been in Port Edward/Sarnia about the time of Canada’s Confederation.^N

The “Big Tom” cannon has a long history in Victoria (Veterans) Park and was witness to many solemn events and patriotic celebrations. During both the Boer War and World War I, it was the only military artifact in the park, a tangible, hands-on reminder for family members of their sons/brothers/fathers who were overseas fighting a war. The cannon was witness to farewell services that took place in the park prior to the troops marching to the train station on their first leg to fight overseas. During both of these wars, it was in the park during church services when families gathered to pray for the safe return of their loved ones. It was there for celebrations like the “Welcome Home to Our Boys” celebration in 1900 and the “Armistice” peace celebration in November 1918. It was in the park during the first official Armistice Day (Remembrance Day) on November 11, 1919, honouring those who served, and witnessed many more Remembrance Day services afterward. The cannon was in Victoria Park for many other special events and ceremonies, including: when Prince Arthur, Duke of Connaught officially declared Sarnia to be a city in May 1914; when the cenotaph was unveiled in November 1921; when Sarnia had its Old Home Week celebrations in July 1925; when Sarnians gathered for the VE Day and VJ Day celebrations in May and August 1945; when Sarnians had their first Remembrance Day ceremony following the end of the Korean War in November 1953; and when the “new” Sarnia cenotaph was unveiled in November 1955.

Between 1959 and 1961, the “new” (and current) Sarnia public library was built while the old Sarnia Carnegie library (slightly east of its current location) was being demolished. In 1959, to make way for the construction work, and after residing in the Victoria Park for over 90 years, the Sarnia Parks Department moved the “Big Tom” cannon to the north end of Canatara Park, in the area of two anchors (that are still there).

“Big Tom” would remain in Canatara Park until early November of 2015. Thanks to a dedicated committee of volunteers led by Lou Giancarlo and Mike Banovsky (MPB Industrial), that also included Tom St. Amand, Tom Slater and Randy Evans; and with the endorsement of Sarnia City Council, the “Big Tom” cannon was returned to its rightful home in Veterans Park. Mike Atkinson of Atkco Cranes donated the time and equipment in order to make the physical move possible. The “Big Tom” cannon was returned to Veterans Park in time to witness Sarnia’s 97th Remembrance Day ceremony in the park.



Returning home - November 2, 2015

Retired Canadian Army Lieutenant-General Andrew Leslie wrote the following in the Preface of Harold Skaarup’s book “Shell Drake: Canadian Artillery Museums and Gun Monuments”; *When guns become old they do not always fade away. In hundreds of cases they are carefully mounted and preserved as displays and memorial symbols, a tangible link to the thousands who fought our wars and paid the ultimate price... It is important to recognize and remember the importance of the people and equipment that defended our nation forward and were present at all of the key turning points in history...the guns that served, and are preserved in Canada, serve as a window into our past while reminding us that there is a price to pay to preserve our society and values, and gunners and their guns have always done their duty.*

- **THE BOER WAR MEMORIAL FOUNTAIN:** In 1902, a contingent of veterans of the Boer War came to Sarnia, from Windsor, Ontario, with the express purpose of creating a monument to commemorate those men from Lambton County who had served in the Boer War (1899-1902). In January 1902, at a meeting held in Sarnia, the South African Club, comprising Windsor men who saw service in the Boer War, opened subscription lists for funds for a memorial for their fallen comrades. Public collections would be supplemented by the proceeds from a number of concerts to be given, with the goal to raise \$1,500 for the purpose. It was suggested that the memorial would probably take the form of a public drinking fountain to be located near the post office.

The Boer War Memorial Fountain was erected in Victoria Park in 1908, having been made possible through donations by both citizens and school children of Lambton County over a six-year period. Around 1960, the memorial was moved and slightly damaged during the demolition of the original Sarnia Carnegie Library. It was later repaired and in 1998, received heritage designation. The names of the men from Lambton County who served in the Boer War are engraved on the cap of the monument. Also engraved are the South African locations where they served. The Memorial lists sixteen men from Sarnia and Lambton County who participated in the South Africa War of 1899-1902. Of the sixteen names on the Boer War memorial, only one man, Daniel Crone, died while serving.



Carnegie Public Library and the Boer War Memorial Fountain

- **THE I.O.D.E. MEMORIAL PLAQUE:** Located behind (north of) of the current Sarnia cenotaph is the I.O.D.E. Memorial Plaque. The I.O.D.E., the Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire, was a federation of women originally formed in January 1900 in Fredericton, New Brunswick to promote patriotism, loyalty and service to others. Chapters were formed in quick succession across Canada. In 1915, the Pro Patria Chapter and St. Clair Chapter were formed in Sarnia. Other local chapters were formed in 1929, the Sir John Colborne Chapter; and in 1935, the Honourable Alexander Vidal Chapter. In April 1938, the four local chapters received a charter for the formation of the Municipal Chapter of Sarnia. In October 2019, the IODE Sarnia-Lambton Municipal Chapter, to commemorate its 80th anniversary, donated a beautiful bench located near the cenotaph and IODE Memorial Plaque in Veterans Park.

Since its inception, in times of war this patriotic women's charitable organization has funded food, clothing and medical supplies for troops and prisoners of war; donated relief supplies for victims of war; built and run hospitals; raised money for ambulances, hospital ships, a Bolingbroke bomber and a fighter aircraft; established libraries, canteens and accommodations for servicemen; and "adopted" ships. In Sarnia, the IODE adopted *HMCS Mahone*, an RCN Banger-class minesweeper with a crew of eighty-three. In peacetime, IODE members volunteer with and for people, focusing on children, education and community services working to improve the quality of life for those in need.^{10W, 10X}

The IODE Memorial plaque in Victoria (Veterans) Park was donated to the original Carnegie Library in November 1928 by the local Pro Patria (For Country) chapter of the I.O.D.E.. The plaque's first home was in the foyer of the Carnegie Library, which stood until 1961, very near the location where the memorial plaque now sits.^N The plaque reads: "TO THE MILLION DEAD OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE WHO FELL IN THE GREAT WAR AND OF WHOM THE GREATER PART REST IN FRANCE."

In November 2019, the plaque was cleaned and restored as part of a Sarnia Historical Society and Sarnia Royal Canadian Legion project to refurbish and add names to the Sarnia cenotaph.



I.O.D.E. Memorial Plaque

• **THE CITY OF SARNIA CENOTAPH:** After the Great War, across the country, citizens who could not grieve at the graves of their loved ones, felt the need to commemorate their dead in their own way. Prominent citizens, patriotic groups, veterans and family members of the fallen came together to erect cenotaphs and memorials in their villages, towns, and cities to those men who had left and never returned. Citizens, groups and politicians suggested and discussed a wide variety of possible ways to honour and pay tribute to those in the community who had sacrificed. Memorials included arenas, schools, veterans buildings, hospitals, libraries, sports fields, stadiums, playgrounds, fountains, stained glass windows, parks, streets and highways, gardens, walkways, gates, towers, statues, plaques, dedicated military artifacts, memorial walls, commemorative books, and of course stone monuments.

Hundreds of monuments were built in the 1920's, and while their size and scale varied, they often shared similar characteristics: local fundraising paid for the monuments of stone; a Canadian uniformed soldier adorned it who was standing at attention, or with an arm raised in victory, or marching forward; and the names inscribed almost always signified only the fallen—not all the soldiers who had served or even those who had been wounded (the latter was not the case in Sarnia). The bereaved of the Second World War reacted similarly, with new memorials, or rededications of older memorials, new names and dates added. Again, funding for most of these memorials was by public subscription, a national grassroots movement to ensure the sacrifices would not be forgotten.^{4G}

Sarnia was no different than hundreds of other Canadian communities after World War I. Many ideas were discussed locally on how to pay tribute to those who sacrificed before deciding to build a cenotaph. Sarnia's original Great War cenotaph would differ from the norm in that more than those who had fallen were honoured.

Plans to create a memorial to Sarnia's fallen of the Great War had begun in November of 1918. Alderman Sanders and "The Great War Veteran's Association of Sarnia" were leaders in this campaign. From the *Sarnia Observer*, November 21, 1918:

The Imperial City Will Erect a Memorial to Its Sons Who Rest Yonder

Sarnia will in the near future open a subscription list to the general public for the purpose of securing adequate funds for the erection of a suitable memorial to the Imperial City's fallen heroes, who sleep where the poppies grow in Flanders. Whether this memorial will be in the form of a monument or in the form of a building is not yet known, but it would seem that the people as a whole will be consulted in the matter.

Much debate ensued as to what form the Sarnia memorial should take. There were public meetings at City Hall with discussions and proposals on the issue. The planned memorial was to be paid for by ratepayer donations, and it was vital that it be a fitting tribute and a lasting credit to the city. Many suggestions were made for "a suitable monument for the brave boys of the city, who paid the supreme sacrifice and lie under French soil."^N One proposal was to purchase a new park site and plant oak trees, with a metal plate with the name engraved for every fallen soldier from the city. Many desired some type of community building, with a suitable monument or statue erected in front of the building. Some argued that a "Veteran's home" would not only commemorate the city's fallen heroes,

but also benefit the entire community, including returned soldiers, and the wives, mothers, dependents and sweethearts of the soldiers. This community soldiers' home would include, possibly, a swimming pool, along with billiard tables, meeting rooms, a library, all of which would be useful for future generations of the community. Others in the community felt that erecting a more traditional monument would be a better way to honour the fallen heroes.

Mrs. Irene McMullin of Sarnia, a divorced mother who had lost her only son in the Great War, wrote a letter in late November of 1918 to the editor of the *Observer* as to why she felt it should be a monument. She was one of thousands of Canadian families who were forced to grieve without a body, or without an expensive overseas visit to a grave, thus unable to achieve the closure that was so important to those who had never had a chance to say a proper goodbye. Her son's information, nineteen-year old Private Leonard Calvin McMullin, is included in the World War I section of this Project on page 335. Following is Mrs. McMullin's heartfelt letter;

Editor Canadian Observer

Dear Sir,

May I speak for my boy? He is sleeping somewhere in France. I do want to tell you what I believe would please him, could he but speak. For some years prior to enlisting in Lambton's 149th O.S. Bn., he had taken great pleasure in the public library and the park surrounding it (Victoria Park) and since a memorial to the boys who will never return has been under discussion, my greatest comfort has seemed to centre there, and always I can picture to myself a monument of suitable design, bearing the names of all our city's fallen heroes, their graves beyond the reach of loving hands to tend and care for, with no mark save a temporary wooden cross.

Reader, have you a boy sleeping over there? If so, does not the little white wooden cross seem a frail thing? And many of our precious boys have not even that much. A granite monument would be a memorial which would withstand the elements for many generations to come and in that way would perpetuate their names as nothing else could. Also it would be something which the residents of our city and visitors as well, would have cause to admire and revere. Furthermore, if this proposed memorial to the boys who have lost their lives should take the form of a home, or a Y.M.C.A. or Y.W.C.A., it would be natural for the original motive to be lost sight of, within a few years.

There are already associations formed for the purpose of bringing comfort and pleasure to the returned heroes. We feel that they can never be fully repaid for their sacrifices and services for humanity. They are deserving of as good as can be produced, but our city and country are prosperous and wealthy, and can well afford to give our beloved dead a separate memorial.

In the years of the future, when one by one our returned heroes have gone to their reward in the Great Beyond, their earthly remains laid to rest beside their father and mother, perhaps, their names and record engraved upon the family monument, or possibly a gravestone of their very own (not only they but you and I together with all others who have known and loved and been loyal to our faithful armies) this proposed granite monument would still stand firm ever beaming the message of peace on earth.

The little white wooden crosses over there seem to send us the message "Do not forget us," though only wrapped in a blanket, perhaps and buried khaki clad, in a soldier's grave.

Thanking you, Mr. Editor for space and patience, I am

Yours truly,

The Mother of One, Mrs. Irene McMullin, 466 Davis Street.

In April of 1921, the site for the memorial monument had been chosen, on the west end of Victoria Park, near Christina Street. Actual work on the construction of its foundation began that same month. The monument comprised a large granite foundation that supported a huge rectangular granite block weighing several tons placed on top, with several bronze tablets bolted on its sides. On each tablet would be enscrolled the names of Sarnia soldiers who paid the supreme sacrifice, as well as the names of all Sarnians who served with the Allied Forces during the Great War.

The planned unveiling was originally to be on Dominion Day, July 1st, 1921; however, the unveiling was delayed when Sarnia Mayor George Crawford visited the Toronto plant of William A. Rogers Company (later F.G. Tickell and Sons) in June of that year and learned that the bronze tablets being prepared there would not be ready in time. Though the stone monument had been in position in the park for some months, the unveiling was postponed until Labor Day, September of 1921, but again, the tablets were not yet completed on that date. In late September of 1921, Mayor George Crawford proposed that the planned unveiling would take place on November 11th, 1921, the

third anniversary of Armistice signing ending the Great War. At some point after that proposal was made, the unveiling date was changed again, this time to Monday, November 7th, Thanksgiving Day, 1921.

Unveiling: The Sarnia Cenotaph Memorial, erected by the citizens of the City of Sarnia, was officially unveiled in Victoria Park by Mayor George Crawford on Thanksgiving Day, November 7th, 1921. (On the actual cenotaph, the date of unveiling is inscribed as November 11th, 1921). At the time of its unveiling, the rectangular stone monument had three bronze tablets fastened to the stone. On one tablet, on the west side of the memorial, were inscribed the names of sixty Sarnia men who paid the supreme sacrifice. On two larger bronze tablets (attached to the memorial's front and back) were the names of over 1,000 Sarnians who served with the Allied forces during the war.

The statue of the soldier that sits atop the current cenotaph was not part of the original cenotaph. The three original bronze tablets are now located on the outside west wall of the Royal Canadian Legion, Branch 62 on Front Street.

Committees from veterans' organizations and the city council had planned the details of the November 7th unveiling ceremony. The ceremony was preceded by a parade from city hall to Victoria Park. The parade included city officials, relatives of the fallen, members of the Chamber of Commerce, various military units, a firing party, the citizens band, wreath bearers, ex-service men (uniformed and ununiformed), a machine gun company, Collegiate cadets, and troops of boy scouts. Over three thousand citizens witnessed the dedication and unveiling.^N

On a cloudy, chilly Monday morning of November 7th, 1921, the **unveiling ceremony** began with the parade participants leaving city hall at 10:30 a.m. en route to Victoria Park. At the park, the units took up their positions around the monument and the relatives of the deceased and civic officials took their seats reserved for them. A huge crowd of spectators encircled the group. Alderman J.C. Barr, chairman of the memorial committee, opened the ceremony. Rev. Monsignor J.T. Aylward of Our Lady of Mercy Church and Rev. R.H. Barnby of Parker St. Methodist Church followed with hymns and prayers and Venerable Archdeacon Carlisle of All Saints Church in Windsor gave a dedication.

Monsignor Aylward stated that on such an occasion one is filled with sentiments of various kinds, but the first thought must go to the wives and mothers of the noble heroes whose bodies lay far away. Canada was made a nation, he declared, by the valour of her boys, and to them is owed a debt of gratitude that can never be sufficiently paid. He also referred to the work carried out by the women of Canada during the war and praised the spirit of self-sacrifice that they displayed. Rev. Barnby stated that the monument stands as a tribute to unselfishness and expressed the hope that it would recall to those who pass it from day to day the unselfishness of heroic deeds of men who lived and died for the Empire. After referring to the fine response of all Canada's sons in his dedication, Ven. Archdeacon Carlisle touched particularly on the magnificent war record of Sarnia, an accomplishment of which Sarnia's citizens should be proud. He declared that memorials stand for two things: inspiration in a glorious and noble past and a challenge for the days to come, a challenge for unity and service.

Before carrying out the unveiling, Mayor George Crawford gave a brief address. A glint of sunshine burst through the hovering clouds an instant before he released the flag that shrouded the monument, exposing the granite column with its bronze tablets. This was followed by the placing of wreaths around the base of the monument as the band rendered the "Dead March"; followed by the discharge of three volleys by the firing party and the sounding of the "Last Post". While the crowd stood in solemn silence, teary-eyed, with bared heads, the ex-service men and uniformed ranks stood at attention. The National Anthem closed the ceremony and the parade re-assembled and marched back to City Hall.

Following is the address given by Mayor George Crawford prior to unveiling the Sarnia Cenotaph Memorial during the November 7th, 1921 ceremony:

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are gathered together this morning for the purpose of unveiling this beautiful monument—the gift of the people of Sarnia to the loving memory of those brave boys who gave their lives in the defense of their King and their country—the cause of justice and liberty.

We have not forgotten those who left all and enlisted, whether in home or in foreign forces, to fight our battles. We have seen to it that the name of every man from this city that served his country in the great conflict is inscribed on the bronze tablets attached to the sides of this granite monument. No matter how much we do, I feel that we can never pay off the debt we owe those lads and their friends for their brave sacrifices.

In erecting this monument is a humble way we as a grateful people have undertaken to cherish the memory of our departed boys, and to hand down to succeeding generations the recognition of the noble deeds of those Sarnia boys that so bravely fought and died on the battle fields of Europe—that the homes of their loved ones might be safe and that a free country might be saved for them.

It is timely and thoughtful that the unveiling should take place on Thanksgiving Day. I feel personally that it is a great honour to have my name connected with the event. The committee responsible for the choosing of this substantial but simple design as a memorial are to be congratulated in their wisdom of choice and location. It is the hope and aim of the committee that another armistice day will see a handsome bronze or marble statue of a Canadian soldier mounted on top of this granite memorial.

At this time, also, it is not out of place for me to say a word or two recalling the splendid record made by our citizens during the war. You gave, you worked, and you prayed for the success of our arms. Your reward was victory. I now with a deep sense of pride, honour and humility—on behalf of the people of this city—unveil this monument to the memory of those who served their king and country well—who fought and bled and died, that the world might be made safe for all.

A side note on Mayor George Crawford: His grandson would lose his life in World War II. His 18-year-old grandson, Leading Aircraftman (LAC) George Crawford (of Ottawa), was killed instantly in August of 1944 on the last flight of his R.C.A.F. training course in Lindsay, Ontario. The training plane he was in was experiencing difficulties and he bailed out of it at too low a level. His body was found, with parachute unopened, in a farmer's field. Young George Crawford had family in Sarnia—J.S. Crawford, 148 South Christina Street and W.H. Crawford, 167 Queen Street—and he had visited Sarnia on a number of occasions.

The following is a portion of a report from the Tuesday, November 8, 1921 *Sarnia Observer*;
THANKSGIVING DAY IN SARNIA COLD AND DREARY

Thanksgiving day in Sarnia, although the weather was fine was a chilly affair. There was a cold wind blowing and rain clouds hovered overhead all day. There was a constant threatening of miserable weather that marked Sunday. In the city most of the diversion was confined to the theatres. Crowds attended the Griffin for the performance of the Arlie Marks Stock Company in the afternoon and evening, and there was too the great attraction of Hullo Canada at the Imperial theatre, with the usual holiday crowd at the Crescent for the movies. A large number crossed the ferry to Port Huron where there was no holiday.

The feature of Thanksgiving Day in Sarnia of course, was the ceremony of the morning in which hundreds turned out to witness the unveiling of the monument in Victoria Park and the attendant ceremonies. In the afternoon there was an exodus of football enthusiasts to Petrolia, where Sarnia went down to an unexpected defeat before at least a thousand of their supporters...

In July of 1922, Mayor George Crawford endeavored to secure a suitable soldier's statue to be placed on the top of the memorial stone monument in Victoria Park. He received photographs of several designs modeled in bronze and took the matter to the War Chest Committee to discuss financing the purchase of the figure.

The selected **bronze statue** that stands atop the Sarnia Cenotaph depicts a Canadian "Tommy", a man in the full uniform worn by Canadian soldiers in the First World War. The soldier stands stiffly at attention, with rifle strapped over his left shoulder, eyes fixed indeterminately at some point on the horizon. The bronze soldier statue was sculpted in 1921 by F.G. Tickell and Sons (formerly William A. Rogers Limited) of Toronto. This was the same company that created the bronze plaques that were bolted to the original Sarnia cenotaph the year before.

In the years immediately after the Great War, a number of entrepreneurs rose to the challenge of meeting the flood of demand from communities across the country for monuments to their fallen soldiers. Three of these, all based in Toronto, were the giants in the market. They were the McIntosh Granite Company, the Thomson Monument Company, and William A. Rogers Limited, which later morphed into F.G. Tickell and Sons. Other Rogers-Tickell bronze statues similar to the Canadian "Tommy" that sits atop the Sarnia cenotaph can be found in St. Thomas and in St. Mary's, Ontario, and Wolfville, Nova Scotia.⁸²

Rededication: On November 11, 1922, after a solemn parade left city hall and travelled to Victoria Park, the Sarnia Cenotaph Memorial, with its new bronze symbolic statue, was rededicated/unveiled. The parade included civic and Point Edward officials, the Citizens Band, the Imperial pipe band, the Salvation Army band, a firing party, war veterans in uniform, military units, Collegiate cadets, members of the machine gun brigade, American veterans

from Port Huron, boy scouts, and the Ladies Auxiliary of the Great War Veterans' Association. Captain Rev. A.R.C. Garrett of Forest, who had lost two of his brothers in the war, dedicated the memorial with these words: *"To the glory of God and in loving memory of those from this city who gave their lives for God, for King and for country, I unveil this memorial."* With those words, in a bittersweet moment for Captain Rev. Garrett, he tugged at the rope that held the enveloping flag, unveiling the bronze statue on the soldier's memorial.

On the east side of the granite block was also attached a new bronze tablet bearing the names of forty-two Sarnia men who had died in the Great War, but had been inadvertently omitted from the original tablets. Adding to the solemn and impressive ceremony of remembrance, on the fourth anniversary of the Armistice, were hymns, prayers, the laying of wreaths, a salute by the firing party, a sounding of the "Last Post" and the singing of the National Anthem.

The four bronze tablets from the original 1921 and 1922 Sarnia cenotaph are now located on the outside west wall of the Royal Canadian Legion, Branch 62 on Front Street. The names on the bronze tablets have been transcribed and are included in this Project on page 1159.



Sarnia's World War I Cenotaph (post Nov. 1922)



with the "Big Tom" cannon in foreground

On the evening of November 11, 1922, Memorial Park was handed over to the Village of **Point Edward** and a memorial was unveiled. Nearly three hundred people assembled to witness the ceremony. Chairman James Hambleton of the Service Club handed over the park to Reeve Darbyshire, who accepted on behalf of the council and the village and thanked the soldiers for their gift. In acknowledging the sacrifice made by the boys who had gone overseas leaving their homes and families, Reeve Darbyshire stated, *"Through their effort, we still stand as free men. Mothers, teach your children of their deeds. Make them understand what the Memorial stands for. Let them know the price at which our freedom was bought."*

The memorial had been fashioned in the village and made possible by the united efforts of the veterans, the council, and the people of Point Edward. In the spring of that year, April 1922, then Governor-General of Canada Lord Julian Byng along with his wife Lady Byng, had made a brief visit to Sarnia and Point Edward. It was during that visit that he laid the cornerstone of the Point Edward memorial. More information on Lord Julian Byng's visit to Sarnia and Point Edward is on page 152.

World War II: Just twenty years after the end of the Great War, World War II would begin. Even before the end of World War II, citizens discussed and proposed the creation of some kind of War Memorial for the City of Sarnia to acknowledge the local returning soldiers and to commemorate the local fallen of the Second World War.

George Stirrett, a local World War I hero, made a proposal in the fall of 1944 that gained a lot of attention. Stirrett, who had been awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal and the Military Medal during the Great War, proposed the building of a Civic Centre, combining an arena, a Y.M.C.A. and a cultural centre, which would include the public library and an art museum all in one memorial. The Athletic Park was considered the ideal site for such a

Centre with the idea that the citizens of Sarnia could raise the necessary funds to build such a Centre. Sarnia Mayor W.C. Hipple was not in favour of such a combination-in-one memorial on the basis that such a centre could not be operated by a civic commission. More information on Lieutenant George Stirrett is on page 131.

May 8, 1945 was declared V-E Day (Victory in Europe). During that same month in Sarnia, concerned individuals met often to discuss proposals on a municipal war memorial for the city and eventually suggested possible ways to perpetuate the sacrifices of the sailors, soldiers and airmen of World War II. Mayor W.C. Hipple, chairman of the Foundation Committee for the War Memorial, released three specific proposals that had been presented to the Committee:

- > a general purpose auditorium to be located adjacent to Athletic Park (with facilities for hockey, skating, and other sports, as well as music, meetings and exhibitions).

- > a memorial recreational centre composed of a park, playing field area (football fields and baseball diamonds) and a recreational building (the nucleus would be an ice arena with a capacity for up to 5,000 people). The auxiliary section would contain meeting places and clubrooms for youth and adult groups and could accommodate expansion to include a gymnasium. To obtain the necessary amount of land, the memorial would be located just outside the present city limits, preferably on the east side of East Street in the vicinity of George Street. This proposal was submitted by the local branch of the Chemical Institute of Canada.

- > a War Memorial Library Building which would be located on a landscaped site, such as Victoria Park, and be close to city hall, to businesses and to shops. It would include an enlarged free public library, a small auditorium, an art gallery and local history room, and hobby and study rooms. The building would also include a small and dignified chapel to the memory of the men and women who gave their lives in the war. This proposal was submitted by the Sarnia Public Library committee.

Two months later, the Sarnia Canadian Legion forwarded another proposal to the Foundation Committee: a memorial park which would include a formal garden and cenotaph, with buildings suitable for cultural education, exclusive of a rink, erected on an area between forty and fifty acres.

That was followed shortly after by the Canadian Legion and Canadian Corps Association branches in Sarnia recommending that no plan should be approved until a majority of their members returned from overseas and had a chance to express their opinion. With the views expressed by the veterans' organizations, the Foundation Committee for the War Memorial resigned.

At the conclusion of World War II in mid-August of 1945, plans to erect a suitable memorial in Sarnia to those fallen soldiers continued. The planning was re-kindled in 1946, with the Sarnia Memorial Committee. Committee members included representatives from the Canadian Legion (Sarnia branch 62), the Canadian Corps Association (Sarnia branch 10), and a Next of Kin Committee. This Committee of interested citizens began by compiling a list of local men who had made the supreme sacrifice in World War II. The list of fallen soldiers from World War II that appears on the Sarnia Cenotaph was originally compiled by the Sarnia Memorial Committee, and was first published in the *Sarnia Canadian Observer* under the heading "Names of Dead Servicemen", in the August 26, 1946 issue.

Not long afterwards, plans for the memorial were aborted, apparently for "several reasons".^N One committee member pointed out that veterans of the First World War had been given \$103 by the city on their return from battle (the Soldier's Civic Gratuity Fund), yet the city had given no recognition to World War II veterans.

Five years after the war ended, in April of 1950, Canadian **Prime Minister Louis St. Laurent** visited Sarnia and was surprised that the city had no cenotaph dedicated to Second World War fallen soldiers. In October 1950, Mayor W.C. Nelson, Aldermen Paul Blundy and Iven Walker, and representatives of local veterans' organizations in the city (Canadian Corps Association, Canadian Legion and Sarnia Wing 403 Air Force Association) formed a committee to plan for some type of Sarnia Second World War memorial.

Suggestions for a Sarnia WWII memorial included an annual bursary to further the education of some son or daughter of a Second World War veteran, and a park or playground of some form for children. In November of 1950, the committee approved a plan to erect a memorial in the form of a Lambton County Museum and a small chapel, which would be added to the Sarnia Public Library in Victoria Park. Nothing ever came of this project and the committee ceased to operate.

In October of 1952, led by the Sarnia Sappers' Club Association (the second largest veterans' organization in the city), pressure was put on city council and the veterans' organizations to restart their plans to erect a suitable memorial for Sarnia's Second World War dead. In January of 1953, the Sarnia Canadian Legion and Sarnia Sappers' Association combined their efforts to find ways and means of building a better war memorial.

The **Sarnia Memorial Committee** was credited with working to make the "new" cenotaph a reality. Its members included former Aldermen Alex Rapson, Alderman Harry Turnbull and representatives of the Canadian Legion Branch 62, the Sarnia Garrison, the Sappers' Association, the Royal Canadian Air Force, the Canadian Corps and the Naval Veterans. In November 1954, the Sarnia Memorial Committee, chaired by J.T. Owen, was continuing to seek missing data from the community on those who paid the supreme sacrifice in the Second World War for the new Memorial plaque.

The **"new" renovated Sarnia cenotaph** in Victoria Park, (which is the one that currently sits in what is now called Veteran's Park) was re-dedicated on November 11, 1955, more than ten years after the conclusion of World War II. The renovated grey granite monument had been enlarged by the addition of two new "wings", on which were inscribed the names of Sarnia's fallen soldiers from World War I, World War II along with a plaque with the Korea War fallen. The four prior existing bronze tablets had been removed and are now located on the outside west wall of the Royal Canadian Legion, Branch 62 on Front Street.

The **November 11th, 1955 re-dedication ceremony** was preceded by a parade consisting of civic, military and veteran units marching from city hall to Victoria Park. Places of business in town were closed from 10:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. so employees could attend the ceremony. During a Friday morning drizzling rain, the cenotaph was unveiled by Lieutenant-Colonel J.H. Coleman, M.B.E., Ed, Commanding Officer of the Sarnia Garrison, followed by a dedication ceremony by Rev. G.G. Stone. The first wreath laid upon the cenotaph was by Captain and Mrs. Augustus R. Mendizabal on behalf of all the next of kin. The Mendizabal's had lost their only son, Flying Officer-Pilot Rodolfo Mendizabal, in August of 1943. Information on twenty-five year-old F/O-P Rodolfo Mendizabal is included in the World War II section of this Project on page 873.

Practically every service club, business and professional organization, Legion branch, civic body as well as next-of-kin of fallen laid wreaths at the foot of the monument to the accompaniment of soft music played by the Sarnia Citizens and Sarnia Veterans' bands. The customary firing of the salute was followed by the trumpeter sounding the "Last Post". Then all bowed their heads to observe two minutes of silence in recognition of the men who did not return. Following this were the sounding of "Reveille", the reading of the Memorial Prayer, and the playing of the National Anthem. A benediction closed the solemn but colourful ceremony.

In **1959**, the old Carnegie Library (east portion of park) was demolished and work on a new Sarnia Public library began (on west portion of park). Renovations were made to Victoria Park, including the re-positioning the cenotaph slightly. Other changes included: the Centennial Cairn thermometer was removed; the Boer War Memorial Fountain was moved; the I.O.D.E. Memorial plaque was removed from the library foyer; the ceremonial maple tree planted in 1914 by Prince Arthur was cut down; and the old "Long Tom" cannon was moved to Canatara Park.

In November **2008**, through the efforts of Sarnia City Counselor Jim Foubister, a plaque was added to the cenotaph; "OTHER THEATRES OF CONFLICT – CPL BRENT POLAND – AFGHANISTAN 2007".

In June of **2013**, the Royal Canadian Legion Sarnia Branch 62, with financial assistance from the Federal Government, Veteran's Affairs, completed a restoration project on the Sarnia cenotaph. The federal government contributed \$5,285 toward the project, while the remainder of the total cost of \$9,700 was covered by the membership of the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 62. The restoration project included removing and replacing damaged monument joints, cleaning the monument and remounting plaques.

New names added: After both World Wars, no official government body or military agency was in charge of recording the names of the fallen or in matching them to specific home centers. Across the country, these kinds of lists were generally assembled by volunteer groups, typically by word of mouth rather than through official documents, and often years after the war. As a result, some names were misspelled while other names were missed.

In the spring of 2019, Tom Slater brought his *Sarnia War Remembrance Project* research findings to the Sarnia Historical Society with the goal of providing proper recognition and honour to those local heroes who had been missed. The Sarnia Historical Society, led by Ron RealeSmith, and the Royal Canadian Legion, Branch 62,

began the endeavor of making this project become a reality. Slater submitted a list of possible candidates with brief bios of missed fallen soldiers connected to Sarnia. A Legion committee that included Lynn Mathieson (Legion Br. 62 President), Bill Chafe (veteran), Les Jones (veteran), RonReale Smith and the Dominion Chairman for the Legion at the National level, met to discuss potential names and concluded that 26 names would be added to the Sarnia cenotaph (10 WWI, 10 WWII, 3 Korean Campaign, 2 Afghanistan and 1 In Service of Canada).

In the fall of 2019, the Sarnia Legion Branch 62 and Sarnia Historical Society also completed a refurbishing of the plaques on the cenotaph, along with refinishing the plaques and monument in front of the Sarnia Legion.

Carving the new names into the cenotaph stone was completed in November 2019 with the financial support of the Sarnia Legion Branch 62, the Sarnia Historical Society, the Imperial Sarnia Site and Bluewater Power. On **November 11, 2019**, as part of the Remembrance Day ceremony on a crisp, snowy but picturesque morning, the 26 names were officially unveiled, engraved in stone to be remembered always. The 288 names inscribed on the Sarnia cenotaph have been transcribed and are included in this Project on page 1155.

Note: *The Sarnia War Remembrance Project* records 312 fallen names.



The Sarnia Cenotaph

Glenn Ogilvie Photography

• **THE SARNIA-LAMBTON AFGHANISTAN MONUMENT:** In August 2015, the Sarnia First Hussars Association began the process of procuring a monument to honour those lost in combat during the Afghanistan War.

The Department of National Defence were disposing of 250 Light Armoured Vehicles (LAV III's) that had been used in the Afghanistan conflict, and offered to make decommissioned hulls available to communities across Canada wishing to create memorials to the war in Afghanistan. The LAV's were used extensively in Afghanistan by the Canadian Armed Forces for assault, mobility and protection—they were the “workhorse” of the Canadian Forces’ effort in Kandahar Province. The makers of the LAV III, General Dynamics Land Systems (Canada) in London, Ontario, were happy to assist by releasing the demilitarized hulls to the program before the final scrapping process, and Militech Inc. agreed to finish and paint the hulls to be used as Monuments. The Sarnia First Hussar's were able to obtain LAV III, hull number 77, and the vehicle's 30 mm cannon was replaced with a fixed metal piece, and the engine, electronics and other equipment were removed.

The Sarnia First Hussars Association, an association connected with the Canadian Army Reserve, along with the Royal Canadian Legion, Sarnia Branch 62, and the City of Sarnia, set up the 1st Hussars Association Afghanistan Monument Committee to raise funds for the project, under the direction of Honorary Colonel Barry A. Hogan. Led by the First Hussars Association, funds were received from the Kiwanis of the Seaway, Sarnia Legion Branch 62, the Sarnia Saints Rugby Club, the Royal Canadian Regiment, the Labourer's International Union of North America, Local 1089, and from private citizens for the \$65,000 project. In the summer of 2016, work began to prepare a spot in Veterans Park for the installation of a cement pad and mountings for anchoring the memorial.



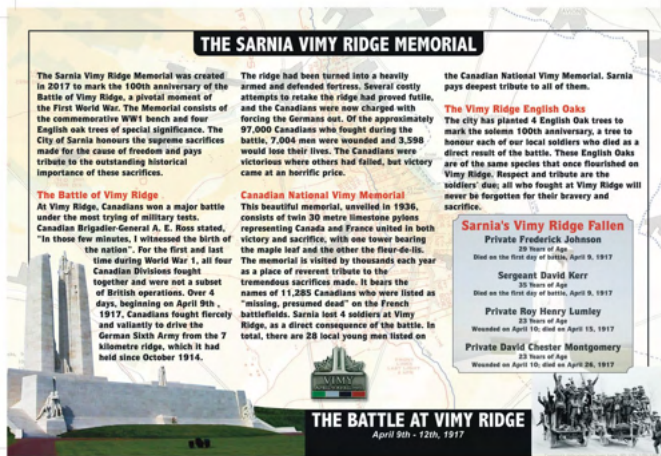
Sarnia-Lambton Afghanistan Monument

On October 30, 2016, a dedication ceremony took place unveiling the Sarnia-Lambton Afghanistan Monument in the southeast corner of Veterans Park in the presence of military personnel, dignitaries and six Silver Cross families – including those of two Sarnia/Lambton Afghanistan fallen. Military personnel included members of the 4th Battalion of the Royal Canadian Regiment, the 1st Hussars, the 31st Brigade and the Royal Highland Fusiliers, including Lt-Col. Mark Poland—the brother of Brent Poland.

Three bronze plaques are part of the memorial: one plaque is dedicated to Private William Cushley and Corporal Brent Poland, both of Sarnia/Lambton who died in action while serving in Afghanistan; a second plaque is dedicated to the 40,000 men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces deployed to Afghanistan, and the 159 who lost their lives, between 2001 and 2014; and the third plaque is dedicated to the 86 members of the First Hussars deployed in Afghanistan. The information on the plaques are included in this Project on page 1158.

In September 2019, the LAV III Committee along with the City of Sarnia Parks and Rec Department installed the Afghanistan Memorial bench that faces the LAV III Monument.

- **THE SARNIA VIMY RIDGE MEMORIAL:** The idea for this project was initiated by City of Sarnia supervisor of forestry/horticulture Chuck Toth, as a way to commemorate the 100th Anniversary of the Battle of Vimy Ridge. With the full support of Sarnia 1st Hussars Association, along with the City of Sarnia, in April 2017, the Vimy Ridge Memorial was unveiled. Located on the west side of the Sarnia cenotaph, it includes a Vimy memorial park bench, a Vimy Ridge storyboard and four English oak trees.



Vimy Ridge Memorial Storyboard



Vimy Ridge Memorial Plaque & Park Bench
(on left is one of the four Vimy English oak trees)

The park bench was created in Scotland—it's design features the silhouettes of four World War I soldiers and several poppies. The storyboard was created by Lou Giancarlo, Tom Slater and Tom St. Amand, and designed by

sign-maker Ken Hall. The storyboard provides information on the Battle of Vimy Ridge, the Canadian National Vimy Memorial in France, the Vimy Ridge English oak trees and the Sarnia sacrifices at this battle. Along the bottom portion of the storyboard are three photographs; the Vimy Memorial in France, the Vimy pin (“April’s poppy”—with the four coloured boxes representing the four Canadian divisions that fought together) and a photo of happy Canadian soldiers returning from action after their victory at Vimy Ridge.

Four English oak trees were planted to commemorate the four soldiers inscribed on the Sarnia cenotaph who lost their lives in the Battle of Vimy Ridge. The English oak trees are the same species that are native to Europe and were present on the Vimy Ridge battlefield in 1917. This species of oak is significant in that they are representative of the Vimy Oaks Project. More information on the Vimy Oaks Project is on page 151.

- **PLANTER STANDS:** Students from St. Patrick’s Catholic High School, under the direction of Technical Department teacher Matt Abbott, constructed and installed self-watering planter stands to Veterans Park in the summer of 2018.

- **THE SARNIA WORLD WAR I and WORLD WAR II STORYBOARDS:** This was another project initiated by City of Sarnia supervisor of forestry/horticulture Chuck Toth, with the goal to complete the project in time to coincide with the 100th Anniversary of the end of the First World War. With the full support of Sarnia 1st Hussars Association, Enbridge, along with the City of Sarnia, the two-part project involved the installation of another memorial park bench and two storyboards to commemorate and honour the sacrifices made by Sarnians in the two World Wars. The project was unveiled in late October 2018. The park bench was created in Scotland, and the storyboards were created by Lou Giancarlo, Tom Slater and Tom St. Amand, and designed by sign-maker Ken Hall.

The World War I storyboard focuses on Sarnia, providing a glimpse of the “trench war”, the major battles that Sarnians were a part of, the role of women overseas and at home, and the sacrifices made locally and across the country.

The World War II storyboard again focuses on Sarnia, providing a glimpse of the branches of service and major campaigns that Sarnians were a part of, the role of women at war, and a look at the Sarnia Home Front, in particular, the growth and contributions of local industry. Alongside this storyboard is a World War II bench that features the silhouettes of World War II marching soldiers and several aircraft.



Creed

*If they should ask you,
Why do you fight?
Tell them, For Freedom. For the right
To live in peace; to worship God;
To build a cottage, turn a sod
That is my own; to trust my friends;
To know that when the work day ends,
A wife and children wait to greet
Me with a smile. I fight to meet
The future unashamed; to read
What books I will; to choose the creed
I wish; face politicians unafraid,
And criticize, if need be, laws they’ve made.
These are the web of life; for these I lend
My strength; these are the rights that I defend.*

By Dick Diespecker (First World War poem)

THOSE WHO SACRIFICED IN WAR - OVERVIEW

Early Beginnings

- **ST. CLAIR BORDERERS:** In the years prior to Canada's Confederation (1867), the defense of the colony of Upper Canada was primarily the responsibility of local voluntary militia, formed to repel any potential threat, either actual (Fenian Raids) or potential (from the United States). One of the earliest records of any military organization in Lambton is from the mid-1800s. Colonel Robert Faethorne had left behind a roll in his Lake Shore residence. Today, the Faethorne House is home to the Bright's Grove Library and Gallery in the Grove. When rebellion broke out in Upper Canada in 1837, Robert Faethorne was commissioned as a Lieutenant-Colonel of the Essex, Kent and Lambton Militia. Found in Faethorne's residence was a service roll of the militia of Sarnia Township of 1855. In that year, Canada had passed a Militia Act in an effort to create military units made up of volunteer, part-time soldiers. It was in response to the threat of the Fenian Brotherhood. In 1855, a Sarnia Township unit, the 27th St. Clair Borderers, was loosely formed and, like most militia units outside the larger cities, they were unarmed and undrilled, seldom if ever assembling for training. The officers were recruited mainly from retired British Army soldiers. Civilians given commissions qualified for rank by undergoing examinations at the Imperial Army station in London, Ontario, where a large garrison was maintained up to the time of Confederation. The 27th St. Clair Borderer members mustered at some convenient centre once a year, signed the service roll and received a King's shilling each to celebrate the event and the end of the year's campaign.^{N, z}

- **THE FENIAN THREAT:** Founded in 1858, the Fenian Brotherhood was by 1861 the largest national organization in the United States with fifty thousand members. Taking its name from the *fianna*—landless warriors of Irish mythology—its stated aim was to overthrow British rule in Ireland and establish an independent Irish republic. Largely composed of Irish-American Civil War veterans (both the Union and Confederate sides), their publicly stated rationale for invading Canada was two-fold: to make the country a staging ground for attacks on British naval ships; and to capture Canada to use as a bargaining chip to push the English-led British forces out of Ireland. Failing this, they believed that a large number of British troops would be deployed to Canada to meet the threat, thus allowing the people of Ireland to rise up against a much smaller British force at home. At the start of the Fenian threat, potential invading points included from Chicago to Goderich, from Detroit, from Buffalo into the Niagara peninsula, from Vermont into Canada East (now Quebec) and from Fort Gratiot and Port Huron to Sarnia. Canadians living near the border were anxious about the rumours of an impending invasion. For months in 1866 in Sarnia, rumours were everywhere about a St. Patrick's Day plot to invade the town.

The colonial government took the threat seriously, and, beginning in January of 1866, began mobilizing troops in the threatened areas. In 1862, Robert Faethorne had been promoted to full Colonel of the local Sarnia Militia. In 1866 and 1867, troops from all over eastern Canada, numbering up to 4,000, were quartered in Sarnia at various times, reinforcements for the 27th Lambton Battalion of Infantry. The threat of a Fenian raid in the area was significant enough that the area inhabitants and leaders not only saw fit to outfit and train on a gunboat (the *Prince Alfred*), but voluntary militia were stationed here to thwart any possible aggression from the United States. With troops such as the York Rifles, Caledonia Rifles, Brantford Rifles and others from Ottawa, Owen Sound and other Ontario communities, Sarnia took on the appearance of a military camp. Troops were brought to Point Edward by train and marched to their quarters in the Alexander House or Hall's Hotel, and even in private homes. No Fenian attack ever occurred in this area though a close watch was kept along the St. Clair River.

Between 1866 and 1871, the Fenians launched a series of small, armed raids in parts of Canadian territory from New Brunswick to Manitoba. On June 2, 1866, the Civil War, battle-hardened Fenians launched their first significant raid, near Niagara (Fort Erie), called the **Battle of Ridgeway**. The Fenians defeated a small, inexperienced Canadian force at Ridgeway, then returned to the United States before Canadian and British reinforcements arrived. Though considered a minor skirmish in the history of warfare, it was significant in that it was the first battle fought exclusively by Canadian soldiers and led entirely by Canadian officers. Nine Canadians (members of The Queen's Own Rifles of Toronto) were killed and 32 wounded in the battle. The "**Ridgeway Nine**" were Canada's first soldiers killed in action and included a store clerk/Sunday schoolteacher, a shoemaker, a beer maltster and several University of Toronto students. Other Fenian attempts to invade Canada—two 1870 assaults in Quebec and one in 1871 at the Manitoba border, were repulsed. After 1871, there were no more Fenian attacks and the movement collapsed in North America. Some historians suggest the Fenian action cemented the necessity of

Confederation in the minds of provinces that had only been lukewarm to the idea. A little more than a year after the Fenian threat began, a united Canada was born in 1867.^{2E}

The “Ridgeway Nine” were: Ensign Malcolm McEachern, Privates William Smith, Mark Defries, Christopher Alderson, William Fairbanks Tempest, John Harriman Mewburn, Malcolm McKenzie, Corporal Francis Lackey and Sergeant Hugh Matheson. While many consider the Ridgeway Nine to be Canada’s first war dead, since the battle took place one year prior to Confederation, their names are not included in the Books of Remembrance in the Memorial Chamber in the Peace Tower in Ottawa. Today, the town of Fort Erie, Ontario honours the Ridgeway Nine with a memorial ceremony each June 2.

- **27th LAMBTON BATTALION:** It was in September of 1866 that the first Lambton Regiment in Sarnia was organized, the 27th Lambton Battalion of Infantry, commanded by Lt.-Col. Davis, a former county judge. It was composed of companies from Sarnia, Petrolia, Forest, Widder, Warwick, Watford and Wallaceburg. A company of Garrison Artillery was also formed at Sarnia (around 1885, it would be absorbed into the 27th Battalion). The Lambton Battalion was well equipped with everything but artillery. Occasionally the Sarnia Battery were taken for a trip on the gunboat *Prince Alfred* for training and gunnery practice. The *Prince Alfred* was armed with two “Armstrong” cannons (manufactured in Newcastle, England) and four brass “howitzer” cannons. The *Prince Alfred* was used for drill training by Sarnia militia volunteers for “landsmen to work the heavy guns.”

- The Lambton Battalion was first armed with muzzle-loading Enfields (aka. Brown Bess). They were later replaced by the breech-loading Snyder-Enfields. Following the Boer War, the Lee-Enfield, a magazine rifle, was adopted. In the early days, the regiment wore uniforms of heavy wool that featured buttons and badges of white metal. The greatcoat was of grey frieze and had a cape while the tunic was scarlet with blue woolen serge. The trousers had red stripes down the side, and in the early 1880s, blue cloth helmets with white metal spikes were issued.

- In March of 1872, the Lambton Regiment would be re-designated as the 27th Lambton Battalion of Infantry, St. Clair Borderers. In May of 1900, it became the 27th Lambton Regiment, St. Clair Borderers. During the Boer War (1899-1902), Sarnia and Lambton County had men volunteer to serve in this war, but was never really called upon to send men away in large numbers. With the outbreak of World War I, that all changed.

Those Who Served

- **A MILITARY OF VOLUNTEERS:** The Canadian military has historically comprised mostly volunteers, so-called “**citizen soldiers**”. In the two World Wars, these individuals came from larger centers like Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver; however, the majority came from small towns that still represented a larger part of Canada’s population. They came from mining towns, fishing villages, forestry towns, farming communities and semi-industrialized towns like Sarnia. It is estimated that more than 1,100 Sarnia men and women answered the call in First World War, and approximately 3,000 Sarnia men and women served in the Second World War. In 1954, military historian George Stanley coined a famous phrase describing Canadians and their relationship to war: “they were an unmilitary people whose history was filled with wars and conflict”.^{N, 8H}

- For young men in their late teens or early twenties, enlistment for overseas service was likely the first momentous decision of their lives. The men and women who went overseas were prepared to, at minimum, accept long, indefinite absences from their homes and families, and to interrupt the course of their own lives for a cause which they, in differing degrees and for varying reasons, saw as right. During the Boer War and two World Wars, sons and couples were often separated for years. Their only means of communication was mail—letters and parcels—that took weeks to cross the ocean by military mail service.

- Canada’s military and those who served from Sarnia comprised people of every class, with a wide variety of educational backgrounds, professions and ages. Sarnia’s youngest fallen soldier was 15; its oldest fallen soldier, 54. Sarnian’s young and old joined the military; they were farmers, teachers, railway employees, Imperial oil workers, students, lawyers, store clerks, doctors, firemen, bankers, cooks, journalists, sailors, mechanics, carpenters, plumbers, electricians, salesmen, butchers, pipefitters, truck drivers, machinists, bakers, grocers, miners, machine operators, barbers, painters, architects, bricklayers and labourers to name a few. The majority of the Canadian soldiers had one thing in common: they were ordinary citizens, not professionally trained soldiers, like the members of some other countries’ military. They were ordinary Canadians who chose to respond in times of extraordinary circumstances.

- Numerous religious affiliations and ethnic origins were also represented in Canada's military: among others, English, French, First Nations, Jewish, Italian, Portuguese, Dutch, Polish, Danish, Irish, Scottish, Ukrainian and Greek. Many soldiers had direct or close ties to Europe, being only first or second generation Canadians. War was a great equalizer, where class distinctions, racial prejudices and religious rivalries that existed in "normal" society, dissipated on the battlefields. All came together, brothers in arms, in their united fight to defeat tyranny.
- During World War I, racist beliefs prevalent in the military, and reflecting those of the larger society, resulted in visible minorities such as Blacks, Ukrainians and Japanese, being excluded from the First Contingent. Despite being willing to serve overseas, many potential recruits were told by unit commanding officers that they were not wanted by the Canadian military. It was not until the summer of 1916, when recruiting sources had largely dried up, that army officials allowed minorities to serve. Some 222 Japanese Canadians served with distinction, and about a quarter of them were killed in battle. Jews who also faced prejudice in Canada, but in the CEF, served shoulder to shoulder with their Gentile comrades.

Amazingly, about 1,500 blacks did manage to enroll in the Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF). After two years of tireless lobbying by black leaders, assisted by supportive white Canadians, the government even authorized a **black battalion** on July 5, 1916—No. 2 Construction Battalion. Although the unit was made up of black enlisted men, the unit's officers were white, with one exception. The battalion chaplain, Reverend Dr. William A. White, was given the rank of honorary Captain, making him the only black officer in the Canadian military during the First World War. Even once accepted, many members of the black community weren't allowed to fight; instead they dug trenches and repaired roads as part of Construction Battalions.^{4F} These units were very much in demand during the First World War—they built and repaired trenches, roads, bridges and railways, and laid barbed wire among other tasks.^{4F, 9U} George Jones of Sarnia, "of the black race", would become a member of the Canadian Army, serving with an artillery unit. He would make the supreme sacrifice in October 1918. Information on nineteen year-old Gunner George Jones is included in the World War I section of this Project on page 309.

- **A SOLDIER'S BOND:** For the men and women who went to war, they fought beside their friends and sometimes their family members, people with whom they had joined, trained, and lived for a length of time within their regiments. They developed a bond and loyalty to one another, an understanding that nobody was going to let the other one down in battle. In the heat of battle, no matter how frightened, tired, cynical, benumbed or despairing their situation, soldiers gritted their teeth and stuck it out because their friends, their comrades, or even strangers in other units were counting on them. Loyalty, the fear of showing fear, the sense of shared risk and responsibility, comradeship, fidelity to friends and family, all contributed to the refusal to let the side down. An acknowledged principle is that men and women in battle fight for those beside them. The warrior's bond is strongest at the smallest level—the section and platoon—where soldiers have known, trained, and lived next to, and where they rely on one another for survival. A World War II Canadian infantryman noted, *"All ranks are held together by the fear of having their peers realize they too are afraid... What is a soldier? He's thinking not so much of himself but of the unit to which he belongs. At some stage, you're with this platoon or section and you're going to keep on because you're part of that section."*^{4I}

Canadian author Pierre Berton, in his book on the World War I battle of Vimy Ridge, described the principle as to why men continue to fight, in the face of all human logic, stumbling forward into the whirlwind of battle, *"They did not do it for patriotism or love of country. They did not do it for mothers, fathers, sweethearts, or wives. They did not do it for the colonel, the lieutenant, the sergeant, or even the corporal. They did it for their closest friends – the half-dozen private soldiers with whom they slept, ate, laughed, worked, and caroused, the men in their own section – grenade throwers or riflemen or Lewis gunners – whom they could not and would not let down because in moments of desperation and terror their virtual existence was woven together as tightly as whipcord."*^{7Z, 8O}

- **FAMILY MEMBERS:** During wartime, in Sarnia and across the country, it was common for multiple members of a family to join the military. For many, the notion of seeing a brother, sister or cousin march off to war without being by their side was unthinkable. Families contributed two members, three members, four members, and in one case, eight boys in one Canadian family joined the Canadian Forces. For example; Harry Manning and four of his sons from Point Edward served in the Great War. Sadly, the casualty rates of war meant that these blood ties ended in tragedy for many families back home when not just one but several relatives were injured or killed.

It was no different locally. The Sarnia Cenotaph includes eleven sets of brothers who lost their lives in war: in World War I – Arthur and James Allan, and Robert and Royal Crawford; and in World War II – George and

William Andrew, Curtis and Francis Goring, Lloyd and William Graham, Donald and James McClure, James and Patrick O'Connor (Korea), Douglas and Ross Pole, Melvin and Robert Ramsay, Clare and Jack Thain and Arthur and Howard Thompson. *The Sarnia War Remembrance Project* includes one additional pair of brothers; Melville and Sylvester Simmons (WWI). Also inscribed on the Sarnia Cenotaph are the names of two fathers and sons who lost their lives in war: Thomas and James Wright (WWI and WWII), and Raymond and Robert Dionne (both WWII).

- **LETTERS HOME:** Throughout his research, Slater uncovered and has included many excerpts from letters sent home by Canadian soldiers, including many Sarnians, who were on the battlefronts, from the Boer War through to Afghanistan. The voices of these men and women provide tremendous insight into the bitter realities of battle, the often appalling conditions of combat zones, the deep emotions the soldiers were experiencing, and a glimpse of their courage and bravery.

All original letters included in this project are in *italics* and have been transcribed verbatim. During the Boer War, and especially during the First World War, when families in Sarnia received a letter from a loved one at the front, it was common for a family member to bring it to the *Canadian (Sarnia) Observer* newspaper office. The *Observer* would publish these letters in the local newspaper. It was a way to keep the community informed about the war, and allay fears about what was happening to “our boys” overseas.

Many of the hand written letters by these ordinary soldiers were to mothers, fathers, wives and children. There was often the typical grumbling about the weather, the food, the lack of sleep; but one element that many had in common –they wrote to assure the loved ones back home that everything was fine, they were safe, and not to worry.

Military censorship prevailed in both world wars, though Canadian officers were free to send their own mail uncensored. Soldiers continued to write frankly about their experiences, and with the sheer volume of correspondence, especially as the war years dragged on, some material painting a less than glorious view of the war got through. Some of the letters received at home were the dreaded ones—the official letters of condolence written by officers and chaplains; or from complete strangers, a comrade of a lost son or father.

Letters sent by loved ones at home to the soldiers overseas were similar in that they raised the spirits of the fighting men and women without dwelling on difficulties or problems at home that would add to their burden. Letters received by soldiers were a vitally important connection to loved ones at home and were essential in keeping up soldier morale. When letters arrived at the battlefronts, they were read and re-read by the soldiers, cherished links to home and family. Correspondence was considered so vital to the morale of the troops that it was retrieved from disaster scenes and sent on, whatever its condition, to keep the communication going.^{2P, 7A}

War and Immigration

- War had a major impact on immigration and played a significant role in the shaping of our country and our city. Prior to World War I, especially between 1906-1913, a huge wave of immigrants, mostly from continental Europe, came to Canada. Many of these pre-World War I immigrants, such as Ukrainian and Polish immigrants, settled in western Canada and developed a thriving agricultural sector. During World War I, under the auspices of national security, the government imposed greater restrictions on immigration and limited the number of immigrants allowed into Canada; in fact, the War Measures Act of 1914 gave the Canadian government the power to arrest, to deport or even to intern “enemy aliens” already living in Canada. The tighter immigration policies continued after the war; the entry of nationalities who had fought against Canada and Britain in the War was prohibited. From 1919, the federal government could prohibit immigrants to Canada based on their race, nationality, occupation and class. It was not until 1923 that Canada began to open its doors again to immigrants. In 1928, in Halifax, Nova Scotia, **Pier 21** officially opened, becoming the site where over 1.5 million new immigrants, including 50,000 war brides, would enter the country to begin their Canadian dream. Pier 21 would close in 1971.

- During World War II, immigration into the country was again limited; however, after World War II, this all changed. In post-World War II, the Canadian economy experienced unprecedented growth, thus creating a huge demand for exporting raw materials, food and manufactured goods to war-ravaged Europe. The days of rationing, forced savings and limited consumption were over, so consumer spending on appliances, homes, automobiles, leisure and travel exploded. Canada was faced with a shortage of workers, especially in core sectors such as agriculture, mining, forestry, rail, construction and industry. So post-war Canada gradually opened its immigration doors, though

selectively in 1947, allowing entry from northern and western Europe initially—for example, Britain, France, Ireland, Norway and Finland—followed by countries such as Italy, Greece, Spain and Portugal from eastern and southern Europe.

One of the main groups to be accepted by the Canadian government were the Dutch who, having lost so much farmland during the later stages of the war, were faced with overcrowding, food shortages and a surplus of farmers. Between 1947 and the end of September 1949, nearly 16,000 members of Dutch farm families entered Canada, with many of these newcomers coming to Ontario. It was so successful that the Immigration Branch continued to encourage farmers from the Netherlands to emigrate to Canada throughout the 1950s.^{3Q}

- There have certainly been some dark chapters in Canada's immigration history, where policy decisions were made based on prejudice, racism, religious intolerance and anti-Semitism ideals that were common in Canadian society at the time. Two examples in times of war are: Canada denying entry of over 370 Sikh, Muslim and Hindu passengers aboard the *SS Komagata Maru* off the coast of Vancouver in May-July 1914; and Canada's rejection of over 900 Jewish refugees aboard the *MS St. Louis* off the coast of Nova Scotia in June 1939. More information on the *MS St. Louis* is included in the World War II section of this Project on page 532.

- **DISPLACED PERSONS:** After World War II, Canada opened its doors to another group known as "Displaced Persons". These were people who after the war found themselves in foreign countries with no way or desire to return to their homeland, or people with nowhere to return to. This group included, for example, Ukrainian, Jewish, German, Slavic and citizens of the Baltic States.^{3D} In fact, Canada decided to admit displaced persons even before the international community had reached an agreement on the permanent resettlement of hundreds of thousands of Europe's homeless. In June 1947, Canada authorized the entry of an initial 5,000 non-sponsored displaced persons, and between July 1947 and October 1948, for the entry of an additional 45,000 of these people. For several years Canada admitted more displaced persons than all the overseas countries combined. Nearly 250,000 displaced persons and other refugees were admitted to Canada between 1947 and 1962.

Of the 165,000 refugees who entered this country between 1947 and 1953, Poles comprised the largest group (23 percent of all those refugees admitted). In descending order of numerical strength were Ukrainians (16 percent), Germans and Austrians (11 percent), Jews (10 percent), Latvians (6 percent), Lithuanians (6 percent), Magyars (Hungarians; 5 percent), Czechs (3 percent), Dutch (3 percent), and Russians (3 percent). All told, these groups comprised 86 percent of the Europeans allowed to enter Canada in this period.^{3Q}

- In July 1946, one of the first "displaced persons" immigrant groups to be accepted to Canada were approximately 4,000 former **Polish soldiers**.^{4U} They had fought alongside the English and Canadian troops, including campaigns in Poland (Warsaw Uprising), Italy, France, Holland and with Poland's vaunted air squadrons in England. After the war, they did not want to return to their homeland that was occupied by the Soviet Red Army. Coming to Canada, each Polish veteran was bound by contract to serve on a farm for one year, after which, they were free to renew the contract or head for Canada's cities in search of better-paying jobs. From 1946 to 1952, approximately 39,000 Polish veterans, displaced people and refugees poured into Canada, with over half of them settling in Ontario.^{3Q}

- **WARSAW UPRISING:** Poland was the first country invaded by Germany in the Second World War, on September 1, 1939. As the war progressed, Allied armies from Britain, Canada and the United States closed in on Nazi-occupied Europe from the west. The Soviet army, advanced from the east. By July 1944, the Soviet army was making its way through Poland, with a plan for a postwar Soviet takeover of Poland. After five years of brutal Nazi occupation, in a desperate bid to liberate the city from the Nazi's while staving off a communist takeover, the Polish resistance launched the Warsaw Uprising on August 1, 1944. In Warsaw, the resistance force, the Polish Home Army, consisted of about 30,000 men and women, with little outside support.

The Uprising was planned to last only two or three days, but when the Russians refused to assist the resistance, the Polish Home Army was left to battle the Nazi's in vicious street-by-street combat, that would last until October 2, 1944. The Uprising was the largest single military effort taken by any European resistance movement during the war. The struggle ended in disaster with the resistance defeated: approximately 20,000 dead insurgents and 200,000 dead civilians (many killed in mass executions by the Germans); the remaining inhabitants sent to internment camps; and the city in ruins after being ravaged by the Germans, and left in the hands of the Soviets. Of note, is that Warsaw was not alone during the Uprising—mainly Polish, South African and British air forces, including

Canadian RCAF aviators, risked their lives, delivering munitions and other supplies to the Resistance fighters. With the Soviets barring Allied planes from landing on Soviet airstrips, support planes had to use distant airfields in Italy, making long-range highly dangerous sorties over enemy territory in broad daylight, in order to make low-level drops at night. A number of Canadian airmen flying Liberator and Halifax aircraft, would lose their lives flying support missions over Warsaw. In Ottawa's Confederation Park, there is a monument dedicated to twenty-six airmen of the RCAF who are buried in Commonwealth War Graves in Poland, seven were killed during the Warsaw Uprising.^{N, 5N}

• **SARNIA'S POLISH CONNECTION:** A number of the post-war Polish immigrants would come to Lambton County and Sarnia, raising their families and helping to build the city, often working on the area farms or in the local factories. In fact, in post-WW II, Sarnia had one of the largest Polish communities in Canada. Some of the first post-war Polish arrivals to Sarnia/Lambton included; Jan Pradyszczuk (fought at the Battle of Monte Cassino), Michal Waldemara, Michal Radzewicz, Aleksander Salaz, Antoni Fiedukowicz, Jozef Lopata and Jozef Polimaka (flew with Poland's 303 Squadron in Battle of Britain, Dieppe and D-Day).

Another Polish immigrant coming to Sarnia in the early 1950's was **Dr. Bernard A. Wiechula** along with his wife Maureen Margaret (nee Rogers). Dr. Wiechula worked for Imperial Oil, and would be a leader of the local Polish community. Years earlier, when the Germans invaded Poland in 1939, Bernard Wiechula and his twin brother Ludwik managed to escape the country passing themselves off as seminary students. Once in Britain, they joined the British Army, becoming agents of the Polish section of Special Operations Executive, SOE (known as "Cichociemni", or "The Unseen and Silent"). They were trained in espionage, silent killing, partisan leadership, and tricks in transmitting radio messages to London.

In September 1943, Lieutenant Bernard Wiechula was parachuted into enemy held Poland where he linked up with the Polish underground. He would remain in Poland for almost two years, leading a platoon of partisans, with few weapons, in skirmishes against heavily armed German troops. The penalty of capture was torture and certain death, and SOE agents were offered a suicide pill in the event of being taken prisoner. Lt. Wiechula, a devout Catholic, refused the pill on principle—he trusted in God, and said he would rely on his wits. At the end of the war, the new peril faced by Wiechula was the Russians, who had been ordered to execute all Polish partisans. In the spring of 1945, now Captain Wiechula had made his way back to Britain. His brother Ludwik made his way safely through the war, their older brother Henrik was executed at Auschwitz for underground activity after being denounced by a Polish neighbor, and their father, who was wanted by the Gestapo, died in hiding during the war.

For his war service, Captain Bernard Wiechula received medals for valour from Poland, Britain and France. In 1945, he enrolled at the University of Leeds, five years later earning a doctorate in chemical engineering. Not long after, he and his wife and children would come to Canada and Sarnia, where he was employed at Imperial Oil as a Consultant Engineer for thirty years. Bernard and Margaret Wiechula would have three children together; Damian, Marek and Gabriela. Dr. Bernard Wiechula passed away in June 2000 in Hamilton with his loving wife at his side.

Members of the local Polish community and Polish Combatants Association Br. No. 11 erected the **Polish Combatants Memorial** in 1999 in Our Lady of Mercy cemetery. Inscribed on it are the words; *In memory of the Polish men and women who died fighting for the freedom of Poland – I World War 1914-1918, Polish-Bolshevik War 1919-1921, II World War 1939-1945 – Oddajemy Hold Polakom Poleglym W Wojnach Za Wolnosc Ojczyzny - Lest We Forget – Bog Honor Ojczyzna.*

In 2014, Krystyna Stalmach, daughter of Jan Pradyszczuk, and a small group of local volunteers created the "Our History, Our Heroes: From Fighting Wars to Farming Fields in Lambton" project—an exhibit honouring the sacrifices and achievements made by Polish veterans who settled in Lambton County. The project documented three distinct aspects of Lambton County veterans' war experiences: the first dealt with Polish veterans of the Italian/Normandy campaigns; the second pertained to veterans who participated in the Warsaw Uprising; and the third was a children's display documenting the story of Wojtek the Bear, a brown bear who had been adopted as a mascot by the 22nd Artillery Supply Company of the Polish II Corps. The displays included medals, letters, uniforms, keepsakes, artifacts, photographs and stories collected from veterans across Sarnia/Lambton.

The Contributions of Indigenous Peoples in Canada

Note: A collective noun for the original inhabitants of Canada has changed over time. Early explorers, believing they had landed in India referred to them as "Indians". The word "Native" was also formerly a common term, and over time, "Aboriginal Peoples" was widely adopted by government and many national groups. More recently,

“Indigenous Peoples in Canada” has become the accepted term, one used by the United Nations. Indigenous Peoples in Canada is an umbrella term used for First Nations, Metis and Inuit people in Canada.

- Indigenous Peoples in Canada have demonstrated great service and sacrifice to the military during times of conflict even before Canada was a nation. They fought beside the British in the Seven Years War (1756-1763) and the American Revolution (1765-1783) and in the War of 1812 (1812-1815). In 1885, they navigated Africa’s Nile River on a British military rescue mission and volunteered for Canada’s first international expeditionary force at the dawn of the 20th century, fighting with the British in the Boer War in South Africa (1899-1902).

In World War I, more than 4,000 members of the Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF) were First Nations volunteers, representing nearly one-third of all Aboriginal-Canadian men eligible to serve (a proportion that was twice the national average). This included Inuit from Labrador; descendants of Metis who had fought with Louis Riel in the 19th-century North-West Rebellion; and three hundred Iroquois from the Six Nations Reserve in Brantford, Ontario. Indigenous Peoples served in units with other Canadians throughout the Canadian Expeditionary Force, and participated in all of the major battles in which Canadian troops fought—at Ypres, the Somme, Vimy Ridge, Passchendaele and the Hundred Days Campaign.

Initially, some were turned away, but as casualties in Europe mounted and the number of volunteers dwindled, Indian agents actively encouraged First Nations men to enlist. There were no all-Indigenous regiments, but several battalions did have many Indigenous members. Two (predominantly) aboriginal battalions formed were the 114th, known as “Brock’s Rangers”, and the 107th “Timber Wolf” Battalion.

Some of the First Nation recruits came from remote areas and travelled hundreds of kilometres, much of it by canoe to enlist, and spoke neither English nor French, and had no connection to white culture. However they did possess traditional skills that served them well in war—hunting, tracking, patience, and navigating without instruments. The over 4,000 First Nations volunteers was an astonishing number given the limited civil rights First Nations were accorded. Corporal Mike Mountain Horse, who had attended an Anglican boarding school in Alberta, enlisted to avenge the death of his brother Albert who had been gassed at Ypres and died at age 22. Mountain Horse, who survived Vimy Ridge and was wounded twice at Cambrai in northern France, later wrote, *“The war proved that the fighting spirit of my tribe was not squelched through reservation life,”* and *“When duty called, we were there... Our people showed all the bravery of our warriors of old.”*^{7A}

During this time, status First Nations did not have full rights of Canadian citizenship. Rather, they were wards of the state. As wards, they did not have the right to vote; they couldn’t own land; and residential schools were taking away their culture.

Their reasons for joining were not unlike others: the call to adventure; the attraction of a steady wage and regular meals; the desire to follow friends and family; an opportunity to show patriotism and to elevate their status within their communities; and the hope that their loyal service would win greater rights for their people. Others were drawn by the warrior ethic, which had been squelched by residential schools, reservation life and restrictive policies. Some saw it as their duty, offering “help toward the Mother Country in its present struggle in Europe,” as Chief F.M. Jacobs of Chippewas of Sarnia Reserve (Aamjiwnaang) wrote in a letter. “The Indian Race as a rule are loyal to England,” said Jacobs. “This loyalty was created by the noblest Queen that ever lived, Queen Victoria,” under whose name treaties were signed.^{2E}

During World War I, First Nation soldiers had become the equals of their white comrades in the trenches and had enjoyed the right to vote in the 1917 federal election overseas. However, when the survivors returned to Canada, they would have to wait until 1960 to vote in another federal election.

More than 300 Indigenous soldiers were killed and thousands wounded in the Great War. Many returned with lungs scarred from poison gas, and with tuberculosis and Spanish influenza, which claimed many victims in First Nations communities across Canada. The First Nations World War I veterans returned to a land where they were still treated as wards of the state. They did not receive the same assistance as other returned soldiers under the War Veterans Allowance Act. The Soldier Settlement Act, meant to help soldiers begin farming, was doubly painful: it was almost impossible for Status Indians to qualify; and the government confiscated tens of thousands of acres from reserves to provide for non-Indigenous soldiers under the plan. These proud First Nation veterans who had served their country fought back against the system. These veterans’ voices were among the most powerful and poignant in the long battle against this injustice, and ensuring Natives received equal rights in Canadian society.^{D, 2E,}

2I, 2N, 3G, 3R, 4G, 9U

- Sarnia-born author and historian **Timothy Winegard** in his book *For King and Kanata: Canadian Indians in the First World War* wrote, “The most significant benefit of Aboriginal peoples’ war service was interaction between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, which was not common in general Canadian society prior to the war.”^{2E}

- First Nations troops left a remarkable record of wartime achievement: several were commissioned as officers; many served as battle-hardened platoon leaders and combat instructors; at least fifty were decorated for bravery on the battlefield; and many acquired near-legendary status as reconnaissance scouts and snipers (two of the most hazardous roles in the military). Two of the more famous First Nations soldiers to serve in WWI were Tom Longboat, an Onondaga from Six Nations Grand River, and Francis Pegahmagabow, an Ojibwa from the Parry Island Band.

Tom Longboat, an Onondaga from the Six Nations of the Grand River, was a legendary long-distance runner who won the 1907 Boston Marathon and competed for Canada at the 1908 Olympics. He became a dispatch carrier with the 107th Pioneer Battalion during the war, delivering messages between units on the front lines. He was wounded twice during the war—once so badly he was officially declared dead—but he survived and returned to Canada.

Francis Pegahmagabow, an Ojibwa from Wasauksing (Parry Island) First Nation in Ontario, was one of the original members of the 1st Canadian Infantry Battalion. He was an outstanding sniper and a superior scout, becoming the most highly decorated Canadian Native soldier to serve in the Great War. He was awarded the Military Medal plus two bars for bravery in Belgium and France. He fought at the battles of Ypres, the Somme and Passchendaele and was lauded for his “disregard for danger and faithfulness to duty.” Records for kills weren’t kept, but some estimates said he had as many as 378, plus another 300 captures. He would serve for the entire war and return to Canada.^{D, 2I, 3G, 3R, 4G}

- During World War II, even though they were still treated as federal wards of the state, it is estimated that more than 4,300 First Nations and Metis from every region in Canada and 72 women enlisted in the armed forces. The actual number of participants is difficult to know for sure for a variety of reasons including, an unknown number of Indigenous people from reserves near the Canada-United States border, like Sarnia, served with American Forces. Several thousand more were rejected because of medical reasons or racial restrictions in the navy and air force (both the RCAF and RCN required volunteers to be “of pure European descent and of the white race,” until 1942 and 1943 respectively).^{D, 2N, 3G, 4H, 4I}

For those who served, not only did these soldiers face racial prejudice and cultural challenges, but also a military hierarchy that worked almost exclusively in English, a language that many of the recruits did not speak. Despite these obstacles, First Nations soldiers left a remarkable record of wartime accomplishment, serving in all branches of the service and in every rank, and fighting in every major battle and campaign. Several were commissioned as officers, and many served as battle-hardened platoon leaders and combat instructors. At least 70 were decorated for their bravery performing daring and heroic acts on the battlefield in the two World Wars. Many acquired near-legendary status as “code-talkers”, reconnaissance scouts and snipers, drawing on pre-war hunting skills and wilderness experience. Those who served with their white comrades usually testified that they were treated with respect, something they had never experienced in Canada. One First Nation veteran remembered after the war, “*In the fighting zone... we were all equals. The only time in my life I was equal to the white society or anybody else.*”

Nonetheless, these Canadians who served their country came home to an indifferent nation. After the war, First Nation soldiers received few of the benefits, services, training or jobs their white counterparts were offered by the government. Many First Nation veterans found that they were no longer considered Indians because the Indian Act specified that Indians absent from the reserve for four years were no longer Indians. Ping-ponged between the Veterans Affairs and Indian Affairs departments, their affairs were handled by Indian agents whose goal was assimilation. Status Indians were told they would have to renounce their status to apply for veterans’ benefits. Some found that Indian agents had removed their names from band lists while they were overseas. During the war, their allowances for dependents were funneled through agents, and there was no way to determine whether the money actually reached the families.

First Nations warriors, who had liberated nations and oppressed people, continued to live in a country where they did not even receive the right to vote in federal elections until 1960 without having to give up any treaty rights in exchange. It was not until 1995, fifty years after the Second World War, that Indigenous Peoples were allowed to lay Remembrance Day wreaths at the National War Memorial to remember and honour their fallen comrades.^{D, 2N, 3G, 4I, 6N}

- One of the most famous First Nations soldiers to serve in WWII was **Tommy Prince**, a descendant of Peguis, from the Brokenhead Band of Ojibwa in Scanterbury, Manitoba. Growing up, he learned to be a superb marksman, hunter and an excellent tracker. He applied to join the Canadian military several times, but was rejected. Aboriginal people faced widespread discrimination and that likely played a role in his rejection. He was finally accepted in the early years of the Second World War. He began with the Royal Canadian Engineers, became a sergeant with the Canadian Parachute Battalion and later became a member of the 1st Canadian Special Service Force. It trained with an American unit, forming a specialized assault team, the First Special Service Force (FSSF), later becoming known to the German soldiers as the *Black Devils*. Tommy Prince's exploits during the war earned him the Military Medal for courage and inspiration and the Silver Star with ribbon for gallantry in action. He was decorated with both awards by King George VI, one of only three Canadians to win both medals in World War II. Prince would also serve two tours of duty with the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry in the Korean War. He would become Canada's most decorated Aboriginal war veteran, having been awarded eleven medals in the Second World War and the Korean War.^{D, 2N, 3G, 3Q}

- One Aboriginal Veterans group estimates that 12,000 Natives, including Inuit and Metis, participated in the First and Second World Wars and the Korean War. It is estimated that approximately 300 lost their lives in World War I and more than 200 lost their lives in World War II.^{D, 2N, 3G, 3Q} Men from Sarnia Aamjiwnaang First Nations, nearby Kettle Point and Stony Point, and Walpole Island served in both World Wars, Korea and as Canadian Peacekeepers. Some would make the supreme sacrifice.²ⁿ

- In mid-June of 1945, one month after VE Day, an Honour Roll was unveiled with appropriate ceremonies on **Walpole Island**. The names of sixty-eight men and women of Walpole Island who served in World War II appeared on the honour roll. The roll was formally unveiled following a special service in St. John's Anglican Church, conducted by Rev. A. Marshall, formerly of Wyoming, with assistance from former Chief Harrison B. Williams. Rev. Marshall, who previously served as a missionary among Cree First Nations in the northwest and James Bay area, said the large number of First Nations, whose names appeared on the honour roll, indicated the loyalty and love they had for their country. Following the church ceremony, a parade, headed by a colour party from the Canadian Legion and First Nations ex-soldiers led the congregation to the Walpole cenotaph. After brief addresses by ex-Mayor Alan P. Brander of Wallaceburg and Chief Charles R. Jacobs of the First Nations council, two First Nations soldiers who had fought in World War II unveiled the honour roll. Included in the list of sixty-eight names on the Honour Roll were four who made the supreme sacrifice: Pte. Edwin Wright, Pte. Willard Shipman, Pte. Roslyn Sands and Pte. Charles Altman.

- **SARNIA'S AAMJIWNAANG FIRST NATIONS:** St. Clair United Church is located on the Sarnia Aamjiwnaang First Nations Reserve. Three honour rolls located within St. Clair United Church pay tribute to local First Nations who served during the two World Wars. One honours those who served in World War I and the other two (one which was completed before the end of the war) honour those who served in World War II.

In early February of 1944, an honour roll in the St. Clair United Church was unveiled. It paid tribute to the Sarnia First Nations men and women who were serving in World War II. Since the roll was completed before the end of the war, the dates for the beginning and end of the war read "1939 to 194_". It was unveiled under two flags for First Nations people were serving in the Canadian and United States militaries. Edwin Maness, the oldest veteran of World War I on the Reserve, unveiled and read the roll. Twenty-five names are inscribed on that honour roll. The names on the three Honour Rolls have been transcribed and are included in this Project on page 1186. Two of the honour rolls are also located inside the Sarnia Aamjiwnaang Band Office on Tashmoo Avenue.

- The **Sarnia Aamjiwnaang First Nations Cenotaph** comprises three vertical stone columns resting on a stone base. The central column is inscribed; TO OUR GLORIOUS VETERANS WHO HAVE SERVED OUR NATION AND ITS ALLIES FOR PEACE AND FREEDOM – LEST WE FORGET. Along the base of the cenotaph is inscribed; PONTIAC'S WAR; WAR OF 1812; KOREA; VIETNAM; PEACEKEEPING. The two side columns honour those who served in both World Wars, along with the fallen Fred Doxtator (WWI) and Harley Williams (WWII). Their stories are included in this Project. The names and information on the Sarnia Aamjiwnaang First Nations cenotaph have been transcribed and are also included in this Project on page 1165.

The Sarnia Home Front

- **NEWS FROM OVERSEAS:** In times of war, many of the loved ones back home in Sarnia – parents and wives, went to bed each night wondering if their sons or husbands were safe in those far-off places where they were fighting for their lives every day. In both World War I and World War II, many of the loved ones in Sarnia received only a short and vague telegram at their homes from Ottawa (Ministry of National Defence – Director of Records) informing them in capital letters that their son or husband was “LISTED AS MISSING IN ACTION”, and that more information would follow later. Often it wasn’t until many weeks or even months later that they received another simple telegram that contained very little information other than, “WE REGRET TO INFORM YOU THAT YOUR SON HAS BEEN OFFICIALLY DECLARED KILLED IN ACTION”. Usually, very few or no other details were included.

Young widows, their lives shattered at the news of the loss of their husbands, and parents were left to wonder where and how their sons had died, and about their last agonizing moments. Parents were left with memories of those special junctures in their sons’ life—the day they were born; special family occasions; going to school; appearing in uniform for the first time; and waving good-bye for the last time as the train left the station, with the knowledge that it was highly unlikely that they would ever be able to see their son’s final resting place.

- A local example is the **Adair family**. Originally from London, Ontario, Mr. and Mrs. Frank and Dorothy Adair would move to Windsor before residing in the early part of 1945 at 302 Confederation Street, Sarnia. Frank Adair was a C.N.R. employee here in the city. In early January of 1945, Frank and Dorothy would receive official notification from National Defence headquarters at Ottawa informing them that their son had been killed in action. The telegram informed them that Private Kenneth Adair, aged 21, had been killed in action in Italy during December of 1944. This was Mr. and Mrs. Frank Adair’s third son killed in World War II. They had previously lost Corporal Robert James Adair—killed in action in Italy in May of 1944; and Sergeant Charles Franklin Adair of the R.C.A.F.—killed by enemy gunfire in September of 1944 as he parachuted from a bombing plane over enemy territory in France. Their fourth son, Private Fred W. Adair who was serving in Italy, was returned to Canada (Windsor) on compassionate leave. Father Frank Adair expressed to the local *Sarnia Observer* reporter, that he hoped that his son Fred would not have to return to the fighting front. Sarnia city council sent a letter to Mr. and Mrs. Adair on Confederation Street at the time, expressing their sympathy in the death overseas of three of their four sons, and also expressing good wishes for their only remaining son.^N

- For many of the men who fell, their time overseas was short. In many cases, they were killed within a year of arriving overseas. Back in Sarnia, many parents, wives and families eventually realized their loved one was likely killed in a violent, untimely manner in a faraway land. Their sons’ bodies were often buried in graves on the other side of the world, or their names were inscribed on some makeshift memorial. Many families never had the chance to visit the final resting places of their sons. They were not given the opportunity to say good-bye to their loved ones or to give them a proper funeral.

- **WHERE SARNIA’S FALLEN REST:** Sarnia’s fallen sons and fathers are buried thousands of miles from their homes in at least 17 different countries throughout the world, including in; South Africa, France, Belgium, England, Netherlands, Germany, Sicily, Italy, Algeria, Sir Lanka, India, Egypt, Iceland, Azores, Malta, Barbados and South Korea. Others have no known graves, their bodies having never been recovered. Their names, however, are inscribed on war memorials throughout the world including; Vimy and Arras in France, Menin Gate in Belgium, Sai Wan in Hong Kong, Runnymede in the United Kingdom, Malta in Floriana, Alamein in Egypt, Singapore in Malaya, Busan Commonwealth in South Korea, and the Halifax and Ottawa Memorials in Canada. Of the 307 identified fallen soldiers covered in this Project, 92 of Sarnia’s fallen soldiers have no known grave (30%). For these soldiers and their families, the fortunes of war denied them a known and honoured grave.

- For many veterans who returned to Sarnia, their lives were never the same. They suffered either physical wounds and/or mental trauma, in some cases that would last the rest of their lives. A number of the veterans died not long after returning home. Though not listed as official “fallen” soldiers, their deaths were without a doubt the result of the effects of war, and their families felt the same loss.

- After both World Wars, upon returning home, many veterans simply wished to forget their experiences. Others saw no point in reliving the horrors that they had witnessed, or telling of their experiences to those who could not relate.

Others learned that the civilian population had no understanding of, or little interest in, the hardships that they had endured. In Sarnia and across the country, almost everyone knew a family member, friend or neighbour who had fought in the war. The prevalent feeling in society was one of not wanting to dwell on the past and the pains suffered due to war. The feeling was one of we've won the war, so now it's time to move on to new jobs and opportunities. For returning veterans, suppressing memories of the traumatic realities that they had experienced, and suffering in silence, was their way of coping. Thus, the fallen soldiers, as well as many of the veterans, literally took their stories to the grave.

Women's Contributions

- **ON THE HOME FRONT:** During both World Wars, Sarnia families like all Canadian families had to make sacrifices in doing what was necessary to help win the war. With their sons and husbands overseas, women did their fair share and much more on the home front: they raised the children; worked in schools, banks and factories; and kept the fabric of society together. Many Sarnia women worked tirelessly in the home, combining that with war-related volunteer work with women's organizations. The Canadian government carefully managed the flow of information to the press and families, and they imposed strict wage and price controls. During World War I, families were urged to cut back on beef, bacon and wheat flour and to focus instead on fish, potatoes, oatmeal and cornmeal. Families were encouraged to adopt "Meatless Fridays" and newspapers published daily War Menus which set out meal plans and recipes that were heavy on vegetables and whole grains.

In both wars, Sarnia residents experienced shortages of many kinds of foods and commodities including meat, sugar, coffee, tea, potatoes, fruit, gasoline, rubber, textiles and even beer. These items were either rationed or available in limited quantity. Families dealt with rationing and food shortages in numerous ways, such as growing "**Victory Gardens**" in their yards, inventing new recipes with fewer ingredients and eating fish instead of beef or pork at least once a week. Like Canadians across the country, Sarnians donated blood and participated in salvage campaigns; made "ditty bags" for the soldiers overseas; knitted socks, sweaters and scarves for the soldiers; and collected everything from scrap metal, used shaving cream cans, toothpaste tubes, rags, newsprint and tinfoil to excess fat from cooking.

With so many men at war, older children and adolescents were encouraged to spend their summers on farms as "**Soldiers of the Soil**". The young boys would receive food, board, and spending money, and—in the case of high school students—an exemption from classes and final exams. The "Ontario Farm Service Corps" was an initiative aimed at girls and women. Known as "**Farmerettes**", the young women were recruited to help with the agricultural labour shortage. In addition to planting and harvesting crops, or in caring for livestock, women worked in the local industries. During the Second World War, more than 300,000 Canadian women held jobs related to war production.

Millions of Canadians, including thousands of Sarnia citizens, also contributed to the war effort by volunteering for various organizations. Volunteers invested countless hours and dollars in the Sarnia Red Cross, YMCA, Salvation Army, Canadian Legion, Knights of Columbus, YWCA, Sarnia Kinsmen Club, the I.O.D.E. (Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire), Rotary Club, Kiwanis Club, and a number of church groups. Local children raised money at their schools by, for instance, making and selling crafts and running lemonade stands to aid the effort. Sarnians contributed and invested in War Savings Certificates and Victory Bonds. Campaigns were carried on in schools, factories, businesses, churches and community associations encouraging citizens to voluntarily purchase the bonds and certificates in order to help finance and support the war effort. And all throughout the two World Wars, Sarnians on the home front read almost daily the official casualty reports listed in the *Sarnia Canadian Observer* and worried about the fate of their friends and loved ones overseas.^{N, SE}

- Two examples reflect the unceasing effort by local citizens. In September of 1941, Mrs. Alex Forbes, seventy-six, of 127 Crawford Street, had in two years knitted 189 pairs of men's socks for the soldiers, and numerous other pairs of socks, sweaters and mittens for refugees. Mrs. Forbes donated all of her knitted articles to the Salvation Army. In December of 1941, Mrs. L.W. Sandercock, seventy-seven, of Lakeshore Road, knitting an average of eight hours a day for six days a week, completed her 103rd pair of wool army socks in a little more than a year. Mrs. Sandercock donated all her knitted socks to the Red Cross.

- **NURSING SISTERS:** Canadian women, including many from Sarnia, have played many important roles in the country's military efforts over the years—one of the most vital is serving as nurses. Nurses had served in the Canadian Army Military Corps since the 1885 Northwest Rebellion. In the Boer War, twelve Canadian nurses volunteered and

served in South Africa, helping the sick and wounded, and saving lives by assisting in medical operations. They were called “Nursing Sisters” because they were originally drawn from the ranks of religious orders, and their uniforms, pale blue dresses and white veils, made them look like nuns. It marked the first time Canadian women served with the military overseas.^{D, 2I, 2N, 4P}

- **Cecily Jane “Georgina” Fane Pope** was born in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island in 1862, the daughter of William Pope, a “Father of Confederation”. In an era when most women stayed at home, made a good marriage and had babies, she chose to be a nurse, when nursing was not a respectable profession. Georgina graduated from the Bellevue Hospital Training School in New York, a school established by Florence Nightingale, a nursing legend who had revolutionized army medical care. In 1899, nursing sister Georgina Pope returned to Canada and volunteered for service with British Medical Corps in the Boer War. She was chosen to head the first small group of four nurses accompanying the troops, arriving in South Africa in November 1899. Four more nurses followed.

The Canadian military valued these women so greatly that they were the first military in the world to grant officer status to a nursing branch. During their time in South Africa, Canadian women acting as nurses had the military rank, salary and benefits of lieutenant. The nurses originally worked at a 600-bed hospital north of Cape Town caring for the sick and wounded soldiers for five months. Later, Georgina Pope and the nursing sisters proceeded closer to the front at Kroonstadt, where they took charge of a military “hospital”, which was not more than a tent that moved along with the army. There, despite the long hours, threat of attack, crowded wards, shortages of food and medical supplies, extreme temperatures, bug infestations and being on constant lookout for snakes and scorpions, they cared for the wounded along with more than 200 soldiers suffering from enteric fever.

Georgina Pope returned to Canada in January 1901, the same year that the **Canadian Army Nursing Service** was made official. Georgina was one of its seven members. In March 1902, Georgina Pope returned to South Africa for a second tour of duty, the senior sister in charge of a group of eight Canadian nurses in Natal. When the war ended, she returned home again, and in 1903, Georgina Pope was awarded the Royal Red Cross Medal by Queen Victoria, for meritorious and distinguished service in the field, the first Canadian to receive this esteemed honour.

In 1906, Georgina Pope became a member of the new permanent **Canadian Army Medical Corps (CAMC)** and worked at the Garrison military hospital in Halifax, Nova Scotia. In 1908, she became the first Nursing Matron-in-Chief of the Canadian Army Nursing Corps, where she designed and administered training programs for military nurses. A visible mark of Georgina’s presence was her decision to change the nursing sisters’ uniforms from khaki colour to navy blue, and she also added an insignia in the shape of a maple leaf with a crown placed over the word Canada.^{F, 2I, 2N, 3T, 5E}

At the time of the Great War, Georgina Pope’s devotion to nursing had taken a toll on her health, yet at age fifty-five, she decided she was well enough to go overseas, arriving in September 1917. There she would serve briefly in England, before moving to No. 2 Canadian Stationary Hospital near Outreau, about twenty miles from the British lines in the Ypres salient. In her own words, *“Nothing...nothing in my experience of the Boer War prepared me for the sights of Flanders, for being bombarded and for the new and ‘improved’ weapons.... The Germans used a terrible green gas, a mixture of chlorine and bromine... The bullets were now larger and ripped their way through all tissues, shattering bone on the way. At times I felt helpless. Legs, feet, hands missing; bleeding stumps controlled by rough field tourniquets; large portions of the abdominal walls shot away; faces horribly mutilated; bones shattered to pieces; holes that you could put your clenched fist into, filled with dirt, mud, bits of equipment and clothing, until it all became a hideous nightmare – as if we were living in the seventh level of the inferno.”*^{5E}

Working day and night with little food or sleep, amongst the chaos caring for critically injured young men, often with German shells flying at the hospital and planes flying overhead, the stress continued to take a toll on her health. She was sent back to Canada in August 1918, suffering from health problems, including shell shock, and would retire to her home in Prince Edward Island. Known as “the Island’s Florence Nightingale”, in June 1938, Georgina Fane Pope passed away and was given a full military funeral in Charlottetown. Remembered for her strong leadership skills and selfless devotion to her patients, she played an essential role in the development of military nursing in Canada. She is one of fourteen figures from Canada’s military history commemorated at the Valiants Memorial, unveiled in Ottawa in November 2006.^{F, 2I, 2N, 3T, 5E}

- **ELIZABETH “ELSIE” MACGILL:** Some women were trailblazers in their fields, contributing to the war effort. One such woman was Elizabeth MacGill, who became the first woman aeronautical engineer and professional

aircraft designer in the world. Born in March 1905 in Vancouver, British Columbia, she would be the first female graduate of electrical engineering at the University of Toronto. After graduating in 1927, she worked as a mechanical engineer with Austin Automobile Company in Pontiac, Michigan. When the company started producing airplanes, she decided to learn more and, in 1929, from the University of Michigan, she would become the first woman to earn her Master's degree in aeronautical engineering.

After graduation, she was diagnosed with a form of polio and told that she would never walk again. This did not deter her. During her recovery, she would write articles on aviation, draft aircraft designs and study at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), and would eventually walk again with the aid of two metal canes. In 1934, she would return to Canada to work for an aircraft company in Quebec as an assistant aeronautical engineer. Prior to the war, as the world's first practicing woman aeronautical engineer, she would work on designing several aircraft and would take part in dangerous test flights.

In 1938, she became chief aeronautical engineer at Canadian Car and Foundry Company (Can Car) in Fort William, (now Thunder Bay, Ontario), where she headed the Canadian production of **Hawker Hurricane** fighter planes during the Second World War. Each Hurricane required 60,000 perfectly manufactured parts, and Elsie MacGill pioneered a unique modular construction system inspired by Meccano sets. MacGill oversaw the training and production work of a skilled workforce she created of which half of the 4,500 workers were women. By 1943, Can Car had produced 1,451 Hawker Hurricanes.

The first 40 Hawker Hurricanes off the production line were deployed during the Battle of Britain where they made an instrumental impact. By battle's end, 1,715 Hurricanes had seen combat—accounting for 1,593 of RAF and RCAF's total 2,739 kills. Although the Hurricane was unable to match the German (Messerschmitt) Bf-109's maneuverability and speed, the Hurricane had a tighter turning arc. This gave the Hurricane an edge in dogfights.

Elsie MacGill also designed a winterized version with skis and de-icing equipment (the first successful winterization of a high-speed aircraft). Numerous articles were written about MacGill and, in 1942, the *American True Comics* series ran a story about her in which they dubbed her the "Queen of the Hurricanes." Her contribution to the war effort made her a Canadian war hero.^{F, 2N, 2E, 6H}

- **IN THE MILITARY:** During World War I, Canadian women were not permitted to serve in military roles, however it did not stop thousands of Canadian women from volunteering their services, eager to serve in any capacity, and financing their own passage to England. Many of the women had brothers or fathers serving in the Canadian Expeditionary Force. Countless Canadian women frustrated by the limited openings in our Canadian services went overseas to serve in British volunteer organizations such as the Royal Army Medical Corps, First Aid Nursing Yeomanry (FANY), Voluntary Aid Detachment (VAD), and Women's Ambulance and Transport Service (WATS).

Of note: **Women drivers** were frowned upon until the Great War, but as members of FANY, they became the very first women to drive motor vehicles for the British Army, proving their mettle as drivers, replacing men who were needed at the front. These civilian volunteers drove supply trucks, set up field soup kitchens, operated mobile hot baths and canteens, all close to the front lines. This soon developed into an ambulance-driving role. Trained in first aid, the driver's duties included chauffeuring wounded from battlefield casualty clearing stations to field hospitals and trains, and meeting hospital trains and barges to take the wounded to hospitals. Frequently the driving was done at night, on muddy roads full of shell holes, under the threat of enemy shellfire, with the wounded moaning, crying or screaming in the open-cabin ambulances. The ambulances could break down with unreliable engines, little suspension, and tires prone to puncture, spare parts and gasoline were often sparse, and they often reeked of vomit, blood and gangrene. The women drivers of the Great War earned the approval and respect of the soldiers, becoming known as "angels behind the wheel".³⁰

Driver **Evelyn Gordon-Brown** of Ottawa was the first Canadian woman to win the Military Medal. In May 1918, she and four other FANY members courageously rushed their ambulances into a burning ammunition dump, successfully rescuing all the wounded men there.

- In recognition of the critical work of the doctors, nurses, and orderlies, "Royal" was added to the title of the CAMC in 1919. During World War I, approximately 3,100 Canadian women volunteered their services in the **Royal Canadian Army Medical Corps** (RCAMC). Of those, some 2,500 served overseas as Nursing Sisters in military hospitals and casualty clearing stations, attending to the many wounded soldiers on all fronts. Most of the WWI

Canadian Army Medical Corps nurses came from middle-class families, their average age was 24 and their marital status was mostly single, with many being trained nurses before the war. Canadian nurses were the first in the world to be given officer status, equivalent to the rank of lieutenant, which was higher than the status of their British counterparts.

These nursing sisters were often situated close to the front lines of Europe and within range of enemy attack. Nicknamed “**bluebirds**” by soldiers because of their blue dresses and white veils, they were exposed to the same horrors as soldiers—hospital ship attacks, air raids, shell fire, primitive working conditions, dreadfully long hours, gas attacks, exposure to disease, rats and fleas and climatic extremes.

As patients arrived by truck or rail, the nurses were among the first to meet wounded soldiers, cleaning wounds and offering comfort. They assisted in surgery and often had primary responsibility for cleaning post-surgical wounds, watching for secondary infections, and caring for wounds daily, bandaging and re-bandaging injuries. They worked tirelessly with selfless dedication caring for the wounded; a comforting face from home, and in many cases, they were the last faces young men saw before they died.

They were greatly respected because of their compassion, bravery and courage. They earned 328 decorations, among them the Military Medal for gallantry and devotion to duty under fire, and the Royal Red Cross. They earned the affection of thousands of Canadian soldiers who often referred to them as “Sisters of Mercy” or “**Angels of Mercy.**” Approximately 50 of these brave women died during the Great War from enemy action, or from disease. A sculpture in their memory was erected in the Centre Block of the Parliament buildings in Ottawa in 1926.^{D, 2I, 2N, 4P, 4X}

- The following are portions of three letters printed in the *Sarnia Observer*, each one written by a wounded Sarnia boy during World War I:

- I got mine at the Somme. Am now back in a field hospital just back of the line. This place is wonderfully complete. One could not have better care in the most perfectly equipped hospital in Canada. The nurses are simply magnificent, always bright, and cheery and tender and watchful. I simply lie here and watch them move from cot to cot and ask myself how can they do it, day by day, week in week out, deprived as they must be of money, conveniences and comforts they were accustomed to back home. Don't worry, I'll be all right.

- Yes, I got a pretty dirty hit, it sure was a close one, but you see I am all O.K. now....It was worth while just to get back to Blighty and to be in this beautiful ward in this splendid Canadian hospital....Our day nurse is just coming in. She is a Toronto girl, a real girl, you bet. What would we fellows do if these Red Cross Sisters had not crossed the pond to take care of us. They have saved tens of thousands of lives and have made Blighty a place to be longed for by tens of thousands of men... I am going to be all right, thanks to the doctors and nurses of this Red Cross hospital.

- I am in a hospital in London lying between clean white sheets and feeling for the first time in months clean all over. Up and down the ward with swift precision, the nurses move softly. Two faces loom out in memory. One is the surgeon's. I think of him as a Christ in khaki. The other face is of a girl. She has an ivory white complexion and spends all her days tending to any soldier with loving service. Her eyes are weary, only her lips hold a touch of colour. They have a childish trick of trembling when anyone's wound is hurting too much. I wonder what she did before she went to war, for she's went to war as much as any one of us.

- During World War II, Canadian women continued to serve the crucial role of “Angels of Mercy” as they did in World War I, saving lives by assisting with medical operations and caring for convalescing soldiers. Approximately 4,500 women served as nursing sisters in all three branches of Canada's military, with more than two-thirds of them serving overseas. These nursing sisters wore a military uniform with a traditional white veil. They were commissioned officers and were respectfully addressed as “Sister” or “Ma'am.” The nursing sisters got closest to the front lines in casualty clearing stations, field dressing stations and field surgical units. They served in Hong Kong, Western Europe, Africa, Sicily and Italy. As in the First World War, Nursing Sisters faced many dangers and obstacles in trying to provide medical care in the battle zone. For example, during an air raid on Catania, Sicily, on September 2, 1943, an anti-aircraft shell fell on No. 5 Canadian General Hospital and twelve Nursing Sisters were wounded.

As soon as the Normandy beachhead was cleared in the summer of 1944, the nursing sisters were sent over. Red Cross officer Jean Ellis wrote, “...Approaching shore, we could see a mass of people on the beach. They waved and shouted and surrounded us the minute we landed... Soon we were loaded into open trucks and set off, driving through village after village amid lines of cheering lads. As we passed troops in fields along the way, we sang ‘The

Maple Leaf Forever' and 'O Canada' to let them know that 60 Canadian girls had come to share their job. Many times our convoy was forced to stop and soldiers would dash over to shake hands.... We saw many tears. Before long a lot of us were feeling them trickle down our faces. We knew that we reminded the boys of their womenfolk at home...and they reminded us of boys we would never see again." As the front moved across northern France and into Belgium, in pursuit of the fleeing German armies, the medical units and nursing sisters moved with them. Seventeen Canadian nurses who lost their lives during the Second World War are honoured in the Book of Remembrance in Ottawa.^{D, 4I, 6F, 7A}

- Before the nurses had arrived, the doctors and surgeons were so hard pressed that recovering patients were not always monitored with vigilance, and some men succumbed to their wounds because of shortages in medical personnel. Those losses were slowed with the arrival of the dedicated nurses. Changing bandages and watching for complications, they also administered morphine when it was available. For the injured who were stabilized, the nurses offered a smile, a kind word, or a cigarette. Such generosity profoundly affected the wounded, afraid and far from home. Many of the nurses took on the task of writing to families, informing them of a man's injuries and, sometimes, his last words. It was heart-rendering work, and it couldn't have been more important. A Canadian veteran of the Italian Campaign who was in the hospital for malaria and later wounded in battle, felt the nurses were, *"a secret morale builder... Not enough can be said about these angels of mercy. Many a soldier survived the war due to their care and devotion, above and beyond the call of duty."*^{D, 4I, 6F}

- During World War II, Canadian women would also serve in other military roles, with some 50,000 eventually enlisted in the air force, army and navy. About half of the women who signed up were married, supplementing family incomes as their husbands went into the military services, or earning a steady wage for the first time themselves. Young women from Sarnia served in all three of the following:

- **Royal Canadian Air Force – Women's Division (RCAF-WD):** A Privy Council order authorized the creation of the Canadian Women's Auxiliary Air Force on July 2, 1941. It was renamed the Royal Canadian Air Force Women's Division on February 3, 1942 and grew to approximately 17,000 members by war's end. Initially trained for clerical, administrative and support roles, but as the war continued, women would also work in other positions like parachute riggers, laboratory assistants, intelligence officers, wireless operators and in the electrical and mechanical trades. Many members were sent to Great Britain to serve with Canadian squadrons and headquarters there. During the Second World War, even with a pilot's licence, women in the Royal Canadian Air Force-Women's Division were not permitted to fly. A few Canadian women did join the Air Transport Auxiliary (ATA) in England, where they flew brand-new bombers and transport aircraft fresh off factory lines, ferrying them to military sites in England and Europe.

- **Canadian Women's Army Corps (CWAC):** It was officially established on July 30, 1941, and recruiting started in September. The Service was officially integrated with the Army on March 1, 1942 and grew to approximately 21,000 members by war's end. The CWACs had a collar badge showing Athena, the helmeted goddess of war, and a cap badge with three maple leaves. Initially, members' duties were traditional and they worked as cooks, cleaners, tailors and medical assistants. These duties would expand to include driving trucks and ambulances, ciphering and decoding, and working as mechanics and radar operators. While most CWACs served in Canada, three companies of female soldiers, approximately three thousand members were posted overseas in 1943.

- **Women's Royal Canadian Naval Services (WRCNS):** They were also known as "Wrens" after the nickname of their British Royal Navy counterparts. It was established on July 31, 1942 and grew to approximately 7,000 by war's end. Initially they performed clerical and administrative tasks, and would expand on these roles to do things like being motor transport drivers, on-shore radar operators and coding technicians.^{D, 2I, 2N, 7P}

- During the Korean War, more than 5,000 Canadian women were recruited for military service, including sixty Nursing Sisters who served in Korea and Japan. The Canadian nurses were again faced with providing medical services in a combat zone. They also faced the daunting challenge of fighting battle-inflicted injuries, and infectious disease. When the ceasefire came into effect in 1953, the Sisters worked with the newly-released prisoners of war, helping to restore their physical health.^D

- Since the onset of the Cold War followed by the Korean War, Canadian Peacekeeping missions and in the Afghanistan War, Canadian women, including women from Sarnia, have volunteered to serve in all capacities of the military and been deployed on missions around the world and sacrificed in the cause of peace and freedom.

The Contributions of the Canadian Red Cross and Other Organizations

- The Canadian Red Cross Society was one of the leading wartime humanitarian organizations. Founded in 1896, when Canadian soldiers went overseas to fight in the Boer War in 1899, it began its work to help the sick and wounded in that war. They collected donations of money and goods, providing a wide range of medical supplies and invalid foods. From the outset of World War I, the number of Canadian Red Cross branches and auxiliaries (church groups, clubs, etc.) exploded. Women were especially active in their support; knitting socks, scarves, sweaters, and other items; producing medical supplies by the millions; packing food parcels for prisoners of war; producing jam and other canned foods for invalid soldiers overseas; donating countless hours of voluntary labour and large sums of money for relief work. They also set up bases in Britain and France to work with sick, wounded and captured soldiers; they worked in tracking missing soldiers; they carried out correspondence with family members of the soldiers back at home; and they served as cooks, transport drivers, ambulance drivers, and nurses' aides.

The vital humanitarian role of the Canadian Red Cross Society in World War II continued, and even expanded to include aid to civilian victims of the war (particularly bombed out British civilians during the Battle of Britain). The Red Cross also developed a trained, uniformed Corps of women volunteers that served overseas and escorted war brides across the Atlantic; and for the first time, they developed a blood program, where civilian blood was collected for use in the new life-saving procedure of blood transfusion. For prisoners of war, the Red Cross packages that included treats and sweets, cigarettes and canned foods, were vital for their survival. If prisoners had been forced to subsist on the German food alone, many more would have starved to death.^{2Y, 41}

- **Lois MacDonald** was one of the young women in the Canadian Red Cross serving in Europe during World War II. She left her comfortable middle-class life in Ottawa to go overseas with the Corps; *"I felt as I did not have any brothers, I had an obligation to take part."* She worked as a hospital aide in England, France, and Belgium. Following is a portion of a letter she wrote home from Bruges, Belgium in March 1945;
Dearest family;

Here it is my 25th birthday, and also my day off... and will try to give you an inside glimpse of our work at the hospital. To do our job properly and perfectly – one would need to be a Master of Psychology, a glamour girl, a Comedian, a Dorothy Dix [an advice columnist], a Florence Nightingale, a Santa Claus, a fount of Wisdom and Information, with the patience of Job, all rolled into one. This must sound like a pretty tall order... but we do try, and one certainly learns by experience.

To learn how to handle people, to get the most of them – to do as much as possible for the boys – without letting them impose. To let them treat you as a sister or girlfriend... to know when and where to offer sympathy – strangely enough – very few really want it. Understanding goes a lot farther. They like to be babied and spoiled and get extra favours – and are very easily pleased. If you remember that they like Winchesters rather than Sweet Caps, or remember their names, or ask about their favourite son or daughter, or even if you only make a special trip back to the Ward, with a chocolate bar or gum, when they are coming out of an operation.

... Most of the lads are young and strong, and while it breaks your heart to see them maimed, disfigured or handicapped – it's fatal to let them know – because they accept our reaction to their loss of limb or disfigurement – as the reaction of their loved ones when they get home. If we can look at them, straight, and regard their loss as unimportant, and even joke about it – instead of looking at them, with eyes averted from an empty sleeve – they lose their self consciousness and soon laugh about it too. Perhaps it's laughter from a sense of relief – as the thought of going home and being stared at and pitied, really scares them...

They tell us the strangest and most hair-raising tales of their lives and loves. Some true enough, but very often embellished with extra details... We offer advice to the lovelorn, sympathize and laugh, too, when their gal at home turns off and marries a Zombie [a conscript]. Tell them to keep writing, even if they are not receiving mail, we are absolutely sure the folks at home are writing faithfully. Sometimes we write them letters ourselves and toss it in the Ward mail so that they will at least get something when the mail is being distributed...

Just knowing these lads – watching them day by day – seeing how much they think of each other – how kind they are and ready to help – yet their complete independence, their courage, their pride in their own Regiment, their ability to get the very most out of life, and their constant thought and goal – Canada and home. It really restores your faith in human nature. We really do little for them, in return for what they have given us...

Much love, my dears. Lois^{7A}

- During World War II for the **Sarnia Red Cross Society** on Queen Street, the tracing of wounded or missing men,

and the tracing of refugees was one of the biggest tasks taken on by the organization. For parents that received the terse cable, "REGRET TO INFORM YOU THAT YOUR SON IS REPORTED MISSING IN ACTION," the Red Cross would be the first place to turn to. If the missing soldier was found to be a prisoner-of-war, the Red Cross became his "angel of mercy". For local European-born families whose relatives had been unreported since the Nazi armies swept through much of Europe, the Red Cross would again be the organization to turn to. With its world-wide information network, based out of the International Red Cross committee in Geneva, Switzerland, the Sarnia Red Cross could probe for details and gradually construct the fragments into a full story, joyful or sad, for the parents and families.

- The following are several examples of the willingness of Sarnians to support the victory efforts through the Red Cross:

- In October 1915, the British Red Cross Society asked Ontario cities to contribute funds to their organization. In a one-day whirlwind blitz conducted by over two hundred collectors throughout the city, over \$10,000 was contributed by Sarnia citizens. The Red Cross collectors reported, "The willingness and readiness of the people of Sarnia to contribute was the outstanding feature of the day. Everybody was ready, everybody enthusiastic and everybody wished it was twice or ten times as much."

- In mid-November 1939, the Sarnia Red Cross Society began an initial campaign to raise funds for war work, setting an objective of \$18,000. Canvassers volunteered their time spreading throughout the city going house to house in search of subscriptions. By the end of November 1939, Sarnia citizens had contributed over \$22,000 to the Red Cross War Fund. The more than one thousand employees at Imperial Oil Limited alone contributed just over \$8,000.

- In June 1940, the National Red Cross made an urgent appeal for assistance in France for the wounded and for the five million refugees. Within three days, the Sarnia branch of the Red Cross was able to collect donations and dispatch a huge supply of dressings, gauze, bandages, compresses, pajamas, surgical gowns, bed pads, surgical towels, knitted clothes, hospital gowns, socks, scarves, sweaters, helmets and blankets. At the same time, the Sarnia Red Cross was collecting waste materials across the city that would be sold for money for the war effort. Households were contributing papers, magazines, scrap iron, aluminum pans, automobile tires and tubes.

- The Sarnia Red Cross Society established a blood donors' clinic in 1942, beginning with twenty clinics in Sarnia that year. In 1943, that increased to seventy-one clinics; fifty in Sarnia, seven in Petrolia, five in Wyoming, four in Oil Springs, three in Brigden and two in Sombra. During the two years that the clinic operated, a total of over 7,300 contributions of blood were given. The donated blood was sent overseas for the servicemen.

- In September 1940, a letter was received at Canadian National Red Cross headquarters and then sent on to the Sarnia branch. The letter from Mr. B.E. Astbury, who was chairman of London's organized relief forces, was directed to the patriotic women workers who had given so much time in making garments and supplies for those in bomb-stricken areas of London, England. The following is a portion of that letter;

I cannot think of even interrupted rest without asking the Canadian Red Cross to send to the people of Canada an expression of our heartfelt gratitude for the goods which they sent through their Red Cross to hundreds rendered homeless by barbarous and wicked attacks on civilians. Before the raids began you had already supplied several thousand blankets, which we had distributed to our offices in district centres, a blessing so great that the people of Canada can never realize its importance when we were able to supply those families rendered homeless in the first raids. With conditions steadily growing worse, government shelters, stocked only with bully beef and bread, could not supply blankets, clothing or food to the hundreds besieging relief centres. I turned to the Canadian Red Cross in this country.

I want the people of Canada to know that within two hours of our appeal, you had started delivering lorry loads of food, clothing and blankets, and these were unloaded during the most terrific air raids. For two days we worked like dock laborers and the Canadian soldiers who delivered your goods worked alongside us, refusing to take cover or cease work as German planes zoomed overhead. I wish the women of Canada could have seen the incidents which alone would convey to all Canadians the greatness of your gifts and the necessity for them. A father whose home had been destroyed, and who left his wife and children, to seek warm covering for them, stooped and kissed the bundle of four blankets given him. One of the children, at another centre, clad only in night attire, clutched her bundle of warm garments and wiped her tears as she cried; "Look mummy, they're new."

- In December 1941, Mrs. Charles C. Clarke of 121 Forsythe Street, Sarnia, received a letter from Major Gordon McIntyre, acknowledging a Christmas gift of chocolates sent to him by the Ladies Field Auxiliary, Sarnia. Major McIntyre was the first commanding officer of a field company of Royal Canadian Engineers formed in Sarnia and mobilized at the start of the war. The following is a portion of that letter:

It thrilled me to think that you ladies still keep me in mind. Although I have commanded two units since and am now at headquarters, I may say without exaggeration that the boys I had from Sarnia were the best bunch of lads that ever came across the Atlantic. I was talking to Col. (A.G.) MacLean who commanded them after I left. He thinks they are the best field company in the Canadian Army overseas. I have heard a lot of good things said about them which always makes me stick out my chest and say that I was one of them once. They are a unit to be proud of and already making a name for themselves. The world will hear more of them. They may be considered 'crack' troops and the cream of the Canadian Army. I am very proud to have been associated with them.

- In August of 1944, according to J.O. Laird, organizer of the national salvage campaign with the Department of National War Services, Sarnia had a record of the highest collection of salvage per capita of any place in Canada. This was a significant compliment to the people of Sarnia who saved their salvage and to the Red Cross-I.O.D.E. Conservation Committee that collected it.
- During World War II, two other relief organizations that Sarnians supported were the Canadian Russia Fund and the Queen's Canadian Fund for Air Raid Victims. During a ten-day Russia Fund drive in February of 1945, more than 1,000 pounds of clothing was received by the local headquarters of the Canadian Aid to Russia Fund located in the basement of the Western Fur Company at 135 North Front Street. Cash donations and thousands of articles, including a variety of children's, men's and women's garments, were collected from local citizens, students and businesses and shipped to Russia.

Sarnians also donated to the Queen's Canadian Fund that gave aid to British bomb victims. One of the numerous reports of a victim aided by the Queen's Fund was that of a 73-year old man who lived with his wife in England. After their home had been struck by a V-bomb, they went away while first aid repairs were made to their house. When they returned to it, they were overwhelmed to receive aid from Canada. In April of 1945, the Sarnia and Lambton County portion of the Queen's Canadian Fund donated by local citizens was approximately \$13,000.

Animals in War

- Animals have demonstrated an enduring partnership with humans during times of war, serving with unwavering loyalty and dedication. They often shared the same horrific conditions endured by their human counterparts. Dogs, cats, and other pets softened the hearts of soldiers living in the maelstrom of violence. Horses, mules, dogs and pigeons have served as a means of transportation and protection, as beasts of burden, for medical support, for detecting explosives, as messengers, scouts, and sentries, while others provided companionship, comfort and morale as pets and mascots, and as therapy animals for soldiers suffering PTSD.
- In the Great War, horses and pigeons especially were worked very hard in dangerous conditions, which often caused their death from exhaustion or enemy action. Horses were utilized for the cavalry and were essential for the transportation of equipment, soldiers and the wounded. Many horsemen developed a special bond with their animals, believing that they had special sensitivities that humans lacked. One Private stated, *"I believe my saddle horse knew more than I did and it is one of the reasons why I lasted as long as I did. He took care of me."* More than eight million horses died during World War I. More information on Canadian cavalry and Canadian horses in on page 96.

Pigeons were a reliable method of communication from the front lines to the rear, especially during the Great War when telephone lines were frequently cut by artillery fire. As an attack was underway, soldiers at the head of the advance released pigeons to inform headquarters of their progress. Artillery support and reinforcements could then be provided as necessary. Pigeons were valued for their impeccable homing instinct as well as their speed, which made it very difficult for enemy marksmen to shoot.^{6E}

- On June 6, 1944, the first news of the D-Day invasion was brought back to Britain by an RAF homing pigeon named "**Gustav**". Just over half an hour after the invasion began, a Reuters war correspondent released Gustav. Flying through thirty-mile-per-hour headwinds, dense cloud, and sporadic enemy fire, the pigeon completed the journey across the English Channel to his home loft in just five hours, sixteen minutes. A British sergeant removed the message strapped to Gustav's leg and relayed it to London: *"We are just 20 miles or so off the beaches. First*

assault troops landed 0750. Steaming steadily in formation. Lightnings, Typhoons, Fortresses crossing since 0545. No enemy aircraft seen.” Gustav was awarded the **Dickin Medal**, the animal equivalent of the Victoria Cross.^{4S}

- During World War I, dogs and cats walked freely among the men in the trenches. Many were abandoned animals that the soldiers soon adopted. The pets provided companionship, comfort and a link with ordinary pre-war life. Cats and dogs were also valued for their rat-snatching abilities. Yet the front was dangerous for animals and humans alike. Many pets were lost in the poison gas wastelands. One Canadian soldier wrote to his wife in February 1917, “*My poor kitten who has not been well for some days died this morning after a fit. I am really quite upset. We had become such great friends. I and he always used to sleep in my sleeping bag. He was much more like a dog than a cat.*” Soldiers who had seen hundreds of men killed and wounded, were hurt in a different way at the loss of a beloved pet.^{6E}

- The most famous Canadian mascot was a black bear cub named *Winnipeg*. “**Winnie**”, was an orphaned bear cub that had been purchased for \$20 during a stop on a train platform in White River, Ontario by Canadian soldier Lieutenant Harry Colebourn, a veterinary officer with a cavalry regiment. Colebourn named the gentle cub after his hometown Winnipeg, soon shortened to Winnie. The bear cub soon proved to be a favourite among the soldiers, a hit at training camps in Valcartier, Quebec, and then overseas in England. Winnie became the 2nd Canadian Infantry Brigade’s mascot and their beloved pet in Salisbury Plains, England. The cub was gentle and friendly to all and, to the delight of soldiers, did a number of tricks, including climbing the centre pole of the soldiers’ tents.

When Colebourn was deployed to France in 1914, he decided to place Winnie in the London Zoo, rather than subject him to the rigours of the front (between 1914 and 1917, at least a dozen black bears were presented or deposited at the London Zoo by Canadian regiments). Winnie became a popular attraction there and delighted thousands of visitors, including that of author Alan Alexander Milne and his son, Christopher Robin. Winnie was so tame and trustworthy that children, including Christopher Robin, would play with her, ride on her back and allow them to feed her by hand. A.A. Milne was inspired and went on to publish *Winnie-the Pooh* in 1926. On Winnie’s death in 1934, several London newspapers wrote obituaries.^{3X, 6E}

- “**Gander**”: An example of a mascot that became a hero was the Royal Rifles of Canada Regiment mascot Gander, during World War II. Gander was a massive Newfoundland dog acquired by the Royal Rifles battalion while they were stationed at the Gander airport. In the fall of 1941, the Winnipeg Grenadiers, along with the Royal Rifles Regiment, including “Sergeant” Gander, were sent to Hong Kong to defend it from enemy invasion. Not only was Gander a beloved mascot, but he had a job to perform—he would bark and snap at the legs of the enemy and scare them away. He was also a smart dog; he knew what a grenade was and how it could hurt people.

On one December night in 1941, Gander saw a grenade tossed by an attacking Japanese soldier near a group of wounded Canadian soldiers. He ran to it, took it, and rushed away with it. The grenade exploded and Gander was killed. But he had saved the lives of the seven soldiers. In 2000, Gander was posthumously awarded the Dickin Medal, often referred to as the “Animals’ Victoria Cross”, for his conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty. On the Hong Kong Veterans Memorial Wall, unveiled in Ottawa in 2009, Gander’s comrades made sure his name was etched in stone alongside the 1,978 Canadians who fought defending against the Japanese forces that invaded Hong Kong. In November of 2012, the “**Animals in War Memorial**” was unveiled in Confederation Park, Ottawa.^{D, E, 2E, 2I, 3Y}

- **Goats** have often been a popular mascot. During World War I, the 5th Battalion’s mascot, “Sergeant Billy”, was featured in a popular Canadian soldiers newspaper, “*Sergeant Billy enlisted at Broadview, Saskatchewan, on August 5, 1914. He has never left his unit, although he has been wounded, suffered trench feet, and has been shell-shocked.*” Like his comrades, Billy was known to like beer. The 21st Battalion had “Nan”, a white goat that was well known for nuzzling with the men and swiping food. On the march to the Somme in the summer of 1916, a new officer found the goat a burden and sold her to a French farmer. The battalion was outraged and staged a rescue. In a nighttime stealth operation, Nan was saved and went on to serve with her battalion all the way to Germany.

In December of 1939, the 26th Lambton Battery, Royal Canadian Artillery was moved to Guelph for the winter. Their mascot, a goat named “Cordite”, disappeared mysteriously the night before the Sarnia battery moved to Guelph. Feeling a deep loss in the lack of a mascot, some of the Sarnia boys who had been home on leave for a weekend, turned up with a new mascot for the unit, a Shetland pony. The pony was an immediate success with the men. He was about five months old; a little larger than a dog; his long coat giving him a striking appearance; and he

had an unusual characteristic—the pony liked to ride in automobiles. One member of the battery said that he curled up on the back seat of a car like a dog, and resented it keenly when he was required to move out.^{N, 6E}

Dulce Et Decorum Est

*Bent double, like old beggars under sacks,
Knock-kneed, coughing like hags, we cursed through sludge,
Till on the haunting flares we turned our backs
And towards our distant rest began to trudge.
Men marched asleep. Many had lost their boots
But limped on, blood-shod. All went lame; all blind;
Drunk with fatigue; deaf even to the hoots
Of tired, outstripped Five-Nines that dropped behind.*

*Gas! Gas! Quick, boys! – An ecstasy of fumbling,
Fitting the clumsy helmets just in time;
But someone still was yelling out and stumbling,
And flound'ring like a man in fire or lime . . .
Dim, through the misty panes and thick green light,
As under a green sea, I saw him drowning.*

*In all my dreams, before my helpless sight,
He plunges at me, guttering, choking, drowning.*

*If in some smothering dreams you too could pace
Behind the wagon that we flung him in,
And watch the white eyes writhing in his face,
His hanging face, like a devil's sick of sin;
If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood
Come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs,
Obscene as cancer, bitter as the cud
Of vile, incurable sores on innocent tongues,
My friend, you would not tell with such high zest
To children ardent for some desperate glory,
The old Lie; Dulce et Decorum est
Pro patria mori.*

*By Wilfred Owen
1918*

*NOTE: The title “Dulce et decorum est” comes from the poet Horace, and is roughly translated to,
“It is sweet and proper to die for one’s country.”*



THE BOER WAR (1899-1902)

Following is a description of important historical events, people and key battles of the Second Boer War (South African War, 1899-1902). Sarnia-Lambton's sons participated in every major battle fought by Canadians.

- The First Boer War had been fought from December 16, 1880 to March 23, 1881. The Second Boer War (South African War) was fought between October 11, 1899 and May 31, 1902.
- The word “**Boer**”, comes from the Dutch word for farmer. The first European settlers in South Africa were Dutch immigrants from the Netherlands in 1652. They first settled near the Cape of Good Hope to establish a station where ships traveling to the Dutch Indies could rest and resupply. French Protestants, German settlers, and other Europeans joined the Dutch in South Africa. Despite their diverse nationalities, the “Afrikaners” (means “Africans” in Dutch), also known as Boers, slowly developed their own language and culture. For 150 years, the Dutch were the predominant foreign influence in South Africa. However, in 1795, Britain gained control of the country, and many British government officials and citizens settled there, and conflict ensued.

By 1806, the British Empire had seized control of the Dutch Cape of Good Hope territory on the southern tip of Africa. By 1836, many of the Boers, descendants of the region's first Dutch immigrants—unwilling to submit to British rule—had left the Cape Colony, trekked north into the interior African tribal territory, and established two independent republics: the **Orange Free State** and the **Transvaal Republic**.

- **THE CAUSE OF THE BOER WAR:** The discovery of diamonds (in 1867) and gold (in 1886 in Transvaal) brought about rising tensions which led to war between the British Empire and the two independent Boer republics in 1880 and again in 1899. The First Boer War was fought from December 16, 1880 until March 23, 1881 between the British and the Boers of Transvaal. The war resulted in Britain's accession to the establishment of the Second Republic, or Transvaal Republic.

In 1899, the British Empire, at the height of its power, had two South African colonies (the Cape and Natal), but also wanted control of the neighbouring Boer States, especially Transvaal and its rich gold fields. The Boers, deeply religious and adhering to a strict Calvinism that was intolerant of other faiths, were fearful of losing their last territory to the “Uitlanders” (outsiders). Britain's pretext for war was the denial of political rights by the Boers to the growing population of foreigners—mostly immigrants from Britain and its colonies—who worked the Transvaal gold mines. During this time, Canada's Parliament passed a resolution in support of the Uitlanders, but Prime Minister Wilfred Laurier made sure it did not suggest that Canada was offering military support.

During political negotiations in 1899, the British increased pressure on the Boers when they moved troops into the border region. Unlike the world wars of 1914 and 1939, Mother Britain was not in danger—this was a war about gold and land.

On October 11, 1899, the Boers launched a pre-emptive military strike against the British troops mustering on the border of Natal and the Second Boer War began. The Boers laid siege to the towns of Ladysmith, Kimberley and Mafeking. The British, with stronger forces, spent the first part of the war liberating the areas occupied by the Boers but could not engage them in the type of set-piece battle that they were used to fighting. Instead, the Boers remained elusive, harassing the British with ambushes and exhausting them with long retreats into Boer-familiar territory.^{D, 2I, 2N, 4A, 6P, 11C}

- **YOUNG CANADA:** The Canada of 1899 was a young nation, only thirty-two years old, made up of seven provinces with a mere population of seven million people widely scattered across the country. When the Boer's declared war on Britain on October 11, 1899, the British Empire called on its overseas colonies including Australia, New Zealand, India and the Dominion of Canada to join the battle for Mother Britain.
- **CANADIANS DIVIDED:** Participation in a war in South Africa by Canadian soldiers was a very divisive issue in this country. Pro-Empire Canadians urged the government to help. English Canada had an intense loyalty to the British crown at the time, only having celebrated Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in lavish fashion across the country in 1897. [In 1891, Sarnia's Market Square had been renamed Victoria Park in honour of Queen Victoria]. Most French Canadians and many recent immigrants were opposed to sending troops overseas to support growing British imperialism. Canadian Prime Minister Wilfred Laurier wanted nothing to do with the imperial war, fearing it could fracture the delicate union between English and French Canada. With intense pressure coming from the British

Colonial Office, many powerful militia officers and press and public calls for action, Laurier was forced to act. He authorized \$600,000 to raise, equip and transport a contingent of soldiers who volunteered (1,000 infantrymen) to South Africa. In turn, the British would pay the Canadian soldiers' wages, maintenance costs and arrange for their return home upon completion of their service.^{D, 2I, 2N, 4A, 6P}

- **NEWS IN SARNIA:** Sarnia citizens learned the details of recruitment in the mid-October, 1899 *Sarnia Observer* (a weekly paper then), with the headline reading, "The Orders Issued – Mobilization of the Canadian Force Proceeding – 1,000 Volunteers to be Taken." Some of the local details provided in the *Observer* that day included;
 - the Canadian contingent would mobilize at Quebec and sail from there.
 - the volunteers would be organized into eight companies of Infantry for active service in South Africa.
 - one thousand volunteers would be accepted.
 - rations, clothing and equipment would be provided free.
 - enrollment centers were in Victoria, Vancouver, Winnipeg, London, Toronto, Ottawa, Kingston, Montreal, Quebec, St. John, N.B., Charlottetown and Halifax.
 - volunteers had to have minimum height of 5 feet 4 inches, age between 18 and 45 years, and be able to pass certain physical requirements.
- **RECRUITING:** Across Canada, response for volunteers was overwhelming. Many white collar professionals, as well as working class men, attempted to join the special battalion. Some militia officers even resigned their commissions, volunteering to enlist and serve as privates in the conflict. There were so many volunteers that a selection process based on health, marksmanship and prior military service was instituted, and still large numbers of applicants were turned away. The men of the first, and later the second contingent, signed on for a year's service (or until the termination of the war, whichever came first).^{6P}

The recruiting of soldiers from southwestern Ontario was conducted by the Royal Canadian Regiment of Infantry out of Wolseley Barracks in London, Ontario. The companies of this Regiment were designated the 2nd (Special Service) Battalion, Royal Canadian Regiment of Infantry. Most of the Sarnia-Lambton County volunteers enlisted within a few weeks of the outbreak of the Boer War.

- The following is a story from the *Sarnia Observer* from late October 1899;

SARNIA CITIZEN'S APPRECIATION

Shown for the Boys of No. 7 Company

Who Have Enlisted to Accompany the Canadian Contingent to South Africa

When the news that several Sarnia boys had enlisted to go to South Africa became known about town this morning, a general feeling of pride at their pluck and heroism and regret at their departure from town took possession of the average citizen. Many were the complimentary remarks passed and hopeful wishes expressed that "the boys" would have a pleasant voyage to the far off country to which they have volunteered to go, and a safe return to their home and relatives in Sarnia. Shortly after the information became known that several local boys had enlisted, a number of Sarnia citizens formed themselves into a committee and drafted the following letter which speaks for itself:

Sarnia, Oct. 23rd, 1899

Capt. Gorman, Wolseley Barracks, London

Dear Capt. Gorman,

Your fellow townsmen who admire the spirit and pluck which have impelled you, Kenneth Johnston and Dan McMillan of No. 7 Company, to volunteer for active service in the Transvaal, wish to show by a slight token, their regard for you and their appreciation of your courage. Will you accept the enclosed cheque and apply the money for the purchase of something for each of your trio, which will remind you of home and the friends here who will watch your course with pride. Wishing you health, safety and a happy return.

It was first intended to purchase some memento for the brave Sarnia boys, but owing to the time being so short it was decided to send the subscription direct to them at Wolseley Barracks at London, with the request to use it as best they see fit. To make the offering a public one subscription lists have been opened at the office of the Traders' Bank and the office of the Huron and Lambton Loan Company, where subscriptions can be handed in by all citizens who desire to do so, and thereby show their appreciation of the courage displayed by the boys from the Tunnel Town. All subscriptions received up to 10 o'clock tomorrow morning will be wired direct to Wolseley Barracks, London, and all subscriptions received after that hour will be sent direct to South Africa. Is it necessary for us to state that the gifts from Sarnians should be liberal? We think not.

• **SARNIA'S FIRST VOLUNTEERS:** The first Sarnia volunteers to enlist, Kenneth Johnston, Dan McMillan and Fred Gorman, would first travel to London, Ontario in late October 1899 to be sworn in. A headline from the *Sarnia Observer* in late October 1899 read, "*TO FIGHT FOR THE QUEEN*". The three Sarnian applicants were sworn in as members of the Canadian Contingent at Wolseley Barracks in London. A total of sixty-five men had been accepted and sworn in at the Wolseley Barracks, with the hopes the number would reach the necessary one hundred and twenty men.

In Sarnia, a special committee of City Council met with a number of militia officers to plan the nature of the send-off to be given the volunteers on their departure for South Africa and also what should be presented to each one to mark the city's appreciation. The committee decided that Sarnia Mayor Wilson would proclaim a public half holiday, and all organizations would be invited to join in a parade beginning at the barracks. The idea of the committee was to have the parade to Victoria Park where a few farewell words would be delivered by prominent citizens. From the park, the men would march to the G.T.R. depot and board a special train of tourist cars. The train would be decorated with flags, bunting and banners.

On the day the three Sarnia volunteers were sworn in, four of Sarnia's prominent citizens had come to London to bid them farewell: Lieut. Col. Ellis, of the 27th Battalion; Dr. Thomas Johnston, M.P. of Sarnia (father of Kenneth); Mr. Henry Gorman, of the *Observer* (father of Fred); and Mr. Mackenzie. The volunteers; Ken Johnston, Dan McMillan and Fred Gorman were reported in the *Observer* as, "*fine looking young fellows and full of military ardor.*" Each of the soldiers was presented with a twenty dollar gold piece on behalf of friends in Sarnia. Sir Wilfred Laurier, on his way to Sarnia, was staying in London the same evening, dining at the Tecumseh House. After dinner at the Tecumseh, the Sarnia delegation and three soldier volunteers were presented to and had the opportunity to speak with Sir Wilfred Laurier and Honourable Mr. Fielding, "*who chatted pleasantly with them for a while.*"

It was also reported that many years prior, Fred Gorman's Irish grandfather, had fought in the British army. When the grandfather enlisted, the family name was O'Gorman, but the "O" was somehow lost when he enlisted, "*perhaps he did not speak distinctly, or the officer who took the name was careless; anyway the O fell out, and it was never restored.*" The grandfather would settle in London, Ontario, and his son Harry Gorman would follow in his footsteps, serving with the Hundredth Regiment in the Crimean War. Returning to Canada, Harry Gorman would become the proprietor of the *Sarnia Observer*. Harry's son Fred Gorman, grandson of the first O'Gorman, going away to South Africa, was now a third generation soldier.

• **OFF TO WAR:** As with the soldiers of later wars, the Boer War volunteers left Sarnia amid speeches, a parade and general fanfare. However, uniquely, these soldiers left Lambton County with money in their pockets—"testimonials" collected from the grateful citizens. Further financial security was provided from two sources: the Patriotic Fund, for soldiers and their dependants as established nationwide with Sarnia as a contributing chapter; and employers' guarantee of employment upon the soldiers return home.

The *Sarnia Observer* headline read, "*OFF TO THE FRONT – The South African Canadian Contingent Leave London*". On October 26, 1899, the citizens of Western Ontario, including Sarnia, bid farewell to the members of B Company, Canadian Contingent as they left the city of London, Ontario. The streets were decorated with flags, bunting and streamers of red, white and blue; were dense with people; and traffic was at a standstill. Before leaving Wolseley Barracks, the officers in command, including Sergeant Fred Gorman of Sarnia, were presented with wristwatches by Alderman Graham, acting for the citizens committee. To the rank and file, including Sarnians Kenneth Johnston and Dan McMillan, Alderman Graham presented hunting knives and pipes. The men then marched from Wolseley Barracks to Victoria Park and then to the train station. During the entire march, Dr. T.G. Johnston, M.P. of Sarnia, accompanied by his youngest son Jeff, marched in the procession with his son Kenneth Johnston, and the other Sarnia boys, Sergeant Fred Gorman and Dan McMillan, and never left them until the last moment.

The enthusiasm of the crowd was described as having no bounds, and did much to enliven the boys and cheer them up; nevertheless, there were tears as well as cheers when the time for saying good bye to fathers and brothers and friends arrived. Dr. Johnston, M.P., his son Jeff, Dr. Hays and Alex K. Wanless, of Sarnia, and Fred L. Evans of London, were with the three Sarnia boys until the train pulled out of the depot. While these men were on the train having a last talk with the boys, Archdeacon Davis of London, came into the train car and desired to be presented to the three boys from Sarnia. The reverend shook hands with all three heartily and bid them goodbye and Godspeed and wished them a safe return. At twenty minutes to three o'clock, the train pulled out amid deafening cheers, the band played "Auld Lang Syne," and the boys were off.

- **FIRST CANADIAN CONTINGENT:** A thousand men were quickly recruited from across Canada to form the First Canadian Contingent—designated the 2nd Special Service Battalion, Royal Canadian Regiment (RCR) of Infantry. The First Contingent sailed from Québec City on October 30, 1899, and included those local Sarnia men who had volunteered. Although they would fight within the British army, it was the first time Canada would send soldiers overseas wearing Canadian uniforms into battle. It was Canada's first foreign war.

Canadian units were kept together in South Africa rather than being broken up to reinforce British units, marking the beginning of a national tradition for Canadian forces, who considered this unity of effort an essential foundation for their morale, loyalty and fighting skill. All of the Canadian soldiers wore a maple leaf cap-badge, which became a rallying symbol for the Dominion troops.^{2N, 6P}

- **CANADIANS ARRIVE IN SOUTH AFRICA:** The first Canadian volunteers, known as the “**Valiant 1000**,” sailed for South Africa aboard the *SS Sardinian*, a converted cattle ship, in late October 1899. Departing Quebec City, a cheering crowd of 50,000 supporters lined the dock, along with a military band, assembled to see the troops off, while the cannons of the Citadel provided a thirty-gun salute for the men. From across the country, Canadians had provided the soldiers with gifts of tobacco, whiskey, books, games, and bibles in both English and French, for the long sea voyage. Built to accommodate seven hundred, the crowded vessel was even more congested with all the troops equipment, horses, and a month's worth of provisions, making for a long and uncomfortable voyage. The Canadians' Commanding Officer Lt-Col. William Otter, had hoped to use some of the 30-day sea voyage for some rudimentary training, but the cramped quarters, bad weather and an outbreak of dysentery scotched the idea.

When they docked at Cape Town on November 29, most believed they would be home, and victorious, by Christmas. Boarding trains the next day, they began a forty-hour rail journey into the highland veldts, arriving in Belmont, where they joined the rearguard of the British Army. The contingent remained camped at Belmont for the next two months, battling boredom, restlessness and disease.

At the time of their arrival, the main British forces had either surrendered in fighting, or were besieged by the Boers in garrison towns. In mid-December, the British would suffer three stunning battlefield defeats in what became known as “Black Week.” The Canadians soon realized they were about to embroiled in a bitter war. The Boer armies, made up of citizen militia soldiers, were highly mobile, adept at guerilla warfare, familiar with the land, equipped with modern weapons, were skilled horsemen and marksmen, and were determined to defend their homeland.^{2N, 4A, 6P}

- **“BLACK WEEK”:** The British suffered serious setbacks in the opening battles of the war. Between December 10-15, 1899, the British suffered three humiliating defeats in what became known as “Black Week”. The Boers were well equipped with German Mauser rifles (which had a range of 1,800 metres and fired smokeless powder that hid the shooter's position), and enjoyed an initial superiority in artillery over the British forces. On December 10, the Boers routed a British force of 3,000 at **Stormberg**. Two days later, at the Battle of **Magersfontein**, the Boer army repulsed 15,000 British troops. Finally, at **Colenso**, a small Boer army of 8,000 inflicted a severe defeat on the main British contingent, a force comprised of 20,000 troops. As a result of these losses, the British government made urgent requests for additional troops, including cavalry and artillery units, from the dominions, including Canada. In response, more Canadian troops would follow including horse-mounted troops, artillery batteries and even a field hospital.⁵¹

- **HARSH CONDITIONS:** Canadian soldiers in South Africa would soon learn of the harsh conditions they would have to endure in the battlefields. Weather included scorching heat in the day, bone-chilling cold at night, harsh rainstorms, and blinding sand storms. A Canadian wrote the following in a letter home, “*Last week we had our first experience of an African sand storm. The sand came down like hail stones, cutting one's face and hands till it brought the blood. Our tent blew down and our horses got frightened and stampeded.*” They would also have to endure long marches, harsh terrain, lack of drinkable water, poor food, flies and insects, disease, and the constant risk of snipers and ambush.

- **THE BATTLE OF PAARDEBERG**, February 18-27, 1900: The 1,039-strong Canadian contingent would join the British army at the front line for the first time in early February 1900 at Graspan, South Africa. The Battle of Paardeberg was the first major Canadian action of the South African War. After two months at Belmont camp, the Canadians were assigned to join the British forces in their march to Bloemfontein. Over five days, the Canadians trekked 120 kilometres in the burning heat across the African plains. Carrying a rifle, bayonet, and forty pounds of kit, each man wore stiff, chafing uniforms, ill-fitting shoes, and survived on meals of salted pork and biscuits. After a

brutal week of marching, the troops reached Paardeberg (Horse Mountain) Drift, on the bank of the Modder River. Entrenched on the other side waited a Boer force that was determined to stop the British advance.

On the early morning of Sunday, February 18, the Canadians crossed the swift Modder River with the help of ropes stretched shore to shore, in preparation for a frontal assault. The battlefield was an open plain where the Boers were concealed in deep dongas—steeply eroded watercourses—shaded by trees and cut branches. The Canadians inched forward in short rushes, sheltering behind every rock and anthill until they became pinned down by enemy fire.

They were forced to lie prone under the sweltering sun, while the Boers maintained a withering fire, for five hours. The weather changed while the Canadians were pinned down, drenching the troops in a cold rainstorm, before the sweltering sun returned. By 5:00 pm, the Canadians along with British forces, were ordered to make a desperate fixed-bayonet charge toward the enemy positions. They gained about 200 yards before the assault ended in failure. After darkness fell, the Canadian troops were able to retreat for food and rest, while stretcher parties were sent out to retrieve the wounded, and the dead were buried in a mass grave. For the Canadians, the cost was high, 18 soldiers were killed and 60 wounded on the first day of the battle—the country’s bloodiest single day of fighting in the war. It became known as **Bloody Sunday**.

For the following nine days, the British besieged the smaller Boer force, pounding them with artillery in an attempt to destroy the Boer encampment, with little success. On February 26, the Royal Canadians led a night attack on the Boer positions. Supported by British forces, they advanced forward in silence with bayonets fixed to within one hundred yards before being noticed. The two forces exchanged gunfire resulting in some Canadian companies having to retreat, while others continued to exchange fire with the enemy until the sun began to rise.

On the morning of February 27, the demoralized Boers had had enough, and surrendered. The Battle of Paardeberg opened up the road to Bloemfontein, and was the first significant British victory of the war. The Canadians had played a key role and were praised for their gallantry. A British officer remarked, “Canadians now stand for bravery, dash, and courage.” Thirty-one Canadians in total died at Paardeberg. The victory provided a boost to the morale and confidence of the troops and to Canadian nationalism.^{D, 2I, 2N, 6P, 7A}

• **CANADA’S SECOND CONTINGENT:** Following defeats in December 1899, the British had asked Canada to raise a second contingent, which was quickly assembled. The Second Canadian contingent was made up of: two mounted regiments—the 1st Canadian Mounted Rifles, later re-designated the Royal Canadian Dragoons (RCD), and the 2nd Canadian Mounted Rifles (CMR)—many recruited from the cowboys and ranchers of western Canada; and three artillery batteries from the Royal Canadian Field Artillery (RCFA)—primarily recruited from eastern Canada. The Second Contingent of 1,289 Canadian troops, and almost as many horses, sailed from Halifax for the Boer War on January 21, 27 and February 21, 1900.

A third mounted regiment was raised and funded entirely by Donald Smith, a wealthy fur trader, Canadian Pacific railroad financier and Canadian diplomat better known as **Lord Strathcona**. His regiment recruited men who were cowboys, ranchers, prospectors and frontiersmen, and were known as The Lord Strathcona’s Horse. Commanded by the legendary North West Mounted Police superintendent **Sam Steele**, they were outfitted with western saddles, lassoes, revolvers, Lee-Enfield rifles, and Stetson hats. The Strathcona’s, a force of 550 men and nearly 600 horses, left Halifax on March 17, 1900. Like the first contingent, the second contingent and the Lord Strathcona’s Horse had to endure a long sea voyages in cramped vessels while caring for their horses. Many of the animals died during the trip, and the men were forced to dump the bodies overboard.

Another 1,004 men, the 3rd Battalion, Royal Canadian Regiment, was raised and served as garrison troops in Halifax, Nova Scotia, freeing a British battalion to fight. In 1901, Canada sent a fourth contingent of about 1,200 men who were assigned to the South African Constabulary.^{D, 2N, 2I, 4A, 6P}

• **CHANGING TACTICS:** By June 1900, Bloemfontein and Pretoria had fallen to the British, but the remaining Boer forces had no intention of surrendering. The war then moved into a chase-and-evade phase—the British pursuing an enemy they could rarely find. The Boers avoided open battle, instead, organizing themselves into mounted guerrilla units ranging from a few men to several thousand that melted away into the countryside, and then mounted ambushes and retreats. For the next two years, the Boers waged an insurgency against the British—raiding army columns and storage depots, blowing up rail lines and carrying out hit-and-run attacks. The British responded with a scorched-earth strategy—burning farms and herding Boer families into concentration camps.^{D, 2N, 6P, 7A}

The Canadians had learned from the first contingent of infantrymen that fighting the war with cavalry and artillery would be a more effective way of fighting the Boer's guerilla, mounted on horseback style of warfare. Canada's Second Contingent, made up of the three mounted regiments and three artillery batteries, arrived in the first two months of 1900.

- **JOHN McCRAE:** Canadian John McCrae would become famous during World War I after writing "In Flanders Fields." During the Boer War, he volunteered as part of the Second Contingent, becoming a lieutenant with the Royal Canadian Artillery. During the war, one of the things he witnessed was that more men were dying of disease than in combat, due partly to the poorly run British field hospitals. He wrote, "*For absolute neglect and rotten administration, it is a model... I am ashamed of some members of my profession ... Every day there are from 15 to 30 Tommies [British soldiers] dying from fever and dysentery. Every one that dies is sewn up in a blanket, and four shillings are taken out of the pay for the blanket. The soldier's game is not what it's cracked up to be.*"^{13M} More information on John McCrae is included in this Project in the WWI Battle of Ypres section on page 71.

- **LELIEFONTEIN**, November 7, 1900: Leliefontein was a farm, where the Canadians faced their most desperate situation during the war. On the morning of November 7, a British force of 1,500, that included the Canadian Mounted Rifles, the Royal Canadian Dragoons, and the Royal Canadian Field Artillery with two 12-pounder guns had planned a withdrawal from the area. To cover the withdrawal, the British commander detailed the under strength Royal Canadian Dragoons and the two 12-pounder field guns as his rearguard. As soon as the Boers realized that the British were retiring, large parties of Boers mounted a series of strong attacks at various points along the Canadian line. These attacks culminated in a charge by two hundred mounted Boers firing from the saddle that threatened to break the Canadian line and capture the two field guns. The charge was only beaten back by the gallantry of a small party of Dragoons, and after two Boer commanders were killed. For two hours, the Canadians fought in a wild, mounted battle, and were able to successfully save their guns. It came at a cost of three Canadians killed, and three other Canadians won the Victoria Cross for their bravery in saving the guns. Leliefontein was the Second Contingent's last major action. Most of its soldiers returned to Halifax on January 8, 1901.^{21, 2N, 4A}

- **BATTLE OF HART'S RIVER**, March 31, 1902: Also known as the Battle of Boschbult farm, this battle involved a column of 1,800 British forces that set up their defences around the farm buildings at Boschbult. During the afternoon of March 31, the Boers shelled the camp with artillery, while their riflemen on the surrounding ridges poured down a steady fire. On the outer edge of the British defense line, an outnumbered group of Canadian Mounted Riflemen fought valiantly against a series of mounted charges by the Boers. The Canadians were eventually cut off by a vastly superior force, but refused to surrender until they had fired the last rounds of their ammunition. In the early evening, the Boers broke off the engagement and withdrew. A total of 13 Canadians were killed and 40 wounded at the Battle of Hart's River.^{21, 2N}

- **THE BOER WAR ENDS:** During the war, Canadians were in action and would fight in key battles including at; Paardeberg, Israel's Poort, Zand River, Mafeking, Doornkop, Johannesburg, Diamond Hill, Belfast, Leliefontein and Harts River. The war finally ended when the Boers signed the **Treaty of Vereeniging** on May 31, 1902 in Pretoria. The Boers surrendered their independence in exchange for aid to those affected by the fighting and eventual self-government, among other terms.

On June 2, 1902, Sarnia citizens read the details of the declared peace in the *Sarnia Observer*. On June 1, Lieutenant-General Lord Kitchener cabled the Canadian War Office that the terms of surrender had been signed by all the Boer delegates, announcing it to the world. An official message of congratulations was forwarded to England on behalf of the Dominion Government. News of the signing of the terms of peace was received with general rejoicing throughout the Dominion, with ministers referring to the subject from the pulpits and public demonstrations in numerous places.

- **LIVES LOST:** Approximately 20,000 British Empire soldiers lost their lives during the Boer War. Of that, more than 7,000 were killed in action or died of wounds, while over 13,000 of the deaths were the result of disease. Another 40,000 were wounded.

Over 9,000 Boer troops lost their lives during the war. Approximately 28,000 Boer men were captured as prisoners of war, the majority of which were sent to camps overseas including in Saint Helena, Ceylon, Bermuda, India and Portugal. Of the 116,000 Boers confined in the concentration camps, more than 26,000 civilians including women and children, and 14,000 black Africans are estimated to have died in the camps from malnutrition and disease.^{D, 21, 2N, 4A}

- **CANADIAN SACRIFICES:** The 1899-1902 Boer War was the first time Canada dispatched troops overseas to fight in war. A total of three contingents of Canadian soldiers were sent overseas. Over the 2 ½ years, approximately 7,400 Canadian volunteers, including twelve nurses, would serve in South Africa, and another 1,004 served as garrison troops in Halifax. When the Canadian soldiers returned home, some chose to remain in Africa, serving as members of the paramilitary South African Constabulary. During the final months of the war, 40 Canadian teachers went to South Africa to help reconstruct the country. During the Boer War, five Canadian soldiers earned the Victoria Cross, the highest award for military valour. The Boer War also marked the first time Canadian women served in the military, with twelve Nursing Sisters helping the sick and wounded in South Africa. Canada's senior nursing sister, Georgina Pope, was awarded the prestigious Royal Red Cross Medal by Queen Victoria, for meritorious and distinguished service in the field, the first Canadian to receive this esteemed honour.^{D, 2I, 2N, 4A} More information on Nursing Sister Georgina Pope is on page 32.

Approximately 270 Canadians lost their lives during the Boer War. Of those, approximately 90 were killed in action and the rest died of injuries or disease, principally enteric fever. Another 252 Canadians were wounded. **Sarnia** and Lambton had sixteen men participate in the Second Boer War, one of whom would make the ultimate sacrifice—Daniel Crone. His grave is in Braamfontein Garden of Remembrance, Johannesburg, South Africa.

Author Pierre Berton wrote of Canada's experience in South Africa, "*it convinced a generation of young Canadians that war was not terribly dangerous.*"^{7A} The Great War would change that illusion.

- **NEW FORMS OF WARFARE:** The Boer War introduced new forms of warfare that would loom large in the future: the British exercised a scorched earth policy and introduced "concentration camps"; the Boers waged guerilla warfare tactics of ambush and retreat; the British introduced armoured trains with naval guns mounted on railway wagons and manned observation balloons to direct artillery fire; both sides used rifles loaded with multiple-bullet magazine clips, along with Maxim machine guns, invented fifteen years earlier (which the Boers converted to a water-cooled, belt-fed piece of light artillery called the "pom-pom"); both sides used the heliograph, which used reflected sunlight to flash coded messages; and the Boer War showed for the first time the defensive advantage of well-entrenched soldiers armed with long-range rifles.

- **FAMOUS PARTICIPANTS:** Some participants in this first major war of the century would later have starring roles in other scenarios. One was Canadian author **John McCrae**, author of "In Flanders Fields", who started his military service as an artillery officer. Others included: **Sam Steele**, a famous member of the North-West Mounted Police during the Yukon Gold Rush, who served as a commanding officer of the Strathcona's Horse mounted infantry unit in the Boer War; **Winston Churchill**, working as a war correspondent, was captured, held prisoner and later escaped to join the British army; and **Robert Baden-Powell**, a lieutenant-general in the British Army, who wrote "Aids to Scouting" for soldiers, which led to the structure and founding of the Boy Scouts movement worldwide based on his military experiences; **Mahatma Gandhi**, best known as the leader of Indian independence, served in the war as a volunteer medic, receiving a War Medal; **Arthur Conan Doyle**, a field hospital supervisor, would become best known as the author of over sixty stories about Sherlock Holmes; and **Rudyard Kipling**, an army newspaperman, who would become an author most famous for his works "The Jungle Book" and "Gunga Din."

- **SARNIANS RETURN HOME:** When the first Sarnia and Lambton men returned home from war at Christmas of 1900, they were treated as heroes. They were met at the Cromwell Street train station by members of the City Reception Committee and local citizens. A procession made up of committee members, military officials, social organizations, local dignitaries, the fire department, city and county citizens, and the Sarnia Band paraded them up Front Street which was decked in flags and streamers, to George St., Vidal St., and Davis St., to Victoria Square (Park). Then there were speeches and presentations of gold watches. The next evening, a celebration in a packed Boys Brigade Hall was held with more speeches, short reminiscences and music from solo artists through to choirs. Appropriately, the Boys Brigade sang, "Praise God, From Whom all Blessings Flow".

- **HEROES REMEMBERED:** Across the country, communities feted the returning war heroes. Volunteers formed a "Patriotic Fund" for the families of the fallen, and Canadian branches of the "Soldiers' Wives League" were created to provide support to the wives and families of soldiers. In 1902, a group led by Lady Minto, the wife of the governor general, the Earl of Minto, raised private funds to record and mark the graves of the fallen Canadian soldiers overseas. The South African Memorial Association sent 180 polished-granite headstones to South Africa, each marked with maple leaves and engraved with "CANADA". A number of communities erected monuments to the men

who fought, including in Ottawa, Halifax, Montreal, Calgary, Brantford, London (Victoria Park) and one in Toronto (University Avenue) that was designed by Walter Allward, who would later design the Canadian memorial at Vimy Ridge, France. For most towns and cities in Canada, these were the first public war memorials.^{2N}

- The **BOER WAR MEMORIAL FOUNTAIN** in Sarnia was erected in Victoria Park in 1908. It was located outside and on the south side of Sarnia Library. Engraved on it are the names of sixteen men from Sarnia and Lambton County who participated in the Boer War, along with the South African locations where they served. Of the sixteen names on the Boer War memorial, only one man, Daniel Crone, lost his life while serving. More information on Sarnia's Boer War Memorial Fountain is on page 10.

Attack

*At dawn the ridge emerges massed and dun
In the wild purple of the glow'ring sun,
Smouldering through spouts of drifting smoke that shroud
The menacing scarred slope; and, one by one,
Tanks creep and topple forward to the wire.
The barrage roars and lifts. Then, clumsily bowed
With bombs and guns and shovels and battle-gear,
Men jostle and climb to, meet the bristling fire.
Lines of grey, muttering faces, masked with fear,
They leave their trenches, going over the top,
While time ticks blank and busy on their wrists,
And hope, with furtive eyes and grappling fists,
Flounders in mud. O Jesus, make it stop!*

Siegfried Sassoon, 1918



Anthem for Doomed Youth

*What passing-bells for these who die as cattle?
— Only the monstrous anger of the guns.
Only the stuttering rifles' rapid rattle
Can patter out their hasty orisons.*

*No mockeries now for them; no prayers nor bells;
Nor any voice of mourning save the choirs,—
The shrill, demented choirs of wailing shells;
And bugles calling for them from sad shires.*

*What candles may be held to speed them all?
Not in the hands of boys, but in their eyes
Shall shine the holy glimmers of goodbyes.
The pallor of girls' brows shall be their pall;
Their flowers the tenderness of patient minds,
And each slow dusk a drawing-down of blinds.*

By Wilfred Owen. 1917

INDEX: BOER WAR – 1899-1902 – SERVED & FALLEN

The following is a record of the sixteen names engraved on Sarnia's Boer War Memorial Fountain.

NAME & Service #	DATE OF BIRTH & DEATH + AGE FORCE, REGIMENT + RANK ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
COLTER, Charles Flerke 322	<p>B: approx. 1869 in Strathroy, Ontario D: November 11, 1930 in York (Toronto) Age: app. 61</p> <p>Royal Canadian Field Artillery "D" Battery Gunner - Sergeant Former Corps – 27th Regiment, Lambton</p> <p>Son of Charles Colter and Elizabeth Colter (nee Howe), both of Ireland, family resided in Petrolia, Ontario. Enlisted December 28, 1899 in London, Ontario. Honourably discharged January 10, 1901.</p> <p>Married Lillian May Colter (nee Foster), October 18, 1902, in County of Hastings. Two children; Charles (b: 1903) and Elinore (b: 1910). Charles Coulter would be a dentist in Petrolia, family resided in Toronto in 1911.</p>
CRONE, Daniel Joseph 216	<p>B: January 24, 1876 in Sarnia, Ontario D: August 5, 1900 in Johannesburg, South Africa Age: 24</p> <p>Army: Royal Canadian Dragoons (1st Armoured Regiment) Private Former Corps- 27th Regiment, Lambton</p> <p>Son of William Crone and Catherine Crone, of Bosanquet, Lambton County. Enlisted January 2, 1900 in London, Ontario. *Daniel Crone was the only Sarnian to lose his life serving in the Boer War. Daniel died of Enteric fever (typhoid), in Johannesburg. Awarded Johannesburg, Diamond Hill, Cape Colony and Orange Free State Clasps.</p> <p>Buried in Braamfontein Garden of Remembrance, Johannesburg, South Africa. There is also a memorial dedicated to him at Irwin Cemetery, Sarnia, Lambton County, and a memorial plaque in the Federal Building on the corner of Christina and Davis Streets, Sarnia.</p> <p>*MORE DETAILED INFORMATION ON DANIEL CRONE IS ON PAGE 53</p>
GORMAN, Frederick 7154	<p>B: October 13, 1867 in London, Ontario D: September 7, 1941 in Sarnia Age: 74</p> <p>Royal Canadian Regiment of Infantry Sergeant Former Corps – 27th Regiment, Lambton</p> <p>Son of Mr. and Mrs. Henry Gorman, of 556 North Christina Street, Sarnia. Sisters Harriett and Winnifred Gorman. Both of Frederick's grandfathers were veterans of the old British army, and both served together in the 23rd Royal Welsh Fusiliers. Frederick's paternal grandfather's last name was O'Gorman (of Ireland). When grandfather O'Gorman enlisted, somehow the 'O' was dropped from the name, never to be restored. Frederick's father, Henry Gorman, enlisted in the Hundredth Regiment in 1856. This regiment was assigned to garrison duty at Gibraltar vs. going to India to suppress the mutiny there (1857-8). In 1866, he transferred to the 7th Battalion in London and remained with them until he retired in 1880. Henry Gorman was employed as editor and proprietor of the <i>Sarnia Daily Observer</i> for many years and later a local magistrate.</p> <p>Frederick Gorman served as an <i>Observer</i> reporter and advertising solicitor for a time. As a youth, he was a member of the St. Clair Borderers' Band. He joined the 27th Regiment (St. Clair Borderers) in 1883 and then the Seventh Company attaining the rank of Lieutenant. He enlisted in the RCR on October 21, 1899 in London, Ontario for service in the Boer War.</p> <p>In South Africa, as a Sergeant, he was in engagements at Paardeburg, Bloemfontein, Hout Nek and Vet River in the Orange Free State and in Pretoria. He was discharged December 25, 1900.</p> <p>On return to Sarnia, he rejoined the 27th Regiment, where he remained until 1913, retiring as a Major. He was also made a member of the Canadian Order of Foresters, Sarnia. By 1911, he was the Manager of the Observer Printing Company (his father's firm).</p> <p>Frederick would enlist on December 1, 1915 to serve in World War I. He initially joined the 70th Battalion, C.E.F. as a Major. Sometime after enlisting, he married Mrs. Fannie Clark Gorman (who served as a nurse at Camp Borden in WWI). The couple resided at 329 North Vidal Street. continued over...</p>

INDEX OF SARNIA'S BOER WAR VETERANS continued

NAME & Service #	DATE OF BIRTH & DEATH + AGE FORCE, REGIMENT + RANK ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
GORMAN, Frederick 7154 continued	<p>The 70th Battalion embarked for Britain on April 25, 1916, and its' personnel would be absorbed by the 39th Battalion. On November 20, 1916, Frederick joined the Canadian Army Service Corps at Bramshott as a Private. He embarked to France on May 25, 1917 and was first attached to 39 Company, Canadian Forestry Corps, and then on October 19, 1917 was attached to the 7th Canadian Cavalry Field Ambulance. He took part in operations at Cambrai in November 1917 and Amiens in April 1918. On May 25, 1918 he was attached to the Royal Canadian Regiment, participating in engagements at Amiens, Arras and Cambrai. He rejoined the Cavalry Brigade in November 1918, and after the Armistice, followed the German army back to the Rhine. He served in England with the C.A.S.C. in 1919 until it was demobilized in Canada in July 1919.</p> <p>After WWI, Frederick Gorman was a member of Sarnia Customs and Excise staff beginning in 1920 and was stationed at Imperial Oil Refinery. He was also an honorary member of Lambton Garrison Officers' Mess and Sarnia Branch 62 Canadian Legion. He was a resident of Sarnia for 70 years. His funeral in September 1941 was held at St. George's Anglican Church with a full military burial at Lakeview Cemetery. His casket was draped with a Union Jack and bearing the cap and sword of the deceased soldier.^{3e}</p>
HARLEY, John Arthur 103	<p>B: January 2, 1873 in Petrolia, Ontario D: March 2, 1954 in Edmonton Age: 81</p> <p>Lord Strathcona's Horse</p> <p>Son of James Rennie Harley and Janet Harley (nee Ovans), of Petrolia, Ontario. Siblings: Catharine, Jane, Jennett, Rachel, Mary, Thomas and William.</p> <p>Enlisted January 2, 1900 in Petrolia. Discharged March 8, 1901.</p> <p>Married Mary Louise Harley, couple resided in Edmonton, Alberta. Employed as a civil servant, post office.</p> <p>Enlisted in April 1916 in Edmonton, to serve in World War I.</p>
HUME, Alexander Harvey 333	<p>B: December 7, 1874 in Fort Erie, Welland, Ontario D: 1934 in Detroit, Michigan Age: approx. 60</p> <p>Royal Canadian Field Artillery 6th Field Battery – Driver Former Corps – 27th Regiment, Lambton</p> <p>Son of William Walker Hume and Emma Elizabeth Walker, of Fort Erie, Ontario. Siblings: Mary, Eleanor, William, James, Jennie and Frederick.</p> <p>Employed at Grand Trunk Rail, Freight Office, Sarnia. Was residing at the Hotel Vendome, Sarnia at enlistment. Enlisted December 28, 1899 in London, Ont., with the "D" Battery of Artillery, Canadian Contingent. Discharged January 10, 1901.</p> <p>Married Catherine "Kate" Hume (nee Ronan). In 1910, resided in Detroit, Wayne, Michigan. Children: Margaret, Mable, John, Alexandria, Ruth, Patricia and Donald.</p>
JOHNSTON, Kenneth George 7207	<p>B: November 2, 1878 in Sarnia, Ontario D: November 7, 1928 Age: 50</p> <p>2nd Special Services Battalion R.C.R. Private Former Corps - 27th Regiment, Lambton</p> <p>Son of Dr. Thomas George Johnston and Frances Johnston (nee Brown). Father Thomas was mayor of Sarnia in 1896 and 1897, and was elected House of Commons Member of Parliament for Lambton West in December 1898.</p> <p>Kenneth's siblings: Frances Grace, Marion Sutherland, Bertha Helen and Geoffrey Maurice.</p> <p>Enlisted October 23, 1899 in London, Ontario. Discharged December 25, 1900.</p> <p>An employee of Imperial Oil Company Works, Sarnia.</p> <p>Upon return, was made a member of the Canadian Order of Foresters, Sarnia.</p> <p>Married Kate Stuart Johnston (nee MacVicar of Sarnia) on November 28, 1903. Two children, Thomas Stuart Johnston (b: 1906) & Ruth Isobel (b: 1910, d: 1910). Emigrated to the U.S. in February 1912. In 1917, family resided in Buffalo, Erie, New York and Kenneth completed his WWI Draft Registration Card.</p> <p>Buried in Lakeview Cemetery, Sarnia.</p>

INDEX OF SARNIA'S BOER WAR VETERANS continued

NAME & Service #	DATE OF BIRTH & DEATH + AGE FORCE, REGIMENT + RANK ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
MACKENZIE, Harold 316	B: January 30, 1877 in Lambton County D: approx. 1933 Age: approx. 56 16th Field Battery "D" Battery R.C.A. Private Former Corps – 27th Regiment, Lambton Son of John Alexander MacKenzie and Helen MacKenzie (nee Crawford) of Sarnia. Siblings: George, Norman and Helen. Father John was a Sarnia barrister. Enlisted January 4, 1900 in Guelph, Ont., in the "D" Battery of Artillery of the Second Canadian Contingent. Discharged January 10, 1901. In 1901, Harold resided in Guelph. He was employed as a bank clerk, Bank of Commerce, Guelph. In 1906, resided in Saskatchewan. He is buried in Lakeview Cemetery, Sarnia.
McMILLAN, Daniel Clarence 7214	B: April 5, 1876 in Thedford, Ontario D: January 29, 1964 Age: 87 2nd Special Service Battalion R.C.R. Private Former Corps - 27th Regiment, Lambton Son of Daniel Donald McMillan (farmer) and Elizabeth McMillan (nee Jones), of Lake Road East, Thedford. Siblings: Annie, Ida, Minnie, Thomas, Catherine, Finlay Walter, Bessie (Betsy), Alfred, Martin and Gordon. Was employed as a clerk at the White Front drug store, Sarnia. Enlisted October 21, 1899 in London, Ont. Discharged December 25, 1900, then resided in Sarnia. Upon return, was made a member of the Canadian Order of Foresters, Sarnia. Married Mabel Etta McMillan (nee Boale) on February 9, 1910 in York, Toronto, Ontario. In 1911, resided in Moosejaw, Saskatchewan. In 1916, resided in Maple Creek, Saskatchewan. Occupation druggist. One child, Peter McMillan, born 1913.
NEAR, Benjamin 233	B: approx. 1876 in St. Mary's, Ontario D: 1st Canadian Mounted Rifles Private Son of Henry Near, of St. Mary's, Ontario Enlisted January 2, 1900 in Regina, Saskatchewan. Discharged January 14, 1901.
NEVILE, Henry (Harry) Martin	B: June 16, 1881 in Sarnia, Ontario D: May 7, 1956 in Brandon, Manitoba Age: 74 Son of Cavendish Neville and Mary Neville (nee Smith) of England. Siblings; Arabella Catherine, Sarah, Mary (May), James Frederick, Georgina, Elizabeth, Emily, John Cavendish, Lucy Edith, Herbert Sandford, and Alice Maude. In 1861, family was residing in Lambton West until at least 1891. In 1901, family was residing in Wapella, The Territories (Saskatchewan). In 1916, employed in Brandon, Manitoba. Married Phoebe Smith Stant. Together they had one child, Lister Cavendish Neville (born 1911). NOTE: On the Boer War Memorial Fountain, his name is inscribed as H.M. Neville
NEVILE, Herbert Sandford 232	B: July 1876 in Lambton County D: June 4, 1944 in Chilliwack, British Columbia Age: 67 1st Canadian Mounted Rifles, and later the South African Constabulary (SAC) Son of Cavendish Neville and Mary Neville (nee Smith) of England. Siblings; Arabella Catherine, Sarah, Mary (May), James Frederick, Georgina, Elizabeth, Emily, John Cavendish, Lucy Edith, Alice Maude, and Henry (Harry) Martin. In 1861, family was residing in Lambton West until at least 1891. In 1901, family was residing in Wapella, The Territories (Saskatchewan). He was residing in Saskatchewan at his enlistment. Enlisted in army in 1900 in Ottawa, and the SAC on June 6, 1901. ^s Married Muriel Hampton Walton in 1907 in Gladstone, Manitoba. Together they had two children; Morris (born: 1908) and Hilda Claire (born: 1915). In 1916, family was residing in Regina, Saskatchewan. NOTE: On the Boer War Memorial Fountain, his name is inscribed as H.S. Neville

INDEX OF SARNIA'S BOER WAR VETERANS continued

NAME & Service #	DATE OF BIRTH & DEATH + AGE FORCE, REGIMENT + RANK ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
NEVILLE, James Frederick 101	<p>B: November 2, 1869 in Sarnia D: November 18, 1951 in Chilliwack, British Columbia Age: 82</p> <p>Son of Cavendish Neville and Mary Neville (nee Smith) of England. Siblings; Arabella Catherine, Sarah, Mary (May), Georgina, Elizabeth, Emily, John Cavendish, Lucy Edith, Herbert Sandford, Alice Maude, and Henry (Harry) Martin.</p> <p>In 1861, family was residing in Lambton West until at least 1891. In 1901, family was residing in Wapella, The Territories (Saskatchewan). Enlisted at Moosomin, Sask. on February 7, 1900, single at the time. A farmer and rancher.</p> <p>Lord Strathcona Horse Private Discharged: March 30, 1901</p> <p>Married Phyllis Annie Walton on June 23, 1904 in Gladstone, Manitoba. One child: Doris Audrey (born 1907)</p> <p>NOTE: On the Boer War Memorial Fountain, his name is inscribed as J.F. Neville</p> <p>At the age of 45, he enlisted on September 22, 1914 in Valcartier, Quebec to serve in WWI. Was residing in Wapella, Saskatchewan working as a farmer. Embarked for France May 4, 1915. Served Lord Strathcona Horse as a Private Returned to Canada July 1917.</p>
PARDEE, John Blair 7423	<p>B: April 12, 1871 in Sarnia D: June 6, 1927 in Sarnia Age: 56</p> <p>2nd Special Service Battalion R.C.R. Member of local militia prior to war.</p> <p>Son of Timothy Blair (a barrister) and Emma Kerby Pardee (nee Forsyth), of Sarnia. Siblings; Louisa Helen, Frederick Forsyth (would become a senator), Edwin Charles, Henry Mason, Timothy Blair, and Emma Kathleen.</p> <p>Enlisted March 10, 1900 in Toronto. Discharged November 5, 1900. Upon return, was made a member of the Canadian Order of Foresters, Sarnia.</p> <p>Married Alice Maud Pardee (nee Clark) on June 28, 1904 in County of Essex, Ontario. Occupation in 1904 recorded as real estate broker. In 1911, couple residing in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario with their two children; Helen Blair and Edward. Buried in Lakeview Cemetery, Sarnia.</p>
REYNOLDS, Richard Henry 215	<p>B: approx. 1877 D:</p> <p>Royal Canadian Dragoons Private</p> <p>Brother of Phillip Reynolds, of Warwick, Ont.</p> <p>Enlisted December 30, 1899 in London, Ont. Single, employed as a steamfitter at the time. Member of 1st Hussars. Discharged January 21, 1901 Returned to Canada February 15, 1901, requiring treatment for enteric fever.</p>
SCOTT, Charles Reade 7239	<p>B: October 7, 1880 in Forest, Ontario D: 1926 in Jacksonville, Florida Age: approx. 46</p> <p>2nd Special Service Battalion R.C.R Private Former Corps – 27th Regiment, Lambton</p> <p>Son of Alexander Scott (of Ireland) and Emma Scott (nee Richardson, of England), of Forest, Ontario. Siblings; George Alexander, Edith Elizabeth and Reginald Faber.</p> <p>Enlisted October 24, 1899 in London, Ontario Charles Scott was a prisoner from about May 29 - June 18, 1900. At one time, he was reported killed at the Battle of Paardaberg. Discharged December 25, 1900.</p> <p>Married Hester Ann Hall on January 30, 1907 in Lambton, Ontario. In September 1918, signed World War I Draft Registration Card in Portland, Oregon, occupation recorded as salesman. Wife Hester died in 1922. Second marriage to Brenda Rehada Alamada Taylor on April 27, 1922 in London, Middlesex, Ontario. Occupation recorded as merchant. Two children in second marriage; unknown and Rosemary Taylor (b: 1924). Died in 1926. Buried in West Evergreen Cemetery, Jacksonville, Florida.</p>

INDEX OF SARNIA'S BOER WAR VETERANS continued

NAME & Service #	DATE OF BIRTH & DEATH + AGE FORCE, REGIMENT + RANK ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
VAN TUYL, Thomas Walter	<p>B: February 2, 1871 in Petrolia, Ontario D: August 16, 1903 in Petrolia, Ontario Age: 32</p> <p>An honour graduate and winner of the Governor General's Bronze Medal at the Royal Military College, Kingston in 1891. During Boer War, he served in the Second Contingent RCA "D" Battery as First Lieutenant. Returned to Petrolia in January 1901.</p> <p>Son of Major Benjamin Stoddard Van Tuyl (of New York, served in American Civil War, Union Army) and Kate Van Tuyl (nee Cheney, of New York). Major Benjamin Van Tuyl relocated to Petrolia after the Civil War to become an oil man. He was originally employed as a drilling contractor/oil operator. In 1874, Major Benjamin Van Tuyl joined forces with J.H. Fairbank forming Van Tuyl and Fairbank Inc. Hardware in Petrolia, originally established in 1865, and still in business today. Thomas' siblings were; Benjamin Blossom (engaged in explosives business in Petrolia) and Louis Gleeson (graduate of the Royal Military College, later employed in the Intelligence branch of the Ottawa Defence Department). Thomas' mother Kate died in August 1886, his father Benjamin died in December 1900 (both parents passed away in Petrolia).</p> <p>Thomas Van Tuyl died of Typhoid fever in 1903. He is buried in Hillside Cemetery, Petrolia, Ont.</p>

The **Boer War Memorial Fountain** was erected in Sarnia in 1908. The Memorial lists sixteen men from Sarnia-Lambton County who participated in the South Africa War of 1899-1902. Of the sixteen names engraved on the Boer War Memorial, only one man lost his life while serving in the war. Following is his story.

CRONE, DANIEL JOSEPH (#216)

Daniel Crone was born in Sarnia on January 24, 1876, the son of William Crone (born in Whitby, Ontario) and Catherine (nee McKellar) Crone, of Sarnia Township, later Mandaumin, Ontario. William Crone, a farmer, and Catherine McKellar were married on September 30, 1869, in Bosanquet, and were blessed with eight children together: Francis Jeffrey (born 1871); Margaret Elizabeth (born 1875); Daniel; Sarah A. (born 1879); James Scott (born 1880); Christine Catherine (born 1882); John Thomas (born 1883, died at age 3 when Daniel was nine years old); and William J. (born 1895).

Twenty-three-year-old Daniel Joseph Crone underwent his recruit medical on December 30, 1899, as a member of the 2nd Special Service Contingent. He completed his "Agreement for Military Service in South Africa" (Attestation) form on January 2, 1900 in London, Ontario. He stood five feet six and one-quarter inches tall, had black hair and blue eyes, was single, and recorded his trade as driver and his next of kin as his father William Crone in Sarnia. At the time, Daniel was employed at the C.P.R. Express and Telegraph Office in Sarnia, and was a member of the 27th Battalion, St. Clair Borderers, headquartered in Sarnia. The following is the report from the *Sarnia Observer* following his enlistment:

Daniel Crone, lately employed in connection with the express department of the C.P.R. here, went to London Saturday and after being examined enlisted in the second Canadian contingent for South Africa. He was allowed home for Sunday and Monday and left this morning again for London to take up his active duties as a member of the London Company. Before leaving, a number of young men met at the oyster parlor of Alex Kelly and entertained Mr. Crone to an oyster supper. Dan, as he was familiarly called, has many friends in Sarnia and vicinity who wish him a safe return to his home and friends.

Prior to going overseas, some citizens of Sarnia collected and presented a draft for fifty dollars to Daniel. He was also a member of the Cawdor Camp, Sons of Scotland Club in Sarnia. At the Cawdor Camp meeting after Daniel had enlisted, the club wrote and delivered a complimentary address to him accompanied by \$25 in gold. The following is an excerpt from that address:

Upon your leaving for South Africa, the officers and members of Cawdor Camp, Sons of Scotland, desire to express their high appreciation of your patriotism and valor and observe with delight that the patriotism and chivalry so characteristic of our Scottish ancestors has descended to their sons and is now so practically displayed by the valorous step which you have taken in offering your services at such a moment and time in defence of the

Empire. We all unite in expressing our admiration of the spirit displayed by you, and hope that you will have an opportunity of rendering efficient service to our country and that you will be spared to return to us.

Peter Symington, Secretary

John Cowan, Chief

In his first few weeks, Daniel was training for the Mounted Rifles at Stanley Barracks, in Toronto. Following is a portion of a letter he wrote to the *Sarnia Observer*:

This place is named the workhouse, by the boys, which it certainly is. We have to get out at bugle call in the morning, at half past six o'clock, and parade to stables and tend horses. We get back to barracks about eight and get dry bread and coffee, sometimes a little meat, for breakfast. We are called out at nine again and do not get back till about one. The first day we were here, we were sent out on mounted parade without saddles for about two hours. A good many of the horses were young and had never been ridden before. Lots of the boys were thrown off time and again. Some were sent home because they could not ride their horses. My riding was counted good, and I tell you I was greatly relieved when I was told so. Hardly anything could induce me to turn back now. Although there are a good many things I do not like, I never was so happy in my life.

Initially a Trooper with the Canadian Mounted Rifles, Daniel Crone became a member of the Army, Royal Canadian Dragoons (1st Armoured Regiment), with the rank of Private. In late January-early February 1900, Daniel embarked overseas as part of Canada's Second Contingent. On June 25, 1900, Private Daniel Crone wrote his parents a letter from the war front. They would receive the letter one week prior to his death. Following is an excerpt from that letter:

Dear Father and Mother,

This is nearly the first opportunity I have had to write since I left Kroonstad. No doubt you have read a few of our doings since we left there, so I need not relate too many of them. We did not have any opposition at the Vaal River, where we most expected it and where the enemy could or should have made a great stand. We, however, had a hot time with them at Krugereder, near Johannesburg. It was a miracle that we were not cut to pieces there. About 600 of us were ordered to take a kopje which was about 1500 yards from the Boer lines. We had no sooner got started towards it, when they started to shell us at a furious rate. We galloped on to shelter of the kopje without a scratch, although their shells fell right among us. We had to fall behind rocks all day and night. I thought I would freeze. I do not think I ever suffered as much with the cold at home. We got thawed out next day, as the sun is always intensely hot... I might say I have never missed a ride since I came out, nor an engagement that our column was in. When we marched through Pretoria I thought, well, it is all over; but soon found out it was not. The warmest engagement we have been in was north of Pretoria, where you no doubt read of one of our fellows being killed by a 40lb shell. He belonged to D squadron, so did not know him. After two days' hard fighting the Boers escaped at sun down... I will have to close for the present and go and cook my dinner before leaving. For a good while we got nothing to eat but flour, which we had to make pancakes out of. You can imagine flour, salt and water. I will have to write out a few recipes for cooking fine dishes when I get home. Remember me to all.

With love to all, your loving son, Dan

On August 5, 1900, Private Daniel Crone lost his life while serving in the Boer War. He died of Enteric fever (typhoid), in Johannesburg, Africa. He was awarded posthumously the Johannesburg and Diamond Hill Clasps.

One week after Daniel Crone's death, the *Sarnia Observer* reported on his death. Following is a portion of that report:

Private Dan Crone Succumbs to Fever. His Death took place on Sunday at Johannesburg

Sarnia citizens were in sorrow last evening when the news of the death of Private D.J. Crone, of the Canadian Mounted Rifles in South Africa, came to hand. THE OBSERVER received an unofficial dispatch during the afternoon that Private Crone had died of enteric fever, but some doubt was entertained as to its authenticity. The worst fears of our citizens were realized later on however, when an official dispatch from Sir Alfred Milner at Capetown to Lord Minto was received by THE OBSERVER, stating that Private Crone, No. 216, of the 27th Battalion, Sarnia, died of enteric fever on August 5th at Johannesburg. The sad news travelled fast, and on the streets on every side could be heard expressions of sorrow and regret. Dr. Johnston, M.P. was notified and he at once telegraphed to Ottawa for information. A reply was received from the Deputy Minister of Militia, confirming the sad intelligence and all hopes that Pte. Crone might yet be alive were abandoned. During the evening Dr. Johnston, M.P. and Sutherland Johnston drove out to the home of Private Crone's parents in Sarnia township, and broke the sad news to them, The scene was a heartrending and sorrowful one.

Dan Crone, as he was familiarly called by his many Sarnia friends, was a young man of sterling qualities. He was aged about 23 years, and prior to his leaving for South Africa with the Canadian Mounted Rifles, was in the employ of the C.P.R. Telegraph and Express Company. When the Mounted Rifles were being organized for service in South Africa, Dan Crone was eagerly the first to offer his services. He passed his examination for qualification and was accepted.

Private Crone was an honored and valued member of the Albert Street Presbyterian Church and also of the Christian Endeavor society in connection therewith. He was also a member of Cawdor Camp, Sons of Scotland, of this town. To say that the sympathy of the entire community is extended to the bereaved parents in their hour of affliction is only repeating what is a universal sentiment throughout the town.

Approximately one month after Daniel Crone's death, William and Catherine Crone received a letter from one of his chum's from Sarnia, who was also in South Africa, dated August 7th, 1900. His chum was Richard Henry Reynolds, whose name is also engraved on the Boer War Memorial Fountain. Following is a portion of that letter:

Mrs. Crone, Sarnia, Ont., Canada

To Mrs. Crone and Family,

I suppose you have already received word about your son's death. My last letter said he was getting better and his death was such a surprise to all around. I generally try and go down to see him every day, so I went down on Saturday, 4th of Aug. in the afternoon, and the nurse told me he was a lot better, and I thought he looked it myself. It was the first time after he had the bad spell that he really knew me and I had on a new suit of khaki and he noticed it right away. I was going down to see him on Sunday, the 5th, but I was on duty so late that I did not get the chance, so as soon as I got my breakfast I went down to see him, as I expected he would be able to have quite a talk, but on entering the hospital I saw the bed empty and the nurse came up and said I suppose you know what has happened, and she told me all. She said a little after I left on Saturday he took a spell of coughing and it lasted for about three hours, then he stopped for awhile and about half past ten on Saturday, the 4th of Aug, he gave three sighs and passed away. The orderly ran for a doctor but when he got there all was quiet. I asked the nurse if I could see the body and she told me it had been sent down to the Victoria hospital, so I went down there and they told me he had been taken from there to the undertaker's. I was making for there when I saw a funeral and I asked the officer who he was burying. He told me it was Dan, so I followed the hearse to the cemetery and saw him laid away. I was the only Canadian that was at the funeral, because none of the rest knew about it. After he was buried the preacher came up to me and said I see your friend has gone at last, and I was speechless. He asked me your address and said he would write to you. Dan had a very respectable funeral, the band was out and played the dead march and three volleys were fired over his grave. I am glad for one thing to tell you and that is that Dan has lived a Christian life all through the war and I am sure he will spend the rest of his days with his God above. After I left the cemetery I went back to the hospital and asked for his clothes and things and the Major said he could not give them to me, so I went to the C.M.R. captain. His name is Captain Greenwood, and he drove me back to the Wesleyan Hospital and I got two rings, one he brought from home and one he found in Capetown, a little silver watch which a friend by the name of Dowling, of Toronto, had given him before he left. There was also a photo of a young lady in a leather case, of which I will send you the proof in this letter. His last request was to one of the orderlies of the hospital to take the Maple Leaf off his hat and send it to me to give to his mother. I have got everything in Capt. Greenwood's charge and will bring them home to you if God spares me... I will close now with the sympathy of all the boys of 4 troop, A Squadron, C.M.R.

From Dan's friend,

Richard H. Reynolds No. 215, 2nd contingent, 4 troop, A Squadron, C.M.R., South Africa

The nurse that took care of Dan was Nurse Pourie, P.O. box 2804, Johannesburg, South Africa.

The preacher that buried him Rev. Mr. Morrise, Johannesburg, South Africa.

He was buried by the East Lancaster Regiment.

There is a Kruger three-penny piece that was in one of Dan's pockets. If there are any letters come for him I will send them back to you.

Rich H. Reynolds

In mid-August of 1900, one week after receiving the above letter, the Crone family received another letter from Private Richard Reynolds. Following is that letter:

Miss L. Crone, Sarnia, Ont., Canada

I write you these few lines to let you know that I got three letters for Dan. I asked the Capt. what I would do with them and he told me to look at the address and send them back to the parties, but I could not see any address, so I sent them all to you and maybe you know who they are from. I opened them but I never read a word of them only the heading and the name at the last. I went up to the police barracks at Pretoria to see some of the boys about putting up a headstone for Dan and I formed a committee to see about putting it up. I got over £20, and I am going to order a stone tomorrow and when it is up I will have some pictures taken of the grave and stone and bring them home with me for you. I will send you a list of the subscribers. I could not get up to the squadron, which is at Middleburg, but I saw most of the boys that were on the police. Anything else that comes for Dan I will send right back to you. All the boys send their sympathy to all your family and we will do anything for you while we are out here. If you let me know I will send his things or bring them home when I come. We do not expect to leave Africa for two months yet. I will close now, from your brother's friend.

Rich Reynolds, No. 215, 2nd contingent, 4 troop, A Squadron, C.M.R. South Africa.

This is the committee: R.H. Reynolds, of London, Ont.; J. Heron, of Toronto, Ont.; A.F. Stover, of Woodstock.

As promised in his letters, Private Richard Reynolds of Sarnia would visit the Crone family in March of 1901, to return Daniel Crone's last belongings from South Africa.

Another Sarnian, Frederick Gorman (whose name is also engraved on the Boer War Memorial Fountain), would write to the Crone family;

We were all very much grieved to learn at Pretoria of young Crone's death at Johannesburg. It is impossible for you to understand how closely we from Sarnia keep track of one another out here and the interest we care in one another is 1st rate.... Crone was a fine young man.

Daniel Crone was Sarnia's first ever soldier to die overseas while in service to his country. After the war, William Crone received from Ottawa his late son's Queen's Medal with four Clasps: Johannesburg, Diamond Hill, Cape Colony and Orange Free State. On August 12, 1900, there was a Memorial Service held in Sarnia for Daniel Crone at the Albert Street Presbyterian Church. At the memorial service, Reverend J.R. Hall said, "We have graves in the Country of the boys who fell in defence of our country, but I do not know of a grave of any soldier who died in the defence of the Empire."

On March 24, 1901, William Crone in Maudaumin wrote a letter to the Canadian South Africa Memorial Association. Following is that letter:

Dear Sir,

We are much in sympathy with your movement to erect suitable memorials to the Canadian boys who lost their lives in S. Africa but there was a stone erected to our son by his comrades but we will be willing to subscribe to help erect a monument to others.

Yours faithfully

Wm. Crone

Twenty-four-year-old Daniel Crone is buried alongside his comrades in Braamfontein Garden of Remembrance, Johannesburg, South Africa. On his headstone are inscribed the words, IN MEMORY OF PTE. D. CRONE. BORN IN LAMBTON, CANADA. DIED 4-8-00. AGED 24. ERECTED BY HIS COMRADES.

Aside from his actual grave in Braamfontein Garden of Remembrance, Johannesburg, South Africa, there are two memorials dedicated to Daniel Crone in Lambton County. A memorial at Irwin Cemetery, Sarnia, Lambton County reads: *In Memoriam Daniel J. Crone Son of Wm. & Catherine Crone of Sarnia Township. Born Jan. 24, 1876, Died Johannesburg, South Africa Aug. 4, 1900. A member of the First Battalion Canadian Mounted Rifles Serving the British Empire in the South Africa War, 1900.*

There is also a memorial plaque in the Federal Building on the corner of Christina and Davis Streets in Sarnia that reads: *1899-1902. South Africa. In Memorium. This tablet is erected by the citizens of Sarnia, Canada. In Memory of Daniel J. Crone, a resident of Sarnia, Ont. Died Aug. 4th 1900 at Johannesburg, South Africa while serving as a soldier of the British Empire, 1st Batt. Canadian Mounted Rifles.*



Daniel Crone's grave
Braamfontein Garden of Remembrance,
South Africa



Daniel Crone Memorial Plaque
Sarnia Federal Building

* The following is courtesy of Dan McCaffrey, a Sarnia-Lambton reporter and author, who wrote this column in November 2005, on the only Sarnian to lose his life in the Boer War.

When local residents pause to remember the nation's war dead today, they might want to spend at least a moment reflecting on the story of Dan Crone.

Crone, the first Sarnian ever to die on a foreign battlefield, fought in the Boer War, a campaign that has all but disappeared from the nation's collective memory. Indeed, when commentators eulogize Canada's war dead they invariably refer to "the two world wars and the Korean conflict."

Dan Crone's war is rarely mentioned. He is, in other words, a forgotten hero. It's as if the term "Lest We Forget" doesn't apply to the men of his generation. And if we can forget them, what's to stop us from eventually forgetting about the soldiers of other conflicts? Crone's story should be remembered because it tells us a great deal about the sacrifices young Canadians have made over the decades.

When war broke out in 1899, the twenty-three year old employee of the CPR Telegraph and Express Company quickly joined the cavalry. Before long, he found out there was nothing glorious about war. In his letters home, he described sweltering days, cold nights, hunger, homesickness, and fear. On one occasion, he recalled sleeping on an African hillside. "We had to lie on the rocks all night. I thought I would freeze," he said. After weeks of eating "hardtack," he rejoiced in telling the story of how he caught a few ducks and chickens and immediately "began plucking and roasting."

In his dreams, he sometimes returned to Sarnia. "I was home one night," he wrote. "Oh! Was I not having a good square meal. I had just cleaned the table when I was awakened to find myself as hungry as ever.

I had not eaten for two days at that time." His first taste of combat was scary. "I admit it gives a person a funny feeling when you hear the shells whizzing by you," he told his parents.

Once, while crossing a river, he was caught in an ambush. "Their shells fell right amongst us," he wrote. "One passed within a foot of me and shot another fellow's horse's ear off. We were ordered to advance and cross the river, which we did on the dead run through water, mud and everything. Some had to dismount and wade through, as it was too deep for horses."

Crone made national headlines in May 1900 when he rode behind enemy lines to rescue a wounded soldier trapped under an exhausted horse. The pair made it to safety, only to learn they'd been reported missing in action. "When neither turned up for a couple of days it was concluded that they had been wiped out or gobbled up by the enemy," the *Toronto Globe* reported.

In August 1900 Crone's luck ran out. Like many soldiers, his death was anything but glorious. In fact, he succumbed to a bout of fever.

At his memorial service, Rev. J.R. Hall blasted Sarnians who were enthusiastic about the war. "It seems to me that our town, led by some of our citizens, has gone wild—simply wild. Where to is the glory of war now?" he asked. He added, "Within the past week there has come very near to us something of the realities of war. The only way we could understand something of it would be to go over to South Africa, stand on one of the hilltops there, and see what has taken place. I am afraid that if some of our shouters were there, they would no longer shout."

*Dan McCaffery is a Sarnia reporter, historian and the author of eight books, including six books on military history.

SOURCES: B, C, D, E, F, L, N, 2D, 2I, 6O, 7C, 8X



Aftermath

*With Desolation and the Stars
I lonely vigil keep,
Over the garner'd fields of Mars,
Watching the dead men sleep –
Huddled together, so silent there.
With bloodless faces and clotted hair,
Wrapped in their long, long sleep*

*By uptorn trees and craters rims
Along the Ridge they lie,
Sprawled in the mud, with out-spread limbs,
Wide staring at the sky.
Why to the sky do they always stare,
Questioning heaven in dumb despair?
Why don't they moan, or sigh?*

*Why do I rave, 'neath the callous stars,
At their upturned faces white?
I, surely I, with my crimson scars
Slumber with them this night!
Death, with shadowy finger bare,
Beckons me on to – I know not where;
But, huddled together, and freed from care
We'll watch till the dawn of Light*

*By Frank Walker
1916*

WORLD WAR I (THE GREAT WAR, 1914-1918)

Following is a description of important historical events, people and key battles of the First World War. Sarnia-Lambton's sons participated in every major battle fought by Canadian troops. Many made the supreme sacrifice.

- **SARNIA BECOMES A CITY:** Only three months before the start of World War I, there was a significant day in the history of Sarnia. It was on May 7th, 1914 that the town of Sarnia, having reached a population of 10,000 residents, was officially declared a city. On that May 7th date, the Royal Highness **Prince Arthur, Duke of Connaught and Strathearn** visited the municipality from Ottawa accompanied by his youngest daughter, the Royal Highness Princess Patricia of Connaught. The Duke of Connaught, Prince Arthur William Patrick Albert, was the first member of the Royal Family to become the Governor-General of Canada. He was the third son of Queen Victoria, and his daughter Princess Patricia was a granddaughter of Queen Victoria.

The Royal father and daughter arrived in Sarnia by train at the Grand Trunk station at the foot of Ferry Dock Hill in the afternoon, greeted by enthusiastic, cheering crowds and the honour guard of the 27th Regiment with a regimental band. A procession with the Duke and his daughter in a horse-drawn carriage was then led up Front Street, to Christina and Davis Streets on its way to Victoria Park. In 1891, the park had been renamed Victoria Park in honour of Queen Victoria, Prince Arthur's mother, who would reign as Queen of the United Kingdom from 1837 until 1901. There, for several hours during the afternoon, hundreds of people participated in the ceremonies while bands played and children waved flags. The guard of honour from the 27th Regiment, in scarlet tunics, white helmets and gleaming accoutrements, the school cadets in bright new uniforms, members of the local First Nations, a corps of khaki clad Boy Scouts, and thousands of school children in white, made an effective background for the royal guests. Among the dignitaries were Colonels R. MacKenzie, Colonel R.I. Towers, Sarnia Mayor Joseph B. Dagan and Maude Hanna who was hostess at a reception in Princess Patricia's honour. Maude Hanna would lose her stepson, Neil William Hanna, in WWI. Information on twenty-three-year-old Lieutenant Neil Hanna is included in this Project on page 293.

- **The Imperial City:** At one point during the impressive ceremony Prince Arthur, Governor General of Canada, thanked the citizens of Sarnia for the warm welcome extended to his party and then officially proclaimed Sarnia as a city. While at the park, the Duke planted a ceremonial hard maple tree near the west end of the park, using a small nickel-plated spade (the ceremonial nickel-plated spade used for planting the tree was placed in the Carnegie Library, and is still housed inside the Sarnia Library today). City of Sarnia mayor Joseph Dagan then said, *"In testimony of our loyalty to the King and your Highness as his representative in Canada, and in the public expression of our affection and regard for all the members of your illustrious family, we have taken the liberty of selecting as a synonym for Sarnia the title of the Imperial City, thus linking the title of the reigning house of the Empire with our young city's name."* Mayor Dagan then watched his granddaughter, Margaret Diver, present a bouquet of flowers to Princess Patricia. After the ceremony, the Duke and Princess visited the Sarnia Collegiate Institute on London Road, and Sarnia General Hospital where tea was served. They were then taken on a tour of other interesting places in the city, including the Sarnia Reserve. They then returned to the Grand Trunk railway station where hundreds of people again cheered as the train pulled away. The *Sarnia Observer* headline that day was "The Imperial City-Sarnia Lights the Way". Less than three months after the Duke's visit and Sarnia being proclaimed a city, families in the new city of Sarnia learned that their country was going to war.



Prince Arthur and Princess Patricia in Sarnia – May 7, 1914

- **The Princess Patricia's:** An interesting sidenote is that at the outbreak of World War I, Montrealer Captain Andrew Hamilton Gault, a veteran of the Boer War, offered the Canadian government \$100,000 to help recruit, finance and equip an infantry battalion for immediate overseas duty. It was the last privately raised regiment in the British Empire. One of Captain Gault's enthusiastic supporters was Lt.-Col. Francis Farquhar, who was the military secretary of Canada's Governor-General, the Duke of Connaught, Prince Arthur. Colonel Farquhar was able to gain the Duke's permission to name this new regiment raised by Captain Andrew Gault, after the Duke's youngest daughter, Princess Patricia of Connaught, who had endeared herself to Canadians, and who had visited Sarnia only months earlier in May of 1914.

So on August 10th, 1914, the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry was established in Ottawa, initially allowing only experienced British soldiers and university men into the ranks. Only eight days later, the newly formed regiment had a full complement of high calibre volunteers, approximately 1,100 men, the majority of whom were veterans of the Boer War. In September 1914, the Battalion left for France, becoming the first Canadian infantry unit to serve in the Great War, entering the trenches near Ypres early in January 1915.

Commonly referred to as the "Princess Pat's" or "PPCLI", they have become one of the most well-known and fabled fighting regiments in Canada and around the world, having participated in every major operation undertaken by Canada in World War I, World War II, the Korean War, in Peacekeeping missions and in the Afghanistan War.^{2E, 2Z} Throughout the Princess Patricia's history, members of the Sarnia community have served in the unit.

- **Mueller Limited:** Mueller Company was founded in 1837 in Decatur, Illinois, originally as a gun shop, by Hieronymus Mueller, a German immigrant. By 1880, the focus of the business had shifted to the manufacture of plumbing goods. By the early 1900's, the company was prospering, and that included an increase in business in Canada. In Sarnia, Joe Dagan, an alderman in 1906, urged town council to push for the growth needed to make Sarnia a city. In order to achieve Cityhood, a community had to have a population of at least 10,000 people and, in the early 1900's, Sarnia was a few hundred citizens short of the magic number. At the urging of Alderman Dagan, Sarnia Council offered the Mueller Company a \$30,000 grant if it agreed to start up a factory locally, and hire at least 150 workers. Mueller's accepted the offer, and with Oscar Mueller heading the operation (the youngest of Hieronymus' six sons), a new brass products factory opened its doors on Clifford Street in Sarnia in June 1913, known as Mueller Limited. The influx of new workers brought the Sarnia population to above 10,000, which enabled the town to apply for city status (which the province granted in May 1914, with Joe Dagan then elected as mayor).

By the time World War I started, Mueller Ltd. had switched from manufacturing bronze and brass fittings for plumbing, gas and water companies, to munitions for the war, including shell casings and detonator fuses for high explosive shells. It would soon employ 1,800 workers toiling around the clock in three shifts, 24 hours a day. In 1917, with the United States entering the war, Mueller's opened a new factory in Port Huron (Mueller Metals Company), which built munitions to aid the American war effort. The Canadian Government would again look to Mueller Limited during World War II. Muellers in Sarnia produced forgings and machine parts for anti-aircraft and naval ammunition, as well as special bronze valves used in the construction of various types of engines and winches for navy corvettes, frigates, destroyers and minesweepers.^{N, 5P, 5Q, g, z}

- **THE WAR BEGINS:** Before 1914 the Great world powers were in two big alliance blocs: the **Triple Alliance** (Germany, Austria-Hungary and Italy) and the **Triple Entente** (France, Russia and Britain).

By the summer of 1914 in the lead up to war, Europe was a tense powder keg of conflict. Countries had calculated goals, deep grievances and complicated alliances. World War I was triggered on June 28, 1914 when on their anniversary, the Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir to the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and his wife Duchess Sophie of Hohenberg, were assassinated in Sarajevo by a nineteen year-old Bosnian Serb terrorist (he was one of seven young conspirators bent on assassinating the Duke that day). The assassination of Archduke Ferdinand, sometimes referred to as the "**shot heard round the world**", was the spark that set off a chain of events that led to the start of war.

On the front page of the July 3, 1914 *Sarnia Weekly Observer* was the headline, "PROUD OF MURDER", with subheadings: "Slayer of Archduke Had Planned Crime For Some Time" and "Martial Law Proclaimed". Sarnians would learn the details of the planned conspiracy against the lives of Archduke Ferdinand and his wife, involving "clockwork bombs", the "explosive" type bullet which killed the archduke, about the young assassin and

his confession. Sarnians would also read about the large-scale anti-Serb riots in a number of cities in parts of the Austro-Hungarian Empire as a result of the assassination, and that martial law had been declared throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina.

On July 6, 1914, Germany (allied with Austria-Hungary) agreed to support Austro-Hungarian action against the Serbs. On July 23, Austria-Hungary delivered an ultimatum to the Serbian government, starting the world on the road to war. The Serbians accepted most of the demands of the ultimatum, but, assured of support from Russia, rejected others.

War officially began on **July 28, 1914**, when Austria-Hungary formally declared war on Serbia (allied with the Triple Entente).

On August 1, 1914, Germany declared war on Russia (the same day that Germany and the Ottoman Empire signed a secret alliance treaty). On August 2, Germany invaded Luxembourg. On August 3, Germany declared war on France, and the next day, invaded Belgium in order to outflank the French army.

In early August, Germany launched its **Schlieffen Plan** against France. The Plan aimed for the quick defeat of France by having the bulk of the German Army invading through neutral Belgium, Holland and Luxembourg (avoiding the heavily fortified direct border with France) and then moving rapidly south to capture Paris. If they were able to defeat France in six weeks, Germany would then be able to concentrate her efforts on defeating Russia in the east rather than having to fight on two fronts at once.

At midnight (London, U.K. time) on Tuesday, **August 4, 1914**, the United Kingdom declared war on Germany. **Canada and Newfoundland**, as colonies of Britain, were both bound by the Mother Country's decision and thus automatically at war.

That first weekend in August of 1914 was a long weekend for many Canadians, a bank holiday, a time for "menfolk" to spend a little extra time with their families. The front page headlines of the holiday Monday, August 3, 1914 *London Evening Free Press* newspaper read, "Germany, France and Russia at War—Britain Thus Far Out of Struggle—Germany Has Invaded Luxemburg and Crossed Border into France; Fighting Goes On Along Frontier".

So as Canadians had just returned to work after the long weekend, it was Tuesday, August 4 at 7:00 p.m. in Sarnia when the news of the war arrived. The front page headlines of the August 4, 1914 *London Evening Free Press* newspaper read, "BRITISH ULTIMATUM TO GERMANY—London, August 4—Great Britain to-day sent practically an ultimatum to Germany demanding a satisfactory reply by midnight on subject of Belgian neutrality". Other headlines on the front page of the newspaper included, "France Formally Declares War—Commander-in-chief of French left for Frontier to-day"; "Nurses for British Army are being Sought in this city"; and "Belgium Refuses Germany's Ultimatum—War is declared on Belgium by Germany, who is going the Limit."

- **NO ARMY:** Canada had virtually no army to speak of when Britain declared war on Germany. In 1914, out of a population of eight million, Canada had barely three thousand permanent force soldiers, and 50,000 militia recruits on paper. Most of these militiamen or "Saturday night soldiers" were poorly trained and unfit for service. The only 'regular' unit of the Canadian army was the Royal Canadian Regiment (RCR). In August of 1914, it was mobilized and sent to Bermuda to relieve a battalion of the Lincolnshire Regiment (British Army) who had been dispatched to France. The RCR's would later join the CEF in France in November of 1915.^{4F, 7Z}

- **CANADIANS VOLUNTEER:** Though Canada was automatically at war on August 4, 1914, it would be Canadians who chose the extent of their support, and young men could decide if they wished to serve. In World War I, from 1914 until 1917, the **Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF)** was composed of men who had volunteered to fight. Initially, volunteers had to be "of good character and physically fit for service"; between the ages of 18 and 45; and have a minimum height of five feet two inches. Privates would receive \$1.00 a day, plus ten cents per day for overseas service, and their board, lodging and uniform would be supplied. Earning \$1.10 a day overseas, many of the men sent half of their pay back to families or next of kin back home. Pay was a source of conflict between Canadian and British troops, as the Canucks were paid almost five times as much as the British Tommies.

At enlistment, **volunteers** for the Canadian Expeditionary Force completed a two-sided **Attestation Paper** that included a series of questions seeking information that included: the recruit's name and present address; date and country of birth; name and address of next-of-kin; marital status; occupation; any previous military service; religious denomination; their willingness to be vaccinated and inoculated; their willingness to serve overseas; a question

asking if they understood the nature and terms of their engagement; and a place to sign an oath of allegiance to the King and country. Recruits would undergo a brief medical examination to determine their physical well-being, and information was recorded that included their; age, height, weight, complexion, eye and hair colour and a record of any distinctive physical marks or characteristics, or tattoos.

By contrast, men who were **drafted** into the CEF under the provisions of the **Military Service Act (1917)** completed a far simpler one-sided form that included their name, date of recruitment, and compliance with requirements for registration. Military Service Act recruits were selected based in the order of: unmarried men or widowers with no children first; married men with no children second; and finally married men or widowers with children. More information on the Military Service Act is on pages 156-158.

Officers completed a one-sided form called the **Officers' Declaration Paper**. Applicants were selected from, in order: single men, then married men without families, then married men with families.

Almost 80 percent of the enlistees were single. Initially, married men were not allowed to enlist to fight in the war without their wife's signed permission. Because of this, women were targeted by propaganda (including in the *Sarnia Observer*) with ads such as; "When the war is over and someone asks your husband or your son what he did in the Great War, is he to hang his head because you wouldn't let him go?"

When the war began, Canada had more volunteers than it could take. As the war progressed, it became tougher, as stories from the Front came home. The army began loosening restrictions, lowering the minimum height and chest measurements, dropping dental and eyesight standards, and no longer requiring men to get their wives' permission to enlist. The average Canadian WWI soldier was a little over twenty-six years old, with an average height of five feet seven inches, and a weight of around 150 pounds.^{N, 4G, 5E, 9U}

At the start of the Great War, men from all classes, occupations and ages rushed to enlist at armouries and militia bases across the country. In Toronto, when the University Avenue Armoury doors opened, it was necessary to post guards with fixed bayonets to keep the frenzied, patriotic would-be soldiers at bay. With so many enthusiastic to serve, thousands across the country were turned away because they did not meet the military's high medical and physical standards, and height and age restrictions. Failing stringent medical exams that demanded good teeth, high arches, and healthy lungs was a bitter disappointment for many. Recruiting sergeants selected volunteers with military experience first, either as part of a militia unit or South African War veterans. It was not uncommon for those over the age of 45 to lie about their age, rub shoe polish into their hair or make multiple attempts to enlist.^{4F}

• **Reasons to join:** The reasons and desire to serve varied. Many were British born, so enlisting offered the opportunity for a free trip "ome" (the First Contingent were 60% British born, but as the war progressed, Canadian born would reach 51%). Other reasons to enlist included: there were strong feelings of patriotism, the idea of service to King and Empire; the desire to fight against tyranny and German militarism; there was the attraction of travel and adventure; a desire to follow friends and family; the feeling that because everybody else was going, it was "the thing to do"; social pressure in not wanting to feel embarrassed at being able-bodied and not part of the war effort; for some it was an escape, a way out of a bad family or marriage; and for others, it was for the benefit of regular pay—Privates received one dollar a day, plus ten cents more for overseas service, plus food and board was supplied.

It was felt by many that it was going to be a short war, likely over by Christmas. As the war progressed, when recruiting for second and third contingents, military authorities increasingly relaxed medical regulations and physical requirements.^{4F, 7Z, 8H}

• **Old Enough to Fight:** It is estimated that between 15,000 and 20,000 underage Canadian youths, most enlisting between the ages of fourteen and seventeen, some as young as ten, volunteered to serve in the First World War. They either evaded or went with the blessing of their parents, or they fooled recruiters. Some were coached and given a nudge and wink by a recruiting sergeant to walk around the block and come back in a few minutes after they'd aged a few years. The reasons for joining varied, such as wanting to be part of this "great adventure", wanting an opportunity to travel and earn money, wanting to escape a difficult home life, or wanting to be with their fathers or older brothers who were also serving.

There were a variety of reasons why underage youths (under the age of 18, later changed to 19) could "get away with" joining the Canadian military. These included: no requirement necessary to prove one's age with a birth certificate at enlistment; a sheer lack of eligible men; a large number of unemployed youth seeking a financial means; and regimental recruiters filling quotas. Single men were the first applicants selected; as enlistments waned, the

Militia lowered its recruiting standards and policies; if rejected by one recruiter, the youth would approach a different recruiter; and, even though they had lied about their age on their attestation papers, it was considered a “legally-binding” document. The army was loath to release the underage from service, even when parents wrote pleading letters.

While some of the very young were siphoned off for special training units in England—including the largest, called the **Young Soldiers Battalion**—thousands more underage boys served in the trenches alongside their elders, and would fight in all the major battles. For some, once it was discovered that they were underage, they were assigned non-combat roles such as “runners”, delivering food, water, rum and ammunition to the soldiers on the front lines, or delivering messages to the rear to battalion headquarters. Other underage soldiers served as buglers, in the trenches ready to sound the alarm in case of a gas attack. By the Great War’s end, an estimated 2,300 underage soldiers were killed in action.^{2J, 9U}

A number of Sarnia’s young men that enlisted for service in the First World War were underage. Eighteen of Sarnia’s WWI fallen enlisted as teenagers (age 19 or under). Two examples of local underage enlistees who made the ultimate sacrifice are: In July 1915, sixteen year-old Norman Brearley enlisted to serve, recording his age as eighteen. In the spring of 1917, seventeen year-old Norman Brearley lost his life while fighting in France. In September 1915, fourteen year-old Robert Batey, recording his age as seventeen, signed up to serve in the Great War. One year later, at the age of fifteen, Robert Batey lost his life during fighting in Somme, France. Both Norman Brearley and Robert Batey’s information are included in this Project.

- **Religion** was important to most Canadian soldiers of the Great War: 30.9 percent listed themselves as Anglicans, 22.9 percent were Catholic, 21.1 percent were Presbyterian, and 13.6 percent were Methodist; the remaining 11.5 percent were divided among various other denominations and atheism.^{4F}

- **A WORLD WAR:** World War I started in Europe, but soon spread throughout most of the world. It was fought between two major alliances of countries: the **Central Powers**, that included Germany, Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria and the Ottoman Empire (Turkey and the Middle East); against the **Allied Powers**, that included Serbia, Russia, France, Belgium, Great Britain and the British Empire (Canada, Newfoundland, Australia, New Zealand, India and South Africa), Japan, Italy and the United States. Other countries also fought with the Allies or declared war on the Central Powers including Portugal, Romania, Greece, Montenegro, Brazil, Costa Rica, Cuba, Panama, Peru, Haiti, Nicaragua and China.

The Great War was concentrated along the “Western Front” (through Belgium and France) and the “Eastern Front” (through Germany, Russia and Austria-Hungary). However fighting also took place in Turkey, Albania, Serbia, Bulgaria, Greece, Africa, East Asia and the Pacific, Mesopotamia and Palestine, the Italian front and at sea as well as in the air.

The focus of this section of the Project is on Canada’s, particularly Sarnia’s involvement and contributions in the Great War. Canadian Forces fought primarily on the Western Front.

- **ENEMY ALIENS:** When the First World War began in 1914, there was widespread suspicion in Canada that immigrants from enemy countries—Germany, Austria-Hungary (Ukrainians, Czechs, Slovaks), and later Turkey and Bulgaria—might be disloyal. Labelling them “enemy aliens,” the federal government (War Measures Act) passed regulations that allowed it to monitor and even intern some of these immigrants. The fear was that these “enemy aliens” could go home to fight for their armies against Canada or sabotage the country from within.

On October 28, 1914, all enemy aliens were ordered to register at a local office. During the course of the war, approximately 80,000 enemy aliens registered in Canada. Of those, by the end of the war, approximately 8,600 men would be interned at 24 camps and stations across Canada. They endured hunger and forced labour, including helping to build landmarks such as Banff National Park. A few hundred women and children were also interned. In Ontario, camps were located in Kapuskasing, Sault Ste. Marie, Niagara Falls, Toronto, Kingston and Petawawa.^{2I, 2N, 3R, 3T}

- **COLONEL SAM HUGHES:** Sam Hughes, the Minister of Militia and Defence (from October 1911 to November 1916), was Canada’s war leader for the first two and a half years of the war. Hughes, a powerful and controversial figure, had successes and failures during his time as a Minister. He deeply believed that amateur, citizen-soldiers were better and brighter than professional soldiers; he was prone to patronage and cronyism in awarding military

promotions and munitions contracts; he championed the purchase of the Canadian-made Ross Rifle and other inferior equipment including boots that rotted in mud, poorly designed leather harnesses and trench equipment like the MacAdam shovel that was unusable; and he fought British military authorities in order to keep the Canadian forces together, profoundly influencing the organization of the united Canadian Corps.^{F, 2I, 2N, 3S, 5M}

- **VALCARTIER CAMP:** Sam Hughes was also the man behind the creation of the primary training base for the First Contingent in 1914 at Valcartier, 25 kilometres northwest of Quebec City. After war was declared, he decided to put the call out across the country for volunteers that would be organized into newly consecutively-numbered infantry battalions. Valcartier, originally a small piece of farmland in the Quebec City area was bought and expropriated to increase the size of the base. The sandy fields of Valcartier were soon converted to a military camp in record time, with latrines, water works, huts, parade grounds, electric lights and railway tracks.

After leaving behind loved ones and cheering crowds in their hometowns, all volunteers travelled to Valcartier for equipment, training and preparation for war. When war was declared, the Canadian government called for 20,000 volunteers. One month after war broke out, over 32,000 volunteers arrived at the hastily prepared primary training base camp at Valcartier, Quebec, making it one of Canada's largest cities almost overnight. The volunteers shared the camp with 8,000 horses.^{D, 2I, 3R, 4F}

- **CANADIAN EXPEDITIONARY FORCE:** Approximately 620,000 Canadian men and women were attested during the war and officially served in the Canadian army. Of those, roughly 425,000 served as part of the **Canadian Expeditionary Force** (CEF). This was the name of Canada's entire force that went overseas. Canada would send a total of four contingents (**divisions**) overseas. Each division was comprised of three infantry **brigades** supported by formations of artillery, engineers, machine guns, trench mortars and medical. Each brigade was made up of four **battalions** of about 1,000 men each at full strength.

Shortly after the First Contingent left for England in October 1914, recruiting for a Second Contingent began. Units were again raised across the country, including from southern Ontario—the 18th Battalion (London) and 19th and 20th Battalions (Toronto). The Second Contingent sailed for England in the spring of 1915, in separate transports, evading the dreaded U-boats, and was comprised of the 18th through the 32nd Infantry Battalions. The Second Contingent spent the summer of 1915 training in Shorncliffe on the coast of Kent. Shorncliffe was the primary training camp by mid-1915—a massive camp of stone barracks, wooden huts, and tents, surrounded by fields of lush green where hundreds of sheep were grazing.

This Second Canadian Division joined the First Division by mid-September 1915 to create the **Canadian Corps**, under the command of the British Expeditionary Force. By the autumn of 1916, Canadians were established in other camps such as Bramshott, Crowborough, Hastings, New Shoreham, Seaford, and Witley—all within close proximity of Aldershot, where the British instructed most of their troops. It was not until June of 1917 that a Canadian took command of the Canadian Corps, Lieutenant-General Sir Arthur Currie. In the final months of the war, all four Canadian divisions were commanded by Canadians.^{4G}

The vast majority of Canadians who served in the Canadian Corps during the Great War served in the infantry. The men of the infantry faced the enemy and bore the brunt of the fighting, paying the highest price, suffering a little more than four out of five of all battlefield casualties on the Western Front.^{4F} Battalions were destroyed over and over again, with most hard-luck units losing 500 to 600 percent of their strength: starting with 1,000 men, by war's end more than 5,000 had passed through the ranks.^{4G}

- **CEF BATTALIONS:** Battalions were composite groups of existing militia regiments (having a geographic base), with stray individuals attached to them to meet the necessary quotas. Sam Hughes stripped existing militia regiments of their historical names and organized Canada's volunteer force into new consecutively numbered battalions. Each battalion was commanded by a lieutenant colonel, and had a strength of about 1,000 men, which grew to about 1,200 by early 1918. Each **battalion** consisted of four infantry **companies** of about 200-250 men each. Within each of the four companies were four **platoons**, each of about 50-60 men, largely composed of riflemen. Within each platoon were four **sections** of about 10-15 men, divided into riflemen, rifle grenadiers, bombers, and Lewis machine-gunner sections.

Although men formed close allegiances within their sections and platoons, the larger battalion was the soldiers' family and home.^{4F} Ignoring their bland names, battalions quickly acquired informal names like the "Dirty Third", "Van Doos", "Black Devils" and "Canadian Scottish".

Men from across the country were represented in the infantry battalions, mounted rifle regiments, artillery batteries, railway troop battalions, and other auxiliary units such as medical, field ambulance, forestry, and tunneling units. By the beginning of the war, seventeen battalions had been created. The first four battalions drew their strength from Ontario: the 1st Battalion drew from London, Stratford, and Windsor. The 2nd Battalion was composed of militia regiments from Ottawa, Toronto, and Peterborough. The 3rd Battalion, drew largely from Toronto militia regiments, and the 4th Battalion recruits came primarily from Barrie, Hamilton, and Brantford.^{4F}

By the end of the war, there would be two hundred and sixty numbered CEF battalions in existence, forty-eight of these infantry battalions were at the front. As the war progressed and casualties mounted, most of the Canadian battalions, those numbered from 101 to 258 (including Lambton's 149th battalion), were disbanded upon arrival in England, where the men were absorbed into **reserve battalions** and sent as reinforcements to where they were needed.^{4G}

- **LEAVING CANADA:** By the end of September 1914, Canadian Prime Minister Robert Borden decided that all fit men of the First Contingent of the CEF could go overseas. At Valcartier, cheering could be heard throughout the day and night as word passed through the anxious ranks. A little more than 31,000 men marched to the harbour at Quebec City, singing both new and old marching songs, as well as "O Canada," often to the skirl of bagpipes and drumbeats. The First Contingent, along with one hundred nurses, and over seven thousand horses, left the Port of Quebec on October 3rd, 1914 in some thirty ocean liners, hastily painted in wartime grey. Bands played the boys off with patriotic songs, well-wishers waved as soldiers struggled to find a spot to glance back and thousands of tearing eyes had last looks at loved ones as the ships slipped away. It was the largest single movement of Canadians in the history of the country.^{4F} Many of the soldiers would never see Canada again. The following day, the flotilla passed near St. John's, Newfoundland, where it was joined by the *SS Florizel* with the first five hundred volunteers of the Newfoundland Regiment aboard.^{7A}

- **CANADIANS ARRIVE OVERSEAS:** The enormous Canadian armada carrying the First Contingent across the Atlantic—some 32 liners and transports along with Royal Navy escort ships, arrived after its ten-day voyage in Plymouth Harbour, England on October 14, 1914, having been diverted from Southampton due to German submarine threats in the region. In the long time it took to unload—four days—tired and anxious soldiers were eager to disembark, with wild rumours circulating that the war might end before the Canadians set foot on English soil. The Canadian First Contingent was comprised of the 1st to the 17th Infantry Battalions, plus the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry. Of the 30,617 men who sailed in the First Contingent, almost 18,500 were British born (although many had spent years living in Canada before the war), over 9,100 were Canadian born and about 750 were American born, though the United States didn't enter the war until April 1917.^{4F, 9U}

After disembarking, as the soldiers marched to the railway station, young women marched alongside, men shook their hands, and the mob cheered. A young Canadian soldier wrote a letter home describing the event; "... *we disembarked and marched through the town listening to the rolling cheers and paeans of praise, grasping the hands of innumerable young ladies, exchanging addresses and handing over quarters, dimes and nickels, button badges and maple leafs till our pockets and uniforms were empty and stripped. Arrived at the station, we awaited the train, some young ladies in the meantime very kindly distributing cigarettes and chocolates...*"^{7A}

The First Contingent men were loaded onto trains and transported to Salisbury Camp, an old British army summer training ground 145 kilometres southwest of London. Never intended for use as a camp over the winter, and certainly not to accommodate troops under canvass, **Salisbury Plain** would be their home until February 1915. In the long, harsh winter of 1914, the First Contingent of Canadian troops underwent rigorous training there. The miserable winter they experienced in the mud, cold and rain was one of the wettest on record. The rain started falling on October 23—"solid sheets of driving rain"—and barely stopped for four months.^{4F} Conditions were so miserable, with torrential downpours creating a sea of mud and small lakes, and violent windstorms that blew down tents, that the Australians and New Zealanders decided to divert their troops to Egypt. The Canadians remained, undergoing intense training with route marches, musketry lessons, drills and trench digging.

- **John Wesley Smuck** was born in July 1891 in Point Edward, Ontario, the son of Peter and Emily Smuck. Twenty-three-year-old John Smuck, single, standing five feet six inches tall, with blue eyes and light brown hair, enlisted in September 1914 at Valcartier, Quebec, recording his occupation as machinist with Grand Trunk Railway, and his next of kin as his mother, Emily Smuck of 202 Mitton Street, Sarnia. In November 1914, Joseph Hay, G.T.R.

locomotive foreman at Sarnia tunnel, received a letter from John Smuck, with the Canadian Army Medical Corps, of the First Overseas Contingent. Following is a portion of that letter:

On Board H.M.T. City of Benares, November 7, 1914

My Dear Mr. Hay,

Just a few lines to give you a rough idea of our trip to date. We spent three weeks at Long Branch, seven miles outside of Toronto, and then to the notorious Valcartier camp. This place was more like a young city, board walks, electric lights, water works, and sewage system and banks. After three weeks more of life under tents we embarked at Quebec city on H.M.T. Scotian.

Here life was a change. Good beds or rather berths, and plenty to eat. We had 22 transports, besides our escorts. At night not one light was seen. Sometimes we felt a little creepy, but would retire to our large dining room to play cards or enjoy good music. After 21 days on water we arrived at Devenport. We were on board one week before disembarking. All noncoms. were granted shore leave to see the old historic city and also Plymouth. The reception given us was something to be well remembered.

On disembarking we marched to the railway station to entrain for Salisbury Plains, where we arrived the following day. It rained 23 out of 24 days we were camped there and we had wet feet continually, but not one man sick, which is considered a good record. Our unit is the first of the Canadians to leave for the front and are on our way now for the continent. Where? We do not know and if we did it would be impossible to let you know, but it is probably France. In sight of land now, but are anchored in the English channel. Why? Ask Kitchener! Our company is ready for anything from good to bad and hope to be home some day to relate my experiences in full.

Sincerely yours, John Smuck

No. 11 Stationary Hospital, C.A.M.C. First Canadian Expeditionary Force

Lance Sergeant John Smuck would serve over four years in the Great War, with the Canadian Army Medical Corps, No. 2 Canadian Stationary Hospital and later the 15th Battalion. He is referenced in a letter on page 232. During his time of service in England and France, he would be hospitalized due to a hernia, epilepsy, mumps and influenza. He was discharged from service in June 1919. He passed away in Sarnia on December 23, 1922 due to rheumatic endocarditis at the age of thirty-two, and is buried in Lakeview Cemetery. One of John's siblings was brother David Smuck, who also served with the Army Medical Corps. John's brother David Smuck would not survive the war. Information on twenty-five-year-old Private David Smuck is included in this Project on page 373.

- **TRAINING:** The training was made worse by the poor quality of Canadian-made equipment. Minister of Militia Sam Hughes adopted the Ross Rifle, Mark III as the primary weapon for the Canadian infantry. It had a number of design flaws, the most serious being that it had a tendency to jam during rapid fire. Army-issued boots had soles with a thin leather cover over a cardboard-like substance, which were reduced to a sodden mess within a few days. They were soon replaced by heavy hobnailed boots from the British. The Oliver equipment, a tangle of leather straps and pouches for carrying ammunition and equipment, was poorly designed—with ill-placed pouches that did not hold enough ammunition and leather straps that cut under the arms and constricted after they got wet. Created by Sam Hughes' secretary, the MacAdams shovel, a combination of metal shovel and sniper's tool, was useless as a shovel and lethal to use as a shield. Most were sold as scrap metal before they got anyone killed.

The uniform consisted of a foppish-looking peaked cap (Brodie steel helmets would not be issued for another year and a half); a tight-fitting khaki serge tunic, with a stiff collar and seven brass buttons; and khaki-coloured trousers which were held in place by suspenders. In cold weather, leather jerkins, vests without arms, were worn on the outside of the clothes, underneath the greatcoats. Wool socks and puttees, worn around the ankles and lower leg, were also part of the uniform. Natty-looking greatcoats offered some warmth and often doubled as a blanket or pillow. Most of the infantry battalions looked the same in their khaki-coloured uniforms, except for the kilted units, which included the 13th, 15th, and 16th Battalions of the First Contingent. The kilted battalions fought hard to keep their distinctive uniforms and unique tartan colours. It was also common that when Highlander battalions attacked, they entered with bagpipers playing them into battle.

Razors and shaving brushes were issued to keep the soldiers clean-looking, but were not to be applied to the upper lip, where it was illegal to shave for the first half of the war. Some officers, like Lieutenant Colonel E.S. Wigle of the 18th Battalion (Western Ontario), ordered the enforcement of this bizarre rule, citing the quasi-scientific principle that a moustache allowed the infantry to better aim their rifles.^{4F} One local soldier disciplined because of this rule was Sarnia-born **Sinclair Battley** (his family resided at 154 Front Street, Sarnia). A Corporal with the Canadian Army Medical Corps (CAMC), on December 10, 1915, Corporal Battley was reprimanded for "Direct

disobedience of an order in that he shaved his upper lip after being warned not to" (additional information on Corporal Sinclair Battley is on page 86 and 232). Other parts of the soldiers' kit included: tooth, hair and boot brushes; a mess tin and water bottle; rifle oil bottle and pull-through (a cord to pull through rifle barrel); bayonet and scabbard (sheath). The Department of Militia issued a distinctive maple leaf badge for all of its' Dominion troops, as it did in the South African War, on which "CANADA" was superimposed, and along with the shoulder titles and collar numerals (with the numbered battalion), all were worn with pride.

The Canadians saw themselves as different from the British. Like the Australians and New Zealanders, the Canadians, as fellow dominion soldiers, were portrayed in propaganda as belonging to a stronger, bigger, and tougher British race than England's soldiers. Supporters of this belief argued that the northern climate of the Dominion forged natural-born warriors who were better fighters and tougher brawlers than the stunted, inner-city British working-class lads who had grown up in the drudgery of factory cities. The view of the Canadians as soldier-frontiersmen conformed to the fanciful and popular literature that emerged about Canada before the war. Every Canadian was supposedly a lumberjack, voyageur, or Wild West cowboy, born in an igloo or teepee, and raised with a rifle in his hand. These untruths were propagated by most Canadian soldiers, generals, politicians, and publicists who all played up the romance.^{9U}

• **CHRISTMAS TRUCE OF 1914:** The First World War had been raging on for just over four months. In early December of 1914, Pope Benedict XV had called for a Christmas truce, an idea that was officially rejected. In the cold and wet December, many of the trenches were continually flooded, and soldiers were covered in mud and exposed to frostbite and trench foot. Though the war had begun only five months earlier, already 265,000 French, 90,000 British and 80,000 German soldiers had been killed. In the grim landscape of shell holes and rotting corpses, young soldiers were dreading having to spend Christmas away from their families for the first time. As Christmas approached, soldiers on both sides received parcels packed with goodies from home, along with gifts from their government leaders. Even King George V made a point of sending a Christmas card to everyone serving in the British Expeditionary Force. Then something incredible happened on December 24, 1914.

On that beautiful, clear moonlit night, curious Allied soldiers (British, French and Belgian) peered over the parapets and noticed flickering candles of small Christmas trees along the edges of the German trenches. And then they heard the Germans sing *Stille Nacht – Silent Night*. When the Tommies responded with *O Come All Ye Faithful*, the Germans joined in with the Latin words. During that evening, the troops sang Christmas carols to each other across the lines. Finally, several German messengers carrying lanterns strode boldly into No Man's Land and called out, inviting one of the British soldiers to meet half-way. A volunteer, equipped with a flashlamp, walked out to meet them. Though not approved by higher command, junior officers on both sides negotiated a temporary truce.

The next morning, Allied and German soldiers put down their weapons, climbed out of their trenches, and ventured into No Man's Land. They mingled and shared in a variety of festive activities together, including singing Christmas carols, exchanging gifts, sharing food, treats, wine and cigarettes, showing one another photos of their loved ones, and even playing football. The London *Times* published a letter from a Medical Corps major reporting that in his sector, near the tiny Walloon village of Ploegsteert (nicknamed "Plugstreet" by the British), in southern Belgium, the Germans won a football game 3 to 2 over the British. For a short time, there was peace. Before long, the men returned to their trenches and back to fighting a war.

The story of this inspiring moment of spontaneous peace has been commemorated in books, songs, poems and films (eg. *Joyeux Noel*). The Christmas Truce of 1914 did not involve any Canadian battalions or regiments, but it is a hope-filled moment worth knowing, one of "peace on earth good will toward men" on the battlefield. One year later, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle described the Christmas truce as "an amazing spectacle", saluting it as "one human episode amid the atrocities which have stained the memory of the war."

A young Canadian soldier, Arthur Stratford of Brantford, Ontario, who was serving with the British Expeditionary Force, wrote a letter on December 26, 1914, to his sister describing his experience;
My darling Mayd,

... *Well Mayd I spent Christmas eve and Christmas day in the trenches... It was very funny in the trenches yesterday, there was hardly a shot fired. About noon one of the Germans, they can nearly all speak English, shouted over "Merry Christmas" of course we shouted back "Merry Christmas". "Come over here" one of them called. "You come over here" we answered. "We'll come half way if you come the other half" replied the German. So a couple of our men stood up in the trench and the Germans did the same. Pretty soon we were scrambling over our*

trenches towards one another, without rifles of course, and we met half way. Both sides were a little shy at first but we soon warmed up and shook hands and laughed and joked. Soon one of them said "you sing us a song and we'll sing you one". So we gave them "Tipperary" which they enjoyed very much. They sang us a couple of songs, I don't know what they were but they sounded all right.... The men had a huge time with the Germans and all were mighty sorry when dusk began to fall and we thought it time to go back to our lines... We had great fires in the trenches and we spent the remainder of the evening singing until we were relieved. The Germans told us they were very fed up with the war and would be mighty glad when it was over...^{7A}

There were many spontaneous truces along the Western Front that Christmas of 1914, with at least 100,000 British, French, Belgian and German troops participating. The truces ranged from brief ceasefire agreements in order to collect and bury the dead, to longer truces that lasted until the New Year's Day, with extensive fraternization. Yet in other areas of the front lines, shelling and firing continued, and there were deaths in bloody battles on that Christmas Day. British and German high command were not in favour of such truces, chiefly because they feared that too much fraternization among enemy troops would hinder their resolve to fight. Truces were less common in subsequent years, but they did occur. From a letter from a Canadian soldier in the vicinity of Vimy Ridge in 1916, he wrote, "*We had a truce on Christmas, and the Germans were quite friendly. They came over to see us and we traded bully beef for cigars. Christmas was tray bon.*" Another soldier wrote, "*There was a truce to bury our dead. We had a short service over the graves, conducted by our minister and the German one. They read the 23rd Psalm and had a short prayer. I don't think I will ever forget the Christmas Day I spent in the trenches. After the service we were speaking to the Germans and getting souvenirs from them. Fancy shaking hands with the enemy! I suppose you will hardly believe this, but it is the truth.*"^{D, 3S, 5M, 7W, 7X}

• **CANADIANS MOVE TO THE FRONT:** In February 1915, the 1st Canadian Division—the name that had by this time officially replaced the term First Contingent, embarked for the trenches in France. On February 4, 1915, following his inspection of the 1st Canadian Division in the pouring rain at Salisbury Plain, His Majesty **King George V** issued a farewell to the troops, to be read to all units on board ship, after their embarkation for France. After four months of training, the Canadians—18,517 of them along with 4,764 horses, were desperate to get to the front.^{D, 3R} Following is the text of the King's farewell:

Officers, Non-Commissioned Officers and Men:

At the beginning of November I had the pleasure of welcoming to the mother country this fine contingent from the Dominion of Canada, and now, after three months of training, I bid you godspeed on your way to assist my army in the field. I am well aware of the discomforts that you have experienced from the inclement weather, and abnormal rain, and I admire the cheerful spirit displayed by all ranks in facing and overcoming all difficulties.

From all I have heard and from what I have been able to see at today's inspection and march-past, I am satisfied that you have made good use of the time spent on Salisbury Plain. By your willing and prompt rally to our common flag you have already earned the gratitude of the motherland. By your deeds and achievements on the field of battle I am confident that you will emulate the example of your countrymen in the South African war, and thus help to secure the triumph of our arms. I shall follow with pride and interest all your movements, and I pray that God may bless you and watch over you.

The men of the 1st Canadian Division were utter neophytes compared with the conscripts and reservists they were about to face. A handful of Boer War veterans, a dash of experienced officers, but aside from summer soldiering in the militia, and stints of training at Valcartier and the Salisbury Plain, the Canadian volunteers were regular citizens. All German males spent the first two years of their adulthood in compulsory military training and a further five years refreshing their skills in annual manoeuvres with their regiments. They were an army long groomed for war from a technically advanced, thoroughly militarized society.⁸⁰

• **THE WESTERN FRONT:** During World War I in France and Belgium, on the "Western Front", the forces of France, Britain, Canada and their allies fought the Germans. Trenches stretched some 700 kilometres throughout northern Europe, from the border of Switzerland to the Belgian coast on the North Sea.

Arriving at the front, Canadian soldiers found themselves in a cratered, eviscerated wasteland of mud, wasted vegetation, and unburied bodies. Along most parts of the front, less than 30 kilometres away in either direction the green fields of France or Belgium teemed with life. Since the Germans had captured most of Belgium and much of France early in the war, they had the enormous advantage of usually holding the best ground. Their strongpoints were usually positioned on the forward slope of a ridge or hill, providing a view into enemy lines and forcing attackers to advance uphill.^{4F}

By mid-autumn 1914, the German initial advances into Belgium and France had staggered to an exhausted halt, and each side had settled into their series of trenches. This line of static trenches extending 700 km, and in some places only 1.5 km wide, was described by one Canadian journalist as “**a ribbon of deadly stealth.**” For two weeks at the end of February 1915, the 1st Canadian Division had its first taste of action when each of its brigades did a seven-day familiarization tour with British units. On March 3, the Canadians took over 6,400 yards of the front near Armentieres; supported a British attack; and suffered their first casualties. By the end of the month, the Division had marched north to Ypres, Belgium, the centre of the salient jutting into the German line. The Canadians took up their positions between April 14 and 17, 1915. The troops relieved a French division that had left only the most rudimentary trenches full of dead soldiers and human waste. The Canadian soldiers set out to bring their positions up to “British standards”, cleaning and deepening the trenches and stringing barbed wire. They would not get the time they needed to ready themselves fully.^{5J, 7Z}

• **THE SECOND BATTLE OF YPRES**, Belgium, April 22-May 25, 1915: This was Canada’s first series of major battles in the First World War (the First Battle of Ypres took place October 19-November 22, 1914, prior to the Canadians' arrival on the battlefield). The Ypres salient—a bulge in the front lines on the **Flanders** plain, was located east of the ancient Belgian city of Ypres. Ypres was the last portion of Belgium that was not in enemy hands after the initial German advance of 1914 and, as a result, held great symbolic meaning to the Allies.

When the Canadians arrived, the Ypres salient was an enormous open graveyard, a quagmire where more than 180,000 casualties had been suffered by British, Indian, and German troops. It was surrounded on three sides by enemy soldiers and artillery, on the higher ground and dug in. The trench works the Canadians moved into in April were also woefully inadequate—shallow, poorly constructed, and littered with human excrement, pools of water, and the unburied corpses of soldiers killed in previous fighting. The Canadian soldiers set to work digging deeper trenches and organizing latrines.

It was here that the Germans would unleash their plans for *Disinfection*, the code name for the first lethal **chlorine gas attack** in the history of warfare, even though it had been outlawed in the Hague Conventions. Though British and French commanders had warnings of an impending gas attack (obtained from interrogating prisoners), the feeling at the top was that the Germans would never be so ungentlemanly as to use gas against their enemies. In fact, the Germans had brought up more than 5,730 steel canisters filled with 160 tonnes of lethal chlorine gas, and dug them into the forward edge of their trenches along a four-mile stretch of the front.^{4F, 7Z}

In the late warm sunny afternoon of April 22, 1915, the Germans launched an offensive, which as usual began with an intensive artillery bombardment, lasting for an hour. At about 5:00 pm, the Germans opened the valves on the thousands of canisters, releasing the chlorine gas from the cylinders into a light northeast wind. The Canadian troops watched the several kilometres long, thick clouds of yellow-green chlorine drift toward the French-Algerian trenches that were located to the left of the Canadians. Widespread chaos ensued—the French-Algerian defences crumbled as the troops, completely bemused by this terrible weapon, dropped their guns and equipment and ran for cover choking in panic. The fumes irritated eyes, throats and lungs and many died. One Canadian described what he saw at that moment, “*Over the rise, across the canal, dim figures appeared. There were scores of them. They reeled and staggered as they came. They coughed and wept, turning agonized faces to the Canadians. Now and then one dropped writhing. It was the French Turcos, German gas had done its work.*”

The fleeing troops left a gaping 6.5 kilometre hole in the Allied line, leaving the Canadians exposed and vulnerable. German troops pressed forward, threatening to sweep behind the Canadian trenches and put 50,000 Canadian and British troops in deadly jeopardy. Even the Germans were highly suspicious of the success of this new weapon and without any adequate protection against the gas themselves, planned only a limited offensive. Canadian eyewitness George Nasmith described his experience as, “*Looking towards the French line we saw this yellowish green cloud rising on a front of at least three miles and drifting at a height of perhaps a hundred feet toward us. The gas rose in great clouds as if it had been poured from nozzles, expanding as it ascended.*” Later in the day, on seeing victims of the attack at a Canadian field ambulance, he described, “*Lying on the floors were scores of soldiers with faces blue or ghastly green in colour, choking, vomiting and gasping for air, in their struggles with death, while a faint odour of chlorine hung above this place.*”

The raw and vastly outnumbered 1st Canadian Division, themselves suffering from the gas, desperately fought throughout the night to hold the stretched out line, managing to stop the enemy from encircling them inside the salient, and from marching on the city of Ypres. The Germans stopped their advance, satisfied with having

occupied the villages of Langemark and Pilkem, capturing 2,000 prisoners and 51 guns.

One of the gaps created during the gas attack was at a position known as **Kitchener's Wood**, an oak plantation near St. Julien. It was here on April 22 at approximately 11:00 pm in the dim light of the moon in a cloudy sky that the Canadian 10th Battalion of the 2nd Canadian Brigade and 16th Battalion Canadian Scottish of the 3rd Brigade were ordered to counter-attack and close the gap. It was the first major Canadian attack of the war. With no reconnaissance prior, and despite running into obstacles through the swirling clouds of gas and heavy enemy fire, the Canadian attack cleared the area of Germans, but it came at a heavy price, suffering more than 75 percent casualties.

Following is a portion of the description of that April 22 counter-attack, as it appeared in the *Sarnia Observer* on the seventh anniversary of the battle:

The two battalions were formed up in battle array, each four lines deep, the men at one yard intervals... Word was given to advance and the lines moved forward quietly in the dark. Another halt was called. A quarter of a mile ahead lay a dark patch on the horizon. It was a wood (Kitchener's Wood). Then word came back that the Germans were entrenched there. Orders were then laid that they must be removed by dawn.

Again the lines advanced. From somewhere behind, a lonely gun was throwing an occasional shell into the wood ahead... Ahead at intervals, German flares rose from the wood. Still another halt was called. This time orders were issued to discard packs and greatcoats and to fix bayonets. "Advance," came the order and the wood began to loom close. The ranks moved steadily. The front rank was not more than 150 yards from the trenches.

Then it happened. With a roar... the whole front of the wood and hundreds of yards on either side burst into lines of jagged flame. Hundreds of flares shot into the sky, laying bare the earth like a noonday sun. The front lines melted. Down went the men. There were no more orders. None could be heard in that awful blast. The men, hugging the earth, watched ahead. When one line rose all rose and rushed forward. They seemed to fall like leaves, but none paused to inquire a comrade's fate.

How did any win through? The air seemed filled with rifle and machine gun bullets. The roar was constant. Shrapnel burst overhead, again and on through ditches, wire over hedges that offered no shelter, men falling everywhere on they rushed. With a wild yell the trench was reached. The firing broke suddenly off. Grey figures darted away through the trees. Those who remained were simply killed in passing. On into and through the wood went the Canadians.

The place was won. The Germans had been removed. The wood was wide and the undergrowth thick in places. From the left broke out a heavy rifle fire. The bullets ripened through the trees. The Canadians heeded them not. They were hunting Germans and they toyed with death. Many fell. The remnants of the two battalions then consolidated in the captured German trench. When dawn broke, they were partly dug in. Two thousand men had rushed to the attack. The roll-call at dawn revealed a scant 600.

Then commenced a day of horror. To the left of the wood and for a mile beyond stretched a German trench... German machine guns played upon the Canadian trench constantly. Many of the defenders went down. Then the German artillery somewhere over on the right got the range. All day long the great shells swept the Canadian line from end to end. Horribly accurate was their fire. By noon the trench was filled in places. To move one was forced to crawl over dead and dying. One's comrades breathed their last in roaring crowded solitude. Scant help could be rendered. A shell lighting in a pile of dead and wounded; red flesh and gory heads streaked the air. In the open lay hundreds of Canadians. If a man rolled groaning in agony, the Germans saw him and a fusillade of shots ended his misery.

But the Canadians hung on. The thought of retreat simply occurred to no one. They waited for the German onslaught. It was sure to come. But it never came. Men's nerves were worn thin and ragged. But they hung on.

As a result of the April 22 gas attack, dressing stations were inundated with hundreds of men at a time. For the victims, the heavier than air chlorine irritated and destroyed the alveoli, causing fluid discharge within the lungs and impairing the exchange of oxygen. Even worse, the chlorine mixed with water to form hydrochloric acid that burned tissue. Victims writhed on the ground, their faces turning purple, making gagging, choking sounds, pulling at their clothes, vomiting "greenish slime," propping themselves up to gasp for help, and then falling back exhausted from their struggles. In the end, the worst-case men drowned in their own searing fluids. One general wrote, "*I saw some hundred poor fellows laid out in the open, in the forecourt of a church, to give them all the air they could get, slowly drowning with water in their lungs – a most horrible sight, and the doctors quite powerless.*" D, N, 21, 2N, 30, 3R, 4F, 4Z, 11C

• **Baptism by Fire:** In the early morning hours of April 24, after enduring another violent artillery bombardment, it

was the Canadians who fell victim to the second chlorine gas attack in the history of warfare. An eyewitness from the 48th Highlanders described what he saw as, *“Men wearing mine-rescue helmets appeared over the German parapet; they seemed to have hoses in their hands and immediately there was a hissing sound, and a heavy greenish-yellow cloud rose slowly like a thick fog moving across no man’s land.”*

Despite overwhelming odds and dealing with a host of problems from: no gas masks; poor command; lack of food and water; from chlorine gas that left men violently sick and gasping for air through urine soaked and muddy handkerchiefs; to jammed Ross rifles; the inexperienced yet resilient Canadians fought tenaciously to hold key strongpoints and prevent a German advance. Another day of blood and sacrifice resulted in thousands of Canadians wounded, captured and killed. In the first 48 hours at Ypres, there were more than 6,000 Canadian casualties—one Canadian in every three became casualties of whom more than 2,100 died, and 1,410 were captured, the largest number taken at one time during the war (nearly half the Canadians taken prisoner in the Great War went into captivity at the Second Battle of Ypres). The casualty rate suffered by the Canadians in their first battle was to be matched not even by the Somme or Passchendaele. In the days following the battle, the War Office announced, *“The Canadians had many casualties but their gallantry and determination undoubtedly saved the situation.”*^{D, 4F, 7A, 8H, 8O}

In just over one month at Ypres, one third of the Canadian force, over 8,600 soldiers were killed, wounded or captured, but the Canadians, along with the British and French, kept the Germans from breaking through. One German prisoner blurted to his Canadian captors, *“You fellows fight like hell.”* Ypres was the Canadians baptism by fire, where they made a name for themselves as tough and dependable troops, but at a terrible price.^{D, 2I, 2N, 4F, 7R}

One German soldier in the Ypres Salient, at Messines, Belgium, wrote of the frustration of the trench stalemate. *“We are still in our old positions, and keep annoying the English and French. The weather is miserable and we often spend days on end knee-deep in water and, what is more, under heavy fire. We are greatly looking forward to a brief respite. Let’s hope that soon afterwards the whole front will start moving forward. Things can’t go on like this for ever.”* The author was a German infantryman of Austrian descent named Adolf Hitler.^{4Z}

• **John Adda MacDonald** was born in May 1890 in Denver, Colorado. At the age of twenty-four and single, he enlisted in Valcartier, Quebec on September 9, 1914, recording his occupation as druggist, and his next of kin as his father, Mr. A.E. MacDonald of 174 South Brock Street, Sarnia. John Adda MacDonald enlisted as a member of the Canadian Army Medical Corps (CAMC). One month after enlisting he arrived in England, and a month later, on November 6, 1914, he arrived in France as a Sergeant with No. 2 Stationary Hospital. In August 1915, Sergeant John Adda MacDonald of the CAMC in Le Touquet, France, mailed a letter to his parents, Mr. and Mrs. A.E. MacDonald on South Brock Street in Sarnia. Following is a portion of that letter:

Dear Friends,

No doubt you will be somewhat surprised when you receive this letter from me but I wish to thank you for the papers which you have been good enough to send from time to time. As soon as Capt. Bentley receives them, he distributes them among the Sarnia boys who with faces wreathed in smiles, retire to a secluded place where they devour its contents free from disturbance of any kind, and in this way we are able to keep pace with current events in the far away home town, Sarnia....

Last April we worked day and night for days, especially during the last week of April, when our brave Canadians did such remarkable work at Ypres. At that time our capacity was five hundred and sixty beds, but I have seen seven hundred patients here at one time. More than a thousand patients passed through here in a week at that time. In fact, they were being admitted and discharged at the same time during the rush. If I remember correctly it was during that week that I saw the first wounded Sarnia man, who was Private McLellan, shot in both arms and the head. Some of the patients are brought in, having ghastly wounds and mangled and shattered almost beyond recognition. In spite of this it is very seldom even a murmur is heard.

Note: Another letter written by Captain John Adda MacDonald is on page 232.

John Adda MacDonald rose to the rank of Captain, serving with the Canadian Army Medical Corps in England and France including at No. 2 Stationary Hospital, No. 13 General Hospital, Eastbourne, No. 14 General Hospital, Hastings and Canadian Central Depot Medical Stores. John Adda MacDonald would survive the war, and was struck off strength from the CEF on general mobilization on December 30, 1919. After his discharge, John Adda MacDonald would return to the home of his parents at 174 Brock Street, Sarnia (and later 118 Talfourd Street).

• **JOHN McCRAE – DOCTOR, SOLDIER, POET:** John McCrae was born on November 30, 1872 in a small stone cottage in Guelph, Ontario. He was the second son in a family of three, of parents David McCrae and Janet

Simpson Eckford McCrae, who had immigrated to Canada from Scotland. John had a sister, Geills, and a brother, Tom. The McCrae family were devout Presbyterians, attending church several times on Sunday. His father David McCrae, a successful owner of lumber and wool mills and a breeder of prize cattle and horses, founded Guelph's first militia artillery unit. For young John, his father took him and his siblings for long walks in the countryside, introducing him to nature and telling the history of the valiant Scots who fought against England in distant times and for England as it rose to be the dominant empire of the 19th century. The boys and their sister were taught to read and write by their mother, who also entertained them with her own stories taken from literature and the Bible.

John was raised with the militia, and joined the Guelph Highland cadet corps at age 14 while at Guelph Collegiate Institute. A year later, he was awarded a gold medal by the Ontario Ministry of Education as the best-drilled cadet. At age 16, he joined the militia unit commanded by his father and was appointed bugler. It was in high school where he began writing poetry seriously, and he continued to perfect his skills as a poet while in university. He graduated from Guelph Collegiate in 1888 at age sixteen and was the first Guelph student to win a scholarship to the University of Toronto. While studying a broad range of subjects, he also found time to play rugby and join the Varsity Glee Club, and join the Queen's Own Rifles, an infantry unit in Toronto that drilled on the campus.

While at Toronto, he met a young woman named Alice McCrae (no relation, last names spelled differently). They would spend more and more time together, and it was evident to all those around them that something special was blooming. At the age of twenty-one, John McCrae would be utterly devastated by the shocking death of his nineteen-year-old girlfriend Alice, who died suddenly of typhoid. Her death profoundly affected him, and the theme of death would often appear in his writings.^{D, 30, 4C, 5E, 11C} Shortly after her death he wrote;

The Hope of My Heart

*I left, to earth, a little maiden fair,
With locks of gold, and eyes that shamed the light;
I prayed that God might have her in His care
And sight....*

*"Cast her not out!" I cry. God's kind words come –
"Her future is with Me, as was her past;
It shall be My good will to bring her home
At last."*

In August 1893, John graduated from the Royal Military College in Kingston, from the artillery school officer's training course as a Second Lieutenant. Young John–Jack to family and friends–was a handsome young man and gifted student whose interests included botany, animals, music and a love of writing, literature and poetry that was encouraged by his mother. Despite suffering from asthma, he participated in sports and enjoyed outdoor pursuits throughout his life.

After attending university for three years, however, he was forced to take a year off due to severe asthma. He would graduate from the University of Toronto earning a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1894, and four years later earned a Bachelor of Medicine degree there, along with a gold medal for academic achievement as the top student. He spent the summer of his third year as resident physician at the Garrett Hospital in Mount Airy outside Baltimore—a summer convalescent home for sick children. He wrote an essay about his young patients and frequently described the children in his correspondence; *"A kitten has taken up with a poor (child) dying of muscular atrophy who cannot move. It stays with him all the time, and sleeps most of the day in his straw hat. Tonight I saw the kitten curled up under the bedclothes. It seems as it were a gift of Providence that the little creature should attach itself to the child who needs is most."*

After achieving his medical degree, John McCrae continued his studies at John Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore, Maryland, and was awarded a fellowship in the pathology department at McGill University in Montreal in 1899.

John McCrae would set it all aside within a year when the **Boer War**, or Second South African War, started on October 11, 1899. He regretted not volunteering soon enough to be part of the initial thousand soldiers that embarked overseas in late October 1899. *"I see tonight's bulletin that there is to be no second contingent,"* a disappointed McCrae, now 27, wrote to his mother. *"I feel I feel sick with disappointment, and do not believe that I have ever been so disappointed in my life. Ever since this business began, I am certain there have not been 15 minutes of my waking hours that it has not been in my mind."*^{11C}

When the government announced on December 21, 1899 that it would send a second contingent, John took a leave from his fellowship at McGill and enlisted not as a doctor, but as a lieutenant in the Royal Canadian Artillery. He arrived in Cape Town in mid-February 1900. He would serve in the war as an artillery officer until mid-December 1900. In that time, his artillery battery mostly guarded railway lines and stations, seeing little action. McCrae first experienced combat on July 21, 1900, while marching to De Wagon Drift, where the British were able to chase off the attackers after a short skirmish. During his time in South Africa, McCrae engaged in battles, experienced the dangers and hardships of armed conflict, saw many deaths, earned the respect of his men, and won the Queen's Medal.

One of the things he witnessed was that more men were dying of disease than in combat, due partly to the poorly run British field hospitals. He wrote, *"For absolute neglect and rotten administration, it is a model... I am ashamed of some members of my profession ... Every day there are from 15 to 30 Tommies [British soldiers] dying from fever and dysentery. Every one that dies is sewn up in a blanket, and four shillings are taken out of the pay for the blanket. The soldier's game is not what it's cracked up to be."*^{3M, 11C}

He would return to Guelph, then Montreal in 1901 to take up his fellowship at McGill where in 1902 he was appointed resident pathologist at Montreal General Hospital. In 1904, he resigned his commission as Major-1st Brigade of Artillery, his life becoming increasingly busy with new medical postings and responsibilities. Over a period of the next eight years his accomplishments included: was appointed associate in medicine at Royal Victoria Hospital; traveled to England and joined the Royal College of Physicians; started his own practice; was a popular lecturer at McGill and the University of Vermont; was appointed pathologist to Montreal's Foundling and Baby Hospital; was appointed physician to Royal Alexandra Hospital for Infectious Diseases; was expedition physician for Governor General Lord Grey; and co-authored a textbook on pathology in 1912.

John was a highly regarded doctor and gifted teacher of medicine, and was known for treating the poor and waiving his fees. When not teaching or treating the sick, he dabbled in writing poetry and stories. He enjoyed travel, hunting and fishing. He was described as warm and sensitive with a remarkable compassion for both people and animals. His bubbling personality, charms and talents gained him ample friends and recognition, and he was much in demand at social gatherings. The six foot tall, handsome doctor McCrae was popular with the women, and though he had relationships with a number of them, he never married.^{D, 3O, 4C, 5E, 11C}

In the summer of 1914, McCrae decided to take a holiday in Europe where he could visit a few of his friends in the medical field. He left Montreal on July 29, 1914 and eight days out at sea, he learned Britain had declared war. When the war broke out, the forty-one-year-old respected doctor felt compelled to serve, writing to a friend, *"It is a terrible state of affairs, and I am going because I think every bachelor, especially if he has experience of war, ought to go. I am really rather afraid, but more afraid to stay at home with my conscience."* He returned to Canada and volunteered his services *"either combatant or medical, if they need me,"* enlisting on September 22 1914. At that time, the army wanted doctors more than gunners. As part of the Canadian Expeditionary Force, 2nd Division, Canadian Field Artillery, McCrae was given the rank of Major, second-in-command and brigade surgeon.

Since he was an officer, McCrae was entitled to a horse and one, named **Bonfire**, was given to him by a friend. Arriving in England in October 1914, he brought his beloved Bonfire. McCrae was very fond of animals and often wrote home to his niece and nephew as if the letters were from Bonfire and signed with Bonfire's hoof print. As part of the First Contingent, McCrae would spend four months training on Salisbury Plain in atrocious conditions for much of the time.

By February 1915, McCrae was in France on the front lines, the field-surgeon and second in command of the First Brigade, Royal Canadian Field Artillery. In a letter he wrote to his mother in February, he described some of what he saw in the muddy, filthy trenches, *"Most of the trench injuries are of the head, and therefore there is a high proportion... killed in the daily warfare as opposed to an attack... Our Canadian plots fill up rapidly."* In early April, the Canadians moved to the front in Belgium.

The Second Battle of Ypres began on April 22 when the Germans unleashed a heavy bombardment against the Allied lines. In the late afternoon of that sunny, warm day, the Germans released 160 tonnes of lung-searing chlorine gas from thousands of large metal cylinders—the first large-scale release of lethal gas in the history of warfare. Two days later, the Germans unleashed a second gas attack, directly on the Canadian lines. The first four days of Ypres would be among the most costly of the war for the Canadians, with more than six thousand men killed, wounded or captured.

During the Battle of Ypres, McCrae established a makeshift dressing station at a location called **Essex Farm**. It was really just a six-square-metre cavern carved out of the bank of the Yser Canal. There he tended to hundreds of dreadfully wounded soldiers every day and night—operating on a crude table, straw soaking up the blood, the steady thump of shellfire shook his dugout, poisonous chlorine gases in the air, and dust and debris filtered down on the doctor and his patients. It was not uncommon for casualties to roll down the bank of the canal and land in front of the dressing station.

Kevin Patterson in the 2015 anthology *In Flanders Fields: 100 Years* wrote, “[McCrae] rejoined his beloved artillery by becoming a war surgeon in a field hospital attached to the guns. McCrae had become an infectious disease consultant at McGill, co-authoring a textbook on pathology. He was no more a trauma surgeon by this point than he was a psychiatrist. But he felt duty called him.”^{11C}

McCrae was surrounded by the dead and dying, corpses piled up on the battlefield, and he watched regiments bury their dead as lines of crosses spread. After days of shelling and lack of sleep, John lost his appetite, but he forced himself to eat in order to keep working. He was haunted by the death of so many friends, comrades and countrymen. He recounted Ypres as “*seventeen days of Hades*,” during which “*every horror that war had, we had at our door*.” In a letter to his mother, McCrae wrote of the Battle of Ypres:

The general impression in my mind is of a nightmare. We have been in the most bitter of fights. For seventeen days and seventeen nights none of us have had our clothes off, nor our boots even, except occasionally. In all that time while I was awake, gunfire and rifle fire never ceased for sixty seconds... and behind it all was the constant background of the sights of the dead, the wounded, the maimed, and a terrible anxiety lest the line should give way.... How tired we are, weary in body and wearier in mind. And all the time, the birds sing over our heads.^{4F, 6Q}

Major John McCrae and the First Brigade Canadian Field Artillery would be in the trenches near Ypres, Belgium, from April 22 to May 9, 1915. In mid-May, the Second Battle of Ypres was winding down and the Canadians departed.

During his time with the Canadian Field Artillery, McCrae had become close friends with **Alexis Helmer**, who was a graduate of McGill University and the Royal Military College in Kingston. On May 2, 1915 at Ypres, twenty-two-year-old Lieutenant Alexis Helmer was seeing to the guns when an eight-inch German shell exploded right in front of him and another officer. Helmer was killed instantly and the other officer died later of his wounds.

Helmer’s comrades gathered what body parts they could, sewed them into sandbags, and arranged them in the form of a body in an army blanket for burial. They also recovered a photograph that Helmer had kept with him in his pocket, of his fiancé. Helmer was buried that day, with his fiancée’s photograph, in a makeshift grave with a plain wooded cross. In the absence of a chaplain, Major John McCrae conducted a simple service at the graveside a few hours later. He knew his friend was a Methodist, but there were no padres available with the battle still at a fevered pitch. McCrae recited parts of the Anglican Burial of the Dead ceremony “*as well as I could from memory. A soldier’s death!*” Wild poppies were already beginning to bloom in the churned up earth between the rough wooden crosses marking the many graves, a fact not lost on McCrae despite his grief.

Sometime on May 2, after burying his friend, John McCrae was inspired to write a few lines of verse. Eyewitness accounts vary about how and when McCrae came to write “**In Flanders Fields**”. Sergeant-Major Cyril Allinson remembered seeing him writing on May 2 after the funeral. McCrae was sitting on the step of the ambulance (dressing station) with a pad in his hand. “*His face was very tired but calm as he wrote. He looked around from time to time, his eyes straying to Helmer’s grave. The poem was almost an exact description of the scene in front of us both*,” said Allinson. McCrae showed the poem to Allinson who tried to memorize it.

McCrae would continue to work on his poem the next day, May 3, in a quiet spot near his dugout while waiting for more wounded to arrive, within sight of his friend’s grave among the many others. John McCrae’s fifteen lines of verse written on a piece of wrapping paper would become the poignant and iconic poem ‘In Flanders Fields’.

D, 3O, 4C, 6Q

At the encouragement of a few friends who had read it over, he submitted the poem to the English magazine the *Spectator*—it was rejected. He submitted it again, to the British satirical magazine *Punch*, which published it, unsigned, in the December 8, 1915 issue. Almost immediately after ‘In Flanders Fields’ was published, the poem was being memorized by soldiers, and soon it began to resonate with the civilian public. Numerous composers even set

the poem to music, and it was used as the centerpiece of the Canadian Victory Loan campaign, credited with raising millions of dollars. McCrae would never know the tremendous impact the poem would have after the war, but he did have the satisfaction of knowing it was popular among the troops at the time. He was known to write it out by hand and send it to those who asked to read it.^{11C}

In Flanders Fields

*In Flanders fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row,
That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the Dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved, and were loved, and now we lie
In Flanders fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe:
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high.
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders fields.*

Not long after Ypres, and against his wishes, John McCrae was transferred to a new post. Given the choice, he would have stayed at the front, where at Ypres, half of his brigade had been slaughtered. On June 1, 1915, John McCrae was promoted to Lieutenant-Colonel, the Chief of Medical Services and was transferred to No. 3 Canadian General Hospital (McGill), in Dannes-Camiers on the northeastern coast of France. It was an area of sand dunes running to the sea, where the patients were housed in large, colourful tents while the medical personnel of all ranks were in bell tents. Despite his rank, McCrae insisted on sleeping in a tent like the other staff. He always wore his pistol with his uniform, preferring to be viewed as a soldier more than a doctor. By Christmas, the hospital was relocated to a deserted abbey near Boulogne, France, where the patients were housed in huts and a nearby barn was converted into a surgery.

It was grueling work for the doctors, surgeons and nurses on staff as they operated on and cared for the wounded soldiers. If patients arriving there could be helped within three weeks, they stayed there. If they required longer convalescence and were able to be transported, they were sent on to England to clear space for the never-ending flow of soldiers from the trenches. The hospital received wounded from the Battle of the Somme, the Battle of Vimy Ridge, the Third Battle of Ypres and from Arras and Passchendaele.

The success of *In Flanders Fields* made McCrae famous, and he could have returned to Canada or transferred to London, but he chose to stay at the hospital. While other medical staff returned to their universities or practices after serving for a year, McCrae felt duty-bound to stay on. He felt uncomfortable about not being with his former artillery colleagues at the front, but he remained intensely committed to the war and refused to return to Canada before it was won.

John McCrae was deeply affected by the fighting and frightful losses in France, becoming bitter and disillusioned, so much so that in John Prescott's book *In Flanders Fields: The Story of John McCrae*, the author wrote of John: "He felt he should have made greater sacrifices, and insisted on living in a tent through the year, like his comrades at the front, rather than in the officers' huts. When this affected his health in mid-winter he had to be ordered into warmer surroundings. To many he gave the impression that he felt he should still be with his old artillery brigade. After the battle of Ypres he was never again the optimistic man with the infectious smile". One nurse who knew him in Montreal thought he had aged fifteen years, "his face lined and ashen grey in colour, his expression dull, his action slow and heavy." Conflicted, tired and emotionally worn, John struggled with his temper, had trouble concentrating and was often plagued by a lack of energy—symptoms that today, would indicate that McCrae was suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. Yet he continued to push himself hard in caring for his patients, carrying out his administration work, and he demanded high standards and military-like discipline from his medical staff. In the summer of 1917, he was troubled by severe asthma attacks and occasional bouts of bronchitis.

McCrae found solace going for quiet walks in the French countryside, on his horse Bonfire that he was able to retain, and a local French spaniel named **Bonneau** that had befriended McCrae and Bonfire. Bonneau followed McCrae everywhere and often accompanied him on his rounds through the medical wards, bringing its own brand of cheer to the wounded soldiers. On walks with Bonfire and Bonneau McCrae would often stop to chat with local children. One girl later gave her impression of him saying, *"He was a very straightforward, very gentle man who you could not help liking. Everything about his face indicated someone very special."*



Lieutenant-Colonel John McCrae



Lt-Col. John McCrae and Bonneau

McCrae's final poem was published in October 1917 in *The Spectator*, the paper that had first turned down "In Flanders Fields." That poem, "The Anxious Dead," picks up on the theme of death and duty (see page 1211). McCrae was pleased that it was published just as the Canadians achieved victory at Passchendaele.

In December 1917, he was offered command of No. 1 Canadian Field Hospital. After Christmas, the reply was sent that McCrae would accept the position. He was then asked to assume the vacant position of consultant physician to the British Army in the field, the first Canadian so honoured, and with it would go a promotion to the rank of colonel. McCrae accepted but did not live to take up the post.

He became very ill in January 1918 and was moved on January 23 to No. 14 British General Hospital for Officers near Wimereux, France, where he continued to grow weak. Two nurses from No. 3 Canadian General Hospital volunteered to provide him with 24-hour care. His audible wheeze deepened into a deep, rasping cough and a fever came over him. Five days later, in the early morning hours of January 28, 1918, forty-five-year-old John McCrae fell into a coma and died of pneumonia aggravated by bacterial meningitis.

His death was a shock to his friends, students, fellow healers, as well as to millions around the world. John McCrae's January 29 funeral, with full military honours, was attended by nearly all the commanders in the area, including General Sir Arthur Currie, commander of the Canadian Corps, as well as a large delegation from all the local hospitals and units. Forlornly following the Union Jack draped coffin on its gun carriage was Bonfire, bedecked in white ribbons and McCrae's boots placed traditionally reversed in the stirrups. Being winter with no poppies around, artificial ones were spread on McCrae's grave. Lieutenant Colonel John McCrae was buried in Wimereux Cemetery, France, not far from the fields of Flanders. His death was met with great grief among his friends, contemporaries and comrades in arms. A friend wrote of the funeral; *"The day of the funeral was a beautiful spring day; none of us wore overcoats. You know the haze that comes over the hills at Wimereux. I felt so thankful that the poet of 'In Flanders Fields' was lying out there in the bright sunshine in the open space he loved so well...."*

In 1933, Sir Arthur Currie, then the principal of McGill University, unveiled a stained-glass window dedicated to the three members of the university's medical faculty who had died in the Great War. John McCrae's window features his biography with rows of crosses amid a field of poppies. The inscription reads, "Pathologist, poet, soldier, physician, a man among men."

All of his colleagues agreed to the final description and thought he would appreciate being remembered first as a pathologist. He was certainly proud to be a physician and soldier, but he was modest about his poetry. McCrae left an indelible impression on his friends, colleagues, patients and students, but history will remember him for the short poem written in the midst of a bloody war of attrition.

When the 100th anniversary of the writing of “In Flanders Fields” approached, the Royal Regiment of Canadian Artillery and the Royal Medical Service commissioned sculptor Ruth Abernethy to create a bronze statue of McCrae in his battledress, sitting on a log with a pen and pad in hand. Two statues were cast. One was unveiled at the National Artillery Memorial in Ottawa on May 3, 2015, on the centenary of the day the poem was written. The second was unveiled outside the Civic Museum in Guelph, Ontario, the hometown to which McCrae never returned. The small limestone cottage in Guelph that John McCrae was born in is a National Historic Site of Canada, and is operated as a museum, McCrae House. ^{D, 30, 4C, 6Q, 11C}

• **YPRES MEMORIAL SERVICE IN SARNIA, 1922:** On Saturday, April 22, 1922, on the seventh anniversary of the Second Battle of Ypres, a special memorial service to honour the fallen of Ypres was held in Sarnia. The parade and service was organized by the Grand Army of United Veterans. The parade formed up at the city hall square in the mid-afternoon, commanded by Lt-Col. W.W. MacVicar and included: Mounted Marshall Constable Lynch of the Dominion Mounted Police; City of Sarnia Mayor George Crawford and Alderman Reeve of Point Edward and Councilors; Sarnia City Band; Machine Gun Company; twelve Sarnia Ypres Veterans under the command of Col. W.J. Bentley; over eighty war veterans; Imperial Sarnia Pipe Band; Boys Scouts; Wolf Cubs; and Sarnia Collegiate Cadets.

The parade proceeded along Lochiel Street, Front Street, Davis Street, Christina Street to Victoria Park (now Veterans Park). There, Col. W.J. Bentley placed a wreath on the memorial in memory of the Ypres fallen. The parade then moved north on Christina Street to the Imperial Theatre where a service was held. The special speaker was Captain, the Reverend J.F. Tupper, who was then the chaplain of the Canadian Air Force at Camp Borden, and was well known as “The Fighting Parson” having served in France and England. The twelve Sarnia men in the parade who had survived the great battle were: Lt-Col. W.J. Bentley, No. 2 Stationary hospital, C.A.M.C.; Sgt-Major A.E. Owens and Sgt. F.J. Russell of the 1st Canadian Battalion; Sgt. F.J. Carion, M.M., of the 16th Battalion; J.T. Crooks, Hugh Fleming, M.H. McAllister, J. Travis, J.F. Foster, and J. Lethbridge of the 1st Battalion; J.S. Wilson of the 1st Reserve Park; and H. Laidler of the 2nd Field Ambulance.

On Monday, April 24, 1922, the *Sarnia Observer* featured a report on the parade and service. Following is a portion of that report:

*SPLENDID OBSERVANCE SECOND BATTLE YPRES BY SARNIA VETERANS
Parade of Units to Victoria Park Where Comrades Place Wreath on Memorial in Honor of
Those Who Sleep in Flanders Field - Inspiring Service at Imperial Theatre...*

*Across the seas in Flanders fields.
At dawn a larks song rises gay,
The heroic dead know endless light
Lift up your heads and pray.*

- Lines on wreath

It was a beautiful spring afternoon in the city yesterday with a benevolent sun shining in a cloudless sky and gentle spring zephyrs floating in the air, as Sarnia prepared to give her mead of honor to the memory of the Canadian soldiers who died in the second battle of Ypres. Just such another day it was seven years ago when out of a cloudless sky came the hurtling shells bringing death in their train and wafted on the light breezes, the terrible clouds of poison gas that drove back the Algerian defenders in the Ypres salient, and drew Canadian troops into a battle against odds, in which undying fame was won for the Dominion but at costly sacrifice. The thoughts of the crowds who lined market square... went back to the later days of April 1915, when following the news of a glorious stand by Canada's hitherto untried soldiers, came the long lists of casualties and the nation mourned her dead...

...The parade marched by way of Front street to Victoria park with several thousand citizens regarding the march past. Arriving at the park, the Ypres veterans moved over to the memorial and placed a wreath there-on, and as quietly moved away and rejoined the parade. There were other wreaths too, for James H. and Arthur J. sons of Mr. and Mrs. James A. Allan, one to the memory of James W. Bennett and one to Harry G. Bury, already placed by their relatives.

At the Imperial Theatre every seat was occupied. On the platform were Senator F.F. Pardee, chairman Lt-Col MacVicar, Lt-Col W.J. Bentley, the Rev. Canon Davis and the Rev. R. Weaver with Captain the Rev. J.F. Tupper known among the men overseas as “The Fighting padre”... Senator Pardee said, it was seven years almost to a day since the greatest and most glorious achievement of all battles took place. The achievement of the troops at Ypres stood out as a finger post along the whole line of victories and with it the name of Canada was indelibly associated.

Canada proved herself as never before, and it was shown that Canada's men and women could do as the men and women of any nation.... The impressive service included speakers, a fine selection of hymns, prayers, singers, a quartet and closed with the pronouncement of the benediction and the sounding of the last post.^N

• **THE BROODING SOLDIER:** One of the most striking battlefield memorials is the “Brooding Soldier” sculpture located at St. Julien, Belgium. It stands at a crossroads known as Vancouver Corner in honour of that city’s 7th Battalion, which fought with extraordinary tenacity at this crucial hinge of the Canadian line. Regina sculptor Frederick Clemesha’s design took second place in a Canadian postwar competition to create a memorial to the fallen, finishing behind the Vimy Ridge Memorial design. Clemesha himself had served in the Canadian Corps during the war and had been wounded. The “Brooding Soldier” was unveiled on July 8, 1923 by HRH **Prince Arthur**, the Duke of Connaught—the same Duke that had been in Sarnia in May 1914 to officially declare Sarnia a city. The almost eleven metre granite column features a Canadian infantryman’s upper torso with bowed head and folded hands resting on a reversed rifle. The enduring memorial stands like a sentinel keeping watch over those Canadians who died during the gas attacks at Ypres, of which over 2,000 fell and were buried in various cemeteries in the vicinity.

A plaque on the “Brooding Soldier” memorial in Belgium has the words;
THIS COLUMN MARKS THE BATTLEFIELD WHERE 18,000 CANADIANS ON THE BRITISH LEFT
WITHSTOOD THE FIRST GERMAN GAS ATTACKS THE 22ND-24TH OF APRIL 1915. 2,000 FELL AND
HERE LIE BURIED.

Note: The Point Edward cenotaph is located in Point Edward Veterans Memorial Park on St. Clair Avenue. At the top of that cenotaph is a soldier figure that has a vague resemblance to the “Brooding Soldier” in Belgium.



The Brooding Soldier, Belgium



Menin Gate Memorial, Belgium

• **MENIN GATE (YPRES) MEMORIAL:** Unveiled on July 24, 1927, the Menin Gate War Memorial is situated on the east side of the town of Ypres (now Ieper), in the Province of West Flanders, on the road to Menin and Courtrai in Belgium. It is located on a site chosen because of the hundreds of thousands of Commonwealth soldiers who passed through this spot on their way to the battlefields on the Ypres Salient. It bears the inscribed names of 54,395 Commonwealth Force soldiers who fell in the Ypres Salient before August 16, 1917 and whose bodies have never been identified or found. Of those are the names of 6,994 Canadian soldiers who fell on Belgian soil and were listed as “missing, presumed dead”. Decorated World War I veteran and poet Siegfried Sassoon called the haunting structure “the gravestone of those who have no graves.”^{5E}

At least three young men from Sarnia gave their lives in the Second Battle of Ypres, including Harry Bury, Roy Illiffe and Thomas Powell, and at least nine young men from Sarnia have their names inscribed on the (Ypres) Menin Gate Memorial in Belgium—Bury, Illiffe and Powell, along with George Ansbro, Angus Garrod, Charles Knight, Thomas Littlefield, James Pirrie, and William Skinner (all of their stories are included in this Project).

Along with panels of Portland stone that bear the names of the dead, inscribed by regiment and corps, the Menin Gate Memorial bears two inscriptions. Carved in stone above the central arch are the words: TO THE ARMIES OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE WHO STOOD HERE FROM 1914 TO 1918 AND TO THOSE OF THEIR DEAD WHO HAVE NO KNOWN GRAVE. Over the two staircases leading from the main hall is the inscription: HERE ARE RECORDED NAMES OF OFFICERS AND MEN WHO FELL IN YPRES SALIENT BUT TO WHOM THE FORTUNE OF WAR DENIED THE KNOWN AND HONOURED BURIAL GIVEN TO THEIR COMRADES IN DEATH.

Since 1928 at the Menin Gate War memorial, every night at 8:00 p.m., rain or shine, traffic is halted, and crowds gather to pay their respects, as four buglers from the local fire brigade station themselves at the centre of the Hall to sound the *Last Post*. The “Last Post” ceremony has continued up to the present day—except in the years of German occupation during the Second World War. On the September 1944 evening that Polish forces liberated Ypres, the ceremony resumed at Menin Gate despite the fact that heavy fighting was still taking place in other parts of the town.

- **MAY-JUNE 1915:** Following the Battle of Ypres, the decimated units of the 1st Canadian Division marched south to join in the Allied offensives that were already under way. The Canadians were thrust into the fighting near the villages of Festubert in mid-May 1915 and Givenchy in mid-June, both in northern France.

The **Battle of Festubert** was the second major engagement fought by Canadian troops in the war. It was part of a wider British offensive against German lines near the village of Festubert, France. The main attack began on May 18, with two brigades of the 1st Division launching frontal assaults against heavy German defences near the village. The fighting here followed the grim pattern of frontal assaults against entrenched German forces that had all the advantages of terrain, firepower and well-positioned machine guns. With little planning and inaccurate maps, they repeatedly charged over open ground with little artillery support. By May 25, after a week of fighting, the battle was over. The result was slaughter on both sides, and the Canadians had made only small gains.

About three weeks later, in mid-June 1915, the 1st Canadian Division was thrust into the fighting at **Givenchy**. Supposedly, lessons had been learned at Festubert, and plans were made to address the issues of German barbed wire and machine gun nests. Three artillery pieces were secretly moved closer to the front line and a tunnel was dug under the German trenches and packed with explosives in the hope that it would eliminate a large section of the enemy front line trenches. Although the Canadians achieved some of their objectives, the gains were negligible and the cost was extremely high—2,468 casualties at Festubert and a further 400 at Givenchy.^{D, 2I, 2N} At least three Sarnians were killed in action at Festubert and Givenchy: Lance Corporal Roy Fair, Sergeant Peter Ford and Private George Gray.

- **GERMAN U-BOATS:** In the years before World War I, the superiority of Britain’s Royal Navy was unchallenged by any other nation’s fleet, but the Imperial German Navy had made substantial strides in closing the gap between the two naval powers in the lead-up to war. Germany had a powerful navy, but was cautious about losing it in a major naval engagement (even though the German navy sank more British warships than it lost at the **Battle of Jutland**, May 31-June 1, 1916—the only major naval battle of the Great War). Germany’s strength on the high seas in the Great War was its lethal fleet of U-boat submarines.

In February 1915, in response to the British naval blockade of Germany, German U-boats began to attack all merchant vessels in British waters. German U-boats typically allowed crews of the ships to disembark before the vessel was sunk. But the war at sea soon lost its chivalrous nature. In May 1916, the civilian ocean liner *Lusitania* was attacked and sunk without warning (see next page).

Afterward, the German high command ordered that U-boats desist in attacking merchant ships with no warning. U-boat attacks intensified, but the confusing, self-imposed rules by the German Admiralty on U-boats that required them to surface when confronting large liners in order to determine nationality, proved cumbersome and dangerous to the U-boats. With no end to the war in early 1917, Germany returned to unrestricted submarine warfare on February 1, 1917. Its primary aim was to sink all vessels supplying the Allies, regardless of whether the country in question was at war with Germany. German U-boats threatened Canadian merchant ships carrying troops and supplies to Britain. With hundreds of ships sunk over the first half of the year, the British Admiralty predicted the possible loss of the war unless the U-boat campaign was stopped.

In response to the U-boat attacks, Allied merchant ships sailed in groups, called **convoy**s, escorted by warships. Canadian and Newfoundland ports like Quebec City, Saint John, Halifax and St. John’s became important convoy gathering points. The convoys, travelling in zig-zag courses, were harder for U-boats to find and attack, but the U-boats still posed a terrifying threat. Combined with limited air support near the coasts, and an increase in Allied war vessels, the all-important logistical lifeline across the Atlantic continued.

In the summer of 1918, German U-boats raided Canada’s east coast, laying mines off the entrance of Halifax harbour and attacking vulnerable ships. Canada’s small navy had little success in bringing the U-boats to battle, but the war ended before the Germans did much damage. In all, 5,000 Allied merchant ships were sunk by German U-

boats during the war. After the war, Germany was banned from possessing submarines under the terms of the Treaty of Versailles. Over time, the Germans circumvented this restriction. In the Second World War, German U-boats would again terrorize merchant shipping.^{D, 21, 10Q}

• **THE LUSITANIA DISASTER:** On May 1, 1915, the luxury ocean liner *RMS Lusitania* sailed out of New York bound for Liverpool, England. Dubbed one of the great “greyhounds of the sea”, the 32,000-ton four-stacker *Lusitania* was the fastest, and most luxurious ocean liner in service at the time, a symbol of British maritime prowess. Aboard the liner when she left New York were 1,959 civilian passengers and crew, including a record number of children (95) and infants (39), and a number of rich and prominent members of society, and three German stowaways. Many of the passengers were British citizens, returning there to do their part in supporting the nation in time of war; and Canadian families moving to England to be near husbands and fathers fighting in the war; and also included 189 Americans; along with many other nationalities including Russian, Persian, French, Greek, Swiss, Belgian, Dutch, and Italian. Included in the ships’ cargo were 4200 cases of Remington rifle ammunition amounting to 170 tons of war munitions bound for Britain. On the day of the liners departure, prior to leaving port, the Imperial German Embassy in Washington had issued a notice in many American newspapers, including New York’s, reminding readers of the existence of the “zone of war” around the British Isles, and cautioned that “vessels flying the flag of Great Britain, or any of her allies, are liable to destruction” and travelers sailing on such ships “do so at their own risk”. Despite the warning, the idea that Germany would dare attempt to sink a fully loaded civilian passenger ship seemed beyond rational consideration. And even if a U-boat did try, common wisdom was that the *Lusitania* was simply too big and too fast, and once in British waters would doubtless be too well protected by the British navy.^{4Z}

In the mid-afternoon of May 7, the *Lusitania* was about 18 km off the south coast of Ireland, approximately 16 hours from its Liverpool destination. The sun was gleaming, the air warm and still, the sea smooth, and the green headlands of Ireland were visible in the distance. It was here that a German U-boat, U-20, fired a single torpedo at the *Lusitania* striking her in the starboard side under the bridge. The initial blast was followed moments later by a second muffled internal explosion (later determined to likely be the result of a rupture of a main steam line, carrying steam under extreme pressure). The ship immediately listed to the starboard side, so severely that the port side lifeboats had swung inward over the deck making them unusable, while the starboard side lifeboats hung well away from the hull. In the chaos and panic, at least one lifeboat dropped into passengers crowded on the deck, another dropped onto a loaded lifeboat below it, and several lifeboats dumped their loads into the water. Only six of the twenty-two conventional lifeboats got away before the ship plunged into the sea. The captain of U-20 viewing the horror through the submarines periscope described what he saw as, “*The ship was sinking with unbelievable rapidity. There was a terrific panic on her deck. Overcrowded lifeboats, fairly torn from their positions, dropped into the water. Desperate people ran helplessly up and down the decks. Men and women jumped into the water and tried to swim to empty, overturned lifeboats. It was the most terrible sight I have ever seen.*” Those in the water found themselves in a turmoil of screaming bodies and corpses, women and children, deck chairs, lifebelts, and endless bits of wreckage. The luxury liner *Lusitania* disappeared below the waters surface in only approximately 18 minutes.^{4Z}

In the nearest port of Queenstown, Ireland, once the *Lusitania* SOS was received, vessels of every size left to render assistance, including the British cruiser *HMS Juno*. The *Juno*, the fastest ship available, could be at the disaster scene in just over one hour. Shortly after leaving port, the *Juno* was ordered to return, for fear that the submarine would still be in the vicinity, and the risk of attack was too great. It would be at least three hours before the fleet of rescue vessels—torpedo boats, trawlers and small fishing vessels arrived at the scene, where they would find a sea strewn with floating bodies and debris. Many of the passengers who had survived the actual sinking perished before rescue, victims of drowning or hypothermia. A total of 1,198 died in the attack leaving 764 survivors. Over 600 passengers were never found.^{4Z}

Sarnia citizens learned of the *Lusitania* sinking in the May 14 *Sarnia Observer*. Following is a portion of that report:

The greatest disaster to British merchant shipping since the war commenced has occurred by the sinking of the great steamship Lusitania in the Atlantic Ocean, off the Old Head of Kinsula, by a German submarine. The ship was struck twice – one torpedo hitting the forward part of the vessel and another in the engine room. The ship sank within fifteen minutes, listing so rapidly that only a few of the lifeboats could be launched. No warning was given... it is feared that 900 or 1,000 persons have lost their lives... The passengers include several hundred United States

citizens, as well as citizens of other neutral nations and Great Britain. An intense feeling of indignation has been aroused throughout the United States at this ruthless disregard of the usages of civilized nations and of the rules of war, on the part of Germany in its treatment of defenceless men, women and children... The war news has sunk to secondary importance in contrast with the absorbing interest of the public in the details of the sinking of the *Lusitania*... Berlin, and practically all Germany rejoices over the drowning of such a large number of innocent men, women and children. Flags are flying, the newspapers are glorifying in the "triumph" and the school children were given a holiday.

Lusitania vs. Titanic: The sinking of the *RMS Lusitania* and the *RMS Titanic* were two of the greatest maritime disasters in history, and they occurred only three years apart. The *Titanic* (operated by White Star Lines) was approximately 882' in length and sunk on April 14, 1912 vs. the *Lusitania* (operated by Cunard Lines) was approximately 790' in length and sunk on May 7, 1915. The *Titanic* struck an iceberg, listed only slightly and sank in 2 hours and 40 minutes vs. the *Lusitania* was torpedoed, listed heavily and sank in only 18 minutes. The *Titanic* did not have enough lifeboats for all of its passengers vs. the *Lusitania* had enough lifeboats for all its passengers, but only a handful of boats were successfully launched. The *Titanic* carried 2223 passengers and crew of which 1517 were lost (68.2% death rate). The *Lusitania* carried 1959 passengers and crew of which 1198 were lost (61.1% death rate).

The Empress of Ireland: Between these two maritime disasters, another famous ocean liner would sink in Canadian waters, just two years after the sinking of the *Titanic*. On May 29, 1914, the Canadian Pacific passenger steamship *Empress of Ireland*, was rammed by a Norwegian freighter in dense fog in the St. Lawrence River near Rimouski, Quebec. The accident occurred in the early morning hours when most aboard were sleeping. The *Empress of Ireland* sank in just 14 minutes. Of the 1477 on board the *Empress*, 1012 passengers and crew were lost (68.5% death rate), while 465 managed to abandon ship and survive. The sinking of the *Empress of Ireland* is the greatest maritime disaster in Canadian history, and is often referred to as "Canada's Titanic". The tragedy never achieved the fame of the earlier *Titanic* disaster, in part because attention was soon diverted to the outbreak of the First World War in August 1914.^{2N}

Lusitania repercussions: Though the *Titanic* disaster has always overshadowed that of the *Lusitania*, the repercussions of the *Lusitania* disaster arguably had a more significant impact on world events. The sinking of the *Lusitania* passenger ship and deaths of innocent civilians and neutral nationals played a significant role in turning public opinion in many countries against Germany; and it would become an iconic symbol in military recruiting campaigns (including in the *Sarnia Observer* newspaper) where the phrase "Remember the Lusitania!" was used on recruitment posters and as a battle cry on the front lines.^{4Z}

The *Lusitania* tragedy damaged relations between the United States and Germany (123 American lives were lost), and would be influential in eventually leading the U.S. in declaring war. After the attack, there would be almost two years of official U.S. protests (President Woodrow Wilson was eager to keep the U.S. neutral) and German replies, made against a backdrop of new attacks on neutral ships and revelations that German spies were at work in America. In June 1916, Germany suspended its attacks against all large passenger ships. However by February 1917, Germany had resumed its unrestricted submarine warfare on all ships in the war zone, and had sunk a number of American ships.

• **AMERICA ENTERS THE WAR:** The United States remained neutral at the start of World War I, but pressure to enter the war built up over more than two years. In November 1916, President Woodrow Wilson was re-elected as "the man who kept [America] out of the war." Despite this, there was mounting pressure in the United States to respond to German transgressions. This included: activities of German agents operating in the U.S., including suspected sabotage attacks against factories involved in the supply of war material to Allied countries; and the German U-boat campaign that resumed its unrestricted submarine attacks against merchant shipping, including U.S. ships.

In February 1917, British intelligence offered the U.S. information that their cryptographers had deciphered a month earlier from a telegram sent from Germany to Mexico—the "**Zimmermann Telegram**". The German foreign secretary Arthur Zimmermann proposed an alliance to the Mexican Government, that if they were to join forces in fighting the Americans, Germany would offer financial support and would help Mexico regain her former territories (Texas, New Mexico and Arizona) in return. The publication of the Zimmermann telegram in the U.S. press caused widespread outrage.

On April 6, 1917, the United States formally declared war on Germany and its allies. On May 8, 1917, six U.S. Navy destroyers began their first patrols in United Kingdom waters, just a day beyond the two-year anniversary of the sinking of the *Lusitania*.^{4Z, 10Q}

U.S. volunteers were slow to come forward—just 97,000 had enlisted by the end of April 1917. A small number of U.S. troops, known as the **American Expeditionary Force (AEF)**, began arriving in Europe in summer 1917, but a mass **conscript** army had to be recruited and trained from scratch. It was not until the next spring that **General John “Jack” Pershing**, commander of the AEF, felt he had sufficient troops to enter battle. American soldiers, nicknamed “doughboys” by their Allies, entered fighting in France in spring 1918. By war’s end, some 4.7 million were mobilized, of which 2.8 million American soldiers were sent to France. About 116,000 died in military service, with more than half of them killed by the influenza epidemic of 1918-19.^{10Q}

• **THE BATTLE OF GALLIPOLI**, Gallipoli Peninsula (modern-day Turkey), April 25, 1915-January 9, 1916: Though this author could not find a record of anyone specific from Sarnia who served in the Gallipoli campaign, Sarnians and Canadians did play a role there (eg. see Corporal Sinclair Battley’s letter on page 86).

Gallipoli is remembered infamously as one of the great disasters of the Great War. By the spring of 1915, British war cabinet felt that a new front was needed to drain enemy forces away from the Western Front. The Ottoman Empire was allied with Germany and the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The Allied Powers plan—the brainchild of Britain’s First Lord of the Admiralty, **Winston Churchill**—was to clear a path through the narrow Dardanelles Straits to Constantinople to force the surrender of the Ottoman Empire, which would also allow the Allies to get supplies and weapons into Russia for the fight on the Eastern Front.

The **Dardanelles offensive campaign** began with several failed naval attacks by British and French ships on the Dardanelles Straits in February and March 1915, which resulted in the sinking of three British battleships, and the crippling of three others. When the naval engagements failed, the Allied forces conducted the first major amphibious operation of modern war. On April 25, 1915, the major land invasion of the Gallipoli Peninsula was launched at two places by Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (the ANZACs), along with British, Newfoundland, Irish, French and India forces. Although the Allies managed to secure footholds on the peninsula, the fighting quickly degenerated into siege warfare with both sides peering at each other from fortified trenches, forced to spill blood in futile frontal attacks on heavily defended positions. The Allies had to deal with a lack of sufficient intelligence and knowledge of the inhospitable terrain; harsh and unpredictable weather ranging from extreme heat, to heavy rains and bitter cold; disease and illnesses such as dysentery, enteric fever, gangrene and cholera spreading among men; swarming insects; food and (contaminated) water shortages were common; along with a fierce Turkish resistance who had entrenched themselves on the higher ground.^{2E, 3S, 4L, 4M, 4N}

Canadian nurses at Gallipoli: A number of Canadians enlisted and served with the British Army at Gallipoli, and a number of Canadians also served in the Canadian Army Medical Corps treating casualties in hospital units there. In fact, two of Canada’s volunteer ‘nursing sisters’, Jessie Brown Jaggard of Wolfville, Nova Scotia and Mary Frances Elizabeth Munro of Wardsville, Ontario, would lose their lives on the Greek island of Lemnos (Limnos), the closest staging-ground to the Gallipoli battlefield.

These two Canadian ‘angels of mercy’, among seventy Canadian nurses stationed on Lemnos, were the first women to die in wartime while serving in the Canadian army. After making their transatlantic voyages, the nursing sisters must have been shocked when they arrived at the 3rd Canadian Stationary Hospital on Lemnos in mid-August 1915. Records indicate that the conditions were horrendous; *“It needed two nurses to change a patients’ wound dressing, one to change the dressing and one to fan out the flies off the wound. Excessive heat and poor sanitary conditions were the contributing factors at spreading disease.... The site had no sanitary provision; the water supply was precarious and depended on one borrowed cart; not even latrine pails were at hand.... food was scarce and unsuitable for the personnel, impossible for patients; dust and flies completed the distress.”*

The exhausted and malnourished nurses worked with selfless dedication caring for the sick and wounded, and were exposed to the same illnesses that were rampant among the soldiers. Both Matron Jessie Jaggard, age 44, and Nursing Sister Mary Francis Munro, age 29, fell ill but carried on with their duties until they dropped, both succumbing to dysentery in September 1915. They were both buried with full military honours in crude wooden coffins on the island of Lemnos. In 2015, a new memorial to the two nurses was erected by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission in the Portianos Military Cemetery on Mudros Bay, on the Greek island of Lemnos.^{C, D, 2G, 2I, 4P}

The Royal Newfoundland Regiment: The young members of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment were the only unit from North America to fight at Gallipoli. Due to a shortage of khaki broadcloth on the island, the Newfoundlanders' uniforms had a unique blue signature—instead of the standard issue khaki-coloured puttee, theirs was blue. **Puttees** were the fabric wrapped around each leg from ankle to knee. Puttees stopped muck, debris and critters from working their way down into the boots or up the trousers; were cheaper than tall boots or gaiters; and they provided warmth, protection and support. The Newfoundlanders quickly became known as "**the Blue Puttees.**" Although the Newfoundlanders were issued standard British khaki later, the nickname Blue Puttees, stuck with the regiment throughout the war.

Approximately 1,100 Newfoundlanders landed on the shores of the Gallipoli peninsula, Suvla Bay, on the night of September 19-20, 1915 in order to reinforce the British. When morning came, they were spotted and the shooting and shelling began. From the beginning, the Regiment had a hard time; day and night the Turkish army, in control of the high ground surrounding the beach, poured a constant stream of artillery and sniper fire down upon the line. At times they were only 50 metres away from the Turkish lines. Conditions were terrible—with insects so thick they covered everything a soldier could eat. The nights were bitterly cold and November brought a storm that flooded the trenches and left many with frostbite. Despite the dangers and squalor of trench warfare, the Newfoundlanders persevered and earned their first battle honour in November 1915 when they captured a ridge (a high point used by Turkish snipers), renaming it Caribou Hill for the caribou patch on their uniforms, with three men earning medals for their bravery in the fighting.^D

By mid-October, Allied forces had suffered heavy casualties and had made little headway from their initial landing sites. British cabinet agreed to a complete evacuation of the peninsula. The commander appointed to plan and execute an evacuation was **General Julian Byng**, who would later lead Canadian troops at Vimy Ridge. The evacuation began in December 1915, and was completed early the following January. It was decided that the Newfoundland Regiment would help in the difficult task of covering the evacuation of Allied troops onto waiting ships. One method used by the Newfoundlanders in order to make the Turks believe the regiment was still present in full force was: unmanned rifles were set up with a can of sand on the trigger. A leaky can of water was placed above the can of sand. When the combined weight of the sand and water reached seven pounds, it pulled the trigger, making the Turks think a sniper was at work. This rearguard operation went well and the Newfoundlanders were among the last Allied soldiers to leave Turkey on the night of January 9, 1916. As the last soldiers pulled away, they detonated abandoned magazines on shore, having successfully deceived the enemy about the final departure. During the almost four months the Newfoundland Regiment fought at Gallipoli, 93 were wounded and approximately 49 of the 'Blue Puttees' lost their lives in action. Three months later, in April 1916, the Newfoundland Regiment would arrive near the firing line on the Somme front, a place they hoped would be a welcome respite from the deprivations of their time in the Suvla Bay trenches.^{D, 2E}

The Cost: Over 123,000 Allied soldiers were wounded during the Gallipoli campaign. Approximately 56,000 Allied troops were killed in action, died of wounds or succumbed to disease in the eight months of fierce fighting at Gallipoli, for no material gain. This included: more than 34,000 British, 10,000 French, 8700 Australians, and 2800 New Zealanders.

Anzac Day: On April 25, 1916, Australians and New Zealanders held their first Anzac Day, marking the anniversary of the first major military action fought by the Anzac forces, their 'baptism by fire', during the First World War at Gallipoli. Since then, Anzac Day has become a principle day of national remembrance in Australia and New Zealand, honouring the memory of the Anzacs who fought at Gallipoli, and all those who served and died in all wars and peacekeeping operations in which those two countries have been involved. Anzac Day is also observed in a number of other countries around the world, including Canada, to commemorate the sacrifice of the Newfoundlanders who fought alongside the Anzacs during the Gallipoli Campaign.^{D, 2E, 3S, 4L, 4M, 4N, 4O}

- **REPLENISHING THE TROOPS:** At the outset of the war, as a tactic to encourage enlistment, the military had the idea to create battalions tied to specific regions. The idea was that men would be encouraged to enlist together, knowing that they would fight alongside their friends and even family members, brother with brother, father with son. One local example was the 18th Battalion, part of the Second Division that recruited in areas that included London, Windsor, Woodstock, Chatham, Strathroy and Guelph.

As the war progressed and casualties began to mount, it became necessary to replace losses in the field. The patriotic fervor that was present in the early days of the war had cooled. Yet the tactic of creating battalions tied to

regions continued and the new battalions were now being trained and sent to England as fast as possible. Despite Canada suffering thousands of casualties overseas, young men, including those from Sarnia and Lambton, continued to sign up in the belief that they would train and fight together.

The **3rd Division** was created in December 1915, and comprised a far higher number of Canadian-born soldiers than the first two divisions. It began to reflect the changing nature of the Canadian Corps, with British and Scottish accents slowly being replaced by the flatter, Canadian dialect. There was an increasing desire among the officers and men to redefine themselves as Canadians first, proud Imperialists second. This forging of a Canadian identity would increase in importance, and intensity, during the last two years of the war. By the end of the war, fifty-one percent of the CEF would be Canadian-born.^{4F}

The **4th Division** was created in April 1916, leaving for France four months later in August. When the 4th Division joined the Canadian Corps in France during the Battle of the Somme, the formation rose to a strength of close to 100,000 men. The four infantry divisions were about 20,000 strong each, and another 20,000 men in uniform were in specialized arms, everything from heavy artillery to logistical formations. The 3rd and 4th Divisions (Contingents) were comprised of the 33rd through the 260th Infantry Battalions, which included the 34th Battalion (Guelph), 70th Battalion (Essex, Kent, Lambton, Middlesex), 99th Battalion (Essex), 135th Battalion (Middlesex) and the 149th Battalion (Lambton).

- **Battle Patches:** In the summer of 1916, the Canadians were issued identification flashes, known as “battle patches.” Each of the divisions had a distinguishing colour: red for the 1st, blue (initially black) for the 2nd, grey for the 3rd and green for the 4th. Worn on the upper sleeve, the badges displayed additional symbols—squares, circles, and triangles—distinguishing every unit in the corps. The patches became an enormous source of pride for the soldiers.^{4F, 8H}
- **Reserve Battalions:** Upon arrival overseas, most of the new battalions were absorbed into reserve battalions. From there, troops were sent to where they were needed, either as reinforcements for the 1st and 2nd Divisions or to the 3rd and 4th Divisions as they were being formed in England. A 5th Division began assembling in February 1917, but was disbanded a year later, with troops going to bolster formations in France. Sarnia fathers and sons were a part of all five Contingents.
- **Left Out of Battle:** As a result of the heavy casualties at the Front, infantry battalions had instigated the “Left Out of Battle” (LOB) rule, where 10 to 20 percent of the officers, NCOs, and men were kept in reserve to form a nucleus in the event of a unit being “knocked to pieces,” so the savaged battalions could be rebuilt. The steady injection of new men from Canada into battalions maintained the fighting battalion as a coherent battle group. This type of rebuilding occurred throughout the war and it ensured the possibility of the resurrection of a battalion after a major battle.^{2T, 4F, 8H}
- **Sarnia-Lambton:** Many Sarnia and Lambton County men enlisted at the outset of war becoming part of the First Contingent (comprised of the 1st to the 17th Infantry Battalions, plus the PPCLI). Others joined later, becoming members of battalions that were part of the Second, Third or Fourth Divisions. Local area infantry battalions included the 18th Battalion (Western Ontario), the 34th Battalion, the 70th Battalion and the Lambton 149th Battalion. Once shipped overseas, these “feeder” units would be disbanded and the soldiers integrated into regular British/Canadian army units. Sarnia-Lambton men also joined other units including the Canadian Mounted Rifles, Canadian Field Artillery, Canadian Army Medical Corps, Canadian Machine Gun Corps, the pioneers, foresters, railway ordnance and service formations of the 1st Contingent (enlisted by Major Bentley) and the 2nd Contingent.
- **The 18th Battalion** (Western Ontario), CEF was organized in October 1914; authorized in March 1915; recruited in London, Windsor, Woodstock, Chatham, St. Thomas, Strathroy, Stratford, Galt, Guelph, Walkerville and Goderich; and mobilized at London, Ontario. It embarked from Halifax on April 18, 1915 aboard the *Grampian*. The 18th Battalion arrived in France on September 15, 1915, part of the 2nd Canadian Division, 4th Infantry Brigade. The 18th Battalion fought until the end of the war, including in battles at Mount Sorrel, St. Eloi, Somme, Arras, Vimy, Hill 70, Ypres, Passchendaele, Amiens, Cambrai and Mons.^F
- **The 34th Battalion** was organized in January 1915; authorized in July 1915; recruited in Guelph, Woodstock, Galt and Stratford; and mobilized at Guelph, Ontario. The 34th Battalion embarked from Quebec on October 23, 1915 aboard the *California*. It provided reinforcements to the Canadian Corps, including to the 23rd and 17th Canadian Reserve Battalions and the 36th Battalion. The 34th battalion was disbanded on July 17, 1917.^F

- In September 1915, the following recruitment advertisement was carried in the *Observer* newspaper for a time:

YOUNG MEN ARE WANTED!

Recruiting is now open for the 70th Battalion Canadian Expeditionary Force.

Recruiting Stations for Lambton County are located in Sarnia, Petrolia, Alvinston, Watford, Forest and Thedford.

- 1. Recruits to be of good character and physically fit for service.*
- 2. Age from 18 to 45 years: minimum height, 5 feet 2 inches.*
- 3. Transportation will be furnished to Recruit from Recruiting Station to Camp in London.*
- 4. Pay \$1.10 per day for Privates, and board, lodging and uniform supplied. Separation allowance for dependents of Privates \$20.00 a month.*

Dependents include only:

- a) Wives.*
- b) Children of a widow if in care of a guardian.*
- c) Widowed mother, if the son is unmarried and her only support.*

The Patriotic Fund supplements these amounts for soldiers having dependents.

Consent of wives, parents or guardians is no longer necessary.

The foregoing is a copy of a circular issued by the officers in command of the 70th.

Seven of the thirty-three officers to complete the 70th Battalion are Lambton men.

Five of the seven fill the higher commands, including the colonel, two majors and two captains.

They look to Lambton to rally to the colors and furnish a quota for which the county will have reason to be proud.

WILL YOU BE ONE?



The 70th recruiting in Petrolia

- **The 70th Battalion** was organized in September 1915; authorized in August 1915; recruited in Essex, Kent, Lambton and Middlesex counties; and mobilized at London, Ontario. In October 1915, the *Observer* reported that, “nearly all members of the 70th Battalion were Sarnia lads.” The 70th Battalion embarked from Halifax on April 25, 1916 aboard the *Laplant*. The 70th disembarked in England on May 5, and two months later, was absorbed by the 39th Canadian Reserve Battalion, providing reinforcements to the Canadian Corps in the field. The 70th Battalion’s commanding officer was Lt. Col. R.I. Towers from April 15, 1915 until July 6, 1916. Lieut.-Col. R.I. Towers, who was a Sarnia barrister, vigorously objected to the dismemberment of his unit, but the plan was carried out anyway. The 70th battalion was disbanded on August 4, 1917.^F

In April 1916, when the 70th Battalion departed for overseas from London, hundreds of Sarnia citizens travelled there to bid farewell, as its commander (R.I. Towers) and many of its members were from Sarnia, as well as Point Edward and Lambton County. The *London Free Press* reported that for its citizens, “half of the city must have turned out to honor them on their departure from her borders.” Troops marched to entrain through the downtown streets lined with crowds scores deep, to the station platform, surrounded by throngs of immense crowds. Following is a portion of the newspaper report on the battalion’s departure:

The Gallant 70th Departs

.... On either side of the street, the crowd awaited, and for blocks away one could tell by the nearing cheers of the crowds, as well as by the classic strains from the band, the approach of the gallant battalion leaving London... Guests thronged to hotel windows and waved a hearty god-speed to the heroic hearts in khaki marching past....

Friends and relatives of the 70th men were admitted through the lines and directed to the coaches allotted to the platoons and companies of which those dear to them were members. There were touching scenes of farewell and tears that broke from quivering eyelids, brave though they tried to be. There were little children weeping and would not be comforted by assurances that "daddy was going to Toronto to buy baby a teddy bear." There were mothers and sisters, wives and sweethearts, whose hearts anguished near to breaking, and fathers and brothers, who found it difficult to remember that though women may weep, far sterner tasks wait for the men to shoulder....

Little interesting touches deep fraught with human interest were to be observed on all sides. Away back from the lines deep in the crowd, an aged man in khaki was playing an euphonium, "Auld Lang Syne," "O Canada," and "Keep the Home Fires Burning." While the battalion was marching to the station, one of the popular lieutenants observed on the sidewalk a Chinese laundryman who had once done the lieutenant's washing. For a moment, the lieutenant stepped out of the line. "Hello, Wong Ling," he said, "surely you were not going to let me go away without saying good-bye." The almond eyes of the laundryman brightened to a pathetic brilliance as he warmly clasped the young officer's hand....

• **Sarnians at the Front:** Sarnia-born **Sinclair Battley** enlisted at ValCartier on September 23, 1914. He was twenty-one years old, single and a medical student at the time. He recorded his next-of-kin as his father, Edwin P. Battley of 154 Front Street, Sarnia. Sinclair Battley became a member of Canadian #2 Stationary Hospital. On October 1, 1914 he was promoted to Corporal, and eleven days later, he arrived in France as a member of Canadian Army Medical Corps (CAMC). In early December 1914, he would spend a week in hospital in LeTouquet with influenza. As an example of the strict military expectations of the time, on December 10, 1915, Corporal Battley was reprimanded for "Direct disobedience of an order in that he shaved his upper lip after being warned not to".

In June 1916, Corporal Sinclair Battley of the CAMC wrote to the editor of the *Sarnia Observer* providing information on the disposition of Sarnia boys at the Front. Following is a portion of that letter:

Dear Sir,

I am writing you a short account of the disposition of the Sarnia boys at the front, as far as my knowledge goes, thinking that their friends might be interested in getting information concerning them. Those who left to join the first contingent have been scattered to many units and along with the men who came later, give Sarnia a representation over practically every part of the war area. As to the first battalion men I have little knowledge, except that with the exception of those who returned – they are still at the front.... I met in France a number of the Sarnia boys from No. 3 Stationary Hospital after their return from Lemnos (Gallipoli). A tougher and more healthy crowd of fellows it would be hard to find. The work on the island evidently having agreed with them, although of a far more strenuous and exhausting nature than we ever had to endure in France....

While passing through Shorncliffe I met most of the Sarnia officers and men of the 70th Battalion. They are working hard and preparing to take their places in the firing line. Everyone is bronzed like an Indian and in the best of health. I did not see the Sarnia artillery men in Shorncliffe as they have a special camp. There are many well known Sarnia boys in the artillery and other branches at the front and in England....

Sarnia may well feel proud of her sons, for they are ably representing her in this time of national peril in every branch of the service and on every portion of the British military areas. Little did we think when we left Sarnia on that memorable August morning in 1914 that we were to be amongst the pioneers of Canada in the greatest struggle the world has known and we are all proud that we were privileged to be amongst those first representatives, not only of Canada but also of Sarnia.

Sinclair Battley

After serving for 20 months, Sergeant Sinclair Battley of the CAMC would be struck off strength at Dibgate Camp on May 25, 1916, returning to Canada to complete his medical studies at Toronto University. Discharged on June 12, 1916, he recorded his intended place of residence as 154 Front Street, Sarnia (he later resided at 467 N. Christina Street, Sarnia). More information on Sinclair Battley is on page 66 and 232.

• **THE LAMBTON 149th BATTALION:** This battalion was the only unit raised exclusively in Lambton County. It was organized in November 1915; authorized in December 1915; recruited in Lambton County; and mobilized at Watford, Ontario. The 149th Battalion embarked from Halifax on March 28, 1917 aboard the *Lapland*. The 149th disembarked in England on April 10, and four days later, was absorbed by the 25th Canadian Reserve Battalion, providing reinforcements to the Canadian Corps in the field. The 149th battalion was disbanded by Privy Council Order on April 11, 1918.^{F, 7V}

When it began recruiting on November 26, 1915, organizers set a goal to recruit 1,000 Lambton able-bodied

young men of military age who were physically fit for war service. In mid-January 1916, as part of their recruitment effort and training, the Sarnia Company of the 149th Battalion, over 120 young men, went on a three-day march south of Sarnia. Leaving the Sarnia armories, marching along the river, they travelled through Corunna, Courtright to Sombra. In each village, the young men were welcomed by cheering citizens; there were patriotic speeches, dinners served; and an evening of entertainment. On the third day, the Company marched from Sombra back to Sarnia. By early March 1916, the 149th already had close to 800 volunteers signed up to fight. The recruits would train at Camp Borden and London. The 149th had three commanding officers in its short history:

Lieutenant-Colonel Dr. Robert George Campbell Kelly, born December 25, 1869 in Brooke Township, was a physician and associate coroner in Lambton County. Robert married Susan Florence Wishart, and they had four children together. He had belonged to the militia since 1885. As commanding officer of the 27th (St. Clair Borderers) Regiment, he offered to raise an overseas battalion from his home county in November 1915. Lt-Col. Kelly was commanding officer of the 149th from November 26, 1915 until his death in December 1915. On the night of December 12, 1915, Kelly collapsed from a cerebral hemorrhage in the garage at his home in Watford. A portion of his Circumstances of Death report includes, “...*He had previously been in good health with heart in normal condition, and medical opinion was that his death was probably caused by fatigue and strain in connection with organization of the 149th Battalion.*” The Watford newspaper, the *Guide Advocate*, mourned, “*He was one of Watford’s big men, and flags all over the town are at half mast out of respect to the doctor’s memory.*” Lt.-Col. Dr. Robert Kelly is buried in St. James Church Cemetery, Watford.

Dr. Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Pinkerton Bradley was born January 7, 1872 in Georgetown, Ontario. On August 12, 1915 at age forty-three, he completed his Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force Attestation Paper in London, Ontario. In June 1916, Thomas married Helen Gertrude MacPherson (from London, Ontario) in London. On September 6, 1916 when Thomas completed his Officers’ Declaration Paper at Camp Borden, he was residing with his wife Helen at 114 Elmwood Avenue, London. A physician/surgeon, he took command of the 149th Battalion on December 22, 1915, upon the death of Lt.-Col. Robert Kelly.

During Bradley’s tenure with the 149th, he and his officers organized a rugby tournament with the 118th Battalion, Western University, London and Sarnia. After the 149th players roughed up the Western students in one match, the university athletic director banned participation in future contests. The Western supervisory board complained, “*We entered a team under the impression that the games would be for sportsmen and gentlemen, but have found that such is not the case.*” The 149th eventually won the championship against Sarnia on December 3, 1916.

Lt-Col. Bradley served with the 149th Battalion until October 3, 1916, when he transferred to the CEF, Canadian Army Medical Corps (CAMC). Arriving in England in late 1916, Bradley became second in command of the Canadian Convalescent Hospital at Buxton. From December 1917 to May 1918, he was assigned to a field hospital in France, after which he was posted to the Convalescent Hospital at Epsom. In June 1918, he was suffering from “slight dyspnea (shortness of breath) and irregularity in heart action—occasioned by mental strain.” Following the Armistice in 1918, he was retained for duty, and later struck off service in June 1919. He passed away in Sarnia on June 30, 1934, and is buried in Lakeview Cemetery in Sarnia.

Lieutenant Colonel William Wallace MacVicar was born November 27, 1866 in Sarnia. In May 1894, William, residing in Goderich at the time, married Carrie Baird Cooper in Clinton, Ontario. They had one daughter together. Unfortunately, only a few years after their marriage, his wife Carrie passed away. William remarried on November 30, 1898, to Ersula Barrick in Windsor. William and Ersula had two daughters together, and the family resided at 178 Forsyth Street in Sarnia. William Wallace was employed as a Grand Trunk Railway mail clerk and would become second-in-command of the 27th Regiment. He completed his Officers’ Declaration Paper on September 9, 1916 at Camp Borden. Lt.-Col. William MacVicar served as commanding officer of the 149th from October 1916 until the unit was absorbed a reserve battalion in England in April 1917. William Wallace MacVicar is buried in Lakeview Cemetery in Sarnia.^{F, 2D, 2G, 7V}

• **149th Grand Mobilization:** In late May 1916, the Lambton 149th prepared for their journey overseas. Two days before leaving, on May 26, 1916, the 800-man battalion paraded through the streets of Petrolia where they were cheered by a crowd of thousands and a reception was held in their honour. Serving as the battalion’s mascot was three year-old **Edward “Ned” McRobie**, the son of Petrolia mayor John McRobie. He would be known as the youngest drummer boy in the British Commonwealth, and later traveled with his parents around Ontario to aid

recruiting drives. Postcards of “Ned” in uniform with his drum were sold for 10 cents each with the proceeds going to the Patriotic Fund that assisted families of soldiers in need. The next day, Saturday May 27, the battalion marched through the downtown streets of Sarnia, part of a “Grand Mobilization” weekend of events. Front and Cromwell streets were so densely packed with people that it was difficult for police to clear a passageway for the troops to move along. Following is a portion of the report on the parade:

Sarnia Entertains the Boys of the 149

... As the battalion proceeded along the streets it was followed by a surging mass of humanity – men, women and children, automobiles, carriages and in fact every kind of vehicle that could be pressed into service. Front Street had been gaily decorated with flags and bunting for the occasion and presented a pleasing sight to the eye. The decorations and the multitude of people all going to show that Sarnia citizens were indeed proud of Lambton's 149... In the march past, the battalion, nearly 800 strong, presented a soldierly appearance that was most creditable. The steady swing and even tread of the troops to the inspiring strains of the band was a pleasure to behold and each company as they passed along the streets was greeted by cheers and hand clapping from the friends who had gathered to do the boys honor....



The Lambton 149th leaving Sarnia at Ferry Dock Hill

• **The 149th leave Sarnia:** On the Sunday morning of May 28, the battalion paraded to Victoria Park for a special church service. In the early morning hours of Monday, May 29th, 1916, the force of 800 volunteers of the Lambton 149th Battalion left Sarnia for training camp at Carling's Heights near London, Ontario to train for the front. They paraded from City Hall to Front Street, to the Cromwell train station. Following is a portion of the report on their departure:

*Bands Play, Women Weep, 149th Gone
Farewell*

*Here's luck to the boys from Lambton
That heard their country's call
Shouldered a gun to fight the Hun
Offered their life, their all*

*We're proud of our border county
That mustered the one-four-nine
May the deeds they do live history through,
And their valor ever shine.*

... The band played “We'll Never Let the Old Flag Fall,” and many of the soldier boys joined in the refrain, while mothers, wives, sisters and sweethearts did their best to keep back the tears. The Battalion swung smartly along the street, the steady tramp, tramp, being drowned by the cheers of assembled hundreds. But there was no glitter of gold or brass, no tinkle of accouterment, for these men were on their way to war, and Sarnia was saying goodbye to Lambton's 149.

Lean, brown young men were in the majority of those in the khaki clad columns of fours, though here and there was a head marked with gray – veterans going forth for their country again. And all along the streets were young and old, all assembled with the one object in view – to honor the soldier boys and bid them farewell and God speed....

While the men were boarding the special train, the band played “Auld Lang Syne,” “The Girl I Left Behind Me,” and “The Red, White and Blue.” There were many tear-stained faces among the crowd but it was not all sadness. The 149 is not a conscript legion being driven into strife but is composed of free men who have heard and answered the call of their country. Other soldiers have left Sarnia but the 149 is distinctively a Lambton product made up almost entirely of men from Lambton and Sarnia. So with the tears and cheers, was mingled patriotism and though the sacrifice was great – the greatest that could be made – many a woman covered her heart break with a smile....

... And when the last section drew away from the Cromwell Street depot as the clock in the Post Office building tolled seven, there was much cheering, and then a great silence.

On their way to London, the 149th Battalion stopped over in Watford, where they paraded down the main street, and lunch was provided for all of the men by the people of Watford.



The Lambton 149th leaving Sarnia at Ferry Dock Hill



The Lambton 149th Badge

• **Training and embarking overseas:** On July 8, 1916, the Lambton 149th Battalion along with seven other units; the 118th, 135th, 142nd, 153rd, 161st, 168th and 186th, left for Camp Borden for further military training. During the winter months, from mid-October 1916 to mid-March 1917, the 149th were at Queen’s Park, London. During this time frame, a number of the men were posted to other units to fill them out. These other units had gone overseas before the 149th. Upon completion of training in late March 1917, the 149th billeted at Queen’s Park and had time to visit their parents, wives and children.

In late March 1917, the 149th boarded a troop train to Halifax, arriving there to march directly onto the waiting troop ship, the *SS Lapland*, a passenger ship with the Red Star Line. The ship set sail for England on March 27th. An uneventful trip overseas followed until, as the *Lapland* began its entry into Liverpool, twelve miles from its dock, the ship struck a mine off the Mersey Bar Lightship. The front portion of the vessel began filling with water, yet it made it to its dock, and all the troops disembarked with no casualties. ^{N, 2U, 7U, 7V}

In the April 13, 1917 *Sarnia Weekly Observer*, citizens read the news that the; “*149th Battalion Arrives Safely in England*”. On the front page of the newspaper that same day, Sarnians first learned of some of the details of the Battle of Vimy Ridge that had taken place that Easter weekend.

• **Harold Roy Marriott** was born on August 3, 1898 in Sarnia. On February 7, 1916, at the age of eighteen, Harold enlisted in Sarnia with the 149th Battalion. He recorded his occupation as student and his next-of-kin as his father, George W. Marriott of 218 Cobden Street, Sarnia. Officials noted on his Attestation Paper that he could not be sent overseas until he was nineteen years of age. Harold was hospitalized three times during his training: for fourteen days due to measles at Camp Borden in late-September-early October 1916; for eighteen days due to laryngitis at the military hospital in London at the end of December 1916; and for nineteen days due to the mumps in London in late February-early March 1917.

On March 27, 1917, approximately four months before his 19th birthday, Harold Marriott of the 149th embarked overseas from Halifax aboard the *SS Lapland*. Upon arrival in England in early April, he was taken on strength into the 25th Reserve Battalion at Bramshott. Following are portions of a letter that Private Harold Roy Marriott wrote to his father George on Cobden Street in Sarnia, received in May 1917:

Dear Dad,

At last we are settled for a while at any rate, and I am glad that we are through moving. To tell you all about

the trip I'll have to start from the time we left London, Ont... We had to carry all our stuff to the C.P.R. station and it made us sweat. I had quite a bit extra stuff and every pound seemed like ten by the time we got there. We left at 5:30 p.m... I took some pictures at Montreal and one or two other places where we had a long wait. We travelled along the south bank of the St. Lawrence River... saw a good many things of interest along the way. We were on the train from 5:30 of the 22nd till 11 p.m. of the 25th (March) and when we got off I could feel that swaying for a day after.... We were taken right alongside our transport, the Lapland of the Red Star Line. It was one o'clock when we went on board and 2:30 a.m. before we got to bed. We had a fine boat and good quarters to be thankful for... We stayed in Halifax Harbor for two days, sailing on the 27th at 4:30 p.m... When we first got into the swell of the ocean I thought it wasn't bad, but the continual rise and dip soon made me sick. I went and lay down in my bunk but then that was tipping up and down and by morning I was so dizzy I couldn't stand. We had to have our life belts with us wherever we went and talk about nuisance, that certainly was one... We had lifeboat drill about every other day and once they enveloped the ship in smoke for trial. Another time they threw a barrel overboard and when it was almost out of sight the gunners had to shoot at it.

It was as calm as could be expected most of the way and although one day we were in a storm it didn't last long and was only a moderate one. We entered the war zone on Wednesday the 4th (April) and everything was got ready in case of an emergency. On Thursday we were met by six torpedo boats which are certainly small but very swift. On Friday about three o'clock we came in sight of the Irish coast. We kept out pretty well and were soon in the channel... We were sailing off the Welsh coast at dark or rather moonlight and it was very beautiful. The moonlight was something grand as seen at sea... Later we entered the Mersey and about 2:30 and struck a mine. It fairly stopped the boat and the cargo was all that saved it from going down. It struck on the right bow tearing a big hole in the ship and twisting things up pretty badly. One man was crushed to death, one drowned and many had serious or minor wounds. There was not much confusion but we were all ordered to the life-boats. The bow sank down very much but the bulkheads were closed and the water could not get in, so by slow speed they got her to port though it took a long time as the river winds so. When we got off we were given a small loaf of bread cut in two with a piece of headcheese between, an orange, a piece of cheese and a sea biscuit and that had to do till supper. We entrained at 6:30 and started for the camp.

I couldn't begin to describe the trains here. The coaches are about as big as the Sarnia street railway car No. 1 and I guess it's the smallest there. From the time we left Liverpool we had a regular joy ride. The ends of the rails must have been raised from the bumps we got. We were on the train till 5 o'clock. The scenery is certainly different from the Canadian and the buildings look peculiar, especially the houses... We are at Bramshott Camp, about forty-six miles from London. I heard a lark for the first time this morning, and there is lots of heather around here although of course it's not in bloom yet. Well, I guess I must close for this time, hoping you are well and everything is alright at home.

Love to all, Harold

In June 1917, Private Harold Roy Marriott of the 25th Reserve Battalion, spent seventeen days in the Canadian Military Hospital in Bramshott due to pleurisy. In December 1917, he was transferred to the Young Man's Battalion at Bramshott. In mid-August 1918, Private Marriott arrived in France, becoming a member of the 46th Battalion, and days later the 78th Battalion. During his time overseas, he served in both England (April 4, 1917-August 20, 1918) and France (August 20, 1918-April 28, 1919). Private Harold Roy Marriott survived the war, was discharged on demobilization in London, Ontario in June 1919, and returned home to 218 Cobden Street, Sarnia.

- **Fate of the 149th:** The Lambton 149th was one of those battalions raised and organized at a time when Canada had already suffered thousands of casualties. Upon arrival overseas, the Lambton 149th like most of the new battalions would cease to exist. The 149th disembarked in England on April 10, and four days later, the men were absorbed into other battalions including the 4th and 25th Canadian Reserve Battalions. From these units, the men were dispersed as reinforcements replenishing those depleted Canadian Corps units in the field.

- **BRITISH HOME CHILDREN:** Some of the young men from Sarnia who volunteered to serve were British Home Children. From 1869 to 1948, over 100,000 children of all ages were sent to Canada from the British Isles during the "British Child Emigration Movement". These children were sent to Canada by over 50 organizations including Annie MacPherson Homes, Barnardo Homes, Quarrier's Orphan Homes, the Salvation Army and various church groups. These children came from families who, through sickness or even death of one of their parents, had fallen on hard times. Because there was no social system in place to help them get through these difficult circumstances, the families had no other way than to surrender their offspring to the organizations.

In Britain, many of these children lived in horrible, slum-like conditions. Many toiled in workhouses or served as indentured labourers, while others lived on the streets. Many believed that these impoverished, abandoned and orphaned children would have a better chance for a healthy, moral life in rural Canada. Both the Canadian and British governments supported the program: Britain, because it reduced the costs of having to support struggling children; Canada, because it provided workers-in-training and young children that could be adopted. In Canada, while most of the children were called orphans, the majority of them had a parent in Britain. Most parents were just too poor to keep them. Many of the home children would never see their families again.

Placed on large ships with little or no provisions, upon arriving in Canada, the children, most between six and fifteen years old, were sent to distributing and receiving homes right across the country. Farmers and households were required to apply for children—there were seven applicants for every child. Living conditions varied for the home children. Some were treated very well, and found loving and caring families. Far too many however faced a variety of circumstances not unlike those they left behind in Britain. Siblings were separated, many were used as a source of cheap farm labour and domestic servants, and others suffered isolation, neglect or physical and mental abuse.^{F, 2N, 3O, 10M, 10N, 10O}

Many of the British Home Children served with the Canadian and British Forces during both World Wars. For some, it was a way to get back to see any family that they might still have in the ‘old’ country. Five of Sarnia’s World War I fallen were British Home Children: Daniel Manning, Thomas Powell, William Reynolds, Albert Rodber and Thomas Wright. Their stories are included in this Project.

- **CANADIAN PATRIOTIC FUND:** In August 1914, Sir Herbert Ames, a wealthy Montreal business-man and MP, re-established the Canadian Patriotic Fund (CPF) to assist families of serving men and those returning from war with disabilities. It had first been organized during the South African War to care for soldiers’ families. During the Great War, poster campaigns, often originating in local areas, encouraged people to contribute to the Fund. Nearly \$50 million was raised to provide financial and social assistance to soldiers’ families who had volunteered to serve. A vast network of volunteers was established to visit homes and assess the level of need. A wife could receive \$5 to \$10 a month with an extra \$1.50 to \$6 for each child, depending on age. This amount was modified as the war progressed.

But the money came with some strings attached. The volunteer social workers dispensed advice, whether it was asked for or not, on budgeting, childcare, nutrition and personal hygiene. Any household deemed unworthy could be cut off without appeal.^{21, 2N}

- **SARNIA’S LIFE INSURANCE PLAN:** Sarnia’s mayor in 1915 was William R. Paul. With more than 1,000 of the City’s 10,000 residents heading to war, he did something quite unique and progressive. Mayor Paul decided something had to be done to protect the economical security of the loved ones left behind. He decided the municipality should buy life insurance for every Sarnia soldier. Council went along with the proposal, and a deal was struck with the State Life Insurance Company of Indianapolis.

By war’s end, with more than 100 of the city’s young men losing their lives while serving, many local families needed help with the day-to-day costs of running a household. Council granted an allowance of \$10 per month to the wives or mothers of enlisted men. Families received \$2 per month for each child of a soldier. In 1915, this was a significant amount of cash. The City was under no obligation to provide such assistance. Mayor William Paul did not seek re-election in 1916.^g

- **THE SARNIA AMBULANCE:** In early May 1915, there was a public meeting held in Sarnia, presided over by Mayor William R. Paul. At that meeting, in a unanimous vote, it was decided that Sarnia would purchase a motor ambulance for use by the Canadian Corps, something that a number of other cities had also done. It was decided a committee would canvas the city for subscriptions to provide the necessary funds. By the end of the month, over \$3,100 had been collected for the purchase of a motor ambulance—a Sarnia Ambulance, which would be sent to France.

The \$3,100+ raised by the citizens of Sarnia was donated to the Canadian Red Cross Society for the purchase of a motor ambulance and supplies that would be sent overseas. A motor ambulance was purchased from the McLaughlin Buick Firm in Oshawa. The fully equipped ambulance was sent to the Red Cross in England in September 1915. Along with the ambulance, also delivered were cans of tobacco, pails of jam, socks and beds for hospitals. The ambulance was used for a time in England, and then sent on to the Front in France.

• **SARNIA'S DR. WILLIAM HENDERSON:** Dr. William A. Henderson was a Sarnia doctor who served for over a year with the British Army-Royal Army Medical Corps, in England, Egypt, Gallipoli and France. William Henderson was originally from Scotland, born February 16, 1869 in Huntly, Aberdeenshire, the son of Peter and Margaret (nee Anderson) Henderson. The Henderson family immigrated to Canada, arriving in the port of Quebec aboard the *St. Andrew* on May 11, 1870. In 1871, Peter (a farm labourer) and Margaret Henderson, along with their children Peter, James, Anna, George, Alexander and William (age 2) were residing in Berlin (Waterloo). Ten years later, Peter (a farmer) and Margaret Henderson, along with their children Anna, Alexander, William (age 12), Robert Maggie and Charles were still residing in Berlin (Waterloo). In 1891, the Henderson family was living in Point Edward—Peter (then a railway cleaner) and Margaret, along with their children William (age 22), Robert, Maggie and Charles.

William Henderson completed his medical training at Trinity University in Toronto in 1898. On November 9, 1898, Doctor William Henderson married May Brown (born November 1870 in Sarnia Township) in Sarnia Township. William and May Henderson resided at 142 Davis Street, Sarnia, and were blessed with two children together, William Stuart (born July 29, 1901) and Marion (born March 1908). In 1900, William Henderson entered the Freemason Fraternity, and progressed to become the Worship Master in 1905. In 1911, the Henderson household on Davis Street included William and May; their children Stuart and Marion; and their 23 year-old domestic Irene Arfenta.

William served in the Sarnia city council for several years, and was elected mayor of Sarnia in 1911. As mayor, he was the driving force behind the creation of Sarnia Harbour by the Federal Government, and he led the way in getting the city to move from wooded sidewalks to concrete ones. He was a member of Sarnia City Council when he volunteered for overseas service. He served overseas for about one year with the Royal Army Medical Corps with the rank of Lieutenant. While serving in various hospitals and clearing stations throughout Europe, he wrote letters home and to *The Observer* describing his experiences. In May 1916, he sent the following letter, from “Somewhere in France” after he saw a little piece of Sarnia there:

The Sarnia Ambulance “Somewhere in France”

The reference in The Observer to the Sarnia Ambulance from time to time caused me to have a glance at all such craft in my travels. At all the unloading places in England, Scotland and Wales, I looked in vain. When I came to France a month ago I resumed my search and after 20,000 miles travel was rewarded by seeing “Sarnia, Canada” much to my surprise, on the ambulance into which was being placed two of my patients. It was at Etaples, pronounced “A-Top,” some miles south of Boulogne, where is situated many hospitals. The driver, Russell Parsons by name told me while I went for a ride to the hospital with him, that it has done splendid work and is on the road daily. From inspection I could see it is still undamaged, has been in no smashes and in fact is in perfect condition. The engine is running very smoothly and strong and the driver likes it very much. On the side in large block letters is “SARNIA, CANADA,” and on a nickel plate in front are the words, “Sarnia, Ontario, Canada.” The army number is 815. At other places in France I had seen one marked from the “Women and Girls, Peel County, Ontario,” and one donated by Bracebridge, so I was pleased to see also the one donated by the citizens of Sarnia.

Yours sincerely, W.A. Henderson

In another May 1916 letter home, sent from Rouen, France, Dr. W.A. Henderson described his months of work on an ambulance train, trains that transported wounded soldiers that had returned by ship from France or the Mediterranean to the English coast, where they were brought to various British hospitals. He described it as,

... just imagine, if you will, a hospital complete in every detail, with twice the accommodation of the Sarnia general, and it all on wheels...Like a city hospital, too, it must be amply supplied with food (a wounded Tommy has a twenty-four hour appetite), water, lit, kept scrupulously clean, with sanitation carefully carried out, and the patients all nursed and medically treated as required... On the train, he ...rendered such surgical and medical aid as is required, such as dressings, dealing with secondary hemorrhages, comforting diseased patients, dispersing medications, tending to fracture cases and the badly wounded so that they suffer as little as possible. Dr. W.A. Anderson also described some of the conversations he had with the wounded:

As you go about you get much information first hand, of what is going on at the front, and what life is like in the trenches. You get also many interesting stories of close calls and deeds of valour done. One Scotch lad told he was in a trench with other men when the Huns exploded a mine under them. He was blown clear out of his trench into the German trench 12 yards away. The Germans thinking their own trench might be injured in the explosion had evacuated it for the moment. All the lad felt was a sore arm, and realizing where he was, he got up, climbed out and

put his back to his own lines. Many bullets whistled about but only one hit him, and that through the fleshy part of the hip. When I asked him what he did when the bullet hit him, he said: "I clapped my hand over the sore spot and ran all that harder." He got safely back to the dressing station, where it was found his arm was broken, but the bullet wound, was a nice clean thing, the bullet having gone clear through. He said as soon as his arm was better he wanted to go back.

We got many such stories... then, too, you often get much food for thought. This for instance; in passing through the train one day I saw a man looking very down hearted and thinking to cheer him up a bit, I sat down beside him. He had reason to be down-hearted for he had lost both legs. We tried to talk to him of his having done his bit, and of his service to his country and such like, but he said, "Yes that's fine now, but a few years after the South African war I knew a man, in the same plight as I am now, who had to beg from door to door and was often refused a slice of bread, and was frequently spoken to harshly, and in a year or two it will be the same way with me, for men soon forget." It was a hard argument to combat, but surely as long as we live, we will never refuse to help the brave fellows who have been maimed in our defence or fail to help the widows and children of those who bled and died.



Doctor William Henderson

Dr. W.A. Henderson returned to Sarnia in mid-August 1916, the first commissioned officer to return to the city from the war. Thousands of local citizens, along with local dignitaries, City council members, and Mayor Doherty turned out to welcome him home from the war. A procession that included the Sons of Scotland Kilties band, the Sarnia Citizens band, the Young Men's Patriotic Club, and many automobiles loaded with citizens—began at Dr. Henderson's residence at 142 Davis Street, and weaved its way through the downtown streets lined with crowds to Victoria Park. Following is a portion of the *Sarnia Observer* report on the public reception:

Not only were the grounds surrounding the bandstand crowded with people but streets adjacent to the park were literally packed with automobiles and other vehicles. As Dr. Henderson made his appearance on the bandstand the cheers of the people broke forth and were supplemented by the screeching of scores of automobile horns. After order had been restored the citizens' band played The Maple Leaf Forever and then Mayor Doherty delivered an address of welcome to the guest of the evening....

After a few welcoming speeches by local dignitaries, Dr. Henderson addressed the crowd. Following is a portion of his address: *Never before in my life have I felt so keenly appreciative of my citizenship of my native city. I appreciate this kindly reception at the hands of my fellow citizens more than words can express. I value it more highly than silver or gold. Indeed in this one hour you have done much to repay me for any sacrifice or any trial I have passed through in the year in which I gave my service for the great cause... In speaking about the work in which he was engaged: ...let me just say that the care of the sick and wounded of the British army is magnificent. To mothers and fathers let me say that no parents hand could more tenderly care for these than the nurses and orderlies and surgeons do. Nothing is denied them, every facility is available for their speedy relief and recovery... lest I forget, let me say that the work done by the women of Canada for the comforts of the soldiers has been magnificent, almost divine... I am glad to be home among you. My experience during the year was wonderful. I was favoured with good health and never lost one days work. I am glad I went. I had to go for I felt that I must do my bit. I am glad to be back. I have the self-consciousness that I helped many a brave fellow in his fight for life and that I had the great*

privilege of relieving pain and also cheering many a sorely wounded lad. The work was at times most trying and exacting, at others pleasant and not severe. It too, fell to my lot to travel far and see much... I have seen many countries and many cities but I am glad to bring you the message that having seen all these there is no country, not even Scotland that looks as fair to me to live in as Canada. That although I have seen many cities large and small if I had my choice to live in any of them my choice after all would be good old Sarnia...

In the weeks following his return to Sarnia, Dr. Henderson gave a number of lectures in Sarnia and Lambton County, telling of his first hand war experiences. The lectures were given to aid the Red Cross and for other war patriotic purposes. A little over two months after returning home, tragedy struck the forty-seven-year-old Dr. W.A. Henderson, casting a gloom over the entire city. To all appearances, he was in the best of health at the time of the incident. In the mid-afternoon of October 25, 1916, he left his home to make a professional call, driving along Christina Street. An eyewitness described seeing an automobile travelling towards him in a zigzag pattern, the driver had fallen over sideways on the seat, when it collided with a coal wagon. Rescuers discovered an unconscious Dr. Henderson in the automobile, attempted to revive him, but he passed away. The 47 year-old doctor's death was officially recorded as "angina pectoris".

It was estimated that five thousand people attended Dr. William Henderson's funeral, the largest ever seen in Sarnia according to the *Sarnia Observer*. The funeral service was held at the home of the deceased at 142 Davis Street, under Masonic auspices, and was packed with people. The procession then moved along Christina Street, lined with citizens, on its way to Lakeview cemetery. The funeral procession included the 27th Regiment Band, and members of the various fraternal societies including: Masonic Victoria Lodge, No. 56, A.F. & A.M.; St. Simon of Cyrene Preceptory Knights of Templar, Independent Foresters Band of Chatham; Court Huron No. 163 Independent Order of Foresters; and the Loyal Order of Moose.

In late October 1916, a Sunday evening memorial service in honour of Dr. Henderson was held at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church. Rev. J.J. Paterson referred to the passing of Dr. Henderson as follows; *"We have a concrete illustration of the uncertain tenure of human life in the passing of Dr. Henderson – in the flower of his manhood, and in the midst of his increasing usefulness as a physician and citizen. It might well appear that Dr. Henderson is another victim of the great world war. His strenuous year at the Front, with his enthusiastic advocacy of the Red Cross movement since his return have proved too much for human strength.... In Dr. Henderson's death the Red Cross organizations have lost a wholesouled and enthusiastic helper. The moral forces of this city are the poorer by his death. The city of Sarnia has lost an energetic, public spirited citizen, and St. Andrew's church a regular and sympathetic member. He saved others, himself he could not save."* Dr. William A. Henderson left behind a wife and two children, Stuart and Marion. His name is included on the St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church plaque honouring members of the church who gave their lives during the Great War.^{N, 2D, 2G}

Note: William Henderson's death was not officially attributed to his military experience. His name is not included in any of the official war remembrance records including the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, Veterans Affairs Canada, Library and Archives Canada (eg. Veterans Death Cards), Canadian Virtual War Memorial, Maple Leaf Legacy Project, or the Books of Remembrance in Ottawa.

• **PRISONERS OF WAR:** Approximately 3,800 Canadians were taken prisoner during the Great War. The largest number of these, over 1,400, were taken in a single day during the 2nd Battle of Ypres. Though there were rules set out by the Hague Convention on how to treat prisoners, surrendering was dangerous business. Blinded by bloodlust or bent on avenging a comrade, a soldier might not accept an enemy's surrender. Many of the prisoners arrived in the camps after being gassed or wounded on the battlefield. In the POW camps, though they were away from the dangers of the front-line trenches, their confinement came with its own hardships. Isolated from news of the war, except that gleaned from new arrivals, prisoners existed on thin soups, suffered from disease, were forced into grueling work in dangerous places including repairing German front line trenches or toiling in iron works and salt mines, and could be ferociously punished—sometimes for no reason at all.

What sustained the prisoners were letters and parcels from home. In 1917, the homemade packages were replaced by standard Red Cross issue. The Red Cross supplies included food—crucial for survival, letters and handicraft materials. When the war was over, for the returned POW's, the perception was that it was not a heroic or glorious thing to have been taken prisoner, to surrender and preserve your life while other people were losing theirs. As a result, many did not talk about their experiences, even to their family members. Many were riddled with health problems that either affected them for many years, or shortened their lives.^{4A, 4G, 5J}

• **MRS. MARGARET McCRAE, SARNIA:** On April 7th 1916, Mrs. Margaret McCrae who was in Newcastle-on-Tyne, England wrote a letter to the *Sarnia Observer*. Mrs. McCrae was a Sarnian who was then working in England. One of the things she was doing while there was sending supplies to Canadian soldiers who were prisoners of war. Following is a portion of her April 1917 letter to the editor of the *Sarnia Observer*:

As I have received considerable money from Sarnia people for my work in connection with Canadian prisoners of war, I am sure they will be interested to have a report from me, showing how the work is progressing. I still send parcels of food to the same twelve Canadians, not having added to the list, as this is all I can undertake to look after properly with the subscriptions I have received, and in any case, this, with my other war works, keeps me fairly busy. Since I started this work I have received donations amounting to \$150 and have sent 118 parcels weighing 11 pounds each (which, by the way, is well over a half ton of food)... I received the names of these prisoners from the Canadian Red Cross in London, and I am under obligation to send parcels to these men, and no one else is given these names...

So many people at home seem to think the prisoners do not receive parcels sent. This is quite a mistaken idea, as everything I have sent has arrived and I hear constantly from these men, as each parcel is acknowledged by date and these letters are genuine, without a doubt. Since the U.S. intervened, there is much improvement in camps and delivery of parcels. Most of my men have sent me snap shots of themselves, and some views of camps, which appear very dreary, bare places. Thanks to the Canadian Red Cross, all Canadian prisoners are now well supplied with clothing of all kinds. One thing I never fail to send is the best beef dripping, as there is absolutely no fat of any kind at the camps, and they all like this...

I am now the official Canadian Red Cross visitor to the military hospital here, and on my first visit last week, saw twenty-six Canadians in various stages of recovery, had a thoroughly interesting time with them. They were so glad to have a real Canadian as visitor, as up to this, it had been an English lady, and we discussed everything pertaining to Canada and Canadians. One man who had arrived the previous day was very "down." He nearly wept when I told him I came from Sarnia. He helped build the tunnel and felt a decided proprietorship in it. Another man from St. Marys, had worked on the telephone in Sarnia, and asked me if I knew several people, of course I did...

I am still making munitions on Saturdays, along with about one hundred other ladies, from 6 a.m. to 5 p.m., and hope every shell we turn out will accomplish its purpose. It is very dirty but interesting work and there is considerable satisfaction in it. This has been a bad week for zeppelin raids, as these unwelcome visitors have come to this locality four nights in succession. Fortunately the bombs were dropped some distance from us but the noise is terrific and thousands of windows were smashed, blocks away from where the bombs fell. We had a flying visit of 24 hours from Dr. Henderson this week which we all enjoyed very much. He had the zeppelin experience to a certain extent, and saw the damage next day. In one raid 20 were killed and over 100 injured. It is decidedly nerve racking when all lights are turned out, trains and trams stopped and we sit in darkness, wondering if the zeppelin has designs on our house and the next bomb dropped will be dropped here. There is little chance for anyone near them when dropped.

We all feel sure things are coming out right for the allies, though there is certainly no immediate prospect of the finish... I hope I have not wearied your readers with this lengthy letter, and assure all those who are assisting me in feeding these brave Canadians, that they are receiving my grateful thanks, and also thanks of the men in German camps. Thanking you for your kindness in publishing the above, I remain, yours sincerely.

Margaret McCrae

• **THE CANADIAN ARMY MEDICAL CORPS (CAMC):** Founded in 1904, the Canadian Medical Corps included doctors, nurses, stretcher-bearers, and physiotherapists who helped rehabilitate wounded or injured soldiers. More than 21,000 Canadian men and women, including Sarnians, served in the Corps between 1914 and 1918. At least three of Sarnia's WWI fallen soldiers served in the Canadian Army Medical Corps, including; David Bentley, Walter McKenzie and David Smuck (their stories are included in this Project).

• **THE CANADIAN RAILWAY TROOPS:** Canadian railway units played a major role in the construction and maintenance of railways of all gauges, including light railways, to within easy reach of the Front Line for the five British Army areas in France and Belgium. Especially after the Battle of the Somme, it was clearly proven that the truck, wagon and animal transport could not alone bring forward in the fighting zone over rutted, battle-scarred roads and shell-torn terrain, the weight of war material required to stage modern battle.

In the years leading up to war, Canadians built more railway lines than any other part of the British Empire.

Railway construction had become a science in Canada as the demands of great distances, terrain and weather stimulated innovation and advances in engineering and equipment. As a result, Canada possessed the expertise required to 'do the job'. In August 1915, the Canadian Overseas Railway Construction Corps (CORCC), made up of 500 picked men from the construction forces of the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR), proceeded to France. In May 1916, Canada was asked to supply another 1,000 men for railway construction work. Before long, five more battalions of Canadian men arrived overseas and were combined with the earlier corps into battalions that eventually became known as the Canadian Railway Troops (CRT). At war's end, CRT ranks consisted of 13 battalions with 19,000 personnel—16,000 of them working in France and Belgium, with the remainder in England.

The cobweb of narrow-gauge steel rail fed the guns, the troops, the trenches and evacuated the wounded. Crews often worked in the heat of battle and their work parties and camps were magnets for enemy artillery. When territory was captured, they had to be weary of booby traps left for them and mines with delay-action fuses. Though their chief occupation was railroading, Canadian Railway Troops were soldiers first. They were armed and ready, and were called on many times to attack or to defend against the enemy.

Many young men from Sarnia and Lambton served with the Canadian Railway Troops. Two made the supreme sacrifice: William Chapman and Thomas Wright (their stories are included in this Project).

- **CAVALRY:** For thousands of years, men on horseback were an essential part of warfare. Mounted soldiers—cavalry—were scouts, reserves or attack forces, used when speed, shock action, mobility or long distances were involved. The cavalry was a proven and necessary component of most armies. The face of warfare changed dramatically early in the First World War, as machine guns, barbed wire, trenches, minefields and artillery barrages severely restricted the use of cavalry. Many of the traditional generals were not yet ready to concede that the day of the horse was over. As a result, long after the war started in 1914, all of the nations involved maintained cavalry.

Canadian Cavalry Brigades (CCB) included the Royal Canadian Dragoons, Lord Strathcona's Horse, Fort Garry Horse and the Royal Canadian Horse Artillery. Faced with trench complexes, machine guns, mechanized artillery and barbed wire, there were few cavalry charges on the Western Front, as horse-mounted troop regiments became an outdated mode of warfare. Often the cavalrymen were required to dismount and fight as infantry during the larger battles.

Many young men from Sarnia and Lambton served with the cavalry during the Great War, either in Canadian Cavalry regiments or Mounted Rifle Battalions. Eight Sarnians serving with cavalry units made the supreme sacrifice: George Ansbro, Robert Batey, James Bennett, Albert Fitzgerald, Thomas Knowles, Thomas Littlefield, James Pirrie, and William Skinner. One of them, Thomas Knowles, gave his life during what some historians refer to as "the last great cavalry charge," in the Battle of Moreuil Wood. All of their stories are included in this Project.

Canadian horses: Horses, along with mules, were essential components to the army in their ability to wage war successfully. On all fronts and theatres, a staggering one million plus horses and mules were listed in service with British and Commonwealth forces.

Canada sent about 130,000 horses overseas during the First World War, representing well over 10 per cent of the horses used on the Western Front. Eight thousand horses went overseas with the First Contingent of Canadians in the fall of 1914. Horses and mules served at the Front, in No-Man's land, in the rear and in the support lines. In the mud, rain, snow, cold, gas attacks and terror, they supplied the soldiers with food, water, and ammunition, and pulled soldiers, guns, large artillery weapons and ambulances. Hundreds of thousands of horses on all sides on the Western front would die from exhaustion, starvation, disease, poison gas, exposure, drowning in mud and water, falling in shell holes, or by being shot and blown up. Estimates vary, but at least 25 per cent of the Canadian horses were thought to have died in the war. Captain Sidney Galtrey, author of *'The Horse and the War'* stated in the autumn of 1918, *I believe that every soldier who has anything to do with horse or mule has come to love them for what they are and the grand work they have done and are doing in and out of the death zones.*

After the war, for the horses and mules that survived, the question was what to do with them. It was felt an ocean voyage back to Canada was both impractical and cruel. The Canadian government decided to sell the surviving horses to the Belgium government. The troops, some of whom had been driving the same animals for two and three years, were heartbroken when orders came down to surrender the horses for sale. Only officers' mounts would get to come back to Canada.

E, 2E, 3L, 3M, 3N, 3R, 6E

• **LIFE IN THE TRENCHES:** World War I was known as a “**trench war**” with most battles waged by the infantry with the support of artillery. Throughout the war, soldiers would cycle through the three types of trenches—the **front line**, the trench closest to No Man’s Land; the **support line**, the trench behind the front line; and the **reserve trench** where reserve troops waited to be called in as reinforcements. From their opposing complex series of trenches, they faced one another across a deadly “No Man’s Land” of barbed wire entanglements, exploding artillery and shrapnel shells, grenades, sniper fire, poison gas attacks, buried land mines and machine-gun fire. Frontal attacks against enemy trenches led to terrible losses in ruthless engagements of attrition. Battles tended to be prolonged, futile affairs, bogged down by attacks and counter-attacks, a static war, often ending in stalemates, with losses and gains sometimes measured by only a few hundred meters. Complicating things initially for Canadians soldiers, many were issued the Canadian-made Ross Rifle Mk. III, which turned out to be unsuitable for the conditions of trench warfare. On the Western Front, one Canadian in seven who served was killed.^{F, 2I, 3S, 6E}

• **Ross Rifle:** At the end of the Boer War, Canada needed to equip its army, police and militia with a new weapon. Scottish industrialist Sir Charles Ross built a factory in Quebec City to meet the need. The rifle created would undergo five different design versions, and it became known for its accuracy and precision, capable of firing 20 rounds per minute. The Ross Rifle, Mark III, won the unflagging support of the Minister of Militia and Defence Sam Hughes, and was adopted as the primary weapon of the Canadian infantry for the First World War. Though trials revealed a number of design flaws, including bolts jamming on sustained firing, the first Canadian troops carried Ross rifles into the war. In the mucky trenches of the battlefield, the rifles’ issues became apparent: the soft brass in the shells expanded and stuck in the chamber; mud gummed up the works; and the most serious being that it had a tendency to jam during rapid fire. Some soldiers used their boots and shovels to loosen jammed bolts. One officer wrote, “It is nothing short of murder to send out men against the enemy with such a weapon.”

In the nation’s first two major battles; Ypres (April 1915) and Festubert (May 1915), a number of Canadians were killed as they stood defenceless, and it was not uncommon for frustrated soldiers to throw away their Ross Rifles, dubbed “**the Canadian club**,” and pick up British Lee-Enfield rifles from fallen allies, despite orders not to do so. Of note, while the jamming Ross rifle shook the infantry’s confidence, snipers loved it. The gun proved deadly accurate in the hands of sharpshooters like First Nations soldiers Henry Louis Norwest and Francis Pegahmagabow, the latter credited with 378 enemy kills. Throughout 1916, the Ross was pulled from the field and the soldiers were rearmed with the Lee-Enfield. Sam Hughes was replaced as Minister of Militia and Defence in November 1916.

Other infantry primary weapons included: the main heavy Canadian Colt machine gun was replaced by the more reliable British heavy, water-cooled Vickers machine gun in the summer of 1916, capable of firing 500 rounds per minute, and requiring five men to work it as a team; the more portable American-designed Lewis machine gun, with its cylindrical feed drum, which could be carried and fired by one man became an essential assault weapon for the infantry platoons (it fired 47 rounds in a five-second burst); grenades (eg. Mills bomb) and rifle grenades (the latter could project up to 200 metres); and seventeen-inch bayonets attached to the end of the Lee-Enfields turned the rifles into a spear.^{2E, 4F, 7Z, 8H}

• **Trench design:** Trenches were dug in a zigzag and stepped pattern to prevent artillery shell blasts or shrapnel from being funneled down a straight path, and so that if an enemy jumped in, he couldn’t fire all the way down the line. Most of the digging and maintenance labour happened at night to avoid the enemy’s searching eyes. At first, the trenches were little more than glorified ditches, but as the fighting continued they became more elaborate, dug down ideally to a depth of as much as two metres. The sandbag wall topping the front-line, or firing trench, was called the “**parapet**”, which usually extended another half to full metre. With the trenches dug down to two metres into the seeping earth, and then built up with sandbags, a soldier spent much of his day staring into muddy walls. The front-line trench was also topped with barbed wire to slow down attacking enemies. Barbed wire was usually laid out in long zigzagging belts, often in rows and several metres deep. Sandbags and timbers were used to shore up the trench walls, at times corrugated tin was used to protect against weather, and underfoot, wood or bundles of sticks were laid to provide some sort of dry footing (“**duckboards**”).

Front line trenches were backed up by support and reserve trenches running parallel behind them, with communication trenches running to the rear linking them. Corpses and body parts not only lay in No Man’s Land, but also jutted out from the trench walls and underfoot. It was not lost on the soldiers that they appeared to be digging extended graves—the trenches—to protect themselves from artillery shells and bullets. And in a sick irony, the artillery bombardments often buried the living and disgorged the dead.^{9U}

Side passages with cul-de-sacs, storage areas and latrines were dug out along the communication trenches. Soldiers also took to carving out holes in the trench walls. They burrowed into their “**funk holes**” to escape the rain and enemy fire. **Dugouts** at least 6 metres deep—similar to underground cellars—were built to offer better protection from shellfire and mortars for soldiers. These caves were accessed by steps and usually through an entrance that was covered by a heavy blanket. These dank, crudely ventilated cocoons offered temporary solace, a place to sleep, read and write letters. During artillery barrages, they could also cave in, trapping soldiers alive inside.

Nostalgia for home was evident as it was common for soldiers to call trenches after known streets in Canada. Captain H.E. Taylor noted that on the Somme in September 1916, as the Canadians advanced, “the German trenches in front of us are given Canadian names before being captured, and as they are taken, the names are absorbed into our front.” The labyrinth of connected trenches cluttered with ammunition boxes, cables, and all manner of supplies often resulted in confusion for soldiers maneuvering through them. All had to grow accustomed to being lost in the maze at some point, as there was no getting out of a trench to study the surrounding landscape. Handmade signs often guided the men to their destinations—with Canadian city names, strange names (eg. The Devil’s Inn, the Savoy, Hell’s Corner) and alpha-numeric names (due to the sheer number of trenches).^{4F, 6E, 9U}

- **Digging in:** Following is a portion of a story from the *Sarnia Observer*, printed in late December 1915, explaining to Sarnia citizens back home the process of “digging in.”

It is practically impossible for soldiers to remain in the open and live under modern artillery fire. When a column of soldiers advance until they can go no further they hold the ground they have gained by burrowing into the earth. Each soldier lies flat on the ground and, by means of trenching tools, or failing them his bayonet, makes a shallow trench at his side, carefully placing the loose earth in a pile at his head. This hole is sufficiently deep to safeguard him from stray bullets, and under cover he begins to dig another and deeper trench at his side. This is known as a “lying down” trench, and, being about 2 feet deep, hides the soldier’s body from the enemy when he crawls into it.

In these roughly constructed shelters the troops lie until darkness sets in, when the engineers, with a formidable array of pick-axes, saws, and spades, set to work to enlarge the “lying down” holes until they are deep enough to shelter a standing soldier. The dirt taken from the trenches is carefully piled in front of the shelter to form a parapet which swallows up the force of bullets. A short distance behind the trenches, actually in the firing line, shelters are constructed for the troops to fall back in case of retreat. Barbed wire interlaced with branches cut from trees is placed in front of these shelters, and wooden beams piled with earth cover them to protect the troops below from shells bursting overhead.

- **Garrisoning:** Garrisoning the front lines consisted of long periods of boredom and work interspersed with never-ending stress and short periods of absolute terror. Sentries were posted day and night to watch for the enemy. At about a half hour before each dawn, the usual time for an enemy attack, soldiers woke to climb up and “**stand-to,**” fully equipped and ready for battle in the front line trenches. After waiting, and if no attack came, the order to “**stand down**” came. The day involved a number of chores such as cleaning equipment, shoring up trenches through backbreaking labour, rebuilding the parapet, repairing duckboards, officer and medical inspections, and seemingly forever filling sandbags. With the onset of dusk, the morning ritual of “stand-to” was repeated.

- **Sleep** was a precious commodity, as soldiers subsisted on only a few hours of shut-eye a day for four or five days straight, leaving them sleep-deprived and walking around in a perpetual daze, with aching bodies and pounding heads.^{4G}

- **Work Parties:** At night, the battlefield swarmed with activity. Under the cover of darkness, the most common activity was parties of 40 to 50 men, sometimes as many as 200, going on “work parties” or “battle patrols” where they climbed out of the trenches, beyond the parapet and moved into No Man’s Land. There they repaired or unrolled new barbed wire, dug new trenches or gathered intelligence, all the while on the lookout for hidden enemy snipers, periodic machine-gun fire, enemy ambush and star shell flares that illuminated the battlefield. During the battle patrols or “stunts”, soldiers crawled as close as they could to the enemy lines, to listen and gather intelligence.

Another grim task of the work parties was to look for and return the corpses of their fellow comrades. Severed arms and legs and other bodily organs were gathered up in sacks, along with the corpses. It made for grim work, often carried out by exhausted men, but few complained as these men had been their friends and companions, and it was important that their comrades were buried with dignity.^{4G}

Identifying those listed as missing was considered essential for the sake of families at home. Prior to burial in a shallow grave of half a metre to a metre deep, the identity disk and personal effects were removed from each body. As one Canadian infantryman remarked, *“Too often we pull out a picture. There he stands and she sits beside him. How smart he looks in his new uniform and how proud and happy she looks. Here’s a family group. There he is, the others must be his father and mother and kid sisters... Damn this dirty, lousy, stinking bloody war.”*

Each soldier was issued two **identity disks** that contained rank, name, regimental number, unit, and religious affiliation. When a corpse was buried, one of the disks was taken, the other left with the body. The collected disks were passed to the battalion’s second-in-command to record the losses, and then sent to chaplains, who often wrote letters to families at home. Friends also often penned letters, conveying their feelings to a man’s family about a chum who had become a member of their family in the trenches.^{4F}

- **Trench Raiding:** Trench raids were a Canadian invention. Until the Canadians came along nobody—the British, French or the Germans—had considered the possibilities of raiding one another’s lines between major offensives. By 1916, “trench raiding” became an essential component of the Canadian approach to fighting on the Western Front. While “work parties” (battle patrols) were sent to gather intelligence, trench raiding was more dangerous, and focused on attacking the Germans in their trenches in small scale surprise attacks. Under the cover of darkness, stalking parties of camouflaged, black-faced volunteers would climb out of the trenches, crouch through their barbed wire, and inch their way across No Man’s Land navigating around craters, corpses, rats, enemy barbed wire and under the periodic glare of illuminating flares. Slipping into the enemy trenches, watching for booby traps or hidden enemy waiting to ambush them, they would use Lewis light machine guns, pistols, hand grenades, handmade clubs, entrenching tools, bayonets and even brass knuckles to kill, wound or capture as many of the startled enemy as possible within several minutes in a **“butcher and bolt”** foray, before retreating back to their own trenches.

The Canadians gained a fierce reputation as elite trench raiders, which originated in mid-November 1915 when over 170 men carried out an extremely successful raid against enemy positions at La Petite Douve farm in Belgium. The purposes of trench raids included to gather intelligence about the enemy, capture prisoners, take weapons, damage defences, and to keep fighting skills fresh and honed. The raids achieved another purpose—keeping the Germans off balance, nervous, and jumpy, never knowing what was coming. A shaken German infantryman wrote, *“I hope that the Canadians are not in trenches opposite you. On the darkest night they jump suddenly into our trenches, causing great consternation and before cries of help can be answered disappear again into the darkness.”*

Competition began among battalions to pull off bigger and more damaging raids to earn bragging rights. Trench raids required careful planning and preparation, and the desired results were not always achieved. In late February 1917, Canadians carried out a massive 1,700-man trench raid against the Germans commanding the heights of Vimy Ridge. The German defenders were fully alert for the attack, and the Canadians had to advance through enemy fire; their own poison gas cloud that had blown backward; uncut barbed wire; and even their own artillery shells that fell short. The Canadians would suffer a 43 percent casualty rate.^{4F, 5A, 7Z}

- **Wastage:** Outside of the formal, designated battles (often with distinguishing battlefield memorials), many Canadian soldiers lost their lives not in named battles, but during the daily exchange of hostilities. In scores of lesser actions and everyday incidents, incessant artillery, snipers, mines, gas shells and random harassing fire regularly killed soldiers in the trenches, while some were lost to accidents and disease. High command’s term for these losses was “wastage.” Canadian high command planned for 10 percent wastage per month per infantry unit—that meant of the about 1,000 men in an infantry battalion (at full strength), 100 soldiers were expected to die, be wounded, succumb to sickness, or be lost through other means each month.

For example, from December 1, 1915 to March 31, 1916, when two divisions of the Canadian Corps were involved in no battles and were only holding the line and carrying out the occasional trench raid, 2,606 Canadians were recorded as killed, wounded or missing.^{F, 2I, 3S, 4F, 9U}

At least twenty-five of Sarnia’s World War I fallen lost their lives between named battles including; Neil Benware, Mason Bolton, Norman Brearley, William Chapman, Frederick Edwards, George Gore, Percival Guertin, George Harris, Thomas Hazen, Herbert Manning, David McGibbon, Leonard McMullin, Harold Nash, Leslie Playne, Albert Rodber, Archibald Rogers, Melville Simmons, David Smuck, Russell Soper, George Turner, Joseph Walters, George Wheatley, John Wilson, Thomas Wright and Andrew Wyseman (19 of these were killed in France).

- **Weather and disease:** Adding to the hardships of living in the trenches were: poor weather such as incessant

heavy rains, wind, bone-chilling winters and hellishly hot summers; and the smells of rotting corpses, stagnant mud, poison gases and human waste. Standing in mud and icy slush for hours, even days, often without taking off their wet socks and boots, resulted in more than 4,900 cases of trench foot in the Canadian forces, with many cases ending with rotting toes and feet amputated. **Rat** infestations were a constant and disgusting feature of the trenches. They lived among the sandbags, beneath the duckboards and especially in No Man's Land, where they gorged on food or, more terribly, the corpses. Soldiers learned to sleep with their mouths closed. The rats also carried **fleas**, as did the many dogs that wandered into rear areas or the trench lines and became pets for soldiers craving affection. The fleas soon lived on the soldiers, as did the **lice**, which indiscriminately infested everyone. These parasite "cooties," as they were known to the soldiers, burrowed into the folds and pleats of clothing, emerging only to feed by clinging to flesh and sucking blood from their victims. Men woke up bleeding from scratches gouged to relieve the itching. Their bites also transmitted a flu-like illness, known as PUO, "pyrexia of unknown origins."

Most men came down with trench sickness at least once in the war. This flu-like disease causing fever, chills, fatigue and pain in the shins was transmitted by lice.^{4F} Other diseases were also a problem, such as trench mouth, typhoid, tetanus, scabies, dysentery, gangrene, diphtheria, meningitis, influenza, tuberculosis and pneumonia. For the wounded—lying in muddy water, sometimes together with blood, feces, and body parts, the vast majority of all wounds became infected. This was an era before antibiotics were invented, so **infection** was very difficult for doctors to treat. The most widely suffered infection was gas gangrene (which had no relationship to chemical warfare). Gas gangrene was a lethal and agonizing fate, as wounded men were killed from within, and doctors frequently treated it by amputation.^{4F, 5J}

- **Sustaining morale:** Many factors helped persuade soldiers to fight—the bonds of friendship, loyalty, and community, based on shared experience and common dangers were principal among them. The military understood many of the challenges to morale and the discomfort caused by life in the trenches. It tried to provide soldiers with the comforts necessary to sustain morale. Almost everyone smoked in the trenches – these "**gaspers**" or "coffin nails" provided a relief from the stress of war, calming nerves, helping to pass the time, and they also helped mask the scent of the trenches, which was permeated with the odours of rotting flesh, poison gas and cordite. There was an official ration of cigarettes, although these tended to be of poor quality and men yearned for the "gaspers" sent in care packages from home.

It was very difficult to get hot food from the company cooks in the rear to the soldiers in the front lines, but brave groups of men transported stew or water in large containers or emptied gasoline jars to the front lines. Soldiers remembered drinking water that reeked of gasoline and chlorine. Drinking water from local sources that was frequently contaminated was discouraged—better to have the men drink boiled tea. **Bully beef** (tinned corned beef) that was eaten for breakfast, lunch and dinner, and "**hardtack**" biscuits were a staple of the soldier's diet. There were many types of canned bully beef, although most were unidentifiable meats marbled with fat and gristle. Men took to soaking and frying the hardtack biscuits, not wishing to risk breaking their teeth on the dog-biscuit-like food.

Army-issued **rum** became a beloved part of trench life. The rum was dark and thick, almost viscous, and had a very high alcohol content. It came in gallon jars, marked "S.R.D.", which stood for "Supply Reserve Depot", though soldiers spoofed it to mean "Soon Runs Dry," "Seldom Reaches Destination," and "Sergeants Rarely Deliver."^{4F} When the over-proof Jamaican rum was available, soldiers received their daily ration consisting of a "tot," about two ounces, morning and night, which was drunk in the presence of an NCO or officer. The strong, gut-burning rum was a reward (for surviving another day at the front, or volunteering for a patrol or a trench raid), a medicine, a coping mechanism, a sedative, and a combat motivator. It helped soldiers to stay warm in their dank trenches, to sleep after the day's horrors, and to quell their nerves ahead of battle. Tea was almost as important, particularly for the teatotalers.^{2I, 3R, 4G, 6E, 7Z, 9U}

- **Influencing chance in their favour:** Almost all soldiers carried lucky charms, protective amulets, and magical talismans that they felt would shield them from the unpredictable shells and bullets. Bibles, prayer books and religious items were also carried by many of the soldiers. One soldier remarked, "Nearly every man out here is wearing some sort of medallion or a rosary that has been given to him, and he would rather part with his daily rations or his last cigarette than part with this sacred talisman."

One such powerful charm was a "touchwood" or "fumsup," a small magical being held in the hand, with a wooden head. The name is a twist on "thumbs up" and had its origins in the thumbs-up-for-good-luck signal. It was also based on the old superstition of not jinxing oneself by talking about a good deed or lucky event by saying "touch

wood” and touching something wooden. It was so common for soldiers to sew magic charms, protective crosses, medals, and badges into their clothing and uniforms that doctors would instruct staff as they prepared to open up men on the operating table to be alert for hidden material on their bodies and, if possible, to save it for an injured man if he survived the procedure.⁹⁰

• **The unexplained:** On numerous occasions soldiers on the battlefield experienced incidents that defied explanation. Events that seemed ethereal, even to those who were not particularly spiritual, transcended interpretation. Canadian military historian/author Tim Cook stated that Canadian soldiers embraced the ‘supernatural, uncanny and ghostly’ on the front lines. Stories involving bizarre apparitions, life-saving premonitions and other unexplained happenings demonstrate “the unending mental and physical strain of fighting on the edge of No Man’s Land.”

One such example is that of Nova Scotia native **William Bird** of the 42nd Canadian Infantry Battalion. With the outbreak of war in 1914, his younger brother Stephen (Steve) enlisted as a Corporal. William also rushed to join but due to a combination of his bad teeth and Stephen’s influence, William was turned down. Disheartened, William went to the Prairies to farm. Will stated, “*The last time I saw him we had a long talk and he held my hand in his warm grasp as we said goodbye. ‘If I don’t come back,’ he said, ‘I’ll try to find some way to keep an eye on you.’*”

Stephen arrived in France in mid-September 1915 and approximately three weeks later was killed in action in Belgium when the Germans blew a large, underground explosive beneath the frontline trenches. That same October found William bringing in the harvest on a small farm in Saskatchewan, pitching sheaves into a wagon, when Stephen walked out from behind a farmcart! They did not speak and soon Stephen vanished. Three days later William received notification that Stephen Bird, was missing, presumed dead in the mine explosion. His body was never found.

After his brother’s death, William returned to Nova Scotia and in April 1916 successfully enlisted. He sailed for England in October and arrived in France in December 1916 as a member of the 42nd Battalion, The Black Watch of Canada, in the frontline. William Bird took part in the famous Battle of Vimy Ridge in April 1917, and in the days following his battalion was sent to Vimy village. During his first night there, he was sent out with two others as part of a work party tasked with the barbed wire duty near the front line. Completing their duty over many hours in the cold and miserable night, they had no chance to prepare any sort of shelter. As they went back they came across two men from another battalion who had dug a neat bivvy into a railway embankment. Following is a portion Will Bird’s description of the events that followed:

They were very decent chaps and insisted they made the place wide enough to accommodate the three of us. We snuggled in, and with a ground sheet pegged to hold over our heads we really felt comfortable. In seconds I was dead to the world.

The ground sheet pegged over our heads was pulled free and fell on my face, rousing me. Then a firm hand seized one of mine and pulled me up to a sitting position. It was very early, as first sunshine was glittering on the dew-wet grass. I was annoyed that I should have to do some chore after being out so late. I tried to pull free. But the grip held, and as I came to a sitting-up position my other hand was seized and I had a look at my visitor.

In an instant I was out of the bivvy, so surprised I could not speak. I was face to face with my brother, Steve, who had been killed in 1915! The War Office had said: “Missing, believed dead.” After a time one of his mates wrote to say a boot had been found with his name on it. The Germans had mined the Canadian trench and blown it up.

Steve grinned as he released my hands, then put his warm hand over my mouth as I started to shout with happiness. He pointed to the sleepers in the bivvy and to my rifle and equipment. “Get your gear,” he said softly.

As I grabbed it he turned and started walking away rapidly. It was hard to keep up with him. We passed make-shift shelters filled with sleeping men of my platoon. No one was awake. Now and then a gun fired off toward the Somme or a machine-gun chattered, but on the whole it was a quiet morning. As soon as we were past the shelters I hurried to get close to Steve. “Why didn’t you write Mother?” I asked. He turned and the grin was still on his face. “Wait,” he said. “Don’t talk yet.”

Then I noticed he had a soft cap on and no gas mask or equipment. Somehow he had learned where the 42nd was, and our “D” Company, but how in the world did he know where I was sleeping?

We left the company area and headed directly into a collection of ruins that had been Petit Vimy. “There’s no one around here,” I said. “How did you know where to find me?” At that moment my equipment, slung hurriedly over one shoulder, slipped off and fell to the ground before I could catch it. As I stooped and retrieved it Steve went into a passageway in the ruins and I ran to catch him. Arrived there, I saw one way went right and the other left. Which way had he gone?

"Steve!" I called. There was no answer, so I dropped my rifle and gear and ran to the right. It only took minutes-two or three-to get to the far side, but there was no sign of my brother. I ran back and called again, took the way to the left, searched and searched again, called repeatedly, but could not find him. Finally I sat down on my equipment and leaned back against a bit of wall. I was tired and sweating and excited....

Minutes went by. I got up and made another search of the ruins. The sun began to glisten on the tops of the broken walls. I settled back more comfortably on my equipment and heard the usual morning stir of guns firing registering shots. The sun got warmer. I dozed.

Suddenly I was shaken awake. Tommy had me by the arm and was yelling. "He's here! Bill's here!" I stumbled up, dazed, looked at my watch. It was nine o'clock. "What made you come here?" Tommy was asking. "What happened?"

"What's all the row about?" I countered.

"You should know. They're digging around that bivvy you were in. All they've found is Jim's helmet and one of Bob's legs."

"Legs!" I echoed stupidly. "What do you mean?"

"Don't you know a big shell landed in that bivvy? They've been trying to find something of you."

It seemed utterly incredible. I put on my gear and followed Tommy. There was a great cavity in the embankment and debris was scattered over the whole area.

Will Bird later reflected, Steve's warm hands had pulled me from the bivvy. His voice had been perfectly natural. He had the old half-grin I knew so well. He had saved my life.^{11A}

William Bird served with the 42nd Battalion throughout the war until demobilized in Canada in March 1919. He was awarded a Military Medal for bravery in the capture of Mons, on the night of November 10-11, 1918, the last night of the war. After the war he became a prolific writer. One of the hardest tragedies he experienced in the years following was when his 24-year-old son, Captain Stephen Stanley Bird of the Nova Scotia Highlanders, was killed in action in Normandy, France on July 8, 1944. William Bird often blamed his writing about his war experiences as a factor in his son's rush to enlist.^{11A}

- **Terror from below:** One more terror for the soldiers in the trenches to confront—special mining units of sappers on both sides dug elaborate underground shafts and tunnels towards the enemy lines, sometimes 15 to 25 metres beneath the surface. They would burrow beneath enemy strong points, set an explosive charge, and destroy the enemy trenches from below. Three Canadian tunnelling companies were raised during the war, many of the men were miners before the war. Cave-ins were not uncommon while doing this claustrophobic and dangerous work, with the constant pounding of high explosives above them. Those in the trenches desperately listened for the telltale sounds of pickaxes or shovels below them.

- **Poison gas:** Poison gas was indiscriminate and could be used on the trenches even when no attack was going on. Victims could be in agony for days and weeks before finally succumbing to the effects of gas. The first large-scale use of lethal poison gas on the battlefield was by the Germans on April 22, 1915, during the Second Battle of Ypres. Two days later, it was the Canadians who fell victim to the second gas attack in history. Thick clouds of yellow-green **chlorine gas** released from cylinders drifted to the trenches, causing victims to writhe on the ground, their faces turning purple, making gagging, choking sounds, pulling at their clothes, and vomiting "greenish slime". Gasping for help, then falling back exhausted, their lungs burned and filled with fluid, impairing the exchange of oxygen. The worst-case men drowned in their own searing fluids.

Later in the war, deadlier gasses and more reliable delivery systems were introduced, such as gas-filled chemical shells, projectors, and mortars. **Phosgene gas**, introduced in late 1915, was nearly invisible, eighteen times more powerful than chlorine, and its impact was frequently felt only 48 hours after it had been inhaled. Its effects build slowly: breathing becomes shallow, the victim begins to retch, the pulse rises to 120, the features turn ashen grey; and over the 48 hours, the victim drowns slowly as the lungs discharge pints of yellow fluid as the phosgene eats into their lungs. The Germans unleashed **mustard gas** (or Yperite) for the first time against the Canadians on August 17, 1917 during the Attack on Hill 70. Mustard gas polluted the battlefield for days and was slow-acting. It caused serious blisters both internally and externally, blinded its victims, induced uncontrollable vomiting, and victims began to die days after the attack. Other types of gas were used, however three forms of gas remained the most widely used: chlorine, phosgene and mustard.^{E, 2I, 3S, 4G, 5J, 7Z}

Initial protections against gas included holding a urine-drenched cloth over their face, and cotton pads dipped in a bicarbonate solution. Later, soldiers were outfitted with various types of respirators (containing charcoal or

antidote chemicals). Claustrophobic and uncomfortable, they often fogged up, impaired vision; made breathing difficult; and frequently filled with vomit that had to be swallowed (“Chew the lumps,” sergeants told their men). Even soldiers horses had specially designed respirators.^{4G, 5J}

By 1918, fully one-quarter of all shells fired on the battlefield contained poison gas. In the last year of the war, gas was used before, during, and after every battle, in the only continuous chemical battlefield in the history of warfare. The Canadian War Museum estimates that by war’s end, gas had killed some 100,000 men, and there were approximately one million gas casualties to all armies. The Canadian War Museum also estimates that during the war, 12,000 Canadians were killed by gas, although the number was surely higher, as gassed men who were hit by shrapnel or bullets were often recorded slain by those weapons. Also, many of the estimates do not take into account the number of men who died from poison gas related injuries years after the end of the war. Many soldiers never reported their multiple minor gassings, which, at the time, were not immediately debilitating. Suffering in later years from chemically-induced illnesses and disabilities, they would sometimes fight unsuccessfully to have medical claims approved, having failed to document their injuries at the time.^{E, 2I, 4F, 4G, 9U}

- **Shellfire:** Artillery shellfire was the true killer in World War I. Doctors estimated that more than half of all wounds received during the Great War were caused by the artillery’s guns.^{4F} Depending on whether a field gun or howitzer was used, shells were fired to a distance of 5 or 6 kilometres, arriving at their targets at just under the speed of sound.

High explosive shells were used to destroy trenches and dugouts and of course kill. Nicknamed “Jack Johnsons” (after the American heavyweight boxer who delivered a powerful punch), they exploded like dynamite, killing by the force of the blast, ripping men’s bodies apart or reducing victims to pieces on direct hits. Drumfire bombardments—when the shelling became one long sonic and physical assault lasting many hours, would rock the trenches and send great geysers of mud, sandbags and bodies skyward. There was no respite during these bombardments, the never-ending blast force and sound of explosions dazed and deafened the men, tossing them around, with many suffering concussions.

Shrapnel shells, nicknamed “whiz-bangs” (as they tended to be smaller, faster shells), were largely an anti-personnel agent. They would explode at an optimum height of 5 to 6 metres above the ground, ejecting some 375 metal shrapnel balls downwards in a shotgun-like blast. Other shrapnel shells were nicknamed “Woolly bears” and “Black Marias”. Both high explosive shells and shrapnel shells on shattering, would create jagged, whirling shell splinters that wrecked havoc on living flesh, tearing and tumbling through bodies leaving jagged exit wounds.^{4F}

German **mortar shells**, nicknamed “flying pigs,” “moaning minnies,” “coal boxes,” “pineapples,” “toffee apples,” or “rum jars,” which could weigh several hundred pounds, and were lobbed in a high arc into trenches, were also a terrifying weapon. Mortars could also fire gas shells, which could deliver chlorine or phosgene more accurately into the enemy lines.

Thousands of shells failed to explode after being fired, many remaining in the soils of France and Belgium. Even today, the war is part of everyday life in rural areas of France and Belgium. Each year, when farmers work their fields in ordinary ways, they unearth tons of World War I debris. War debris collected includes shrapnel, digging tools, badges, rusted bayonets, canteens, iron wheels, barbed wire, bullets, trench supports and unexploded ordnance such as shells, gas shells, mines, mortars and grenades. The collection and hauling away of this debris is referred to as the **iron harvest**.

- **Creeping barrage:** The “creeping barrage” was a tactic developed around the time of the Battle of the Somme, as a means for the artillery to better support the infantry during frontal assaults. It was based on suppressing, not destroying the enemy. High explosive and shrapnel shells would rain down a wall of fire, advancing forward 90 to 100 metres per lift, first through the enemy outposts for a few minutes (driving defenders into their dugouts), then through the front line trenches (the objective), and finally into the rear areas (to prevent reinforcements from rushing up). The advancing infantry troops would follow closely, between 35 to 65 metres, behind the barrage for protection (“**hugging the wall**”), all the way to the objective. Moving forward, they were under strict orders not to stop for the wounded, as that would slow the advance. Two of the hazards of this tactic: the artillery fire alerted the enemy to the direction and location from which the attack was coming; and hugging the wall of fire would result in casualties from their own artillery, men lost to “friendly fire,” or “drop shorts.” Faulty shells, worn-out gun barrels, weather and untrained gunners could all result in shells falling short or wide.^{4F, 8H}

- **No Man’s Land:** The name “No Man’s Land” originated in the Middle Ages, and was a designated slaughter

ground to the rear of a castle where bodies of slain criminals were left to rot as a warning to others. The name transferred well to the Great War.^{4F}

No Man's Land could be as narrow as 100 metres (and even narrower) or stretch to over 1 kilometre wide in parts, but most often it was 300 to 400 metres wide. Going **"over the top"** and into No Man's Land was a terrifying event. The phrase "over the top" had initially been part of the longer phrase "over the top, and best of luck," but the costs of facing enemy fire and uncut barbed wire were so ghastly that the cheerful quip "best of luck" seemed out of place, so it was eventually dropped. A battle was known as a **"show,"** which took some of the sting out of the potential slaughter that was soon to follow. Waiting before an attack, every soldier realized that these could be their last moments. Time was spent praying, thinking of loved ones, or nervously waiting for the NCO with the rum jug. Many prepared a "last letter" of some kind, keeping it on their bodies or handing it to a friend who was not slated to go "over the top," in case they should not survive the upcoming battle.

Once "over the top," or "hitting the bags," or "jumping the bags" many described the surreal quality of bullets whizzing past them, shells exploding, and men falling all around them.^{4F} Adding to the task, the men were weighted down with a helmet, full kit, rifle, 200 rounds of ammunition, grenades, shovels, respirator, water bottles and more, that could add up to at least 60 pounds, up to over 90 pounds—no small feat for men who weighed between 120 and 140 pounds on average.^{4F} The men advanced in waves to what amounted to the length of a football field, through a hurricane of machine-gun and small arms fire, running, crawling and stumbling forward over a muddy, shell-cratered, ravaged landscape that was strewn with rotting corpses and body parts. In the chaos, they had to follow closely behind a creeping barrage wall of metal and explosives from their own advancing artillery barrage, while also suffering under additional drop shorts (friendly fire) and into the German counter-barrage. Infantry caught in the deadly maze of barbed wire entanglements had little hope of escape or survival. The **barbed wire**, tempered steel with five-inch barbs, sometimes as high as a house, was difficult to cut and slowed the attackers, and channeled them into "killing zones" where enemy machine-guns swept back and forth, fired by defenders who were dug in and safely behind sandbag walls.^{4F}

Even in the most meticulously planned and coordinated attacks, errors, surprises, emergencies, and enemy reactions, for which no one could plan, intervened, at which point the initiative and courage of a single soldier, or a handful of men, decided the issue. If the attackers were fortunate enough to reach the enemy trench, they faced more gunfire, grenades, bayonet thrusts and hand-to-hand combat. The soldiers risked all, racing towards death in hopes of escaping death.^{4F, 5J, 7Z, 8O, 9U}

- **Holding a trench:** When an enemy trench was captured, the next task at hand was the attempt to hold on to it, as the attackers (now turned defenders) were isolated in their forward trenches. One of the immediate tasks was to reverse the trench in preparation for the counterattack—building new parapets on the former back wall for protection, and ripping out firing steps and rebuilding them on the former back part of the trench. In crossing No Man's Land, the attacking infantry always lost significant parts of their force to enemy fire, and then used up much of their ammunition, grenades and manpower in clearing the trenches. In such a weakened state, the inevitable rapid German counterattacks would come, and a desperate battle of survival would rage back and forth. The success of holding a trench was in part reliant on the logistics of shuttling essential supplies across No Man's Land. Crushing loads of food, grenades, barbed wire, bombs, sandbags, small-arms ammunition, wooden ladders, flares, and petrol tins filled with water and medical supplies were truded forward on the backs of infantry soldiers, often while under enemy fire.^{4F}

- **Caring for the wounded:** The difference between life and death on the battlefield often depended on how quickly a wounded soldier could get medical attention at a dressing station. With constant shelling and sniping on No Man's Land, often a wounded soldier would have to lie on the ground and wait for darkness before anyone could come to his rescue. All soldiers carried emergency first aid supplies and tried to dress their own wounds when they could. When the firing did subside, the wounded began to surface from their hiding places, wriggling and dragging themselves back to the safety of their own trenches, biting back the pain of a shredded arm or shattered leg, usually driven by survival instinct alone. Flares illuminating the battlefield made them potential targets for enemy snipers.

Stretcher-bearers hunted through the ruins of wounded, often turning over dead men in search of the living. Most of the stretcher-bearers carried a canteen of rum to ease the pain, and it was administered to the cold wounded men as long as they did not have stomach wounds. Stretcher-bearer parties ferried the worst of the wounded to the battalion medical officer, some 300 to 700 metres behind the forward lines. Amidst the destruction, a team of four

bearers often took several hours to make it to the rear, often slipping, tripping and dropping their patients. Generally there were only four stretcher-bearers in a company. On solid ground, two men could carry a wounded man on a stretcher. However, in heavy rain and mud, it took four men. Sometimes, German prisoners were enlisted in the cause of carrying wounded Canadians to the rear.

The wounded were dropped in a **triage area** (advanced dressing station) where the medical officer, or his orderlies, attempted to bind the wounds, immobilize broken bones, apply a quick shot of rum, or perform emergency surgery on those who were in danger of slipping into shock. From the forward trenches, the wounded were then rushed to **Casualty Clearing Stations**, usually a few kilometres behind the line. As the war went on, blood transfusions would be more frequently used, but in an age before blood types and Rh blood groups had been discovered, there was substantial risk. The Casualty Clearing Stations were the closest the 2,500 Canadian Nursing Sisters who served in the war got to the front. Again, the wounds would be examined, and triage performed. Those who were not in danger were sent back to rear hospitals, those who could be saved with emergency care were operated on, and those too badly wounded were left to die.

The sad reality was when field ambulances and casualty stations were overwhelmed, difficult choices had to be made—those who were too badly wounded to survive, or whose treatment would take up hours and therefore consign to death other men who were left without care—were untreated. It is not surprising that many of the cemeteries that dot the Western Front today had their origins in clearing stations and hospitals. The medical services were quite competent however: the vast majority—more than 90 percent—of the men who arrived at the dressing stations were saved by the expert medical care of surgeons, doctors and nurses. The real problem was in getting the soldiers from the front to the rear quickly enough, and many died before they ever saw a doctor. The system was often strained, which meant men often lay waiting for many hours before they were tended to.^{4F, 5J, 8H}

- **Behind the Firing Line:** Units rotated in and out of the trenches on a regular basis, and even when they were at the front, some parts of a unit's complement were in reserve. Those on the front were rotated between front line, secondary lines and rest. A unit of men rotating into the front-line trench system was known to be going "**up the line.**" Time in the front line trenches was a period of extreme danger—the men had to be hyper vigilant for enemy raids, carry out patrols, stand sentry, and always be prepared to scurry for cover from shells, mortar bombs, and bullets. There was little time for rest, and the hard labour of expanding trenches, digging latrines, and filling sandbags was physically demanding. Typically, a battalion spent around six days in the front lines, six in reserve trenches a few hundred metres behind the firing line, and another six days in the rear, where men were usually involved in carrying parties, bringing material to the isolated front lines.

While waiting in reserve or after being pulled off the front lines for a temporary respite from fighting, soldiers occupied themselves with a variety of leisure pursuits; important for an army of civilian-soldiers. Blowout parties in local villages and sightseeing were common activities. Though it was illegal in the army, Crown and Anchor, a gambling dice board game, was a popular subversive tradition. One of the most popular and happy places for soldiers were the local *estaminets*—taverns operated by the locals often in their homes, where the men could enjoy plates of eggs and fried potatoes, coffee, bread, weak beer or wine. These eateries were sanctuaries of good cheer, camaraderie and raucous song. One Canadian soldier described the prevalent attitude of the men when away from the stress of battle: "Eat, sleep, drink and be merry, for tomorrow, you may die."^{9U}

It is no surprise that many of the Canadians sought female companionship behind the lines. In turn, the French and Belgian women became practiced at resisting the amorous advances of the men who walked through their villages. It was not uncommon for Canadians to turn to prostitutes. Lectures by medical officers, chaplains and civilian experts on the morals and dangers of sex with prostitutes failed to curtail the growing VD epidemic. Though few of the Allied soldiers were innocents, the Canadians in particular had a reputation for promiscuousness and the pursuit of prostitutes, likely because of their higher pay and because men could not return home while on leave as married British soldiers did. High command eventually ordered that official, regulated brothels be set up and prophylactics issued.^{9U}

Snapping **photographs** was another illegal activity for fear that captured film could provide the enemy with information. Photography at the front was outlawed in March 1915 by order of the British High Command. Beginning in the summer of 1916, Canadian official photographers were commissioned to document the war. Yet many men snuck small cameras behind the lines and in the trenches, and snapped pictures, providing a valuable historical record. High Command also decreed that no soldier was to keep a **diary** for fear of providing the enemy

with usable intelligence. The directive was widely ignored, and countless soldiers, from commanders to the lowest rankers, recorded their experiences at the front.

The **YMCA** and **Salvation Army** (nicknamed “Sally Ann”) were two organizations that established huts/canteens behind the lines to care for the men’s health and spiritual well-being. Located in many of the villages and closer to the front, they would hand out free tea, cookies and a few cigarettes to the soldiers. They sold Canadian food, tobacco, coffee, candy and chewing gum, and provided a place to read a newspaper or magazine, or write a letter home. The canteens were dry (no alcohol sold), the prices were generally low, the staff caring, and the area open to all. Following is a portion of a letter written home by a young Canadian soldier:

I can’t say anything but good about the “Y’s” over here. They usually have so many things distinctly Canadian, like Old Chum & Hudson Bay tobaccos, MacDonald’s chewing, Tuckett’s cigars, maple sugar, and Canadian brands of chocolate bars. They are to be found almost everywhere from the base to the front line, in all manner of places from tents to dug-outs. In those in the battle zone, you can procure free coffee and tea. I never hear any knockers among the troops especially when they are lining up [at] some old “sap” or cellar, filling an empty milk tin with streaming tea. Then they stand around and blow on the hot liquid and swap stories or just talk & jolly each other...^{7A} Another young Canadian wrote to his father, “I am writing in the YMCA building. The boys are playing the organ, dancing and singing. Mostly every song is about mother at home, and wife and baby. It would make your heart melt if you only heard them.”^{9A}

Arthur Wesley Crawford was born on May 4, 1892 in Point Edward, Ontario, the son of George Crawford of 153 Christina Street, Sarnia. Twenty-two years old and single, Arthur Crawford enlisted on November 2, 1914 in Toronto with the Canadian Engineers, recording his occupation as an electrical engineer, and his next-of-kin as his father George in Sarnia. At the end of December 1914, Arthur Crawford became a member of 2nd Divisional Signals Company, Royal Canadian Engineers (RCE). He arrived in France in mid-September 1915. In late April 1916, Lieutenant Arthur Wesley Crawford, RCE, wrote a letter from France to his mother, Mrs. George Crawford on Christina Street. In it, he described a large “Soldier’s Rest Camp.” Following is a portion of that letter:

... the Soldier’s Rest Camp includes a cinema, canteen, library, recreation room, etc.. They have two shows daily which are worth seeing. The vocal and instrumental talent is supplied by the units of the third division and are permanently attached to the show. They even go on tour to other divisions and “put up” good performances. The tired “fed up” chaps from the trenches soon forget their sorrows and enjoy the entertainment to the full.

Each division has similar places of amusement provided by the Y.M.C.A. and what with band concerts, travelling troupes, impromptu concerts, etc., we are well provided with entertainment while in rest. You cannot imagine how these things are appreciated by the men and the benefits are beyond measure. The fellows come out, tired, nerve wrecked and oppressed by horrible memories, but in a few days they are as cheerful as ever and as light hearted as children....

More of Lieutenant Arthur Wesley Crawford’s letters home are on pages 119 and 197.

Sports were an almost universally shared pastime overseas. In fact, on the home front, many of the amateur and professional sporting leagues temporarily closed down as hockey, baseball, and lacrosse players joined the war effort. Toughness, grit, teamwork, leadership, camaraderie and withstanding hardship—qualities exalted in sport—were all valued on the battlefield. Military command encouraged sports as they built better soldiers, and behind the lines they provided relief and distraction from the horrors of the front. Soccer and baseball were the most popular sports, but there were also multiple boxing leagues, track and field competitions, lacrosse games and even horseback events for the mounted units. Rivalries developed between platoons, companies, battalions, divisions, even nations. The inter-unit games were very popular, attracting huge crowds, with much money changing hands in wagering.^{9U}

Concert parties and **theatrical revues**, with vaudeville and music hall-inspired shows grew in popularity. Initially, it was the soldiers who provided the entertainment, but as the war dragged on, there were also semi-professional troupes. In the dugouts of the front lines, and when rotated out of danger, soldiers banded together to put on shows for one another, featuring musicians, comics, singers, magicians and female impersonators. The ribald songs, jokes and skits were focused on the soldiers’ experiences and frequently poked fun—sometimes bitter fun—at their officers and high command. Providing pleasure and relaxation, the concerts also provided an outlet for cultural expression and restored morale of battle-fatigued soldiers. One Canadian soldier-entertainer wrote of the opportunity to unwind and take in a show, “It was here that the one big family spirit prevailed... the audience and actors became one and thus banished all their worries for at least a little while... men who died the following dawn with the song still on their lips.”^{9U}

At night, as men sat in holes carved out of the trench walls, or in their dark dugouts, men often joined together in song. **Songs** such as “*Keep the Home Fires Burning*” and “*It’s a Long Way to Tipperary*” were popular, along with Canada’s unofficial anthem “*The Maple Leaf Forever*”. Men returning from leave in London shared the newest songs from popular shows like *The Bing Boys Are Here*, with songs like, “*Another Little Drink*” and “*If You Were the Only Girl in the World*.” *The Bing Boys* was so popular that soldiers adopted the name informally for the Canadian troops, changing it slightly in tribute to their beloved corps commander, Sir Julian Byng. Popular songs were often taken and remade with new lyrics that better fit the harsh realities of the trenches. Yet they could easily turn to sentimental and sappy ballads that brought a lump to the throat as men dreamed of one day returning home.

One of the much loved performers (especially by Scottish Canadians) was Sir Harry Lauder whose most famous song, “*Keep Right on to the End of the Road*,” was written after his son’s death. Other popular entertainers included: Canadian Gitz Rice (his song “*Dear Old Pal of Mine*,” in which a nostalgic soldier laments to his girl, was a monster hit); the Princess Patricia’s Canadian Light Infantry (PPCLI) Comedy Company (their initial shows were rather tame, but as the brutal fighting continued, it became more biting satire and sharp-edged, anti-authoritarian); and Canadian Merton Plunkett of the YMCA who entertained and established the *Dumbells*, a popular soldiers’ theatre troupe (the *Dumbells* were so popular that they played across Canada for over a decade after the war).

Films were very popular among the troops, with theatres often set up in old barns. By the second half of the war, a steady rotation of films arrived at the front that were projected in purpose-built cinemas in wrecked villages. The films were silent, but they were often accompanied by a piano or even a marching band. There were many wartime celebrities, but the most popular was the shabby “Little Tramp” played by Charlie Chaplin. His character was the little guy who soldiered through life with a quiet dignity, challenged authority, tweaked and beat the wealthy and sophisticated. Even Chaplin’s penguin waddle was hilarious from the perspective of the soldiers, who had been drilled to walk with precision and in unison. Chaplin’s humour crossed national boundaries, with soldiers of many nations identifying with the unlikely dishevelled hero who lived by his wits and outsmarted his betters, always coming out on top.^{9U}

Reading was commonplace behind the lines, in the dugouts and in the trenches. Usually solitary in nature, soldiers often read aloud to groups, because of the shortage of material, the challenges faced by illiterate comrades, and the bonding nature of the act. Books by Rudyard Kipling, Arthur Conan Doyle, Jack London, H.G. Wells, Jules Verne, and Nat Gould were popular. Newspapers that were a day or two old could be bought behind the lines, usually from Belgian or French boys who braved the shellfire and poison gas, but the British and Canadian papers were heavily censored and laced with patriotism that skewed the truth of what was happening. Front-line soldiers were often frustrated by newspaper accounts of the war.

With editors, journalists and cartoonists in the ranks, the civilian-soldiers founded a number of **trench newspapers** for their comrades-in-arms. Many of the trench newspapers were crafted in or near the trenches, but also encompassed periodicals produced behind the lines at bases in France and England. The content was not meant for those outside of the soldiers’ culture. They poked fun at subjects that were a constant source of complaint, such as food, weather and work fatigue, or taboo subjects, such as uncaring officers and shell shock. Though the papers were rife with dark humour, criticisms, biting satire and a healthy dose of anti-authoritarianism, there were also patriotic verses and heroic accounts of victories over the enemy. Soldiers submitted stories, observations, jokes, cartoons and poems. The most popular and widely circulated Canadian soldiers’ trench newspaper was *The Listening Post*, its inaugural issue was published by the 7th Battalion in August 1915.

Poetry, an important form of expression at this time, was a widespread and popular means of communicating soldiers’ emotions and experiences. The best-known English-language Great War poets, British officers Siegfried Sassoon and Wilfred Owen, and Canadians John McCrae and Canon Frederick Scott, had Empire-wide fame. The rank and file emulated the famous poets by penning their own poetry, their work inspired and born in the trenches.

The rest, sports and entertainment at the rear helped to rejuvenate the physical and psychological strength of men who had lived in squalor and experienced unimaginable horrors. However the trenches always loomed in the back of the soldier’s mind. Within a few days or a week at best, he would be marching up the line, back to the killing ditches of the Western Front.^{4F, 5J, 6E, 9U}

- “**Souveneering**”: Canadians, like other Allied soldiers and the Germans, gathered all they could from the battlefield. This desire to scavenge and collect war material was so strong in the soldiers’ culture, that the British and Canadians embraced a new name to encapsulate the act—“souveneering”. These keepsakes were gathered from the

battlefield and from prisoners of war. The souvenirs held multiple meanings: proof of service on the Western Front; signs of victory over the enemy; and remembrance of a location or battle that held deep meaning. Battlefield trinkets, German Iron Crosses, Luger pistols and even shrapnel extracted from flesh were prized trophies. Other items included; helmets, bullets, shrapnel, shell casings, badges, pins, buttons and the brass nose caps of exploded shells. Some made for unique gifts for loved ones at home, and some soldiers crafted them into unique art. Created in the trenches and behind the lines, known as “**trench art**”, soldiers crafted items that included candlestick holders, cigarette cases, pipes, walking sticks, letter openers, photo frames, little toys and jewellery. Though military authorities declared the art as illegal, and the men lacked workshops and the necessary tools, it did not dissuade the artists from creating art out of bullets, shrapnel, shell casings, brass shell caps and almost everything else.^{9U}

- **Temporary respite:** Temporary respite from the trenches was given to soldiers in the form of a “**leave**” – Officers received roughly four leave passes a year, in comparison to only one for an enlisted man, and usually not before he had served at least a year at the front, which allowed for a mere ten to fourteen days. So important was leave from the front that men risked their lives for it. It was not uncommon for a commanding officer to offer leave as a reward for pulling off a dangerous trench raid. Where British soldiers going on leave were less than a day’s journey from home, and pilots on patrol over the battlefields could at times catch sight of England, Canadian soldiers could return to their homes only in their thoughts and dreams. Since many Canadians had strong links to England, Scotland, or Ireland, most soldiers spent their leave there (the United Kingdom was known as “Blighty,” soldiers’ slang derived from the Hindustani word for “home.”)

The term “**Blighty**” was also used to describe a “Blighty wound,” a wound that was not fatal, but serious enough to send a man out of the trenches and to a clean hospital in England. For example, a “Blighty” could be a piece of shrapnel through the fleshy part of the leg or a bullet through the hand.

London was the big attraction for young Canadian men who for most, had grown up on farms and small towns in Canada. In the metropolis of London soldiers did many things including: taking in the tourist attractions; searching for photographers to send snaps back home; going to music halls or plays; eating in good restaurants; enjoying the company of a woman; or drinking with mates in the pubs. For others, it was a chance to be with family members. Early in the war, thousands of upper-class Canadian families had sailed across the Atlantic to set up temporary homes in England in order to be near their soldier-husbands. For poor families, in contrast, the expense of such a move was prohibitive, so soldiers had to wait for years before they might see a loved one again.^{4G, 5J, 8O, 9U}

- **Khaki University of Canada:** As the war dragged on with no end in sight, soldiers increasingly asked for opportunities to better themselves. The chaplains stepped in, first with Bible study groups and then in 1916 with a more formal program of educational study in partnership with the YMCA. As thousands of Canadians arrived in Britain to train and then serve at the front, the numbers of Canadians seeking access to education overwhelmed the chaplains and YMCA. In January 1917, the YMCA requested that a representative from the Canadian universities be sent to England to help develop an educational program. That July, Henry Marshall Tory, the president of the University of Alberta, went overseas on an educational mission.

Surveys were conducted to determine what the men hoped to learn. Even though the average education level for the Canadian soldier was Grade 6, there was a fierce desire by thousands to improve themselves while overseas. Under the YMCA and chaplains, instruction was deeply tied to religion. Tory established a program known as the Khaki University of Canada (initially Khaki College of Canada) that emphasized more formal education instead of the salvation of souls.

Promotional phrases like “Rations for the Mind” and “Don’t Starve Mentally” were used by Khaki University to advertise to the Canadian soldiers. Administrators found students in the hospitals and recovery centres, especially those wounded men who were facing long periods of monotony. Special courses were developed to help those affected by shell shock, with instructors offering speech remediation for those who stuttered or had lost the ability to speak. From late 1917, the program had one main centralized university camp for students in London and a number of colleges in the various Canadian bases across England, and later, Battalion Schools for those men who had received only minimal or no schooling at all. Libraries were created too, both for men in the colleges and for units in the field. The courses were a mixture of hands-on training, lectures and reading groups, ranging from men who were illiterate through to university-level instruction.

The most popular course was scientific farming, which included information on crops and management, types of soil and livestock, elementary veterinary science, dairying, and vegetable and fruit growing. Other courses

included business management, commerce, mechanics, electricity, teacher training, legal studies, foreign languages, and medicine. While some YMCA officers continued to instruct, the majority of the teachers were drawn from the units and were a mix of officers and enlisted men. The army of citizen-soldiers had all manner of educators and teachers in the ranks, and they stepped forward to instruct their comrades. Other instructors roamed the front and rear areas providing lectures. In December 1917, the University of Vimy Ridge (UVR) was established as one of the soldier colleges in France. Amidst a desperate wartime landscape close to the front line, books and stationary supplies were shipped from England to service the classes, teachers were called from the units, and sessions were held in abandoned mine offices, improvised dugouts and any building available.

The Khaki University taught 3,000 illiterate men to read and write which, for many, gave them their first opportunity to send a letter home to their family. The vast majority of pupils benefited from instruction directed at high school-or primary school-level education. Others earned university level credits. There were also courses offered to the fiancés and wives of soldiers, as thousands of Canadian soldiers married British women during the war. The goal of a course at the University of London was to turn war brides into “ideal Canadian settlers,” with instruction in home economics, farming and general knowledge about Canadian geography, history and culture.

The Khaki University continued to educate tens of thousands of soldiers during the long and frustrating demobilization process. The Khaki University held its’ last class on June 30, 1919 as the last of the men were shipped home to Canada. The Khaki University and its Colleges lasted less than two years, during which time 50,189 soldiers had enrolled in courses and more than 500,000 had attended lectures. Tens of thousands more had benefited from education during the war. All of the soldiers acquired skills and knowledge that better prepared them for life in postwar Canada.^{2E, 2N}

• **Connections Home:** Letters and periodic care packages with cake, candies, tinned fruit, cigarettes, magazines and clothing were a vitally important connection to loved ones at home and were essential in keeping up morale. Almost every man had left behind loved ones—a wife, children, friends, and parents, whom they were desperate to return to one day. Tens of millions of letters criss-crossed the ocean, and it could take two to three weeks for a letter to travel from a soldier’s hand to his home, and just as long for the return message to make its way back. Mail came up to the trenches almost every day, and the letters from home were read and reread. When a call went out that a carrier arrived, men crowded around him. One soldier remembered, “*It is... pathetic to see those who are not lucky turning away sometimes with tears in their eyes.*”^{4G}

Those that received mail loved reading about events at home, everything from sports to politics, the details about which young men from their street or town had enlisted, of who was getting married or had a baby, though some learned of the deaths of grandparents and parents and other tragedies. One Canadian Lieutenant wrote to his wife and two children, “*I am dreadfully homesick and I am longing to be home with you and the children again... Every time I go to sleep I dream that the war is over and that I am back home again. For comfort I read your letters and look at your pictures and I can tell you they are a great comfort to me.*”^{9U}

It was not easy at the front to summon the will to settle oneself down and write: there were constant trench duties; everyone was sleep-deprived and worn down; so much of their energy was focused on survival; and finding a dry spot and securing paper was a challenge. Few soldiers could write home more often than once a week, and some were illiterate and needed a friend to write letters for them. In letters sent home, few were able to accurately describe the bewildering events and trauma they were experiencing, and self-censorship, not wanting to worry those at home, hid other aspects of the terror. Soldiers tried to provide emotional support to their wives, impart loving words to their children, or a gentle word to a mother or father. Most also recounted some of the aspects of their war experiences, though all letters were censored first by their officers and then sometimes at headquarters. Canadian soldiers who wrote letters had to leave them unsealed, to be read by the censors.

Censoring of letters was done to prevent disturbing news from reaching home and discouraging recruitment. Mail could also be intercepted by the enemy, so letters were censored to prevent them from obtaining useful information. Men knew not to mention their unit or location, and the phrase “somewhere in France” became a well-used address of the writer. As a result of the censors, the men rarely wrote home of the true hardships they faced. In reality, censorship was sporadic at best. Officers disliked the time-consuming and intrusive task, and reading dozens of letters a day with soldiers’ chicken-scratch writing, led to much skimming or even wholesale abdication of the annoying chore by many officers. Many of the letters that reached home were published in local newspapers, which was the case here in Sarnia.

Soldiers also had the option of sending a “whiz-bang”, a Field Service Postcard (F.S.P.) home. These bizarre and impersonal postcards contained multiple choice prewritten messages, and soldiers simply struck off those that did not apply to them, with most opting to keep the message: “I am quite well” and “I hope to be home soon”. Although they contained little personal information, the “whiz-bangs” provided an indication to a worried family at home that a soldier was still alive.^{4G, 5J, 6E, 7A, 7Z, 9U}

• **SOLDIERS’ LETTERS HOME TO SARNIA:** Following are a number of the letters written home by Sarnia-Lambton boys (and their stories) who fought in the trenches, providing a glimpse of the horrors that they witnessed and experienced (more Sarnia soldiers’ letters home are on page 160):

> **Ralph Louis Ackerman** was born in Sarnia on November 16, 1891, the son of Wilbert Albert Ackerman, of 390 Russell Street, Sarnia. Twenty-three-year-old Ralph Ackerman enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force on August 16, 1915 in Sarnia with the 34th Battalion. He embarked overseas and arrived in England on November 1, 1915. Six months later, in May 1916, he embarked for France. On May 25, 1916, Private Ralph Ackerman was drafted into the Canadian Army Infantry, British Columbia Regiment, 7th Battalion, and joined that unit in the field on June 7, 1916. During his time in France, Ralph wrote a number of letters home.

Following is a portion of a letter that Ralph wrote from “Somewhere in France” to his sister, Charlotte “Lottie” (Mrs. Albert E. Chambers), who was residing on North Mitton Street (that she received in August 1916):
Dear Sister,

Just a line or two to let you know that I am well and hoping that this letter finds you the same. I received your letter today and am answering it right back... The trenches are nice and dry and I have been on “listening post” every time I have been in the trenches. It is a pretty good job, and exciting at times. You have to go out in “No Man’s Land” and lay and listen and watch for “Fritz.” You have lots of bullets and rifle grenades flying around, but you soon get used to them. I was out one night and I had a fellow with me who was not on it before with me. It was certainly a lively experience for the beginner. We spotted three “Fritzs” working on their wire entanglements. They were about fifty yards from me. You could see them quite plain, but were a little too far away to toss a bomb at, and our scouts were out patrolling. I didn’t dare take a chance at bagging them. I was out another night when the trenches were only 40 yards apart. I was out pretty close to them on this occasion. You could hear them talking in their trenches quite plain... Fritz has a shell they call a sausage. They are about three feet long, and are awful high explosives. You can see them coming through the air and can generally get out of the way of them. They make an awful noise when they explode. But we have just as good, and a lot better explosives than he has though, and can always give him twice the amount he serves us...

Ralph Ackerman would be killed in action in August 1917 in France. His biographical information, including more of his letters, are included in this Project on page 213.

> **William Potter** was born in Point Edward on December 7, 1894, the son of Albert and Flora Potter. On January 27, 1915, William Potter, age twenty and single, enlisted in Sarnia. He recorded his occupation as painter, and his next-of-kin as his father Albert Potter in Sarnia. William enlisted with the 7th Regiment, Canadian Mounted Rifles, and embarked overseas on June 9, 1915. Eleven months later, in mid-May 1916, he arrived in France. In August 1916, Private William Potter, then a member of the Fort Garry Horse, Canadian Cavalry, wrote a letter from No. 3 Canadian General Hospital in Boulogne, France, to his mother Flora Potter of 173 Brock Street. Following is a portion of that letter:

August 2, 1916,
Dear Mother,

Just a few lines to let you know I am still alive and kicking. As you will see I am in hospital, but haven’t been wounded. I just got a shaking up. We were marching into the trenches along a road through a village and I was leaning back watching an air battle and what happened, I don’t know, only I woke up in a dressing station on a stretcher. I feel a lot better now. Will be all right in a week or so...

It is surely fine here. A nice clean bed to sleep in, good meals at the regular hours and no noise. That was what bothered me most. Pieces of shell flying around did not worry me as much as the noise. When our guns opened up you couldn’t hear the next fellow to you speak unless he got his mouth right up to your ear and shouted...

Less than two weeks later, William would write another letter to his mother Flora Potter from Boulogne, France. Following is a portion of that letter:

Dear Mother,

Just a few lines this week to let you know everything is going on O.K.... Well, I am a lot better now, but being a little shaky. It isn't very pleasant having a few tons of dirt flying around you from a big shell, especially when you wake up and find yourself buried to the neck. It is enough to make one a little shaky...

While overseas, William Potter served in a number of units including: the Fort Garry Horse, Canadian Cavalry; the 64th Battalion; #2 Canadian Labour Battalion and the 16th Reserve Battalion. Also while overseas, William Potter would be treated at different times for pneumonia, influenza and bronchitis. William Potter returned to Canada in September 1917, becoming a member of the Military Police Force, CEF, No. 1 Detachment. After serving in a number of battalions in England, France and Belgium, Lance Corporal William Potter was discharged upon demobilization on February 6, 1919 in London, Ontario. William Potter passed away on July 1, 1941 at the age of forty-six, and is buried at Lakeview Cemetery in Sarnia.

> **John Carolan** was born in Bailieborough, Ireland on June 10, 1886. A member of the 27th Regiment, St. Clair Borderers, he initially enlisted on August 5, 1914 in Sarnia, recording his occupation as locomotive fireman. On September 22, 1914, twenty-eight years old and single, John Carolan enlisted again in Valcartier, Quebec, recording his occupation as locomotive fireman, and his next-of-kin his mother Mrs. Mary Smith in Greytown, Natal, South Africa. John Carolan became a member of the 1st Battalion, CEF and embarked overseas on October 3, 1914. Seven months after enlisting, in the opening days of the Second Battle of Ypres, Private John Carolan was wounded. Following is a portion of his medical report: *On April 23rd 1915 at Ypres, while advancing, was struck by bullet which pierced skull fully a handsbreadth above the R. ear, passed through brain & emerged a little to the R & above the external occipital protuberance. He woke in 3 hrs or so, & found his L. arm & leg paralysed, but managed to crawl 100 yds to shelter. Then was only vaguely conscious. He was also 'gassed' badly. 8 or 10 days later was operated on and had a number of pieces of skull removed....*

(NOTE: a couple of reports in his Service File have the date of his wounding recorded as April 20).

John was admitted to No. 6 General Hospital in Rouen on April 29, recorded as, "GSW head and arms, dangerously ill". He was moved to York County Military Hospital, Pickering for five weeks, where he was recorded as "GSW Cranium, severe", and then transferred to Canadian Convalescent Hospitals in Bromley and Monks Horton. On September 7, 1915 at Shorncliffe, England, he secured his discharge to Canada, requesting transportation to Point Edward, Ontario. In October 1915, he was discharged, declared "permanently unfit for military duty of any nature", and "he has been rendered at present materially incapable of earning a livelihood by reason of wounds received in action". On his Medical Report, examiners recorded his disability as, "Fractures Compound of Skull by Bullet, Weakness of Left Side – gas". He was granted a pension for the period of one year (\$192 dollars per annum). After his discharge, he resided at 284 Confederation Street, Sarnia.

On that fateful April 23rd, 1915 at Ypres, fierce pounding by the German artillery had smashed a gap in the British defence lines. John Carolan was with his unit of the 1st Battalion that had rushed to fill the gap. John had just passed the position from where his late commander was cheering on his force, when John was wounded. Following is a portion of John's description of his former commander who fell in the battle, and of his own experience:

Colonel Becher was the bravest man in the unit. His troops would have followed him anywhere, or even into hell itself, and surely those engagements that we came through were as bad as the infernal regions. There was nothing the men wouldn't do for him, and there was nothing he would ask a soldier to do that was not a matter of plain duty. He wouldn't send a man where he would not go himself. No wonder the men worshipped him.

An accurate and realistic description of the fierce engagements at Langemarck, Ypres and Hill 60 is almost impossible. The terrible crash of artillery, the ceaseless rattle of fire arms and machine guns and the deep reverberating boom of the "Jack Johnson," the men falling all around in a veritable hail of lead, the sudden "Up and at them!" that carried all before it, the dogged retreat when every foot of ground gained was held tenaciously and given only at a tremendous cost to both sides – all these were terrible phases of the conflict that were indescribable.

Two years after being discharged in England, at the age of thirty-one and still single, John Carolan enlisted again on September 17, 1917, in London, Ontario. He recorded his occupation as motor mechanic, his address as 284 Confederation Street, and his next-of-kin as his mother Mrs. Mary Smith in Greytown, Natal, South Africa. He also recorded that he had served previously in the 1st Battalion, CEF, and that he had been discharged as medically unfit due to "gun shot wound in head". The following month, he underwent a medical examination at Guelph Military

Hospital. Aside from the two large scars on his head (entrance and exit wounds from the bullet), John was suffering a host of health issues a result of his war wounds, including; increased sensitivity to mental and physical strains, body numbness on left side, dizzy spells at times, debilitating headaches, poor memory, and he would tire easily upon exertion. Three months after enlisting again, on December 26, 1917, Private John Carolan of the 1st Battalion was discharged in Guelph, declared “medically unfit for further service”. John Carolan passed away on May 20, 1935, three weeks before his forty-ninth birthday. John Carolan is also mentioned in the bio of Dr. David Bentley on page 232.

> **Edward John Beecher Carr** was born in Sarnia on June 4, 1895. On November 1, 1915, Edward Carr, age twenty and single, enlisted in Sarnia with the 70th Battalion, recording his occupation as farmer and his next-of-kin as his father Douglas Carr, in Corunna. Private Edward Carr arrived in England on May 1, 1916, and in France on June 7, 1916 as a member of the 5th Canadian Mounted Rifles. Just over three months later, on September 26, 1916, Edward Carr was wounded, receiving a shell or shrapnel wound in his right leg. Days later, Edward wrote three letters home; one to his sister, and two to his parents Mr. and Mrs. Douglas Carr in Corunna. Following are two of his letters (Edward’s third letter to his parents is included in the biography of Robert Batey on page 223):

France, Sept. 28th, 1916

Dear Sister,

I am in the hospital recovering from a slight gun shot wound in the leg. Lucky I did not get it in the bean, but I would rather not have had it at all. Had almost begun to think I could not be hit, but the night I got this I was the only one hit just then, although when the rest arrived at their destination and started to work more of them were hit. Four came during the course of the night into the same tent that I was in. They had been digging and unearthed a German hand grenade which exploded and wounded four. Well, the winter weather will soon be here, but I hope it will not stop our advance. Our cavalry will now soon be swarming over Fritz’s country at the rate we are going. We are continually extending our roads, etc., as we take another trench from him. We were the first Canadians to go over on the morning of the 15th... The wonderful new machine of the British ??? tanks, commonly known as the Irish navy, or His Majesty’s Overland Cruisers, were in operation with us. They can go right over shell holes, trenches, barbed wire, even through an ordinary brick wall. I don’t know what Fritz thought when he saw them. I’m sure nothing will stop us now and if he is wise will quit right away. We had a concert here last night given by the P.P. It was a fine taste of real theatricals. Two of the “ladies” were so real that really one could not tell for sure what they were. There was Charlie Chaplin, etc. Altogether it was quite the finest thing I have ever seen out here.

Beecher Carr

Following is a few lines of poetry found on the body of one of our troops. It will give you some idea of the atmosphere of conditions sometimes:

SEAM SQUIRRELS

*I don’t mind the rain at all,
I don’t mind the mud,
Or scare at German bullets,
Or faint at sight of blood.*

*I’m used to being thirsty,
And sleeping in the dirt,
But I hate those Seam Squirrels,
Cruising o’er my undershirt.*

*I never kick at bully beef,
I love my daily cheese,
I don’t mind if my billet,
Is full of foreign fleas,*

*I never flinch or duck my head,
When German shrapnel hums,
But I can’t be contented,
If my shirt is full of “crumbs.”*

*I don’t dread the nightly hikes-
continued over...*

Here is another verse (often done in song):

SING ME TO SLEEP

*Sing me to sleep where bullets fall,
Let me forget the war and all;
Damp is my dugout, cold my feet,
Nothing but bully and biscuits to eat.*

*Sing me to sleep where bombs explode,
And shrapnel shells a la mode;
Our sand bags and helmets you will find,
Corpses in front of you, corpses behind.*

*Far, far from Ypres I long to be,
Where German snipers can’t pot me;
Think of me crouching where the worms creep,
Waiting for the sergeant to sing me to sleep.*

*Sing me to sleep in some old shed,
continued over...*

'Seam Squirrels' continued...

*My pack upon my back,
Crawling through the darkness,
Upon my unknown track.*

*But when I lay me down at night,
In some strange hut to sleep,
Those hungry little grey backs,
Fairly make me creep.*

*So when you write to me again,
Kind friends across the foam,
Don't send me any cigarettes,
Or chocolates from home.*

*For I get all I want to eat,
And my daily "shot" of rum-
Send me some kind of poison,
That will put them on the bum.*

'Sing Me To Sleep' continued...

*Where rats are running about my head;
Dreaming of home and nights in the west,
Somebody's oversea boots on my chest.*

*Sing me to sleep where camp fires glow,
Full of French bread and café de l'eau;
Stretched out upon my waterproof,
Dodging the raindrops through the roof.*

*Far from the star shell I'd love to be,
Lights of old Sarnia I'd rather see;
Think of me crouching where the worms creep,
Waiting for a "whiz-bang" to sing me to sleep.*

Following is a portion of Edward Carr's September 30, 1916 letter from France to his mother in Corunna:
Dear Mother,

Well, I suppose you will be surprised to hear that at last I got a scratch, and am in the hospital. You will be surprised too to hear how I lost the gifts you sent me. Well, on the eve of Sept. 15th, we were on our way up a communication trench, to our dugouts. We were put in two dugouts, made by the Germans before they were driven back. These dugouts are all well constructed and have bunks in them, are electrically lighted, etc., lined and even have close fitting doors and fireplaces. These, compared with our "funk holes," or burrows in the bank of a trench, seemed quite luxurious. We arrived in a driving drizzle of rain, and I laid down near the open doorway (one of our shells had landed on it and caved part of it in) and went to sleep, although not before leaving my equipment just outside the door, ready for slipping on at 12 o'clock, when we had to go on up to the front line, to wait there till dawn, when we were to attack the German line.

Scarcely had I dozed off, when a German 9-2 shell landed just in the doorway, right on top of my equipment and rifle, and digging ourselves out a few minutes afterwards, I could not find a trace of my stuff; nothing but a hole in the ground... then we had to go up at 12. We had to hustle around and get sand bags to carry our stuff in and hunt up rifles and bayonets from the salvage dump, which luckily, was close by... once we got over there, I was able to get equipment off one of our own poor fellows who was killed, but my own private stuff was all lost. I am recovering and will leave for a rest camp tomorrow morning, where we will be about a week by the seaside...

Yours, Pte. E.J. Carr

Private Edward Carr remained in hospital for six weeks before rejoining his unit. He served overseas in England and France for seventeen months with the 5th Canadian Mounted Rifles. On October 30, 1918, he was admitted to #5 Canadian General Hospital in Liverpool because of arthritis in his knee. After almost one month in hospital, he was invalided to Canada in late November 1918. Admitted to Hamilton Military Hospital in late-January 1919, he spent two months there receiving treatment for chronic arthritis in his right knee (a result of his service). This was followed by another month and a half treatment in the Military Hospital, Wolseley Barracks in London. Edward John Beecher Carr was discharged on May 8, 1919.

> **William "Harry" Jennings** was born in Forest, Ontario on August 13, 1888. At the age of twenty-six and single, Harry Jennings enlisted in Calgary, Alberta on August 12, 1914, becoming a member of the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry (PPCLI). Two weeks later, he underwent his medical exam in Ottawa and completed his Attestation Paper recording his occupation as printer/proof-reader, and his next-of-kin as his father Richard Jennings in Forest. Harry embarked overseas from Quebec on October 3, 1914, and by mid-December 1914, embarked from Southampton, England to France. One month later, on the night of January 24, 1915 in Ypres, France, Private Harry Jennings and four others were carrying ammunition into the trenches when they were hit by German machine gun fire from 350 yards away. One man was killed, Harry and another man were wounded. Harry had been hit on the left side of his head, fracturing his skull, and knocking him unconscious. After fifteen minutes, he regained consciousness, but his right arm was totally paralyzed, his right leg was weak, and he was unable to speak.

A field dressing was applied immediately and he was able to walk a little. The other wounded man helped drag Harry through 50 yards of knee-high mud to safety. From a Field Hospital at St. Eloi, he was brought by ambulance wagon to a Clearing Hospital where his wound was dressed again. On January 28, he was sent by motor ambulance to a hospital at Bailleul where he was operated on for “fractured skull with depression”. He remained there until February 15.

Following is a letter that Harry Jennings wrote to the Alberta newspaper *Morning Albertan*, published March 6, 1915, about that deadly night for the PPCLI (Harry had formerly been on the staff of the newspaper):

Five of us were carrying ammunition into the trenches when the Germans caught us. It was dark and we were sneaking along to get the ammunition and bring it back. The German trench was only a short distance away. Suddenly the darkness was split by a flare which lighted up everything all about us. We did not have time to drop before the fusillade started from the German trenches. The bullets spattered all about us. The officer in charge of our detail, a man named Price, from Edmonton, was instantly killed. Another man from Saskatoon, got a bullet in the chest, and I got my skull chipped. It was all over in a minute, and three out of the five of our party which had started out were out of commission. Not such bad work on the part of the Germans, was it? We had all the ammunition we wanted.

There were two other Calgary men killed the same night. One was Captain Fitzgerald [also known as Robert Mansfield], the finest man and the most popular officer of the whole regiment. He was the British reservist, of good family, who went out to Calgary a couple of years ago, went broke, and finally had to work at manual labour for the government of Banff. When war broke out he was among the first to offer his services, and as he was an excellent soldier, was commissioned as a captain in the Patricias. Old Jack Murphy was another man who was killed this same night. He worked for the city for a time and was a friend of Barney Collison, Crispin Smith and that crowd. He was in my section and I had gotten to know him well. I am in the hospital at Boulogne, and have improved so that I can get around, and expect to be taken to England in a few days.^{2G}

Harry Jennings was treated at several other hospitals, including the Rawal Pindi British General Hospital in Boulogne, then sailed to England aboard Hospital Ship *Valdivia*, followed by more treatment at the Royal Victoria (Welsh) Hospital in Netley, England for his, “GSW Head” that at one hospital was recorded as “severe”. Following is a portion of a letter that he wrote to his mother in Forest, while he was recovering in a hospital in England:

My Dear Mother,

... Now just a word to the war. It is absolutely worse than the people ever imagine. The weather is not as cold as Canada of course but it rains or sleets every day nearly. Raw and miserable and the trenches are a terror. Actually water over the knees have I stood in for 2 days and nights and kept my back humped up and my head down below the trenches all the time. And then when we come out had to cut my boots off my feet. They were so swollen. This is what the papers don't tell and are not allowed to tell, so don't show this letter around. And Belgium, village after village, and they are only a matter of a few miles apart here absolutely blown to pieces. And the people where they are, goodness only knows. And France isn't much better a country of old, young and cripples If people only realized what a war such as this meant to the country, where it was waged it would mean that the world would turn to socialism in no time. Thank goodness you live in North America...

On March 4, 1915, medical officials at Welsh Hospital, Netley, completed a medical report on Harry's condition. The gunshot to the head had caused the fracture of the left parietal bone with injury of the underlying motor area. His right arm was weak with loss of fine movements of his right hand, and his speech was slow and hesitating. The disability was diagnosed as permanent and that it would affect his capacity for earning a full livelihood in the general labour market. The commanding Medical Officers recommended that arrangements were to be made to send the patient to his home in Ontario. They also concluded that his capacity for earning a full livelihood was decreased by ¼, and that he should be discharged permanently, declared medically unfit.

Harry Jennings was discharged to Canada on March 19, 1915 and on March 30 he was be declared “medically unfit” in Halifax. On June 30, 1915 in Forest, the Medical Board had examined Harry and released their report on his condition—they determined as a result of the bullet wound to the left motor area of his brain, he was suffering from partial paralysis of the right arm and leg, with some impediment of speech. He was also suffering from sub-acute pleurisy. On December 30, 1915 in Calgary, Private Harry Jennings of the PPCLI was discharged, declared “being medically unfit”. Some time after his discharge, Harry married his wife Ethel, and they later resided in Port Dover, Ontario. William Harry Jennings passed away at the age of thirty-six, of war related injuries/illness on May 15, 1925. His cause of death was recorded as “influenzal broncho pneumonia, related to his service.” He is buried in Union Cemetery, Calgary, Alberta, and is commemorated on the Forest Cenotaph.

> **Leonard Francis Allingham** was born on September 24, 1895 in Courtright, Lambton County, Ontario and was raised in Sarnia. Prior to enlisting, he was employed in the grease department with Imperial Oil Company in Sarnia. On September 8, 1914, two weeks before his nineteenth birthday, Leonard Allingham enlisted in Valcartier, Quebec, becoming a member of the Canadian Infantry, 7th Battalion. Single, he recorded his occupation as oil maker, and his next-of-kin as his mother Mrs. John Allingham at 402 Wellington Street, Sarnia. Leonard embarked overseas on October 3, 1914 and one month later, on November 5, he was transferred, becoming a member of the Canadian Army Medical Corps (CAMC), No. 2 Canadian Field Ambulance. On December 23, 1914, nineteen year-old Leonard Allingham, CAMC, completed a second Attestation Paper, this one in Salisbury, England. Following is a letter that he wrote to the *Sarnia Observer*, published in February 1915:

Dear Sir,

*I am writing a few lines which I hope you will print as I feel sure that Sarnia people will be pleased to have news of the Sarnia boys at the front. We are all scattered about in different regiments but that cannot be helped. So far we have had a good time. About twelve of us are with No. 2 Field Ambulance, billeted at Wilton. The boys of the 2th [sic] regiment are still in camp, but I learned from one of them that they expect to go to France shortly. Some of the fellows in No. 2 stationary hospital were lucky enough to go to France some weeks ago in spite of the fact that they were almost the last chosen to go. I am hoping to go to France soon. We all want to have a go at the Germans. None of the Sarnia fellows have been sick so far. We seem a pretty tough lot so I hope we shall get through all right. I think a few more Sarnia boys might join the army and do their share for their king and country. Hoping to hear shortly that some more Sarnia boys have joined the army. I am, Yours truly,
(Private) L.F. Allingham, No. 2 Field Ambulance, C. Sec. 1st Can. Expeditionary Force, Wilton, Salisbury, England
P.S. I wish the Sarnia hockey boys all good luck in the coming season.*

Following is a portion of a letter that Leonard wrote in late April of 1915 from France:

Dear Mother,

I received your letter yesterday and was glad to hear from you. Things are getting a little hotter around where we are now. Bullets and shells whizzing through the air everywhere. You can tell Clarence things are just as hot as they put in the papers, about the battles. I guess you will have the news of the battle (April 27) we are in. We were four days dressing the wounded without a wink of sleep and we are back for a rest. The boys that were left out of the battle turned around and volunteered to go back at the Germans, again, after being in battle for five days. I guess there isn't many left of the Sarnia boys (poor fellows). They wouldn't give in until there was hardly enough of them to make a company out of each battalion. There is a few killed and wounded out of our bunch. Some of them are from Sarnia also. I guess they are only wounded.

*We were all separated into stretcher squads and sent out to collect the wounded that couldn't walk. If anybody wants to go through purgatory once they only want to be in a battle like this one which our boys went through. I think this battle is the biggest that has been yet. The Germans sent word across to our trenches that they were going to have their dinner in Ypres on the 24th. They must have meant lead, for I think they got filled up with it from our boys. Our bunch worked like heroes and there is some news that one or two of us are going to receive a Distinguished Conduct medal. They certainly deserve it when they double across field under shell fire after wounded. Well mother dear, this is all the news I have to say for now. If I told you all the news it would take a newspaper to write it on.
With best of love to all from your loving son, L.F. Allingham*

On June 22, 1915, Leonard Allingham was wounded in action—a gun shot wound in the right leg—and was admitted to No. 1 Canadian Field Ambulance. Soon after, his mother in Sarnia received a telegram from the Adjutant General, Ottawa, informing her that her son “Leonard Allingham, of No. 2 Canadian Field Ambulance, was officially reported wounded in action on June 22, 1915, and that further particulars would be forwarded when received”. Four days after being wounded, Leonard returned to action. Fourteen months later, on September 5, 1916, he was reported wounded again; was admitted to No. 2 Canadian Field Ambulance; and then returned to duty that day.

On October 4, 1916, he was admitted to No. 2 Canadian General Hospital in Le Treport with a “not yet diagnosed” medical problem of his lungs. Two weeks later, he was admitted to No. 7 Canadian Stationary Hospital in Havre, suffering from influenza and acute bronchitis. He remained in hospital for four days before rejoining his unit. Nine months later, on July 25, 1917, he was granted a Good Conduct Badge in the Field. Also see page 237.

Leonard Allingham survived the war, and on January 11, 1919, he was granted permission to marry—his wife was recorded as Mrs. E. Allingham, Bank House, Wilton Wilts. Salisbury—and they later resided at 402 Wellington Street, Sarnia. In early June 1919, Private Leonard Allingham of the CAMC was awarded a Distinguished Conduct

Medal (DCM), a medal for bravery, and returned to Canada. He was officially discharged upon demobilization on June 13, 1919 at Quebec Depot, Clearing Services Command. Leonard Allingham returned home, residing in Sarnia with his wife. He passed away in 1971, at the age of seventy-five, and is buried at Lakeview Cemetery in Sarnia.

> **Ulysses Theodore Mays** was born on April 6, 1871 in Bellefontaine, Ohio, USA. At the age of forty-three, Ulysses Mays enlisted in Valcartier, Quebec, on September 16, 1914, becoming a member of the 1st Battalion, CEF. Ulysses and his wife Mary Mays were residing at 409 George Street, Sarnia at the time. Ulysses recorded his occupation as a cook, and his next-of-kin as his wife Mary. Private Ulysses Mays embarked overseas on October 4, 1914, arriving in England before moving to France. Following is a portion of a letter that Ulysses wrote in early May 1915 to Mary in Sarnia:

Dear Wife,

You have probably read the account of the great dash the Canadians made, but the half has never been told. I am thankful to say I am well and among the living. I have been in three countries now, England, France and Belgium, and hope to be in Germany. We are now in a rest camp and expect to be here two or three weeks. I am glad to get away from the roar of the guns. I have not seen Tod Fleming since. He was killed or wounded, I don't know which. We lost so many of our boys, but they died heroes. We charged the Germans in a regular hail of shot and shell. It did not seem as though anyone could possibly live under the fire, but a few of us are left to tell the tale, but for how long we don't know...

On November 9, 1915, Private Ulysses Mays of the 1st Battalion was admitted to the 3rd Casualty Clearing Station, and then No. 1 Canadian General Hospital, Etaples diagnosed with scabies. Approximately two weeks later, he was admitted to No. 6 Convalescent Depot, Etaples, diagnosed with herpes zoster. Commonly called shingles, it is a virus infection (the same virus that causes chickenpox) of the central nervous system that is characterized by a painful, burning skin rash with blisters, usually on part of one side of the body. Other symptoms include fever, feeling run down, and general fatigue. Ulysses was experiencing pain in his chest, back and legs. On April 10, 1916, he was admitted to Canadian Base Depot suffering the same condition. One month later, on May 9, he rejoined his unit in the field. Three months later, on August 16, he returned to England, West Sandling, becoming part of the 36th Reserve Battalion. One month after that, on September 16, 1916, and after two years of service, Private Ulysses Mays of the 36th Battalion was discharged at the Quebec Depot. Tragically, at some point while Ulysses Mays was overseas, his wife Mary passed away.

Fourteen months after returning to Canada, on November 1, 1917, forty-six-year-old Ulysses Mays enlisted again, in London. A widower, he was residing at 409 George Street, and recorded his occupation as a cook, his next-of-kin as his daughter, Verna Mays at 409 George Street, and that he had served with the 1st Contingent, CEF. Private Ulysses Mays became a member of the Canadian Military Police Corps (CMPC), No. 1 Detachment. On July 31, 1919, Acting Corporal Ulysses Mays was discharged on demobilization at No. 1 District Depot in London. He returned to Sarnia, residing at 146 Essex Street.

> **Charles Marr Paul** was born on June 3, 1894 in Sarnia, the son of George MacPherson and Barbara (nee Cranston) Paul. On September 22, 1914, twenty year-old Charles Paul enlisted in Valcartier, Quebec. He recorded his occupation as laborer, and his next-of-kin as his father George M. Paul, at 149 North Brock Street, Sarnia. Charles Paul became a member of the Canadian Infantry, 8th Battalion, 90th Winnipeg Rifles Regiment, nicknamed the "Little Black Devils". He embarked overseas to England on October 3, 1914, and four months later, on February 9, 1915, he arrived in France. In April 1915, his battalion helped in holding the line during a German poison gas attack at Ypres, Belgium.

Following are portions of two letters that Charles wrote to his mother in Sarnia, the first in mid-April 1915, and the second in late May 1915:

Dear Mother,

Well, mother, we have been over here two months now. We are getting well acquainted with the country... Our company was in the reserve line and the rest in the front line, which was only 40 yards from the enemy at some points... we were open to fire on every side... We got to the position all right without mishap but it sure was dark and foggy as well. I was in a dug out with four other chaps and there was barely room for four, so we were just crowded enough to be uncomfortable. The shelling was by far the heaviest we have seen. They shelled the trenches steadily and dropped shells by dozens all over the show... We lost several men in the trenches... The shrapnel was whizzing above our dugout at time in quite an unhealthy manner. We had to stay right in the dugout and we could not light

fires so the cocoa we took with us and such could not be used. There was a grave just outside our dugout having two German helmets on it, and there were plenty of German rifles and bayonets, etc., lying about. There had been a good many buried altogether too near the surface, and well, everything seemed to stink of bodies. The hot weather was responsible. There was one of the biggest battles of the war fought there about Christmas time, and that accounts for bodies being improperly buried...

My Dear Mother,

I have not had a chance to write you for some time. We have been on the move a good deal and at the firing line and reserves quite a while and they would not take any mail, so of course, I could not write... We are now back for a couple of days rest. We have had another bad cutting up, though some of the other battalions got it worse than us. It has been a very hard place we have. We were up against heavy guns and plenty of them. Big ones that when they burst make holes in the ground ten or twelve feet wide. They threw these shells right into our trenches. One day they kept up a steady bombardment all day and it was a wild old time we had believe me. While in the reserves we were on fatigue burying dead and fixing up trenches which were captured from the Germans. We got little rest. If we were not busy at work we were digging ourselves in the fields to keep out of shell fire...

On July 22, 1915, Private Charles Paul of the 8th Battalion was admitted to No. 3 Canadian Field Ambulance, his medical condition "NYD" (not yet determined), and returned to his unit eight days later. Less than two weeks later, on August 10, he was admitted to 2nd Canadian Field Ambulance, diagnosed with muscular rheumatism. He rejoined his unit only nine days later. In late December 1915, he was attached to Canadian Army Corps Headquarters, and was appointed Acting Sergeant in the field (France).

On October 18, 1916, then Acting Sergeant Charles Paul, was awarded the Meritorious Service Medal (MSM) for helping to save lives during the Battle of the Somme. That same month, he was promoted in the field to the rank of Company Quartermaster-Sergeant (CQMS), 8th Battalion. Sometime in 1916 while in London, England, Charles Paul married his British girlfriend, Miss Frances Williams, of Ryton-on-Tyne, Durham, England.

Returning to the field, he took part with his unit in the April 1917 Battle of Vimy Ridge, and the October 1917 Battle of Passchendaele. In November 1917, Charles was in Shorncliffe, England where he attended an Officers Training Course. The following year, on March 24, 1918, Charles was promoted to Lieutenant, Manitoba Regiment, and taken on strength into the 18th Reserve Battalion. In late September 1918, he returned to the 8th Battalion, and in late-March 1919, he returned to England. On April 26, he sailed from England and returned to Canada. Lieutenant Charles Paul was discharged on demobilization on May 9, 1919 in Winnipeg.

Charles Paul returned to Sarnia with his British bride Frances, and they resided at 149 North Brock Street. Together, they raised eight children: Francis, Robert, Elva, Lillian, Edna, Jean, Edith, Elizabeth and Effie Barbara. Charles Paul worked as a Senior Customs and Excise Examiner at the Ferry Dock in Sarnia. On May 5, 1938, forty-three-year-old Charles Paul was killed in a car accident near Flat Rock, Michigan. He was given a military funeral and was buried at Lakeview Cemetery, Sarnia. On May 15th of 2010, Lieutenant Charles Marr Paul was inducted into the Canadian Veterans Hall of Valour in Carleton Place near Ottawa. Charles Paul is connected to another Sarnia fallen soldier—Petty Officer-Stoker Michael Paithowski, who was a member of the Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve and is included in the World War II section of this Project on page 915.

> **Garnet David Dawson** was born on June 28, 1894 in Sombra Township, the son of Mr. and Mrs. David Dawson of Sarnia. On September 22, 1914, twenty years old and single, Garnet Dawson enlisted in Valcartier, Quebec. He recorded his occupation as sailor, and his next-of-kin as his father David Dawson, of Mandauman, Ontario. Garnet became a member of the Canadian Infantry, 1st Battalion. He embarked overseas to England on October 3, 1914, and four months later, arrived in France in February 1915. He served in France for twenty months.

In a letter home to his parents, he described the marksmanship of the German soldiers, telling how he held a milk can up on the point of his bayonet and in five minutes the receptacle was pierced by 25 bullet holes. Following is more of his letter:

Life in the trenches is not a pleasant one. We bury our dead and get food supplies into the trenches at night. I must say the Germans are good soldiers. At night the enemy opens fire at our trenches to test our strength, and the violence of fire we return aids them in deciding if they are able to make a successful night attack on us. We have not had our shoes off for 14 days, and we were three days without food. Our losses have been heavy, and out of our company of 250 there are 20 left. I hardly know how it is that I came through. You ought to see this country. It is hard to imagine its true condition. The cities of France are blown to pieces. We succeeded in taking this week three

lines of German trenches, but lost them again in a bitter engagement. The fields that surround us are literally covered with the bodies of dead soldiers. We hope for the end, but we can not tell how long the war will last.

On October 23, 1916 Private Garnet Dawson was admitted to No. 12 Stationary Hospital, Rouen, the result of a "contusion of face (accident)". Still recovering from the injury, on November 2, 1916, he was admitted to the Military Hospital Bagthorpe, Nottingham, and one month later, on December 9, 1916, he was transferred to Canadian Convalescent Hospital, Hillingdon House, Uxbridge. Two months after being injured, on December 22, he was discharged from hospital and returned to his unit. In early June 1917, he became a member of the 4th Reserve Battalion at Hastings, and a month and a half later, was a member of the Western Ontario Regimental Depot at Bramshott. Two weeks later, on August 10, he became a member of the Canadian Forestry Corps at the Base Depot in Sunningdale, Berkshire. Fifteen months later, on November 14, 1918 (three days after the Armistice), Private Garnet Dawson accidentally wounded his right hand and was admitted to the War Hospital, Exeter. He was discharged from the hospital sixteen days later.

Private Garnet David Dawson arrived back in Canada on January 17, 1919 and was discharged in London, Ontario on February 13, 1919 on demobilization. He then resided at 875 St. Claire Avenue, Detroit, Michigan, with his sister Gladys Johnson. He passed away at the age of fifty-eight on December 15, 1952, and is buried at St. John's Anglican Church Cemetery in Windsor, Ontario.

> **Thomas Weston** was born on June 18, 1892 in Birmingham, England. At some point, Thomas and his wife Beatrice moved to Sarnia. On August 19, 1915, the twenty-three-year-old married Thomas Weston enlisted in Sarnia. He recorded his occupation as brakeman, and his next-of-kin as his wife Beatrice of 257 Tecumseh Street, Sarnia. Thomas became a member of the Canadian Infantry, 34th Battalion, and arrived in England on November 1, 1915. On February 3, 1916, he was transferred to the 23rd Battalion at Bramshott, and on May 25, was transferred to the 2nd Battalion, Canadian Infantry. The next day, he arrived with that unit in France.

Approximately three weeks later, on June 13, 1916, Private Thomas Weston was wounded in action during a charge into enemy trenches during the Battle of Hill 60 in Flanders, south of Ypres. One medical report recorded that "he was buried by a fall of earth and on being dug out was hit in the head by a shrapnel bullet which passed through the scalp from side to side... After the injury he was unable to walk on account of pain in the left ankle..." Another report recorded that he "was also hit on right hand by shrapnel." A later medical report recorded that the wounds suffered occurred at Zillebeke, and added that he had suffered a wound from a "bayonet entered at the wrist and came out at the ball of the thumb, left hand".

Private Thomas Weston received initial medical treatment at Pepperinge, 14 General Bologne, France. On June 17, 1916, he was admitted to Bethnal Green Military Hospital in England as a result of his wounds. Seven weeks later, on August 8, 1916, he was admitted to Canadian Convalescent Hospital, Bromley to continue his recovery. He was finally discharged from hospital on August 17, 1916.

In July 1916, Beatrice Weston on Tecumseh Street received a letter from her husband. When he wrote the letter, Thomas was recovering in hospital after having five pieces of German shell taken out of his head. In his letter, he described how they knew the day before they were to charge; of the heavy artillery shelling the night before into German trenches only 50 yards away from them; and "the noise something awful". Following is more of his letter:

I remember getting hit, shrapnel and machine gun fire was flying all around us and Alf bandaged my head up and that was the last I remember. When I was just going unconscious I heard him crying and telling me to cheer up, for he thought I was dying, but when I woke up again I was lying in a dugout in the captured German trenches with German prisoners that were captured. I only knew that I had an awful headache and the Germans were shelling us to beat the band as they were going to try and get the trenches back. It was then I heard the order and again to stand to, for they thought the Germans were going to make a charge, and I knew that if they did my chance was gone, for the trench would be blown up and I knew I would go up with it and the German prisoners. It was then I thought of you, I saw you as plain as if you had been near by with me and for once I said a prayer. I thought I was going to die and then I fell unconscious again for I was bleeding and was very weak through the loss of blood, and the shelling was so hot and heavy that no Red Cross could get up to me. Then I found myself being wakened up by having some rum forced into my mouth.

When I was being pulled out of the trench I saw some dreadful sights. The dead half filled the trench. I was pulled over them as we had to crawl so as the Germans would not see us and my face knocked against the dead. After I got out of the trenches I was put on a stretcher and put into a motor ambulance and with three others taken to the

hospital. I saw them putting dead comrades in shell holes, burying them, 30 in a shell hole. My God, nobody that has not seen or been there does not know and cannot imagine the terrible scenes. There were 30 come through without a scratch out of 150 in our company and as I was being taken to the dressing hospital there were hundreds lying along the road dead.

On September 30, 1916, Private Thomas Weston returned to Canada, having been granted furlough until November 11, 1916. In late-October 1916, he was examined by a Medical Board in London, Ontario. They concluded that he was suffering from an injured left foot, the “result of injury received in a bayonet charge at Zillebeke on June 13, 1916”, along with suffering from the wounds he received in the head and hand. The Board recommended an extension of his furlough for two months (extended to December 11, 1916), and that he be discharged on account of being unfit for service. Thomas was discharged in London on January 11, 1917. His Discharge Paper recorded that: his conduct and character while in service were “very good”; and that “on account of his wounds, was not able to follow former calling as brakeman”. Sometime after his discharge, Thomas and Beatrice Weston resided at 422 Devine Street, Sarnia.

> **Arthur Wesley Crawford** was born on May 4, 1892 in Point Edward, Ontario, the son of George Crawford of 153 Christina Street, Sarnia. On November 2, 1914, twenty-two years old and single, Arthur Crawford enlisted in Toronto with the Canadian Engineers. He recorded his occupation as an electrical engineer, and his next-of-kin as his father George Crawford in Sarnia. At the end of December 1914, Arthur was a member of 2nd Divisional Signals Company, Canadian Engineers. He embarked overseas bound for England and in mid-September 1915 he arrived in France. Six months later, in March 1916, Arthur wrote a letter from France to his father George in Sarnia. In it, he described a typical trip to the front line to repair a phone line. Following is a portion of that letter:

Dear Father,

... We put on our steel helmets, hang our gas masks at the alert position (on our chest) fasten on our linemen's belts and climb the stairs off our dugout into the trench... Keeping your eyes on the cable which is neatly stapled into the wall of the trench we turn up the first communication trench and walk briskly along the raised trench mats... a double row of two by fours, about 14 inches apart... The trench walls are about a foot higher than our heads and the width of the trench varies from about three feet at the bottom to approximately five feet at the top.... Only occasionally can we catch fleeting glimpses of the surrounding country through a shell torn gap in the trench wall. What a bleak desolate country it is. A few battered stumps of trees, a broken pile of white stone and timbers, the remains of a former home, and fields churned and scattered by the constant pounding of first ours, and now Fritz's artillery... As we continue our walk, the trench has lost its neat appearance and we are kept busy stepping over holes in the broken trench mats or picking our way through muddy holes of water... At the entrance of the dugout occupied by the company of signalers... we descend the tortuous, slippery stairs arriving at the bottom, perhaps twenty of thirty feet below ground level and soon come to a bay where we find the signal office... After remedying the phone trouble, we climb up one of the other entrances... and start up a battered muddy trench for the front line. Just then, however, Fritz opens up with his heavy trench mortars and showers our line with “sausages” and “minnies”... As each bomb lands, sandbags and timbers, to say nothing of the dense cloud of smoke and mud, go hurtling skyward. The artillery are called into play... and soon the line is one continuous stretch of smoke and flying debris... The ground trembles with the awful concussion of large bombs and shells and one wonders how anyone can live in either front line.

Later in March 1916, Arthur wrote a letter from Belgium to his mother. Following is a portion of that letter:

Dear Mother and All,

As you know we are once again occupying our old positions on the front, after four weeks rest in France. I am again in the fine steel dugout and it seems just like home to be back here again. When we first came back the ground was white with snow and we had to hustle to keep warm. Now spring has arrived to stay and we are enjoying the beautiful weather... This is a great country for flowers and already, before the leaves have opened out the ground is literally covered with cowslips, mayflowers, dandelions and many other varieties of flowers which I do not know. The hedges and bushes are blooming and the grass is covering the indescribable mud with a beautiful green carpet. Spring is in the air and even the birds are livelier and their calls and songs are a welcome change from the whistling of bullets and the screeching of shells. It seems a pity that these beautiful days should be spent in killing one another.

Fritz spoiled a beautiful afternoon yesterday by presenting us with over a hundred high explosives in an hour or so... I enjoyed the spectacle of the bursting shells from behind a large tree a few hundred yards to one side. It is a sight worth seeing to watch the effect of large shells on the landscape. We have become so accustomed to the sound

of approaching shells that we can tell the size and approximate target of the shell before it explodes. We always know whether it is necessary to dive for the nearest hole or cover of any kind. If no cover is available we simply fall flat just where we are and let the fragments and uprooted landscape whistle by. The "...boxes" burst on percussion and send a column of black smoke, earth, bricks, wire boards, etc, about fifty feet in the air. Fragments of shell, debri, etc., fly for several hundred yards and it is always wise to flatten out when these chaps explode close by. They tear a hole in the ground about ten or fifteen feet in diameter and about six feet deep...

Arthur went on to describe how on the previous night when, "I was out just behind our lines" he experienced a period of enemy gun, mortar and shell fire. Creeping along, he and his partner were able to finish their assigned job before finding "the shelter of our trenches". He concluded his letter with:

...Didn't get back till after two this morning and I was cook today. It is now bed time and I am tired, so will turn in and dream of home and peace.
Lovingly, ART

In April 1916, Arthur wrote a letter to his mother from France. In it, he again described his role in repairing communication lines on the front lines. Following is a portion of that letter:

Dear Mother and All,

It is some time since I have written more than a note so will try to give you some idea of what I have been doing lately. After four weeks rest in France we returned to our position on the firing line. I was again assigned to the dugout for advance linemen. We felt quite at home in the familiar old place and counted ourselves lucky to get back. However Fritz decided that he had been too gentle on our previous visit and tried to liven up things a bit. Every day we had a shower of whiz-bangs and small shrapnel. One fine morning I was peeling spuds in the door of the dugout when suddenly two small shells burst just overhead and I had to fish out several small pieces from the potato pot. I wasn't long in reaching the far end of the dugout where things were quieter.

He went on to describe being moved with an advance party to take over new lines up front:

No sooner had we started out to locate the buried lines than Fritz welcomed us with a heavy shower of shrapnel. I thought my time had come, but managed to reach a shelter of a good dugout and stuck there till the things had quieted down a bit. But Fritz seemed to have an unending supply of ammunition and I couldn't wait all day so during a lull I "beat it" for our new linemen's dugout. Arrived just in time to join a man going out to repair a line. I donned a shrapnel helmet and we set out. We found two breaks in a buried armored cable and while repairing these were told that another line was out. Before returning to our dugout we repaired no less than eight breaks, had several narrow escapes from flying shrapnel, got covered with mud and I decided that I was in for a lively time.

From then on it was almost one continual round and except for a few hours rest snatched as opportunity afforded, I was on the job night and day. We lived on cold rations and tea and ate whenever we got the chance. However, we were extremely lucky in that not one of us was wounded, and most of the breaks occurred during daylight. However, I spent the busiest week of my soldiering career up there and am not anxious to do it again. I can now say that I have actually worked under shell fire and have seen men go down close by.

But my experience is as nothing compared to what some of our infantry went through. I helped out men who had been under almost continuous heavy fire for forty-eight hours standing in water with practically nothing to eat and absolutely no sleep. Some were almost insane, others all crippled with rheumatism, others dazed and few were normal. It must have been "hell." I saw mangled bodies and ghastly wounds, ruined trenches and caved in dugouts but these men lived through the actual making of this awful devastation. Truly they have seen "Hell."

In July 1916, Arthur wrote to his mother again, this time from Belgium. In it, he described his experiences at a special signaling course with a flying squadron. That letter is on page 197 in the section on "Birth of Canada's Air Force". At the end of that letter, he wrote the following:

... Have another bit of good news for you. I heard definitely a short while ago that I had been recommended for a medal, for repairing lines under shell fire. Have little hope of receiving a decoration but it is something to be recommended anyway. My best decoration will be a whole suit of civy clothes after the war is won.

Best to all, Art

In late September 1916, Arthur wrote a letter from France to his brother Willard Crawford of 153 Christina Street, Sarnia. Following is a portion of that letter:

Dear Willard,

Some time ago I promised to write and tell you something about the ground we have gained from Fritz. For the most part, it is still a barren desolate shell swept stretch of ruined landscape, thickly populated by our troops and guns. I have only seen a small part of it on one particular front, but am told that it is all pretty much alike. On my

way up to the front last time, we were camped by a large town, lying just behind our lines and had a good opportunity of visiting the scenes of July's heavy successful fighting. It was a sight never to be forgotten and well worth studying.

First, we visited our old trenches and saw the havoc wrought by German shells, bombs, etc., caved in dugouts and flattened emplacements, told of casualties now forgotten, while everywhere were fragments of exploded shells, to say nothing of hundreds of 'duds' (unexploded) lying in huge shell holes or laid in neat rows by our tommies and labeled "No Bon," "Rip" etc. Everywhere were clips of British cartridges and not a little abandoned equipment. Of course the salvage corps was busy and much of the apparent waste is being used again.

As we advanced across what had been "No Man's Land" we found a profusion of British and German hand grenades, trench mortar bombs, shells and equipment. The barbed wire entanglements of both sides were cut to pieces...

Our trenches were badly battered but were in good shape compared to Fritz's. The awful havoc wrought by our big bombs and shells was indescribable. Everywhere were shell holes over 15 feet in diameter and about ten feet deep. Countless smaller holes to say nothing of whiz-bang and sand grenade 'scratches' had in many places completely obliterated Fritz's line.

However, the sight of the day was one of the huge craters, where we had literally blown Fritz off a hill by exploding a heavy mine. Many of our gallant lads shared the fate of the Germans by rushing this crater before the earth had time to settle. Opinions vary as to the size of this crater but I can tell you that our house would look small if placed in the centre and the roof would be many feet below the ground level. The walls are almost perpendicular and the crater is shaped like a huge bowl set in the earth. A huge circular mound around the lip of the crater and some filled in trenches show the amount of earth which was thrown hundreds of feet in the air and buried hundreds of men as it fell.

Everywhere are the graves of Germans and British, while large wooden monuments mark the resting places of unknown friends and foes buried together. One feature in which Fritz excels us, is in the construction of his dugouts. In some places, he had regular underground homes and had apparently no intention of moving for some time to come. The men's dugouts were well constructed subterranean chambers from fifteen to thirty feet below the parapet. Lined with four inch timbers with tight joints and having several staircase entrances, they were shell proof and very comfortable... Some of the officers' dugouts were engineering masterpieces, and had several stories. The bottom level was safe from anything but gas and every precaution was taken to guard against a gas surprise. Carpets and furniture were not uncommon and all were lit by electricity. The ventilation was excellent and Fritz must miss his excellent homes.

Of course, we have shell proof tunnels and many deep dugouts on our side but they are the exception while with Fritz, they appear to have been the rule. One captured officer declared that they were nine months under construction and he had expected them to last at least nine years...

You have read of the capture of this and that village and no doubt picture to yourself a desperate fight amidst ruined buildings. In many cases that is quite true, but not so during our first advance. I passed through two villages and didn't know that they had ever existed. During our last turn in, I was repairing a line on the outskirts of a captured village, when a chap dodging from shell hole to shell hole yelled at me; "Where is ---- (naming the village). I have been going over an hour and must be lost." He had been wandering about in the village and didn't know it. This is absolutely true and will give you an idea of the effect of long continued shell fire.

Well, I hope I have given you some little idea of what a battlefield is like, but it can only be fully realized by being there when the show is on. The sooner it is over the better for all concerned...

Your loving brother, ART

In early October 1916, Arthur wrote a letter from France to his mother. Following is a portion of that letter:
Dear Mother,

We are out in rest after another long spell up front. Went in for an attack and then after a few days in close reserve were sent in again to consolidate further gains. It has come to be a recognized fact that we advance at each attempt and reverses are not only unexpected but are not tolerated. We must advance so always do. Fritz is powerless to stop us and we are absolutely sure of an overwhelming victory in the not far distant future.

Of course, the losses are great and the hardships endured by the men are such as I thought impossible to bear. Being under severe shell and rifle fire is very trying to the nerves and soon wears a man down, but add to that, the suffering from exposure to rain in flooded trenches (or rather I should say, connected shell holes) with very little to eat and often nothing to drink for a couple of days and you have the hell of warfare. Men have lain wounded for

days in open shell holes soaked by rain and cold from exposure yet have come out smiling. Some are demented and others die. Yet conditions cannot be improved. Even the prisoners lend willing aid to our wounded... Captured doctors work as hard as our own and at such times we are all men and common suffering makes us one.

The spirit of our men was well shown by a new recruit during our last charge. His brother and many of his comrades had been sniped by parties of detached Germans after we had broken their line and he swore that he would take no prisoners. Rushing at one group in a shell hole he determined to bayonet the lot. But the look of fear and suffering on their faces as they stood with uplifted hands was more than he could bear. He gave them his water bottle and lined them up with the next escort passing back with prisoners. It is the same all along the line. Fritz resists strongly until our men reach him and then quits cold. Few men can bayonet an unresisting enemy so, many prisoners are taken.

I have seen over a dozen Germans walking between two Canadians and others with no escort joining in the procession. They are glad to be taken and I don't blame them. For a drink of hot tea they will give anything they have and a cigarette cheers them immensely. They are searched and questioned, especially the first few to be taken, and then sent back to headquarters under escort. Barbed wire enclosures are built a few miles behind the lines and they are herded here and sheltered in tents. Many voluntarily remain in the enclosures and are paid for doing road repair work. They have a very easy time of it and are well fed. I have never seen any of them being overworked and all are well fed and appear to be in the best of health... None are left under shell fire and we sometimes envy them their easy time. They don't even work in the rain...

Well, this isn't news, but then, there is little to tell. Our present billet is the best yet. About twenty of us sleep in the attic of the general's billet. We have to be quiet but it is dry and clean and we are glad to have clean boards to lie on. Expect to move again in a few days but don't know where we will go. Are on the move all the time when out of the line. It is hardly what I call a rest, but it is at least an agreeable change...

Lovingly, Art

During the war, Arthur Crawford of the Canadian Engineers, 2nd Divisional Signal Company, was promoted through the ranks from Corporal to Lieutenant. In September 1916 near Courcellette, Corporal Arthur Crawford and four of his comrades were recommended for Military Medals and Bars (that were awarded in October 1916). The war diary records that the award was in recognition of "Battalion lines being kept up by hard work on part of linemen".

In late June 1917, Lieutenant Arthur Crawford was admitted to #4 Canadian Field Ambulance, followed by transfers to #22 Casualty Clearing Station, then #7 Stationary Hospital in Boulogne, and then Mrs. Mitchesons Hospital. He had suffered a sprained right ankle with deep-seated haemorrhage while playing baseball (or football) in France. While in hospital, he was also diagnosed with trench fever with pain and irregular temperature. He was discharged from hospital one month later, and in late July 1917, Arthur was granted a two-month furlough to Canada.

After spending a year-and-a-half fighting at the front, Arthur Crawford arrived home in Sarnia in September 1917. The long voyage home greatly benefited his health. During his time overseas, he had been slightly wounded once by shrapnel (left eye and right hand); his services were recognized with a Distinguished Service Medal; he had been promoted in the field; and he had been awarded a Military Medal and Bar for conspicuous bravery. Arthur Crawford survived the war, was permitted to resign and was struck off strength in Ottawa in March 1918. Nine months later, in December 1918 in London, he was diagnosed with a "nervous debility," that had originated in May 1917 while on Active Service in France. Symptoms included sleep difficulties, lack of concentration and mood problems. After his discharge, Arthur Crawford resided in Hamilton, Ontario.^{F, N, 2G}

> **Stanley John Smith** was born in Harrow, Middlesex, England on May 4, 1895, and at some point he immigrated to Sarnia. On September 24, 1914, nineteen years old and single, Stanley Smith enlisted at Valcartier, Quebec. He recorded his occupation as switchman, and his next of kin as Mrs. F.G. Smith of 302 Christina Street, Sarnia. On October 3, 1914, Stanley embarked overseas from Quebec bound for England as a member of the 7th Battalion, Canadian Infantry. Four months later, on February 9, 1915, he arrived in France.

In early March 1915, Private Stanley Smith was at Sir Henry Norman's Red Cross Hospital, in Wimereux, France, recorded as sick with a skin lesion with abscess on his right forearm. He would be hospitalized at a number of locations including: No. 14 General Hospital in Boulogne (recorded as "Supportive Lympha-Demitis"); was then transported to England and hospitalized in Hornbrook Hospital in Chislehurst; then Royal Herbert Hospital in Woolwich; and then Canadian Convalescent Hospital in Monks Horton. On February 28, 1916, he was admitted to Canadian Convalescent Hospital, Bear Wood Park, diagnosed with "Lupus right arm". He was discharged two months later on April 26, 1916, and assigned to the Canadian Casualty Assembly Centre (CCAC). On May 17, 1916,

he was admitted to Canadian Convalescent Hospital, Woodcote Park, Epsom, diagnosed with “lymphargitis, right arm”, and was operated on there (Note: diagnosis was possibly lymphadenitis). He was discharged from hospital on June 2, 1916, and transferred into the 30th Reserve Battalion. In late August 1916, he returned to the front lines in France, rejoining his 7th Battalion.

In September 1916, the twenty-one-year-old Private Stanley Smith, “a well-known local young man”, wrote a letter from France to his friend in Sarnia. Following is a portion of that letter:

Dear Friend,

As I have a few minutes to push the “graphite,” I will now endeavor to tell you what I have been doing lately, since coming back to this country again. I have not seen much difference. It seems that the war is on for the end of the world. The same old mud, shell holes, and lice... I could not write it down what our guns sound like, but it’s nothing but a continual shriek and bang all the time. A few nights ago I went up the trenches with a load of water and everything was quiet. All you could hear was the horses’ hoofs in the mud and the suction when pulling them out again. There was a concealed gun beside me, then it went off, and I thought it was an earthquake. This must have been a signal, for the heavens were lit up with flashes and you would think hell was let loose...

... Gun carriages, ambulances, rifles, shells and other munitions of war are piled up mountains high. Yesterday the roads were terrible to make headway. Nothing but shell holes and mud. In some places the mud was nearly to your waist, and the funny part of it, I could not ride a horse, so I had to walk. I was ready to return to my billet when Fritz started putting shells over my head, and there are other things I am more enthusiastic about than those whiz-bangs, as we call those shells. At last they got to dropping uncomfortably near me, and I’ve said before, I could not ride a horse. I know more about a fish hatchery than I do a horse, but the driver suggested for me to get on the horse’s back.

So I took a “stab” at it. I led the horse up against an old gun and tried to mount, but either the old gun moved or the horse, for I was in the mud and in it good and deep. I tried it again, and succeeded, but I don’t think I know what happened then, for Fritz used a shell for a whip and that horse started down that dirty old shell ridden muddy road. I was clinging first on one ear and then the other. After we went a quarter of a mile the mud got the horse’s “goat” and he slackened down, and I found out that by just sitting there I could keep on, so I got back safely. But today I feel stiff: something is strangely wrong, for I can’t remember where I sat on a red hot stove yesterday. I can hardly sit down. Maybe it’s the food and then maybe it’s the – horse...

... Well, I will have to draw this to a close as I’ve got lots of letters to write. I met lots of Sarnia boys and they are all well. Give my kind regards to the boys. I am, yours sincerely,

Stanley Smith, Seventh Bat.

Private Stanley Smith was wounded and hospitalized at least twice while in France: on August 16, 1917, he received a “gun shot wound left knee” and was admitted to No. 18 General Hospital, Camiers; and on September 5, 1917, he received a “gun shot wound nose” and “gun shot wound left leg, enemy aircraft” and was re-admitted to No. 18 General Hospital, Camiers. In early November 1917, he was transferred to the Canadian Labour Pool, and two months later, on January 12, 1918, was transferred to the Headquarters of the Canadian Forestry Corps in France.

On October 14, 1918, Stanley was promoted to the rank of Corporal, and later that same month, he would be granted permission to marry his fiancée Mary, of Pinner, Middlesex, England. The Great War ended less than a month later. On January 31, 1919, Corporal Stanley Smith was admitted to Canadian Convalescent Hospital, Bear Wood Park, diagnosed with “neurasthenia, debility”. On February 14, 1919, he was discharged to the Base Depot in Sunningdale, Berkshire, and five months later, in early July 1919, he returned to Canada. Corporal Stanley Smith was discharged at No. 1 District Depot, struck off strength on demobilization, on July 12, 1919. After his discharge, he resided at 302 South Christina Street, and later moved to 351 Russell Street, Sarnia.

> **Leslie Ernest Boulton** was born in Oil Springs, Ontario on September 22, 1886. At the age of twenty-eight and single, Leslie Boulton enlisted in Sarnia on October 27, 1914. He recorded his occupation as carpenter, and his next of kin as his mother, Mrs. Richard Boulton, of 304 Front Street, Sarnia (her address later changed to 365 Maria Street, then 168 Napier Street, Sarnia). Private Leslie Ernest Boulton embarked from Halifax on April 18, 1915, bound England as a member of the 18th Battalion, Canadian Infantry. Following is a portion of a letter that Leslie wrote to his mother and sister in Sarnia in mid-June 1915, while he was training in England:

We have a big English instructor for an hour every day and believe me when he gets through with us we are all sweating. Then we have bayonet drill every day. We have spring bayonets, pads, masks and gloves and go for each other like a German and a Britisher, lots of fun and you can’t get hurt. I had two goes today with Stan

Musselman, my chum. We have lots of hard work but the officers are a good sort and give us lots of fun.

Private Leslie Boulton of the 18th Battalion, "C" Company, was promoted to Lance Corporal on September 11, 1915, and four days later, he arrived in Boulogne, France. Leslie Ernest Boulton was promoted in rank a number of times during his service: on March 4, 1916, he was promoted to Corporal; and later on the same day, was appointed Lance Sergeant, in the field. Three months later, on June 6, 1916, he was promoted to Sergeant, again in the field (when their Sergeant was killed). Sergeant Leslie Ernest Boulton received the Military Medal for bravery in the field, awarded July 9, 1917.

On September 15, 1916, Sergeant Leslie Boulton was wounded in action—a bomb wound to the right eye. He was initially treated at No. 4 Canadian Field Ambulance, and the next day at 1st Australian General Hospital in Rouen (recorded as "gunshot wound eye"). Four days later, on September 20, he arrived at Canadian Convalescent Base Camp in France. While recovering from his wound at the Base Camp, he wrote a letter to his mother, Mrs. Richard Boulton in Sarnia. Following is a portion of that letter:

Dear Mother,

I have just been discharged from Hospital. I was wounded by a piece of a bomb on the 15th, and was in hospital three days, so you know the wound wasn't very bad. I expect to be back with the battalion in the course of a few days. The piece of bomb hit me just over the right eye. Old Hienie thought he'd play a prank on us and waltzed over and took our front line. Well, we just kicked him out and went right back and took two of his. We sure had some fun. Four of his bombs hit within ten feet of me and a little piece of the last one got me, but it's not very bad. ... I wish they would sell all the big guns on both sides and let us go at it with rifle and bayonet. It would soon be over... Funny thing that I was wounded on the anniversary of my landing in France. Well, such was the case. Was a year in France all but two hours, when I was wounded. I am fit as a fiddle string, only my eye is a little sore...

Write soon and let me know all the news. With love, "LESS"

After recovering, Leslie was discharged to the Base Depot in Harfleur, and rejoined his unit in the field on October 1, 1916. Seven months later, on May 7, 1917, Leslie Boulton was despatched back to England to undergo training for commission in the Canadian Infantry. He completed his Officers Training Course at Bramshott in early-September 1917, and was taken on strength into the 4th Reserve Battalion, assigned to be Temporary Lieutenant. He then proceeded to Bramshott, and returned to France on November 23, 1917, and four days later, re-joined the 18th Battalion.

Seven months later, on June 29, 1918, he was admitted into hospital due to influenza. Three weeks later, on July 18, 1918, he was transferred to No. 20 General Hospital, Camiers, where he remained in hospital into early August. He was discharged to the Medical Board Depot, and rejoined his unit in the field on August 7, 1918.

Leslie Boulton survived the war, returning to England on April 4, 1919. One month later, on May 13, 1919, he sailed from Liverpool and returned to Canada. On May 25, 1919, Lieutenant Leslie Boulton of the 18th Battalion, was discharged in London, Ontario, struck off strength on demobilization. Leslie Boulton returned to his home in Sarnia. He passed away in 1968 at the age of eighty-one, and is buried in Lakeview Cemetery, Sarnia.

• **THE BATTLE OF ST. ELOI**, Belgium, March 27-April 16, 1916: This was the 2nd Canadian Divisions first major engagement of the war and it would end in disaster and defeat. On March 27, British forces opened up an artillery barrage and exploded a series of powerful underground mines beneath the German defences. One the largest mines detonated during the war was at St. Eloi on March 27, and it was dug by the 1st Canadian Tunnelling Company, containing 43,400 kg of explosives. The enormous mine explosions were heard in Folkestone, England, and caved in trenches and created seven massive mud-filled craters, dozens of smaller ones and impassable lakes in No Man's Land.

For one week at St. Eloi, British and German troops were engaged in savage fighting in a struggle to occupy the tactically important craters. On April 3, the inexperienced and ill-prepared Canadians relieved the exhausted British, to find a shortage of steel helmets, machine guns and few trenches in which to take cover (and most of those were waist-deep in water). After experiencing two days of enemy shelling, a Canadian Private described the scene: *"When day broke, the sights that met our gaze were so horrible and ghastly that they beggar description. Heads, arms and legs were protruding from the mud at every yard and dear knows how many bodies the earth has swallowed. Thirty corpses were at least showing in the crater and beneath its clayey waters other victims must be lying killed and drowned."*

On April 4, ordered to take over the series of mine craters, the relatively untried 2nd Canadian Division were

sent floundering into a sleet-swept, shell-pocked moonscape where no one knew which crater was which, or how many there in fact were. Told that they were to occupy seven craters, they instead found more than thirty, and ended up fighting for objectives that no one could identify.

Through two weeks of hard fighting while dealing with thigh deep mud; incessant rain; poor communication; a lack of coordination and reconnaissance; and superior positioned German artillery; the Canadians attacked and counterattacked in attempts to capture the various craters in the muddy wasteland. Complete bewilderment prevailed on the front as Canadian leadership often had little idea which craters they held and which were held by Germans. Another Canadian soldier wrote to his wife describing the horrific conditions, *"We were walking on dead soldiers and the worse was they was (in) about three feet of mud and water. I saw poor fellows trying to bandage their wounds, bombs, heavy shells falling all over them... it is the worst sight that a man ever wants to see."*

When the **"Battle of the Craters"** was over, the Germans maintained control of the battlefield, and more than 1,370 Canadian soldiers were killed or wounded. At least one young man from Sarnia gave his life at the Battle of St. Eloi: Private Angus Garrod, age 28, of the 18th Battalion. His story is included on page 284. ^{2I, 2N, 3Q, 4G, 8O}

• **THE BATTLE OF MONT SORREL**, Belgium, June 2-13, 1916: In the summer of 1916, the 30-metre hill Mont Sorrel was the last remaining high ground in the Ypres salient still in British hands. On June 2, the Germans attacked the Canadian lines (held by the newly arrived 3rd Division of the Canadian Corps) with a crushing bombardment, one of the most staggering of the war to date; detonated mines they had dug beneath the Canadian positions; and followed with an overwhelming infantry attack. The German attack resulted in the killing of hundreds of Canadian troops and they captured Mont Sorrel and two surrounding hills (Hill 61 and Hill 62). A hastily organized Canadian counter-attack at dawn on a rainy, windy June 3rd failed. From June 3 to 6, the two sides had dug in, and with the steady fall of rain, high explosives, shrapnel, and gas adding to the misery, little was achieved other than more casualties. On June 6th, the Germans exploded four mines under the Canadian positions, and almost two entire companies, some 300 men, were wounded, buried alive, or taken prisoner. The Germans also unleashed a heavy shellfire and mortar bombardment, then rushed forward, capturing the village of Hooge.

The Canadian counter-attack, under Lieutenant General Sir Julian Byng, began on June 9. From June 9 to 12, the Canadians laid down four days of heavy bombardments in preparation. In the very early morning hours of June 13, under the cover of darkness, pushing through wind, rain and mud, and supported by artillery, Major-General Arthur Currie's 1st Canadian Division charged the German front lines. Desperate fighting ensued and the Canadians drove the Germans back to their original lines, and recaptured much of the lost ground. The Germans responded with massive counterattack barrages several times over the next two days, and despite more carnage, the Canadians held their ground, recapturing Mont Sorrel.

George Adkins, a Canadian infantryman from Alberta, was the youngest of three brothers who fought in the war. One of the brothers, Bill, had been killed in action in May 1916. George and his brother Martin would both fight together in the Battle of Mont Sorrel. In early June 1916, George wrote a letter home to his mother in Alberta describing his experiences at Mont Sorrel:

Dear Mother,

Just a line to let you know that we are both alright for which we must thank God for we have been through a terrible ordeal. I don't know if I am allowed to say much about it but you will see by the papers what a fierce fight the Canadians have been into. How Mort & I came through without a scratch I can not tell as we have had terrible losses. It has been simply awful I cannot describe it in words but I know there has been nothing worse in this war. He described being bombarded "pretty heavy," then coming out of the line for a rest before having to return the next night when the enemy broke through. We had to make a charge in broad daylight but they were ready for us and opened up an awful fire on us we took what cover we could get in old trenches and were there all day. They opened up again two or three times in the night but we kept them back. That night we were supposed to be relieved but the relief could not get in so we had another awful 24 hrs, during which they sent over the terrible high explosives & shrapnel but we held firm. Two or three times they nearly landed one in our trench. The force of the explosion threw us down and I couldn't hear nothing but ringing in my ears. I was hit on the head about four times but my steel helmet saved me. Then I had a bullet go right through a mess tin strapped on my back... But I wasn't very frightened although the strongest nerves couldn't stand it for long while the shells are bursting around & above. We had to stay in that trench for 8 hours without water & no food but about two dry biscuits each. It was up to our shoe tops in water and we got all stiffened & cramped up. We were thankful when the relief came at last... We were so tired when we got home that we just fell down and slept for a long time...

Good by with love, George

In late June of that year, Martin Adkins was killed in action. Officials then moved George Adkins out of the front lines. He survived the war.^{7A}

Over the two weeks of fighting at Mont Sorrel that resulted in almost no change in the ground held by both sides, the “**June Show**,” as the battle was known informally, came at a cost of 8,700+ killed, wounded or missing Canadians (more than 1,100 were killed).^{4F} The important lessons learned in this Canadian victory—including the need for detailed planning, and the need for cooperation between the infantry and the artillery—became hallmarks of Canadian operations over the next two and a half years. At least two young men from Sarnia gave their lives at the Battle of Mont Sorrel: Private James Allan, age 28 and Private Thomas Littlefield, age 19.

• **SOME OF SARNIA’S WOUNDED COME HOME:** In late August and again in early September 1916, the *Sarnia Observer* included a number of stories on some of Sarnia’s wounded boys who had returned home. Following are portions of some of those stories:

Friends Welcome Returned Soldier

*Russell Street in the vicinity of the home of **Private George Dickenson**, was thronged with citizens Saturday evening, when Private Dickenson arrived home from active service. Private Dickenson went overseas with the Third Contingent, in the 34th Battalion and was invalided home after being fifteen months in the trenches.*

Pte. Dickenson was welcomed by Mayor Thomas Doherty, Albert J. Johnston and a host of friends. He was driven to his home with his wife, who had gone to London to meet him, by Mayor Doherty, in his automobile and was royally greeted when brought to the house.

“I am glad to be home again,” he said. “Fifteen months in the trenches without a day’s leave of absence was a hard stretch.” Pte. Dickenson said that he had been through many “brushes” with the enemy, but was fortunate to escape without a wound. The continual grind in the trenches has affected his heart and lungs, which necessitated his being invalided home.

Pte. James Bohannan Given a Welcome Home

*About five o’clock yesterday afternoon a telegram was received here from military headquarters at London stating that **Private James Bohannan** and Private C. O’Connor, two Sarnia returning soldiers would arrive here at the tunnel station at 7:30 p.m....*

When the train pulled into the depot the only soldier on board was Private Bohannan, accompanied by his brother Oscar and a number of friends who had gone to London to accompany him home to Sarnia. Private Bohannan and his relatives who had gathered at the depot were placed in S.L. McKay’s automobile and driven to the city followed by the other motor cars containing citizens who had turned out to welcome the young soldier home. As the auto parade traversed the city streets to Front street the young hero was greeted by the applause of many citizens whose attention was attracted by the screeching of the different auto signals. The parade continued up Front street to George, east to Christina and south to the young soldier’s home at the corner of Christina and Lochiel streets. Quite a large crowd of citizens had gathered here and Private Bohannan was greeted with many a hearty handshake. Later in the evening the Sons of Scotland Kilties band paraded the streets and serenaded Private Bohannan at his home.

Private Bohannan is a son of the late Quarter-Master Sergeant John Bohannan. He enlisted in the 18th Battalion and left London for overseas with that unit. Private Bohannan was married while in England shortly before going to France to Miss Ethel Cobb, daughter of the late Rev. and Mrs. Cobb of Hythe, Kent, England. Mrs. Bohannan returned to Canada with her husband on the Metagama, arriving in Sarnia with her baby Sunday last.

In conversation with an Observer representative later in the evening Private Bohannan told the story of “his bit” in a quiet unassuming matter. “I had been in the trenches around Ypres for six weeks, off and on, when Fritz ‘got me.’ It was just before the big battle at Ypres. Our guns had been bombarding the German lines since daybreak. The enemy opened up a retaliatory bombardment of our positions and about 11 o’clock a shrapnel shell hit about 20 feet behind our first line trench. Myself and two chums got the benefit of it. One was killed outright, and the other two of us was wounded. I found that I couldn’t use my left arm and I also had a stinging pain in my left leg. Finally I had to lay down in the trench and wait for the ambulance. The bombardment was getting more intense all along and we had to wait till dark before any of the stretcher-bearers could get near us. Just at dark they appeared, and then started the roughest ride of my life. Every little while the Germans would send up a flare of light and their gunners would try to pick off anyone they saw in the open. So throwing themselves flat to the ground when the flares appeared, and scrambling in and out of shell holes and ditches and over obstacles, they finally managed to get us to the dressing station. From there we were sent to the base hospital, and from there later to England. My chum was not as badly wounded as myself and was shipped across to England the next day, and was lost when the hospital ship

Anglican struck a mine or was torpedoed by the Germans. I received good care in the English hospitals, had three operations on my arm, and am now in pretty good shape. I have seen a good slice of the world, had lots of experience, but am glad to get back to Sarnia."

James Joseph Bohannon had been born in Sarnia on March 31, 1887. At the age of twenty-seven, James enlisted with the 18th Battalion, Canadian Infantry on October 29, 1914. He stood five feet four inches tall; had grey eyes and fair hair; was working as an iron moulder (Harriston Stove Works) at the time; and recorded his father John Bohannon at the Northern Hotel in Sarnia, as his next-of-kin. Private James Bohannon arrived in England aboard the *SS Grampian* in late April 1915, and arrived in France on September 15, 1915.

Less than two months later, on November 4, 1915, James was wounded and then admitted to hospital recorded as "GSW to his left arm and leg." It was later recorded as shrapnel wounds left arm and leg, and a fractured left humerus. He remained in hospital in Boulogne, France for six weeks, then in hospital in England until early August 1916, when he returned to Canada. In late October 1916, James Bohannon was officially discharged from the CEF, "being no longer physically fit for service (the result of his wounds)". James and his wife Ethel Bohannon resided at 188 ½ Christina Street in Sarnia, and later on Ellis Avenue in Windsor, Ontario. James Bohannon, at age 69, passed away in Windsor on November 22, 1956.

The front page of the September 1, 1916 *Sarnia Observer* featured the headline: *Sarnia Honors Her Returned Soldiers – Fourteen War Heroes Given a Public Reception*, with the subheadings: *Thousands of Citizens Turn Out to Welcome the Boys in Khaki* and *Monster Street Parade Followed by Speeches at Victoria Square*. Following is a portion of that report:

That Sarnia citizens honor the soldier boys who have returned from active service after doing their bit for King and Country was amply demonstrated last evening when the people of this city turned out en masse to welcome home some fourteen returned heroes – Sarnia boys who have either been wounded while on active service or invalided home on account of being incapacitated and unfit for further service at the front. The turn out was without exception one of the largest and most enthusiastic ever witnessed in Sarnia. From the Market square, where the street parade formed up to Victoria Square where the speeches were given the principal streets were thronged with citizens all anxious to show by their presence that they honor the soldier boys.

As the procession wended its way along the streets, the returned heroes were greeted by cheers and applause to which they modestly responded by a salute. As the parade passed along the south end of Front street, the steamers at the wharves and those passing up and down the river added their quota to the celebration and the salutes from every whistle seemed to indicate that each boat captain was endeavoring to demonstrate that his particular boat whistle could send forth the loudest blasts as a welcome to the boys that were being honored. The refrain was taken up by the hundred or more automobile drivers and the screeching of the auto horns added to the welcome to such an extent that the bands could not be heard and the cheering of the people was completely overcome....

The parade group included the Sarnia Citizen's Band, Italian citizens with British and Italian flags, Boy Scouts, Sons of Scotland, Kiltie Band, Home Guards, Orange fife and drum band, Young Men's Patriotic Club, M.P. F.F. Pardee, Mayor Thomas Doherty and other civic dignitaries. One of the speakers who addressed the gathering was John Farrell—following is a portion of his speech:

It gives me unusual pleasure to join with the citizens of Sarnia tonight in honouring these men who have done their bit for King and Country. We are proud of the record these men have made. We say all hail to these noble soldiers who have offered their lives to protect your home and your liberty. We hope that time will soon restore them to health and the fine physique they formerly enjoyed. These boys possessed the real courage and convictions of the Canadian soldier. They did not fight in vain and they did their bit as only Canadians can be relied upon to do. The doors of Sarnia citizens are open to them and their future is assured. The goodness of the hearts of the people of this community will see that these men are well looked after for the balance of their natural lives. This country is big enough to see that all our wounded soldiers are protected throughout their lives. I have been requested to announce that a number of gentlemen will pass among you and take up a collection to send some comforts to the Sarnia boys who are in the trenches beyond the sea...

The *Observer* report also included a list of the returned heroes:

Corp. Cecil Manning, wounded at Givenchy

Lance Corp. C. Blake, invalided home

Private Patrick Carolin, wounded at Ypres

Private Hugh Fleming, wounded at Ypres

continued over...

Private J. Martin, wounded at Givenchy
Private George Dickenson, invalided home
Private Wm. Lethbridge, wounded at Givenchy
Private John Lethbridge, wounded at Ypres
Private Harry Cattell, wounded at Ypres
Private T. Ewings, wounded at Langemarck
Private J. Cain, wounded and gassed at Ypres
Private Charles Doughty, gassed at Ypres
Private J.W. Jenness, wounded at Ypres
Private Wm. Ross, injured in mechanical transport wreck

• **THE BATTLE OF THE SOMME**, France, July 1-November 18, 1916: Over the four and a half months, thousands of British, Canadian and French troops would hammer German defence lines north of the Somme River in one of the most futile and bloody battles in history. Known as the “**Big Push**,” this operation was twofold: to relieve pressure on the French who were defending Verdun to the south; and to finally break through the German lines – it was not to be.

The Germans had long anticipated an attack here—their defences were among the strongest on the whole Western Front. The front line consisted of a complex of trenches, lines of barbed wire and fortified strongpoints with deep dugouts to shelter troops from artillery fire. A good distance behind this, there was a second defensive line, and in places a third behind that. For months prior, the Germans had been heavily fortifying the trenches, towns and villages in the Somme region. Leading up to the attack, the British carried out a week-long artillery attack, launching over 1.7 million shells on the German lines, the largest bombardment to that point in the history of warfare.^{4F, 10Q}

A week before the first day attack, a Canadian Lieutenant wrote in his diary, “*Everyone seems so cool about it all, quietly preparing for what is going to be the greatest attack in the history of the world... We only hope that it may be a very strong factor in bringing an early end to the war.*” The Lieutenant would be killed two weeks later by a German shell.

British Second Lieutenant John Sherwin Engall wrote a letter home to his parents on the day before the attack. Following is a portion: “*I’m writing this letter the day before the most important moment in my life... The day has almost dawned when I shall really do my little bit [for] the cause of civilization. Tomorrow morning I shall take my men—men whom I have got to love, and who, I think, have got to love me—over the top to do our bit... I took my Communion yesterday with dozens of others who are going over tomorrow... I have a strong feeling that I shall come through safely; but nevertheless, should it be God’s holy will to call me away, I am quite prepared to go... and you, dear Mother and Dad, will know that I died doing my duty to my God, my Country, and my King. I ask that you look upon it as an honour... I wish I had time to write more, but time presses... I fear I must close now. Au revoir... fondest love to all those I love so dearly...*” Second Lieutenant Engall was killed in action the following day.^{10Q}

On July 1, 1916, the Battle of the Somme began at 6 a.m., with an hour-long artillery bombardment of German positions, followed at 7:20 a.m. by the detonation of 18,000 kilograms of explosives in a tunnel dug under an important German stronghold. At 7:30 a.m., after the long drumfire barrage of shells reached its crescendo, silence fell. Whistles blew and thousands of Allied troops left their trenches and slowly walked shoulder-to-shoulder across No Man’s Land in broad daylight toward the well-trained and well-entrenched German positions to open the Battle of the Somme. The result would be slaughter—more than 57,000 British and Commonwealth soldiers were killed, wounded or missing—the heaviest combat losses ever suffered by the British Army in a single day. Over 19,000 of these casualties were killed on July 1. After the initial battle, General Sir Henry Rawlinson, commander of the British Fourth Army said, “*I do not think that the percentage of losses is excessive.*” Urged on by the French, the British continued attacks through another five months.^{D, 2E, 2N, 4F, 10Q}

The 1st Newfoundland Regiment at the Battle of Beaumont-Hamel: Part of the opening phase on that first day of the Battle of the Somme, July 1st, 1916, involved the 1st Newfoundland Regiment at the Battle of Beaumont-Hamel. The same Newfoundland Regiment had been the only unit from North America to fight at Gallipoli from September 1915-January 1916.

On July 1, 1916, officers of the Newfoundland Regiment were in headquarters when the attack was launched at 7:30 a.m. They witnessed the early carnage as soldiers who only seconds before had gone over the top began falling back into the front-line trench in unfathomable numbers. At 8:45 a.m., the Newfoundlanders were set to

advance on the enemy, from their reserve trenches (nicknamed **St. John's Road**), not the front line trenches (the linking trenches were clogged with dead and wounded bodies). It would have been evident to the Newfoundlanders waiting in the reserve trenches that things had not gone as forecast in the initial assault—the alarming, unceasing clatter of the German machine guns, and the sight of their own forward trenches full of wounded men streaming back, served ample notice of this.

Leaving their trenches armed only with rifles and bayonets at 8:45 a.m., silhouetted against the skyline, they were the only battalion advancing in the sector. The approximately 800 men of the Newfoundland Regiment were expected to traverse more than 200 metres of open ground in full view of the waiting enemy, and then a further 500 metres downslope of No Man's Land through barbed wire. As the Newfoundlanders advanced through the hail of machine gun and artillery fire, they were cut down like cordwood, many fell before reaching their own front line.

There was an apple tree partway down the slope that marked the spot where German fire seemed to become particularly intense. This gnarled tree was nicknamed the "**Danger Tree**" by the Newfoundland troops. It marked the spot where barely a handful of men reached and many of them would fall that morning. The petrified "Danger Tree" remains there today, a monument to the fallen at Beaumont-Hamel. The 1st Newfoundland Regiment was virtually wiped out in less than half an hour, with 710 killed, wounded or missing, a casualty rate of approximately 90% (approximately 320 were killed, died of wounds or missing and presumed dead).

Enemy shelling continued through the day, and any of the wounded in No Man's Land who moved were gunned down by snipers. One survivor described the aftermath, *"Some chaps who were wounded struggled to get back to our lines. Some of them made a good job of bandaging their wounds and stopping the bleeding and others just lay there and let themselves bleed to death. A few badly wounded, or with painful wounds, just cut an artery and died. Guess when they were not rescued the first night, they could not take it, the poor fellows."* The Newfoundland Unit diary recorded, *"During the night and evening, unwounded survivors managed to crawl back to our lines and by next morning some 68 had answered their names..."* After the battle, a senior staff officer told the Newfoundland prime minister, *"It was a magnificent display of trained and disciplined valour... and its assault only failed of success because dead men can advance no further."* For its efforts at Beaumont-Hamel, the Newfoundland Regiment was renamed "**The Royal Newfoundland Regiment**" by King George V on November 28, 1917. It was the only regiment to have the prefix "Royal" attached to its name during the war.

Every year since 1917, in Newfoundland and Labrador, July 1 has been observed as Memorial Day in commemoration of the wartime sacrifices of members of the armed forces of the province, particularly for their sacrifices at Beaumont-Hamel. The **Beaumont-Hamel Newfoundland Memorial**, located in Northern France and opened in 1925, commemorates Newfoundlanders who fought in the First World War, particularly those who have no known grave. The site is dominated by the Newfoundland Regiment Memorial itself: a bronze caribou stag (the emblem of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment) atop an outcrop of granite and shrubs native to Newfoundland. The majestic stag, with head thrown high in defiance, faces the ground across which the battalion advanced on July 1, 1916. ^{D, 2E, 2N, 6Q, 8O}

The Battle of Flers-Courcelette: This was the second major offensive of the Battle of the Somme. It began on September 15, 1916, and would last one week. Along with the new creeping barrage tactic, another new weapon – code-named "**tanks**" made their first appearance in the war here.

Urged on by the then First Lord of the Admiralty, Winston Churchill, these new armoured land cruisers were meant to overrun enemy defences, crushing barbed wire, trenches, and shell holes. The 28-tonne British Mark I tank was a lumbering monster, almost 4 metres wide, 2 metres tall, and 8 metres long, but pitifully slow (as slow as a walking person), and was mechanically unstable. Soldier operators inside the metal coffins were almost rendered unconscious by the petrol exhaust that flowed into the stifling, confined space that heated up to 40 degrees Celsius or higher. The machines shook and the noise inside was deafening. Visibility was restricted and so was communication with the outside world. Forty-nine tanks would be committed to this battle, and the Canadians would have six to support their main thrust.

The tanks were a surprise to the infantry, who had received no warning about this secret weapon. Of the six tanks allotted to the Canadians, three got stuck in the mud and one broke down. Despite their unreliability, the tanks inspired shock and terror in the hearts of the enemy. The British later developed Mark IV "male" versions that carried two 6-pounder guns and four machine guns, while "female" versions carried six machine guns. All tanks were individually named, like naval vessels. Later in the war, even "dummy tanks" were used to deceive the enemy.

Usually constructed of wood, the dummy tanks were nicknamed “John Collins”, and were meant to fool German observers and draw enemy artillery fire.^{E, 4F}

The Somme battlefield on September 15 was a wasteland of ruined farmers’ fields—a quagmire of water-filled shell holes and acres of unburied corpses. The British had been fighting there for three months, trading more than 250,000 men for less than 8 kilometres of German trench systems. In the early morning hours of the 15th, following an artillery “creeping barrage”, the five first-wave Canadian battalions, which included the 18th Battalion (Western Ontario), swarmed over the top and into No Man’s Land. They became stranded in the open, forced to inch forward on their bellies, moving from crater to crater, past the wounded writhing in agony, and frequently using corpses for cover. The battle went on for several hours, and was supported by six of the armoured tanks. Casualties mounted in staggering numbers, and counter-attacks were successfully repulsed, yet the Canadians prevailed, able to capture hundreds of prisoners and the ruined village of Courcelette.

The Battle of Flers-Courcelette officially ended on September 22nd. It was a stunning success for the Canadian Corps, advancing 3,000 yards, a huge gain by the standards of 1916, but at a cost of over 7200 Canadian casualties in one week.^{4F, 5J} At least seven young men from Sarnia gave their lives on the Somme battlefield during the Battle of Flers-Courcelette including; Robert Batey, Charles Howe, Andrew McIntosh, James Norwood, Norman Towers, Robert Wade and Bertrand Weatherill.

Walter George Ewener was born in Bexley Heath, Kent, England on September 30, 1879. Walter and his family immigrated to Sarnia in the early 1900’s. On January 18, 1915, thirty-five-year-old Walter Ewener enlisted in Sarnia, becoming a member of the 34th Battalion. He recorded his occupation as (construction) engineer; his next-of-kin as his wife, Phyllis Elizabeth Ewener; and their address as 300 Campbell Street, Sarnia. Private Walter Ewener embarked overseas on October 23, 1915, arriving in England on November 1, 1915. He would advance to the rank of Corporal, and was a musketry instructor in England from March to September 1916. In September 1916, he reverted to the rank of Private, at his request, in order to proceed to France. In late-September 1916, Private Walter Ewener arrived in France as a member of the 43rd Battalion, Canadian 3rd Division.

In late November 1916, the *Sarnia Observer* printed a letter written from Corporal Walter George Ewener, 43rd Battalion, B.E.F., France, Stationary Hospital, addressed to the editor of the *Observer*. Following is a portion of that letter:

I am taking this opportunity of writing a few lines to you after meeting a few of the old 34th boys who left Sarnia nearly two years ago and have since gone through some of the thickest of the fighting, being distributed among several different Battalions. A lot of Sarnia boys were in the fight when we took Courcelette, and they did their bit like men. There were some extraordinary scenes around that place as we drove the Huns out and away beyond. For hours we were hunting for them in the dugouts and driving them out in the open and making them prisoners. You will hear them say, “We will soon have this back,” and then a Canadian would answer, “nothing doing, Fritzzy, what we have we’ll hold: you can’t get Courcelette back, not if the whole German army comes against us.”

The way the boys fought was grand to see. Many Huns were buried by our shell fire and any that showed signs of life were dug out. Then came a call for men to haste to the front and the boys rushed to repel a Hun counter attack and drove them back quicker than they came. The attack was repulsed by a mere handful of men, as many had gone under, but they died like the gentlemen they were, fighting for a just cause. Beyond the village they (The Huns) made seven attacks on our position, but we drove them off... the Canadians have held on to their ground through the heavy rainstorms which swamped them through and through, and under the gigantic rain of shells from the Germans, resolved to die rather than yield a yard of what they had gained. At one place a corporal and eleven men held a crater hole for three days without a bite to eat so that the Huns would not creep upon us unawares and attack us. Those men died at their post – a hero every one.

Sarnia can well feel proud of the part her men are playing in the fight, but more are wanted. Those men that left the old guard stations at Point Edward and the Tunnel are doing their bit. What about the rest of them? Boys, your country needs you to fill up the places of those gone over to the great beyond. Step out and take your place if you are fit and give your place to someone of the boys who have returned from the fight... we out here hope and trust that the sacrifice made by those who have given their lives will have not been made in vain, and that their memory will be handed down to future generations. I need hardly say that we shall all be glad to get back to Sarnia, and our homes and friends, and hope that the peace which is made will be a lasting one and not a patched-up sort of affair...

Cpl. W.G. Ewener, 43rd Batt. France

Soon after arriving in France, Private Walter Ewener had been gassed slightly at the Somme, and was later blown up by a shell explosion, fracturing his left ankle. He spent five weeks recovering in No. 7 Canadian Stationary Hospital in Havre. After serving two months in France, Walter Ewener was returned to England in November 1916 to be treated for his injuries. He continued his service in England, and was hospitalized for treatments on several occasions while there: for his ankle problem that occurred at the Somme; for vitreous opacities, with high myopia in both eyes (ie. defective vision—caused by “service conditions in France”); and for an infection/inflammation of the left thigh.

Walter Ewener survived the war, being discharged on demobilization in March 1919 in London, Ontario. He was discharged as “medically unfit due to vision”, and the Medical Board deemed that his defective vision in both eyes along with his left ankle limited movement issue (both the result of his active service) would impact his choice of occupation after the war. Walter Ewener returned to his Campbell Street address, and he and Phyllis later resided at 494 Wellington Street, Sarnia. Walter Ewener passed away on August 12, 1954, at the age of seventy-four. Note: Walter Ewener has a connection to one of Sarnia’s World War II fallen, John Charles Clarke, who is included in this Project on page 628.

The Somme battle drags on: For more than four brutal months the Battle of the Somme continued, its battlefields spanned both sides of France’s Somme River south of the city of Arras. Canadians played a major role, including at key battles at Thiepval Ridge and Ancre Heights (Regina and Desire Trenches). Canadian World War I veteran and author Edgar Stanford Russenholt wrote, *“Men toil through the darkness under heavy loads, floundering, at times, waist deep in water; climbing wearily over slimy sandbags, stumbling across dismembered corpses – tired, dazed and shaken by incessant bombardments, clothes soaked and equipment clogged with mud; faces grey from want of sleep.”*^{2E}

Four times in seven weeks, in the October rains and the November mud, the Canadian divisions were sent in turn to seize the long and shrewdly sited trenchline encircling the enemy defences north of Courcellette, in an attempt to drive the Germans from their strong positions dominating the centre of the battlefield. Fighting continued into November, while soldiers dealt with persistent cold weather, freezing rain, sleet and hip deep mud that made movement difficult and saturated their clothes and equipment. By November 19, heavy rain had reduced the battlefield to a quagmire, and with winter setting in, the Battle of the Somme was over.^{2E, 80, 10Q}

The Cost: The Somme yielded no winners. The Somme cost the Allies (British and French) more than 623,000 soldiers killed, wounded, missing or taken prisoner. The situation was scarcely better for the German defenders with an estimated 500,000 casualties. One letter captured from a German infantry soldier confessed, *“You can no longer call it war, it is mere murder.”*^{4F, 10Q}

Of the 85,000-strong Canadian Corps, there were more than 24,000 Canadian casualties (over 8,000 killed), with the infantry making up over 90 percent of those terrible losses.^{D, 2E, 4F, 5J} For this incredible cost, or as one Army official referred to it as **“mass butchery”**, the Allies moved the front line forward about 9.5 kilometres over four months.

Along with the seven Sarnians that gave their lives in the Battle of Flers-Coucellette (Robert Batey, Charles Howe, Andrew McIntosh, James Norwood, Norman Towers, Robert Wade and Bertrand Weatherill), at least thirteen more young men from Sarnia gave their lives in the four and a half month long Battle of the Somme including: Arthur Allan, James Bennett, Frederick Chester, Stewart Cowan, Robert Crawford, Jesse Croucher, Joseph Elliott, Albert Fitzgerald, George Giles, Norman Leckie, Daniel Manning, John McMutrie, and Alfred Weston.

• **GEORGE HUNTER STIRRETT (#112135):** One of Sarnia-Lambton’s heroes of the Great War was George Hunter Stirrett. George Stirrett, the son of Robert and Meda (nee: Pake) Stirrett, was born in Forest, Ontario on March 1, 1891. Robert Stirrett, born June 9, 1857, and Meda Pake, born March 12, 1862, were married on February 19, 1884 and they were blessed with eight children together: Gordon Park (born June 15, 1886); Robert Roy (born June 10, 1889); George Hunter; Jean (born March 7, 1895, passed away January 27, 1896 at the age of ten months); John Ross (born February 23, 1898); Andrew Grant (born November 15, 1901); and Margaret Marion (born July 18, 1903). Note: The couple’s first child, Mary Helen Stirrett, passed away at 18 days of age on January 18, 1885. When George was born, his father Robert was employed as a general merchant. George Stirrett was raised in Petrolia, and later resided in Sarnia.

In the late 1970s, Bob McCarthy of Lambton Shield, interviewed George Stirrett about some of his memories of the First World War. Following is a portion of some of his recollections:

George Stirrett remembered that in 1914, he and his friends were more interested in hockey, rugby, baseball and lacrosse. Famous battles were something they had to learn in class, for memory work.

Military things were never referred to or thought about... On August 4, 1914, the Methodist Sunday School picnic group was going by train from Petrolia to Courtright. Then the Tashmoo steamer from Sarnia picked us up to take us to Tashmoo Park at the entrance to Lake St. Clair... As we got to Port Algonac, I remember it was about 10 AM. We heard a newsboy calling out from the dock that England had declared war on Germany. But this news was at the time no more important to us than the news we heard later that day that Detroit beat the Chicago White Sox in baseball.

On reaching home after dark that day, I saw Harry Bolt turning into our house. He had been the trainer for our rugby team and he was very popular with anyone who played games of any kind. Harry wanted to see my father who was mayor of Petrolia. My father was busy at a council meeting, but was expected home any minute. So I sat with Harry on the front porch and he told me that he wanted my father to sign a paper that would allow the Grand Trunk Railway to provide Harry with a ticket to Montreal and then on the England. It was then that Harry told me he had been a Reserve soldier with the Lincolns in England. Now that war had been declared, he had received a telegram telling him to rejoin the regiment he had served and trained with for five years back in England. He told me that he would have to leave his wife and two children but they would receive a pension of a dollar a month while he was in the service. Harry got away early the next morning... The local paper said nothing about him quitting his job at the wagon works. His job was soon filled. The idea of his going was a shock to me and the other boys I told...

Sometime later in 1914, George Stirrett refereed a rugby playoff game between Sarnia and London in London. After the game, George and a few of the boys visited the Armouries in London. There they ran into one of the London players, who had scored the winning touchdown for London that afternoon against Sarnia. He told the boys that a military school was starting the next week in the London Armouries. George and a friend decided to sign up to take the course starting the following week. *Returning home to Sarnia on the train, we saw in the evening paper that Harry Bolt of Petrolia had been killed while fighting with the Lincolns in the retreat from Mons. This was the first time we realized that war could kill people that we knew. We had all known and liked Harry...*^{3U, 9B}

Twenty-three-year-old George Stirrett enlisted for service on January 13, 1915 in London, Ontario, with the 7th Canadian Mounted Rifles (First Hussars), "C" Squadron. He stood five feet eight inches tall, had grey eyes and dark brown hair, was single, and recorded his occupation as merchant; that he had one year military experience with the 27th Infantry; and his next-of-kin as his father Robert Stirrett in Petrolia. Part of Private George Stirrett's infantry training in London was with future fighter pilot William "Billy" Bishop, who became a close friend.

On February 4, 1915, George Stirrett was promoted to Corporal, and two weeks later, on February 19, he was promoted to Sergeant in the 7th Regiment, Canadian Mounted Rifles. In mid-April 1915, he was transferred to the Second Canadian Divisional Cavalry. Two months later, on June 9, 1915, George Stirrett was promoted to temporary Lieutenant and proceeded overseas from Montreal aboard the *SS Caledonian*, as part of the Second Canadian Division Cavalry. George Stirrett recalled, ... *On the Caledonia, with three decks of horses underneath, our main duty was to feed and water them. There were no kitchens on board and the cooks had to prepare our meals on the open deck. It was awful food. It was the worst conditions I had ever seen. The ship wasn't designed for this kind of duty and there wasn't even a doctor on board. Fortunately, on the trip over the Atlantic Ocean, we had good weather. Hammocks had been provided for us below deck but we found the air too foul to sleep there. So we were able to set out hay and sleep on the deck. Then the next day, the hay we had used for our beds would be fed to our horses.*^{9B}

The *Caledonia* landed at South Hampton and then moved to Devonport in England on June 22, 1915. The men entrained for Canterbury where the Cavalry Headquarters was located, and a few days later, rejoined the Second Canadian Division at Dibgate Plains, *where we went under canvas*. George recalled, ... *At Dibgate Plains, the squadron was issued 168 light riding and draught horses and new Lee-Enfield rifles and swords. Training continued at an accelerated pace in spite of the fact that the area was very heavy clay and it rained a lot. The whole area became almost impassable...*^{3U, 9B}

It was while training at Dibgate Plains in England that then Sergeant George Stirrett witnessed the birth of one of Canada's greatest flying aces. As George Stirrett recalled;

... One day when the mud was very bad, two Royal Air Force planes went over. While Billy Bishop, who hated to be dirty, and I stood in the mud watching them, only a few hundred feet high, Bishop turned to me and said, "It's clean up there George. And if you were killed, at least you would be clean. Imagine being killed in this mix of mud and horse manure." Lieutenant Billy Bishop joined the Air Force that afternoon... Lt. Bishop hadn't told anyone

in the Hussars where he was going or what he was going to do so we didn't know where he was for about two weeks.^{13U}

William “Billy” Bishop went on to be a fighter pilot, in fact, the top Canadian and Imperial flying ace in WWI, credited with 72 victories and a recipient of 16 medals including the Military Cross, Distinguished Flying Cross and Victoria Cross.

In mid-September 1915, George Stirrett’s squadron departed from Southampton, England and arrived in Le Havre, France. His squadron was immediately moved up to the front by train, and it wasn’t long before they were moved into the lines. During the fall and winter, his squadron was mostly engaged in frontier patrol duty, trench mapping, classification of water supplies, assisting engineers, artillery spotting, stretcher bearing, and miscellaneous duties. George recalled; *We were to do very little in a cavalry role for much of the war.* In late-April of the following spring, then attached to the 1st Canadian Hussars, George enjoyed a leave of approximately two weeks. On May 10, 1916, he rejoined his unit that later in month; became part of the Canadian Corps Cavalry Regiment (CCCR), subsequently known as the **Canadian Light Horse** (CLH). George recalled; *During this time, even though we were not being used in a cavalry role, our cavalry training continued whenever it was possible. General Haig, who was the senior cavalry officer, believed that there was still a need for cavalry...*

On July 30, 1916, George Stirrett was admitted to No. 1 Canadian Field Ambulance due to a sprain where he remained for just over one week, before rejoining his unit in action on August 8. George recalled; *Since there was little opportunity to use cavalry, most of our time was spent in training, looking after the horses, or on duty in various capacities as sub-units attached to the advanced units in the trenches. When on the line we would stand to for two or three hours at a time as there were always rumours about the Germans attacking. Our job was to go forward if the attack came but we knew that with the trenches and barbed wire, our cavalry would do no good. The RCDs had heard that horses could see in the dark and would be able to jump over trenches and barbed wire in a night assault even if their riders couldn’t see. The RCDs made up a series of trenches and barbed wire behind the lines and one night sent a troop of cavalry over them at the gallop believing the horses would jump when necessary. It was an awful mess and all of the horses had to be shot. That’s the way you learned.*

George described September 26, 1916, during the Battle of the Somme, as the day that made the greatest change in his life. On that day, then Sergeant-Major George Stirrett was in command of a sixty-man stretcher party assigned to the 8th Battalion, the “**Little Black Devils**”, from Winnipeg. Following is part of George Stirrett’s account of what he witnessed that day as German soldiers came out of the trenches to meet Canadian attackers:

The attack started at 6:00 AM when the German soldiers came out of the trenches to meet our Canadian attackers. It looked like two teams coming from both ends of a rugby field and meeting in the middle. As they met, all machine gun fire stopped. It was impossible to tell friends from enemies with 1000 Germans fighting 1000 Canadians you just couldn't shoot so they used knives at each other. Until this time I never had any idea of what the infantry had to go through. I didn't know if I'd go crazy or not... The Canadians forced the Germans back and took the German trenches. Our job now was to clear the field of wounded. As we started, about 9:00 A.M., I wondered as to my sanity. In one shell hole I saw a young man with his lips moving so I knew he was still alive. I reached down and put my hand behind his head and realized my hand was in his brain as the back of his head was missing. I started to go on about 100 yards to locate some more of our parties. I was going from shell hole to shell hole which, at the Somme, almost interlocked. In a shell hole ahead I spotted a boy from Saskatchewan lying wounded. He looked like my younger brother Jack who was with the artillery. I touched the boy and he opened his eyes and asked me not to touch him again. I asked him what I could do for him. "Sergeant Major." he said "Do you believe in God?" I wasn't particularly a religious person but my answer was Yes. "Sergeant Major" he said, "Will you pray to God for me? I'm going to be with him in a few minutes." You could not fool with this request. I knelt beside him, held his hands and closed my eyes in prayer. Then in a bare whisper, I heard, "Thank you sergeant-major. Please go now and help the others." I knew he wanted to be alone with his God. I left to help others but came back later, emptied his pockets and answered the letters I found there. What happened to me then I don't know, but all fear was gone, in a trance you might call it. I walked and went any place I wished to that day and night without fear. We worked that day, that night, and the next day as stretcher bearers under continuous fire.^{3U, 9B}

George Stirrett led his stretcher crew to successfully bring in hundreds of injured men to safety on that day, but the cost was high. Years later he reflected, *By the next day, I had only 18 of our 60 men who were able to come home to our own lines. Twelve had been killed and the rest wounded... It took one man to help a walking wounded*

back to the line and they could use some cover, but it took two men to carry a stretcher and they made good targets... In my diary for this date I have written, "Whoever it was that said war is hell is correct."

In mid-October 1916, George Stirrett was awarded the **Distinguished Conduct Medal** (DCM) as a member of CCCR "A" Squadron for his heroic actions. The official citation to his DCM award stated, *"For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty. He tended the wounded under heavy fire, displaying great courage and determination. He set a fine example to his men"*. George Stirrett later recalled the incident that he was decorated for; *I was with three Officers who were looking for their CO. I could hear a person calling and I said to the three Officers, "There's somebody out there calling for help." They said, "We know but the Germans aren't likely no more than 100 yards out there, you can't go." I said, "You just watch me. Just boost me up." So I went out and a Sergeant that was there wanted to go with me. I said, "No, you stay here cause if there's two they'll shoot at us but if I go alone, they won't." So I went out towards where this fellow was yelling for help and, holy Moses, before I got to the shell hole he was in, I got eight of them that were out there wounded and lying waiting for dark. I got them out and pulled them over to our trenches and then waved over at the Germans because I knew they were close enough to see what I was doing. So I just waved at them and dropped down into our trench. These three Officers were there and immediately a bullet came over as if to say, "We saw you and could have killed you but we didn't – we saw what you were doing."*^{3U}



Lieut. George Hunter Stirrett, D.C.M., M.C.

On October 8, 1916, a sick George Stirrett was admitted to a Field Ambulance unit, and five days later he was transferred to No. 14 Stationary Hospital, Boulogne, France with suspected dysentery. One month later, on November 17, he was transferred to Canadian Casualty Assembly Centre (CCAC) for assessment, and then sent to Addington Park War Hospital Croydon, in Surrey England, diagnosed with enteric fever. On January 5, 1917, he was admitted to Enteric Depot Hospital in Woldingham, Surrey, and one month later, on February 9, he was admitted to Canadian Convalescent Hospital in Epsom, diagnosed with typhoid fever. He was discharged on February 27, and transferred to Canadian Light Horse (CLH) Reserve Depot, and returned to full duty. He was immediately taken on strength into the Lord Strathcona's Horse (LSH) (Royal Canadians) at Shorncliffe, and a week later was transferred to the Canadian Reserve Cavalry Regiment (CRCR) at Shorncliffe. By June 1917, he was promoted to Temporary Lieutenant, posted to "D" Squadron, CRCR. By August 1917, Lieutenant George Stirrett returned to action in France with the Canadian Light Horse. There, they took part once again as a dismounted unit, in cooperation with the Motor Machine Gun Brigade, in the attack on Hill 70.

In the fall of 1917, the Regiment moved back to an area near Ypres. George Stirrett recalled; *"Once again, mud and bad weather made mounted operations impossible. All of our men and officers, who were available, went forward with the infantry units, carried ammunition for the artillery and manned observation posts. Casualties were very heavy both in the front lines and in the rear because we were constantly being subjected to heavy artillery shelling from the enemy lines."* The winter of 1917-1918 was spent near the Corps Headquarters on the Lens front, preparing for an expected attack from the Germans the next spring. During this time, many of the officers went away on courses lasting two weeks to a month. In December 1917, George was sent to a school on the French coast at Comte-sur-la-mer, for riding and horsemanship.

During the final two months of the war in the Hundred Days Campaign, the Germans were retreating and were leaving machine gun crews behind to cover their retreat. It was the cavalry's mission to find their positions and

to deliver messages, each day conducting hazardous reconnaissance, suffering heavy casualties. George Stirrett led near-suicidal forays in search of these German machine gun nests. It was for his troops reconnaissance actions on September 26, north of Sailly, and again on October 1, 1918, east of Tilloy, that then Captain George Stirrett of the Canadian Light Horse, was awarded a second medal, the **Military Cross (MC)**. Awarded in March 1919, the official citation notes that he carried out mounted patrols to gather accurate information on enemy positions “*with great dash and coolness, locating the exact position of the enemy...both of these patrols were carried out under heavy fire*”.

In October 1918, as the Canadians advanced toward Valenciennes, the Canadian Light Horse kept contact in front of the infantry and gained considerable cavalry experience in open warfare. During the advance wherever possible, CLH patrols entered small villages ahead of the infantry, allowing them to continue moving forward without having to deploy. George Stirrett recalled; “*Major McEwen would move to the north with two troops taking a sector about a mile wide and I would move to the south with two troops taking a similar sector. Our orders were to draw fire from the enemy to show their positions.*” As soon as they were fired on, the cavalry retired and the infantry took charge. On October 21, Stirrett’s friend Major Cuthbert F. McEwen, OC of ‘B’ Squadron, was killed by an artillery round while on a forward reconnaissance at Hesnon. Command of ‘B’ Squadron passed to George Stirrett who, at first, refused the command. He had been greatly shaken by the death of his dear friend and did not want to benefit from his death. He took command because as he put it, “*I had to, I was the only experienced Officer left.*”

The day after McEwen’s death, as the CLH continued their advance, Stirrett wrote in his diary; *The next day, we ran into civilians whom the Germans had not had time to clear out. As we rode into a village, we trotted down the cobblestone streets. All windows for 300 yards to the village square were drawn and covered. As we reached the village square at the Catholic church, we looked to see the road full of women, older men, and children, filling the road with anything they could wave. We dismounted and the old priest took me by the ears and kissed me. Then they all seemed to go crazy at once. They even kissed our horses. Next, the priest called for prayer and the entire village went to their knees at once, including my men and myself. We had a very similar experience in every village from then on. We were first into at least twenty villages with the infantry about a mile behind following us in column of route.* ”^{3U, 9B}

In late October 1918, Lieutenant George Stirrett of the Canadian Light Horse, CRCL, was granted 14 days leave. The Great War came to an end on November 11, 1918. Two months later, in mid-January 1919, George was invalided back to England from France. Soon after, he was admitted to the Prince of Wales Hospital, in Marylebone, England and five days later, was admitted to Canadian Convalescent Officers’ Hospital, in Matlock, Bath, where he received dental treatment (a condition attributed to his service). He remained there until the end of January 1919. On March 5, 1919, he was admitted to No. 9 Canadian General Hospital, Kinnel Park due to influenza, and fortunately, was discharged from the hospital three days later. On March 24, 1919, George Stirrett departed from Liverpool and returned to Canada. Lieutenant George Stirrett was struck off strength from the Canadian Expeditionary Force on general demobilization on April 4, 1919.

After the war, on October 15, 1919, twenty-eight-year-old George Stirrett married twenty-seven-year-old Vera Mary (nee Spurr) in Petrolia. They moved to Front Street in Sarnia in 1922. George became a Sarnia City Councilor in the 1930’s; was a member of Central United Church; and was a president of the Royal Canadian Legion, Branch 62. George’s parents, Robert, passed away on March 16, 1933; and Meda, passed away in 1959; and both are buried in Hillside Cemetery, Petrolia. George Stirrett passed away in mid-February 1982 just short of his 91st birthday at the Vision Nursing Home. He was survived by his wife Vera, son Franklin, and daughters Mary Louise and Georgina, and 13 grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. Captain George Stirrett was buried in Hillside Cemetery, Petrolia with full military honours by members of the 1st Hussars of Sarnia and London, the same unit that he had distinguished himself with so many years earlier. Sarnia’s armoury on Confederation Street is named in his honour.^{F, J, N, 2G, 3K, 3U, 9B, g}

• **THE BATTLE OF VIMY RIDGE**, France, April 9-12, 1917: The Battle of Vimy Ridge was part of a larger British offensive, the **Battle of Arras** - from April 9 to May 16, 1917, when troops from the four corners of the British Empire attacked German trenches to the east of the French city of Arras. In fact, the Battle of Arras was a supporting attack for the French Artois offensive to the south.

Vimy Ridge, known informally as “**the shield of Arras**,” is located in northern France, a long 7-kilometre hill that rises to a height of 110 metres that dominates the landscape, protecting the coalfields of Lens and the ancient city of Arras. Because of its towering height and commanding view of the flat and low countryside in all directions, whoever held the Ridge had the upper hand in battle and controlled a large portion of northern France.

At the north end of the ridge was its highest point—**Hill 145** (145 m above sea level). Across a valley from Hill 145 stood another high point, “**the Pimple**” (135 m). Germany captured Vimy Ridge early in the war in October 1914, and had transformed it into a strong defensive position, virtually impregnable, with deep dugouts of concrete, rows of barbed wire, a complex system of underground tunnels, multiple lines of trenches manned by highly-trained soldiers with mortars and machine guns that could sweep over the front in overlapping arcs of fire, and protected by artillery pieces overlooking the battlefield. Previous Allied assaults on the Ridge in 1914 and 1915 had cost the French and British hundreds of thousands of casualties and had been largely unsuccessful. By the time Canadian troops were rotated into the battlefield, 300,000 Allied soldiers had already been killed in attempts to capture the ridge.

- **Arrival:** The Canadians arrived at the Vimy front in staggered marches starting in late October 1916. They soon occupied a line about 15 kilometres in length that the Germans on Vimy Ridge could look down into their trenches. The muddy, cratered western slope was described as an “*immense graveyard*,” littered with the remains of thousands of unburied corpses and fragments of bodies. Canadian gunner William Ball wrote in his diary about the hulking ridge, “*Never saw anything like it before. I think it is called Vimy Ridge, or the Valley of Sorrows as sixty thousand French were supposed to have been lost here.*” Lieutenant-Colonel Joseph Hayes of the 85th Battalion wrote, “*There is perhaps no place in France where as many men have been killed to the square yard as on this sloping ground.*” The conditions were so poor that thousands of soldiers had to dig and repair the trenches continuously for weeks on end, much of the work during the bitterly cold and wet winter of 1916. Veterans recalled later, it was hard to put a shovel in the ground without turning up the ragged scraps of a British khaki tunic or a pair of French red trousers.

William Bird, a soldier in the 42nd Canadian Infantry Battalion, wrote about his experience of arriving on a cold night in January 1917 at the Vimy Front. After leaving the village of Neuville St. Vaast, Corporal Stevenson of the 42nd brought William and a group of others to the line. *He led us down a long trench, and at last we were really at the front. We had become used to the slamming roar of gunfire and now we also heard the barking of machine-guns. Bullets came singing overhead, to go swishing into the darkness. Some struck on wire and we heard the sibilant whine of ricochets. We had sandbags to fill. One man held them and the other shoveled in gruel-like mud. When twenty were filled a man jumped on top and emptied the bags as they were handed up to him. It was ticklish work, as the one emptying had to jump down when machine-guns opened on that section. We got soaked to the skin. The cold slime ran down our wrists as we lifted the bags, and our boots sunk in the mire until our feet were numbed, sodden things.*

The next day at dusk, William and two of his comrades were sent to an emplacement used by a mortar team that used a big mortar called a “flying pig”. *When we got there we noticed a peculiar odour. All the shapeless ruin of Neuville St. Vaast stank of decay and slime, but this new smell halted us. “Here’s bags,” said Stevenson. “Go in there and gather up all you can find, then we’ll bury it back of the trench. Get a move on.”*

A “flying pig” had exploded as it left the gun and three men had been shredded to fragments. We were to pick up legs and bits of flesh from underfoot, place all in the bags and then bury them. It was a harsh breaking-in. We did not speak a word as we worked. When we were done Stevenson told us we could go, but Tommy (William’s buddy) and I lingered in a trench bay and stared over the dark, flickering, silhouetted landscape.

Over the tangle of wire in front lay the no man’s land about which we had heard. Not two hundred yards away were the Germans in their trenches. A thin stalk of silver shot up as we looked, curved over in a graceful parabola and flowered into a luminous glow, pulsating and wavering, flooding the earth below with a weird, whiteness. It was a Verrey light. We craned our necks and stared. Jumbled earth and debris, jagged wreckage: it looked as if a gigantic upheaval had destroyed all the surface and left only a festering wound. Everything was shapeless, ugly and distorted.^{11A}

- **The task:** In the spring of 1917, the Canadians were tasked with capturing Vimy Ridge as part of a larger British and French offensive. The Canadian force drew the most formidable part of the entire German defensive system, and perhaps along the whole of the Western Front at Vimy. It would be the very first time (and last time in the war) that all four divisions of the Canadian Corps, with soldiers from every region in the country, would attack together as one formation.

- **The plan** was simple – all four Canadian divisions would surge forward simultaneously to seize the crest by lunch hour under the curtain of the greatest artillery bombardment of the war. There would be four simultaneous mini-battles, all interconnected, each divisions’ style and method of attack differing, depending on the frontage, the

distance to be covered, and the state of the German defences. The four divisions would do it in a series of carefully timed stages, the objective of each stage marked on the map by a coloured reporting line. At each stage the forward troops would consolidate, reporting their arrival to low-flying aircraft, while fresh troops leap-frogged through to the next objective.

The 1st and 2nd Divisions on the right would have the farther distance to travel, but over the more gentle slope, with four reporting lines – Black, Red, Blue and Brown. Included in part of the 2nd Division's initial assault wave was Western Ontario's 18th Battalion, which had been mobilized in London, Ontario. The 3rd and 4th Divisions on the left of the line had the shortest distances to travel, but a much steeper climb to reach two reporting lines – Black and Red. The Canadians were given less than eight hours to capture all of Vimy Ridge except the "Pimple" – the small wooded knoll and German stronghold at the far end of the ridge on the northern slope.

The Pimple was not part of the ridge, but it would have to fall. Up until late March, the Pimple was to have been assaulted by I British Corps on the left flank of the Canadians. But British First Army commander General Henry Horne changed the operation on April 1, one week before the attack, and ordered Byng and his Canadians to take the hill. With the 4th Division already fully committed to capturing Hill 145; not enough troops to divert towards the Pimple; and artillery already positioned for the main operation; Byng struggled with what to do. His decision was to order the 10th Infantry Brigade to capture the Pimple after attacking Hill 145. Leaving the assault on the Pimple until after the ridge was captured was, however, an enormous risk to the entire operation.

Confidence in the Vimy plan was gained by the fact that the battalions of each of the four divisions were at full strength – so the total strength of the Canadian Corps at Vimy was over 97,000.^{4G, 5A, 7R, 7Z, 8H, 8U}

- **Sir Julian Byng:** The British would ably support the Canadians at Vimy, providing logistical and artillery support, and an infantry brigade. The commander of the Canadian Corps in charge of directing the attack on Vimy Ridge was British army officer Lieutenant-General Sir Julian Byng. The professional soldier had fought with distinction in the South African War, and had organized the difficult and remarkably successful retreat from the Gallipoli campaign in January 1916. He had been given command of XVII British Corps on the Western Front, and seemed to be in line for promotion to an army command when in May 1916, he was tasked with commanding the Canadian Corps who had just lost the Battle of St. Eloi. Upon being congratulated on being promoted to command of the Canadian Corps a bewildered Byng responded to British commander-in-chief Sir Douglas Haig, *"Why am I sent the Canadians? I don't even know a Canadian... I am ordered to these people and will do my best, but I don't know that there is any congratulations in it."*

Byng soon won the respect of the Canadian Corps by standing up to bureaucratic bullying; ordering the Ross rifle be replaced by the more reliable Lee-Enfield; and the Colt machine guns to be replaced by Vickers guns; and outfitting Canadian battalions with more machine guns, steel helmets, and better grenades and mortars. His intensive preparatory regime of practice and planning transformed the Canadians into a confident, disciplined, well-prepared and effective striking force. Known to his friends and King George V as "Bungo," it was a nickname he got at school because his older brothers were known as "Byngo" and "Bango". Julian Byng would become so well-respected and beloved by the Canadian troops, that they began to call themselves **"The Byng Boys,"** after a popular musical theatre comedy *The Bing Boys are Here*.

Two months after Vimy, in June 1917, Byng was promoted, taking command of the British 3rd Army as a full General. In October 1919, when the general was elevated to the peerage (knighted), he took as his title **Baron Byng of Vimy**. After the war, Sir Julian Byng was appointed as **Governor General of Canada**, serving from August 1921 to 1926. Byng always had the common touch and he made many cross-country tours to adoring crowds. The Byng's were often seen at Ottawa Senators hockey games, and in 1925, Byng's wife Evelyn, who admired Canada, donated the Lady Byng Trophy, the National Hockey League's award for sportsmanship and excellence. Author and military historian Tim Cook credits Byng as being, *"The single most important figure in transforming the Canadian Corps into a battle-hardened formation."*^{4F, 5A, 8H, 8U}

On the cenotaph in Veterans Memorial Park in Point Edward, a plaque at the base of the monument reads, *"This stone was laid by Lord Julian Byng of Vimy Governor General of Canada April 18th, 1922."* More information on Byng's visit to Sarnia and Point Edward is on page 152.

- **Sir Arthur Currie:** Arthur Currie, was born in 1875 in the hamlet of Napperton outside the town of Strathroy, Ontario. He graduated from high school, briefly attended university in Toronto, and worked as a teacher. After he moved to Victoria, British Columbia in 1894, he joined the local Militia artillery unit where he rose through the non-

commissioned and commissioned ranks. By 1909 he was a lieutenant-colonel commanding the 5th Regiment, Canadian Garrison Artillery, a successful businessman (land speculator) and he was married. It was boom or bust times in the West, and in 1913, Victoria's land speculators went bust. Faced with personal bankruptcy and disgrace, an overextended Currie siphoned off money for his own use, money that he had been provided with by the government for the new 50th Regiment Highland Infantry uniforms (Currie was to command the regiment). He had a promise from the regiment's honorary colonel to cover the "loan," but the money was never forthcoming. His embezzlement would hang over his head for the next four years until some of his senior overseas commanders paid off his debt.

At the outbreak of war in August 1914, Currie headed off to Valcartier Camp in Quebec. There, he accepted command of the 2nd Brigade, and led them overseas to England and, in April 1915, into the morass of the Ypres Salient. When a second Canadian division came to France, now Major-General Currie took command of the 1st Division in September 1915. He would lead the 1st Canadian Division effectively through the Mont Sorrel and Somme battles, and into 1917.

Currie stood almost six feet three inches tall, was overweight with a pear-shaped body carried on thin legs, had a babyish face with large jowls, and looked unsoldierly in his uniform. Yet he sympathized with the soldiers under his command and abhorred casualties. During the Second Battle of Ypres, Arthur Currie's brigade had played a pivotal role in holding the Allied position. At the Battle of Mont Sorrel, Currie had convinced Byng of the importance of detailed planning, and the need for cooperation between the infantry and the artillery—lessons valuable at Vimy Ridge. One of his quotes was, *"Pay the price of victory in shells-not lives."* Arthur Currie would command the 1st Canadian Division at the Battle of Vimy Ridge.

After Vimy and Julian Byng's departure in June 1917, the replacement to command the Canadian Corps was a man that Byng had been grooming as his successor since the Somme battles. Byng recommended forty-one-year-old Arthur Currie, a key fellow Vimy strategist, making Currie **the first Canadian to command the Canadian Corps**. To honour the man who had been primarily responsible for achieving the first major Allied victory in WWI, King George V knighted Sir Arthur Currie on June 3, 1917. A few days later, Sir Arthur Currie took command of the entire Canadian Corps, given the rank of Lieutenant-General.

Arthur Currie was a nationalist who believed that the Canadians had to stay together because they fought better when all four divisions were in the field under a single Corps command. A tactical innovator, he was notable for his emphasis on pre-battle preparations and his sincere concern for his troops' well-being. Currie led the Canadian Corps to hard-fought victories at Hill 70, Passchendaele and during the Hundred Days Campaign, until its disbandment in late 1919.

As the war progressed and casualties mounted, Currie was unloved by some of his men who only saw him as an absent superior who called on them to fight and sacrifice, while he did neither. Disdainfully referring to him as "Guts-and-Gaiters", these men did not see the hours Currie worked late into the night at headquarters, bent over maps, eyes darkened with fatigue, demanding more guns or supplies, sending out officers to collect information from the front, and standing up to both British and Canadian superiors to ensure his soldiers had a fighting chance in battle. He tried to minimize casualties, and made the four divisions of the Canadian Corps into an elite combat formation, and was widely recognized as one of the very best on the Western Front. Lieutenant-General Sir Arthur Currie is believed by many military experts and historians to be one of the best military commanders Canada has ever produced.^{2I, 2N, 4G, 5A, 5J, 8H, 8U}

Note: More information on Currie, including his return to Canada after the war is on page 167 and 194.

- **Andrew George Latta McNaughton:** Along with Currie, the other Canadian who was critical in developing the plan to crack the German fortress at Vimy was Andrew McNaughton. The physics and engineering graduate of McGill University joined the Canadian Militia in 1909 and led an artillery battery overseas in 1914 as a 27-year-old major. Wounded twice in early fighting, McNaughton recovered and rose rapidly, and in late January 1917, the twenty-nine-year-old was named Counter-Battery Staff Officer. He used his keen mind to develop and perfect new scientific gunnery principles, including "flash spotting" and "sound ranging" to improve the Canadians ability to not only calculate the position of the enemy guns, but also its type, its calibre, and the target on which it was registered. As a result, the counter-battery fire became increasingly effective in suppressing enemy guns, permitting troops to close on their objectives with fewer casualties.

During the war, McNaughton was decorated several times for his achievements, and by late 1918, he

commanded the entire heavy artillery and counter-battery forces of the Canadian Corps. Before the war was over, he was acknowledged by both the Allies and the Germans as the best artillery officer in the British Empire. During the Second World War, he would successfully command the First Canadian Infantry Division, the First Canadian Corps, and the First Canadian Army.^{21, 2N, 3F, 6E, 7Z}

- **Vimy Preparations:** The Canadian planning and preparations for the attack of Vimy Ridge verged on the unbelievable, and it included vast armies of engineers, labour units, clerks, cooks, surgeons, tunneling companies, loggers, locomotive engineers, carpenters, tailors, telegraphers, road builders and infantrymen toiling furiously day and night. Much of the work had to be carried out at night in the cold by men constantly slopping about in water or muddy gruel and under constant fire.

Tasks included supplying food and water for close to 100,000 men and 50,000 horses and mules; horse and mule teams strained to carry heavy loads steadily forward through the mire and mud roads while braving the steady barrage of enemy fire, to the point where hundreds had to be mercy-killed as they were worked to death; water-mains and pipelines were constructed, reservoirs dug and pumping stations were installed; building new roads and adding planking to others; building rails for light trams; miles of electrical cable were buried in trenches seven feet deep and hundreds of miles of telephone wire were strung; fortifying the lines; digging trenches and gun pits; digging tunnels at least six metres underground that wound for hundreds of metres beneath the German lines and filling the narrow shafts with explosives; moving and stockpiling thousands of tonnes of ammunition and shells to the front; hauling heavy artillery pieces each weighing tons to the gun pits which then had to be assembled; digging underground subway systems to move materials and to shelter troops close to the jumping-off points; and training on models and a full-scale replica course (with marked trenches, gun emplacements and barbed wire that the soldiers could practice walking through).

Over 40,000 **maps** were issued to the troops empowering them to understand where their objectives were established. This devolution in command meant if officers were knocked out in battle, the lower ranks knew and could continue on to the objectives—for the first time, junior officers, NCOs, and ordinary soldiers would all be given specific responsibilities. Each division would have a specific objective, and within the brigades, each battalion, each company, each platoon—indeed, each man—would know exactly where to head, when they should reach each objective point, exactly how many minutes to stop before moving forward again, and at what point to dig in and allow reserve troops to leap-frog through.^{7Z}

Each platoon was reorganized into a self-contained fighting unit made up of a lieutenant, three sergeants, fifteen riflemen, eleven bombers, eleven rifle grenadiers, six Lewis machine gunners, two scouts, and a stretcher-bearer, all of whom could be interchangeable in the event of casualties. By the end of March, every platoon and every section had developed into a tightly knit group who knew each other well and knew exactly what their job was to be in the battle that followed.

The **British First Army** would supply about half the artillery, two battalions of combat troops and thousands of soldiers that engaged in logistical work. A number of tanks were also brought in to assist the infantry, however the 28-tonne steel beasts would have no impact at Vimy. The clumsy, slow tanks became bogged down in the mud, slipped into large mine craters or were shredded by shellfire.

The labyrinth of **tunnels and subways** were particularly important at Vimy, as German troops were able to see every above ground movement of the Canadians from their perch high on the ridge. Located at least 6 metres beneath the earth, the maze of tunnels, caverns and subways, some more than a kilometer in length, contained electric lights, command posts, ammunition stores, medical stations, telephone lines, sleeping areas and latrines. Although the tunnels had some comforts and provided protection from artillery fire, they were prone to leakage, poor air quality, and were unpleasant to be in for any length of time. Hundreds of men carved their names or hometowns or regimental crests into the sweating chalk walls. In the days before the assault on Vimy, these underground cities housed thousands of men, while the dull thud of shellfire resounded through the walls day and night.^{D, 4G, 5A, 7R, 7Z, 8H}

Among those who etched their names on the walls of the Vimy tunnels were two Sarnia-Lambton soldiers, members of the 1st Hussars. Their names were found among hundreds of others in the Targette Tunnels section of the caves, in a portion not usually open to the public. The two Sarnia-Lambton soldiers were:

John Edward Chenney #112025:

Cave wall etching: *J. CHENNEY #112025 1st HUSSARS ... CCCR*

John Chenney was born on November 13, 1896 in Petrolia, the son of Joseph and Annie (nee Hurst) Chenney

of Petrolia. Joseph Cheney was born in England and immigrated to Canada in 1887, and worked as a coachman. Joseph and Annie Cheney had four sons together: Thomas, James, John and Roy. On January 23, 1915, eighteen year-old John Cheney enlisted in Sarnia, becoming a member of “C” Squadron of the 7th Regiment, Canadian Mounted Rifles. Working as a clerk when he enlisted, John recorded his birthdate as November 13, 1893, making himself three years older than he actually was (recruiters thought he was age 21). Private John Cheney arrived in England aboard the *SS Caledonian* on June 22, 1915, and in France on September 15, 1915, as a member of the Canadian Cavalry Brigade. In January 1916, he was a member of the 1st Canadian Hussars Special Service Squadron. In April 1916, he was hospitalized for 11 days with German measles, and the following month, his unit became known as the Canadian Corps Cavalry Regiment (CCCR). In January 1917, he was hospitalized for close to two weeks the result of scabies (infection from clothing). In February 1917, his unit became known as Canadian Light Horse (CLH), and a year and a half later, in October 1918, he was appointed the rank of Corporal in the CLH. Corporal John Cheney survived the war, returning to Canada in April 1919. After the war, John Cheney resided in South Bend, Indiana, USA.

Hugh Roswell Hall #112063:

Cave wall etching: *Pte. H.R. HALL #112063 1st Hussars B SQUAD C.C.C.R. Dec. 4/16*

Hugh Hall was born on October 24, 1891 in Warwick, Lambton County, the son of George Watson and Mary Eliza (nee Mitchell) Hall of Petrolia. George, a farmer, and Mary Hall had three children together: Alice Maud, George Lloyd and Hugh Roswell. On January 19, 1915, twenty-three-year-old Hugh Hall, a tinsmith at the time, enlisted in Sarnia, becoming a member of “C” Squadron of the 7th Regiment, Canadian Mounted Rifles. In April 1915, he was a member of the 2nd Canadian Divisional Cavalry and he arrived with that unit in England aboard the *SS Caledonian* on June 22, 1915. Private Hugh Hall arrived in Havre, France on September 15, 1915, a member of the Canadian Corps Cavalry Regiment (CCCR). On January 31, 1916, he was transferred to the 1st Canadian Hussars Special Service Squadron, part of the CCCR. Over a year later, in February 1917, his unit became known as Canadian Light Horse (CLH). In August 1917, he was appointed Lance Corporal, and six months later, in February 1918, he was promoted to the rank of Corporal in the CLH. Corporal Hugh Hall served in France until late April 1918; survived the war; and returned to Canada in December 1918. In March 1923, Hugh Hall married Effie Irene Mott, and he went on to work as a government employee. On April 30, 1926, Hugh Hall passed away in Queen Alexandra Sanatorium in Byron, Ontario at the age of thirty-five. His death was due to pulmonary tuberculosis and recorded as, “Death related to Service” (he had suffered lung problems for nine years prior to his death). Hugh Hall is buried in Hillsdale Cemetery in Petrolia.

- **Trench raids:** In the three months before the April assault, the Canadian Corps launched at least fifty-five trench raids on the German positions. The goals of the raids were to inflict terror and casualties, hamper the enemy’s ability to lay barbed wire, gather intelligence and capture prisoners. The earlier ones were carried out by a handful of men; the later ones involved many more.

In the early morning hours of March 1, 1917, four battalions of the 4th Division Canadians carried out the **largest raid**, a massive 1,700-man trench raid against the Germans commanding the heights of Vimy Ridge. Canada’s 4th Division was the youngest and least experienced fighting division and they wanted to prove to everyone that they could out-raid any group. The German defenders were fully alert for the attack, and the Canadians had to advance through enemy fire, their own deadly phosgene poison gas cloud that had blown backward, uncut barbed wire and even their own artillery shells that fell short. The Canadians suffered 687 killed and wounded in the disastrous raid (a 43 percent casualty rate). After recognizing that the Canadians had lost so many who acted with such valour, the very next morning the Germans offered a two hour truce so that the dead could be removed honourably from the battlefield. The failed raid also so greatly weakened the 4th Division that it had its effect on the battle that followed five weeks later.^{4F, 5A, 7Z, 8H, 8U}

- Information on the location of enemy trenches, barbed wire, strongpoints and hidden batteries were central to the attack, and the best intelligence was supplied by the “eyes in the sky” – balloons and aircraft. **Kite balloons**, gas filled and tethered to the ground, would float to a great height behind the front line. Suspended below each one was a basket that carried one or two observers who could locate distant enemy targets and pass down their readings via the use of flags or radio. Pilots of the **Royal Flying Corps** (RFC), including Canadians, flew observatory aircraft and using cumbersome cameras lashed to the cockpit, took photographs and gathered aerial reconnaissance. The Canadian Corps worked closely with No. 16 Squadron, RFC, whose slow-moving two-seater reconnaissance planes, the F.E. 2b and 2d, had observers and gunners. These slow spotter planes were outclassed in speed by the German

Fokkers and Albatrosses, who engaged the spotters in intense air battles above the ridge. Each reconnaissance plane required a cover of several fighters. The young Canadian fighter pilot, Lieutenant William “Billy” Bishop, became an Ace during this period, flying with No. 60 Squadron, RFC. On April 7, 1917, Billy Bishop wrote, *“Three more pilots lost today. All good men. Oh how I hate the Huns. They had done in so many of my best friends. I’ll make them pay, I swear.”* Baron Manfred von Richthofen, later known as the “Red Baron,” was one of the corps skilled adversaries.^{3G, 7Z}

A steady flow of information from other sources poured into the commanders headquarters – from the men who raided the enemy trenches in the dark, from the young men of the Royal Flying Corps, from sweaty documents and maps ripped from German corpses or liberated from captured prisoners, and from coded reports of secret agents.^{7Z}

- **Artillery** would be a key to the success of the attack. Hitting the hidden enemy targets, and providing a curtain of fire that exploded only a few yards ahead of the advancing troops during the final assault required stunning accuracy. Though they did not look it, the huge artillery pieces were sensitive weapons. Corrections had to be made for wind, weather, temperature, pressure changes, contour of the ground, barrel wear, and subtle variations in shell size. The creeping barrage, first introduced in the later parts of the Somme, would be coordinated by McNaughton to move forward at 90 metres every three minutes. The infantry would “lean into the barrage” staying within 35-65 metres of the wall of fire. The troops practiced over and over again what became known as the **“Vimy glide”** – a precisely paced advance, one hundred yards every three minutes, behind their own artillery’s creeping barrage. Lieutenant-General Byng warned his men beforehand, *“Chaps, you shall go over exactly like a railroad train, on time, or you shall be annihilated.”*

On March 20, half of the Canadian artillery batteries began preliminary bombardment on the German fortifications, barbed wire, and lines of communication and it lasted for thirteen punishing days. Many of the high-explosive shells were equipped with the new **No. 106 fuse**, which caused the shell to burst on contact with the barb wire, tearing and ripping it to shreds and ripping great gaps in the wire (something the shrapnel shells were ineffective at).

On April 2, one week before the scheduled infantry advance, the full battery of Canadian and British guns opened up on the German positions, pulverizing the front with nearly 2,500 tonnes of ammunition every day. The artillery also carried out feints – creeping barrages, which seemed to signal an attack, or sudden intensifications in certain areas to throw the enemy off guard. A Canadian Observer at Vimy stated, *“Shells poured over our heads like water from a hose.”* As a result, large parts of the enemy trench system, the barbed wire in No Man’s Land and the nearby towns of Thelus, Farbus and Givenchy were destroyed. The seven days before the battle became known by the Germans as the **“Week of Suffering”**. Though the Canadians deluged the German trenches and fortifications with some 1.6 million shells, the Canadians’ task would still be daunting.^{4G, 5A, 7A, 7R, 7Z, 8H, 8U}

Firing from a fixed platform, the **Vickers heavy machine gun** unleashed up to 500 bullets a minute. By tilting the Vickers into the sky, gunners could spray the enemy lines indiscriminately with tens of thousands of bullets. This indirect fire made it difficult for the Germans to repair their trenches and barb wire, hampered the delivery of supplies to the front lines and it filled in the gaps left by artillery fire. From the first week of March onwards, a number of dedicated Vickers machine-gun teams commenced their bullet barrage. Brigade machine guns were grouped together and sixty-four guns fired by day and another sixty-four by night to keep the German front under a hail of bullet fire.^{7Z, 8H}

- **Easter Sunday, April 8, 1917**, dawned as a clear, bright and beautiful spring morning. Behind the lines, the French countryside was at prayer. As streams of fighting troops moved forward toward the din of shellfire, streams of peasants walked to church as bells rang. By the time the sun went down, a chill and cold wind sprang up—an omen of things to come.^{7Z}

On the night of April 8-9, thousands of Canadian infantrymen moved through the gloom, mud and water, wading through the long communication trenches, to the subways, the jumping off trenches and shell holes well out in No Man’s Land—their assault positions for the next morning. The men crouched in the liquid gruel of the crowded trenches and the underground tunnels (eg. the longest tunnels Goodman, ran 1,721 metres and Grange, ran 1,200 metres in length), huddling in the dark, sheltering from the shellfire and harsh cold weather, with the continuous rumble of artillery overhead. On the walls of the tunnels and underground caves, many Canadians used bayonets, other sharp devices, and even pencils to add their names, hometowns, crests, and sayings into the soft chalk walls, possibly a lasting reminder of their existence.

For many that evening, no doubt their thoughts turned to home—to family members going to Easter service and relatives gathering for the traditional Easter dinner. Most men wrote potentially last letters to loved ones, or private notes in their diaries in case their bodies were found.

One of those men was Private John Wesley (Jack) McClung of Alberta, a nineteen year-old member of the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry (PPCLI). Jack McClung had enlisted against his mother's wishes. Facing the grave uncertainty of combat for the first time, he wrote the following in his diary on the eve of the Vimy attack, while waiting in one of the chalk tunnels under the ridge; *Easter Sunday night and we go over the top tomorrow morn at 5:30. I guess a fellow has more sensations and feelings in this short night than in his whole life. I fixed up all my bombs, 15 in all, cleaned rifle, bayonet and ammunition and then sat down. Some fellows are singing songs sacred and otherwise... One fellow has tried to start "Just before the battle Mother." It was a failure. Any other kind of song gets an ovation, but each of us is trying to hide the real state of his mind. I know how much I am thinking about Mother, Dad and all the kids; The sooner I can get back the better and the more I do to help end it, the better!*^{4G, 7Z, 8H, 8U, 9U}

Note: John Wesley (Jack) McClung was the son of Nellie McClung, a famous Canadian social and political activist. John McClung would rise to the rank of Lieutenant in the PPCLI. He survived the war, although with a serious wound.

• **Zero Hour: Easter Monday, April 9, 1917**, was a miserable weather day at Vimy with sleet, rain, and snow driving down in the early morning hours. Dozing soldiers were awakened in the tunnels and trenches for a meal, either warm porridge or cold meat and bread. To calm nerves of the men, battle rum was broken out by the officers in most of the units. The strong, over-proof and thick concoction burned all the way down, offering some warmth to the shaking men. Tense Canadian infantrymen huddled in their start lines in jumping-off trenches and underground tunnels waiting for the "big show" to open up. At 5:28 a.m., as the whispered order to fix bayonets came, 230 Canadian Vickers heavy machine guns tilted their barrels upwards and rained tens of thousands of .303 bullets on enemy crossroads and trenches. The goal was less to kill Germans than to keep them in their dugouts.

At 5:30 a.m., zero hour, a brief silencing of the big guns was followed by the sound of 983 field guns and howitzers and 120 mortars crashing down on the German positions. At the same time, a series of mines were detonated below the defenders, creating miniature volcanoes, adding to the chaos. Also as part of the spectacle, huge drums of burning oil were hurled at the enemy, exploding into flame illuminating the ghastly battlefield.

Twenty-one first-wave Canadian battalions of around 15,000 Canadian soldiers then advanced through the wind-driven snow and sleet into the face of enemy fire. They emerged from the trenches, some standing in mud up to their knees, climbing ladders to go "over the top". Underground tunnel entrances were blown out for other Canadian infantry to surge forward into No Man's Land. With shells soaring overhead, the soldiers advanced through the slimy mud, over countless craters and barbed wire, into the enemy fire. The infantrymen advanced in a straightforward frontal assault, "hugging their barrage," moving 90 metres every three minutes to keep pace with advancing curtain of steel and fire. Officers tried to scream commands but nothing could be heard above the din of shells overhead that sounded like trains passing in continuous runs.

Lieutenant Gregory Clark, a platoon commander in the 4th Canadian Mounted Rifles described the experience of advancing behind the creeping barrage; *"In one sense, it was a beautiful sight. It was still quite dark. Sleet was falling. There before us, frightfully close, was the edge of hell. It blazed, flashed and flickered, the bursting shells; and white and coloured flares were fired frantically by a distracted enemy. And the flashing, flickering lights showed an infernal wall of twisting, boiling smoke and flame, against which stood out the distorted silhouettes of men advancing into it."*

Private Lewis Duncan, in a letter to his aunt, described his experience; *"5:30 came and a great light lit the place, a light made up of innumerable flickering tongues, which appeared from the void and extended as far to the south as the eye could see, a light which rippled and lit the clouds in that moment of silence before the crash and thunder of the battle smote the senses. Then the Ridge in front was wreathed in flame as the shells burst, confining the Germans to their dugouts while our men advanced to the assault."*

Most of the battalions went into the line with between 650 to 700 men, while about 10 percent of the fighting force was "Left Out of Battle", as the official policy was called, to rebuild the battalions should they be savaged. Staff Sergeant Percy Willmot of the 25th Battalion was one of those Left Out of Battle. On the day of the assault he wrote, *"During 18 months of warfare I have become more or less deadened to feeling and emotion, but I could not*

prevent the tears from rolling down my cheeks, and the choking in my throat for the cheery lads who were marching away, many of them never to return.” ^{4G, 5A, 7Z, 8H}

With tens of thousands of shells, and hundreds of thousands of bullets whirling over their heads, the infantry advanced toward their objectives through the sleet, rain and through mud that in some places was thigh deep. Wearing heavy greatcoats, the ordinary private carried his rifle, 120 rounds of ammunition, two Mills bombs, five sandbags, forty-eight hours’ rations, a water-proof sheet, gas mask, smoke helmet, a ground flare, a filled waterbottle, and a pick or a shovel. They stumbled and pushed forward through the shroud of smoke and explosions, around deep craters and sinkholes, over shell-holes and barbed wire, past corpses and falling comrades, some screaming for help, into the jaws of the enemy counter-barrage, chemical shells, machine gunners, mortars, stick grenades, small-arms and sniper fire.

Directly behind the first wave, ankle deep in water, caked in mud, bayonets fixed, a supporting wave of 12,000 more infantrymen fidgeted and blew on chilled fingers as they waited their turn to advance. And behind them were 70,000 more troops—gunners, stretcher-bearers, surgeons, cooks, transport drivers, mule-skinners, foresters, engineers, signalmen and runners—all hived in a maze of tunnels, dugouts, sunken roads and trenches behind the front lines.

Private William Pecover wrote the following in his memoirs; *“Moving forward in the full light of that clouded April morning, we learned full well the nature of the great modern battlefield. This was war... The wounded, friend and foe alike, lay everywhere about in the cold, wet mud, silent and helpless in their agony or crying out for help to the stretcher-bearers who fanned out behind the attacking waves. And just ahead of us roared the barrage and all the fury of the fight - the death rattle of the machine guns, bursting overhead, shrapnel and counter fire from the enemy guns - all of the fiendish implements of death that man had devised. In contrast, the conquered area through which we passed seemed strangely quiet. Here death reigned, and the agony of pain.”* ^{7Z, 8H}

Following behind and sometimes through the first units were other clusters of men. This included the “mopper-uppers”, who cleared strongpoints of the enemy that had been bypassed by the lead units. Many of the enemy were holed up in their deep dugouts. Mopping up involved bombing sheltering dugouts, attacking pockets of resistance, disarming prisoners and sending them to the rear under escort, and fighting the bitter-enders. Other clusters of men were “carrying parties”, marching steadfastly forward lugging mortars, picks, shovels, ammunition, water and bombs. Other men were “runners”, carrying messages, and others were “flag wavers” who would signal to low-flying aircraft when an objective was reached. Adding to this, traipsing through the Canadian lines were another group of soldiers, dejected and in mud-stained grey uniforms, were surrendering Germans. They were sent back without escorts, some were used as stretcher-bearers.

- Along the far right edge of the battlefield, Currie’s **1st Division** swept along 4 kilometres (the longest advance) of the most gentle terrain; advancing through three sets of front line trenches, a second defence system half-way up the slope (Zwischen Stellung trench), and a German strong-point known as the Chain Trench. The 1st Division successfully reached their final objective at the outskirts of Farbus and Farbus Wood at 1:30 pm.

The **2nd Division** advanced through a shorter distance (3.2 km) but steeper slope; also through three sets of front line trenches, the second defence system (Turko Graben trench), over the hamlet of Les Tilleuls and the ruins of Thelus, and a series of support trenches. They successfully reached their final objective of a belt of woods along the base of the ridge on the German side at the village of Farbus at a little before 2:00 pm.

The **3rd Division** advanced an even shorter distance (1.2 km) and steeper slope; advancing through three sets of front line trenches, and successfully reached its final objective in La Folie Wood by 8:00 am. With its main attack over in just two and a half hours, the division faced an unexpected hazard—on its left flank, the 4th Division hadn’t yet seized the heavily fortified German defences on Hill 145. The battalions found themselves exposed to merciless fire, raining down on them from the highest point on the ridge. Though the 2nd and 3rd Divisions had shorter distances to advance than the 1st, they sustained higher casualties. Only one of the four Canadian divisions failed to conquer all its objectives by noon.

At the far left, the **4th Division** faced the shortest distance, 700 metres, but the hardest climb and the best-defended section—up against “Hill 145” (its height in metres), the highest point on the ridge. Planners had badly underestimated the strength of this section; did not realize the Germans had a carefully camouflaged network of concrete machine-gun nests; erred in asking its artillery to leave one German trench undamaged; and were under fire

on the left flank from “The Pimple”. By mid-morning it had become terribly clear that the 4th Division’s Vimy assault was in chaos, with few of the attackers able to reach their objectives, and many who did had been hurled back. As 4th Division casualties grew (the highest number of the four divisions), in order for the set-piece attack to be successful, Hill 145 on the right flank had to be taken that day.

The decision was made to send in fresh troops—the only source, the 85th Battalion, better known as the **Nova Scotia Highlanders**, a work battalion, not a fighting unit. Exchanging picks and shovels for rifles, machine guns and grenades, at 6:45 p.m., with no covering barrage, two companies of Nova Scotians made a heroic frontal bayonet charge against fortified machine-gun positions on Hill 145. As men were cut down by a hail of enemy fire, the Nova Scotians firing rifles and Lewis guns from the hip, did not falter, crashing through the German lines bayonets first, shooting, stabbing, and clubbing the enemy. Within one hour, the Highlanders had captured the upper ridge of Hill 145, and the last strongpoint on the ridge was in Canadian hands as the sun went down. By the end of the first day, most of the crest, save for the Pimple, was in Canadian hands.^{4G, 5A, 7Z, 8H, 8U}

- The first day Vimy operation had been terribly costly, with thousands of casualties suffered. Four Victoria Crosses were awarded to Canadians for uncommon valour that day, three of them posthumously. A member of the 2nd Division, as he made his way into the fight at about 9 a.m. on the opening day recounted, *“Wounded men (were) sprawled everywhere in the slime, in the shell holes, in the mine craters, some screaming to the skies, some lying silently, some begging for help, some struggling to keep from drowning in (water-filled) craters, the field swarming with stretcher-bearers trying to keep up with the casualties.”*^{2N}

April 9, 1917 was the **single bloodiest day** of the entire war for the Canadian Corps, and the bloodiest in all of Canadian military history (10,000+ killed and wounded): worse than Beaumont Hamel on July 1, 1916; worse than Dieppe on August 19, 1942; worse than D-Day on June 6, 1944; in fact, worse than all three combined.^{4G, 7R, 7Z, 8H} Two Samians lost their lives on that first day; Frederick Johnson and David Kerr.

Over the course of a miserable April 9 night of cold and snow, stretcher-bearers worked without sleep trying to clear the battlefield and provide hasty first aid while trying to avoid enemy sniper fire and shelling. On the next day, **April 10**, there was no rest for the 4th Division, as the eastern slope of Hill 145 and the woods at its base were still held by the enemy. In the mid-afternoon April 10, two battalions of the 10th Brigade (4th Division—50th and 44th Battalions), advanced following a creeping barrage, and successfully drove the remaining defenders off the lower eastern slope of Hill 145 and from the La Folie Woods at its base. Canadians had captured the highest and most heavily defended feature on the ridge—Hill 145.

On the third day, **April 11**, the Canadians had time to lick their wounds, a full twenty-four hours of rest, reorganization, consolidation and digging in. Waking up to everything covered in a thick blanket of snow and the temperature dropping, reserve battalions moved up to relieve the exhausted men in the front lines. Across a valley at the northern edge of the ridge stood another German stronghold—the “Pimple”, a high point of about 135 metres. Strengthened with concrete pillboxes and bristling with hidden snipers and machine guns, it was a maze of tunnels, dugouts, holes, trenches, and entanglements, all carefully camouflaged and protected by mines, barbed wire and booby traps.

On the fourth day, **April 12**, the Canadian 44th, 46th and 50th battalions were assigned the task of completing the job. In the early morning still dark hours of April 12, in a raging snowstorm, the three Canadian battalions advanced behind a creeping barrage and were able to successfully capture the “Pimple” in less than two hours. A member of the 50th Battalion that had attacked “The Pimple” wrote the following; *“From the very first minute of the attack we came under murderous and hellish fire from the machine guns... we lost about 30 per cent of the fighting forces before we got into his green line of trenches and then went into hand-to-hand fighting... As we looked back up that ridge in the early dawn we witnessed a scene never to be forgotten. The entire face of the hill was covered with German green and Canadian khaki. Men lay out there in that blood-soaked field, some dead, some dying.”*^{4G}

- In the days following the capture of the ridge, part of the sobering work carried out by the infantry involved scouring the battlefield for their fallen comrades, collecting information on the dead (especially the two-part identification disk, known as a dog tag in the next war), sewing them in their blankets, and burying them in mass graves. The dead were often buried where they lay, in communal graves in mine craters and shell holes—as many as one hundred to a single grave.

• **The Cost:** Of the 97,000 Canadians who fought at Vimy Ridge, approximately 7,004 were wounded and 3,598 lost their lives in four days of battle. Added to that number were another 9,553 casualties suffered at Vimy in the months before the battle due to sniper fire, artillery fire, and trench raids.^{4G, 5J, 7R, 7Z, 8H, 8U}

At least four young men from Sarnia gave their lives in the four-day Battle of Vimy Ridge, including; Frederick Johnson, David Kerr, Roy Lumley and David Montgomery.

As mentioned earlier, the Battle of Vimy Ridge was part of a larger British Empire offensive, the Battle of Arras, from April 9 to May 16, 1917. The capture of Vimy Ridge would be the sole successful operation in the slaughter and stalemate of the Battle of Arras. Though the British suffered over 150,000 wounded, missing or killed while the Germans incurred between 130,000-160,000 casualties, the Battle of Arras is generally considered a British victory due largely to the capture of Vimy Ridge. Following the battle, the Germans built new defensive positions and the stalemate resumed. Though the Battle of Vimy Ridge was a seminal battle and significant victory for Canada, it was not a turning point or breakthrough in the war. After 2 ½ years of losses and stalemates, Vimy was a much-needed Allied victory—one that the Canadians delivered.

• **Vimy News in Sarnia:** On the front page of April 13, 1917 edition of the *Sarnia Weekly Observer*, local citizens read the special cable to the *Observer* with the headline, “*All Canada’s Troops Are in The Big Fight Now*” - *The Canadians have smashed the German lines again. Trenches were taken one mile south of Vimy in an impetuous dash. All four Canadian Divisions are engaged in the present battle of Arras. General British advance continues.*

A second headline read, “*How the Canadians Stormed Vimy Ridge*”, with subheadings, “*Cheering, Singing and Confident They Swept Up the Slopes of the German Stronghold Through Snow Storm*” and “*They Clear the Way for Victory Along the Whole Line – Seven Lieut-Colonels and 3,000 Men Surrender*”.

Following is a portion from that news report (dated April 10):

...The manner which the British have advanced over scores of German trenches which the Germans must have believed would protect them indefinitely has been little short of miraculous. The Germans themselves have been amazed at the audacity of the invaders and have surrendered with an air of complete mystification.

The success of the attack launched yesterday against some of the strongest sections of the German lines of the entire Western Front seems to prove the fact that the artillery has finally solved the problem of entrenched warfare. It has taken months and years of preparation, but when the guns were finally massed against the Germans’ front they hammered it into submission... Today the intrepid airmen were covering the advance everywhere, keeping the troops advised of enemy movements and enabling the British artillery to shell every area where concentrations appeared to be taking place. The day was anything but ideal for flying. It was blustery from sunrise to sunset and furious snow squalls were in the air at half-hour intervals... Tonight the Canadians triumphantly announced that the famous Vimy Ridge had been cleared of all Germans. Vimy Ridge has been an historic battleground in this war. The country on either side is dotted with graveyards, in which lie tens of thousands of French and German soldiers, who gave up their lives in the fight, either to take or to hold this imposing position. The British, too, have tasted the bitterness of the battles there, and the Canadians had been holding on to a slender position on the western slope all winter only by the display of the most tenacious courage.

In connection with the new offensive it was determined that Vimy must fall. The ridge positions had been flayed by an incessant bombardment for ten days and nights, when yesterday at dawn the Canadians climbed out of their lowly trenches and began moving toward the top of it. They fought their way from the foot to the crest before mid-afternoon yesterday; today they swept down the farther slope, and now dominate the enemy remaining in the Douai plains... More than three thousand Germans in the Vimy garrison, including one hundred officers, fell into Canadian hands before sunset last night.

The Canadians did not for a moment underestimate the seriousness of the task before them in taking Vimy. They knew that the artillery had paved the way to success, but were frankly surprised when they saw what the guns had actually done. They found hundreds of Germans holding up their hands over the bodies of their fallen comrades and begging for something to eat. These men said they had been cut off for days from all supplies by the steadiness of the artillery fire. They could not retire, and no relief supply columns from the rear ever reached the region where the shells had been falling in continuous showers...

Also on the front page of the April 13, 1917 *Sarnia Weekly Observer* was a report from Stewart Lyons, a special correspondent of the Canadian Press at Canadian headquarters in France. Following is a portion of that report:

...Now that the list of casualties from the last week are beginning to appear in the Canadian Press, it may

bring solace to the sad hearts to know how carefully the wounded were handled and reverently the dead were buried. Hospital arrangements were made to handle far more than the number actually wounded. Extra ambulances were provided at the front, and many supplementary dressing stations were opened. There was little congestion anywhere. Over two thousand who were wounded on the first day were able to walk back to the stations without aid. Sorrowing relatives in Canada of the unreturning brave men may take comfort in the fact that their dead have been cared for as reverently as if they had been laid to rest in the family plot at home...

In the same April 13, 1917 edition of the *Sarnia Weekly Observer*, Sarnians learned the news that the: “149th Battalion Arrives Safely in England”. The 149th Battalion, based out of Watford, was the only unit raised exclusively in Lambton County. They were part of a total of over 8,100 Canadian troops from across the country to arrive in England at that time. More information on the Lambton 149th Battalion is on page 86.

- **A Cross at Vimy:** In the aftermath of the Vimy battle, many of the Canadian units erected memorials or built monuments to mark the sacrifices. Following is a portion of a letter written by Captain Thomas McGill, who was an accountant with the Canadian Bank of Commerce in Kingston prior to enlisting in the war in 1915. Thomas wrote the letter in early July 1917 from France to Charles Foster, who edited the pamphlet “Letters from the Front,” which followed the fortunes of Canadian soldier-bankers throughout the war. Captain Thomas McGill was present in early July 1917 with about 100 men for the unveiling of the 3rd Divisions memorial:

Dear Mr. Foster,

... Have you seen in the papers that a cross has been erected on the highest point of Vimy Ridge by the Third Division to commemorate the loss of our men in the battle? I was at the ceremony and greatly impressed. There were only about one hundred there altogether. It took place at twelve noon. Sharp on the tick of twelve all the big guns in our area fired three volleys at the German lines as a salute, while the men all present presented arms. Then the ceremony began; a hymn, a prayer, a lesson, the Lord's Prayer, a dirge by the pipes, the funeral march by the band and then 'God Save the King.' I have never seen men stand straighter or with their heads more proudly lifted, for each felt that a little bit of his own heart was buried there too. During all the ceremony we stood with our backs to the German lines, clearly visible below us though a mile or so distant, and between the cross and them; but when we sang 'God Save the King' we turned our faces again to the front. The bands had been warned to play softly lest it draw fire upon us, but, when that came, discretion was thrown to the winds and I hope our challenge reached them. Then we saluted the cross and left it there, looking down towards the trenches we took that day on one side and on the other across a mile or so of valley towards the present front lines. Altogether it was a very satisfactory little ceremony, and one felt less poignantly as he passed a little wooden cross which read, 'Here lies an unknown Canadian who fell in action, 9th April, 1917.' ^{7A, 8H}

- **THE CANADIAN NATIONAL VIMY MEMORIAL:** In early 1919, the Battle Exploits Memorials Commission in England, began work on selecting a number of battle sites for war memorials, including to Canadian forces. Canadian officials identified eight sites that were important to the Canadian Corps (5 in France, 3 in Belgium). In September 1920, the Canadian Battlefields Memorials Commission (CBMC) was created to oversee the erection of the memorials and to set competition rules to find an architectural design for the overseas sites. Originally, the decision was that each battlefield would be treated equally, so all eight sites would be graced with identical monuments. Some 160 design drawings were submitted, which was shortlisted to seventeen finalists. Each of those artists was given \$500 to prepare a plaster 3-D model of their proposal. One design was so stunningly different that the jury quickly suggested it not as a model for all eight battlefield memorials, but as Canada's one and only national war memorial in Europe. In October 1921, Canadian sculptor Walter Allwards' design was chosen to be the national war memorial.

Walter Seymour Allward, born 1876 in Toronto, resided in Toronto during the war, and experienced first-hand the fear and grief felt by Canadians who had sent their sons and neighbours into battle, some never to return. Following is Allward's description of the dream he had that inspired the Vimy monument:

When things were at their blackest in France, I went to sleep one night after dwelling on all the muck and misery over there, my spirit was like a thing tormented... I dreamed I was in a great battlefield. I saw our men going in by the thousands and being mowed down by the sickles of death... Suffering beyond endurance at the sight, I turned my eyes and found myself looking down an avenue of poplars. Suddenly through the avenue I saw thousands marching to aid our armies. They were the dead. They rose in masses, filed silently by and entered the fight to aid the living. So vivid was this impression, that when I awoke it stayed with me for months. Without the dead we were helpless. So I have tried to show this in this monument to Canada's fallen, what we owed them and we will forever owe them. ^{D, 21, 2J, 3R}

The CBMC then had to decide which of the eight battle sites to place Allward's memorial. Originally, it recommended that the memorial should be erected at Hill 62 in the Ypres salient, near the site of the June 1916 Battle of Mont Sorrel in Belgium. The Vimy site had its detractors, including Sir Arthur Currie. It was Canadian Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King that made the difference in the memorial site choice. He believed Vimy Ridge was "hallowed ground" and the right site for "Canada's altar on European soil." In June 1922, the French government ceded to Canada, "freely and for all time to the Government of Canada the free use of a parcel of 100 hectares located on Vimy Ridge" according to the treaty, in perpetuity to honour the country's sacrifice on behalf of France during the war. By December 1922, the decision was made to locate the Allward memorial at Vimy Ridge.^{8H}

It took 2.5 years to clear the fields surrounding the monument site of unexploded bombs, artillery shells, grenades and human remains. It took Allward over three years to select a stone that was the right type for his monument. After visiting numerous quarries and inspecting other memorials and cathedrals throughout France, Italy, Spain, and England, he eventually chose a limestone known as Seget, obtained from an ancient quarry near Split in Yugoslavia. It was not until 1926 that the decision was made to inscribe the names of Canada's missing along the front walls and up the staircase. Allward even designed his own lettering, and it took four years to sandblast all the names in continuous bands into the stone. Along the main road to the memorial, 650 maple trees that had been sent from Canada were planted. In total, it took 14 years to create the monument, from design to completion. In one lull in construction, parts of the Canadian and German front line trenches were preserved—sand bags were filled with concrete and concrete replica duckboards were laid down, and a portion of the Grange Subway was opened and made safe for tourists.^{5A, 8H, 8U}

The Canadian National Vimy Memorial (it's official title) sits atop Hill 145, the main height on the Ridge. It stands as a tribute to all who served Canada in battle and risked or gave their lives in the Great War. The twin 30-metre pillars of white stone, rising from the ground where soldiers were mired during the fighting, represent France and Canada joined together in friendship. On and around the memorial are twenty allegorical figures representing *Truth, Faith, Hope, The Defenders, Honour, Charity, Grieving, Knowledge* and the two figures at the pinnacle; *Justice and Peace*. There is also a central figure in the front of the sheltering pillars, ***Canada Bereft***, also known as "Mother Canada". Standing alone, with head bowed, holding wilting lilies, and peering at a sarcophagus below, she weeps for her fallen sons. Above the tomb is a single plaque that reads in English and French, "TO THE VALOUR OF THEIR COUNTRYMEN IN THE GREAT WAR AND IN MEMORY OF THEIR SIXTY THOUSAND DEAD THIS MONUMENT IS RAISED BY THE PEOPLE OF CANADA."

On the ramparts of the memorial are inscribed the names of 11,285 Canadian soldiers killed in France whose final resting place is unknown, who were listed as "missing, presumed dead" – an army of the dead that will stand together for all time. Unlike many war memorials, the Vimy memorial has no rifles, no soldiers, no helmets, no symbols of fighting and victory. Canadian historian and author Tim Cook described the Vimy Memorial as, "*a monument to peace, not victory, an homage to loss and death, and a call to remembrance.*"^{8H, 8U} At least twenty-eight young men from Sarnia have their names inscribed on the Canadian National Vimy Memorial in France: Ralph Ackerman, Robert Batey, Cameron Bissett, Norman Brearley, Frederick Chester, Stewart Cowan, Jesse Croucher, William Eddy, Fred Edwards, Roy Fair, Albert Fitzgerald, Peter Ford, George Giles, George Gray, Percival Guertin, George Hall, George Harris, Amos Iveson, Frederick Johnson, Albert Ketch, Thomas Knowles, Charles Major, Andrew McIntosh, John McMutrie, Albert Rodber, Daniel Thomson, Bertrand Weatherill and Andrew Wyseman.



The Canadian National Vimy Memorial

- **Vimy Memorial Unveiled:** Vimy fever reached its peak in 1936 in the most remarkable peacetime outpouring of national fervor the country had yet seen. The Vimy Memorial was unveiled by King Edward VIII on a warm, sunny July 26, 1936 afternoon before a crowd of more than 100,000 spectators, including more than 6,200 Canadian veterans and their families who, at the height of the Depression, paid their way across the Atlantic to stand on Vimy Ridge. The journey—the largest ever peacetime movement of people from Canada to Europe—required five ocean liners for them all, and was properly called a **pilgrimage**. Among the pilgrims were 50 Silver Cross mothers and widows, women who had lost sons or husbands in the war. Many of the elderly women travelled alone, though they found solace in each other's company on the ships. The Canadian Radio Broadcasting Commission (forerunner of the CBC) broadcast the unveiling ceremony live to Canada over the national radio network, while the British shortwave broadcast was heard worldwide.^{7Z, 8H}

On July 26, 1936 in Sarnia, Sarnians observed Vimy Day in Sarnia and Port Huron. In a morning ceremony, a delegation of members of the Canadian Legion, Sarnia branch, and a number of veterans, visited the memorial stone at Lakeview cemetery, placing a wreath in memory of those who fell at Vimy Ridge. In the afternoon, approximately 200 locals, including members of the Canadian Legion, Sarnia branch, the Lambton Regiment, the Imperial Pipe Band, the Ladies Auxiliary and veterans from Sarnia, Petrolia, Forest and Wallaceburg attended a Vimy memorial service and parade in Port Huron. The ceremony was primarily in honour of deceased members of the 42nd Rainbow Division of Michigan, but was made into a dual celebration to celebrate Vimy Day. Among the speakers at the event were George Stirrett, representative of the Canadian Legion, and Major William Doohan, representative of the Lambton Regiment. American, Canadian, British, Belgian and even several German veterans also attended the event.

The next day, the *Sarnia Canadian Observer* dedicated an entire page to the Vimy Memorial unveiling and pilgrimage under the headline, "Canada Pays Homage To Heroic Dead At Vimy Ridge". The page featured a number of stories with headings that included: King Unveils War Memorial For Dominion; Into Battle (with details of the battle and infantrymen); Memorial Facts; Battle Scars are Healed on Quiet Somme - Pilgrims Recall Scenes of Great Triumph and of Sorrow; Mons Greets Men Who Won City Freedom; Veterans Visit Former Billets; and Lt-Gen. Sir Arthur Currie. The following days' front page *Observer* headline read, "A Nation Mourns and Remembers - Canadian Pilgrims Scatter After Rendezvous With Memory At the Unveiling Of the Vimy Memorial". The story began with, "Canadian pilgrims – veterans and their kin – turned toward home today, or scattered on special journeys to fields of their own choosing, scenes of old battles and acres of fading crosses..."

- **1936 World events:** At the same time as the Vimy Memorial was being unveiled, new conflicts were arising in Europe. A vicious civil war was beginning in Spain, fought between the Republicans (supported by the Soviet Union and Mexico) and the Nationalists (supported by Nazi Germany and Italy). The civil war would last almost three years and result in hundreds of thousands being killed.

A revitalized Germany was under Nazi control, its' leader dictator Adolf Hitler had been appointed Chancellor in 1933. With the Gestapo, SS secret police and concentration camps already established, and the Nuremberg Laws enacted, in November 1936 Hitler mandated that all males ages 10-18 must join the Hitler Youth. In March 1936, a remilitarized Germany would reoccupy the Rhineland (on the border with France). Neither Britain or France acted on this direct contravention of the Treaty of Versailles.

Also in 1936, Italy who under its' dictator Benito Mussolini, had invaded Abyssinia (now Ethiopia) in October 1935, won a major victory there in April 1936, and took its capital in May 1936. Once again, Britain, France and the League of Nations were ineffective in responding to this aggression. In November 1936, Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy announced a Rome-Berlin Axis, and later in the month, Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan signed an Anti-Comintern Pact directed against the Soviet Union. As well in November 1936, Japanese backed forces attacked a province in China in the Suiyuan Campaign. All these events set the stage for a looming worldwide conflict.

- **Vimy Memorial destroyed?:** Three years later, after invading Czechoslovakia, Germany invaded Poland on September 1, 1939, marking the beginning of World War II. In 1940, Germany invaded Denmark, Norway, Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and France. Soon after the Allied troops evacuated from Dunkirk, the French surrendered in late June 1940. Before the French surrender, Canadian newspapers reported on June 1 that the Vimy Memorial had been blown up by the Germans. A front page headline in the June 1, 1940 *Sarnia Canadian Observer* read, "Report Canada's Memorial Atop Vimy Ridge Smashed to Pieces By Nazi Bombs". Following is a portion of that story:

Canada's memorial to her First Great War Dead atop Vimy Ridge has been smashed to pieces in deliberate bombing attacks by the Germans, according to British Tommies returned from the hell of the fighting in Flanders.

One soldier, weary and battle stained after the bitter rearguard action of the Allies, told his story a few hours after landing in England. "I stood near the memorial and saw German dive bombers sweep down and release a load of bombs over the memorial. It was completely shattered. The attack was obviously deliberate."

... An eye-witness to the destruction of the memorial said the planes returned later and bombed British, French and Canadian military cemeteries in the vicinity of Vimy Ridge, blasting the tiny crosses into fragments and wrecking the graves...

Also on the front page of the *Sarnia Observer* was a story on Allward's response to the news, with the headline, "Report Shocks Vimy Sculptor". Following is a portion of that story:

Sculptor Walter S. Allward today received with great sadness eyewitness reports from London that German bombers deliberately shattered Canada's Vimy war memorial, which he designed and on which he labored for 14 years... "I only hope the reports are not true," the 65-year-old sculptor told the Canadian Press at his home in suburban York Mills. "It seemed inevitable, however, that this terrible thing would happen in these terrible days. The Huns have gone quite mad... The memorial, you know is in an open field. It isn't in the heart of a village and there aren't any military objectives nearby – only the cemeteries in the neighbourhood and clear ground all around."...

Expressing hope that the memorial might not be beyond repair, Allward added, "But that is in the hands of the gods. This is a sad commentary on civilization," he continued, his voice husky with emotion. "I really can't say any more about it at the present time."

Outraged Canadians learned within a few days that the memorial had not been destroyed. Several days later, they learned that Hitler had visited Vimy, and several newspapers featured a photograph of the Fuhrer, in his greatcoat and peaked hat, inspecting the memorial with his entourage of conquering generals. During the course of the war, the Nazi's destroyed many of the memorials belonging to the Allies, but the Vimy memorial survived thanks to an order by Hitler. Hitler actually served in the First World War and in a strange twist, his unit was scheduled to be sent to Vimy Ridge just weeks before the Canadian attack. However, at the last minute there was a change and his unit was dispatched to a location a few kilometres away. He had a special respect for Vimy and admired the monument, and he was also concerned about the 45,000 German soldiers buried nearby.

Over the course of the Second World War, the Vimy Memorial remained standing in occupied France, unseen and unvisited by Canadians. French civilians in the Arras area continued to honour the dead at Vimy by laying wreaths at the memorial on Vimy Day and Remembrance Day. After defeating the Germans in the Battle of Normandy, Canadians rejoiced at the welcome news that Vimy Ridge had been recaptured by a British armoured regiment on September 1, 1944. Canadian General Harry Crerar, a Vimy veteran and Commander of the Canadian First Army, visited the site that day. In November 1944, a special Remembrance Day ceremony was held at the memorial by Canadian representatives and the people of Arras, at which the memorial was decorated with flowers and some 500 school children were present.^{5A, 8H}

• **Vimy Memorial 2007 Rededication:** Over the decades after World War II, neglect, wear from tourists, and the elements—wind, rain, sleet and temperature fluctuations all took their toll on the Vimy Memorial. Sculptures and walls became faded and discoloured or darkened from mould; there were cracks in the masonry; joints had weakened; there were lime deposits; the base was crumbling; stones had disfigured; and many of the inscribed names had eroded.

In 2002, the Government of Canada launched a major project to restore Canada's memorial sites in Belgium and France, including the Vimy Memorial. Work began in 2003 with a team that included architects, engineers, stonemasons, and forestry and landscape experts. The memorial was shrouded for two years as much of it was taken apart piece by piece. Restoration included dismantling and rebuilding stone structures, cleaning, sealing the concrete, replacing and re-engraving damaged stone, and adding new stone in place of older stone that couldn't be restored.

Following the extensive multi-year restoration, on April 9, 2007, Queen Elizabeth II rededicated the Vimy Memorial (just as her uncle Edward VIII had unveiled it in the summer of 1936), at a ceremony commemorating the 90th anniversary of the battle. The crowd attending the rededication ceremony was the largest crowd on the site since the 1936 dedication. With only a handful of Canadian Great War veterans still alive, and all of them over 100 years of age, there would be no eyewitnesses from the battle. The last Vimy veteran, an underage soldier who served with the 43rd Battalion, had died in May 2004, at age 105. Among the 20,000+ attendees were several thousand Canadian

high school students, each carrying with them the story of a soldier who fought or fell in the war. The ceremony was broadcast live across the country on radio and television. The 90th anniversary would elevate Vimy into the social consciousness: it inspired a number of films, books and a play; the Royal Canadian Mint struck a commemorative thirty-dollar silver coin; the Canadian Forces, fighting in Afghanistan since late 2001, created a new Sacrifice Medal for killed and wounded service members (with an image of mourning *Canada Bereft* from the Vimy Memorial); and Parliament reaffirmed April 9 as Vimy Ridge Day. Following are portions of Queen Elizabeth's rededication speech:

"In any national story there are moments and places, sometimes far from home, which in retrospect can be seen as fixed points about which the course of history turns, moments which distinguish that nation forever. Those who seek the foundations of Canada's distinction would do well to begin here at Vimy... Within just a few hours, on that cold and gloomy Easter morning, the Canadians became masters of this ridge, managing what most thought impossible... the Canadian Corps transformed Vimy Ridge from a symbol of despair into a source of inspiration. After two and a half years of deadly stalemate, it now seemed possible that the Allies would prevail and peace might one day be restored... The victory at Vimy allowed Canada, who deserved it so much, to take its rightful place on the international scene as a proud, sovereign nation, strong and free."^{D, 8H, 8T}

Interest in the Vimy rededication/90th anniversary ceremony was further intensified by events coinciding with Canada's military operations at the time. The Vimy ceremony was set against Canada's military operations going on in Afghanistan at the time. Canadian Forces were working to destroy the terrorist al Qaeda and Taliban organizations, and to try to bring some semblance of order and stability to that nation.

On April 8, 2007, one day before the Vimy ceremony, six Canadian soldiers were killed in combat in Afghanistan. The interplay of Vimy and Afghanistan created new meaning for the old battle.^{8H} One of the Canadian soldiers killed on April 8 was from Sarnia/Cambridge – **Corporal Brent Poland** of the Royal Canadian Regiment. Corporal Poland's story is included in the Afghanistan Peacekeeping section of this Project on page 1148.

• **The Birth of a Nation:** Immediately after the 1917 Vimy battle, those who were there understood it was a significant victory. In letters home, framing it as a Canadian victory, soldiers took great pride in telling how they took one of the enemies' greatest strongholds, one that the British and French had failed to take in two years. The Old Country immigrants, new to Canada, who had thought of themselves as British, now thought of themselves as Canadian. As one Brit said, *"I never felt like a Canadian until Vimy, after that I was a Canadian all the way."* Canadian newspapers, along with British, French and even American papers enthusiastically extolled the Canadian victory. The *New York Times* wrote that the battle would be "in Canada's history, one of the great days, a day of glory to furnish inspiration to her sons for generations."

For Canadians, the significance and interest in Vimy Ridge has ebbed and flowed over the generations. In the 1920's, Vimy was very significant for the veterans and family members who sacrificed, who were trying to make sense of the war. Vimy fever reached a peak in 1936 with the unveiling of the Vimy Memorial. After the "necessary war" against Hitler's tyranny, it was largely forgotten. In the mid-1960's, it gained attention with Canada's Centennial and Vimy's 50th anniversary. Interest in celebrating military history and honouring veterans really faded in the late 60's and early 70's due to a variety of cultural and social reasons. In 1992, on the 75th anniversary of Vimy and when it was designated a national historic site, there was a resurgence of interest. The legend of Vimy was rejuvenated at the 2007 rededication/90th anniversary, and again in April 2017 at the 100th anniversary of the battle and the 150th anniversary of the country.

The victory at Vimy Ridge was the pinnacle of Canadian military achievement, igniting a sense of national pride from coast to coast, and a confidence that Canada could stand on its own as a nation. Vimy was the turning point in the war for the Canadian Corps. It was the first major Allied victory of the war on the Western Front, in which the Canadians captured more ground, more prisoners, and more guns than any previous operation, all of which had been done against the heaviest of odds. According to historian and author J.L. Granatstein, *"For the soldiers, no matter from where they came, no matter their origin, no matter how short a time they had lived in Canada, after Vimy they were all Canadians and bloody proud of the shoulder flashes and cap badges that proclaimed their allegiance."*^{5J} From Vimy onward, the Canadians never lost another set-piece or major engagement, delivering victory after victory, and often against the most formidable of defensive positions. By war's end, the Canadian Corps had fully earned their reputation as elite "shock troops".^{4G, 7Z, 8H, 8U}

Brigadier-General Alexander Ross, a battalion commander at Vimy, recounted in 1967 (on the 50th Anniversary of the battle) his feelings when he watched the Canadian troops advance and capture Vimy Ridge: *"It*

was Canada from the Atlantic to the Pacific on parade. I thought then that in those few minutes I witnessed the birth of a nation."^{D, 8H} In April 2003, the Government of Canada declared that the date April 9 would annually be known as "**Vimy Ridge Day**".

- **The Sarnia Vimy Ridge Memorial:** The idea for this memorial was initiated by City of Sarnia supervisor of forestry/horticulture Chuck Toth, as a way to commemorate the 100th Anniversary of the Battle of Vimy Ridge. With the full support of Sarnia 1st Hussars Association, along with Ken Hall, Tom Slater, Lou Giancarlo and Tom St. Amand, the Vimy Ridge Memorial was unveiled in April 2017. Located on the west side of the Sarnia cenotaph, it includes a Vimy memorial park bench (created in Scotland); and a Vimy Ridge storyboard providing information on the Battle, the Canadian National Vimy Memorial, the Vimy Ridge English Oaks and the Sarnia sacrifices at this battle. Also on the west side of the cenotaph, four English oak trees were planted to commemorate the four soldiers inscribed on the Sarnia cenotaph who lost their lives in the Battle of Vimy Ridge. The oak trees are significant in that they are representative of the Vimy Oaks Project. More information on the Vimy Ridge Memorial is on page 19.

- **VIMY OAKS:** One of the men at Vimy Ridge in April 1917 was Canadian Expeditionary Force soldier **Lieutenant Leslie H. Miller**. Born on October 5, 1889 on the family farm in Scarborough, Ontario, his goal had been to be a teacher. Following his studies at the University of Toronto, he moved to Saskatchewan to teach. It was there in October 1914 that he enlisted, and after training in England, he arrived in France in October 1915. He would serve as a communications specialist in the Signal Corps, assigned to the 5th Battalion.

Over the course of the Battle of Vimy Ridge, nearly every tree in the once-forested area was destroyed. After the Battle was won, many soldiers realized that they had been part of something truly great. Lt. Leslie Miller looked around for a souvenir on the Ridge, which was completely devoid of structures or vegetation due to shellfire, but he did find a half buried dying English oak tree. This species of oak was native to Europe and were present on the Vimy Ridge area before they were destroyed in the war. Leslie Miller gathered up a handful of acorns and shipped them home to Canada. His father planted the handful of salvaged acorns on the Scarborough family farm. Leslie Miller, not knowing if he would survive to see them, was wounded twice but did survive the war.

Upon returning to Canada, for health reasons, Leslie Miller was unable to resume his teaching career. He enrolled at the University of Toronto with a major in modern languages, but his formal education was cut short when he contracted scarlet fever. The cure at the time was plenty of bed rest and fresh air for five years. His father gave him a 24-acre section of the family fruit farm. With the help of his dad and brother, Leslie built his own house and barn. He sectioned off parts of his property into an orchard, beehives, market gardens, and hay and alfalfa fields. The lot included a section of mature hardwood where ten saplings of his Vimy English Oaks were growing. He named his land "The Vimy Oaks". During the early 1950's, with many immigrants from Europe moving into the area, Miller offered them the opportunity to grow food on his farm, in return for help with his fruit and vegetable crops—probably the first community garden in Toronto. Miller tended to his farm and Vimy trees the rest of his life, until he died in 1979. Miller's farm is now the site of the Chinese Baptist Church in Scarborough, but his old woodlot where the trees were planted has been left undisturbed.^{2j, 7R, 7S}

The **Vimy Oaks Legacy Project** was founded by Monty McDonald, a friend of Leslie Miller who had worked on Miller's farm when he was a boy. The idea of sending some Vimy oaks back to France began in the mid-2000s by Monty McDonald. Monty had travelled to the famous battlefield and realized that none of the original oak trees at Vimy had survived the intense shelling. The not-for-profit corporation involved a small team of volunteers, in partnership with the Vimy Foundation, with a two-fold mission: to repatriate Vimy Oak saplings to Vimy Ridge; and to distribute commemorative Vimy Oak saplings across Canada.

In January 2015, the process began with professional arborists taking cuttings (scions) from the crowns of the "Vimy Oaks" on Miller's farm. These were then grafted onto French/English oak root stock. The saplings were grown at Dundas, Ontario's NVK Connon Nurseries using an accelerated method. The group hoped to have the project ready for the 2017 centennial of the Vimy battle, but that fell through when an outbreak of a disease affecting oak trees led the French government to ban tree imports.

Instead, McDonald gathered acorns from the original trees and flew them to France in 2016, where they were grown in a nursery. The young saplings were transplanted into the new **Vimy Foundation Centennial Park**, inaugurated in November 2018, located beside the Canadian National Vimy Memorial. The 1.8 hectare park features a Vimy Oaks grove of four concentric circles of trees forming allees, one circle for each Canadian Division who

fought at Vimy. Lt. Miller's repatriated oak trees serve as a living memorial to a defining moment in Canadian history.

Since 2017, the Vimy Oaks Legacy, partnering with NVK Nurseries, has offered for sale the oak saplings grown in Dundas, Ontario. These direct descendants of the English oaks destroyed during the Battle of Vimy Ridge, have begun growing at parks, schools, war monuments, Legions, cenotaphs and private residences across Canada.^{7R, 7S}

In late October 2019, three English oak trees from the Vimy Oaks Project were planted in Heritage Park in Sarnia. Planted by city arborists with the help of three members of the local Beavers Club, the oak trees are located alongside the Trees of Remembrance memorial in Heritage Park—102 autumn blaze maples planted in the shape of a cross in 2014 to honour the 102 Sarnia soldiers who lost their lives in World War I (names on cenotaph pre-2019). The park is located along a stretch of Highway 40 that in October 2019 was designated as "Veterans Parkway".

• **LORD JULIAN BYNG of VIMY in SARNIA, April 18, 1922:** The April 18 *Sarnia Canadian Observer* front page headline read, SARNIA WELCOMES THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL, with the sub-heading, Imperial City Gives Hearty Welcome to Lord and Lady Byng. Following is a portion of that story:

When his Excellency, Lord Byng of Vimy, Canada's warrior governor-general, Lady Byng and party arrived at the foot of Cromwell street in their special car shortly after four o'clock this afternoon, a reception was accorded them worthy of Sarnia and in keeping with the importance of the occasion. Hundreds of citizens welcomed the vice-regal party when they detrained and lined the streets over which the parade passed en route to the public reception at the city hall. When the train came to a halt, Mayor George Crawford and other civic dignitaries advanced to greet Lord Byng, who was the first to alight the train...

After formal greetings the vice-regal party, accompanied by the civic officials, moved up to the foot of Cromwell street where they were saluted by the Boy Scouts guard of honor. The governor-general and party were then escorted to waiting automobiles and the parade, with Lieutenant-Colonel Robert I. Towers commanding, moved north on Front street, which was gayly bedecked with flags, pennants, streamers and motto banners...

Participants in the parade included the Sarnia Band, Machine Gun Company, war veterans, Collegiate cadet corps, Sarnia Boy Scouts, Imperial Pipe Band, Civic and chamber of commerce officials, ex-mayors of the city, county officials and other prominent citizens of Sarnia and district. The parade made its way along George Street, College Avenue, Lochiel Street, Victoria Street, Davis Street, and up Christina Street to city hall where school children were lined up, each one bearing a small flag.

From the moment the governor-general stepped off the train the famous Byng smile was very much in evidence and all along the route of the parade, Sarnians capitulated... The Baroness, although she did not take as prominent a part in the ceremonies as her husband, nevertheless made a pronounced impression with her charming mannerisms and smile.

At the public reception at city hall, Mayor George Crawford read the official civic address of welcome which expressed Sarnia's pleasure in welcoming his majesty's representatives as well as the general who had endeared himself to the hearts of the Canadian people while in command of the Canadian troops in France... Mayor Crawford said, "On behalf of the citizens of Sarnia, I have much pleasure in extending to you on the occasion of this your first visit to our city; a heartfelt welcome to yourself and to Lady Byng. We welcome you to a city which has from earliest times been a point of settlement of the native races which preceded us here, and which has grown with the growth of Canada through the stages of villages and town to its present prosperity, and which, we hope and trust, may continue to keep pace in every way with the advancement of this Dominion and Empire..."

Sarnia has contributed her quota to the public life and to the public policies of Canada and, when it became necessary to make sacrifices toward a common end, this city and district, we hope, cannot be deemed to have been deficient. While this is the first visit you have made to our city, it is not as a stranger, Sir, that you come among us. Your name and achievements are well known to us all and most intimately perhaps to the seven hundred men who went from Sarnia to the great war, many of whom, five years ago this month, advanced on the Vimy frontage under your command in the action in which the name of Canada is linked with your name..."

Though it was cool, the sun shone brilliantly making it a banner weather day as thousands of cheering citizens lined the streets to pay respects to Lord and Lady Byng. *Sarnia was ablaze with color for the visit of the vice-regal party today, Front street being draped with flags and bunting, blowing merrily in the breeze, and the city hall was given special attention for the occasion. There was a warmth of color, which did much to make the citizens feel in a proper mood to celebrate, and they did so to the full measure of their physical powers. Sarnians were out in their*

best mood and the fame of the governor general had preceded him to such an extent that all classes were ready to accord him a hearty reception, and take him and his gracious wife to their hearts. Sarnia has seldom seen such a spontaneous cheering as greeted the vice-regal visitors today...

At the public reception held at city hall, many citizens were presented to Lord and Lady Byng. There were members of the ladies reception committee including representatives of the Sarnia Women's Council, the Young Women's Christian Association, the Great War Veterans' Association, the Sarnia Red Cross and the I.O.D.E. The civic reception committee included Mayor Crawford, Senator F.F. Pardee, Lieut. W.S. Haney, Col. W.W. McVicar, Col. R.I. Tower and Captain J.M. MacAdams. Invited guests included the M.P and M.P.P. of East Lambton, the M.P.P of West Lambton, Governor Groesbeck of Michigan, the Mayors of Port Huron, Forest and Petrolia, and members of the Sarnia Indian Reserve Band.

During the city hall reception, Lord Byng had a keen interest in chatting with many of the veterans he noticed wearing military service ribbons and gold stripes. The *Observer* added, *There were others on parade with service ribbons and little gold stripes, and the Governor-General did not fail to ask the name of the unit with which they served. He could recall in almost every case the name of the commanding officer of the men to whom he was talking... During the inspection of the parade Lady Byng stood on the steps of the city hall chatting with the mayoress, and taking a very keen interest in the crowds lined up in the square.* A presentation of a beautiful bouquet corsage of orchids and lillies was made to Lady Byng, who was described as *looking very charming wearing a full length raccoon coat, set off by a brown hat trimmed with two feathers.*

Following the public reception at city hall, the vice-regal party was driven to **Point Edward** where, *the parade moved north to a point just south of the Oddfellows hall where the governor general laid the corner stone of a memorial to the men of the village who paid the supreme sacrifice in the great war... The memorial has been a visionary project for the last three years... Point Edward is now erecting a memorial, which in tangible form, will help to commemorate the undying memory and glory of those valiant lads, who gave all and remained on the greatest battle fields of history, that Canadians might live in continued peace and safety. Their memories live today quite vividly, but in years to come the monument shall remind the future generations of their glorious achievements...* Point Edward Reeve William Darbyshire greeted the governor general with an address of welcome from the citizens of the village, and a copy of the address was placed in the cornerstone of the monument.

Returning to Sarnia at the completion of this ceremony the governor general next visited the Sarnia Service Club on Front street where he had a warm hand clasp for the veterans of Sarnia who were congregated there to receive him. He complimented the officers of the club on the excellent quarters they possessed and expressed pleasure at the hospitable reception accorded him... After being shown around the soldier's club, Lord Byng called the veterans present and they gathered around him. Old soldiers hung on each word of their former commander, who speaking in a quiet voice but with obvious feeling said, "You know that I am in Canada as the representative of His Majesty the King, I want you to feel also that I am here as your comrade. We were comrades in France, let us continue so. Comradeship is a wonderful thing boys, it held us together in those days, let it help hold us together now. You all know what we accomplished in the war when we pulled together. Let us pull together again here in Canada, and make it the most glorious of all Dominions. Boys I wish you the best of luck in all things, your business, your sports, in your club and in your homes." Cheer after cheer resounded in the confines of the club as Lord Byng passed through the former soldiers. The vice-regal party again entered the waiting cars that took them to their train, departing Sarnia at seven o'clock on their way to Stratford.

The editor of the *Sarnia Observer* added his thoughts on the Byng's visit to the city. Following is a portion of that column:

Sarnia today rejoices in the privilege of honoring His Excellency Lord Byng of Vimy and Lady Byng and extends to the representative of the King in Canada, that warmth of welcome that is accorded always by local citizens of the Dominion... The people are opening their hearts to a fearless soldier in whose care the destiny of Canada's soldiers rested, under whose leadership they achieved great fame as soldiers, and also to a man whose manly and democratic manners cannot fail to arouse personal respect and admiration.

The title of Lord Byng is associated with the outstanding achievement of the Canadian soldiers overseas. Nothing in the history of the war was so cleanly and so thoroughly accomplished as the magnificent attack on the heights of Vimy that brought fame alike to the brave soldiers of the Dominion and the brilliant leader, General Lord Byng.

Perhaps the finest tribute to sterling qualities of Lord Byng as a soldier and as a man, lies in the universal

regard in which he is held by those who served under him in France. Canadian soldiers obeyed, respected, honored and loved their commander, and the Canadian people as a whole welcomed and appreciated the action of the king in the appointment of the accomplished soldier as his representative to the Dominion... Thus Sarnia today strives to outdo itself in warmth of welcome to an English gentleman and lady.

At the reception at city hall, two large autographed sepia photographs, one of Lord Byng of Vimy and one of Lady Byng were presented to Mayor Crawford. These were to be framed and hung up in the city hall. Mayor Crawford was impressed by Byng and thought the reception was a credit to the city. He said, *"Both Lord Byng and Lady Byng were delighted and asked me to convey their thanks to the people of this city for the hearty reception accorded and the program of entertainment provided. To give you an idea of how they were impressed, the governor-general asked me the population of the city and when I told him, he remarked that judging from the crowd, nearly everyone must have turned out."* The Observer reported, *The public reception at the city hall gave the citizens an insight into the reason for Baron Byng's popularity. He greeted every citizen with not only a warm handclasp but a cheery smile and a look that evidenced his genuine pleasure at the opportunity afforded to meet such a large number of citizens. It was a distinctly memorable day in Sarnia's history.*

One of the headlines in the April 19, 1922, *Sarnia Observer* read, CORNER STONE OF MEMORIAL WELL AND TRULY LAID. Following is a portion of that story:

With solemnity and ceremony fitting the occasion Lord Byng of Vimy, governor general of Canada laid the cornerstone of the Point Edward Memorial yesterday afternoon while hundreds of villagers and Sarnians looked on. In answering the addresses of welcome read to him and Lady Byng and the introductory remarks of Rev. Welver... His Excellency said that the 22 lads from here who had given up their lives did it for three things, namely "For us, for their country and for liberty. If those boys were living," he said "They would tell us to work for Canada with all that is in us."

The Governor's speech was that of a soldier... his famous smile and general deportment completely won his audience. Lord Byng was not the only one to come in for the honors as Lady Byng made a very favorable impression with her charming personality... Immediately upon his arrival at the stone addresses of welcome were read by Reeve Darbyshire and Mrs. Darbyshire. Lord Byng was presented with a silver trowel which he laid the stone with and Lady Byng was presented with a beautiful bouquet of roses by little Ethel Lea. The ceremony covered 25 minutes as the Vice Regal party had to get down to Sarnia to entrain for Stratford. The crowd sang the Maple Leaf Forever... and God Save the King was followed by three loud cheers...

Two days later, an *Observer* article pointed out that the memorial at Point Edward was *being erected primarily in honour of the twenty-two men of the village who were killed in action in the great war, and also as a tangible tribute to all those men of the village who served. The total number of men who enlisted from Point Edward, including those of the home guard, was one hundred and four... The total population of the village ranges from twelve to thirteen hundred.* The memorial was erected by public subscription and all extra work was done voluntarily by members of the Point Edward Service Club. Built of limestone resting on a concrete base twelve feet square, the memorial tapers to a height of eighteen feet six inches. A copper tube was enclosed in the corner stone (laid by Lord Byng) that included a complete list of subscribers, a coin of the realm and a copy of the April 18, 1922 *Canadian Sarnia Observer*.^N The Point Edward cenotaph inscriptions are transcribed on page 1196.

• **THE ATTACK ON HILL 70 and LENS**, France, August 15-25, 1917: In July of 1917, British Command ordered the Canadian Corps to launch a frontal assault on the heavily fortified city of Lens with the objective to inflict casualties and draw German troops away from Ypres and Passchendaele in Belgium. Lens was a French coal-mining town barely 10 kilometres up the road from Vimy. This would be the first major battle orchestrated by the Canadian-appointed commander of the Canadian Corps, Lieutenant-General Arthur Currie, and fought entirely by Canadians (ie. the first time a Canadian had full command of the Canadian Corps).

The town of Lens was a shattered urban landscape of wrecked brick houses and barely recognizable streets surrounded by a labyrinth of slag heaps and destroyed mining installations, rail sidings and buildings. After studying the ground, Currie at first refused the order to attack the town. He argued attacking Lens against the tenacious, well-concealed and dug-in defenders would result in huge losses. Instead, he was able to convince his British superiors that a better plan would be to capture the German-held Hill 70 overlooking the ruined city of Lens. The Hill, 70 metres above sea level, had been in German hands since 1914 and it was well fortified. The treeless, blasted, gently rising chalky slope was a maze of deep trenches and dugouts, deep mines for protection, coiled barbed wire and bristled with German machine-gun strongpoints.

Canadian planning, rehearsals and preparation for the assault was extensive, however German troops had anticipated the upcoming attack, so for two weeks prior, saturated the Canadian area with barrages of high explosive, shrapnel and poison gas shells night and day. Hundreds of Canadians were killed and wounded before the battle had ever started. In the days before the attack, 500 Canadian and British gun batteries responded with both regular and gas filled shells in attempting to destroy enemy targets, trenches and barbed wire before the infantry went over the top.^{2E, 2I, 2N, 3O, 4G, 8F}

The attack on Hill 70 commenced on August 15, 1917 at 4:25 a.m., when the initial force of more than 5,000 Canadians in ten battalions surged forward into No Man's Land behind a creeping barrage rained down by more than 200 artillery pieces. After six minutes, the barrage lifted 90 metres forward and the attacking waves of infantry advanced. Thereafter, the barrage lifted at 90-metre bounds every four minutes, and the troops pushed up the hill, through the shell-torn landscape into the face of enemy fire. Canadian Arthur Lapointe of the 22nd Battalion described the assault in his diary; *"4:25 a.m. Zero hour! A roll as of heavy thunder sounds and the sky is split by great sheets of flame... I scramble over the parapet and... am one of the first in no man's land... The noise of the barrage fills our ears; the air pulsates, and the earth rocks beneath our feet... I feel I am in an awful dream. Now we are crossing ground so torn by our barrage that no soil remains in place... We reach the enemy's front line, which has been blown to pieces. Dead bodies lie half buried under the fallen parapet and wounded are writhing in convulsions of pain."*^{2E}

The rapid advance was assisted by the Royal Engineers, who propelled drums of blazing oil and poison gas into the enemy lines. Fierce fighting ensued, and as soon as the first objectives were secured, fatigue parties brought up ammunition, entrenching tools and supplies; signal linesmen laid wire to the new positions; and stretcher-bearers working in dangerously exposed positions evacuated the wounded. In less than two hours, the Canadians successful **"bite and hold"** tactic (established at Vimy) of advancing and constructing defenses enabled them to capture many of their objectives including the high ground. They added **"destroy"** to their combination of bite and hold: first capture ground-the *bite*; and then *hold* it; then using firepower to *destroy* expected German attacks.

The first of many German counterattacks began at 8:15 a.m. on August 15, and over the course of the next four days and nights, launched no less than 21 determined counterattacks attempting to recapture Hill 70. Each German attack was repulsed with the support of artillery and mortar fire; spotter aircraft from the Royal Flying Corps; the creation of deliberate 'killing grounds' that the Germans had to cross; and skillful use of machine guns and rifle fire. The bitter fighting was perhaps the most vicious hand-to-hand combat experienced by Canadians during the war, involving small arms, grenades, bayonets, clubs, fists and anything else that was handy. Canadian artillery fire was directed by observation officers atop Hill 70, using field telephones and, a first for the Canadian artillery, **wireless radio**. On August 17 and 18, German forces added to their assault arsenal a terrifying new weapon, the **flame thrower**, and for the first time against the Canadians, they used mustard gas.^{2E, 2I, 2N, 3O, 4G, 8F, 8H}

Mustard gas: This gas did not disappear as quickly as chlorine and phosgene gases, but instead polluted the battlefield for days or even weeks. It was difficult to detect right away and was slow-acting, killing nerve cells so that the victim would only start to feel the effects hours after being poisoned. Eyes became inflamed and swollen, skin blistered, and men vomited uncontrollably. At the clearing stations, the gas cases became hoarse, coughed harshly, and went blind. The body, as well as the throat and lungs, were burned and blistered by the poison, and nothing could be done to relieve the suffering. The victims began to die on the second and third days after the attack. Between 15,000 and 20,000 mustard gas shells were fired on the Canadian artillery positions on August 18, yet incredibly, the Canadian gunners were able to beat back the German counterattacks.^{4G}

Attack on Lens: With the overwhelming Canadian victory of Hill 70 by August 18, 1917 corps commanders decided to push into the city of Lens. The overextended Canadians would attack with a reduced force and were inexperienced in urban combat, while the Germans held all the observational and positional advantages. Canadian attacks into Lens were launched on August 21 and August 23. The superior German forces overwhelmed the Canadians, throwing them back with heavy casualties. The battle for Lens ground to a halt by August 25 with the Germans still in possession of Lens.

The Cost: The campaign for Hill 70 and Lens, often overlooked, is known as **"Canada's Forgotten Battle"** of the First World War. Yet it was the second-largest Canadian military undertaking up to that point in the war, second only to Vimy. The success came at a cost, with approximately 9,100 Canadians listed as killed, wounded or missing from August 15 to 25, including 1,877 killed, and more than 1,100 of the Canadian soldiers suffered from

mustard-gas poisoning. There were nearly as many Canadian casualties during the 10-day battle for Hill 70 and Lens as at Vimy, although fewer men were involved. Six Victoria Crosses, the highest award for military valour, were awarded to Canadian soldiers for their actions at Hill 70 and Lens (vs. four at Vimy Ridge). For the Germans, an estimated 25,000 were killed or wounded. Canada's first phase of the battle, the capture of Hill 70 and holding it through a remarkable 21 German counterattacks, had been a highly successful operation. The second phase, the two probing attacks on Lens were clumsy, hurried and unsuccessful affairs, with the Canadians suffering close to 4,000 casualties—almost half the total for the battle.

At least three young men from Sarnia gave their lives in the Attack on Hill 70 and Lens, including Ralph Ackerman, Harold Ketch and Charles Major.

Hill 70 Memorial: On April 8, 2017, the Battle of Hill 70 Memorial Park was dedicated near the start line where the Canadian Corps began its advance to capture Hill 70. Located in the town of Loos-en-Gohelle, France, the park was opened to the public in August 2017 and it is dedicated to the Canadian Corps that achieved victory there. On October 2, 2019, the centerpiece of the park, the Hill 70 Memorial obelisk, was unveiled. The Memorial Park includes: the stone obelisk with the sword of sacrifice and the words, CANADA 1917; six walkways dedicated to the six members of the Canadian Corps who earned Victoria Crosses in the battle; an amphitheatre named after Arthur Currie; 1877 maple leaves set into the pathways, each representing a Canadian soldier who died in the victory; and poppies grow throughout the park surrounding the large white obelisk^{2I, 4G, 5J, 8F}

• **VICTORY BONDS and INCOME TAX:** The First World War was much longer and more expensive than anyone had expected. The effort needed by the Canadian government to sustain its massive armies in the field required huge amounts of capital. So Ottawa, opposing the raising of taxes, borrowed money from ordinary Canadians. Through the sale of **war bonds** (called Victory Loans), the federal government obtained loans from Canadians that could be redeemed after five, ten or twenty years, with interest rates up to 5.5 per cent. Publicity campaigns (eg. use of posters) were directed to people's sense of patriotism, linking buying bonds to the direct support and welfare of soldiers overseas. Canadians' willingness to loan money to their government by buying bonds was an overwhelming success.

In November of 1918, the *Observer* reported that Lambton residents contributed over \$4.2 million in the Victory Loan campaign, which was nearly a million dollars over what was asked for. Sarnia led the way in the county with \$2 million alone, along with that raised by residents in Plympton, Enniskillen, Brooke, Bosanquet, Warwick, Moore, Sombra, Dawn and Euphemia. The sale of victory loans and bonds across the country, beginning in November 1915, was a tremendous success, raising in excess of \$2 billion over the course of the war.^{F, 2I, 3R, 5J} The success of the "victory bond" campaign would be repeated during the Second World War. Today's Canada Savings Bonds are the direct descendants of these wartime efforts.^{N, 2I}

Another means the federal government used to help finance the expenditures of war was the introduction of the "**Income War Tax Act**" in September 1917. It was introduced as a 'temporary' wartime measure, a personal tax on Canadian citizens - 4% on all income of single men over \$2,000; for others, the personal exemption was \$3,000; and for those Canadians with annual incomes of more than \$6,000, the tax rate ranged from 2 to 25 percent. It remains today as **income tax**.^{F, 2I, 3R}

• **MESSAGE TO WOMEN ON THE HOME FRONT:** As the war continued, and recruitment slowed, the government encouraged women in Canada to pressure men still at home to enlist. Following is an example of one advertisement that showed up across the country on posters and in newspapers like the *Sarnia Observer*;

TO THE WOMEN OF CANADA

1. *You may have read what the Germans have done in Belgium. Have you thought what they would do if they invaded this country?*
2. *Do you realize that the safety of your home and children depends on our getting more men NOW?*
3. *Do you realize that the one word "GO" from you may send another man to fight for our King and Country?*
4. *When the War is over and someone asks your husband or your son what he did in the Great War, is he to hang his head because you would not let him go?*

WON'T YOU HELP AND SEND A MAN TO ENLIST TO-DAY?

• **THE CONSCRIPTION CRISIS:** After the great number of casualties at Battle of the Somme, Canada was in desperate need to replenish its supply of soldiers; however, there were very few volunteers signing up to replace

them. After the victory at Vimy in April 1917, Canadian Prime Minister **Sir Robert Borden**, in England at the time, had visited Canadian soldiers including those wounded in hospitals. Talking to the amputees and men who had been wounded two or three times and were set to return to the front, left him shaken. He wrote that he had “the privilege of looking into the eyes of tens of thousands of men at the front who look to us for the effort which will make their sacrifice serve the great purpose for which it was intended.” On May 18, 1917 in the House of Commons in Ottawa, Borden, reversing a position on which he had held firm since the start of the war, announced that, “the time has come when the authority of the state should be invoked to provide reinforcements necessary to sustain the gallant men at the front...”

On July 24, 1917, the **Military Service Act** (MSA) was passed by the House of Commons, and then passed through Parliament, signed by the Governor General becoming law on August 29, 1917. It allowed the government to conscript men across the country if Prime Minister Borden felt it was necessary. The Military Service Act declared all men who were British subjects between the ages of 20 and 45 liable for service, and grouped them into six classes according to call-up priority. Classes were defined by age, marital status and number of children. Class 1 were those who had attained the age of 20 and were born not earlier than 1883, unmarried or widowers without child. Class 6 were those born between 1872 and 1875, married or widowers with one or more children. Only men in Class 1 were ever called up.

There was much opposition against the Act, including by conscientious objectors, by unwilling soldiers, by farmers, forestry workers, fishermen and by many French-Canadians. To solidify support for conscription in the 1917 election, PM Borden brought in the **Military Voters Act** in August 1917, allowing overseas soldiers and women serving as nurses the right to vote. In September 1917, he brought in the **Wartime Elections Act**, allowing wives, widows, mothers, daughters, and sisters of soldiers overseas the right to vote—the first time women in Canada were allowed to vote. Thousands of underage soldiers were also allowed to vote, their record of service trumping their illegal voting age. The government also removed the right to vote from masses of Canadians who had emigrated from “enemy countries,” even as early as 1902.

On October 13, 1917, a royal proclamation was published in major newspapers and public places across the country, ordering all men in the First Class of conscripts—single or widowed men between twenty and thirty-four years old, who did not have children—to register for service or obtain an exemption by November 11; otherwise, they would face military discipline and the possibility of up to five years in prison. Across the country, October 1917 municipal notices read; “MEN IN CLASS 1 – GO TO ANY POST OFFICE... and ask the Postmaster for a form of REPORT FOR SERVICE which you will fill in and for which you will be given a receipt. Every man in Class 1 must either report for service or CLAIM EXEMPTION.”

Class 1 conscripts had until November 10 to report to a post office, fill in one of the two forms, and hand it to the postmaster. Both documents asked the same basic information: name, residence address, age, marital status, number of children, occupation and employer. Those reporting for service could expect to be notified by registered mail as to where to report, the first stop usually being a medical examination board. After the medical, they would either return home and await instructions or report for service to a Depot Battalion to start basic military training. Travel expenses, for example from Sarnia to London, were reimbursed.

Conscription was a very divisive issue that brought about a political crisis in the country, polarizing provinces and ethnic groups. Once conscription became law, local tribunals were established, usually with two respected members of the community hearing applications for exemptions from military service. **Exemption** from conscription was allowed for a number of reasons. If a man could prove he was needed in his job, had “exceptional” financial or family obligations, was in poor health, was in school, was a member of the clergy, or belonged to a religious denomination that forbade combat service (eg. Mennonites and Doukhobors), they would be exempt. Also exempt were farmers and munition workers, whose work was considered to be in the national interest. And though many First Nations had volunteered, Indian agents could exempt those who were attached to reserves from call-up. Knowing the high casualties and brutal conditions at the front, vast numbers of the conscripted soldiers sought exemptions from service. A surprising 94% of those in Class 1 that were called up applied for exemptions.

It wasn't until early January 1918 that conscription was brought into force, and ultimately, only about 125,000 men were ever conscripted into the Canadian Expeditionary Force, and only 48,000 were sent overseas. It was intended that they would have fourteen weeks of basic infantry training in England, but that was shortened to nine weeks. The first conscripts went to France as reinforcements in April 1918. In the summer of 1918, thousands

more conscripts, 97% of whom were infantry, flowed across the English Channel to the Canadian Corps reinforcement camp at Aubin-Saint-Vaast, France. Many were held there until the start of the next great offensive, but thousands of others were quickly sent forward to their units to help bring these battalions up to fighting strength.

By comparison, in Great Britain the Military Service Act was passed in late January 1917, while New Zealand had approved conscription in August 1916. The Americans, who entered the war in April 1917, had passed the Selective Service Act in May 1917, which would ultimately conscript seventy-two per cent of their army. Australia, South Africa and India were the only participating countries not to introduce conscription during the First World War.

Only about 24,000 Canadian Military Service Act conscripts served in the front lines in France. They helped keep the ranks of the ragged infantry battalions at or near full strength during the Hundred Days Campaign (August 8 – November 11, 1918). In fact, over half the 42,065 reinforcements received by the Canadian Corps during this Campaign were conscripts. They saw intense action at Amiens, Arras, Canal-du-Nord, Cambrai, Valenciennes and Mons, and suffered more than 30 percent casualties. They earned 56 Military Medals for acts of bravery. In fact, the last Commonwealth soldier to fall in the Great War was a conscript, Canadian Private George Lawrence Price, 28th Battalion, killed by a sniper moments before the armistice went into effect at 11:00 a.m. on November 11, 1918.^{2E, 4G, 8H, 11C} More information on Private George Price is on page 182.

A number of Sarnia men were drafted under the Military Service Act of 1917. Nine Sarnia conscripts are inscribed on the Sarnia cenotaph—all Class One conscripts—who were called to service in January 1918, eight of whom were killed in action overseas. They are; Cameron Bissett, Joseph Carson, Alfred Corrick, Alexander Cunningham, Albert Eberly, Albert McDonald, Harry Smith, James Steele and Edward Watson.

• **THE BATTLE OF PASSCHENDAELE**, Belgium, October 26-November 10, 1917: This Ypres area of Belgium was largely made up of flat, open, low land that was kept dry only with a series of dykes and drainage ditches. Three years of heavy fighting had destroyed the drainage systems. In mid July 1917, the British launched an offensive in Flanders, the **Third Battle of Ypres** that began with a fifteen-day pre-battle bombardment in which they fired 4.3 million shells against the German positions. The offensive—using a series of short, rapid attacks—lasted for three months, in rain that rarely stopped during the entire time. It would cost the British, Australians and New Zealanders 200,000 killed or wounded for small gains, and in the end, the Germans still held much of the higher ground at Passchendaele. British Command then ordered the Canadians to deliver victory. Canadian Corps commander Sir Arthur Currie objected to the battle, fearing it could not be won without a terrible loss of life (he forecast that success would entail 16,000 casualties), for an area with no strategic benefit, but British Command insisted on the effort, believing it would help to salvage the campaign.^{D, E, 2I, 2N}

Conditions: In mid-October, the Canadians arrived in Flanders to relieve battered Australian and New Zealand forces, and were shocked by the terrible battlefield conditions. The unceasing rain and the millions of artillery shells had churned the ground up, turning it into a sticky quagmire of mud, swampy sludge, water-filled craters, filthy ponds and churned-up soldiers graves and unburied corpses. On the road to the front, one Canadian soldier recorded in his diary that, *“thousands of dead horses and mules are to be seen in the four-mile stretch to the firing line; large numbers of human bodies which have been hurled from their graves by the bursting of large shells add a very poignant note to the horror of the general surroundings.”* Another Canadian recalled that the *“single track line of road across the sea of mud was a shambles, a slaughterhouse and a good example of Hell or Hades in full blast.”* Once in the lines, with heavy kits, it was not uncommon for soldiers to slip off the wooden boards, especially at night, and drown. One Canadian soldier recounted, *“The clinging mud was waist-high everywhere, and when one fell, or stepped, off the bath-mat [ie. duckboards] it was literally a life-and-death struggle to get back.”*^{4G}

Preparations: Currie had limited planning time, only fourteen days, and ordered the construction of new roads and tramlines, the building or improvement of artillery gun pits, the movement of ammunition and supplies to the front, and the building of trench mats (duckboards) that would allow the infantry to move. Horses and mules dragged supplies, ammunition and hundreds of thousands of shells up from the rear, with legs and hoofs scarred and burned from mustard gas, wounded by shrapnel, and past the bloated corpses of other animals. The animals’ average life expectancy could be measured in weeks. Night after night, units worked in muck preparing for battle before a single bullet was fired, while the Germans atop Passchendaele Ridge fired shells of high explosives, shrapnel, and poison gas continuously, that killed and wounded more than 1,500. The service corps lived up to its informal motto; *“The impossible we do immediately; the miraculous takes a little longer.”*

J.H. Becker and his pal with the 75th Battalion, squatting in a shell hole, knee-deep in water, waiting for what they weren't sure recalled, *"The rain came down in torrents and as we sat there with our backs against the earth towards the Germans, listening to the whine and crash of shells all around us, we were about as miserable a pair as one could imagine... We had no idea where we were, who was in the front line ahead of us or where that line was. All we could do was sit there and wonder-wonder many things."*^{2E, 4G}

The First Phase: Currie's plan to capture the heavily fortified and flooded Passchendaele Ridge was to take it one chomp at a time. The Canadians launched the first phase of their four set-piece battles on October 26, 1917. At 5:40 a.m., the infantry advanced hugging the wall of their creeping barrage moving 50 metres every four minutes into the enemy lines. They advanced slowly in a costly process through deep mud, artillery fire, sniper fire, enemy dugouts, riflemen, machine-gunners in concrete pillboxes, poison gas, barbed wire, friendly fire, and enemy counter-attacks. The barrages were adjusted to lead the slowest charge in history, according to one participant, while the first wave had to carry a good deal more ammunition, rations, and tools than normal to fend for itself, since resupply would be a long time coming. The Canadians would have successes in this first phase, yet fell short of their final objective, but they had moved to higher and drier ground. The fighting on October 26 and the three-day defence to hold their positions cost the Canadian Corps over 2,700 casualties.

The Second Phase: On October 30 at 5:50 a.m., they began the second phase of the battle, advancing forward through the quagmire of mud, smoke, exploding shells and enemy fire. One young Canadian who had to manhandle supplies up to the front described the scene in a letter home, *"The mud was the worst I had ever experienced. Horses would mire in shell holes and could not be taken out, and had to be shot. Have seen dozens of horses and men lying along the road, just where they had fallen, killed by high explosives or overhead shrapnel. They were pulled to one side clear of the roads and left. No time to bury them, because the ammunition had to go forward to the guns."* The Canadian were successful in dragging themselves out of the mud through the use of deliberate bite and hold tactics. The Canadian Corps were able to reach the outskirts of Passchendaele by the end of a second attack, but suffered a further 884 killed and 1,429 wounded.^{2E, 4G, 8O}

The Passchendaele battlefield was a nightmarish mess of rotting, mangled corpses, gagging gas, and glutinous mud. A soldier from the 22nd Battalion described it as, *"Here and there, arms and legs of dead men stick out from the mud, and awful faces appear, blackened by days and weeks under the beating sun. I try to turn from these dreadful sights, but wherever I look dead bodies emerge, shapelessly, from the shroud of mud."* For the hundreds of wounded trapped on the muddy battlefield, they tried to pull themselves into shell holes, where they passed the hours, and then days, trying not to drown in the mud. They endured agonizing pain, exposure to mustard gas as it seeped out of the ground, faced the dangers of shock, bleeding to death, or going unconscious and drowning, as hundreds did. Along parts of the front, informal truces were established to allow both sides to collect the wounded and bodies of their dead.^{4G}

The Third Phase: On November 6 at 6 a.m., they launched their third phase of the assault behind a heavy bombardment and creeping barrage. One Canadian described the plunge ahead in a *"half-swimming, half-crawling and wholly miserable advance across that morass in cold drizzle of winter rain."* Heavy fighting lasted the day, and by the end of the day, the Canadian Corps had captured the ruined village of Passchendaele itself. Over the next five days, the Canadian gunners fired tens of thousands of shells in an attempt to hold and expand the Canadian front. In fact, records show that by battle's end, over a period of less than a month, the Canadian gunners fired over an astonishing 1.45 million shells in support of the operations.

The Final phase: On November 10, the Canadians launched their final phase of the assault behind a thunderous barrage, and by the end of the day had succeeded in clearing the Germans from the eastern edge of Passchendaele Ridge. However, German fighter squadrons firing on the advancing Canadians from above and a heavy enemy artillery bombardment still cost the Canadians more than 1,000 casualties in this limited attack.^{2E, 4G}

Toddling Along: Following is a portion of a letter written by William MacDonald of Prince Edward Island in January 1918, from a hospital in England to his sister Mary:

My Dear Marie,

At last the cloud of mystery which has surrounded the whereabouts and welfare of your brother is lifted. It was on the morning of November 6 that my company "went over the top" in the attack on Pasachendalle [sic] Ridge, the capture of which once more brought such laurels to the Canadian arms.

I was always in the machine gun section since I came to France. Our section went in 10 men and the corporal. Just after we jumped out of our trench one of the boys "got it" through the stomach. He was carrying a

machine gun and I instantly took it. I just went about a 100 yards more when “thung” a ringing sound in my ear and I fell in my tracks as a result of a shot fired by Bosche sniper [sic]. I dropped in a shell hole still retaining my senses but doubting very much whether or no my wound was fatal as it bled profusely. It discouraged me very much to see one of my chums, Dan Ross... laying there quite dead, shot through the head.

Dear Marie, you can't imagine the misery. There was a pool of water in the shell hole red with Ross' blood and my own. I really thought and hoped my end would come any minute, but then I suddenly realized how sweet life really was and I just determined I would try and live. I lay in this miserable shell hole for hours afraid to try and look up for fear “Fritz” would have another try at me. At last one of our boys came along and I called him and told him to get the stretcher bearer. He bandaged me and started me for dressing station and then more misery. The mud was actually up to my waist and several times I sank right down in it but of course there was a lad helping me, a kid about 17 and a good kid he was. The dressing station was 2 miles away.

But alas new dangers awaited me. In order to get to the dressing station I must go through the enemy's barrage. This I did and oh! what gruesome sights; pieces of arms, legs, intestines, hearts, etc., scattered out just like so many leaves. Ah! what a pity – all good Canadian blood... One of Fritz's shells landed a few yards away, a piece of shrapnel hitting me in the right shoulder and knocked me. I thought “all was up” and the lad lifted me and found that I could still toddle along. (It's wonderful what one is able to do when it's a matter of life and death). The pain was awful. At last I arrived at the dressing station where I collapsed. They carried me 3 miles to a casualty clearing station where my wounds were attended to better.

William McDonald recovered from the shot through his head and a broken shoulder blade, along with an infectious skin disease. He would survive the war and return home.^{7A}

The Cost of Victory at Passchendaele: In the immediate aftermath of the battle, Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig's chief of staff made his first visit to the front. Reaching as far as his car could advance, appalled by the conditions, he began to weep. “Good God,” he said, “*did we really send men to fight in that?*” The man beside him, who had been in action, replied flatly, “*It's much worse farther up.*”

Overcoming almost unimaginable hardships and horrific fighting conditions, the remarkable victory few thought possible at Passchendaele was accomplished by great bravery, acts of self-sacrifice and great individual heroism—nine Canadians earned the Victoria Cross, four on one day, the highest award for valour, in the battle. Almost 12,000 Canadians were wounded and more than 4,000 Canadians lost their lives at Passchendaele, all for ground that served no tactical purpose, that would be vacated for the enemy the following March. Passchendaele broke many men—those who fought there were never be the same.^{3N, 4G, 6Q} At least six young men from Sarnia gave their lives in the Battle of Passchendaele, including George Ansbro, William Bendall, William Coulter, Charles Knight, James Pirrie and William Skinner.

• **MORE SOLDIERS' LETTERS HOME TO SARNIA:** Following are a few more letters written home by Sarnia/Lambton boys (and their stories) who fought in the trenches, providing a glimpse of their experiences (more Sarnia soldiers' letters home are on page 110):

> **Albert Charles Ellis** was born in Sarnia on May 8, 1896, the son of Charles (a customs collector in Sarnia) and Margaret Ellis. On May 1, 1916, one week before his twentieth birthday, Albert Ellis enlisted in Toronto. He was single at the time, and recorded his occupation as bank clerk; that he was a member of the 27th Regiment Militia; and his next-of-kin as his father, Charles S. Ellis, Lieutenant-Colonel, of 145 South Christina Street, Sarnia. Albert Ellis became a member of the 92nd Battalion, CEF. Less than three weeks after enlisting, on May 20, 1916, Private Albert Ellis embarked overseas, arriving in England nine days later. Three months later, on August 28, 1916, Albert arrived in France, as a member of the 15th Battalion.

In March 1917, Private Albert Charles Ellis of the 15th Battalion, wrote a letter from France to Miss Milne of the St. Clair Chapter of the Daughters of the Empire (I.O.D.E.) thanking her for the box of socks received. Following is a portion of that letter:

Just now, during the wet and cold weather, these things are one of the most essential to all of us. When you are able to change wet socks for dry ones, it certainly makes you feel a whole lot more comfortable and that's just what you allowed us to do... The socks that we do receive aren't the heavy sort that the ladies of the Chapter sent, and while marching do not protect your feet as well as the heavy ones do. I've received other things from the different societies of Sarnia and have distributed the things around to the boys that need them. They certainly think Sarnia is a peach of a place for looking after her boys so well. It makes one from the home town feel proud that he belongs to Sarnia, and I must say I certainly do.

Albert Ellis was promoted twice in the field: to Lance Corporal on April 9, 1917, and to Corporal on November 6, 1917. On March 22, 1918, Corporal Albert Ellis was admitted to No. 1 Canadian Field Ambulance, the result of shell gas. Two weeks later, he was discharged back to duty from No. 6 Casualty Clearing Station. Albert Ellis survived the war, disembarking in Halifax on April 23, 1919. He was discharged on demobilization in London, Ontario on April 25, 1919, and returned to Sarnia. Albert Ellis passed away in 1954 at the age of fifty-seven, and is buried in Lakeview Cemetery, Sarnia.

> **A few of the boys from the 149th Battalion** - In December of 1917, a group of citizens from the towns of Lambton County raised money and sent it along with a shipment of socks with notes from home in the toes, to one company of the former 149th Battalion, now attached to the 161st Battalion. Following are excerpts of letters sent home by three soldiers after receiving their gifts of socks:

I am now employed in the quartermaster's stores. The boys have all arrived from Lambton County and I am to have the pleasure of opening, unpacking and actually issuing the contents to the men. I can assure you that every Lambton boy will receive his share. I hardly suppose all the notes in the toes will be answered, but every pair found a Lambton man. Indeed we did have a good Christmas, thanks to the people of Lambton.

Yesterday was the day on which the Lambton supplies were given out to the men, and thought you might be interested to hear of the distribution. All the 149th men were to parade to Quartermaster's Stores after dinner, and each fellow was presented with a pair of socks, and a package of smokes. You may be sure that the fellows appreciated what was done for them, and as you know, a pair of good home knit socks are just about the handiest things in sight... Nearly every pair of socks had a note or card enclosed, which is a grand idea. I think it makes it seem more like a gift – the personal touch... We had quite a time comparing the different cards, etc., as they came from all over the county.

I only hope that our work in France will be good enough to deserve the hard work you have all done for us. I know I feel myself the same as all the other fellows that no hardship is too big to put up with for the people of Lambton. You have done wonders for us and for the time being all we can send is a heartfelt thanks.

The money was a donation for a Christmas dinner for the boys of the 161st Battalion, 212 of them former 149th men. In a letter of appreciation from Quartermaster Captain W.B. Allen of the Battalion, he wrote:

... the men enjoyed the best Christmas dinner, and the men enjoyed themselves better than any other unit in the 5th division. In fact, more money was raised than expected, allowing the men to get a few extras in the New Years dinner. At the Christmas dinner, the mess hall was decorated with holly, mistletoe and flags, the 161st Battalion orchestra played, the officers and sergeants did the serving and dishwashing, and everyone ate until they could eat no more, from a menu that included soup, roast turkey, potatoes, vegetables, mince pies, plum pudding, Christmas cakes, apples, oranges, grapes, nuts and tea. The boys will have the satisfaction of knowing that they enjoyed a sumptuous feast, even while their thoughts were all of the folks back home and their Christmas.

Now about the socks: The system was that each man is issued two suits of underwear and two pairs of socks when they get to France. When they go into the trenches, one suit of underwear and one pair of socks were turned over to the field laundry. The men are then in the trenches for a week or longer. The trenches may have anywhere from six inches to two feet of water, and when a man does his four hours watch, his boots and socks are wet. If he has an extra pair when relieved he can go in his dugout and change, which is a great comfort... it means a lot to be dry.

> In August 1917, **Sergeant F. Rawland** of "D" Company, the 18th Battalion in France, wrote a letter to the *Sarnia Observer*. Following is a portion of that letter:
Dear Sir,

I take great pleasure in utilizing these spare moments in writing a few lines concerning my ramblings in this vast European battlefield of which I have been over a considerable portion and sighted many thrilling and heroic acts and myself have taken part in many of the big shows.

Since coming to this country I have been attached to a good old Western Ontario Battalion known as the 'fighting eighteenth' and well the boys have kept the name. There are a number of Sarnia boys in this battalion and not a few of the old boys have gained distinction and are now officers in the battalion. They hold up the grand old tradition of never asking a man to go where they would not go themselves and are always found at the head of their men in the grand old rushes over the bags.

Lieutenant Colonel Jones hails from the Imperial City and shows his worthiness of the position he holds by being present when there is anything doing and impart cheery words when our turn comes to hold the muddy old

front lines. Our company commander, J.M. Fisher, also hails from Sarnia vicinity and sure possesses lots of iron nerve, which goes a long way to make D company a top notcher... Sergt.-Major G. Williams is a Sarnia man and the proud possessor of a Military Medal, winning it for valor at the Somme on the celebrated tank day, September 15, 1916. The G.T.R. [Grand Trunk Railroad] as far as Sarnia is concerned is well represented in the battalion. Engineers, firemen, conductors, brakemen, shopmen and one old call boy are all doing their bit for King, country and Sarnia.

Some great changes have taken place since three years ago this date. A once very thriving and prosperous country is now reduced to a desolate mass of ruins and barren plains giving the results of modern warfare and all the effects of the machinery now being used. Taking in all the country where battles have been fought and the enemy routed there is hardly a foot of ground that has not been upturned by our guns, showing the accuracy and determination of our gallant gunners...

Now a word for the men. How well they follow their gallant officers example. No matter what the task may be, from over the bags, holding the trenches or carrying out the various fatigue, which at all times are exceedingly dangerous, to trying to Parly Vous with the different mademoiselles when back at rest, which is comical to witness. And don't let us forget the gallant work carried out by our brave and fearless stretcher bearers, known as "body snatchers" or "poultice wallopers" although there is not much poulticing done out here. On the bloody battlefield is the place to see them carry out their heroic work...

> **James Aaron Etherington** was born in Toronto, Ontario on August 5, 1896, the son of Aaron and Harriet Emma Etherington. On August 18, 1915, James Etherington, nineteen years old and single, enlisted in Toronto. James recorded his occupation as civil clerk, and his next-of-kin as his father, Aaron Etherington of 452 Devine Street, Sarnia. James Etherington became a member of the 83rd Overseas Battalion, CEF. In late April 1916, he embarked overseas from Halifax, arriving in Liverpool, England on May 7, 1916. Seven weeks later, on June 29, 1916, Private James Etherington arrived in France, a member of the 3rd Battalion.

On September 16, 1916, James Etherington was wounded in action on the Somme, receiving a gunshot wound in the right leg (ankle). He was initially admitted to No. 2 Australian General Hospital, Boulogne, and would spend 46 days recovering in various hospitals including Alexandra Military Hospital, Cosham, and the Cental Military Hospital in Shorncliffe, England.

Private James Etherington returned to France in mid-May 1917, rejoining the 3rd Battalion. In August 1917, Harriet Etherington on Devine Street, Sarnia, received a couple of letters from her son James, who was on active service in France. Following is a portion of one of the letters:
Dear Mother and All,

I have no less than three of your letters to answer this time. I don't forget any of you and if I don't write it's only because there's really nothing to say. Then at times I'm dead tired, sometimes I'm drenched or covered with mud and at times I need sleep. Wouldn't you feel like making one letter do for the family if you had to sit on the floor and write on your knee?

... Now mother it has seemed kind of useless sometimes to tell you about all the mud and rain and marching and getting completely fagged out till one leg will hardly go by the other, because I didn't know you understood or had any idea what it was like out here, but on reading this letter I see you realize why we are here...

... Red Cross socks – at least I guess that's where they come from, are issued sometimes - for instance, last night with our rations there were four pairs for seven men – and we drew for them – three of us had to go without. No, it has not been so hot out here. It's pretty cold at nights though...

Private James Etherington would be wounded in action again on August 8, 1918, near Amiens, and admitted to No. 1 Canadian Field Ambulance. He had been hit by a machine-gun bullet, wounding him in the right arm, fracturing his humerus. He would spend over 100 days recovering from his wound in various hospitals including No. 3 General Hospital in LeTreport; Hoole Bank Hospital in Chester; and the Granville Hospital in Buxton. Private James Etherington survived the war, and was discharged on demobilization on February 21, 1919 in Toronto. James' parents had moved to Toronto during the war. James Etherington would then reside in Toronto, and on April 23, 1923, he married Sabina Beatrice Maud Colclough.

> **Robert J. Clark** resided at 428 Cromwell Street in Sarnia prior to the war. On October 1918, the *Sarnia Observer* printed a letter from Robert received by his wife, Mrs. Pearl Clark on Cromwell Street. Following is a portion of that letter:

Dear Pearl,

I received your letter dated August 26, and was pleased to hear from you again and to know that you were all well... I am back of the line a little way just now, as the doctor considered that I was still suffering from gas and hardly fit for fighting. I am bothered with a bad cough, otherwise I am alright... We were marched here in the evening and told to make ourselves comfortable; we were in the centre of a large field without a sign of shelter and a big black cloud coming up that looked like rain, and off to one side was, (or had been) a village but not a wall was standing, everything leveled to the ground.

So I says to my comrade go and see what you can find, and I started to dig a hole 4 feet deep and 6 feet long. By the time I had this dug he come back with 2 small poles a few strips of board about 4 feet long and 4 inches wide and 2 old bags, so I laid the poles along the edge of the hole I had dug, laid the bits of board across, split the bags and laid them across the boards, and cut sods and laid them on the bags, and piled dirt on top of all, then cut a couple of steps in the ground at one end to crawl in. There we were as snug as a bug in a rug just as the darkness and rain come on. I have been living in this hole for a week now and though it is a little damp, it is warm and dry. Ask Dad if he could beat that in building a house out of nothing. This house gives both shelter and protection, and it gives a certain amount of protection from flying shrapnel from both shells and bombs which Fritz will persist in sending over to us. I might say I have heard the dirt or shrapnel on my little old roof as Fritz dropped a shell within a few yards of me... He also dropped a bomb, the concussion of exploding jarred the loose dirt off the walls onto my bed clothes which consist of an army overcoat.

We see some spectacular sights at times which many a one would pay well to see. There is generally a line of balloons up near the front line for observation purposes. The other day while gaping around we suddenly saw a plane shoot out of the clouds straight for the balloon; saw four men jump out of the balloon and come down to the ground with parachutes and a moment after, the balloons burst into flames. Fritz had shot into them with bullets with fuses on them and set them on fire... A couple of nights ago I heard a Fritz airplane coming. We can nearly always tell enemy planes by the sound of the engines; and, as I lay in my little hole in the ground listening to the anti-aircraft guns and machine guns firing at him and expecting every second to hear a bomb drop and explode. I thought I heard a cheer so I crawled out of my hole and looked up into the sky. I saw a bunch of flame and sparks and a moment after I heard a crash and the plane came down in flames, his load of bombs exploding as it hit the ground...

I am batching it now as my comrade has gone on duty somewhere else and it's awful lonesome living alone in my underground mansion. We are living well these days. I have just eaten my dinner in my dining hole. I had boiled ham, potatoes, bread and butter and tea. I am lying here in my library (as there is hardly room to sit), writing to you and, as the light is poor, I shall have to enlarge my window. Living here makes me feel like a cave man. The guns are still hammering away and the fight is still on. It's fight a while, then rest a while, in shifts like workmen. Up to now we certainly have had the best of it and the 18th Battalion has done its share as have all the Canadian corps. We hope it will soon be over and we can come home... I must close by sending love to you and the kiddies.

> **Edward William Drinkwater** was born on June 26, 1892 in Eversham, Worcester, England. At some point he immigrated to Canada and came to reside in Sarnia. On February 11, 1916, twenty-three years old and single, Edward Drinkwater enlisted in Sarnia. He recorded his current address as 128 Stewart Street, Sarnia; his occupation as laborer; and his next-of-kin as his father, Edwin James Drinkwater of Bewdley Street, Eversham, England. Edward became a member of the 149th Overseas Battalion, CEF. He embarked overseas from Halifax on March 25, 1917, and arrived in Liverpool, England on April 7, 1917.

While in England, Private Edward Drinkwater was first posted to the 161st Battalion, and in early February 1918, he was transferred to the 4th Canadian Reserve Battalion. On March 3, 1918, Edward arrived in France, as a member of the 47th Battalion. Six months later, on September 2, 1918 near Cambrai, France, he was wounded in action by shrapnel, that was recorded as "gun shot wound, right thigh, with foot drop". After dressing and treating the wound at a Casualty Clearing Station, he was returned to England one week later.

In October 1918, the *Sarnia Observer* printed a letter from Private Edward William Drinkwater, received by Mr. and Mrs. John H. Fletcher, of Monk Street, Point Edward. Following is a portion of that letter:

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Fletcher,

A few lines to you hoping that you are enjoying the very best of health. I am sorry to say that I am not feeling very good at present. I guess you have heard by now that I am in Blighty, I arrived here on the 8th. I have got a nasty wound and it will keep me in bed for a long time yet. I have had four weeks already. I had a shrapnel bullet go through my thigh and it cut the nerves connecting with my foot and it has given me Scratic Paralysis, my foot has

been in continual pain since I got hit, it doesn't ease at all, the pain won't go away until the nerve heals which will be a long time yet. I have to be on my back with my leg and foot in splints as my foot is useless. I don't think I will see France again.

I'll tell you now how I got hit. On the morning of the second we went over the top at about 5 o'clock and we were told that we had got to take the first four trenches and stop. There were more troops coming up behind us to carry on farther. Well we took the first and second trenches pretty easy but we had to fight hard for the third and fourth, we got so excited taking the trenches that we did not count them so finally we got into the fourth trench (we didn't know it at the time) we were sat down waiting for the barrage to creep on farther so that we could advance again when bingo! a shell dropped in the trench just a yard away, it got three of us (by the way that only left two in the section to carry on). It is a wonder that we didn't get killed, well as soon as I got hit I rolled over and my foot went numb so I could not walk at all, I lay there until 4.30 in the afternoon (nearly 10 hours) before I got carried out, all the time that I was laying there I was expecting to get hit again as shells were dropping all around but I was lucky I got carried out safe...

During his recovery, Edward Drinkwater received treatment at several hospitals in England including at 3rd Western General in Cardiff; Granville Canadian Special in Buxton; and 5th Canadian General in Liverpool. Complicating his recovery was the fact that the wound became infected. In early May 1919, Private Edward Drinkwater was invalided back to Canada, arriving in Portland, Maine on May 17, 1919. Just over two weeks later, on July 2, 1919 in London, Ontario, Edward Drinkwater was discharged on demobilization, declared medically unfit for general service. He returned to Sarnia, and resided at 128 Stewart Street, later 247 Bright Street, Sarnia.

• **HALIFAX EXPLOSION:** On December 6, 1917, the city of Halifax, Nova Scotia was devastated when two ships collided in the city's harbour, one of them a munitions ship loaded with explosives bound for the battlefields of the First World War. Halifax was a busy, wartime port, its harbour crowded with merchant vessels and warships from Canada and Britain. The city's permanent population swelled to 50,000 by 1917, in addition to thousands of temporary army and navy personnel at the garrison, navy yards and aboard ships. Halifax was an important staging area for trans-Atlantic convoys that gathered in Bedford Basin before ferrying supplies of food, munitions and soldiers to the war effort.

Two of those merchant ships were the Norwegian vessel *SS Imo*, outbound en route to New York to pick up relief supplies for the beleaguered population of war-torn Belgium; and the French munitions ship *SS Mont-Blanc*—filled with more than 2,500 tonnes of benzol, picric acid, TNT and guncotton—arriving to join a convoy across the Atlantic. Yet it flew no flag to indicate it was a munitions ship, due to fear of attracting the attention of patrolling German submarines.

On the clear and crisp morning of December 6, 1917, the *Imo* was departing Halifax Harbour travelling through the Narrows—the strait connecting Halifax Harbour to Bedford Basin (moving faster than it should and on the wrong side), while the *Mont-Blanc* was entering the harbour. After a series of whistles and miscommunications on the two ships, the *Imo* struck the starboard bow of the *Mont-Blanc*, generating sparks that ignited benzol stored on the *Mont-Blanc*'s deck. When the benzol reached its boiling point, the drums began launching like a series of rockets into the air, trailing smoke and bursting into fire aloft.

For nearly twenty minutes, the *Mont-Blanc* burned, attracting the attention of crowds of spectators on shore. Crowds gathered in the streets, people stood at the windows of homes, schools and workplaces and climbed to rooftops for a better view as *Mount-Blanc*, flames shooting up 30 metres, drifted toward shore as a thick plume of black, oily smoke rose. The *Mont-Blanc* captain and crew fled the ship as it drifted towards Pier 6 on the Halifax shore. The fire superheated *Mont-Blanc*'s hull, increasing pressure in the sealed holds—and on their deadly cargo—2.6 million kilograms of explosives.

The *Mont-Blanc* exploded just before 9:05 a.m., the blast lifting the ship 300 metres into the air, a 5,000°C fireball vapourized water around the ship creating a six-metre wave that flung nearby tugs and ships onto the land. Much of the *Mont-Blanc* became shrapnel and the shank of the anchor, weighing more than 500 kilograms, flew 3.5 kilometres. The explosion levelled the north end of Halifax, either by the blast and shock wave; the subsequent tsunami; or the raging fires that quickly spread. The massive explosion alone all but wiped out the Richmond neighbourhood, wrecked houses in neighbouring Africville and across the harbour, heavily damaged Dartmouth and obliterated Turtle Grove, a small Mi'kmaq community. Nearly 2,000 people died in the tragedy (approximately 1,600 instantly), and 9,000 more were injured, many by flying shards of glass, wood and metal.

Graham Metson, author of *The Halifax Explosion: December 6, 1917*, wrote of survivors wandering amidst the ruins, their faces “chalk-white with terror... black with the ‘black rain’ and smeared with blood... the dead, the dying and the severely injured lay about the streets, amid ghastly, bleeding fragments of what had been human beings’ heads and limbs.” Buildings and houses had been blown apart, and whole families were killed as their houses collapsed one storey onto another. Embers scattered from toppled stoves and furnaces setting houses and buildings afire. Six thousand were made homeless, and 25,000 others were without adequate shelter, a problem made worse by the winter blizzard that struck Halifax overnight. So many people lost their vision that the city had to establish a school for the blind. The blast was the largest human-caused explosion prior to the detonation of the first atomic bombs in 1945.^{2E, 2N, 7K}

• **WINTER OVERSEAS, 1917-1918:** Over the winter of 1917-1918, the Canadians carried out their orders to hold the front around their prize of Vimy Ridge and the surrounding area. With fewer soldiers needed on the firing line, some officers received leave to England; long-awaited furlough was approved for some of the First Contingent men, and several hundred married originals and soldiers who had loved ones back home suffering severely, were sent back to Canada to see their families; some men went to specialist training schools; and some were rushed into British lines to fill gaps. Though there were no set-piece battles for the Canadians around Vimy, the trenches were alive with almost daily crash bombardments, trench raids and harassing chemical attacks of phosgene, chlorine and mustard gas while the soldiers shivered in the mud, cold and wind. During this time, the Canadians dug 400 km of trenches and laid more than 450 km of barbed wire, plus buried telephone cables, dug water mains, strengthened dugouts, built sniper posts, etc., all fortifying the Vimy front.^{4G, 5J}

Over the course of the 1917 year, the Canadian Corps reputation within the Allies had soared. In a letter to the premier of Ontario, Currie wrote, “*The year 1917 has been a glorious year for the Canadian Corps. We have taken every objective from the enemy we started for and have not had a single reverse. Vimy, Arleux, Fresnoy, Avion, Hill 70 and Passchendaele all signify hard fought battles and notable victories. I know that no other Corps has had the same unbroken series of successes. All this testifies to the discipline, training, leadership and fine fighting qualities of the Canadians.*”^{5J}

For the Allies as a whole, 1917 was a disastrous year. Although the Canadians had won significant victories at Vimy Ridge, Hill 70 and Passchendaele; the French armies had mutinied (even after they recovered, morale was fragile); the Italians were losing men at an astonishing rate; the British Army had endured a series of costly defeats; and U.S forces had not yet arrived at the front in great numbers (the U.S. declared war in April 1917). On the Eastern Front, the Russian army and nation were in full revolt (Bolshevik Revolution), with the result that Germany would soon knock Russia out of the war. Their loss was devastating to the Allied cause, as German Command were able to transfer fifty divisions, many of them elite troops, from the Eastern Front to the Western Front. The German army on the Western Front swelled to 4 million men in almost 200 divisions. German high command saw their opportunity to win the war before the United States’ forces were fully committed to battle.

• **GERMAN SPRING OFFENSIVE:** In mid-March 1918, the Germans launched their Spring Offensive on the Western Front, known as *Kaiserschlacht* (Kaiser’s Battle) to the Germans. It was a multi-army offensive using heavy artillery bombardment followed by new aggressive small group attack formations. These “**stormtroopers**” were designed for open warfare, in which small group assault forces flowed around areas of resistance and kept driving into the rear areas to cause confusion. From the first day the offensive was launched on March 21, and in the days following, the Germans broke through the British lines, making enormous gains and forcing an Allied retreat. On March 25, General Douglas Haig, Commander of the BEF, implored his superiors to “make peace on any terms we could.” The British regrouped, and soon after, French general Ferdinand Foch was appointed as General-in-Chief of the Allied Armies. During the German Spring Offensive, they advanced to within 70 km of Paris. Positions that had been won by the Canadians at high costs—Ypres, the Somme, Passchendaele—were all lost within weeks.

It was not until the end of April 1918 that the German offensive slowly ground to a halt as British defenders adapted their fighting tactics and the Germans overextended their support systems (shortages of fresh troops and a lack of food). The Canadian Corps were not engaged in the hard fighting as the Germans avoided the deeply entrenched Canadian troops on and around Vimy. However, all along the front, as the British were pushed back, Canadian infantry, motor machine-gun teams (using armoured cars) and cavalry brigades fought in support, attacking, counterattacking and holding the front. Soon after the German breakthrough, General Haig, Commander of the BEF, pulled three of the four divisions from the Canadian Corps to support the beleaguered British to the north. Currie strongly opposed the breaking up of his Canadian Corps, and soon got back all but one division (2nd Division).^{4G, 5J}

By the end of the German offensives in the spring and summer of 1918, the Germans suffered almost 800,000 casualties, and the combined Allied losses were almost as high. Although the series of battles had been tactically successful for the Germans, and they had gained ground, nothing had changed strategically. By late summer, though the Allies had been pushed back, the Allied Supreme Commander General Ferdinand Foch was anxious to counterattack the German forces who having failed to achieve a decisive breakthrough, appeared to be demoralized and weakened. Allied counterattack operations on July 4 (by Australian troops) at Hamel, and another one in mid-July (by French, British & American divisions) at Marne were both successful in driving through the German lines.^{4G, 5J}

- **THE BATTLE OF MOREUIL WOOD**, France, March 30, 1918: During part of their Spring Offensive, the Germans were able to advance until they occupied Moreuil Wood, a commanding ridge on the riverbank of the Avre River overlooking the village of Moreuil, about 20 kilometers south of Amiens, France. It was here that the **Canadian Cavalry Brigade** (that included Lord Strathcona's Horse, Royal Canadian Dragoons and Fort Garry Horse) was tasked with holding the Germans back. To this point in the war, mounted cavalry charges were of limited use against barbed wire, deep trenches, mechanized artillery and machine-guns.

With the British fighting retreating and fluid enemy lines, the battlefield opened up, so on March 30 the Canadian Cavalry Brigade (CCB) saw their opportunity. Confronting the enemy head-on, the Germans found facing several hundred men and horses riding en masse, with swords drawn, a terrifying experience. The Royal Canadian Dragoons ran into enemy fire at about 9:30 a.m. and were forced to dismount. Taking casualties, the Dragoons charged on foot with speed and fury, routing an estimated 300 enemy troops in the wood. The Lord Strathcona's Horse rode into the surrounding woods with swords drawn, leaning low over the necks of their horses into the face of German artillery and machine-gun fire. One Canadian Private later recalled, *"Everything seemed unreal. The shouting of the men, the moans of the wounded, the pitiful crying of the wounded and dying horses."* Repeated cavalry passes, small-scale skirmishes and hand-to-hand combat continued until, by the end of the day, the Germans had been cleared from the woods.

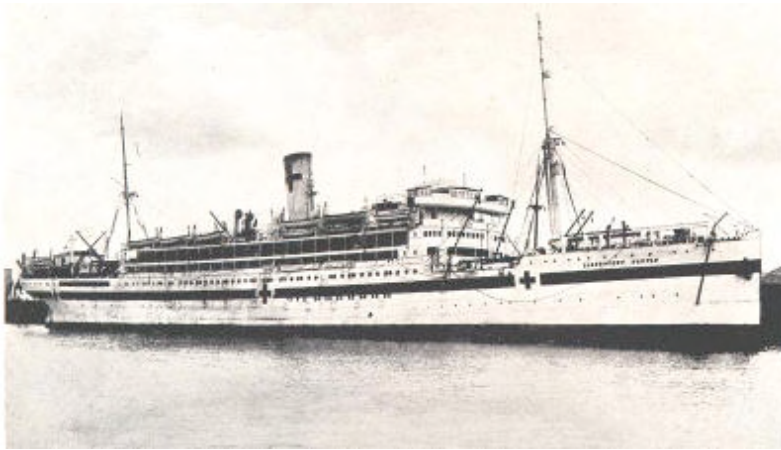
Despite heavy losses, over 300 casualties, the Battle at Moreuil Wood was a key Allied victory in the war, which contributed to the halt of the German Spring Offensive.^{4G} The charge of the Canadian Cavalry Brigade at Moreuil Wood on March 30, 1918, was not the first Canadian cavalry charge in the First World War, but it was the biggest. Some historians refer to the events of this battle as **"the last great cavalry charge,"** as there were few other military charges on horseback after this one.^{2E, 4G, 5J} One of the members of the Royal Canadian Dragoons in the Battle of Moreuil Wood was 27 year-old Lance Corporal Thomas Knowles of Sarnia, who gave his life on that day. His story is included in this Project on page 319.

- **ATTACK ON THE LLANDOVERY CASTLE**: On the night of June 27th, 1918, the Canadian Hospital ship *HMHS Llandovery Castle*, travelling alone and with running lights on, was torpedoed without warning and sunk by a German submarine. It would be one of the most controversial events during the war; the most significant Canadian naval disaster of WWI; and it would become the rallying cry for the Canadian troops during the Last 100 Days offensive.

There were two hundred and fifty-eight people on board the ship, including ninety-four Canadians, of which fourteen were Nursing Sisters. After the ship was struck, as many as five lifeboats were launched by those struggling to survive. The Nursing Sisters were able to escape the sinking ship, but not a tragic fate. Their lifeboat, without oars, failed to get clear of the suction produced by the hull's rapid descent below the surface. A sergeant, who was in the boat and survived, reported that the nightmare unfolded over a period of eight minutes: *"In that whole time I did not hear a complaint or a murmur from one of the sisters... There was not a cry for help or any outward evidence of fear. In the entire time I overheard only one remark, when the matron, Nursing Sister M.M. Fraser, turned to me as we drifted helplessly towards the stern of the ship and asked – 'Sergeant, do you think there is any hope for us?' – I replied 'No,' seeing myself our helplessness without oars and the sinking conditions of the stern of the ship. A few seconds later we were drawn into the whirlpool of the submerged afterdeck and the last I saw of the nursing sisters was as they were thrown over the side of the boat."*^{6E}

Several lifeboats with many more people got clear of the wreck. The German submarine surfaced and the commander started interrogating surviving crew members. Then, in an attempt to erase evidence of the attack, the U-boat machine-gunned and rammed a number of the lifeboats. Only one lifeboat escaped carrying the Captain and twenty-three crew members who were rescued two days later. In total, two hundred and thirty-four persons lost their

lives in the sinking of the unarmed *Llandoverly Castle* Hospital Ship, including eighty-eight of the ninety-four Canadians on board, including the fourteen Nursing Sisters. One of the Canadians who lost his life in the brazen attack was twenty-five-year-old Private David Smuck of Sarnia. More information on the attack on the *Llandoverly Castle* is included in the David Smuck biography in this Project on page 373.



HMHS Llandoverly Castle



Post-attack propaganda poster

- **THE FINAL HUNDRED DAYS:** The Hundred Days was not initially intended to be a war-winning campaign. In July 1918, Marshall Ferdinand Foch of France, the Supreme Allied Commander, proposed taking advantage of German disarray following their Spring Offensive by securing a number of key logistical hubs (eg. Amiens). The **key Allied players** were: Allied Supreme Commander Marshal Ferdinand Foch (also under his command were the Americans, Italians and Belgians); General Henri Petain would command the French armies; Field Marshall Sir Douglas Haig, Commander in Chief of the Imperial Forces (BEF); and Canadian Corps Commander Sir Arthur Currie.

Commander Foch and the military leadership based this campaign on using their “shock troops” to crack the German defences. The “shock troops” given the biggest role was the Canadian Corps. The Canadian Corps of four divisions, had developed a reputation as a first-rate force, and were considered fresh and ready for battle. Currie, willingly accepted this heavy burden. He saw the chance to end the war before Christmas.^{4G, 5J}

- **SHOCK TROOPS:** Since their victory on the Somme, the Canadian forces had forged the reputation as an elite assault force, the “shock troops of the British Empire”. The British prime minister at the time, David Lloyd George, wrote of the Canadian Corps, “*The Canadians played a part of such distinction that thenceforward they were marked out as **shock troops**; for the remainder of the war they were brought along to head the assault in one great battle after another. Whenever the Germans found the Canadian Corps coming into the line they prepared for the worst.*” The Canadian Corps planning and training, innovative fighting tactics and coordinated combined-arms approach (such as the use of tanks, surprise artillery bombardment, and cooperation with supporting aircraft) to battle helped break the conundrum of the trenches to a more open warfare, as they headed the assaults, smashing enemy divisions and taking vital ground time after time.^{D, 2N, 4F, 4G, 5J}

Breaking up the Canadians?: Before the Canadians engaged in the brutal battles of the final Hundred Days campaign, in early 1918, the British War Office had begun to pressure the Canadians to establish an army of two corps of three divisions, by reducing the number of battalions in each division (from 12 to 9 infantry battalions, thereby cutting the strength of each division). By breaking up battalions, the idea was that it would free up troops for new divisions—but it would involve transferring men from their “home” units to new ones. Due to their own losses, the British were reorganizing and reducing their fighting units, and it was devastating to soldier morale. Many Canadian politicians, and officers looking for promotion, liked the idea.

But **Arthur Currie**, though pressured, fought against the reduction in battalions, making the case that diluting the Canadian Corps’ strength and its cadre of experienced officers would only weaken its formidable striking power. Currie got his way, and was able to strengthen his four divisions throughout 1918. Canadian historian Tim Cook wrote, “*Currie’s refusal to weaken his Canadian Corps, and to ensure the combat efficiency of his fighting force, may have been the single most difficult and important decision of his career.*”^{4G}

Canadians prepare for the Hundred Days: From March to July 1918, the Canadians, holding the line at Vimy, were largely out of action, providing them time to recover, and the chance for an extensive rest and “refit”. The Canadian Corps battalions and units built up to at or near full strength, as reinforcements came forward from camps in England in a steady stream to keep it so (by breaking up Canada’s 5th Division in England, along with Military Service Act conscripts coming from Canada later). His refusal to dilute the Canadian divisions left Currie with almost 12,000 infantrymen per division (British division’s were 8,000).

At Currie’s direction, Canadian Corps underwent extensive training and reorganization, and refined their storm battle tactics. It began with training the individual, then section, platoon, company, battalion, and brigade. Initiative was stressed vs. blindly following orders (the old method of advancing in long lines of men). The major goal was to transition from trench fighting to semi-open and **open warfare**. This consisted of accurate, intense, surprise artillery fire (with new methods of locating and countering enemy artillery); better communications; quick infantry attacks through enemy “soft spots” by means of infiltration; and fire and movement at the platoon level (with emphasis on surprise, firepower, speed, mobility and initiative).^{4G, 5J}

Currie’s plan, complicated but innovative, depended on **cooperation**—infantry, engineers, artillery, tanks, armoured cars and trucks, and aircraft had to work together, while supply and transport had to keep up in order to sustain the attack. The strengthened infantry platoons were to “stick the enemy” with concentrated fire by pinning them down with Lewis guns or rifles, and then infiltrate along the paths of least resistance. For example, if resistance could not be evaded, troops were then to employ fire and movement; half the men would rush forward with their Lewis gun firing from the hip, while the light machine gun of the other half of the platoon would provide covering fire along with their rifle grenades. They were to penetrate the enemy’s weak points, even if it meant bypassing strongpoints, thus creating confusion in the German command-and-control structure, and leading to mass surrenders as positions were cut off and surrounded. All the while, onrushing platoons and companies were to leapfrog through one another, attack in successive bounds, dig in and prepare for possible counterattacks. The decentralized command called for brigadiers and battalion commanders, those close to the front, to react to the ever-fluid nature of the battle.

Despite the refined tactics of open warfare, there remained the problem of how to support troops that achieved a deep advance (the infantry would soon outdistance its protective artillery screen and its logistical support). Battle veterans were wary—no matter what tactics were employed or how much firepower was brought to bear, in the open it always came down to **flesh and bone against steel and fire**.

Through June and July 1918, infantry units practiced employing open tactics working together cooperatively with artillery gunners, mobile field gunners, mortar sections, heavy machine-gunners, tanks and tactical aircraft, along with signallers and engineers (as a result, they became much better at locating and eliminating enemy guns and perfecting the creeping barrage so infantry could advance). Smoke would be used more frequently to cover troops as they advanced.

More heavy artillery and light mortars were added, and more heavy and light Lewis machine guns were added to each battalion; machine-gunners perfected the use of indirect fire; all infantrymen now carried grenades into battle; and **motor machine brigades** (with guns and mortars mounted on armoured cars and trucks) were added (ie. more firepower saved lives). The size of engineering battalions increased, making for more efficient logistical support (building roads, pontoons and railways), allowing infantry to move forward rapidly in the preparation phase, during the battle and in exploiting successes (the larger engineer battalions also relieved the infantry of having to dig trenches, fill sandbags...).

Also added to the Canadian Army Service Corps was a Canadian Corps Troops Mechanical Transport (MT) Column with a Divisional MT Company for each of the four divisions (more trucks), and a Motor Machine Gun MT Company; along with an Engineer MT Company, a Bridging Transport Unit, two Tramway Companies and a Canadian Works Group Headquarters—each of these were responsible for specific tasks (eg. bringing supplies, building bridges, digging trenches, constructing rail lines, building roads, handling ammunition, etc...) with the manpower and capability of doing them quickly and without having to use infantry units for labour.

The Canadian Corps four divisions worked and trained together, giving them a stronger sense of **national pride and identity**, that was reinforced by a rise of more Canadians to higher positions; more Canadians making up each division; and the corps own publicity machine disseminating stories of Canadian heroism and endurance. The Canadians fought side by side (though many of the supporting units were not Canadian).^{4G, 5J, 11C}

• **CANADA'S HUNDRED DAYS CAMPAIGN**, France and Belgium, August 8-November 11, 1918: In this final three-month period, marking the **"beginning of the end"** of the Great War, Canadians were called on again and again to lead the offensives. Canadians played a critical role scoring victory after victory against the toughest German defences on the Western Front—victories that repeatedly drove the Germans back, culminating in Germany's unconditional surrender (and dramatically shortening the First World War). Canadian historian and author J.L. Granatstein stated that, *"The greatest victories of the Canadian Corps took place in the critical period known as the Hundred Days.... In fact, Canada's Hundred Days was the most important Canadian role in battle ever, the only time that this nation's military contribution might truly be called decisive."*⁵¹ Granatstein and Canadian historian and author Tim Cook agree that, *"The Hundred Days Campaign was unquestionably the greatest and most decisive campaign ever fought by Canadian troops in battle."*

The Canadian Hundred Days Campaign included; **the Battle of Amiens, the Battle of Arras and breaking the Drocourt-Queant Line, the Battle of the Canal du Nord and Cambrai, the Battle of Valenciennes, and the Pursuit to Mons**. Under the command of Canadian Lieutenant-General Sir Arthur Currie, the four Canadian divisions, some 105,000 Canadians advanced 130 kilometres through Belgium and France in that time, captured approximately 32,000 prisoners and nearly 3,800 artillery pieces, machine guns and mortars. During the "Hundred Days" thirty Canadians and Newfoundlanders earned the Victoria Cross. But it came at a high price. In the final three months of war, approximately 45,835 Canadians and Newfoundlanders were killed, wounded and missing (this includes more than 6,800 killed). The almost 46,000 casualties is 18.7%, or almost one in five, of the Canadian casualties suffered in four years and three months of the Great War.^{E, 4G, 5J, 8H, 11C}

It was during this final campaign of the war that the highest number of men from Sarnia lost their lives. At least thirty-three young men from Sarnia gave their lives during Canada's Hundred Days Campaign. Three of the deaths were termed "wastage"—occurring between major set-piece battles: Thomas Hazen, Albert Rodber and Thomas Wright. The thirty others were killed in action during the major battles of the Campaign. Descriptions of the battles, along with the Sarnia men lost in each, are in the following pages.

• **THE BATTLE OF AMIENS**, France, August 8-14, 1918: The massive advance was to be spearheaded by the Canadians, with Australian and French divisions flanking at its side, along with British Fourth Army tanks (to assist in mopping up and to support the infantry push). All four Canadian divisions were involved in the battle on August 8, along with the Canadian Cavalry Brigade. The Canadians code-named their operation "*L.C.*," for the *Llandovery Castle*, the Canadian hospital warship that was torpedoed by a German U-boat in late June 1918. The Canadian Corps had an 8.5-kilometre-wide front and had to advance about 14 km to reach their final objectives. The plan divided the battlefield into Green, Red, and Blue lines, with each successive line more strongly defended.

Planning: The Amiens operation was planned as a surprise attack and started with deception. The Canadian Corps' reputation was such that the mere presence of Canadians on a section of the front warned the enemy that an attack was coming. This meant that great secrecy would be involved in the movements of the Canadian Corps. To deceive the enemy, several Canadian infantry, medical and signals units were sent north to the Ypres section. There they carried out small raids and passed messages to alert the Germans of their presence—this made the Germans think a major attack was coming there. After making their presence known to the Germans the Canadians secretly hurried back to the Amiens sector for the real attack.

A week before the battle, the Canadians took on the enormous logistical challenge of transporting more than 10 million rounds of small-arms ammunition, over 290,000 artillery rounds, tanks, food, water, medical supplies and all manner of war supplies, along with moving the 100,000-strong Canadian Corps south to their assault positions, all without alerting the enemy of their presence. Much of this work was done at night taking back roads or indirect rail routes. The guns moved into their firing positions only on August 6 and 7 and the Royal Air Force flew back and forth over the front, making noise to hide the sounds of men and equipment getting in place.

On the eve of the attack, tens of thousands of troops moved to their jumping-off positions, where they lay shivering in the wet grass or in shallow slit trenches. The infantry were ordered to shed most of their equipment and go in "battle order"—equipped with only emergency rations and water, 250 rounds of ammunition, an entrenching tool, two grenades, two sandbags, a respirator, and their weapon. An infantryman wrote, *"Each unit knew exactly where it was to go and what it was to do, and when the zero hour arrived they were all in place and ready."*^{4G, 5J, 11C}

The assault begins: On August 8, 1918, the surprise assault began at 4:20 a.m., an hour before sunrise, as 2,000 Allied artillery pieces began a devastating bombardment of German front line defences, followed by a creeping

barrage that moved forward at 200 metres per minute. The creeping barrage moved forward at six times the speed of the Vimy barrage (with no long preliminary artillery bombardment as was usually done which also warned the enemy that an attack was coming). The infantry and tank assault advanced rapidly through a dense cover of fog and smoke across a nightmarish battlefield of fire, smoking craters and shredded barbed wire, made ghostly and terrifying by the shadows of soldiers along with the noise generated by the metal clanging of tanks, the drone of planes overhead, the loud high explosive bursts, the crack of rifle fire, and the shrieks of the wounded. One Canadian gunner described the scene, “*within ten minutes from the start, the tanks, by the hundreds, and the cavalry, by the thousands, were passing our guns. It made an awful pretty picture to see tanks and cavalry looming up in the mist, over the crest, just about dawn. The field guns began to pass at a gallop too, not to mention the infantry by the hundreds of thousands.*”^{4G}

Above the front, RAF aircraft bombed and machine-gunned enemy positions, and observation planes helped to direct artillery fire and provide reports on the advance. Tanks initially proved effective during the Amiens battle in supporting the infantry, by assisting in clearing out enemy strongpoints, and by drawing fire and sheltering troops. Often though, the tanks were late for battle, fought uncoordinated skirmishes, broke down over the terrain, were destroyed by enemy anti-tank or artillery fire, or couldn’t keep up with the advancing infantry. Of 342 Mark V tanks at the start line on August 8, only 38 were left in running order by August 11.

Initially, many of the Canadian sections and platoons infiltrated past enemy strongpoints quickly, with secondary waves or first wave attackers doubling back to destroy them. With their fire and movement tactics, the Canadians continued their advance into the face of enemy fire—past machine-gun nests and pockets of resistance, they crossed open fields, marshy areas, a river, over hills, and through forests, ravines and occupied villages. As they advanced, they lost the support of their tanks and artillery. All along the front, the advance moved forward much faster than expected, and before 9 a.m. the first of the attackers had reached the Red Line, their objective. By 5:30 p.m., Canadian troops were on their final objectives, the Blue Dot Line.

Over the course of intense fighting, in the face of intense Canadian pressure, the Germans fled from their positions, three entire divisions had been shattered, and over 5,000 surrendered. The Allied armies had achieved their greatest single-day victory of the war. The Canadians had advanced 13 kilometres, the Australians 11, the French 8, and the British 5. The German commander who ran the nation’s war effort, General Erich von Ludendorff, lamented that, “*August 8th was the **black day** of the German Army in the history of the war... We have reached the limits of our capacity. The war must be terminated.*” For the Canadians, the August 8th victory was costly, with 1,036 killed and 2,803 wounded.^{2I, 2N, 4G, 5J, 11C}

The second day: The second day of fighting was far more difficult than August 8—the Canadian infantry were now spread over the battlefield and out of range of many of their own artillery guns (especially the heavier guns); surprise was no longer a factor; many of the men were exhausted having fought the day before and had endured hours of shellfire during the night; moving ammunition, food and other supplies forward was slowed by the distance and traffic on the worn roads (eg. prisoners going opposite direction); army headquarters was mired in confusion (because of the astounding success) resulting in problems with orders being issued, then cancelled, and then issued again; and the Germans rushed reserve divisions to the their front lines, dug in and improved defensive positions and rushed up fresh guns.

Through the course of the day, using a combination of dogged frontal assaults and quick-moving flanking attacks, the Canadians were able to pierce the German lines. Against a desperate enemy that one Canadian infantryman described as, “*were fighting furiously for every yard of ground*”, the Canadians again had to fight over open areas, past machine-gun nests, through fortified villages, concentrated artillery fire and German counterattacks. August 9 ended with the Canadians having advanced another astonishing 6 kilometres, deeper than any other force involved in the battle. The second day cost the Canadians 2,574 killed or wounded.

The wounded: Inefficient clearing of the wounded was an ongoing problem throughout the battle with casualty clearing stations too far to the rear. There were not enough stretcher-bearers or motor ambulances to assist in the clearing of the wounded. Often it fell to the terribly wounded to make it to the rear on their own, usually driven by survival instinct alone. With casualty clearing stations too far back, Canadians were dying of shock and loss of blood before getting medical attention. The primary dressing station on the Canadian front received over 2,600 wounded in the first twenty-four hours, then over 1,330, 2,540, 1,610, and 700 over each of the next four days. Even when they managed to arrive at the stations, the wounded lay for as long as twenty-four hours without treatment. There were simply not enough doctors and orderlies to keep up with the onslaught of wounded.

Pounded to pieces: There were two more days of battle, and several additional days after that of sporadic fighting. The enemy defences stiffened and Allied casualties mounted. The advance slowed and then ground to a halt, a breakthrough no longer possible, as the Allies could no longer provide sufficient supplies and reinforcements to the front lines against a desperate and determined enemy. On August 13, General Currie, supported by the Australian corps commander, were able to successfully convince Allied command that the battle should be called off before his corps was “*pounded to pieces*” (an annoyed Allied Supreme Commander Ferdinand Foch wanted the British to continue to push forward).^{4G, 5J, 11C}

“The finest operation”: The Battle of Amiens, from August 8 to 14, 1918, was truly an **all-arms battle**: artillery (fired over 409,000 shells), mortar teams, machine-gun units, armoured cars, cavalry, tanks, and airplanes supported the infantry. The Canadian Corps, as a spearhead force in the battle, met and defeated elements of fourteen German divisions and captured 9,311 prisoners and advanced 22 kilometres. Days after the battle, British Field Marshal Douglas Haig told Canada’s General Arthur Currie that the victory at Amiens was “*the finest operation of the war*”, while British general and historian J.F.C. Fuller called it one of “*the decisive battles of the Western World*.”^{5J}

The Cost of Victory at Amiens: There were numerous times all along the Amiens front when the difference between defeat and victory was determined by the incredible acts of courage and bravery by a platoon, or section, or even a single soldier, who charged into the face of enemy fire, outnumbered and against overwhelming odds in order to capture a machine-gun nest or enemy strongpoint. Ten Victoria Crosses, seven on the first day, and 3,000 other decorations were awarded to Canadian Corps soldiers for their actions at Amiens. At the same time, the Canadian Corps suffered 11,822 casualties. Shortly after the Amiens battle, conscripted men, returned wounded soldiers, and remnants of the broken-up 5th Division provided 12,000 reinforcements to bring the Corps up to full strength again.^{4G} At least seven young men from Sarnia gave their lives in the Battle of Amiens: Urban Noel, Albert Potter, William Reynolds, Walter Scott, Herbert Stott, Edward Timpson and Frederick Williams.

• **THE 2ND BATTLE OF ARRAS and BREAKING THE DQ LINE**, France, August 26-September 3, 1918: After the breakthrough at Amiens, Allied commanders agreed to keep the pressure on, and that a multi-army offensive all along the Western Front could possibly crack the now vulnerable Germans. Beginning on August 21, French, British, Belgian, and American armies renewed their attacks all along the entire Western Front. Beginning on August 19, the Canadian Corps trekked 65-kilometres back north to the Arras sector, where they would be part of a spearhead force tasked with crashing one of the most heavily fortified positions, the Hindenburg Line (the main defensive line), to the east of Arras.

The Hindenburg Line was not a single line but a series of strong defensive trenches, stretching 80 km southeast from Arras to Soissons, France. Built by the Germans in the winter of 1916-17, it was 30 kilometres deep on the Canadian front—twice the depth of anywhere else along the Allied front. A kilometer and a half behind the forward line was the Fresnes-Rouvroy Line, then the strongest of them all the Drocourt-Queant Line, and behind that was the yet unfinished Canal du Nord, and then the key logistical city of Cambrai.

The German strategy was to hold the Hindenburg Line, inflicting maximum losses on the Allies and surviving until the winter. Most of the Allied generals and politicians believed the Germans would do just that, and were planning for at least one, likely two, more years of fighting. On the opposite end of the cratered and broken battlefield, Germans had secured their defensive lines with thick rolls of barbed wire, concrete pillboxes, tunnels, a maze of trench lines, fortified villages, hundreds of interlocking machine-gun nests, and hidden artillery guns.

The Canadians had almost no time to plan and prepare for the assault (less than a week), while the German force opposite them were fully prepared, well-fortified and desperate to resist to the bitter end. One Canadian brigade major wrote, “*Vimy took months of preparation. Four days ago I knew nothing of this affair and this job is at least the equal magnitude.*” The campaign was to begin on August 25, but Currie did not think he could get his artillery sufficiently ready by then, so the attack was postponed until the next day (disappointing Haig).^{4G, 5J}

The assault begins: With no chance to surprise the Germans, Currie opted for a risky night operation. In the hours before the attack, heavy rain drenched the exposed troops anxiously hunkered down in their forward trenches. On August 26, at 3:00 a.m., the frontal assault was launched in the dark during a heavy rain. Behind a massive creeping barrage and artillery bombardment (Canadian, British and other Allied guns) that blasted enemy positions, Canadian 2nd and 3rd Divisions battered their way forward, firing and advancing over the open and broken ground. Two British divisions on the flanks were to draw enemy fire and exploit Canadian successes; a strong aerial armada

of RAF spotter planes, fighters and bombers provided essential and valuable intelligence and firepower in shooting up targets; and a few tanks also helped in the advance.

In the chaos of the battlefield, multiple battles took place simultaneously, with the Canadians fighting past thick rolls of barbed wire, small arms fire, machine gun nests, pillboxes, mortars, howitzers, artillery fire (high explosives and shrapnel), poison gas, hand-to-hand fighting and enemy counterattacks. The 2nd and 3rd Divisions took their initial objectives by 7:40 a.m. after very hard fighting. At the end of the day, the Canadians had punched a hole into the German line, and the exhausted men dug in and fortified their new trenches, as shell and mortar fire fell continuously, as fresh brigades moved into the jumping-off lines.

“The hardest battle”: The second day (August 27) was a repeat of the first, with chaos and confusion reigning across the battlefield with dozens of fierce clashes taking place simultaneously. Again, the problems of this type of warfare surfaced as battalions, platoons and sections fanned out over the battlefield: communication between each other and the rear was more difficult; heavy rain grounded the air force; supporting artillery fire for each group was sporadic at best; the logistics of moving supplies to the front groups was more difficult; casualties mounted leaving exhausted and fewer men to press on; and there was no hope of surprising the dug-in enemy.

Intense, brutal fighting continued for three days. The Canadians relentlessly clawed their way forward through a maze of trenches, uncut barbed wire, and hundreds of machine-gun nests, advancing more than 8 km past three separate defensive lines and towards the DQ Line. They shattered several German divisions and captured some 3,300 prisoners. Canadian success was achieved by relying on massive firepower, innovative infantry tactics (fire and movement), Royal Air Force support, and countless acts of sacrifice and bravery, at a cost of 5,800 casualties over the three days. Currie later called the Corps advance to the DQ Line, *“the hardest battle in its history.”*^{E, F, 2I, 4G, 5J, 11C}

Next phase: After the three days of brutal fighting, British Command ordered the Canadians to start the next phase (attacking the DQ Line) on September 1. Again Currie demurred, delaying it an additional day. He wanted to wait to attack “the backbone of the enemy resistance” not “until we are ready, then we will go out.” He also knew that the Germans (with three divisions holding the front and five in reserve) would go all out to defend this important position. The Canadians had only two divisions (plus backed by the Corps’ full artillery). As they prepared for the attack, German artillery saturated the Canadian front day and night. Light railways, tramways, trucks, mules, and men all slugged ammunition, food and weaponry forward on muddy, cratered roads praying that the shells would go long or short. The Canadians had no chance of surprising the enemy, very little time to prepare for the battle, and limited aerial intelligence, so the Canadians were going blind into a heavily-fortified line.

Beginning on the night of August 30, 1918, battalions of the Canadian 1st Division launched a series of attacks, which would continue for two days, in order to secure stronger jumping-off points including the deep trench Vis-en-Artois Switch. In the see-saw warfare with dozens of individual battles, the Canadians attacked, retreated, were overrun, and overran in return. In harsh days of fighting before the big push against enemy troops who, as one battalion commander described them, *“fought bitterly until the end in almost every instance, and in many cases were killed rather than captured”*, the Canadians lost over 1,200 men.^{4G, 5J, 11C}

The Drocourt-Queant (DQ) Line: On September 2, the next big push began, with the Canadian 1st and 4th Divisions leading the charge to take the next formidable objective, the Drocourt-Queant (DQ) Line. The DQ Line was the very heart of the German defence system. The Germans had taken more than two years to build it. It was heavily fortified with a front line and support line both with clear fields of fire—both protected by dense rolls of barbed wire, concrete pillboxes and bunkers, hundreds of machine gun posts, with interlocking trench systems. Several villages were incorporated into their positions becoming miniature fortresses, and eight fresh German divisions were situated in depth. The Germans knew an attack was coming, and through the night and in the hours before the offensive was to begin, they sent out forces to disrupt plans and destroy jumping-off trenches. Fierce battles raged back and forth in the hours before zero hour. The attack on this objective would become the **hardest single battle of the war** for the Canadian Corps.^{4G, 5J}

The assault begins: On September 2 at 4:50 a.m., the men of the Canadian 1st and 4th Divisions leapt from their forward trenches behind the creeping barrage. A Canadian gunner wrote, *“At dawn the whole valley and the hills around burst into a living hell of flame and of hunks of shells.”* The enemy was ready and their counter-barrage came down almost immediately. The Canadians advanced, often in the open, into small-arms and sweeping machine-gun fire, shrapnel and high-explosive shellfire, and poison gas. Lead troops, then follow-on forces pushed on through the smoke and fire, following their heavy barrage (90 metres every three minutes, then 90 metres every five minutes).

Artillery batteries and tanks assisted in taking out strong points. The Canadians had massive artillery support—the most they had for any Canadian attack during the Hundred Days Campaign, and over 70 Mark V tanks, and also taking part was the Canadian Independent Force, an armoured machine-gun brigade. Often it was the infantry (the remains of platoons), who would spread out and engage the strong points with rifle, Lewis-gun, and grenade fire and then manoeuvre around them to attack from the sides or rear. Again they were dogged by the same problems as they pushed deeper into enemy lines, the artillery and logistical train struggled to keep up.

“Turning point in the campaign”: Against nearly unimaginable odds, bombarded mercilessly by enemy shellfire and raked by machine guns (the Canadians faced machine guns ten or twenty times the density of guns that they faced on the Somme, many of them in concrete bunkers), the battered Canadian infantry advanced through two days of intense fighting, and succeeded in breaking the Drocourt-Queant Line (on September 3), advancing almost 6 kilometres.

Elements from at least seven German divisions had been defeated, and over 6,000 prisoners were captured. Sir Julian Byng cabled General Arthur Currie after the battle, telling him that the Canadian Corps’ *“smashing of the Drocourt-Queant Line was the turning point in the campaign.”* Currie believed the Canadian operation at Arras was one of the hardest-fought battles of the war. He wrote on September 3 in his diary that *“it is a question whether our victory of yesterday (DQ Line) or of August 8th (Amiens) is the greatest, but I am inclined to think yesterday’s was.”* The official historian of the CEF agreed writing, *“The Corps’ success in destroying the hinge of the German defence system had not only made it impossible for the German Third Army to advance; the repercussions were to be felt along the whole front.”* The Canadians crashing of the D-Q hinge sent reverberations all along the line, allowing forces to the south to push forward and, in combination with an Australian breakthrough, forced the Germans to relinquish all remaining territory they had captured in March and April. It also proved to the Germans that even their most fearsomely protected defences could be smashed.

For the Canadians, during the first three days of September, they suffered over 5,600 killed or wounded. There were countless acts of bravery and soldiers’ selfless acts of sacrifice for their brothers-in-arms. A testament to the tenaciousness of the Canadian infantrymen—seven Victoria Crosses were awarded for uncommon valour on September 2, most given to soldiers who single-handedly charged machine-gun nests.^{E, F, 2I, 4G, 5J, 11C}

Canadian historian and author Tim Cook wrote the following DQ Line account in his book *“Shock Troops”*: *When the bone tired Seaforths (Highlanders) of the 72nd Battalion were relieved after losing a staggering total of 448 officers and men, they trudged out of the line, half-dead from exhaustion. But when they heard that their fallen mates were going to be picked up and placed in temporary mass graves by divisional burial parties, they showed their mettle and esprit de corps, and marched back into the line. Exhausted sweat- and blood-stained infantrymen collected the remains of their comrades and interred more than sixty of them, side by side, thus ensuring that their comrades were buried with dignity by the men who had stood beside them in battle.*

Private George Bell was one who volunteered to help clear the battlefield (the strength of his platoon had been reduced from forty to fewer than ten in two days of fighting). *Bell and the burial team received a stiff tot of rum to help deal with their grim work, and after arranging the bodies in the (mass) grave, they began to search them, taking identification tags and emptying pockets to identify the slain. An anguished Bell remarked, “Too often we pull out a picture. There he stands and she stands beside him. How smart he looks in his new uniform and how proud and happy she looks. Here’s a family group. There he is, the others must be his father and mother and kid sisters... Damn this dirty, lousy, stinking bloody war.”*^{4G}

The Cost of Victory at Arras/DQ Line: The Canadian Corps suffered 11,400 casualties during the 2nd Battle of Arras and the breaking of the DQ Line. At least ten young men from Sarnia gave their lives in the Arras/DQ Line battle: Alfred Adams, Cameron Bissett, Edward Causley, Albert Eberly, William Eddy, George Hall, Amos Iveson, Albert McDonald, James Steele and Daniel Thomson.

• **NEEDED REST:** After the two significant victories at Amiens and Arras, the Canadian Corps had been nearly shattered, suffering almost 24,000 casualties (most of them infantry) in less than a month of battle. With such losses, the morale of the Canadians, though buoyed by their victories, was fragile. Earl Bolton, a Private from Ingersoll, Ontario, survived the 2nd Battle of Arras, and wrote his sister on September 22nd, *“just a few lines to let you know I am still alive. Things are pretty lively here with us. We are sure giving Fritz all he wants now. I have been in one scrap and just out on rest getting ready for another... my friend was killed in the last push which makes it pretty lonesome for me... You never know what minute you are a dead man here. Shells burst around you that would*

blowup a building the size of a house.” Earl Bolton, a member of the Canadian Machine Gun Corps, was wounded ten days later and died on October 9, 1918.^{2G,5J}

After Arras and breaking the DQ Line, the Canadian Corps enjoyed a well-earned rest, and reinforcements were sent from camps in England, bringing the Corps to full strength. Canada’s Fifth Division (all volunteers), who were in England, were also used to feed men to the front. A few men went on leave, the lucky going to Paris or London; most just rested in the rear areas or remained close to the front and hoped to avoid the German artillery shells that regularly came over the lines (and caused about 100 casualties a day).

Of note: Some of the reinforcements at this time were **conscrip**ts, drafted under the Military Service Act, who underwent shortened training and then were rushed to the front (the first conscripts arrived in France for brief training in May 1918. Substantial numbers fought at Amiens on). Over 24,000 conscripts reached France before the Armistice, providing valuable reinforcements for depleted battalions in the Corps, keeping them at or near full strength (900 to 1,000 men). More information on the Conscription Crisis and Sarnia conscripts who lost their lives during this final campaign is on pages 156-158.

• **THE BATTLE OF CANAL-DU-NORD and CAMBRAI**, France, September 27-October 11, 1918: The Germans had now retreated to the other side of the Canal du Nord, part of the main Hindenburg Line, the last trench system of German defence. Cambrai, a city of 30,000 inhabitants was a vital German-held logistical hub and railway centre and the key to their Hindenburg Line defences, and was located on the Canadian front. The Germans would defend this city with a ruthless desperation.^{4G}

Once again, Allied commanders Marshal Ferdinand Foch and Douglas Haig called on Arthur Currie and the Canadian Corps to spearhead another attack—to cross the Canal du Nord, which the Germans had flooded leaving a marsh-like bog; then punch through a series of fortified villages and deep interlocking trenches and through dense barbed wire; to capture Bournon Wood, a fortified strongpoint; and then capture the city of Cambrai, an important railway and supply hub for the German army. No one was sure how the Canadians would respond to being thrown into one final titanic battle against seemingly impossible odds and a desperate enemy whose back was against the wall.^{4G} All along the Allied front, British, French, and American armies were to launch assaults along the German lines, and the Canadians were assigned the toughest sector.

The Canadian Corps had almost a full month of planning and preparation for the attack (all four divisions were now commanded by Canadians), however, the Germans knew an attack was coming and complete surprise was impossible. Separated by the canal, both sides dug in and fortified their fronts. The Canadians remained out of sight during the day (hiding in their trenches, often with their muddy groundsheet thrown over them), and at night worked on their trenches, barbed wire and dugouts. Observation balloons tethered to the ground and reconnaissance aircraft circled the battlefield gathering information. German bombers also flew tactical runs, dropping their payloads on the Canadians. Both sides continued to rain down high explosive and shrapnel shells on each other, day and night. The Germans also fired heavy concentrations of chemical shells, mixing their gases to form a witches’ brew that permeated the entire battlefield.^{4G, 5J, 11C}

The Canal-du-Nord: The Canal-du-Nord banks were high, the canal wide (the western bank varied between 3 and 3.6 metres in height, the eastern bank was 1.2-1.5 metres high), and the canal bed ranged from 40 to 60 metres across. The Canal-du-Nord waterway had been under construction in 1914 when war broke out, and it lay incomplete. The Germans had flooded the region to recreate a Passchendaele-like bog. To the south was a narrow, dry portion only 2,600 metres wide. The Germans held an area on the west side of the canal (with machine-gun nests and barbed wire) that the Canadians would have to fight their way through just to get to the canal.

On their side of the canal, the Germans had seven divisions (with four more in reserve), an extensive trench system, many interlocking machine-gun posts, concrete bunkers, row upon row of barbed-wire entanglements and a series of fortified towns. A mile to the east and parallel to the Canal was a similarly defended Marquion Line trench system, and then the fortified Bournon Wood (bristling with machine guns and artillery batteries). Further on, they would have to break the Marquion defence system and the high ground north of Cambrai. Eight German divisions held the area across from the Canadians (three in the line and five in reserve).^{4G, 5J, 11C}

The Plan: Currie came up with a breathtaking and audacious plan—the 50,000 men of the Canadian divisions were to be channelled through the 2,600 metre dry section of the Canal du Nord in a few hours, and then were to fan out on a front of 14 kilometres. They were to hit hard and fast, then were to keep plunging forward into the depths of

the enemies' defences. There was to be no heavy bombardment until just prior to the assault, but masses of artillery were put in place, with careful planning in conjunction with the RAF for counter-battery work to suppress the German guns. Currie knew that any success would require his artillery to move across the canal quickly. With the Canadian field artillery limited in range to some six kilometres, planners plotted how to get guns over the canal quickly to provide the fire support the infantry would need. Much depended on the engineers who had to construct seven bridges for the foot soldiers and 10 larger bridges to get the guns across, all this to be done under fire.

The Germans were so confident in their defences and positions here, that they did not expect an attack in this area. If the Germans repulsed the lead Canadian units, clogging up the canal, the traffic jam of humanity and horses leading back from the front would be ripe for slaughter from enemy artillery. The Commander of the British First Army, General Henry Horne, tried to convince Currie to try something else. Field Marshal Haig and Sir Julian Byng also visited Currie before giving the plan their blessing.^{4G, 5J, 11C}

Assaulting the Canal-du-Nord: On the eve of the attack, a steady drizzle rained down on the troops as they tried to remain as quiet as possible in their muddy holes and slit trenches. The activity in the days preceding could not be masked, the Germans knew that an operation was impending. The Currie-planned assault was launched on September 27 at 5:20 a.m., with a creeping barrage consisting of shrapnel and high explosive shells, along with smoke and gas shells, plus Vickers heavy machine-guns added to the barrage with tens of thousands of bullets in a ferocious **“shock and awe”** operation—with the full weight of the Canadian Corps' Royal Artillery, comprising 785 guns—thrown ahead of the infantry's assault. It was the heaviest single-day bombardment of the entire war.

The narrow front allowed only four (depleted) battalions of the 1st and 4th Divisions, totaling 2,100 men (of the total 100,000-strong Canadian Corps), to spearhead the attack across the dry unfinished corridor of the canal that was only 2,600 metres wide. Several more battalions would leap through them in succession. The infantry moved forward at a measured pace through a No Man's Land of enemy machine-gun and artillery fire toward the canal, then up and into the canal, across the canal (ranging from 40 to 60 m across), then scrambled up the far wall of the canal (1.5 m high) using ladders or on the backs and shoulders of others. Adding to the chaos, because the front was not straight, barrages moved forward at different paces, and some soldiers moved forward too quickly, so some infantrymen were killed by their own barrage or gunfire.

Assisting in the advance were Mark IV armoured tanks (each division only had eight) and RAF squadrons providing air cover, its pilots, a large number of them Canadian, all young and many were inexperienced. RAF pilots attacked anti-tank guns, pinpointed enemy guns and troop concentrations for the artillery. This use of air, armour and infantry in combination was a precursor of the blitzkrieg of WWII. One Canadian pilot of the RFC (from southwestern Ontario) who was above the battle on September 27 wrote, *“I have never in all my life and never again do I expect to see anything to equal this morning's war. We crossed the line just as the sun was coming up out of the east and it certainly added to the wonderful scene that was going on below. The whole front was one mass of smoke, dust and flames... the poor boys on the ground certainly deserve great praise... How anything or anyone could live through it, I do not know. I do know though, that all the time I was buzzing around through the air I was thanking my stars that I was not on the ground”*

On the other side of the canal, as the barrage continued to move forward, the Canadians continued their advance into the enemy firestorm. Advancing in single file, going to ground when necessary, sections thrust forward in short rushes, laying down fire to provide cover for other units as they moved ahead.

The **Canadian combat engineers** were essential here, following close behind the first wave. They built roads, ramps and bridges across the canal for trucks, horses and artillery; erected footpaths over some of the wet spots for the infantry; and carried out mine clearing—all often while under intense fire—in order to move infantry and artillery in support of the advancing front. One bridge was quickly completed with the first guns going across at 8:40 a.m. Seven additional bridges had been thrown over the canal by 6 p.m. Currie wrote, *“Let me tell you that those bridges were begun not only under shell fire, but under machine gun fire, and yet nothing could deter the work of our men.”*

First day continues: Follow-up battalions crossed the fabricated and larger bridges, reassembled on the opposite side, then leapfrogged over the spearhead battalions and fanned out to a full 10,000 metre front (all while under fire). Over the course of the first day, as the Canadians fanned out, they faced a firestorm from the German defenders making a determined stand, including machine-gun nest fire, sniper fire, artillery barrages, and counterattacks. Displaying great grit and determination, with their numbers thinning and artillery support dwindling,

the Corps continued to work its way forward, steadily driving through the enemy trenches and strongpoints in dozens of chaotic piecemeal assaults.

The German strongpoint **Bourlon Wood**, a forested hill overlooking the flat, exposed plain and canal was expected to be the most difficult objective on the entire front. In fact, the Canal du Nord set-piece battle was sometimes referred to as the “B.W.” operation in official documents. To capture this objective, the Canadians first captured the village Bourlon. Then several battalions fiercely fought through the Bourlon forest, tree by tree, bush to bush, under cover of a phosgene gas attack, knocking out the German strongpoints, but suffering terrible casualties.

The bitter fighting went on into the night of the September 27th, the casualties heavy, with more than 840 Canadians killed and many more wounded in a single bloody day of battle. One ambulance driver wrote of his gruesome task searching the battlefield, *“Dead men lay here and there... Those with heads torn off, sides shot away and bullet holes through many heads—many soaked in blood and lying in it...”* At the end of the first day, the Canadians had broken through three lines of German defence, and were successful in reaching their initial objective, advancing nearly 8 kilometres, crossing the Canal-du-Nord and capturing the strongpoint Bourlon Wood.^{4G, 5J, 11C}

The last days of September: September 28-30 were much more difficult for the Canadians as they advanced further east, fighting through a more fortified Marcoing Line, numerous enemy occupied villages and towards Cambrai. German high command was desperate to hold Cambrai, so seven German divisions were rushed to the front on September 28 and 29—thus outnumbering the three Canadian divisions (1st, 3rd and 4th, and one British to the north). The Germans also added over a dozen marksman machine-gun companies. This was a positive in that, one of the goals of the Allied plan was for the Canadians to draw essential enemy reserves to the Hindenburg Line, relieving pressure in other areas along the Western Front. A number of German units on the Canadian front were personally visited by Field Marshal von Hindenburg, who urged them to hold the line to their collective deaths. No retreat, no surrender.

With the Canadian forces now spread out over an almost 10,000 metre front, communication lines broke down, artillery support was insufficient and sporadic, and multi-pronged attacks were uncoordinated and chaotic, so the often overextended, understrength and beleaguered Canadian units suffered shocking levels of casualties against an enemy that was more determined and desperate, and one that continually mounted counter-attacks against any ground lost. Canadian assaults were made into areas of sweeping machine gun fire, hidden snipers, barbed wire and enemy shells with enemy aircraft overhead raining down fire.

One Canadian infantryman remembered his experience of playing dead along with his section mates as they lay in shallow craters pinned down by raking machine-gun fire, *“It was certain death to breathe deeply. The moaning and groaning of the wounded put fear into those who were more fortunate, but still we could not move to help them. As the wounded rolled over to ease the pain of their wounds, the Germans would riddle them with bullets.”* A Canadian gunner wrote, *“The Canadians have suffered terrible losses during the last 3 days. Some companies have fought to the last man, but we have taken all our objectives.”* Another Canadian infantryman recounted his shock as he marched to the rear with the remnants of his battalion, *“The last five days and nights we have been in battle... the shattered remnants of our battalion, to the number of 60, groped our way out of death and hell... I bore a charmed life through it all, of close calls, I ceased to count them. I am still numb... every time I look around for a familiar face, I find they have all gone.”*^{4G, 5J}

All along the front, **Canadians found ways to attack and counterattack**, moving from a smoking shell crater to a ditch, from a ditch to a depression in the ground, pushing ahead in small groups, metre by metre. Daunting acts of bravery, grit, skill, self-sacrifice and tactical innovation continued in the chaotic piecemeal assaults, but too often the infantry were called on to attack without time to prepare or reconnoiter the ground. On many occasions, after taking an objective, the German prisoners outnumbered the surviving attacking Canadians. The cycling of Canadian infantrymen through the battered units kept up the Corps’ momentum, but the Germans were also pouring in reinforcements, so the battle was reduced to one of hard-pounding, brutal engagements of attritional warfare. The Germans kept on resisting hard, their counterattacks heavy and in large numbers, their enemy machine-gunners took a heavy toll every time the Canadians tried to move forward. By October 1, the Canadians had crossed the Marcoing Line, fought through a number of occupied villages and had surrounded Cambrai on two sides.

General Arthur Currie finally halted his offensive on October 1, giving his weary battalions a few days to bring up reinforcements. The cost of the Canadian success was high, and casualty numbers continued to mount day by day. In the five days of battle from September 27 to October 1, the Canadian Corps suffered some 10,000

casualties. Currie wrote in a letter to Prime Minister Borden that the breaking of the canal and its eastern defences was “*some of the bitterest fighting we have experienced... It was attack and counterattack every day.*” In another letter to a friend, he wrote that “*we have never known the Boche to fight harder. He is like a cornered rat.*” ^{4G, 5J, 11C}

Moving into Cambrai: The fighting in the first week in October was of a minor scale, the Canadians alternating between offensive operations and an active defence, keeping the Germans back on their heels, although heavy enemy shelling and gassing were a constant both day and night. Also during this time, preparations for an assault on Cambrai continued with ammunition columns, light rails, and pack trains stockpiling the front lines, and artillery was moved forward. Because of Cambrai’s importance as a logistical centre, the French implored the Canadians not to destroy it with artillery fire. Currie, not willing to throw his forces into battle without an adequate barrage, decided he would wait and see what the Germans planned to do with the Canadians on their doorstep. The Germans held the bridges that criss-crossed the moats and canals near Cambrai, and capturing them intact was crucial to the final assault on the city.

On October 6, 1918, orders arrived directing the capture of Cambrai in conjunction with the British Third Army, which was in good position south of the city. On the night of October 7, a series of probing battles by the 2nd Division was successful in gaining key terrain northeast of Cambrai, strengthening the Canadians hold on the city. The Canadian attack was launched by the 2nd Division at 1:30 a.m., on the cold, wet and dark night of October 8-9.

As the Canadians readied for their assault and the dreaded urban warfare among civilians, hostiles, and rubble, the Germans pulled out of the city on October 9, behind a screen of smoke, having first set parts of the city on fire (though there was some enemy shelling and opposition from small German rearguards including snipers and machine-gunners). As the Canadians (2nd and 3rd Divisions) entered the city, and through its many booby-trapped streets, Cambrai appeared to have been gutted.

The Germans had looted everything they could manage; parts of the city had been deliberately set afire; many bridges had been blown up; and it seemed that a serious attempt had been underway to destroy the city. This pattern of rampant destruction, a **scorched-earth** policy, was their ruthless norm as the Germans retreated east during the final phase of the war. Only the rapid Canadian advance had frustrated this plan, so Cambrai and its ashes had fallen to the Canadians, saving the city from complete ruin. On October 11, the Canadians handed over its responsibilities to the British troops. Over the following two days, lead Canadian forces followed the retreating enemy carefully, who still had fight left in them. ^{D, E, F, 2I, 2N, 4G, 5J, 11C}

Frederick Banting: One Canadian soldier who was wounded in the Battle of Canal-du-Nord/Cambrai was Captain Frederick Banting. Born in Alliston, Ontario in November 1891, Fred Banting was a medical student when the war began. He tried to enlist in the Canadian Army, was rejected for poor eyesight, but nonetheless became a medical officer in the Canadian Army Medical Service when he graduated in December 1916. Captain Banting went to France in June 1918, where he served with a field ambulance and as a relief officer filling in for battalion medical officers. He was the medical officer for the 44th Battalion during the attack on the DQ Line, had repeatedly come under fire, and treated dozens of wounded.

During the attack across the Canal-du-Nord and toward Cambrai on September 28, Banting was ordered to replace the wounded medical officer of the 46th Battalion. He wrote in his diary that an “*absolutely wonderful*” barrage began at 5:30 a.m. followed by “*cases coming about 6 and from then on they actually poured in.*” Later, he came under heavy shellfire, stopped to treat his wounded stretcher-bearers, and continued forward. Banting was then wounded in the right arm by shrapnel, suffering a severed artery. Some accounts suggest he continued to treat the wounded for hours before he went to the rear for treatment. For his “energy and pluck,” Banting was awarded the Military Cross in 1919.

Banting’s war had ended. His arm became infected, and he was not released from hospital until December. He returned to Canada in March 1919, continued his studies, practiced medicine in London, Ontario, and became interested in methods of treating **diabetes**. Working with Charles Best, in November 1921, their experiments resulted in the discovery of **insulin**, still a treatment for diabetes today. Banting was awarded the Nobel Prize for Medicine in 1923, sharing it with Best. ^{11C}

When the Second World War broke out, he served as a liaison officer between the British and North American medical services. He was killed in February 1941 when the aircraft he was in, being ferried to Britain on a war mission, crashed in Newfoundland.

The Cost of Victory—Arras to Cambrai (Aug. 26-Sept. 3 and Sept. 27-Oct. 11): Many historians consider the breaking of the Drocourt-Queant Line, and the taking of the Canal du Nord, the most difficult and one of the greatest Canadian tactical achievements of the war. Currie's plan was complicated but innovative, and the infantry, engineers, artillery, air support and armour had cooperated to make it work—while the supply and transport system, which had to move ammunition dumps across the Canal du Nord under fire, performed miracles to sustain the attack.

From August 26 to October 11—the Battle of Arras and breaking the DQ Line to the Battle of Canal du Nord and taking Cambrai, the four Canadian divisions had advanced 37 kilometres against the enemy's most formidable defences. They had faced 31 German divisions, and they had smashed many of them decisively, capturing almost 16,000 prisoners. After receiving praise from General Horne on the brilliant record of the Canadian Corps, Currie wrote to a friend that since August 8, *"We took care of 25% of the total German army on the Western Front... leaving it to the American Army, the French Army, the Belgian Army, and the rest of the British Army to look after the balance."*

For the Canadian Corps, some 100,000-men strong, it was one of the bloodiest operations of the war—suffering 30,806 killed, wounded, and missing. Add to that, the Canadians had earlier lost another 11,822 casualties in the fighting at Amiens (August 8 to 14). In all, during this period (August 8 to October 11), the vast majority of these 42,000+ killed, wounded, and missing would have fallen on the infantry at the sharp end, who were fewer than 50,000 men. One historian wrote, *"Counting the casualties, the German machine-gunners proved to be the Canadians nemesis through the last half of the 100 Days."*^{46, 51}

From Arras to Cambrai: at least ten young men from Sarnia gave their lives in the 2nd Battle of Arras and DQ Line (August 26-September 3) including Alfred Adams, Cameron Bissett, Edward Causley, Albert Eberly, William Eddy, George Hall, Amos Iveson, Albert McDonald, James Steele and Daniel Thomson; **and** at least eleven young men from Sarnia gave their lives during the Battles of Canal-du-Nord and Cambrai (September 27-October 11) including George Beaumont, Joseph Carson, Royal Crawford, Alexander Cunningham, Sidney Davies, George Johnston, George Jones, Albert Pringle, Frederick Robinson, John Salsbury and Edward Watson.

• **PURSuing THE RETREATING ENEMY:** German positions had been broken all along the Western Front by the Allied forces, which were growing stronger with each month as the Americans arrived in force. The British Expeditionary Force, the French army, and the American army were all pressing the Germans eastward. German allies were in poor shape: Bulgaria sued for peace at the end of September; the Turks surrendered on October 30; and the Austrians surrendered four days later. Morale had never been lower in the German army as a result of their heavy casualties at the front, the devastating effects of the Spanish flu that killed and weakened thousands, and the ongoing plight of their loved ones at home who were struggling to obtain sufficient food. With the Germans retreating and on the verge of defeat, Allied Commanders Ferdinand Foch and Sir Douglas Haig ordered their tired forces to continue to hound the enemy.

After taking Cambrai, Canadian forces advanced tentatively using artillery and battle patrols, pushing against the retreating German forces, occasionally running into significant opposition. They were now moving into parts of France that had been in German hands since the beginning of the war in 1914. To purchase much-needed time, the retreating Germans destroyed bridges, flooded areas to make them impassable, destroyed roads and placed sacrificial forces behind them to harass any Allied advance. The soldiers were generally shocked by the destruction the Germans had inflicted on French farms and factories, and even more by the sights of untold suffering—homeless refugees, widows and orphans. The civilians had initially had some reservations, however, as the Germans had portrayed the Canadians as wild colonials who would rape and murder their way through the French population.

As the Canadian divisions advanced through tiny villages and mid-sized towns, they were delighted to find themselves greeted as liberators by the French civilians lining the roads and cheering on the victors. A Canadian Private wrote to a friend at home, *"Instead of dugouts, we are living in houses, most of the time with civilians... They don't seem to be able to do enough for you and should you offer them money they get peeved."* Once greeted into the French homes, the Canadians were told stories of the German occupation that included the ill-treatment of the elderly and women, and the looting of livestock and destruction of homes, farms and factories. Robert Connors, serving with the Canadian Railway Troops, wrote home, *"Nearly all the girls and women from about 15 years up are certainly in some condition...I can't explain exactly what I mean in a letter but you can surmise what I mean."*

The Canadian troops also found themselves in a relief role as they cared for malnourished and sick civilians. Many of the Canadian units voluntarily gave up their warm rations to feed the destitute and hungry. The Canadians

continued pushing east throughout the third and fourth weeks of October 1918. Still, Canadians died by the score every day, the result of German resistance. And just when it looked like a straight march to Berlin, the Germans stopped running at Valenciennes, a city of 36,000.^{4G, 5J, 11C}

- **THE BATTLE OF VALENCIENNES**, France, November 1-2, 1918: Valenciennes was the last major French city still in German hands, and after their experience at Cambrai, they believed that the British and Canadians would not bombard the city. The Canal de l'Escaut, along the western part of the city, was a major obstacle—filled with water, its banks were wired with explosives and machine guns were directed into it. To the south of the city was Mont Houy, a forest-covered hill that rose to a height of 150 metres. It provided a dominating view of any Canadian advance, and was strengthened by five divisions of German defenders, backstopped by additional defences in depth, secondary trenches, and the fortified city of Valenciennes itself.

The British XXII Corps opened operations on October 24, striking from the south and over two days, sometimes against strong opposition, the British reached Mont Houy. On October 28 at 5:15 a.m., a single battalion of 500 men from the British 51st Highland Division, behind a massive artillery barrage, attacked Mont Houy. They did manage to capture the hill through some dogged fighting, but German counterattacks drove them from their gains. The task of taking Mont Houy and pushing into the south end of Valenciennes fell to the Canadians.

At Valenciennes, the Germans held every advantage: they were dug in; had flat, open fields of fire; and outnumbered the Canadians by at least two or three to one. Currie and his staff worked almost non-stop over two days to prepare for the battle. Unlike the British, who had thrown just one battalion against the position, Currie employed the entire 10th Brigade, with two battalions (47th and 44th) up, and the 46th Battalion as a second-wave formation, and the 50th Battalion in reserve. Before the attack, not wanting to waste his men's lives, Currie ordered the Canadian Corps heavy artillery to pound the enemy positions day and night. Brigadier-General Andrew McNaughton, newly promoted to command the heavy artillery, and Lieutenant-Colonel Harry Crerar, the counter-battery staff officer, devised the plan for the guns. (Both men would command the First Canadian Army during the Second World War). More than 250 field and siege guns supported the 10th Brigade when they stormed the enemy positions—the largest force to support a single Canadian brigade in the entire war.^{11C}

First day: After a night of cold rain falling over the Canadians as they lay crouched in their shallow jumping-off trenches, on November 1 at 5:15 a.m., a massive Canadian artillery bombardment (field artillery, heavy artillery, augmented by machine gun fire and mortars) opened up, shattering enemy strongpoints and artillery batteries with accurate fire. When the creeping barrage moved off, the two understrength lead Canadian battalions of the 10th Brigade advanced (they were so under-strength that one of the special mopping-up platoons consisted of a group of batmen, signallers, orderlies, and runners—men who rarely went into battle).

Within forty-five minutes, the 44th Battalion had achieved their objectives against an enemy that was shocked by the power of the Canadian bombardment, and hundreds surrendered freely. The 46th Battalion swept past the 44th, and through four hours of desperate fighting, pushed nearly 2,500 metres through residential areas that were heavily-fortified by the Germans. The 47th Battalion followed their barrage, and had to fight through pockets of enemy formations (including vicious hand-to-hand fighting) and strong resistance, and reached their objective by 10:20 a.m. Once at the south end of the city, the 46th and 47th spent the rest of the day trading fire with the enemy across the canal. Time and again, brave pockets of Canadian attackers banded together and advanced in short sprints, behind a Lewis gunner, or as a rifle grenadier laid down a covering explosion, or while other formations covered them, in order to clear enemy strongpoints.

As the 10th Brigade advanced north to the city, the 12th Brigade launched a flanking attack from the west of the city. A little before noon on November 1, two battalions (38th and 72nd) crossed the Canal de l'Escaut on rafts and on cork bridges laid down by the corps' engineers. With strong covering fire from rifles, Lewis guns, field guns and mortars, the two battalions were able to successfully make the amphibious crossing while under direct enemy fire. Throughout the day, elements of these two battalions swarmed through the western part of Valenciennes, engaged in urban warfare, pushing forward aggressively overtaking German units. Further to the north, the 4th Canadian Mounted Rifles (CMR) completed the third side of the encirclement, crossing the canal and infiltrating through the northern part of the city under the cover of darkness.

Second day: On the morning of November 2, the various Canadian battalions spread through the city from three directions. By the end of the day, Valenciennes had fallen and was completely in the hands of Canadian and British troops. The Germans were in full retreat. The Canadians took some 1,400 prisoners from 19 enemy battalions.

This **last set-piece battle** at Valenciennes, the last major prearranged assault staged by the Canadian Corps, cost the Canadians 501 casualties, of whom 121 were killed or listed as missing.^{D, 4G, 5J} Private Alfred Corrick of Sarnia was wounded by enemy gunfire at Valenciennes on November 1. He was returned to England to recover from “severe shell wounds”. He never made it home. He died in an English hospital in early January 1919. Alfred Corrick’s story is included in this Project on page 251.

A Sarnian at Valenciennes: Following is a story from the *Sarnia Observer*, November 1918;

French City Thanks Sarnian

An interesting souvenir of the recent advance in France has reached Sarnia in the form of a letter under the seal of the French City Valenciennes, addressed to Capt. Johnston MacAdams, conveying the thanks of the municipality in connection with an incident which took place when the city fell into the hands of the Canadians.

A large part of the fine civic collection of art had been left behind by the Germans, and was found to be exposed to the elements through the damage done by shell fire to the civic building. The Sarnia officer took prompt action, and with the assistance of a party of soldiers, work on the roof was commenced and rapidly completed, and other prompt steps taken to preserve the treasures of art from further damage.

The letter was accompanied by a memento from the city which will doubtless be held in permanent regard by Capt. MacAdams as a remembrance. The letter was signed;

F. Billiete, L’Adjoint Faisant Fonctions de Maire de Valenciennes, Valenciennes, France

• **PREMATURE PEACE:** On November 7, 1918, Sarnia, like the rest of the world, received news (falsely) that the war had ended. The *Sarnia (Canadian) Observer* large print headline on that day was, “PEACE DECLARED.” The sub-heading was a report out of Washington, “Navy cable censors reported today that unofficial messages had come thru from abroad, announcing that the Germans had signed the Armistice terms delivered by Marshal Foch. No authority was given for the statement, and while it added to the air of expectancy everywhere, officials said nothing except an official dispatch could be believed. Neither the American government nor any of the Allies’ embassies or war missions had been advised even that Marshall Foch actually had presented the Armistice terms. It was assumed however that the German envoys had been conducted through the French lines some time during the day.”

Another sub-heading was a report out of Toronto, “One of New York’s news agencies carried the story today that an Armistice had been signed, to become effective at 2:30 today but there is nothing official or corroborative yet.” A related headline stated, “Celebrations in all the large cities - Detroit has received official information that the armistice had been signed at 10 o’clock today, and the hostilities had ceased at 2:00 pm. Celebrations are being held in all the large cities of the United States and Canada this afternoon.” A report out of Toronto stated, “This city went into furious demonstrations of joy on the report today about 1:10 of unofficial news that an armistice had been signed on behalf of Germany. Whistles were blown continuously and bells rung all over the city. Business was suspended and the streets were crowded with celebrating thousands.” As it turned out, peace would not become official until four days later.

• **THE PURSUIT TO MONS**, Belgium, November 1918: After Valenciennes (Nov. 1-2), the German armies were drawing back, but there was no rest for the Canadians, as Haig ordered a full advance against the retreating forces. This was no easy task as rearguard enemy snipers and machine-gunners, frequently fighting to the death, made pursuit dangerous. Complicating the assignment: the countryside was dotted with farms, hedges, and sunken roads, all of which were perfect spots for ambushes; a steady week-long rain left the men wet, cold and exhausted in their continual march over the few muddy roads; the Germans destroyed most of the roads, bridges, railways and planted landmines; villages had been ravaged and looted; evacuated trenches, dugouts and homes were booby trapped; enemy aircraft continually strafed and bombed troop concentrations; and the Canadians own supply lines had trouble keeping up with the rate of movement.

Despite the difficulties, battalions leapfrogged each other as they gave chase as pockets of small fierce engagements continued to rage, involving the clearing of houses, farms, and villages and the crossing of river obstacles (which required the work of the engineers). With the war winding down, amid rumours of an impending peace, followed by rumours that peace was refused, Canadians continued to advance and were still being killed daily by the dozens. Whenever the Germans were defeated or fell back, French civilians lined the roads, cheering on the Canadians as they continued their march and fight through France. As the Canadian Corps’ logistic system struggled to keep up with the demands of the advance, soldiers ate hard tack and tinned beef and grumbled, despite the liberating civilians cheering and offering kisses and cognac.

On the night of November 6-7, 1918, the 2nd Division replaced the 4th in the line, and along with the 3rd Division to the north, continued to push towards Mons. On November 7, the Canadians crossed into Belgium, continuing to push the enemy before them, fighting against German bitter-enders, when they reached the outlying suburbs of the city of Mons on November 9, where resistance stiffened.

Mons: The city of Mons in Belgium, a key coal-mining centre, was an important symbol for the entire BEF. It was the site of their first significant battle in the early days of the war in August 1914; and the spot from which the small British troops had been forced to retreat in the face of overwhelming German pressure, suffering heavily in the process. The Germans had occupied the city through the entire war, using it as a critical logistical hub for the movement of troops, and as a source to supply their army with much-needed coal.

Though there were rumours of an upcoming peace, and the German Kaiser had abdicated on November 9, at the front, Canadian Corps had no confirmation of either of these as the Germans across from them fought resolutely. With the rest of the Allied forces pushing forward, the Canadians were ordered to capture Mons. At 10:00 p.m. on November 9, Currie ordered the capture of Mons, to be done the next day. He ordered the capture of Mons through an encircling approach—the 2nd Division would attack from the south and southeast, while the 3rd Division (42nd Battalion and RCR) would attack eastward. The city was ringed by canals and German gunners covered the crossing points.

Liberating Mons: On the outskirts of Mons, the Canadian patrols began probing the enemy defences around the city on November 10, but the Germans were holding tough: occupying several strongpoints; dug in along key woods; having established machine-gun nests and snipers at all bridges and canal crossings leading into the city; keeping up heavy small-arms fire; and sending out raiding parties. On orders from High Command, the Canadians had been forbidden the unfettered shelling of the city—so they didn't mount any large-scale attacks for fear that it would be too costly in lives.

On November 10 at 11:00 p.m., the Canadian 42nd Battalion and RCR patrols crept through the dark in search of weak spots in the enemy lines. Throughout the night of November 10 and into the early morning hours of November 11, Canadian combat patrols engaged in small-scale attacks, infiltrating the city streets, shooting up strongpoints and engaging in running gun battles with the enemy.

By 7:00 a.m. on November 11, the Canadians had liberated Mons at a cost of 280 men killed, wounded or missing during the final two days of the war. To drive the point home, the 42nd Highlanders marched their pipe band through the city, stirring the emotions of the soldiers and announcing their arrival to the 60,000 citizens of Mons.^{E, 21, 2N, 4G, 11C}

The fighting from November 7 to November 10 cost 645 killed and wounded in just the 2nd and 3rd Canadian Divisions. At least one young man from Sarnia gave his life during the pursuit to Mons—Private John Howarth of the 3rd Battalion, age 29, was killed by enemy fire on the morning of November 6th. His story is included in this Project on page 301.

• **NOVEMBER 11, 1918 – THE WAR ENDS:** On November 8, Marshall Foch, the Allied Supreme Commander, met with German leadership in a railway carriage parked in the forest of Compiegne, France and presented them with the terms of armistice. They were given 72 hours to accept the Allies' terms, which amounted to **unconditional surrender**. The Germans tried to negotiate but were rebuffed on every single major item. At 5:05 a.m. on the morning of November 11, they signed, knowing that they had absolutely no choice.

The “**War That Will End War**” ended with the signing of the ‘**Armistice of Compiegne**’ not far from Paris, on November 11th, 1918, though it would not take effect until 11:00 a.m. Officers on horseback then had six hours to inform their troops of the Armistice.

Not long after 5:30 a.m., news of the ceasefire reached the belligerents' capital cities long before it reached the frontline soldiers. Celebrations began in London and Paris before word arrived in the trenches. Many would die before 11 a.m., including over 860 British Empire soldiers, and more than 3,000 American troops would become casualties.

At 6:30 a.m., about the time when the last of the German defenders in Mons were being killed or forced to surrender, Canadian Corps headquarters received word that the Armistice would be struck at 11 a.m., at which time all hostilities would cease. The official telegram read, “*Hostilities will cease at 1100 hours 11/11/18. Troops will stand fast on line reached at that hour which will be reported by wire to Army HQ as soon as possible. Defence*

precautions will be maintained. There will be no intercourse with enemy until receipt of instructions from GHQ. Further instructions follow."

The signalmen in the corps sent the message to their companions in the divisions and brigades, after which runners raced across the battlefield with the good news. The Canadian Corps were spread out over several kilometres of frontage and to a depth of twenty to thirty kilometres, including those on the flanks that had pushed beyond Mons, still driving the Germans before them. Some units did not learn of the ceasefire until after 9:00 a.m.

• **LAST COMMONWEALTH SOLDIER KILLED:** To the east of Mons, pockets of German resistance were still holding out, resulting in a number of Canadian casualties on the last day of fighting. About 7 kilometres east of Mons, the 28th Battalion had captured the town of Havre, and the men had been ordered to stay down and not expose themselves.

George Lawrence Price, born December 15, 1892 in Falmouth, Nova Scotia, was the son of James and Annie Price of Church Street, King's County, Nova Scotia. As a young man, he had moved west (although his parents remained in Nova Scotia), ending up for a time with Canadian Pacific Railway and later a farm labourer in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan. He was **conscribed** to service in October 1917 under the Military Service Act of 1917, and enlisted in Regina, Saskatchewan in December 1917. Standing five feet seven and a half inches tall, with brown eyes and brown hair, he arrived in England in early February 1918, and in France on May 1, 1918. Private George Price of the 28th Battalion Canadian Infantry served during the Hundred Days campaign, and in September 1918, was hospitalized for three weeks after a gas attack. Without a wife or children, he wrote home diligently, sending stoic and hopeful postcards to his little sister, Florence. In one he wrote, "*Just a line to let you know I still think of you. I will see you someday.*" In another he wrote, "*So be a good girl and help momma and I will come to see you some time soon.*"

In the early morning hours of November 11, by 9:30 a.m., many of the units would have heard by runner or telegram that an armistice would come at 11 that morning. And yet for some reason, twenty-five-year-old Private George Price was leading a small platoon to the east of Mons – and they hadn't heard the news. There are a few versions of what exactly happened with Price that morning. According to one account, Price suggested they go sweep some buildings sitting across a narrow canal in Ville-sur-Haines to look for German soldiers. Five soldiers walked across the small bridge and arrived at one home, kicking down a door to enter. While inside, German machine guns on a small knoll opened up, picking at the bricks of the house. As the Canadians ventured back out, Price was shot through the back and to the heart by a sniper at the end of a street.

Various accounts mention a young woman who ran over and tried to help. A "Killed in Action" report filled out afterward records Private George Price's death at three minutes before 11:00 a.m. Other accounts say it was just two minutes before, at 10:58 a.m. In another version, Price had crossed the bridge to say hello to a young Belgian woman who had waved to him, perhaps for a kiss or a handshake, perhaps to have a story to tell his grandchildren some day. After more than four years of fighting, on the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month, the guns fell silent. On November 11, Canadian casualties were 1 killed and 15 wounded.

On the other side of the ocean, Price's family had joined countless others that morning, gathering at a local park to celebrate the end of the war. They returned home and soon learned that George Price had been killed in action. Price left behind his family and his fiancée. George Price was buried in St. Symphorien Military Cemetery, 2 km east of Mons, which is also the resting place for several German soldiers.

Also buried there is Private John Parr, thought to be the first British Commonwealth soldier to die in action on the Western Front, in August 1914. Private John Parr, of the 4th Battalion, Middlesex Regiment, was only fifteen or sixteen when he was killed on August 21, 1914. Canadian Private George Price was the last Commonwealth soldier killed before the Armistice. In the city of Le Roeulx, there is a stone monument honouring George Price, just under the George Price Footbridge, also named in his honour, which sits close to the spot where he was killed.^{E, 2I, 2N, 4G, 5J}

• **CELEBRATIONS IN MONS:** In Mons, the Belgians welcomed their Canadian liberators with kisses, hugs, backslaps, songs, blessings and gifts of flowers, sweet biscuits and wine. A Canadian captain with the 58th Battalion, described in a letter home to his father, the reception in Mons; "*We certainly received a wonderful reception, something that I shall never forget, for as soon as we reached the outskirts the people were crowding around us, so that we could not even trot, throwing flowers on us, and in front of our horses on the road, and crying "vive les canadiens", "long live our deliverers"... All the houses were decked with Belgian and French flags and bunting,*

and people at every window when we reached the square in front of the town hall it was packed with people cheering, and singing and dancing. Everyone's wildest imagination could not have pictured a more stirring or glorious demonstration for the day of victory and peace. I had hoped to be in London or Paris on this day, but that could never compare with being in Mons, the place where Britain started and ended the war, and to think that our division had the honour of taking this place.^{7A}

A Private in the PPCLI wrote in his diary, "Civilians almost crazy with joy. They decorate us with colours and flowers but best of all the young maidens are right there with beaucoup kisses... civilians can't believe it's over. Rid of terror of German rule." And when the PPCLI marched into Mons with bands playing, he noted that, "thousands of people lined the streets. Old women cried as we went by. When the band played the Belgian national anthem the civilians went clean bug house—first time they had heard it in 4 years. A man threw his arms around the bandmaster and kissed him."^{4G, 5J, 7A}

The same kinds of wild, jubilate celebrations were taking place in the streets of Paris, London, Toronto and Allied capitals and across the Dominion.

• **NEWS IN SARNIA:** The *Sarnia (Canadian) Observer's* bold headline on that day was, "HUMANITY SAVED!" Two story headlines on the first page of the *Observer* read, "Ten Million Lives is the Terrible Toll of Most Bloody War in History" and "All Allied Prisoners, Soldiers and Civilians Alike Held in Germany Are To Be Released." Following is one story on the front page of the *Sarnia Observer*:

Our Gallant Canucks Capture Mons to Finish War Fittingly

London, Nov. 11 - The official statement today says: To Canadian troops fell the honor of capturing the last important town before the armistice put an end to hostilities. Mons, where the British made a brilliant stand at the beginning of the war, was retaken early this morning by the Canadians.

Following is another story in the *Observer* that day:

Citizens of Sarnia Go Wild On Receipt of News

The receipt of the joyous tidings that had been declared was heralded in this city early this morning, and the streets were crowded with an eager populace anxious to hear a confirmation of the report. Port Huron went wild and whistles on boats, factory, and every noisemaking device was unearthed and the racket kept up for hours. All morning the streets of the city were thronged with an enthusiastic crowd, autos were pressed into use, schools and stores closed, industries were shut down, and people went wild with joy when the news was confirmed that kaiserism and prussianism had been trampled to dust. Their joy knew no bounds, and thousands marched in procession armed with impromptu noise makers, consisting of old cans, drums, and anything from which they could produce a noise.

Thousands of flags and firecrackers were purchased by the enthusiasts. Business was at a standstill. Hundreds crossed to Port Huron and engaged in the celebration of their American cousins, who in turn came over to Sarnia to share in the demonstration here. The employees of the Loughhead Machine Co. went over the river in full force. At 1:30 a monster parade was held, which was participated in by several thousand joy-maddened citizens. This outburst, however, will have no effect on the demonstration that has been planned for the past several days, and which will be held tomorrow evening as originally intended.

It will, no doubt, be the greatest in the history of the Imperial City; it will probably eclipse anything ever attempted in Canada. Hundreds of workmen are at work at the old golf grounds building platforms and making preparation for the big event. The committee in charge have everything in readiness, the fireworks and paraphernalia will arrive to-morrow morning and everything will be in readiness. Everybody turn out for to-morrow night.

The next day, the *Sarnia Observer* continued to report on the impromptu celebrations held in the city on November 11th. Following is a portion of one report:

The Great Throng Could Not Wait

The people of Sarnia were so overjoyed at the news of the Kaiser's downfall that Tuesday (Nov. 12) was too far away to give vent to their feelings, and an impromptu demonstration was held in which hundreds of autos, carriages and vehicles of all kinds participated, and to noise and music of all kinds marched up and down the streets proclaiming the glad tidings of victory. It was a hilarious and spontaneous affair by a people who had awaited for over four years for such a celebration... The fact that no previous arrangements had been made added to the spontaneity of the affair, and men, women and children, old and young, men in khaki, some on crutches and others maimed by German soldiery were out to add their quota to the enthusiasm of the joy maddened crowd. Others with saddened hearts, owing to the loss of their loved ones joined in The Day, and while thinking of their loved ones who

would never return, they too, were overjoyed that the great struggle was over and that victory had rested with the armies in which their brave sons, fathers and brothers had given their lives...

The *Sarnia Observer* also outlined the details of the planned celebration for that evening. The headline read, "The Biggest Celebration in Sarnia's History Will Begin At Seven O'clock Tonight."

• **SARNIA CELEBRATES THE WAR'S END:** On the evening of November 12, 1918, one day after the Armistice was signed, a tremendous peace celebration was held in Sarnia. Thousands of citizens from Sarnia and surrounding communities joined in the celebration, including hundreds of people from each of Corunna, Courtright, Forest, Petrolia and Walpole Island. Cheering crowds packed the darkened streets as a huge torchlight parade, thousands strong, made its way starting at Victoria Park and moved through the downtown to the golf grounds. The noise was bewildering with the sounds of noisemakers of all kinds—such as tin cans, bells, clappers, clinkers, whistles, horns, cymbals, triangles, old saws and anything else that would make a noise. The bewildering noise combined with the music played by seven different bands, including those from Forest and Petrolia.

Participating in the celebration were the Collegiate boys procession; the local and very boisterous Chinese community, who even imported a Chinese band from Toronto; Goodison's Hun Thrasher; the Imperial Oil Company's Tank float and every truck they had along with hundreds of its employees with torches; a mass of citizens from Port Huron who had come across on the late ferry to rejoice; a number of Spanish War Veterans; First Nations community members who were out in full war dress of feathers and paint; members of the Sarnia Bridge Works; members of the Great War Veteran's Association; and people in every conceivable sort of costume.

The immense line of flaming torches stretching through the darkness was described as "a sight of magnificent grandeur" made even more unforgettable by the confetti and fireworks rocketing skyward in countless streaks of flame and falling in brilliantly multi-coloured showers. By the time the last of the parade arrived at the old golf grounds, an estimated twenty-five thousand people had gathered. A pile of boxes twenty-five feet high was ignited to create an enormous bonfire, warming the chilly night air. After more celebrating which included the burning of the Kaiser in effigy, the crowd began to disperse about eleven o'clock. Yet many moved to Front Street where the merrymaking continued, with bands playing, cheering, singing and dancing. One reporter stated, "It was a once in a lifetime civic celebration."

Following is a portion from the *Sarnia (Canadian) Observer* report on the celebration printed the next day:
Thousands of People from All Over Lambton County Celebrated Last Night

Sarnia's peace celebration has come and gone, but it leaves in the memory of all who attended or took part a lasting impression that will remain as long as life itself... Four long years have the people been storing up their hilarity for that glad occasion when they could once more breathe freely and shout lustily for the new birth of freedom in seas of blood. Each and every unit in the immense crowd last night let his or her feelings give vent in loud, long cheering, in the manner that young boys cheer, unrestrainedly, without thought of deportment or age. Everybody was glad and the whole world looked rosier, even to they who had sent their loved ones overseas to fight the battles of the country, who would never tread their native soil again. They forgot the individual and looked at it in a broader, more comprehensive way that rose above mere self, and instead of being downcast at the thought of their heroic dead, they joined in the thanks giving of they who had given their lads and who would once more welcome them to their hearthsides. It was a noble, it was a Canadian spirit that prevailed and held that vast crowd in its grasp last night...

• **SARNIA'S COST IN CANADA'S HUNDRED DAYS CAMPAIGN:** During the final three months of war, Canada and Newfoundland suffered it's greatest number of casualties—from August 8 to November 11, 1918, approximately 45,835 Canadians and Newfoundlanders were killed, wounded and missing (this includes more than 6,800 killed).

It was during this final campaign of the war that the highest number of men from Sarnia lost their lives. At least thirty-three young men from Sarnia gave their lives during Canada's Hundred Days Campaign. Three of the deaths were termed "wastage"—occurring between major set-piece battles—Thomas Hazen, Albert Rodber and Thomas Wright. The thirty other Sarnians were killed in action during the major battles of the Campaign: at least seven young men gave their lives in the **Battle of Amiens** (August 8-14)—Urban Noel, Albert Potter, William Reynolds, Walter Scott, Herbert Stott, Edward Timpson and Frederick Williams; at least ten young men gave their lives in the **2nd Battle of Arras and DQ Line** (August 26-September 3)—Alfred Adams, Cameron Bissett, Edward Causley, Albert Eberly, William Eddy, George Hall, Amos Iverson, Albert McDonald, James Steele and Daniel

Thomson; at least eleven young men gave their lives during the **Battles of Canal-du-Nord and Cambrai** (September 27–October 11)—George Beaumont, Joseph Carson, Royal Crawford, Alexander Cunningham, Sidney Davies, George Johnston, George Jones, Albert Pringle, Frederick Robinson, John Salsbury and Edward Watson; at least one Sarnian was killed in the **Battle of Valenciennes** (November 1–2)—Alfred Corrick; and at least one Sarnian was killed in the **Pursuit to Mons** (November 1–11)—John Howarth.

- **THE DYING CONTINUES:** After the signing of the Armistice on November 11, many more lost their lives or had their lives shortened in the months and years following the war, the result of their service overseas. At least five young men from Sarnia lost their lives shortly after the war was over. Frederick Doxtator died as a result of tuberculosis in Halifax on his way home on November 15, 1918; Neil Hanna was killed in a flying accident in Italy while observing the Austrian retreat on November 20, 1918; Earl Simmons died at his home in Sarnia on December 17, 1918; Alfred Corrick (noted above), who had been wounded at Valenciennes on November 1, died as a result of his wounds in an England hospital on January 13, 1919; and Frank Hickey died as a result of the effects of his service in a Windsor hospital on September 1, 1919. Four of these names are inscribed on the Sarnia cenotaph.

- **ARMISTICE TERMS:** Though it was termed an armistice, it was a German surrender in truth. The Armistice document contained 34 terms for Germany to follow that imposed a crippling and punitive defeat on Germany. Some of the terms included: immediate evacuation of all the territory they had invaded; the German army and navy had to surrender vast quantities of weapons (including artillery pieces, machine guns, mortars, aircraft, locomotives, rail cars, trucks and submarines); they agreed to repatriate all citizens of Allied nations and all Allied prisoners of war (some 3,500 of whom were Canadian); they agreed to pay billions in reparations; no removal or destruction of civilian goods or inhabitants in evacuated territories; all minefields on land and sea had to be identified; all means of communication (roads, railways, canals, bridges, telephones) to be left intact, as well as everything needed for agriculture and industry; and to admit guilt for causing the war. Germany also agreed to evacuate the left bank of the Rhine and bridgeheads behind it, to be held by Allied occupation forces, maintained at Germany's expense, until the peace terms had been met.

Though the Armistice deal was signed, it did not mean that the war was over. No one was sure what kind of terms would be imposed by the Allies on the defeated enemy now that they had laid down their arms. Though they retreated in good order, no one knew how the Germans would react to the Armistice terms, and though defeated, the German Imperial Army remained a force of several million strong. An army of occupation was needed in Germany to ensure that hostilities would not flare up again. No one relished the thought of asking these men, who had served for years—often dreaming of getting home again, to continue to serve for an indefinite period. As part of the British Expeditionary Force, Sir Arthur Currie's Canadian Corps, recognized as one of the most disciplined and hard-hitting forces, was asked if it would contribute two divisions to the occupation of Germany.^{4G, 5J, 11C}

- **CANADIANS MARCH TO GERMANY:** So on November 17, 1918, the 1st and 2nd Canadian Divisions—the units that had been on French soil the longest—began the long, hard 22-day march of 400-kilometres in a cold, wet November through Belgium to the Rhine River and Germany to take up occupational duties. The Canadian Corps 3rd and 4th Canadian Divisions remained in Belgium until they could be moved to England and then repatriated to Canada.

During their advance on Germany, the Canadian 1st and 2nd Divisions had the satisfaction of passing village after village of liberated French and Belgians, where civilians often flocked to the streets, shouting, cheering, and waving. The inhabitants of Nivelles, Belgium, dug up eight thousand bottles of wine for them. The Canadians also passed refugees carrying everything they had returning home, and thousands of abandoned German guns, helmets, and destroyed equipment that had been left by the side of the road.

However, towards the end of November, cold sheets of rain drenched the marching men who were covered in mud; the German destruction of bridges and railheads, as well as logistical problems including horses, mules, and motorized transport floundering on the muddy roads, caused delays—resulting in food, supply and fuel shortages; and then the influenza epidemic struck. The first wave of the worldwide deadly flu had hit earlier in 1918, with devastating effects on hunger-weakened civilians. The strain of the virus that struck at the end of the year was more virulent.

- **THE SPANISH INFLUENZA EPIDEMIC:** The most damaging epidemic disease—for Canada and the world—appeared in the latter stages of the war. The first case of Spanish influenza was diagnosed in Kansas on March 11,

1918. Soldiers spread it across Canada and carried it to the front in Europe. The Spanish Flu that swept the globe in the spring of 1918 through to the winter of 1919 was undoubtedly given a boost by the war. Soldiers living in close quarters huddled in trenches and tents; troop trains and transatlantic troop crossings; soldiers returning home; refugee populations; malnourishment; and unsanitary conditions all contributed to the spread of the contagious disease. Soldiers who had survived the war tragically died of Spanish influenza.

The virus damaged lungs, so fluid built up that could not be expelled. Oxygen was prevented from getting into the bloodstream so breathing became more and more laboured. It soon led to uncontrolled hemorrhaging and the coughing of blood, as writhing patients slowly suffocated. Blood from damaged respiratory cells seeped and foamed from the nose and mouth. The inflammation spread to other organs, causing swelling and leaking of blood from damaged vessels, leading to organ failure. Many also died from secondary bacterial infections.

Some 500 million people—a third of the world’s population—were infected and at least 20-50 million people worldwide died from the disease from 1918 to 1920, including 50,000 people in Canada. Within the CEF, an estimated 45,000 Canadian soldiers were afflicted with fever, aches, and chills, and at least 776 died from the illness, although the number could have been higher, as another 3,049 were recorded as having died under the generic category of “disease”.^{2E, 2I, 2N, 3R, 4G, 5J, 8H}

• **CROSSING THE RHINE:** By early December 1918, the Canadians had crossed the German border, and finally arrived at the Rhine. The crossing into Germany was a significant event, with dignitaries, journalists and photographers there to capture it for posterity. On December 13 in the cold, pouring rain, the lead Canadian units crossed the bridge over the Rhine at **Bonn** with colours flying and bayonets fixed. General Currie was there to take the troops’ salute. The parade of troops was 18 km long and took over five hours to cross the bridge. “*We looked like a bunch of drowned rats,*” one soldier said. The 2nd Battalion entered the Rhineland with their band playing “O Canada,” and the 14th Battalion were played forward to the tune of “The Maple Leaf Forever.” At the same time, about 32 km to the north, a similar event was taking place in **Cologne**, where citizens lined the streets to witness the arrival of the 1st Canadian Division as they too crossed the river in the pouring rain to take control of that city.

As days and weeks passed into a cold winter, the Canadian army of occupation became increasingly frustrated and discontent, unhappy with the continued military discipline, and anxious and eager to return home to their loved ones. The two Canadian divisions (1st and 2nd) in Germany moved back to Belgium in mid-January 1919. They did not begin to return to Canada via England until March and April 1919. The two divisions in Belgium (3rd and 4th) moved to England in February and March 1919.^{4G, 5J, 11C}

• **DEMOBILIZATION:** The logistics of getting hundreds of thousands of Canadians, and over a million Americans, back to North America would be long and trying process due to a number of factors: shipping shortages; an increasing number of strikes by dock workers, police officers and railway employees in Britain; a lack of suitable ports in Canada; and Canadian railways that didn’t have the capacity to handle the influx of people. The initial demobilization plan was to have troops sail from France to Canada, however, England became the embarkation point for the troop ships since the demobilization camps were there, and many of the soldiers in the CEF had family there whom they wanted to see before they returned to the Dominion (Currie made the case for this and got his way).

There was disagreement amongst the soldiers, Ottawa and General Currie on just how demobilization should proceed: many of the soldiers asked for a “first one in, first one sent home” policy; the government in Ottawa wanted first to reintegrate men with skills, known as “pivotal men,” to guard against a recession and kick-start the economy after the war; while Currie fought for Canadians to return in their units and under their officers. Currie argued that it would be more efficient, would better maintain discipline, and would ensure that units disembarking in Canada would be properly welcomed by their communities.

The solution arrived at was a compromise—complete units from within the four divisions, and the rest of the Canadian Corps, would be sent back under their own officers (accounting for approximately 100,000 men), while the rest of the CEF, from reserve units, conscripted men and the vast logistical support members, would be organized into drafts and sent home piecemeal.

Eager to get home: Military officers and civilian planners worked with aid agencies to speed the process but for soldiers overseas, the months of waiting were long, boring, frustrating and difficult to understand. Discouraged soldiers were unhappy with continuing harsh discipline, poor food, weak officers, and no firm departure dates. During this period, there were a number of instances of Canadian soldiers’ raucous behaviour in and around

demobilization camps. For example, on March 4 and 5, 1919, there were 13 incidents of unrest at demobilization camps, the most serious at the overcrowded **Kimmel Park** (near Liverpool), where rioting left five soldiers dead and another 25 seriously injured. To sustain morale, the military promoted physical training programs, organized sports, a theatre school was established, and a wide range of recreational activities. It also expanded the Khaki University, first established in 1917.

Paperwork and medicals: Before embarking for home, soldiers filled out 13 documents and answered 363 questions. This included Regiment and Company Conduct Sheets; Copies of Convictions; Medical History and Medical Examination Sheets; and a Dental Certificate for Demobilization, which recorded all fillings, extractions, crowns, dentures and any dental treatment received. Many took the opportunity to be “dentally fit for peace”, and having half a dozen teeth pulled at a time was not uncommon (a procedure often performed without anaesthetic).

Soldiers also had to complete a medical exam, for example to determine if they carried any kind of communicable disease, and if they would be eligible for a pension. A typical medical form completed by an examining doctor stated, “This is to certify that the man named above has been examined and found free from infectious diseases, transmissible skin disease, venereal disease and vermin, and is fit to travel.” For the soldiers, admitting to a medical illness meant delaying their demobilization, as more tests would have to be performed. So many of the men shrugged off or downgraded their illnesses and wounds from probing medical members, and were labelled “fit” when they should not have been.

The transportation of the troops to Canada did proceed much faster than anticipated. The original estimate had been that it would take 18 months, but two-thirds of the men were home within five months. Most of the Canadian Corps were returned to Canada between February and May 1919, and almost all of the men were back on Canadian soil by late summer.^{2I, 4G, 5J, 11C}

• **RETURNING HOME:** One of the soldiers returning home in 1919 was Nova Scotia native **William Bird** of the 42nd Canadian Infantry Battalion. He had arrived in France in December 1916 and served with that battalion until the end of the war, taking part in the battles at Vimy Ridge, Passchendaele, Amiens, Arras and Mons. Returning to Canada in March 1919 aboard the *Adriatic*, Williams’ thoughts were representative of many of the frontline soldiers as they approached home. Following is his description of his thoughts on his final night aboard the ship:

In my fine sheets I could not sleep and began to forget where I was. I seemed to be in an atmosphere rancid with stale sweat and breathing, the hot grease of candles, the dampness of the underground. I saw cheeks resting on tunics, mud-streaked, unshaven faces... men shivering on chicken-wire bunks. Then, from overhead, the machine-gun’s note louder, higher, sharper as it swept bullets over the shell crater in which I hugged the earth... the rumble of guttural voices and heavy steps in an unseen trench just the other side of the black mass of tangled wire beside which I lay. The long-drawn whine of a coming shell... its heart-shaking explosion... the seconds of heavy silence after, then the first low wail of the man down with a blood-spurting wound... It was too much. I got up and dressed, although it was only four o’clock in the morning.

It was cold but I wore my greatcoat, and to my amazement there were other dark figures near the rail. We stood, hunched together, gazing ahead into the darkness... The way we stood (in silence) made me think of a simile. Ah—we were like prisoners. I had seen them standing together, staring over the wire to the field beyond, never speaking. And we were more or less prisoners of our thoughts. Those at home would never understand us, because something inexplicable would make us unable to put our feelings into words. We could only talk with one another.

All at once the watchers stirred, tensed, craned forward. It was the moment for which we had lived, which we had envisioned a thousand times, that held us so full of feelings we could not find utterance. Far ahead, faint, but growing brighter, we had glimpsed the first lights of home!^{11A}

• **HOME AT LAST:** Departing England and crossing the Atlantic, the many ships docked in east coast ports, and the soldiers then boarded trains for the last leg of their journeys home. Upon arriving by train at their home stations, the soon to be demobilized battalions, batteries and units formed up for one last time before dignitaries. Speeches were given, soldiers stood proud, and then it was over. The demobilized men received their back pay, a bonus depending on their length of service, a maximum of \$420 for single men, \$600 for married men, \$35 for a set of clothes, and the option to keep parts of their kit. The “**returned men**,” as the veterans were initially called, of Canada’s most effective fighting formation were then expected to reintegrate back into Canadian society.

The transition to peacetime was difficult—the men reconnected with wives who had been forced to run the household without them; with children who had grown up; and with parents who had become aged by stress and

strain. One Canadian soldier expressed how many of the veterans felt—that the brotherhood of soldiers would never be understood by civilians. Those who had survived in the trenches and stared out into No Man’s Land, he believed, “*would remain a separate, definite people,*” forever haunted by the war.^{2I, 4G}

On their return home, at the very least, the veterans expected jobs. Instead, war factories were shutting down and there was unemployment, inflation and a housing shortage. One example of the unrest was the **Winnipeg General Strike** in the spring of 1919, which culminated in “Bloody Saturday,” where two strikers were killed in a Winnipeg demonstration. Compounding the homecoming problems was the Spanish Flu pandemic, which killed thousands across the country.^{2E}

Pensions: The war created hundreds of thousands of veterans who came home to a country with no formal pension process. Politicians and most bureaucrats were cautious about the long-term costs of veterans’ welfare. The concern of the government was that all returning soldiers should integrate back into civilian life, return to their jobs and resume making a living for themselves. Federal, provincial, municipal and charitable organizations provided financial support and a wide range of services to veterans and their families. Most aid remained grounded in the belief that soldiers and their families would remain responsible for their own post-war re-establishment.

The government’s desire to ensure that veterans did not become wards of the state, meant that they were paid pensions they could barely survive on, which would, it was thought, provide an incentive for the recipients to find work. The process also required a veteran, or his family, to plead his case before a jury of superiors. Full pension payments varied among ranks, with privates receiving a maximum of \$480 per year, plus monthly child allowances of \$6 per child. The vast majority of disabled soldiers received pensions of less than twenty-five percent of the possible allotment for their rank. Thousands of veterans were denied pensions, or never even applied for them, too proud to go before a board who would pass judgement on them and their service.^{2I, 4G, 8H}

Military Hospitals Commission: In 1915, the Canadian government created this Commission to offer medical and convalescent care to returned veterans. The Commission’s philosophy stressed will power and determination in overcoming personal adversity. Benefits and advice directed to disabled soldiers included: there is no such word as ‘impossible’ in his dictionary; that his natural ambition to earn a good living can be fulfilled; that he can either get rid of his disability or acquire a new ability to offset it; that he must help them to help him; that he will have the most careful and effective treatment known to science; that his strength and earning capacity will be restored to the highest degree possible; if he requires an artificial limb or kindred appliance it will be supplied free; that every man disabled by service will receive a pension or gratuity in proportion to his disability; if a disability prevents him from returning to his old work he will receive free training for a new occupation; that his own willpower and determination will enable him to succeed; and that neither his treatment nor his training nor his transportation will cost him a cent.^{2I}

In 1918, the Military Hospitals Commission was replaced by the **Department of Soldiers’ Civil Re-establishment**. It oversaw pension administration and the creation of hospitals across the country, along with rehabilitation centres, long-term care facilities, vocational training, specialized facilities for the blinded and shell-shocked, and even prosthetic limb factories.

Disabled soldiers: Though the transition to “normal life” was hard for able-bodied veterans, it was far worse for disabled soldiers who came home wounded in body and spirit. Tens of thousands of injured soldiers required prolonged medical treatment, some for the rest of their lives. Some of the disabled veterans were so badly injured that they were shuffled off to the veterans’ hospitals and renovated private homes that sprang up across the country to care for the legless, the armless, the blind, and insane. Veterans who were not badly enough injured to spend the rest of their days in a medical facility were often left to the care of loved ones. Or they fended for themselves, becoming less forgotten soldiers than invisible ones. Amputees were fitted with prosthetics from limb factories that opened to meet a new demand. Some of the wounded had faces reconstructed in painful surgery, while the worst cases were consigned to wearing masks for the rest of their lives. Long-term illnesses from disease were common among many men, and resulted in more hospital cases than did wounds from the weapons of war.

It is unknown the number of injured Canadian soldiers who returned to Canada and soon succumbed to their wounds, or had their lives cut short after the war as a result of wartime injuries, disease, and long-term trauma to the body and mind.^{4G} As mentioned on page 185, five Sarnians (four are inscribed on the cenotaph) lost their lives shortly after the war was over—Frederick Doxtator, Neil Hanna, Earl Simmons, Alfred Corrick and Frank Hickey. Many more had shortened lives and died as a result of their service overseas, but are not recorded on the cenotaph.

Compensation: Surviving dependents of soldiers killed in the war received compensation for their loss. Some 12,000 women were left as war widows, with thousands of children orphaned, countless lives disrupted, and families broken up. These grief stricken families were also forced to go before pension boards to receive their compensation for a father's or a husband's life. For example, a widow of a soldier who was killed on the Somme, who was left to care for their seven children, was awarded the \$384 per-annum allotment for a private's widow, plus \$6 per child per month.^{4G}

Sarnia's Civic Gratuity Fund: Not long after the conclusion of the First World War, Sarnia mayor William Nisbet was instrumental in creating the "Soldiers' Civic Gratuity Fund." It provided a grant for Sarnia officers and men who had served overseas and who were residents of the city for six months prior to enlistment. The by-law, passed in late 1919, authorized the sale of \$70,000 worth of debentures to create the fund. Pro-rata allotments were given out based on the number of applicants, which turned out to be approximately \$103 per soldier.

Suffering in silence: For those who came home, who had lost years of their lives and endured unspeakable hardships, they returned to a nation that wanted to forget everything about the war. Veterans were told to "move on" with their regular lives; to forget about the experiences they had endured; the horrors they witnessed; and their physical, psychological and emotional wounds. Survivors of this war generation had firm ideas about masculinity and how a man should conduct himself—they stifled the hurt and pain and carried on in silence. And so the war was obscured and buried deep, often revealed only in short bursts over the course of a lifetime, even as parents, wives and children yearned to know what happened over there. Many lives were shortened and many suffered in silence.

Following is a story written by Sarnia historian Randy Evans, printed in the November 2015 *Sarnia Journal*:

My Grandfather's Story

On January 4, 1916, my maternal grandfather, Percy Bodaly enlisted to serve with the Canadian Expeditionary Forces in World War One. He was 19 years old. Initially as a Private and later a Corporal, his entire wartime career would be spent in the medical corps at the Canadian war hospital at Taplow, England.

Like so many of his colleagues from that conflict, Grampa did not speak much of his war time experiences. A few funny anecdotes, perhaps, but nothing of consequence. Except on one occasion during a visit in the mid 1970's. As it happens, I was at the time reading Robert Service and thus came to my Grandparents' home with a book of the poet.

As clear as if it happened today, I recall my Grandfather spotting the volume and taking it in his large workman's hands. Without opening the cover, he began to recite lyrics from The Cremation of Sam McGee, The Spell of the Yukon, and the yarn of Dangerous Dan McGrew and the lady who was known as "Lou."

This spontaneous recital was followed by a moment of silence – me in astonishment and my Grandfather clearly in Remembrance. I asked the obvious question and was responded to as follows: After his daily shift at the war hospital my Grandfather would stay and read to the soldiers who had been blinded at the Front. Many of the sightless would ask for works by Service, so much so that his prose became a matter of memory. Some 60 years later the poems were still fresh in the mind of my Grandfather. So too was his recollection of those brave souls who sought solace in the words of Mr. Service.

I will never forget that precious story received from my Grandfather. Arising simply by chance, it gave to me a brief but lasting glimpse of my Grandfather in uniform, as well as those wounded soldiers so richly deserving of our esteem and Remembrance. Bless all their hearts and service. Lest we forget.

• **SHELL SHOCK:** It was during the Great World War that the term "shell shock" first came into being, appearing in a British medical journal in February 1915, only six months after the outbreak of the war. Others referred to the condition as "battle fatigue," doctors referred to it as "neurasthenia." Mental breakdown caused by the unending strain of combat such as the constant crash of high explosives, the never-ending stress and fear of death, hours and days of sleep deprivation, as well as the brutality of what they witnessed and what they were forced to do to other men pushed many soldiers over the edge of sanity.^{4F}

Poorly understood at the time and for many years afterward, shell shock meant its victims experienced a myriad of unpleasant symptoms: crying, fear, mutism, nightmares, spasms, uncontrollable trembling, paralysis, and insanity due to the prolonged exposure to the stresses and horror of combat. Early in the war, military authorities often saw its symptoms as expressions of cowardice, weakness or lack of moral character. Generals far from the front, fearing a mass breakdown of soldiers rendered unable to fight due to mental wounds, responded with punishment, thinking that it might stiffen the backbone of those wobbling. But the cowardice-weakness of character

argument was heard less often when it became known that officers were more likely than the men to break down.

Shell shock was rarely mentioned in letters home, but the effects of stress did come through in some. Following is a portion of a letter written by a twenty-four-year-old Canadian infantryman in January 1918 to his parents describing his situation after his battalion took and held a trench;

We were relieved after a very trying day at about eleven at night (after four days of it on bully beef and captured rations) and had to make about six miles back to reserves. Naturally we were exhausted before we started our trip out and we had to go through a veritable ocean of mud, all the time Fritz was throwing all he had at us... At about three miles out, he described, I was so exhausted that I was almost delirious and I began counting my steps. I would count to ten or so and then forget that I intended to count so I'd start in again and count perhaps to fifteen and then forget again. All the time the boys were falling out one by one but I still kept plodding on counting my steps when I could remember... We finished the trip at six a.m., six [men] only of the three companies got in without falling out, the rest were scattered all the way along the road. The cooks had a hot breakfast for us and we ate like wolves but all the time we ate the lot of us cried like babies. I'll never forget the way the tears rolled out of my eyes and I couldn't have told you why I cried excepting that my nerves were completely gone.^{7A}

Following is a story from the *Sarnia Observer*, November 29, 1916, entitled "CURE FOR SHELL SHOCK":

Simple Invention For Wrecked Nerves Used by Canadians

Wounded soldiers suffering from shell shock and various nervous complaints are being cured at the Ontario Military Hospital, Orpington, Kent, by a novel treatment of baths with continuously flowing water. A soldier who went into the bath a raving maniac was held down by rubber bands, and emerged cured and able to walk out after eleven days' continuous treatment. The treatment is pleasant, judging from the blissful expression on the face of a patient sleeping in the bath. The patient lies on a sheet and pillow suspended in the bath with the water up to his chin. The water is regulated to the man's temperature, and flows with a rippling motion from head to foot.

At the mid-point of the war, high command ordered that the term "shell shock" be dropped. The military tried to downplay the implications of shell shock, instructing doctors to use the term "N.Y.D." standing for "Not Yet Diagnosed" which the men cynically transformed into "Not Yet Dead." It was also designated "N.Y.D., N" standing for "Not Yet Diagnosed, Nervous".

Like those who were physically wounded, shell shock victims were often treated quickly, frequently at rest stations close to the front, with treatments that included shaming, physical therapy, Freudian psychotherapy and crude electroshock therapy. In most cases, the goal of treatment was to return the soldiers to the front lines as soon as possible to replace the depleting ranks.

Doctors diagnosed almost 10,000 Canadians with shellshock during the course of the First World War. One contemporary Canadian Army Medical Corps doctor claimed that there were at least 15,000 diagnosed cases, and this did not include all the men who were killed even before they made it out of the line to be diagnosed.^{4G} Tens of thousands more sustained stress injuries and somehow kept going. For the countless who survived the war, doctors knew little of what is now known as **Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder** (PTSD), so there were few treatment programs after the war for returned veterans who suffered from it. For these sufferers, their minds remained a battlefield, never able to leave behind the Western Front—they experienced flashbacks, nightmares and daytime horrors.^{2I, 3P, 4F, 4G, 9U}

• **SHATTERED LIVES AT HOME:** In both World Wars, soldiers families in Sarnia coped each day with the possibility that those whom they loved might not return, and for many, ultimately had to face the terrible reality that their worst fears were realized. They received only a short and vague telegram at their homes from Ottawa (Ministry of National Defence—Director of Records) informing them that their son or husband was "*listed as missing in action*", and that more information would follow later. Often it wasn't until many weeks or even months later that they received another simple telegram that contained very little information other than, "*We regret to inform you that your son has been officially declared killed in action*". Usually, very few or no other details were included.

Young widows, their lives shattered at the news of the loss of their husbands, and parents were left to wonder where and how their sons had died, and about their last agonizing moments in a faraway land. They wondered whether their sons' bodies were buried in a grave, and if so, where, or if their bodies were even recovered. Many were left with only their memories and a sepia photograph, and the knowledge that they would never be able to see their loved one's final resting place. They were not given the opportunity to say good-bye to their loved ones or to give them a proper funeral. Parents were left with memories of those special junctures in their sons' life—the day they

were born; special family occasions; going to school; appearing in uniform for the first time; and waving good-bye for the last time as the train left the station.

Following is an example of one mother's experience, one that was too common: Private Donald Ross, the only son of Mabel Ross from Grafton, Ontario, was only seventeen when he enlisted in 1916. A member of the Canadian Infantry, 87th Battalion, he was wounded at Vimy Ridge in April 1917. During his fourteen months of recuperation in England, he became engaged to an English woman who called him "Smiler," because he smiled, danced, and whistled and was "the happiest boy in the world." Donald Ross was sent back to France in August 1918. The next month, on September 2, he was killed in action. In October 1918, Donald's mother wrote a letter to one of Donald's friends, Conners. Following are portions of that letter:

Dear Friend Conners,

My Friend Conners is the way my Dear Son Donald Ross spoke of you when he wrote me the last letter he ever will write to me... He was killed Sept 2nd, I believe the day you were wounded. You know I do not know what your name is but believe Donald mentioned it in his letter... I am very sorry to know you are wounded then again if not dangerously so I am glad as you will be safe for awhile at least and now I am going to cry out a mother's sore heart to you for some little news of my son's death or at least something about his last days or hours on earth.

Ah if you only knew how I want to hear something about him you see he wrote me the Friday before he was killed and he said like this – my old friend Conners is Sargent and I am going in his company so do not be surprised if I get a stripe myself that is if I am lucky enough to stay here long enough to get one. And as I have nothing except the cable and a letter from a Chaplain by the name of Jackson who put another man's name and number in the letter he wrote about my boy's death so you see it had very little interest for me. So I just made up my mind I would appeal to you for news. Perhaps you can give me some details and if not get into connection with some of the boys who were near him when he fell and also try and have his little personal effects sent to me they are nothing to anyone else but ah how precious they would be to me his Mother anything touched by his dear hands.

Ah Conners may you never have that longing to see anyone that I have to see my son for I am so lonely for him and have been waiting for so long and now ah now I must wait all in vain and I loved him so. Please do all you can in this for me and I shall give you a Mother's blessing.

... hoping and praying that you will be able to write me some news any little thing about him even the fact you spoke with him and how he looked etc. etc. would be a great source of comfort to me. Now I will close and I do hope this awful long selfish letter will not tire you too much and that you will try to send me some little news.

Hoping this finds you as comfortable as can be and trusting you to do what you can for a poor lonesome mother. I will close with best wishes.

Mrs. Hugh Ross

Grafton Ontario Canada

Mrs. Ross's letter was returned unopened; Conners was also dead. ^{C, D, 2G, 4F, 7A}

Over the course of the war, thousands of telegrams reporting deaths were sent out to loved ones at home. Parents' dreams of seeing their children again were shattered after reading the first line: "Deeply regret to inform you..." Following is a poem written by Myrtle Corcoran Watts and printed in the *Sarnia Observer* in late September of 1918 that expresses the emotion of a mother's grief:

My Son

*Somewhere in France there lies my youngest son,
It seems such little time since he was small.
And now his life on earth so soon is done,
His Master needed him. He heard the call,
Within my sleep I dream of him each night,
And wake to find he cannot come to me,
For with the coming of the morning light,
I seem to see his grave across the sea.
I know the sorrow and the bitter loss,
That Mary felt when on that day at noon,
Her Son was nailed upon that cruel cross,
While all the heavens turned to darkening gloom.
Oh, may I help some mourning one,
Who, like myself, has lost her much loved son.*

- **THE SILVER CROSS:** In 1916, William Alexander Fraser, a Toronto novelist, proposed a tribute in the form of a silver cross, to mothers who had lost sons. *“The mothers are the heroines of the bitter home trenches. They suffer in silence with no reward but the sense that they have answered the call with their heart’s blood – their sons.”* By December 1, 1919, such an award was approved, taken a step further by including the mothers *and* widows of Canadian soldiers who died on active duty or whose deaths were later determined to be attributable to their active duty. Officially, the award is called the **Canadian Memorial Cross**; unofficially it is referred to as the **Silver Cross**. Many people have termed it, “the medal no mother wants.”

The first Silver Cross was presented to Charlotte Susan Wood, of Winnipeg, who had lost five sons in the Great War. When Charlotte Wood met King Edward VIII at the inauguration of Canada’s Vimy Memorial in France in July of 1936, King Edward, holding her hand said, *“I wish your sons were all here”*. As they gazed across the former killing fields subsequently planted with uncountable white crosses row on row, Charlotte replied, *“Oh Sir, I have been looking at the trenches and I just can’t figure out why our boys had to go through that”*. During the two World Wars, approximately 100,000 Silver Crosses were given to the mothers and wives of soldiers who were killed.²¹

- **THE “DEAD MAN’S PENNY” and MEMORIAL SCROLL:** In October 1916 the British Government set up a committee regarding the idea for a commemorative keepsake that could be given to the relatives of soldiers serving with the British and Empire forces whose deaths were attributable to the Great War of 1914-1918. It was agreed that the memorial to be issued to the next of kin would be produced and paid for by the British Government. The Next of Kin Memorial Plaques and Memorial Scrolls were produced to commemorate those that gave their lives and to acknowledge their sacrifice. They were intended to give the close family a tangible memorial of their lost loved one.

In August 1917 the committee set up a competition for any British-born person to enter who could put forward a suitable design for a small bronze plaque to record the name of a fallen British or Empire Forces serviceman or woman. The top few selected entries would be offered prizes of up to £500. The design of the plaque competition was held while the war still raged. There was so much interest from people wanting to submit designs for the memorial plaque that the closing date (November 1, 1917) was extended by a few weeks to December 31, 1917 so that servicemen on active service overseas would have an opportunity to submit a design. There were more than 800 entries to the competition from within the United Kingdom, from countries in the British Empire and from the theatres of war. The winning design, announced March 31, 1918, was by Mr. **Edward Carter Preston**. His initials, E CR P, appear above the foot of the lion.

The Next of Kin Memorial Plaque is a circular bronze plaque approximately 11 cms in diameter. Its design features the figure of Britannia bowing her head. She is facing to her left and holding a laurel wreath in her left hand over the box with the name of the fallen soldier. The rank of the soldier was not given, so as to make no form of distinction of the level of sacrifice made—each death was to receive the same honour regardless of regiment or rank. In Britannia’s right hand she is holding a trident. In representation of Britain’s sea power there are two dolphins each facing Britannia on her left and right sides. A lion (the symbol of England) is standing in front of Britannia at her feet, also facing to the left with a menacing growl. A very small lion, with his head facing to the right can be seen underneath the larger lion’s feet, biting into a winged creature representing the German Imperial eagle. Around the margin of the circular plaque are the words, “He died for freedom and honour.”

Manufacture of plaques did not start until late in 1918. In the first month after the war was over the first plaques began to be produced in December 1918 at the Government’s Memorial Plaque Factory in Acton in London, and was moved in December 1920 to the Woolwich Arsenal munitions factory in south London. The circular shape and coin-like appearance (like the smaller British penny coin) of the Next of Kin Memorial Plaque soon contributed to the nickname of this plaque becoming widely known as the **“Dead Man’s Penny”**, the “Death Penny”, “Death Plaque” or “Widow’s Penny”.

The Memorial Scroll: In October 1917 it was announced that the committee had decided also to issue a commemorative scroll to the next of kin in addition to the bronze plaque. The scroll would be printed on high quality paper, size 11 x 7 inches (27cm x 17cm). By January 1918 the wording on the scroll was being discussed. The committee found the choice of words very difficult and asked for advice from numerous well-known writers including Rudyard Kipling, whose only son John was missing in action, believed killed, at the Battle of Loos. The text was to be printed in calligraphic script beneath the Royal Crest followed by the name of the commemorated serviceman giving his rank, name and regiment, this time individually written. The production of the memorial

scrolls began in January 1919, being printed from a wood block by artists at the London County Council Central School of Arts and Crafts. The accepted wording agreed upon by the committee was; “He whom this scroll commemorates was numbered among those who, at the call of King and Country, left all that was dear to them, endured hardness, faced danger, and finally passed out of the sight of men by the path of duty and self-sacrifice, giving up their own lives that others might live in freedom. Let those who come after see to it that his name be not forgotten”

King’s message: The plaque was sent out to relatives in an “On His Majesty’s Service” white envelope with a printed “Official Paid” stamp. Inside this outer envelope there was another white envelope with the Royal Crest embossed on the reverse enclosing a letter with a copy of King George V’s signature. With Buckingham Palace letterhead, the letter read “I join with my grateful people in sending you this memorial of a brave life given for others in the Great War. George R.I.”

Distribution of Plaques and Scrolls: Manufacture of Next of Kin Memorial plaques began in late 1918, and the Memorial Scrolls in January 1919, as the supply of the metal and the paper were difficult to obtain in wartime. The plaques and scrolls were posted out separately, typically in 1919 and 1920, and a ‘King’s message’ was enclosed with both. From 1919 and for several years after the end of the Great War there were over 1,300,000 Memorial Plaques and Memorial Scrolls sent to next of kin in commemoration of the soldiers, sailors and airmen, including approximately 600 women who died as a direct consequence attributable to service in the Great War. In those cases the motto on the plaques was amended to “She died for freedom and honour”. ^{21, 3R, 4C, 90}

• **THOSE LEFT BEHIND:** Many of the fallen left behind wives and children. The following poem, *The Soldiers’ Widow*, written by Edgar Guest and printed in the *Sarnia Observer* in March of 1915, expresses the emotion of a widow’s grief:

*The babies ask: Where’s papa gone?
And when’s he coming back?
And oh, it hurts to look upon
His little Joe and Jack,
And oh, it hurts so much at night
When all the lights are low!
I wonder was it wrong or right
For me to let him go.
They need so much his gentle care,
They look for him each day;
‘Twas I that sent him marching there
And brushed the tears away.
‘Twas I that heard his country call
Nor asked him not to go;
Alone I could have borne it all,
But there are Jack and Joe
They look for him both night and day,
So good and kind was he,
They want him now to share their play,
And when they question me
I have to turn away to hide,
The bitter, scalding tear,
It hurts to think that had I tried
I might have kept him here
I know his country needed him,
But oh, my heart is sore,
For through the future, dark and grim,
His babies need him more.
And when they ask: “Where’s papa gone?”
‘Tis then it hurts me so,
To think I strapped his knapsack on
And said he ought to go.*

- **WAR BRIDES:** While overseas, a large percentage of the wounded Canadian soldiers spent time at hospitals in the British Isles or travelled there while on leave. Many soldiers fell in love with the women they met during their extended stay. By war's end Canadian soldiers were marrying British and European women at the rate of 300 a week, over 1000 per month. Many of the soldiers served long enough overseas to begin families. There are no official figures given for the total number of Canadian Expeditionary Force soldiers who married abroad and returned to Canada with a war bride and/or children. By November 1918 reports in the Canadian press estimated that there were at least 20,000 war brides who had never been to Canada before. By mid August 1919 that number swelled to 35,000.

Most of the women were from the British Isles, but a number of them also came from France and Belgium. A handful of ships brought the war brides to Canada after the war, with the voyage across the Atlantic taking an average of 7 days. Many of the women travelled with young children or infants. The greatest risk while travelling to Canada during the winter of 1918/1919 was the Spanish flu epidemic. A number of war brides and their children succumbed to influenza on ships travelling to the Dominion during this time and were buried at sea, while others died shortly after arriving on Canadian shores.

In an immigration scheme in January 1919, the Government of Canada offered the dependents of Canadian soldiers free third class passage from their homes in Europe to their final destination in Canada. The Department of Immigration and Colonization repatriated over 54,500 soldiers' dependents to Canada in all. Approximately 17,000 returned to Canada between July 1917 and November 1918. After the armistice a further 37, 748 came to Canada by the end of 1919. This remarkable group of young Canadian citizens followed their veteran husbands and made their homes in this young and growing country. Their contributions would extend far beyond the walls of their homes and their growing families as they entered their communities and enriched it with their many abilities and hard work.^{D, F, 5K, 5L}

- **GENERAL ARTHUR CURRIE'S RETURN TO CANADA:** (more information on Arthur Currie is on pg. 137)

Sir Arthur Currie commanded the Canadian Corps from June 1917 until its disbandment in late 1919. He proved to be an excellent commander who always did his best for his Canucks to enhance the prospects for success and save Canadian lives. He had put his career on the line several times to ensure that more guns were available to support an attack; pushed back start times against his superiors' wishes; demanded more preparation time prior to major assaults; refused to let his forces serve under weak British generals; and even turned down an army command to preserve the fighting efficiency of his corps. Under his leadership, the Canadian Corps cemented their reputation as an elite assault formation, with an unbroken string of major victories that included Hill 70, Passchendaele, Amiens, Arras, and the Canal du Nord. Lieutenant-General Sir Arthur Currie is believed by many military experts and historians to be one of the **best military commanders** Canada has ever produced.^{4G, 5J}

Despite his sterling wartime standing, Currie received a cold welcome on his return to Canada – his reputation damaged by Sir Sam Hughes, who had been Minister of Militia and Defence at the start of the war until his firing in late 1916. In fact, Currie had been selected as a brigade commander in the First Contingent in 1914 by Sam Hughes, in part because of his friendship with Hughes' son, Garnet.

Years before his return to Canada, Currie had refused to promote Sam Hughes' son, Garnet, and reward him with a key leadership position in the Canadian army. Sam and Garnet Hughes both vowed revenge. Father and son Hughes accused Currie of having sacrificed Canadian lives in fruitless battles in the days leading to the Armistice. It was not true, but the accusations would dog Currie for many years. On his return to Canada, exhausted from the war and suffering from what we would now call post-traumatic stress disorder, Currie offered a poor defence of his war record. Though he was celebrated throughout the British Empire as one of the finest corps commanders of the war, the Canadian government accorded him no special honours.

Currie helped create the postwar army and in 1920, he exited the military to become principal of McGill University in Montreal where he would be a resounding success. In June 1927, a Port Hope newspaper, owned by the Hughes family, published a scathing editorial repeating the substance of Hughes charges in 1919. The accusations were untrue, but they shook the country. Currie struck back against the paper, suing for libel of character, asking for \$50,000 in damages, but really to clear his name and reputation.

The war was refought in the Cobourg courtroom, as Currie's battlefield decisions were attacked, his motives interrogated, his character assassinated, and the cost of the war questioned. Backed by almost all of the surviving Corps officers, hundreds of whom offered to testify on his behalf, Currie would win the sixteen day high-profile court case in May 1928. Though the verdict came down in his favour—the jury decided that he had been libeled, but

awarded him only \$500—the trial had damaged Currie’s spirit and health. Universally seen by military historians as Canada’s greatest soldier, and one of the finest leaders of the Great War, Arthur Currie died at age fifty-seven in November 1933 after a stroke. Tens of thousands attended his military funeral in Montreal; it was broadcast on radio coast-to-coast; the largest funeral for any Canadian to that point in the country’s history.^{21, 2N, 5J, 7Z, 8H, 11C}

Towards the end of the war, in response to the criticism that the Canadian Corps had taken too many casualties, General Sir Arthur Currie pointed out that it was the Canadians who spear-headed the attacks during the final 100 days. He continued, *“The Germans fought us exceedingly hard all the way, for whenever the Canadian Corps goes into a battle he seems to throw a far higher proportion of men and ammunition at us than he does at any other part of the front. He assumes that if he stops the Canadian Corps, everything else stops. This is a point that should be remembered by the people of Canada...”*^{7A}

On reflecting on the Canadian Corps extraordinary victories in the last months of the Great War, General Arthur Currie told Prime Minister Sir Robert Borden that, *“to my mind, there is no doubt, that no force of similar size played anything like so great a part in bringing the proud enemy to his knees.”* Currie had written to a friend in late October 1918 that, *“peace when it does come must be a peace that will last for many, many years. We do not want to have to do this thing all over again in another fifteen or twenty years.”*^{4G, 5J}

General Sir Arthur Currie had no illusions about the horrors of war. In an address to the Empire Club in Toronto on August 29, 1919, he stated, *“We picture war as a business of banners flying, men smiling, full of animation, guns belching forth, and all that sort of thing. One, somehow or other, gets the impression that there is a great deal of glory and glamor about the battlefield. I never saw any of it. I want you to understand that war is simply the curse of butchery, and men who have gone through it, who have seen war stripped of all its trappings, are the last men that will want to see another war.”*^{5J}

• **TECHNOLOGY OF THE GREAT WAR:** The weapons used in the Great War expanded killing to an industrial scale with the goal of each side being to kill as many as possible, as fast as possible. The First World War was primarily a land war. Trench weapons included rifles and bayonets, grenades, and rifle grenades. The new Mills bomb became the main grenade used by the Allies—weighing half a kilogram, the bomb’s exterior was serrated so that when it detonated it broke into many fragments. For Canadian soldiers, the unreliable Canadian-made Ross rifle was replaced with the British Lee-Enfield rifle, designed to fire 15 rounds per minute. Machine guns that included the heavy, water-cooled Vickers machine gun and the more portable Lewis, with its cylindrical feed drum, were capable of firing 400 to 500 rounds per minute, devastating weapons that made any frontal assault a costly affair.

Flamethrowers were used for the first time in warfare in the trenches. Artillery had the most devastating effect in the war; mortars and field guns fired high explosive shells, shrapnel shells that released hundreds of steel balls, as well as smoke, incendiary and gas shells. As the war progressed the artillery pieces became larger and more accurate in their fire. The new ‘106 graze trigger fuse’ enabled artillery shells to explode on the slightest contact rather than burying themselves in the ground, an extremely useful weapon at cutting barbed wire.

Soldiers and miners dug tunnels under enemy trenches and planted explosive charges. Tanks, first used at the Battle of the Somme, improved over the course of the war. The first large-scale use of poison gas was used by the Germans at Ypres. Chlorine gas caused a burning sensation in the throat and chest pains, leading to suffocation. Other gases such as mustard gas and phosgene were used, the former causing blistering skin, vomiting, blinded eyes, internal and external bleeding, and death in days. Phosgene was many times deadlier than chlorine, and nearly invisible and odourless. In the air, planes were used for the first time, initially for spying, aerial photography and dropping bombs. Planes evolved into fighter aircraft, with machine guns and sometimes cannons. In the water, submarines and torpedoes, sea mines and depth charges were added to the navies.^{E, 2I, 7Z}

• **MEDICINE:** A number of medical innovations and improvements were made during the First World War, brought on by the havoc created by the new lethal weapons of war. More than 3,600 Canadian soldiers returned home missing an arm or a leg – and sometimes more than one. The Military Hospitals Commission (see pg. 188), responsible for restoring wounded veterans to health and productivity, promised free **prosthetics**—artificial limbs for soldiers who lost them in the war. They promised to produce the best arms and legs devised anywhere in the world, as well as **orthopedic** apparatuses such as splints, braces and orthopedic shoes.

The War Amps organization traces its origins back to September 23, 1918, when the Amputation Club of British Columbia held its first meeting. It was the first of many groups of war amputees across Canada to organize

and, eventually, amalgamate into a national organization. Formally chartered in 1920 as the “Amputations Association of the Great War”, with a philosophy of “amputees helping amputees”, the organization pledged to “bind together in the spirit of fraternity all men who have lost a limb or limbs whilst in service to Canada.” In its constitution, The War Amps identified a threefold purpose: to bring their case to the Canadian government; to help amputees with retraining and rehabilitation; and to explore and initiate research into the little-known world of artificial limbs. Today, the charitable Association continues to serve war amputees, and all Canadian amputees, including children.^{9T}

Physiotherapy, referred to as “rehabilitation therapy” at the time, involving massage, manipulation and exercise, grew in importance as a method used to help many of the wounded. Another development came early in the war when Canadian Dr. Lawrence Bruce Robertson was credited with performing the first **blood transfusions** in a British hospital. Before the war, he had studied blood transfusion techniques and had used them to save infants at Toronto’s Hospital for Sick Children. By war’s end, the prompt transfusion of blood in wounded soldiers saved thousands of lives, yet there was always substantial risk as the knowledge of blood types and Rh blood groups was still in its’ infancy. The technique of blood transfusion would be honed by Canada’s **Dr. Norman Bethune** in the 1930’s in Spain and China.

Countless veterans returned from war with burns, gaping facial wounds in their faces, missing noses and chins and holes in their cheeks. Innovations in skin grafts and facial reconstruction revolutionized **plastic surgery**. Advances in **X-rays**, including mobile X-ray machines that could be brought to surgical stations at the Front, helped to locate bullets, shrapnel, shell and grenade fragments, as well as broken bones. Certain diseases like typhoid could be controlled by the use of **vaccinations** and treatments for dysentery and tetanus improved. Canada became a leading producer of tetanus vaccinations during the war thanks to research and development conducted at the University of Toronto. Jagged steel from shell casings, shrapnel balls and bullets tore through flesh. In “good” wounds, the metal passed through the body without hitting organs, though a man could still bleed to death. In bad cases, the steel shattered bones, pulped organs, cut arteries, tore up intestines and lodged in the body. **Antibiotics** such as penicillin had not yet been discovered, so many of the wounded soldiers died a slow and agonizing death, a result of infections of their wounds.

• **BIRTH OF THE CANADIAN NAVY:** Prior to 1910, the Canadian government had little interest in naval affairs. However, on May 4, 1910, with conflict brewing in Europe, the Canadian Parliament, under the authority of the Naval Services Act, established the Canadian Navy. One year later, on **August 29, 1911**, by command of the King George V, it was designated the **Royal Canadian Navy** (RCN). In the beginning, it consisted of 350 sailors and two second-hand British cruisers, *HMCS Niobe* and *HMCS Rainbow*, with bases divided between Halifax, Nova Scotia and Esquimalt, British Columbia. In May of 1914, the Royal Naval Canadian Volunteer Reserve (RNCVR) came into being (on January 31, 1923, it was renamed the Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve - RCNVR).

The protection of Canada’s coasts was entrusted to the RCN. With the threat of enemy attack, British Columbia’s premier even purchased two submarines (CC-1 and CC-2) to help patrol the coasts. New ships were built and a number of patriotic citizens loaned or gave their personal yachts to aid in naval defence. By 1918, the navy had grown to over 100 war vessels, with 5,500 Canadians serving in the Royal Canadian Navy, and another 3,000 Canadians serving in Britain’s Royal Navy. Over 150 Canadian sailors lost their lives during the Great War, serving with the RCN. No casualty figures exist for the 3,000 Canadians in service with the Royal Navy. The first four Canadians to die on active service during the Great War were serving on the *HMS Good Hope*, a British armoured cruiser that was sunk on November 1, 1914.^{D, 2I, 4G}

• **BIRTH OF CANADA’S AIR FORCE:** It was in December 1903 that Orville and Wilbur Wright had piloted the first successful powered flight on the beach at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, U.S.A. The first Canadian powered flight, organized by Alexander Graham Bell and flown by Douglas McCurdy was in 1909. Canada’s first attempt at an air force was the Canadian Aviation Corps (CAC), formed in September of 1914. It consisted of two officers and a mechanic and one biplane that was shipped to England with the Canadian Expeditionary Force. The plane was trucked to Salisbury Plain where the Canadian troops were training, but never flew, as not one of the three members was a qualified pilot. By February 1915, the CAC had disappeared, so during the First World War, Canada did not have a distinct air force.

However, approximately 22,800 Canadians volunteered to serve in the British flying services—the Royal Flying Corps (RFC) and the Royal Naval Air Service (RNAS)—which amalgamated on April 1, 1918 as the **Royal**

Air Force (RAF). Some of those who joined the flying services enlisted in Canada. Another approximate 13,100 Canadians served as aircrew.

Canadians served at home and overseas as fighter and reconnaissance pilots, aerial observers, mechanics, flight instructors and women served as clerks, mechanics and vehicle drivers. Most of the Canadians in the British flying services were those who transferred from the CEF, who were fairly liberal about allowing such transfers, with only occasional protests that the army was losing too much talent to the flying services.

Flying, still in its infancy, was extremely dangerous. The demands of war meant that pilot training was often cursory. Many recruits had only a few hours of instruction before being expected to fly solo; consequently, more pilots died from flying accidents and mechanical failure than from enemy fire. The flyers, the so-called “**cavalry of the clouds**”, went up in rickety mono and biplanes made of wood and canvas with propeller engines, few instruments and no parachutes. At the war’s beginning, flimsy aircraft were unarmed, used in a reconnaissance role, and pilots carried pistols or dropped hand-held bombs. Advances in air technology were rapid so by war’s end: sturdy aircraft were armed with machine guns that could fire through the propeller’s arc; fighters fought for air superiority and strafed enemy soldiers; bombers carried the war to the front and beyond enemy territory; observation planes spotted enemy troops movement, located gun batteries and passed information back by wireless; and pilots at last were issued parachutes. Pilots strove to achieve surprise through advantages of sun, altitude and attacks from behind. Most pilots lasted only ten weeks in action, and one third of all the fliers died in combat.^{4G, 5J, 10Q, 11C}

Canada produced its share of flying aces, who became household names at home, including William Barker, the single most decorated Canadian of the Great War; Arthur Roy Brown, who is credited by many as the one who shot down German flying ace Manfred von Richthofen, better known as the “Red Baron” on April 21, 1918; Raymond Collishaw; and William A. “Billy” Bishop to name a few. Billy Bishop shot down 72 planes during the war, including four German planes during a solo mission in July of 1917, for which he was awarded the Victoria Cross.^{D, 2I, 2Q, 2S, 3R, 4G, 5J, 8H}

One Sarnian who was a member of the RFC during the war was **John Wilfred Randolph**. He was born October 5, 1897, the son of Harry DeBeaumont Randolph of London Road, Sarnia. Seventeen year-old John Randolph enlisted in the Canadian Expeditionary Force on February 15, 1915 in Sarnia, and became a member of #3 Stationary Hospital with the rank of Private. He arrived in England on April 29, 1915, and in France on April 8, 1916, as a member of #2 Canadian Field Ambulance. On January 31, 1918, John Randolph joined the Royal Flying Corps, becoming a member of #2 Cadet Wing, training at Hastings, East Sussex, England. On May 28, 1918, he was appointed Flight Cadet, RFC. John Randolph survived the war, returned to Sarnia, married and worked at the post office.^F

During the Great War, at least one in four (possibly one in three) pilots who flew British planes were Canadian. Of the 22,800 pilots there were 6,166 British Empire air service fatalities, of which approximately 1,400 Canadian airmen were killed or died of wounds or disease either during training or combat. An additional 1,130 Canadians were wounded or injured, and 377 became prisoners of war or were interned. At least five young men from Sarnia gave their lives during the Great War while serving with the Royal Flying Corps including Nelson Brown, Neil Hanna, Thomas Hazen, David McGibbon and Leslie Playne.

In September of 1918, the Canadian government approved the formation of a Canadian Air Force (CAF), which was comprised of two British squadrons made up entirely of Canadian personnel—designated No. 1 (Fighter) Squadron and No. 2 (Day Bomber) Squadron. With the signing of the Armistice on November 11, 1918, the CAF never flew an operational mission. The government cut air force funding and it was disbanded by 1920.

On **April 1, 1924**, the **Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF)** was reorganized and established permanently. At its inception, it was heavily involved in civil air operations including forestry patrols, anti-smuggling, forest spraying, mail delivery and surveying. It was not until 1936 that the RCAF would be a purely military operation.^{2I, 2Q, 2S, 3R, 4G}

In July 1916, Point Edward born **Arthur W. Crawford** wrote a letter from Belgium to his mother Mrs. George Crawford, of 153 Christina Street, Sarnia. In it, he described his experiences at a special signaling course with a flying squadron. Following is a portion of his letter:
Dear Mother,

I am late again as usual but will try to make up for lost time by writing more than usual. I forgot exactly what I told you in my last letter but will try to give an account of my wanderings during the past week or so.

Shortly before we came back to reserve camp, I was sent along with several other N.C.O. 's to our flying squadron, to take a special course in signaling. Cannot tell you the particulars, but will give a brief account of what I did. Arthur Crawford would walk to a small village, then was taken to the headquarters of the flying squadron. In a lecture room awaiting a major he continued, In the midst of a gramophone selection we were called to attention as the major entered and then the course began. We were given not only a summary of the course but a brief history of the work of the aviator since the war began... As you know, we have many types of aeroplanes just as we have different types of war vessels. I was surprised to learn that each type is used for a special purpose. We have small planes, designed for speed and climbing ability, large planes designed for long flights and carrying power, to work far behind the lines and fast but stable planes for observing our artillery fire and photographing the trench areas, etc. The flying corps is divided into squadrons of eighteen planes, each squadron having its own particular work and consisting of three flights of six planes each.

Our own particular squadron consisted of eighteen very stable machines of the latest pattern for trench observation work... We were taken to the aerodromes and told to ask as many questions as we liked and learn all we could about aeroplanes... We had all been promised a trip if we wished it, so within ten minutes after meeting the lieutenant, I was donning helmet, goggles, etc and receiving final instructions for the flight.

The machine was wheeled on to the starting ground, I climbed into the forward or observer's seat and fastened the wide belt about my waist. When the engine was running to the satisfaction of the pilot, the blocks were pulled from in front of the wheels and we ran out along the starting field or course. At the far end, we wheeled around into the wind and were across the green like a race horse. Before I grew accustomed to the roar of the engine and rush of the wind, the lever (or joy stick) was pulled back and the earth started to slide away... At less than a thousand feet, we flew for some distance on an even keel with the trees, fields, houses, etc., passing in review below us. It was a beautiful sight and I thoroughly enjoyed it.

Suddenly the plane tilted to one side and the earth seemed to swing up till it hung like a wall on my right. The end of the right plane remained stationary and we swung around in a circle. It was thrilling for me and I felt none too safe until reassured by the smile of the pilot who righted the plane with a jerk and once more we were off on an even keel. I could tell by the weight of my feet that we were climbing and the motion of the earth grew slower and all objects became gradually smaller. Except for occasional swaying due to "air bumps" the plane was quite steady and apparently very easy to control.

At about five thousand feet we flew along over familiar country and I had an interesting lesson in map reading as I picked out our various camps, familiar buildings, etc., and endeavored to locate human beings on that beautiful "flat" earth, away below. The tiny tents, huts, transport parks, etc., were easily discerned but I could not see a man. As we neared the line we again soared upward until we flew at about eight thousand feet. Below were demolished towns and farms all spotted with shell holes which showed up very clearly, although not a moving object could I see. Puffs of smoke showed the bursting shells but none came near us and we circled in peace high above the din of war.

On the return trip I was treated to a few thrillers and lost a little of my enthusiasm. As we sailed calmly along just above a large cloud bank, I suddenly had the sensation of falling and before I could my breath we shot through the bank and saw the earth straight ahead. Suddenly we swung up again and I was forced into the seat once more. Then we did a long spiral and finally to top it all, we actually looped the loop. I cannot say that I was frightened but I certainly did not enjoy it at the time. I grasped the sides of the machine, put my head inside and just held on... When we finally landed, I was almost deaf and expected to be sick, but wasn't. I don't like looping but will certainly fly at every opportunity. It was a great experience for me and I shall never forget it...

Best to all, Art

Note: More on Arthur Crawford and his letters home to Sarnia are included on pages 106 and 119.

• **THE PARIS PEACE CONFERENCE:** Just over two months following the end of World War I, the victors organized the Paris Peace Conference to negotiate the peace treaties between the Allied victors and the defeated Central Powers. The conference took place over a period of six months between January and June of 1919 and involved diplomats from more than 32 countries. Among them were Canada's Prime Minister Robert Borden and the "Big Four" – Woodrow Wilson, President of the United States; David Lloyd George, Prime Minister of Great Britain; Georges Clemenceau, Prime Minister of France; and Vittorio Orlando, Prime Minister of Italy. Major outcomes of the Paris Peace Conference included the creation of the League of Nations; the signing of five peace treaties including the Treaty of Versailles with defeated enemies; and the formation of new national boundaries. The

remaking of the world map through the drawing of new boundaries and divisions of territory continues to impact the world today.^{2N, 3Q}

The Treaty of Versailles was signed in Paris on June 28, 1919 at the Palace of Versailles inside its Hall of Mirrors, exactly five years to the day after the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife, an event that triggered the start of World War I. The Treaty ratified the terms of peace and was a formal recognition of the end of the Great War. The Treaty of Versailles broke up and redistributed the German Empire and imposed substantial reparations on Germany which would linger for years and play an important role in the lead up to World War II.^{2N, 3Q}

The Treaty of Versailles also included a plan to form a ‘**League of Nations**’. It was an international body with representatives from many countries whose purpose was to promote international co-operation and to achieve peace and security. Prime Minister Robert Borden managed to get Canada a separate seat on the League, independent and no longer a colony of Britain. When the United States objected, the Canadian delegates pointed out that Canada, despite its small population, had lost more soldiers during the war than the Americans and had been in the war from the beginning, three years before the Americans.

The League of Nations, established on January 10, 1920, was designed to maintain global peace through security, arms control, and negotiation. League of Nations membership brought Canada its first official contact with foreign governments as an equal, helped establish its position as an independent nation and confronted it with both the opportunities and the dilemmas associated with problems of international co-operation and attempts to prevent war. Though flawed from the outset, the League of Nations over the course of its history did experience a number of successes as well as some failures. It ceased its activities after failing to prevent the Second World War and gave way to its successor, the United Nations, in 1945.

Though it was the great powers that decided all of the major issues at Versailles, from the redrawing of countries’ borders to the punishment to be meted to Germany, Canada’s presence was a diplomatic victory—the nation of Canada was now recognized not only within the circle of the British Empire, but also internationally.^{2N, 3V, 3W, 5A, 8H}

• **SARNIA’S PEACE CELEBRATION:** On a summer weekend in mid-July 1919, Sarnians rendered homage to the fallen of the Great War of the city and Lambton County, by holding a peace celebration picnic and veterans parade with memorial service at Victoria Park. Following is a portion of the account of this event from the *Sarnia Observer* newspaper:

Sarnia Honors the Noble Dead who fell on the world’s greatest Fields of Battle in Europe

With muffled drums and with standard borne high, over one hundred of Sarnia’s war heroes, the majority khaki clad, with here and there a civilian, his war badges signifying service, paraded to Victoria Park on Sunday afternoon, to participate in the memorial services held in honor of those who fell in the conflict. There are many people in Sarnia who were unable to participate with unrestricted joy in the peace celebration on Saturday, those who had hoped to welcome their own beloved soldier sons, or husbands or sweethearts home from the war, but they never came and the sight of the marching veterans on Sunday made more acute their sense of loss and intensified their yearning for their “unreturning brave.”

The mingled pride and grief which they felt in bidding those dear ones God speed when they went away to the war; the long days and nights – many sleepless nights – of suspense and anxiety after every report of a great battle in which the Canadians took part; the shock of the terrible news which brought lasting grief to them, and the numbing heart ache that succeeded and will not wear away, all were recalled and revived by the sight of the marching men, some minus an arm, and some with a limp, outward evidence of suffering.

Yet even for them there was a note of joy, of subdued and chastened joy, in the celebration of peace and as Rev. Newton stated in his memorial address, the lives of those fallen soldiers were not wasted. Every home that sent forth to war, a soldier who will never come back is a shrine dedicated to the honored memory of that soldier.

When the veterans had reached their allotted space near the bandstand in the park and the citizens who had lined the streets to witness the solemn parade had encircled the stand, the entire gathering stood with bowed heads for one minute, time being taken by the bugle to give a silent prayer of Thanksgiving for Peace and a prayer that those that mourn may be comforted....

• **LOCAL DECORATED SOLDIERS:** A number of Sarnia and Lambton men were rewarded with decorations for their bravery and gallantry during the Great War. The exact number of awards is not known, but in October of 1942, the *Canadian (Sarnia) Observer* compiled a list of local decorated World War I soldiers. Following is that list:

Local decorated soldiers included Major Bart Charlton (Distinguished Service Order and Croix de Guerre), Captain George Williams (Distinguished Conduct Medal – D.C.M.), Sergeant Leonard Francis Allingham (D.C.M.), Captain George Stirrett (D.C.M. and Military Cross – M.C.), Corporal A.R. Mendizabal (D.C.M.), Major N.L. LeSueur (M.C.), Flt.-Lieut. Jack Church (M.C.), Major Jack Newton (M.C.), Col. S.C. Stokes (M.C.), Capt. Dick Bolton (M.C.), Lieut. Niven MacKenzie (M.C. and Military Medal - M.M.), George Lucas (M.M.), Clarence Duncan (M.M.), Ernest Tilley (M.M.), Douglas K. MacDonald (M.M.), Sergeant Frank Baxter (M.M.), Sergeant Maxfield Harper (M.M.), and Thomas E. Wood (Mons Star and M.M.).

• **THE COMMONWEALTH WAR GRAVES COMMISSION:** Formerly the Imperial War Graves Commission, this commission owes its existence to the vision and determination of **Sir Fabian Ware**. He was born in Clifton, near Bristol, England in June 1869. Unable to enlist in the British army in August 1914 on account of his age, he still volunteered to work at the head of a mobile British Red Cross unit in France. Striving to save the wounded, saddened by the sheer number of casualties, he was also struck by the obvious lack of a system of recording the graves of the men killed in action. Ware knew that both saving the wounded and recording the burial places of the dead were of crucial importance to the soldiers who survived, each of whom feared that he might be left behind wounded or dead and forgotten.

Under his leadership, his mobile unit of the Red Cross began recording and caring for all the graves they could find. By 1915, Ware had come up with the idea of establishing an official body to perform this task—one quickly approved by the British government—not only in dealing with queries from relatives of the deceased, but also in terms of improving the morale of the troops in the field. Ware was also keen from the outset to ensure the co-operation of not only the Allied powers but also those of the Central powers. In May 1917, the Committee for the Care of Soldiers Graves that Ware had created was transformed to the **Imperial War Graves Commission (IWGC)**, with Ware as its Vice Chairman and the Prince of Wales as its President. In 1960, the IWGC was renamed the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC).

At the end of the Great War, the Imperial War Graves Commission's work began in earnest. Along with the enormous task of recording the details of the Empire's million dead, it had to guarantee land for war cemeteries and memorials, and work with architects, artists and poets in order to design and construct the appropriate cemeteries and memorials. The cemeteries were to follow a basic pattern with a Cross of Sacrifice and a Stone of Remembrance. All of the memorials and cemeteries would be maintained in perpetuity to ensure lasting remembrance of the fallen.

Two of the key pressing issues discussed and decided upon by the Imperial War Graves Commission were: first, the bringing into cemeteries of bodies buried in isolated graves on the battlefields; and second, the exhumation of bodies, whether in isolated graves or in cemeteries, in order to repatriate the bodies to their native countries.

On the first issue: *"The Commission recognized the existence of a sentiment in favor of leaving the bodies of the dead where they fell, but, in view of the actual conditions, regarded it as impractical. Over 150,000 such scattered graves are known in France and Belgium. In certain districts notably those of Ypres and the Somme battlefields, they are thickly strewn over areas measuring several miles in length and breadth. These are, or will shortly be, restored to cultivation, or possibly be afforested, and the bodies cannot remain undisturbed. They must, therefore, be removed to cemeteries where they can be reverently cared for."*^N The army arranged for this work to be done by volunteers from among the comrades of the fallen. The bodies would be disinterred from their haphazardly dug battlefield graves and placed into cemeteries as close as may be possible to the place where they lay, all under **uniform white wooden crosses**.

In the 1920's, the Imperial War Graves Commission started removing the wooden crosses from the graves and replacing them with the **stone headstones** that are still present today. The wooden crosses were offered to the families of the fallen. Part of its mandate was to commemorate all Commonwealth war dead individually and equally in a uniform fashion. The IWGC demanded the headstones (normally of white Portland stone) be uniform, and for the fallen to be buried side by side regardless of military or civilian rank, religion, origin or colour. Every headstone contains the national emblem (eg. the iconic Maple Leaf, or a caribou for Newfoundlanders) or regimental badge; soldiers' rank; name; enlistment number; unit; decorations conferred; date of death; and age of casualty. Inscribed below these are an appropriate religious symbol (eg. a cross or Star of David) and a more personal valediction chosen by relatives (epitaph).

On the second issue: *"To allow removal by a few individuals of necessity only those who could afford the cost, would be contrary to the principle of equality of treatment; to empty some 400,000 identified graves would be*

colossal work and would be opposed to the spirit in which the Empire had gratefully accepted the offers made by the Governments of France, Belgium, Italy and Greece to provide land in perpetuity for our countries to adopt our dead. The Commission felt that a higher ideal than that of private burial at home is embodied in these war cemeteries in foreign lands, where those who fought and fell together, officers and men, lie together in their last resting place, facing the line they gave their lives to maintain. They feel sure – and the evidence available to them confirmed the feeling – that the dead themselves, in whom the sense of comradeship was so strong, would have preferred to lie with their comrades. These British cemeteries in foreign lands would be the symbol for future generations to the common purpose, the common devotion, the common sacrifice of all ranks in a united Empire.”^N In battle, the Empire had fought together; in death, the fallen soldiers would remain a unique army of comrades for all eternity, an “Empire of the Silent Dead.”^{C, 2B, 8H, 8O}

The Stone of Remembrance inscription: Also at the end of the Great War, the Imperial War Graves Commission requested submissions for an inscription that would be placed on the Great War Stones of Remembrance in the many British and Commonwealth military cemeteries located around the world. It was British author and poet **Rudyard Kipling’s** recommendation that was approved by the commission. Kipling himself had lost his only son John, who was eighteen years old when he was killed in battle during the Great War. John Kipling was burdened by abysmal vision and had no business being in the army, but his well-connected father had managed to secure him a position in the Irish Guards. In September 1915, only one month after his unit arrived in France, they were engaged in what turned out to be a “near rout” according to one account. The Irish unit suffered heavy casualties and among the dead or missing was John Kipling, whose disappearance would haunt his parents for the rest of their lives.

In Rudyard Kipling’s submission to the War Graves Commission, he wrote, *“It was necessary to find words of praise and honor which should be both simple and well known, comprehensible and of the same value in all tongues, and standing, as far as might be, outside the flux of men and things. After search and consultation with all ranks and many races in our armies and navies, as well as those who had given their sons, it seemed to me that no single phrase could better that which closes the tribute to ‘famous men’ in Ecclesiasticus 44:14: ‘Their bodies are buried in peace; but their name liveth for evermore.’”* Kipling’s submission, **“Their Name Liveth For Evermore”** was inscribed on the memorial Stones of Remembrance. Rudyard Kipling also suggested the words, **“Known Unto God”**, for an inscription to be placed on the foot of headstones marking the remains of unidentified British or Commonwealth soldiers.^{4G, 8H}

Today, the Commonwealth War Graves Commission ensures that 1.7 million Commonwealth servicemen and women who died in the two World Wars will never be forgotten. The Commission cares for cemeteries and memorials at 23,000 locations in 153 countries worldwide.

Epitaphs: From the outset, the Imperial War Graves Commission embraced the idea of encouraging loved ones to be directly involved in selecting an epitaph with personal meaning. So if they wished, family members could write a short valedictory inscription of their choice that would be engraved on the headstone (with a prescribed length of 66 characters, including the spaces between words).

Never before in history had the families of the fallen had the opportunity to express their reaction to the loss of a beloved son, husband or father, laid to rest in a foreign land. The insertion of a personal inscription was for the vast majority of families the only way to bid farewell to a beloved husband, son, or father laid to rest in a foreign land, in a grave far from home.

For next of kin, how does one find words to capture the haunting loss of a son, brother, father, uncle or daughter, and sum up a life in 66 characters or less? These moving inscriptions convey in a few words the impact of a young soldier’s death on his family and preserve the voice of the bereaved – those who bore the burden of loss for the rest of their lives. These inscriptions, chosen at a time when most people would be at a loss for words in the face of overwhelming sorrow, were drawn from Scripture, hymns, literature, and popular songs of the day. Others were composed by loved ones who thought carefully about their valediction. The quotations give recognition to the parents, wives, and children who used epitaphs to express the ideals for which Canadians had fought, or to reconcile themselves to the loss of a loved one whose grave they would in all likelihood never see.^{C, 2B, 8O}

Sarnia Epitaphs: For every Sarnia fallen soldier, in every war, who has an epitaph, their epitaph is included in their biography. A collection of all of Sarnia’s fallen soldier’s epitaphs (words of valediction and remembrance) is included in the Appendix section of this Project on page 1205.

- **THE GREAT WAR VETERANS ASSOCIATION:** With the end of the Great War, Canada and its government was for the first time ever, faced with the issue of the mass return of men from their service overseas. Formed during or shortly after the Great War, there were a number of veteran groups and regimental associations existing to aid returning service men in Canada. In Sarnia, as in communities across the country, there were a number of veterans' organizations that sprang up after the War.

Founded on April 10, 1917, during the Vimy battle, the "**Great War Veterans Association**" (GWVA) was Canada's largest and most influential national organization. Initially formed by wounded veterans returning home, it was an organization devoted to prosecuting the war to the fullest, no matter the cost, including enacting conscription and restricting the rights of some new Canadians, especially those from enemy countries in the war. Across the country, they also pushed for government recognition and rewards for veteran soldiers. This included a failed effort to convince the federal government to give a \$2,000 bonus to every veteran. Sarnia had its branch of the GWVA that aided servicemen make the transition to civilian life.

In June 1925, at the urging of Field Marshal Earl Haig of the British Empire Service League, an appeal for unity of the different organizations led to the formation of the "Dominion Veterans Alliance". In November 1925, the "Canadian Legion of the British Empire Service League" was founded in Winnipeg, Manitoba, commonly known as the "**Canadian Legion**", and it was incorporated by special Act of Parliament in 1926. In Sarnia, the last meeting of the Great War Veteran's Association and the first meeting of the new branch of the Canadian Legion (Branch 62) were held at the Sarnia Soldiers Service Club in October 1926.

Canadian Legion Halls began to be erected across the country in the late 1920s as sanctuaries for the veterans. Much like the soldiers' wartime dugouts or the *estaminets* (taverns) behind the lines, the halls were sites for veterans to gather together and share wartime culture—reliving the camaraderie, sharing stories and rehashing old jokes.^{9U}

- **THE ROYAL CANADIAN LEGION:** Initially, the principal objectives of the Canadian Legion were to provide a strong voice for World War I veterans and to advise the government on veterans' issues. World War II brought new demands, and the Canadian Legion increased its efforts to help veterans, returned service members, and those serving abroad. In 1960, the Canadian Legion was granted royal patronage by Queen Elizabeth II, and it became the "Royal Canadian Legion". The Royal Canadian Legion, a not for profit organization, is the largest veterans service organization in Canada. It has never faltered in its efforts to serve veterans, to serve military and RCMP members and their families, to promote remembrance and to serve the community and country.^{2Q}

Initial meetings of the **Sarnia Legion Branch 62** were held in quarters opposite the city hall. As the branch became stronger, plans were made to secure a larger building. Patriotic moneys left when the armistice was declared had been placed in a war chest and these were used to purchase the building on Front Street—the Sarnia Soldiers' Service Club. The Royal Canadian Legion in Sarnia, Branch 62, is located at 286 Front Street, the original address of the Sarnia Soldiers' Service Club.

In July 1987, there was a sod-turning ceremony to break ground for the construction of the Sarnia Legion's new \$1.2 million building, which would be double the size of the original building. The original "old white house" Legion building was located where the current Legion's parking lot is. The "white house" Legion was demolished when the new building was constructed. The new hall, which included pillars similar in design to those of the original building, opened in late April of 1988, with its official opening in mid-September of 1988.

The "Calamity" tank: The tank that sits outside the Legion hall was donated to the City of Sarnia by the First Hussars and Sarnia Legion in 1970. The tank is model type M4A2 HVSS Sherman medium tank with a 76-mm gun, serial number 65042, built by Fisher, with Reg. No. 30123021. Sherman tanks were manned by a five-man crew that included the commander, gunner, loader/wireless operator, driver, and co-driver/machine-gunner.^{3F, 5O}

The First Hussars is a Primary Reserve Armoured Reconnaissance Regiment of the Canadian Army, based in London and Sarnia. The First Hussars "C" Squadron was formed in Sarnia in 1964, serving as a reserve armoured reconnaissance training unit. To facilitate training, they brought with them a 76 MM cannon and a Sherman tank. The cannon was installed in the basement of the Sarnia Federal Building, while the tank was housed at the Hydro building located at Front and Nelson Streets. The tank had steel tracks that would have destroyed city streets, so the tracks were changed to rubber. In 1967, the First Hussars' responsibilities shifted from armoured artillery training to reconnaissance, and the heavy weaponry became expendable.

The Sherman tank was offered to Royal Canadian Legion Branch 62, and was dedicated three days before Remembrance Day in 1970. The tank was christened “Calamity” to honour First Hussars member **Brandon (Brandy) Conron**, who drove a tank named “Calamity” as the Canadians stormed ashore on D-Day, June 6, 1944. More information on Captain Brandon Conron and D-Day is in the World War II section of this Project on page 501.

Sarnia’s Sherman “Calamity” tank’s dedication plaque is inscribed: *To the Memory of Our Fallen Comrades. Dedicated by the 1st Hussars and Royal Canadian Legion Branch 62. 8 November, 1970. ‘Lest We Forget’*. In 1994, a second plaque was unveiled on the Sherman tank. This second plaque is inscribed: *1944-1994 This plaque is placed here to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the Allied Invasion of Normandy on D-Day, 6th June 1944. It is dedicated to the soldiers of the First Hussars; to those who took part in the assault, to those who fought in the European Campaign, and to those who gave their lives to liberate France, Belgium, and Holland. “Hodie Non Cras”*. Sarnia’s “Calamity” tank has served as a tribute to the fighting soldiers of the First Hussars. “Calamity” is not the only memorial tank celebrating the regiment—for example, “Bold” remains in Normandy, and “Holy Roller” performs a similar service in London, Ontario.

- **THE FIRST HUSSARS:** In 1856 in London, Ontario, a group of settlers who had trained in cavalry skills formed an independent cavalry unit, the First London Volunteer Troop of Cavalry. It would amalgamate with several other troops including ones in St. Thomas, Courtright and Kingsville. It was deployed to meet the Fenian threat in 1866, and again in 1870, and would undergo several changes in title, including the 1st Regiment of Cavalry in 1872. In April 1892, the regiment was officially designated the **1st Hussars**. The 1st Hussars Regiment motto is “Hodie Non Cras” – Today Not Tomorrow.

During the Boer War, the 1st Hussars sent a contingent of officers and men to South Africa, and earned the Regiment’s first Battle Honour. Battle Honours are given to units that have displayed distinguished achievements during battle. During World War I, the 1st Hussars served as part of the **7th Canadian Mounted Rifles**, going overseas in June 1915. The soldiers fought with distinction, often seeing action dismounted as infantry. They were awarded thirteen additional Battle Honours for outstanding performance in battle, including at the Somme, Hindenburg Line, Arras, Vimy, Cambrai and Amiens. One of the more famous local members of the 1st Hussars from the Great War was Forest-born and Petrolia-raised George Stirrett. The Sarnia Armoury is named in his honour. Information on George Hunter Stirrett is on page 131.

Upon the outbreak of World War II, the 1st Hussars were the first Non-Permanent Militia to be mobilized, moving overseas in 1941 as part of the **5th Canadian Armoured Division**. Following training, the 1st Hussars were one of the units to take part in the Normandy Landing on D-Day. The tanks of the 1st Hussars were actually the only Allied force to reach their D-Day objectives. Following that, the Regiment took part in the bitter battles in the Normandy bridgehead, the closing of Falaise Gap, and clearing of the cross channel guns at Calais. The 1st Hussars fought with distinction through Belgium and Holland, ending the war in Germany. During this period, the 1st Hussars won 72 Decorations, Certificates, or Mentioned in Dispatches, more than any other unit in the 1st Canadian Army, and were awarded 20 additional Battle Honours for outstanding Bravery, including at Normandy, Falaise, Caen, Calais, The Rhineland, Apeldoorn and North West Europe. Members of the Gallant Hussars have served and continue to serve in peacekeeping missions around the world including in the Middle East, Bosnia, Kosovo, and Afghanistan with NATO and the United Nations.^{3G, 5R}

In 1964, as part of the larger London-based regiment, the 1st Hussars “C” Squadron was formed in Sarnia. The local squadron was based out of the federal building in downtown Sarnia until moving to the armoury in 1983. In late September 2019, as part of the 1st Hussars C Squadron 55th Anniversary weekend, a plaque was unveiled at the George Stirrett Armoury. The plaque, located beside a Cougar AVGP (armoured vehicle general purpose), tells the stories of the 1st Hussars “C” Squadron on D-Day and of the Cougar tank. Following is the plaque content:

1st Hussars “C” Squadron

On the sixth of June, 1944, the First Huusars were one of three Canadian Armoured Regiments to lead the assault on Juno Beach. 2 Troop, C Squadron, of the 1st Hussars, led by Lt. Bill McCormack, supported the Winnipeg Rifles in taking the French town of Creully and then pushed on to their objective, Secqueville-en-Bessin. In doing so, they became the only element of the Allied Seaborne assault forces to reach their objective. Finding themselves isolated without infantry or anti-tank support, they retraced their steps and rejoined the Regiment.

Cataraqui “The Story of”

Lt. McCormack’s tank was named “Cataraqui” and thus to honour the actions of 2 Troop, on the 6th of June,

we have named this Cougar “Cataragui” and affixed the same Tactical signs that would have been on his original Sherman Tank. Cougar AVGP’s were originally issued to the 1st Hussars in 1983 and were intended to be used by Primary Reserve, Armoured Units as a tank trainer. However, the vehicles were deployed to Bosnia-Herzegovina on a Peacekeeping Mission. They served the 1st Hussars Regiment well until they were retired in the year 2005.

• **FAMOUS CANADIANS THAT SERVED IN THE GREAT WAR:** More than 620,000 Canadians served in the First World War. Many of their names are forgotten to time, but some of this country’s soldiers later became famous for other feats, in the fields of government, medicine, sports, business and the arts to name a few. Following are just a few of these well-known Canadians that served with the Canadian Corps:

John Diefenbaker, Canada’s 13th Prime Minister; Lester B. Pearson, Canada’s 14th Prime Minister; Frederick Banting, co-discoverer of insulin; Charles Best, co-discoverer of insulin; Norman Bethune, famous physician; Grey Owl, Canadian conservationist; A.Y. Jackson, Group of Seven artist; Conn Smythe, built Maple Leaf Gardens; Dick Irvin, Montreal Canadiens Hall of Famer; Raymond Massey, Hollywood actor; Georges Vanier, first French-Canadian Governor General; Sam Steele, noted member of North West Mounted Police; Tom Longboat, long distance runner, see below; Gregory Clark, famous journalist; Sir William Stephenson, businessman, inventor, master spy in WWII, code named “Intrepid”; and 40 Hockey Hall of Fame inductees.^{2G, 5M}

There were six **Canadian Olympians** who fought in the First World War, five of them died while serving: Geoffrey Taylor won two bronze medals in rowing at London 1908, and later competed at Stockholm 1912. He was killed in action at the Second Battle of Ypres in April 1915; Percival Molson was a star athlete who won a Stanley Cup in 1897 with the Montreal Victorias, and competed in the 400 metres at St. Louis in 1904. He was killed in 1917 near Vimy Ridge; Robert Powell played in men’s tennis—singles and doubles—at London 1908. Lt. “Bobby” Powell died leading a charge at Vimy Ridge in 1917; Alex Decoteau competed in the men’s 5,000 metres at Stockholm 1912, placing 6th. He was killed at the Second Battle of Passchendaele in 1917; James Duffy competed at Stockholm 1912 in the marathon, placing 5th. He went on to win the Boston Marathon in 1914. He was killed a year later at Ypres, Belgium; and Tom Longboat competed in the marathon at 1908 London and was later inducted into Canada’s Sports Hall of Fame. He was the only Canadian Olympian to fight and survive the First World War.

• **THE MEMORIAL CUP:** Each year, the Sarnia Sting Major Junior A Hockey Club vies for an opportunity to challenge for the Memorial Cup. The Memorial Cup is the junior hockey club championship trophy awarded annually to the Canadian Hockey League champion. It is one of the oldest and most prestigious trophies in North American sport.

The idea to present such a trophy was brought forward by Captain James T. Sutherland, who was the president of the Ontario Hockey Association and who served overseas during the First World War. “*Many of the young men who headed overseas were more comfortable wielding a hockey stick than a rifle,*” he was quoted as saying. Captain Sutherland spoke of the splendid work done by Canadian boys in France and suggested the creation of a suitable memorial to hockey players who had fallen. Sutherland was also sparked by the World War One deaths of Allan ‘Scotty’ Davidson and George Richardson, two former hockey greats whom he coached when they played for the Kingston Frontenacs.

The trophy was originally known as the ‘OHA Memorial Cup’ and was donated by the Ontario Hockey Association in March of 1919, in remembrance of the many men and women who paid the supreme sacrifice for Canada in the First World War. The first Memorial Cup was awarded in 1919 to the University of Toronto team who defeated the Regina Patricia’s. What made that first championship game truly unforgettable was that it was delayed by nearly an hour-and-a-half. There were jubilant parades in Toronto the same day—for Canadian regiments just returning home from the First World War—and fans were late to their seats because of them. A more fitting start for the cup, named in honour of the Canadian soldiers who did not return, could not have been contrived. In 2010 the Memorial Cup was rededicated to the memory of all fallen Canadian military personnel.^{3B}

• **WORLD WAR I NUMBERS** – More than twenty nations were drawn into a war that would for more than four years be fought in Europe, East Africa, Macedonia, Mesopotamia (now Iraq), and the Dardanelles. World War I is also referred to as “The Great War” and, as British author **H.G. Wells** characterized it in August 1914, “**The War That Will End War**”, which over time shifted to become “the war to end all wars.”

World War I altered the nature of warfare and changed the landscape of the modern world. It employed new technologies, including poison gas, flamethrowers, warplanes, tanks, and submarines, which demonstrated an

unimaginable capacity for death and destruction.^{2K} Over the course of the Great War, an estimated 10 million soldiers were killed, another 15 to 20 million soldiers were wounded, and 8 million civilians died. World War I was slaughter on a scale that is almost incomprehensible.

For Canada, World War I was the bloodiest conflict in this nation's history. More Canadian soldiers died in World War I, than Canadians died in all the other wars combined. However through the great achievements of Canadian soldiers on the battlefields, the world witnessed "**the birth of a nation**", Canada. Also, the Canadian Corps was made up of men from all parts of the country, from all classes, religious affiliation and ethnic origin. Never before had there been anything to bring together this diverse collection of Canadians. This terrible war forged a new Canadian nationalism.

Approximately 620 000 men and women served in the Canadian Forces, and more than one of every ten who fought in the war did not return. Another 8,826 sailed with the Royal Canadian Navy and the British Royal Navy. Another 13,160 served as aircrew in the British flying services, plus 9,652 served as ground crew. Close to seven percent of the country's total population left Canada during the war years, which included an astonishing **twenty percent** of the total male population between the ages of eighteen and forty-five.^{4G, 9U}

Very few of the Canadians who served had previously been professional soldiers. Canada's army was largely an army of **citizen-soldiers**, from every corner of the nation and every walk of life. Of the 620 000 attested, approximately 425 000 served overseas as part of the Canadian Expeditionary Force. Of the Canadian men and women that served, over 61 000 gave their lives, as well as 1,300 Newfoundlanders, over 172,000 were wounded, and over 3,800 became prisoners of war. Of the 425,000 who travelled overseas in the land forces, only 345,000 Canadians ever made it to France. If the figure of 345,000 is used to represent those Canadians who fought in Europe, then at least 6.5 out of every 10, and likely closer to **7 out of every 10 soldiers**, serving on the Western Front were killed or wounded.^{4G, 5J}

More than 18,000 Canadians died in France or Belgium during the First World War and have **no known grave**, their bodies swallowed in the mud or dismembered in shellfire. For over 6,840 Canadian sons who fought in the Great War, their remains were never identified.

The **deadliest period** of World War I for Canada, and for Sarnia, occurred during the Last Hundred Days offensive, August 8 – November 11, 1918. In that three-month period, approximately 45,835 Canadians and Newfoundlanders were killed, wounded and missing, representing approximately 20 per cent of Canada's total wartime casualties.^{E, 4G, 5J} At least 33 Sarnians lost their lives during the Hundred Days Campaign.

After the war was over, between 1919 and 1921, some 6,000 additional Canadian veterans died as a result of the injuries of war. Historians are still struggling with the total death count of Canadians in the Great War. The Commonwealth War Graves Commission lists 64,962 fallen between August 4, 1914 to August 31, 1921. Canada's Books of Remembrance in the Peace Tower at the House of Commons in Ottawa contains 66,755 names of WWI Canadian fallen (its cut-off date was April 30, 1922). So the death figures range from 61,000 to 67,000, and from 62,300 to 68,600 if Newfoundlanders are included. The number of Canadian wounded ranges from 172,000 to 176,000.^{D, E, 2I, 2Q, 4G, 8H, 9U}

Of the 61,000+ Canadians who died in World War I, less than 3% **died in service with the air forces**. Of the 114 identified Sarnia WWI fallen included in this project, five of them lost their lives while serving with the Royal Flying Corps (4.3%). A generation later, in World War II, technological advances changed the methods by which war was fought, and close to 45% of Canada's war dead lost their lives in service with the Royal Canadian Air Force or the Royal Air Force.^{2B} Approximately 49% of Sarnia's World War II fallen lost their lives while serving with the Air Force.

Sarnia's population in 1914 was approximately 10,900. An estimated **1100 Sarnia men and women served** in the Great War. The Sarnia cenotaph has 112 names of World War I fallen inscribed on it. This *Sarnia War Remembrance Project* records 119 Sarnia World War I fallen soldiers (the identities of five names inscribed on the Sarnia cenotaph have yet to be identified).

Due to the nature of the Great War, it too common that the bodies of those killed were never recovered, or they were vapourized, shredded, eviscerated or destroyed beyond recognition. It was one more sad reality of this war, a tragic nightmare that family members back home had to cope with. The Commonwealth War Graves Commission notes that 49% of its 1,146,982 Great War soldiers have **no known graves**.^{4F} Of the 114 identified Sarnia fallen

soldiers included in this Project, 42 of them have no known graves (37%). For those young men from Sarnia with no known grave, their names are inscribed on war memorials including at Vimy Ridge, France (28 names); Menin Gate (Ypres), Belgium (9 names); Arras, France (3 names); and Halifax, Nova Scotia (2 names).

- **THE VICTORIA CROSS:** The British War Office established new gallantry medals during the course of the Great War, a way to single out the uncommonly courageous. These included the Military Medal (MM), the Military Cross (MC), the Distinguished Service Order (DSO), and the Distinguished Conduct Medal (DCM). The MM and DCM were given out to NCOs and other ranks, and the MC and DSO were reserved for officers.

The Victoria Cross (VC) was the highest-ranking award for bravery at that time, and could be issued to officers or the rank and file. It was awarded for most conspicuous bravery or some daring or pre-eminent act of valour or self-sacrifice or extreme devotion to duty in the presence of the enemy. Established by Queen Victoria in January 1856 during the Crimean War, it was a crimson ribbon with a simple bronze cross, made from cannons captured from the Russians during the Crimean War, inscribed with “For Valour.” The first one awarded to a Canadian was in February 1857, to **Lieutenant Alexander Dunn** (Charge of the Light Brigade). The last Canadian to earn a Victoria Cross was **Lieutenant Robert Hampton Gray**, a pilot whose posthumous award came for actions on August 9, 1945, when, under heavy fire, he led a Corsair attack on a Japanese destroyer, sinking it with a direct hit even as his aircraft burned. No crosses were awarded to Canadians during the war in Korea.

Of the total 98 Victoria Crosses awarded to Canadians over the last 150 years, seventy-two went to Canadians in the Great War. Of the seventy-two Canadians who were awarded the Victoria Cross in World War I, more than one-third were awarded posthumously, and twenty-seven of the recipients were awarded for their actions during Canada’s Last Hundred Days.

In an incredible phenomenon, three of the Canadian VC recipients in World War I were from the same street, a sleepy avenue on the outskirts of Winnipeg. Corporal Leo Clarke, Sergeant-Major Frederick William Hall and Lieutenant Robert Shankland had all lived on Pine Street in Winnipeg. Of these three Victoria Cross recipients from Pine Street, only Robert Shankland survived the war. In 1925, as a way to honour the bravery and sacrifice of these men, the City of Winnipeg renamed the street **Valour Road**. It reminds Canadians that ordinary men from small towns across the nation, can do and did extraordinary things for their country.^{4E, 4G, 7R, 9U}

The British decoration was eliminated in Canada when Ottawa began overhauling the Canadian honours system in 1972. In February 1993, a Canadian version of the award was created – the **Canadian Victoria Cross**, with the same criteria as the original British decoration. The first Canadian Victoria Cross was manufactured in 2007, and unveiled at Rideau Hall in Ottawa in May 2008. The Canadian VC is cast from some of the bronze from the Crimean War captured Russian cannons, donated by Queen Elizabeth II, as well as metal from the 1967 Confederation Medal, and metal from each of Canada’s regions. The inscription borne on the medal is the Latin phrase “PRO VALORE”, replacing the British insignia, “For Valour.” Not one Canadian VC has been awarded since the Canadian version was created, despite a number of heroic individual actions by Canadians in Afghanistan.

- **SARNIA’S OLD HOME WEEK, 1925:** During the third week of July in 1925, the City of Sarnia held its “Old Home Week” celebrations. One of the events during the week-long celebrations was a Drumhead Service held on a Sunday afternoon at Victoria Park in Sarnia. A notable part of this event was a military parade of soldiers and ex-servicemen. Ex-servicemen in the parade included a handful of grey-haired veterans of the Fenian Raids and North West Rebellion under Sarnia’s veteran magistrate Major Henry Gorman, as well as veterans of the South African War and the “youthful” heroes of the Great War.

The Fenian Raid (1866) veterans were Henry Gorman, Don J. Finch, W.W. Finch, Rich Causley, W.S. Percival, J. Hoskins and Andrew Logan. Northwest Rebellion (1882-5) veterans included Charles Finch, David W. Finch, James Spurway, and T.J. Walker. Following is a portion of the report from the *Sarnia (Canadian) Observer*: *How they held up their heads as they marched with the younger men these loyal citizens of long ago and even men who faced the horrors of modern warfare in 1914-18 must have experienced a thrill of pride as this little band displaying medals with unfamiliar ribbons kept pace with them.*

Veterans of the South African war were under command of Major Fred Gorman; and veterans of the Great War included details of the 1st, 18th, 34th and 70th Battalions, under command of Major N.L. LeSueur; members of the 149th Lambton Battalion under Lt.-Col. MacVicar; the 27th Lambton’s Battalion under Lt.-Col. C.S. Woodrow; ex-imperial army and navy veterans under Col. A. Rowland Davies, D.S.O.; and No. 2 Company 2nd Canadian

Machine Gun Battalion under Major George Lucas. The parade was under command of Col. Robert MacKenzie. The Windsor Salvation Army band led the march, and the Machine Gun pipe band was also in the parade. Hundreds of people attended the service in Victoria Park, which opened with the singing of “The Maple Leaf Forever” and “Onward Christian Soldiers.” Rev. Canon D.W. Collins then read a psalm and prayers before addressing the gathering with a stirring address touching on companionship and spirit. In speaking about the soldiers and ex-soldiers, he said, *“Their companionship, rich in its recollections of stirring events when they fought together and won or lost, was higher than a mere companionship. It was a companionship that should be and was cherished. I believe we have the greatest force for the preservation of peace in the world and also that we have the highest form of civilization in the world today.”*

• **REMEMBRANCE DAY:** Until 1931, Remembrance Day was known as **Armistice Day**. The **first** Armistice Day, declared by King George V to be a day to remember all those who had made the supreme sacrifice in service to their country, took place throughout the Commonwealth on November 11, 1919. Days earlier, King George V had said to the world, *“... at the hour when the armistice came into force, the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month, there may be (a moment) of two minutes... (so that)... the thoughts of every one may be concentrated on reverent remembrance of the glorious dead.”*

In 1920, Armistice Day was also held on November 11th. After that, the Canadian government decided that Armistice Day would be celebrated on the same day as Thanksgiving Day, which would take place on the Monday of the week in which November 11 fell. For many, having Thanksgiving Day, a day of festivities and celebrating the “bountiful harvest”, and Remembrance Day, a time of commemoration, meditation and solemn ceremonies at cenotaphs, on the same day was not a popular decision. Following a decade of lobbying by veteran’s organizations, the government amended the Armistice Act in March 1931, renaming Armistice Day to Remembrance Day. The Act also ensured that from that year on, it would always be on November 11, the anniversary of the day the First World War ended, when the guns fell silent, on the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month.

A central element in the Remembrance Day ceremony is the **Two Minutes of Silence** at precisely 11:00 a.m. The two minutes of silence tribute was adopted after the First World War to commemorate those who fought and those who died in battle. It was adopted in 1919 when King George V issued his proclamation. The Two Minutes is preceded by the playing of *O Canada* and the *Last Post*. Originally known as *Setting the Watch*, the mournful bugle melody was used to signify to soldiers that the camp’s perimeter had been secured for the night, or it indicated the end of the day’s duties. In the 19th century, buglers began playing it at funerals to signify the end of life’s duties. In 1873 it was renamed *The Last Post*.

The two minutes of silence is a time of reflection, where Canadians pause to honour, thank and remember our fallen. The end of the silence is signaled by the playing of a lament, the bugling of *The Rouse* and the reading of the *Act of Remembrance* (from “For the Fallen”, Laurence Binyon) *The Rouse* was once played by bugle (or trumpet) to get soldiers out of bed. At remembrance services, it represents the dead awakening to a better world and is a call to the living to return to their duties.

The Act of Remembrance
They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old;
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them.

• **THE RED POPPY:** The poppy has been widely recognized internationally as a **symbol of Remembrance**. The first person to use the poppy as a symbol of remembrance was an American teacher, Moina Michael, a member of the American overseas YMCA in the last year of the Great War. After reading John McCrae’s 1915 poem *In Flanders Fields*, she was so moved that she pledged to keep the faith and always wear a red poppy of Flanders Fields as a sign of remembrance of all who died. She led a successful campaign to have the American Legion recognize the poppy as the official symbol of remembrance in April 1920.

At the same time, Madame Anne Guerin of France, who was also inspired by John McCrae’s poem, became a vigorous advocate of the poppy as the symbol of remembrance for war dead. Her own organization, the American and French Children’s League, sold cloth copies of the flower following the war to help raise money for the orphaned children in war-devastated areas in Europe. In 1921, Madame Guerin travelled to Britain and Canada, and convinced both the recently formed British Legion and the Canadian Great War Veterans Association to adopt the poppy as

their symbol of remembrance. Canada adopted the poppy as its national flower of Remembrance on July 5, 1921. In Canada, wounded veterans started making poppies in 1922. Other versions were made, but Canadians were urged to purchase veteran-made ones as a “true memorial.” Britain and Australia also adopted the poppy in 1921. New Zealand and the United States adopted the poppy symbol in 1922.^{21, 11C}

The **wearing of a poppy** prior to and including Remembrance Day is a visual pledge to never forget those Canadians who have fallen in war and military operations. It is a way to demonstrate our gratitude to those who gave their lives for the freedoms we enjoy. Funds raised during the **Poppy Campaign** each year are used to provide immediate assistance to ex-servicemen and women in need. Funds are also used for educational bursaries, medical research and training, donations for disaster relief, and community medical appliances, to name a few.

- **THE PEACE TOWER:** Also known as the Tower of Victory and Peace, it is the dominant feature on Parliament Hill in Ottawa. It is the freestanding tower connected to the Centre Block of the Canadian parliament buildings. Nearly 98-metres in height, it features the Peace Tower clock, Peace Tower carillon (53 bells), and a copper-covered apex that is topped with the Canadian flag. It is also adorned with approximately 370 stone carvings, most depicting Canadian flora, fauna and historical elements. The Peace Tower is dedicated to all Canadian men and women killed during wartime and the peace which they died to achieve.

It is the second tower to stand on this site – the first was the 60-metre tall Victoria Tower, completed in 1878. It crumbled to the ground during a fire that destroyed most of the Parliament Buildings in 1916. Reconstruction of the destroyed section began almost immediately, as the First World War raged in Europe. When dedicating the new tower’s building site in July 1917, Prime Minister Robert Borden reminded the country of the need for peace: “*(the tower will be a) memorial to the debt of our forefathers and to the valour of those Canadians who, in the Great War, fought for the liberties of Canada, of the Empire, and of humanity.*” Two years later, on September 1, 1919, the Prince of Wales laid the cornerstone of the tower and designated it “The Tower of Victory and Peace.” The inauguration of the then named “Peace Tower” took place on July 1, 1927, the Diamond Jubilee (60th anniversary) of Canadian Confederation.

Located within the heart of the Peace Tower is the **Memorial Chamber**, built as a tribute to the Canadians who lost their lives during the First World War. The walls of the Chamber display many stone carvings depicting the symbolic history of the Great War, and stained glass windows of heraldic symbolism soar on three walls. The floor is inlaid stone brought from various battlefields in France and Belgium, and laid in the form of a cross. Brass plates in the floor inscribed with the names of major WWI battles, such as the Somme and Passchendaele, were hand-crafted from spent shell casings from the war. The stone walls in the Chamber were originally to have been inscribed with the names of all Canadian war dead – but as the First World War’s death toll mounted, it was realized that there were just too many names. The solution was to create a resting place for the names within carefully crafted books, handwritten on vellum parchment.

The centerpiece of the Chamber is a massive stone central altar that is surrounded by seven altars made of stone and bronze. Each altar holds one of the eight **Books of Remembrance** that together contain the names of more than 118,000 Canadians who fought and made the ultimate sacrifice in the service of Canada. The main altar, resting on steps made of stone quarried from Flanders, holds the *The First World War Book of Remembrance* (66,600+ names). Seven other Books of Remembrance are displayed open in glass cases on the other altars; *The Second World War Book of Remembrance* (44,800+ names), *The South African War-Nile Expedition Book of Remembrance* (almost 300 names), *The Korean War Book of Remembrance* (516 names), *The Newfoundland Book of Remembrance* (2,300+ names), *The Merchant Navy Book of Remembrance* (2,100+ names), *In the Service of Canada Book of Remembrance* (1,800+ names), and a *War of 1812 Book of Remembrance* (1,600+ names).^{D, 3G} (see page 1121)

- **THE NATIONAL WAR MEMORIAL:** Following World War I, there was a strong sentiment in Canada that a memorial should be erected to those who had served their country in that war. In 1925, a worldwide competition was held to choose a design for a national commemorative war monument to be erected in the capital of Canada. Open to architects, sculptors and artists, the monument was to be “expressive of the feelings of the Canadian people as a whole, to the memory of those who participated in the Great War and lost their lives in the service of humanity”. The competition regulations further stipulated that the vision which the government wished to keep alive was “the spirit of heroism, the spirit of self-sacrifice, the spirit of all that is noble and great that was exemplified in the lives of those sacrificed in the Great War, and the services rendered by the men and women who went overseas”.

In January 1926, the Board of Assessors selected the model submitted by sculptor Vernon March of Farnborough, Kent, England, his theme was "the Great Response of Canada". His concept was of a monument that in no way glorified war or victory; rather, it was intended to commemorate the events of 1914-1918 on a more human scale. It took thirteen years from the time the memorial's concept was approved until it was unveiled, and March, unfortunately, was unable to see the project to its completion; he died of pneumonia in 1930.

The impressive structure includes 22 uniformed bronze figures from all services marching through a granite archway. Included are infantrymen, a mounted cavalryman, a mounted artilleryman, an aviator, a sailor, a sapper, a forester, a stretcher-bearer and nurses, among others. Overhead are two winged figures representing Peace and Freedom. The National War Memorial, named "**The Response**," was officially unveiled in downtown Ottawa by His Majesty King George VI and Queen Elizabeth at eleven o'clock on the morning of Sunday, May 21, 1939, before an estimated 100,000 persons who gathered to witness the ceremony. Sadly and ironically, less than four months later, World War II would begin. ^{D, 2N, 5M}

Over the years, the monument came to symbolize Canada's involvement in all wars of the 20th century and the dates of the Second World War (1939-1945) and the Korean War (1950-1953) were added. In 2014, the dates of the South African War (1899-1902) and the mission in Afghanistan (2001-2014) were added. A plaque was also added to honour **Corporal Nathan Cirillo** who was killed while standing as a sentry on October 22, 2014.

• **THE CANADIAN TOMB OF THE UNKNOWN SOLDIER:** This monument is located at the National War Memorial in Confederation Square, Ottawa. The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier was added to the war memorial in the year 2000. The Tomb holds the remains of an unidentified Canadian soldier who died near Vimy Ridge, France during World War I. The Tomb is positioned directly in the line of sight of the foremost soldier advancing through the arch in the National War Memorial. The tomb's only inscription reads, "The Unknown Soldier" in English and "Le Soldat inconnu" in French. Each year hundreds of thousands of Canadians continue to visit the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier and pay their respects.

On the second Armistice Day, November 11, 1920, the British buried one of their unknown soldiers at Westminster Abbey in London, England. Known as the "Unknown Warrior", he represented 908,000 dead from Britain and its empire, including Canada. The original entombing ceremony, presided over by King George V, had included many of the British Empire's Victoria Cross winners, and a group of one hundred women, each of whom had lost their husband or sons during the war. Eleanor Watson was one Canadian mother whose son had been killed in the war and lay buried with no known grave. Years later when she visited the Westminster Abbey Unknown Warrior tomb, she confided in her diary that she was moved by "a wonderful feeling and I suppose each of us thought that 'he' may have been our dear 'missing one'".

France and the United States followed Great Britain's example in 1921, as did numerous other countries in subsequent years. In 1993, Australia marked the 75th anniversary of the end of the First World War by repatriating from France the remains of its Unknown Soldier, the first Commonwealth country to have done so since 1920. He was buried in the Australian War Memorial's Hall of Memory in Canberra. In 1996, Canadian officials and the Royal Canadian Legion worked with the Commonwealth War Graves Commission to bring home one of Canada's unknown soldiers.

The selected Canadian fallen soldier was one formerly buried in Cabaret-Rouge British Cemetery in Souchez, France, near the memorial at Vimy Ridge. It was selected among the over 1,603 graves of unknown Canadians buried in that cemetery, killed between 1916 and 1918, most of whom fell during the April 1917 Vimy battle. In total, there were 6,846 Canadian sons who fought in the First World War whose remains were never identified, their bodies so badly mangled in battle that in death they could not be identified. Carved into their headstones are the words "A CANADIAN SOLDIER OF THE GREAT WAR – KNOWN UNTO GOD".

On May 25, 2000, the remains of the nameless Canadian fallen soldier were disinterred from Plot 8, Row E, Grave 7, and laid to rest in a casket of silver-maple wood. The body was taken to Vimy Ridge for a ritual service and then flown in a Canadian Forces aircraft to Ottawa, accompanied by a guard of honour, a chaplain, Royal Canadian Legion veterans, and representatives of Canadian youth. From May 25 to 28, an estimated 15,000 Canadians silently passed by the soldier who lay in state in the Memorial Chamber of the Peace Tower.

On the afternoon of May 28, 2000, the casket was transported to the National War Memorial by a horse-drawn carriage in a funeral procession accompanied by the Governor General Adrienne Clarkson, Prime Minister

Jean Chretien, veterans, Canadian Forces personnel and members of the RCMP. More than 20,000 Canadians attended the internment ceremony, while Canadians could watch the nationally televised event. The tomb consists of a dark granite sarcophagus enclosing the casket containing the remains of the Unknown Soldier. The remains are surrounded by soil from the original grave in France as well as from all the Canadian provinces and territories. A bronze relief sculpture atop the sarcophagus includes a medieval sword, a World War I helmet, and branches of maple and laurel leaves. Grand Chief Howard Anderson laid a golden eagle feather upon the soil, a symbol of a strength and loyalty among First Nation warriors. A 100-year-old Canadian Great War veteran, and a Victoria Cross recipient from the Second World War then read poet Laurence Binyon's words, "At the going down of the sun, and in the morning, we will remember them."^{D, 2I, 2N, 8H}

At the first Remembrance Day following the tomb's installation, a new tradition of respect formed spontaneously as attendees placed their poppies on the tomb at the conclusion of National Remembrance Ceremony. Now a widely practiced tradition, others leave small Canadian flags, cut flowers, photographs, or letters to the deceased. The tomb honours more than 118,000 Canadians who have sacrificed their lives in the cause of peace and freedom, including about 28,000 soldiers whose resting place is unknown.^{D, 2I, 4H, 8H}

- **NATIONAL HISTORIC SITES OF CANADA:** These are places that have been designated by the federal Minister of the Environment on the advice of the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada (HSMBC), as being of national historic significance. There are over 975 designated National Historic Sites located all across the provinces and territories of this country. Only two of these national sites are located outside of Canada. In 1997, the HSMBC designated two battlefields and monuments in France as National Historic Sites: the **Beaumont-Hamel National Historic Site of Canada**, commemorating the 1st Newfoundland Regiment's bravery and sacrifice at the Battle of the Somme on July 1, 1916 at the Battle of the Somme; and the **Vimy Ridge National Historic Site of Canada**, commemorating Canada's accomplishment, contributions and sacrifice in the First World War.^{8I}

- **CANADA'S LAST WORLD WAR I VETERAN:** Canada's last known First World War veteran was **John "Jack" Babcock**. He was born on a farm in Frontenac County (near Kingston), Ontario in July 1900 as part of a family of 13 children. When he was six years old, he lost his father in a tree-cutting accident. Impressed by the salary of \$1.10 a day and two recruiting officers who quoted the poem "The Charge of the Light Brigade," fifteen year-old John Babcock first joined the army in Sydenham, Ontario, with the 146th Battalion, Canadian Expeditionary Force. He was sent to Valcartier, Quebec where they discovered he was underage. He was turned down, but managed to get to Wellington Barracks in Halifax where he dug ditches and loaded freight on army trucks. When he was sixteen years old, lying about his age (he claimed he was eighteen), he was able to volunteer for the Royal Canadian Regiment. Arriving in England a few months later, officials discovered he was only 16 so he wasn't allowed to go to the front. So in August 1917, Babcock was sent to the Boys (Young Soldiers) Battalion – 1,300 young soldiers doing endless military drills and digging ditches until they were old enough to fight the Germans. The war ended a few months after Babcock's 18th birthday, so he never saw front-line action.

In the 1920's, with relatives in the United States, he moved there and would serve in the U.S. Army from 1921 to 1924. At the time, dual citizenship was not allowed, so he had to give up his Canadian ties. He became an electrician and worked in the oil and natural gas business before operating his own business as a mechanical contractor. Later, he worked for his son's waterworks equipment wholesale business and did not retire until he was 87. His first marriage lasted 45 years, his second 33 years. He took up flying at age sixty-five and earned his high school diploma at age ninety-five.

In 2007, Babcock became the last known Canadian veteran of the First World War. He was proud, though a little uncomfortable being known as the last surviving veteran. Babcock was of the opinion that, "they should commemorate all of the fellows who spent time in the front lines and were actually in the fighting, instead of just one." Reflecting on his WWI experience, he never felt like a "real soldier", referring to himself as a "tin soldier". He said, "I think if I had a chance, I would have gone to France, taken my chances like the rest of them did. A lot of good men got killed." In 2008, Babcock asked for and was granted his Canadian citizenship back. His wife Dorothy said, "Jack loved Canada, his heart was there." John Babcock would later say, "I think it would be nice if all the different people in the world could get along together so we weren't having wars. I don't suppose that'll ever happen, though."

In 2009, **Sarnia city firefighters** were busy gathering gifts of clothing, coffee and other treats for Canadian soldiers in Afghanistan. The idea of honouring Canada's last living First World War veteran seemed a fitting

extension of the program. Sarnia firefighter Kevin McHarg travelled to Spokane, Washington (where John Babcock was residing) several times to meet with him, to chat, and present gifts including a Sarnia Sting jersey and a white fire helmet designating “Private Babcock” as honorary chief of the Sarnia fire department.^z

John Babcock passed away on February 18, 2010, at the age of 109. Ever conscious of not actually serving at the front, he did not feel the need to be honoured with a state funeral as suggested by Canadian officials. On April 9, 2010, on the anniversary of the Battle of Vimy Ridge, Queen Elizabeth II, issued a statement marking the two events, stating: “As proud and grateful Canadians, we pause today to mark not only the ninety-third anniversary of this Nation's victory at Vimy Ridge but also to pay tribute to the passing of a truly remarkable generation who helped to end the most terrible conflict the world had ever known... And now, they are all gone – and all Canadians mourn our collective loss. Yet they will remain forever etched in the hearts of a grateful people and on the pages of our history as symbols of service, honour and dedication.”^{D, 2N, 7S, 8J}

• **SARNIA’S WORLD WAR I TREES OF REMEMBRANCE MEMORIAL:** In November 2013, local Beavers, Cubs and Scouts from troops across Sarnia planted trees of Remembrance in Heritage Park, Sarnia. The project was undertaken by Scouts Canada–Bluewater area, and was completed with the cooperation of the City of Sarnia, and with generous assistance of Enbridge Pipelines, Sun Life Financial, the Sarnia Horticultural Society and Union Gas.

There are 102 Autumn Blaze maple trees planted in the park, one tree for each fallen soldier listed on the World War I section of the Sarnia Cenotaph*. The trees in the living memorial are planted in the formation of a cross. In November 2014, local Cubs, Beavers and Scouts held a dedication ceremony in the park, unveiling a plaque commemorating the Scouts “**Trees of Remembrance Project**”. The plaque reads; “*These one hundred and two trees were planted to honour the memory of the soldiers from Sarnia who fought in World War I, and in particular the memory of the 102 soldiers from this community who died in battle – one tree for each fallen soldier.*” The names and information on the World War I Trees of Remembrance Memorial plaque are included on page 1168.

*Note: In 2019, ten new names were added to the World War I section of the Sarnia cenotaph.

• **FOUND SARNIA HONOUR ROLL:** In the spring of 2015, Roslyn Green, a young lady residing in Toronto, came across two World War I honour rolls on a curbside in that city destined for the trash. She decided to salvage the rolls to give to her boyfriend. She also carried out some research on the names on the roll, and through the on-line version of this *Sarnia War Remembrance Project*, discovered that they had a link to Sarnia.

Roslyn then contacted Ron RealeSmith of the Sarnia Historical Society. Ron RealeSmith along with Randy Evans then worked together to uncover the history behind the rolls. They discovered that the honour rolls were linked to either Parker Street United Church (it became Dunlop United) or Devine Street Methodist Church in Sarnia. Through the graciousness of Roslyn Green, she desired that the honour rolls should be returned to Sarnia. Ron RealeSmith travelled to Toronto to retrieve the rolls and he returned them to Sarnia in March 2016. The decision was made to donate them to the Sarnia Armoury where they would be cared for and available for public viewing. The names on the two found honour rolls are included in this Project on page 1172.

• **PETER MANSBRIDGE REFLECTS:** When people describe their experiences after touring World War I battlefield sites, following in the footsteps of those who served, or visiting the military cemeteries and memorials throughout France and Belgium, they use words like educational, contemplative, emotional, reflective, memorable and deeply moving.

In 2014, Peter Mansbridge, former CBC News correspondent and the recipient of the Officer of the Order of Canada, wrote of his visit to the overseas war cemeteries:

If you visit the cemeteries of France and Belgium where Canadians are buried, you’re confronted by rows of gleaming white headstones. They are arranged beautifully. Visitors are appropriately quiet. They whisper as they walk. The peacefulness is in complete contrast to the way these men lived and died during the war. The cemeteries have the power to overwhelm our emotions. They bring us closer to those who were killed. But it’s only when you start reading the individual inscriptions on the tombstones that you understand the intimacy of the loss. Suddenly, the dead aren’t just soldiers. They’re sons, brothers, fathers, husbands. And they’re so young. Some are teenagers. It’s rare to find someone as old as thirty-five or forty.

There’s a maple leaf on every Canadian headstone. So no matter what else they were, these dead were part of us... They forfeited love, children, walking in the park, seeing a hockey game, reading books, suppers around the kitchen table, playing charades in the parlour.^{6E}

A Working Party

*Three hours ago he blundered up the trench,
Sliding and poising, groping with his boots;
Sometimes he tripped and lurched against the walls
With hands that pawed the sodden bags of chalk.
He couldn't see the man who walked in front;
Only he heard the drum and rattle of feet
Stepping along barred trench boards, often splashing
Wretchedly where the sludge was ankle-deep.*

*Voices would grunt "Keep to your right—make way!"
When squeezing past some men from the front-line:
White faces peered, puffing a point of red;
Candles and braziers glinted through the chinks
And curtain-flaps of dug-outs; then the gloom
Swallowed his sense of sight; he stooped and swore
Because a sagging wire had caught his neck.*

*A flare went up; the shining whiteness spread
And flickered upward, showing nimble rats
And mounds of glimmering sand-bags, bleached with rain;
Then the slow silver moment died in dark.
The wind came posting by with chilly gusts
And buffeting at corners, piping thin.
And dreary through the crannies; rifle-shots
Wood split and crack and sing along the night,
And shells came calmly through the drizzling air
To burst with hollow bang below the hill.*

*Three hours ago he stumbled up the trench;
Now he will never walk that road again:
He must be carried back, a jolting lump
Beyond all need of tenderness and care.*

*He was a young man with a meagre wife
And two small children in a Midland town;
He showed their photographs to all his mates,
And they considered him a decent chap
Who did his work and hadn't much to say,
And always laughed at other people's jokes
Because he hadn't any of his own.*

*That night when he was busy at his job
Of piling bags along the parapet,
He thought how slow time went, stamping his feet
And blowing on his fingers, pinched with cold.
He thought of getting back by half-past twelve,
And tot of rum to send him warm to sleep
In draughty dug-out frowsty with the fumes
Of coke, and full of snoring weary men.*

*He pushed another bag along the top,
Craning his body outward; then a flare
Gave one white glimpse of No Man's Land and wire;
And as he dropped his head the instant split
His startled life with lead, and all went out.*

*By Siegfried Sassoon
1918*

BIOGRAPHIES OF SARNIA'S WORLD WAR I FALLEN SOLDIERS

ACKERMAN, Ralph Louis (#602916)

In a letter to his father in January 1917, Ralph Louis Ackerman mentioned that front line action *has a fellow a little scared the first time in, but you soon get used to it and don't pay any attention to all the bullets whistling and zipping round you*. Months later during a front line attack on Hill 70, Private Ackerman, 25, was killed, his body never recovered.

He was born in Sarnia on November 16, 1891, the son of Wilbert Albert and Jane Elizabeth (nee Malcolm, born June 1859 in Hamilton, Scotland) Ackerman. Wilbert Albert and Jane Elizabeth Ackerman were married on October 14, 1885 in Norwood, near Peterborough, Ontario. To support his family, Wilbert worked for the Grand Trunk Railroad, first as a railway brakeman and later a conductor. The Ackermans had four children together: Florence Annetta (born March 22, 1888); Clarence Franklin (born September 24, 1890); Ralph (1891) and George A. (born in 1908). The older children grew up in Point Edward, but the family moved later to 390 Russell Street, Sarnia.

Ralph's sister Florence Annetta married Albert Ernest Chambers (from Cobalt, Ontario) on March 31, 1909 in Sarnia. Two years later, Albert (a barber) and Annetta Chambers were residing at 132 College Street (they later moved to 146 Mitton Street). Albert and Florence Annetta would have a son, Harold Wilbert Chambers, born October 28, 1911, a nephew for Ralph Ackerman. Harold Wilbert Chambers would go on to graduate from Sarnia Collegiate, and enter the military, becoming a Captain in the Royal Canadian Army Pay Corps (RCAPC).

Little is known about Ralph's early life, but his family dynamic changed drastically when his mother Jane passed away on August 19, 1912 in Sarnia at the age of 53. George, the youngest Ackerman child, lost his mother when he was only four. Years later, widowed father Wilbert remarried a widow, Mary Evelyn McLean in Sarnia on August 29, 1916.

Ralph's life also changed dramatically when, at age 23, he enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force on August 16, 1915 in Sarnia. Joining the 34th Battalion, he stood five feet eight and one-half inches tall, had blue eyes and red hair, was single, and recorded his trade or calling as switchman (railway). He listed his father Wilbert of 390 Russell Street as his next-of-kin.

Ralph Ackerman embarked overseas on October 23, 1915 with the 34th Battalion aboard the *S.S. California* and arrived in England on November 1, 1915. He trained at various English camps that included Aldershot, Bramshott and Shorncliffe and on February 3, 1916 at Bramshott, Ralph became a member of the 23rd Reserve Battalion.

On May 25, 1916, he was transferred to the Canadian Army Infantry, British Columbia Regiment, 7th Battalion. The next day, he arrived in France with the 7th Battalion and twelve days later, on June 7, 1916, he was in the field. During his time in France, Ralph wrote a number of letters home. The following are portions of a few of them:

To his sister Mrs. Albert Ernest Chambers (Florence Annetta), living on North Mitton Street, on July 10th, 1916:
Somewhere in France

Dear Sister,

Just a line or two to let you know that I am well and hoping this letter finds you the same. We are having lovely weather over here now and the roads are pretty dry. I had a letter from Dad just before we went into the trenches the last time. I met Andy McIntosh and a bunch of the 70th boys the other day. They had not been in the trenches, but expected to go in soon. It has a fellow a little scared the first time in, but you soon get used to it and don't pay any attention to all the bullets whistling and zipping round you. I have certainly seen some interesting sights since being over here, and if I get back safe and sound will tell you all about it.... Say, don't send me any tobacco, for we get all we can use issued to us. We get it in the trenches just the same as when we are out. We also have our mail delivered to the trenches. I suppose it is pretty quiet around town now. I have certainly met a lot of fellows from home here. I met Charlie Warren the other night. He was in the hospital with fever the same time as myself.... I have got a big bunch of German souvenirs. I would like you to see them. There are lots of them to be had, but I don't bother with them much. I suppose Harold is growing like a weed. There is hardly any need of money over here. We get fifteen francs every two weeks, and we don't even have to buy tobacco with it. Well Sis, I guess I have told you all the news for this time so will sign off.

From your loving brother, Ralph

Ralph wrote Florence two letters in August 1916 from "Somewhere in France". Portion of these letters read as follows:

Dear Sister,

Just a line or two to let you know that I am well and hoping that this letter finds you the same. I received your letter today and am answering it right back... The trenches are nice and dry and I have been on "listening post" every time I have been in the trenches. It is a pretty good job, and exciting at times. You have to go out in "No Man's Land" and lay and listen and watch for "Fritz." You have lots of bullets and rifle grenades flying around, but you soon get used to them. I was out one night and I had a fellow with me who was not on it before with me. It was certainly a lively experience for the beginner. We spotted three "Fritzs" working on their wire entanglements. They were about fifty yards from me. You could see them quite plain, but were a little too far away to toss a bomb at, and our scouts were out patrolling. I didn't dare take a chance at bagging them. I was out another night when the trenches were only 40 yards apart. I was out pretty close to them on this occasion. You could hear them talking in their trenches quite plain... Fritz has a shell they call a sausage. They are about three feet long, and are awful high explosives. You can see them coming through the air and can generally get out of the way of them. They make an awful noise when they explode. But we have just as good, and a lot better explosives than he has though, and can always give him twice the amount he serves us...

In his second letter, Ralph, in his matter-of-fact way, gives more details about the dangers of life on the front lines.

Dear Sister,

We have been having nice weather over here. It has been pretty dry. The farmers are all busy cutting their crops. It seems funny to see them cutting grain just a few miles from the firing line... It is pretty near three months now since I landed here. It doesn't seem that long, but I have had some warm times in that period, and I suppose, will have warmer yet before it is through. We had a mine sprung on our line just recently, a big one too. I thought Fritz was going to send a bunch of our boys up in the air, but we came out lucky. A mine is a tunnel dug under the ground. They generally dig right under the trench and fill it up with high explosives. When it goes off, you would think it was an earthquake the way it shakes the ground. The one he sprung on us was thirty feet deep. I was just a little way from it... We have lots of straw to lay on, and lots of lice and rats for company. The latter are pretty thick.

Ralph

At his Russell Street home, Wilbert Ackerman heard from his son, still "somewhere in France", in January 1917.

Dear Dad,

It is a beautiful spring day here today, but I suppose you have lots of snow at home. We have been having pretty good weather lately, but pretty cold. We sure had some Christmas dinner. We were pretty lucky this year. This is a list of the few things we had for Christmas, so you can imagine if we enjoyed it or not: roast beef, roast pork, mince pie, fried potatoes, cabbage, water cress, nuts, apples, oranges and a lot more stuff... We had a pretty good time before the day was over. Christmas only comes once a year, and we sure made it a merry one. There are about 40 of us in the bombers and we got our own dinner up. Our officer helped us out a lot. He is an awful nice fellow... Say Dad, I could write a book about France now and what I have seen. I've witnessed some sights that some people would give thousands of dollars to see. I have had the pleasure of seeing some nice air duels, only one time, our pilot came out second best, being forced to land in our lines, but the pilot himself was not hurt. Another time an enemy airplane started to fall after a battle with one of our aviators, and his gasoline tank exploded and he came down in one big flame. The pilot was burned so bad that you could not recognize him. He fell within a few feet of where we were stationed. In an attack one day in which I participated, we were accompanied by two tanks. It was a great sight to see them go after Fritz.

PS. Believe me dad, if I am spared to come home, I will have lots to tell you.

Ralph

Ralph's letters may have minimized the dangers all around him, but they were very real as he soon discovered. On September 27, 1916, he was admitted to No. 5 Canadian Field Ambulance for shell shock. He would be out of the front line action for two weeks before rejoining his unit on October 11, 1916. In late January 1917, he was admitted to No. 23 Casualty Clearing Station due to impetigo, a highly infectious skin disease caused by bacteria. He was transported to No. 20 General Hospital in Camiers on February 1, 1917 where he was again diagnosed with impetigo, and then six days later to No. 26 General Hospital in Etaples for further treatment of skin disease. On February 13, 1917, he was discharged to Base Details Camp at Etaples, diagnosed with impetigo.

Private Ackerman rejoined his unit on March 1, 1917, but he wasn't with them for long. On April 10, 1917, he was admitted to No. 8 Station Hospital at Wimereaux as a result of a "gun shot wound to the scalp, slight". The

next day he was moved to No. 1 Convalescent Depot in Boulogne. Three days later, on April 14, 1917, he was discharged to Base Details Camp at Boulogne. Two weeks later, on April 28, 1917, he rejoined his unit in the field.

In mid-August, 1917, the 7th Battalion was in the vicinity of Lens, and would take part in the second-largest Canadian military undertaking up to that point in the war, second only to Vimy. The **Attack on Hill 70 and Lens** in France (August 15-25, 1917) was the first major battle orchestrated by Canadian commander Lieutenant-General Arthur Currie and the first time German forces first used flame-throwers and mustard gas against the Canadians. Known as “Canada’s forgotten battle of the First World War”, the Canadians were able to capture Hill 70 but not the city of Lens, at a cost of approximately 9,100 Canadians listed as killed, wounded or missing.

On August 15 near Loos, the attack began at 4:25 a.m. The first objective was captured with fairly light casualties, but enemy fire became heavier as the battalion advanced, with very heavy machine-gun fire and active sniping troops. The battalion advanced shell hole to shell hole toward their final objective, but outflanked by the enemy and enfiladed from the right, the unit withdrew to the intermediate objective and consolidated. It was on August 15, 1917, that Private Ralph Ackerman was reported “missing in action” while fighting on the first day of the Attack on Hill 70, France.

On September 2nd, 1917, Wilbert in Sarnia received the following telegram about his son from the Officer in charge of records: SINCERELY REGRET TO INFORM YOU 602916, PTE. RANDOLPH LOUIS ACKERMAN, INFANTRY, OFFICIALLY REPORTED MISSING AUGUST 15TH, 1917. WILL SEND FURTHER PARTICULARS WHEN RECEIVED.

It was not until late-March 1918, that Private Ralph Ackerman of the 7th Battalion was officially recorded as *killed in action (previously reported missing) on August 15, 1917*. The Circumstances of Death Register records him as; *Date of Casualty: 15-8-17. Previously reported Missing, now reported Killed in Action. Casualty occurred at Hill 70*. Twenty-five-year-old Ralph Ackerman has no known grave. He is memorialized on the Vimy Memorial, Pas de Calais, France. On the Sarnia cenotaph, his name is inscribed as, Ackerman, R.H.
SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 2G, 6O, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10Z, 2k

ADAMS, Alfred Roy (#90801)

Alfred Roy Adams survived Vimy Ridge, the Somme, Arras, Ypres, Passchendaele, and Cambrai. He was killed in action three weeks before The Great War ended.

He was born in Sarnia on January 13, 1886, the third son of Joshua Fourth and Jessie Loretta (nee Clarke) Adams, of 191 Brock Street, Sarnia. Joshua Adams (born April 22, 1840 in Carleton, Ontario) married Jessie L. Clarke (born 1851 in Markham, Ontario) in Sarnia on October 25, 1876. Joshua’s work as a customs officer in Sarnia supported Jessie and their four sons: Charles Frederick (born March 13, 1880, who would become a schoolteacher in Calgary); Ernest Joshua (born May 9, 1882); Alfred; and George Percy (born December 31, 1889). Tragedy, however, struck the family in their Brock Street home when, on May 29, 1896, its youngest member, George, passed away from diphtheria at age six.

What distinguished Alfred before the war was his musical talent that made him prominent in musical circles. After residing in Sarnia for many years, he left for Goderich a few years before enlisting. His talent, especially in playing the piano and organ led him to becoming the leader, organist and choirmaster at Goderich’s St. George’s Anglican Church from 1910 to 1914.

At age 29, Alfred Adams enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force on June 17, 1915 in Sarnia with the 29th Battery, Canadian Field Artillery. He stood five feet six and a half inches tall, had blue eyes and fair hair, was single, and recorded his trade or calling as civil engineer. Alfred listed his father, J.F. Adams on Brock Street, as his next-of-kin. Alfred trained at Guelph and embarked overseas on the *S.S. Missanabie* on February 23, 1916. He disembarked in the U.K. at Plymouth on March 12, 1916, moving first to Bramshott Camp and later to Witley Camp. On June 21st 1916, Alfred wrote to his mother from Witley Camp, in Surrey, England where he was training. Following is a portion of that letter:

Dear Mother,

I know it is a long time since I wrote, but it was pretty hard to do any writing while we were on our tick to Larkhill, and they have formed a habit recently of springing parades of one kind or another on us for Saturday afternoons and Sunday, so that leisure time is rather a scarce article. We had quite a time on our “trek.” It was done under actual service conditions. We left here on the 5th about 8 a.m., the whole brigade the 29th, 41st, 44th and 46th

Batteries, travelled of course at a walk. Every hour we would halt for about 10 minutes, see that everything was alright, then on again. Any time near noon we would halt where there was a stream of water to water the horses, feed them and eat a sandwich ourselves. We moved by easy stages only about 12 to 16 miles a day, usually reaching our bivouac for the night about 2 or 3 p.m....

He later described his stay in the area of Over Wallop: ... In the evening as soon as the horses are fed and watered, we had a hot meal usually a stew, then we would wander off to the town to see what it looked like. Then there was a roll-call at 9:30 so we didn't have much time to look around. It is broad daylight here now at 9:30 with the daylight saving bill in force, Summer time as they call it. Reville was at 4 a.m. and we moved off again at 6. Of course we slept in the open with a rubber sheet and two blankets, fortunately we did not get much rain at night.... The soil all through is chalk but there is plenty of good sticky mud on the surface, and even a short shower turns the place into an abominable mud hole. The first contingent must have suffered tortures in such a place during the rainy season.... It will not be long before we move to France now by the looks of things and I guess leave is hard to get then, but the war will soon be over. I think this brings my tale nearly up to date so I'll end here. Everything is going fine, good health and everything else. I'm glad father is keeping up. Hope everything is O.K.

Yours, Roy



Lieutenant Alfred Roy Adams

Sergeant Alfred Adams disembarked in France with the 11th Howitzer Brigade on July 15, 1916. In the ensuing months, he participated in many historic battles and, amazingly, escaped with no major injuries. In late-November 1916, he was hospitalized at No. 5 General Hospital in Rouen due to influenza. Approximately three weeks later, he rejoined his unit.

In April 1917, he became a member of the 8th Brigade, Canadian Field Artillery. In January 1918, Alfred took his Officer's Training Course (OTC) in Witley Camp, Godalming, England, and attained the rank of Lieutenant. He returned to the front in June 1918 as a member of the Canadian Army Field Artillery, 3rd Brigade. While in France, Alfred took part in the battles at Vimy Ridge, the Somme, Arras, Ypres, Passchendaele, Cambrai and others. His good fortune ended when he participated in what became known as The Hundred Days Campaign.

The **Hundred Days Campaign** (August 8 – November 11, 1918 in France and Belgium) was the “beginning of the end” of the Great War. Canadians were called on again and again over the three-month period to lead the offensives against the toughest German defences. The series of victories repeatedly drove the Germans back, culminating in Germany's unconditional surrender on November 11, but it came at a high price, approximately 46,000 Canadian were killed, wounded or missing.

The first offensive in the Campaign was the Battle of Amiens (August 8-14, 1918), a truly all-arms battle, one that all four Canadian divisions would be involved in. Over the course of one week, in a battle that British Field Marshal Douglas Haig called “*the finest operation of the war*”, the Canadians would advance nearly 14 km.

The second offensive in Canada's Hundred Days Campaign was the **Battle of Arras and Breaking the DQ**

Line in France (August 26-September 3, 1918), where Canadians were part of a spearhead force tasked with crashing one of the most heavily fortified positions, the Hindenburg Line – a series of strong defensive trenches and fortified villages. General Sir Julian Byng called the Canadian victory at the 2nd Battle of Arras and breaking of the DQ Line “*the turning point of the campaign*”, but it came at a cost of 11,400 Canadian casualties.

Near the end of the 2nd Battle of Arras on September 4th, 1918, Lieutenant Adams fractured his skull when a shell burst near him on the front lines. He would be confined to No. 20 General Hospital in Camiers, France where he was operated on and a piece of shell was removed from his skull. His doctors thought he was recovering well enough to move him to No. 3 London General Hospital in Wandsworth, England on October 2nd, 1918. Two weeks later, on October 17, 1918, seriously ill, the lieutenant from Sarnia died. Alfred Adams was officially recorded as; *Died of wounds – 3rd London General Hospital (England), Wandsworth Common, S.W.* Approximately three weeks after Alfred’s death, the First World War ended.

Alfred’s family received his British War Medal and the Victory Medal posthumously. His father, Joshua, passed away less than two years later in Sarnia, in April 1920 at the age of 79. He is buried at Lakeview Cemetery, Sarnia. At St. George’s Anglican Church in Goderich, not long after the war, a plaque was unveiled in Alfred Roy Adams honour. The plaque is still in the church today and reads

TO THE GLORY OF GOD
AND IN LOVING MEMORY OF
A. ROY ADAMS
LIEUTENANT 9TH BATTERY 3RD BRIGADE C.F.A.
SOMETIME ORGANIST OF THIS CHURCH
WHO DIED OCTOBER 17TH 1918 OF WOUNDS RECEIVED AT
THE STORMING OF DROCOURT QUEANT SWITCH LINE

Thirty-two-year-old Alfred Adams is buried in Brookwood Military Cemetery, Surrey, United Kingdom, Grave III.D.12.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 2G, 2c, 6O, 7C, 8A, 8X, 8Y, 10Z

ALLAN, Arthur John (#602258)

Like many Sarnians, Arthur John Allan fought in brutal conditions and died in front line action. At his Central United memorial service, the pastor remarked that only faith in the cause and in God *could lead men to endure what our men have endured and to meet so heroically every demand made upon them.*

Arthur John Allan was born in Palmerston, Wellington County, Ontario on September 18, 1891, the son of James Alexander (born October 1, 1863) and Florence (nee McArthur, born March 11, 1863) Allan. At some point, they moved to Sarnia where James found work with the Grand Trunk Railroad. It was fortunate he did for his steady job helped support Florence and their nine children: Mabel Florence (born November 15, 1884); William Albert (born March 18, 1886); James Howard (born December 23, 1887, see below); Mary Violet (born June 8, 1889); Arthur; Robert Earl (born August 1, 1893); Sarah Gladys (born December 1, 1894); Edna B. (born 1899); and Velma (born November 1900). The Allan family were members of Central United Church and lived at 382 Brock Street and, later, 239 Mitton Street.

At age 23, Arthur Allan enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force in Sarnia on January 13, 1915, with the 34th Battalion (his older brother James would enlist seven months later). He stood five feet six inches tall, had blue eyes and dark hair, was single, and recorded his trade or calling as a rig brakeman. He listed his father, James on Brock Street, as his next-of-kin.

Arthur Allan and his brother James embarked overseas together with the 34th Battalion, ‘D’ Company, aboard the *S.S. California*. They disembarked in England on November 1, 1915 and were initially posted to Camp Bramshott with 23rd Battalion. On May 25 1916, the Allan brothers were transferred to the 2nd Battalion and the next day were deployed to France.

Upon arriving in France on May 26, Privates Arthur and James Allan were immediately transferred to 7th Battalion, Canadian Army Infantry, British Columbia Regiment. Both Arthur and James fought in the June 1916 **Battle of Mont Sorrel**. Arthur survived this battle, but his brother James was killed in action on June 13, 1916. Arthur Allan was then transferred to the Somme Front.

The **Battle of the Somme** (July 1-November 18, 1916) was one of the bloodiest and most futile battles in

history. The Somme battle lasted for more than four brutal months and saw the Allies advance around 10 kilometers. A more telling statistic is the number of injuries and deaths: of the 85,000 Canadian Corps, there were more than 24,000 Canadian casualties.

The second major offensive of the Somme battle was the week-long **Battle of Flers-Courcelette** (September 15-22). It was here where tanks made their first appearance in the war. The Battle was a stunning success for the Canadians, but it came at a cost of over 7,200 casualties. Only days after this battle, another one of the many soldiers that the Battle of the Somme claimed was Private Arthur Allan of Sarnia. On September 27, 1916, Arthur was killed during fighting at Hessian Trench near Courcellette, a mere three months after his brother died.

On Brock Street, James Allan Sr. received the following message about his son from the militia headquarters at Ottawa not long afterwards: *Sincerely regret to inform you, 602258, Private Arthur John Allan, infantry, officially reported missing since Sept. 27th, 1916. Will send further particulars when received.*

Officer in charge record office.

Later, James received letters from two young Sarnians who were on active service in France. Both men informed James of Arthur's death. The circumstances of his passing provide insight into the chaotic nature of the WWI battlefields. Arthur was initially reported missing in action, but four weeks elapsed before authorities confirmed that he was *now killed in action Sept. 27, 1916*. His Circumstances of Death Register records Arthur Allan as; *Date of Casualty: 27-9-16. "Previously reported missing, now reported Killed in Action". Killed in trench leading up to Regina Trench in the Area of the Somme, France. No record of burial. Killed in area of the Somme, France.*

Twenty-five-year-old Arthur Allan is buried in Cerisy-Gailly Military Cemetery, Somme, France, Grave III.A.6.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, K, L, N, 2C, 2D, 2G, 6O, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10Z



Private Arthur John Allan



James Howard Allan (L) and Arthur John Allan (R)

ALLAN, James Howard (#602544)

James Howard Allan, 28, had only been in France for a few weeks before he was killed on the last day of the Battle of Mont Sorrel. At a Central United memorial service for James and his brother, Arthur, the pastor emphasized that the brothers had *the deepest love for home, country and the cause for which they were giving their lives*.

James Howard Allan was born in Palmerston, Wellington County, Ontario on December 23, 1887, the son of James Alexander (born October 1, 1863) and Florence (nee McArthur, born March 11, 1863). At some point, they moved to Sarnia where James found work with the Grand Trunk Railroad. It was fortunate he did for his steady job helped support Florence and their nine children: Mabel Florence (born November 15, 1884); William Albert (born March 18, 1886); James Jr.; Mary Violet (born June 8, 1889); Arthur John (born September 18, 1891, see above);

Robert Earl (born August 1, 1893); Sarah Gladys (born December 1, 1894); Edna B. (born 1899); and Velma (born November 1900). The Allan family were members of Central Baptist Church and lived at 382 Brock Street and, later, 239 Mitton Street.

Twenty-seven-year-old James Allan enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force on August 21, 1915 in Sarnia with the 34th Battalion (his younger brother Arthur had enlisted seven months earlier). He stood five feet five inches tall, had blue eyes and brown hair, was single, and recorded his trade or calling as railway brakeman. He listed his father, James Allan Sr. on Brock Street, as his next-of-kin.

James and his brother Arthur embarked overseas together with the 34th Battalion, 'D' Company, aboard the *S.S. California*. They disembarked in England on November 1, 1915 and initially were posted to Camp Bramshott with 23rd Battalion. On May 25 1916, the Allan brothers were transferred to the 2nd Battalion and the next day were deployed to France. Upon arriving in France on May 26, Privates James and Arthur Allan were immediately transferred to 7th Battalion, Canadian Army Infantry, British Columbia Regiment.

Both James and Arthur Allan fought in the June 1916 **Battle of Mont Sorrel** in Belgium (June 2-13, 1916). Mont Sorrel was the last remaining high ground in the Ypres salient still in British hands. Over two weeks of fighting that resulted in almost no change in the ground held by both sides, the "June Show," as the battle was known informally, came at a cost of 8,700+ killed, wounded or missing Canadians.

Private James Allan was killed at Mont Sorrel, less than three weeks after he had arrived in France. On late June 12 and into June 13, 1916, his unit was tasked with attacking enemy positions. Despite incessant rain, heavy artillery bombardment, and machine gun fire, the unit took their assigned objectives, held them, and then reinforced their position.

On June 13, 1916, James Allan died while fighting on the final day of the Battle of Mont Sorrel, Belgium. His brother Arthur Allan fought in the same battle, and survived to fight another day, but was killed in action only three months later in the Battle of the Somme. James Allan was later officially recorded as; *Killed in Action. Ypres (Mt. Sorrel). Cemetery: Railway Dugouts Burial Ground. (Transport Farm). Commune: Zillebeke. 157/c.28.I.21.c.6.8.*

In early November 1916, Central Baptist Church held a memorial service for the Allan brothers. Following is a portion of the story from the *Sarnia Observer* on the service:

The evening service on Sunday at the Central Baptist church was in memory of two young men of this city who have been killed in action – Private James Howard Allan and Arthur John Allan, sons of Mr. and Mrs. James A. Allan of Brock street south, who went overseas in the 34th Battalion, and upon that unit being broken up in England, went to the front as members of the Seventh Battalion. In the fight at Hill 60 the first named laid down his life. Arthur passed safely through the same action, and later was transferred to the Somme front, and there in one of the many engagements, he too made the supreme sacrifice. Appreciation of their service for king and country, and sympathy for the twice stricken family, were evident throughout the entire service, which opened with Chopin's Funeral March. The pastor's remarks included, "Only faith in the righteousness of our cause, in the honorable action of our national leaders, and in God, could lead men to endure what our men have endured and to meet so heroically every demand made upon them." Pastor McKay concluded his address by reading some extracts from letters written amidst the carnage of the battlefield showing deepest love for home, country and the cause for which they were giving their lives.

Twenty-eight-year-old James Howard Allan is buried in Allan Railway Dugouts Burial Ground (Transport Farm), Belgium, Grave VI.D.17.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, K, L, N, 2C, 2D, 2G, 6O, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10Z

ANSBRO, George Patrick (#124280)

Born in Ireland and living in Sarnia when he enlisted, George Patrick Ansbro was killed at Passchendaele exactly two years to the day after he enlisted in 1915. He has no known grave.

George Patrick Ansbro was born in the village of Hollymount, Ireland on March 3, 1895, the son of William William and Margaret W. (nee Loughlin) Ansbro, of Ireland. William and Margaret were blessed with a large family. George's siblings included his brothers William, Frank, Patrick, Martin, Peter Paul and Joseph, and three sisters: Annie, Mary and Francis. In 1912, George Ansbro, now 17, immigrated to Canada, arriving in Quebec in June 1912. By November 2012, he was residing in Sarnia and working as a contract labourer in the Imperial City. At least one of

his siblings had also immigrated to North America. In November 1912, George crossed the border at Sarnia on a trip to visit his brother William who was living in Detroit.

When the Great War started in 1914, George was a member of the Sarnia Fire Department. A year later on October 30, 1915, at age 20, he enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force in Sarnia with the 70th Battalion. He stood five feet seven inches tall, had blue eyes and black hair, was single, and recorded his trade or calling as fireman. George listed his next-of-kin as his father William Ansbro of Hollymount, Ireland.

On April 24, 1916, Private Ansbro embarked from Halifax for England aboard the *S.S. Lapland*. He landed safely at Liverpool on May 5, 1916. He continued his training at Shorncliffe with the 39th Battalion. In mid-July 1916, he was deployed to France as a member of Army, 5th Canadian Mounted Rifles Battalion, 1st Quebec Regiment.

Like many soldiers, George did not escape the terrible conditions unscathed. Within three months, in mid-September 1916, he entered No. 3 Canadian General Hospital in Boulogne with suspected enteric fever. He returned to the U.K., and in mid-November 1916, was at Shorncliffe with typhoid fever. In January 1917, he was still being treated for enteric fever at Enteric Depot at Woldingham. After being away from action for six months, George returned to the 5th Canadian Mounted Rifles in France in April 1917. By mid-October 1917, Ansbro arrived with the Canadians in an area of Flanders, Belgium known as Passchendaele.

The **Battle of Passchendaele** in Belgium (October 26 – November 10, 1917) was waged in unceasing rain on a battlefield that was a nightmarish mess of rotting, mangled corpses, gagging gas, water-filled craters and glutinous mud. Overcoming almost unimaginable hardships and horrific fighting conditions, the remarkable Canadian victory that few thought possible, came at a cost of almost 12,000 Canadian wounded and more than 4,000 Canadians killed.

Two years to the day after he enlisted, on October 30, 1917, Private George Ansbro lost his life during fighting in the Battle of Passchendaele, Belgium. The Circumstances of Death Register records George Ansbro as; *Date of Casualty: 30/31-10-17. "Killed in action". Passchendaele.*

Twenty-two-year-old George Ansbro has no known grave. He is memorialized on the Menin Gate (Ypres) Memorial, Belgium, Panel 30, 32.

NOTE: George Ansbro recorded his birthdate on his Attestation Paper as March 3, 1895. Thus in his military records, his enlistment age and his age at time of death are based on that; however, based on Ireland Birth and Census records, his birthyear was 1897. Thus the likelihood is that George Ansbro lied about his age in order to enlist, making himself two years older than he actually was.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 2G, 6O, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10Z

BARNES, Charles Harris (#2356758)

Despite his best intentions, Charles Harris Barnes, 20, never got to fight overseas. En route to join his countrymen in Canada's Hundred Days Campaign, Charles succumbed to acute pneumonia. He was buried at sea.

He was born in Oil Springs, Ontario on February 15, 1898, the third oldest child of George (born August 14, 1866) and Annie (nee Campbell, born December 1872) Barnes, of 413 Confederation Street, Sarnia. George Barnes and Annie Campbell were married on November 2, 1892 in Oil Springs, Ontario. Their marriage blessed them with six children in the next dozen years: George Walter (born February 1894); John Thomas (born February 4, 1896); Charles; Robert Clayton (born February 20, 1899); Reta Mae (born August 1902); and Kathleen Victoria (born August 1904). Sadly, their oldest son, George, died at age three in January 1897, one year before Charles was born. The other siblings, however, reached adulthood. John Barnes enlisted in the United States Medical Corps, attaining the rank of Sergeant and sisters Reta and Kathleen became nurses.

Charles' younger brother, Robert, a former blacksmiths helper at the Mueller Company, also served in the Great War with Charles. On May 27, 1918, Robert, 19, and Charles, 20, enlisted together in the Canadian Expeditionary Force in London, Ontario. Their lives in the military would soon take divergent paths.

Robert embarked overseas to England on June 29, 1918 and two months later arrived in France on August 19, 1918, as a Sapper with the 7th Battalion, Royal Canadian Engineers. When the Great War ended on November 11, 1918, Robert was discharged in March 1919 on demobilization.

Charles' story is much different. Prior to enlisting, he worked as a Still Helper at the Imperial Oil Company

as a Still Helper. Enlisting with his brother, Charles stood five feet seven inches tall, had brown eyes and brown hair, was single, and was residing at home with his family on Confederation Street at the time. He recorded his trade or calling as Still Helper Imperial Oil Co. and his next-of-kin as his father, Mr. George Barnes of 413 Confederation Street. At enlistment, he became a member of the Army, Canadian Infantry, Western Ontario Regiment, 4th Reserve Battalion with the rank of Private. In mid-July 1918, he spent four days in the Military hospital in London, Ontario (Wolseley Barracks) with measles.



Private Charles Harris Barnes

Charles Barnes left London, Ontario for overseas on September 27, 1918. Two weeks later, on October 10, 1918, he would lose his life while at sea on his way to England, on board the *HMS City of Cairo*. He died as a result of acute broncho-pneumonia, and was buried at sea. He was on his way to join in Canada's **Hundred Days Campaign** (August 8 – November 11, 1918 in France and Belgium) the “beginning of the end” of the Great War. Canadians were called on again and again over a three-month period to lead the offensives against the toughest German defences. The greatest victories of the Canadian Corps took place in this critical period, but it came at a high price, approximately 46,000 Canadian casualties.

One month after Charles' death, the Armistice was signed ending the Great War. In mid-October of 1918, George Barnes Sr. was officially notified that his son, *Private Charles Harris Barnes 2356758 had died at sea on route to England, on board the SS City of Cairo, October 10th of broncho-pneumonia*. Charles Barnes was later officially recorded as, *Died on board H.M.T. 'City of Cairo' of acute bronchial pneumonia. Buried at sea*. Twenty year-old Charles Barnes has no known grave. He is memorialized on the Halifax Memorial, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Panel 1.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 2G, 6O, 7C, 8A, 8X, 8Y, 10Z

BATEY, Robert Arthur (#123951)

In 1915, Robert Arthur Batey lied about his age on his Attestation Papers. Nearly a year after he enlisted, the 15 year old Sarnian was killed in the Battle of the Somme. He is the youngest fallen soldier inscribed on the Sarnia Cenotaph.

He was born in Heaton, Newcastle upon Tyne, Northumberland, England on June 14, 1901, the oldest child of Robert Thomas Batey Senior and Blanche Isabel (nee Rowe) Batey. Robert Thomas Batey Sr. (born February 8, 1877) and Blanche Isabel Rowe (born December 1880 in Chatham, Kent, England) were married in April 1900 in Maidstone, Kent, England. Robert Batey Sr., a railway worker in England, immigrated to Canada in 1910 and two years later was joined in Sarnia by Blanche, age 30, and their children Robert Arthur, 11, Douglas, 7, and Hilda Mary, 3. They arrived from Liverpool aboard the *SS Virginian* in Quebec City on May 31, 1912. In the next eight years, Robert and Blanche saw their family grow. Along with Robert (born June 14, 1901); Douglas (born June 1905 in Heaton, Newcastle); and Hilda (born July 4, 1909 in Backworth, Northumberland); the following children were born in Sarnia: Arthur Aitchison (born April 25, 1913); William (born 1915); Margaret Lillian (born December 15,

1916, would later marry becoming Margaret Waller); and Blanche (born 1920). The family moved often and their various addresses included 106 Julia Street; 274 Campbell Street; 124 South Savoy Street; 165 South Mitton Street; and 561 Christina Street.

At age 14, Robert Batey enlisted as a bugler in the Pioneers in September 1915. One month later, on October 4, 1915, he completed his Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force Attestation Papers in Sarnia. He was residing with his family at 106 Julia Street at the time. To do so, he presented a brief letter penned by his mother on Grand Trunk Railway System letterhead that would change his life.

Dear Sir,

This is to certify that I give my consent for my son R.A. Batey to enlist in his Majesty's Service.

The youngster must have been desperate to serve. On his Attestation Paper, he wrote his birthdate as being June 14, 1898, a deliberate lie which, for official purposes, made him three years older than he actually was. Robert recorded his trade or calling as call Boy and his next-of-kin as his mother, Blanche Batey of 106 Julia Street. So at fourteen years and four months of age, five feet five and three quarter inches tall Batey, with gray eyes and dark brown hair, joined the army, becoming a member of the 70th Battalion.



Private Robert Arthur Batey

On April 24, 1916, Robert embarked overseas from Halifax aboard the *S.S. Lapland*. After arriving in England on May 5, he was transferred to the 5th Canadian Mounted Rifles (CMR) Battalion, Bombing Section, 2nd Quebec Regiment. A month later, on June 7, 1916, he arrived in France as a Private and a member of the 5th Canadian Mounted Rifles.

The teenager fought and died in the **Battle of the Somme** in France (July 1-November 18, 1916), one of the bloodiest and most futile battles in history. The Somme battle lasted for more than four brutal months and saw the Allies advance around 10 kilometers. A more telling statistic is the number of injuries and deaths: of the 85,000 Canadian Corps, there were more than 24,000 Canadian casualties.

The second major offensive of the Somme battle was the week-long **Battle of Flers-Courcelette** (September 15-22). It was here where tanks made their first appearance in the war. The Battle was a stunning success for the Canadians, but it came at a cost of over 7,200 casualties. It was during this second major offensive of the Somme battle where Robert Batey was killed in action.

On September 15, 1916, he was initially reported as “wounded and missing after action” and was later recorded as “presumed to have died on or since 15-9-16”. Robert’s Circumstances of Death Register records him as; *Date of Casualty: On or since 15-9-16. “Previously reported missing, now for official purposes presumed to have died.” Courcelette Sector.*

He was fifteen years old when he died and became the youngest fallen soldier inscribed on Sarnia’s cenotaph. Robert Batey has no known grave and is memorialized on the Vimy Memorial, Pas de Calais, France.

The Somme battle lasted for more than four brutal months and saw the Allies advance around 10 kilometers. A more telling statistic is the number of injuries and deaths: of the 85,000 Canadian Corps, there were more than 24,000 Canadian casualties.

Such was the chaotic nature of the battle that few details were immediately available about how the young Sarnian was killed; however, in late September 1916, **Private Beecher Carr** wrote a letter to his parents Mr. and Mrs. Douglas Carr in Corunna. Edward John Beecher Carr, born in June 1895 in Sarnia, was a farmer when he enlisted in November 1915 in Sarnia, and went overseas with the 70th Battalion. Two of his other letters home are included in this Project on page 112. In his September 1916 letter home, he described his own wounding, and he makes mention of Robert Batey. The following is a portion of his letter:

France, Sept. 28, 1916

Dear Mother,

Well, I suppose you no doubt have heard of the work the Canadians have been doing on their new front in taking part in the great offensive. In every scrap we have come out on top until we have the Germans pushed away back. Every day there are new gains. On the morning of the 15th we went over in an assault on his front line. The scene cannot be described as under cover of our curtain of fire we went over in one line... At exactly the same moment, the whole line – Canadians, British and French leaped out and rushed across. Men were falling on every side. How I myself escaped I do not know, but I never got a scratch. Out of our little squad of 10: Timmins, a man from the United States was killed; Paget, was shot dead; Moore, a boy from London was wounded in three places. I dressed him and helped carry him out when we were prevented by the German guns from getting him all the way. We had to leave him on the stretcher and return. I heard a big shell landed on top of him afterwards – too dreadful to think of. He always was a close friend of mine. Being only just a kid I always sort of looked after him. We always had the same dugout, etc., and many a trial and discomfort we shared together. The corporal, myself and another man were all that returned. However I got it at last and in a rather unusual place.

*Since being relieved out of the line we have been doing working parties, making roads, etc. and the day before yesterday we had breakfast at 3 a.m., and then started out on a five mile walk. When we had gone about three miles Fritz started sending over shrapnel on the main road and I was the only man hit, although the balls fairly rained around us. I got a ball just below the right knee, not bad, but the bone is rather sore and may take some time to heal. I am now in the hospital and hardly know what to do with myself after the strenuous life. Art Gunn was killed, you know him. **R.A. Batey** was dangerously, perhaps fatally wounded. He is only 16 years old. He used to work "calling" in Sarnia. Keene from Oil Springs will lose a leg. S. Grooms, Canning Factory manager's son, from Alvinston, was wounded. Our officer, poor fellow, was shot dead. Harry Beresford, the only old 70th officer we had with us was badly wounded. But their lives were not in vain. We took and held their front line and the battalion gets much credit along with the rest who went over, from the General. With love and best wishes.*

Pte. Beecher Carr

Three years after the war's end, in 1921, the Batey family was residing at 124 Savoy Street--parents Robert Sr. (a janitor) and Blanche, and children Douglas, 17, Hilda, 12, Arthur, 8, William, 6, Margaret, 4, and Blanche, 1. The Batey family in Sarnia must have been crushed with the death of their oldest child and sibling. It was a grief they took to their graves years after Robert was killed serving his country. Robert Sr., 69, passed away on August 5, 1946 and Blanche outlived her husband by nine years, passing away at age 74 on March 20, 1955. They are both buried in Lakeview Cemetery, Sarnia.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 2G, 6O, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10Z

BEAUMONT, George (#844052)

George Beaumont had only been in action for six weeks when he was killed by machine gun fire in a German counter attack. Five weeks later, The Great War ended.

George Beaumont was born in Wyoming, Lambton County, Ontario on April 8, 1895, the eldest son of George Beaumont Sr. (a railway employee) and Mary Jane (nee Young) Beaumont. George Beaumont Sr. (born April 24, 1857 in London, England) immigrated to Canada in 1870. Thirty-four-year-old George Beaumont Sr. (residing in Wyoming, Ontario at the time) married twenty year-old Mary Jane Young (born 1871 in Michigan) on February 8, 1892 in Wyoming, Ontario. George and Mary Jane Beaumont resided at 212 and later 191 Cobden Street and had five children together: Amy May (born January 30, 1893); George Jr.; John (born February 25, 1897); Julie Martha (born May 10, 1899); and Mary Gladys (born March 11, 1901). Sadly, Mary Gladys passed away from bronchitis at the age of five months on August 17, 1901. The year 1901 was a difficult time for the entire family. Not

only because of young Mary's passing, but also because George's mother, Mary Jane, died two weeks after giving birth to their youngest child. Mrs. Beaumont was only twenty-nine when she passed away from typhoid fever and pneumonia on March 24, 1901 in Sarnia.

The following year, George Sr., now 44 and employed as a labourer, remarried someone familiar to the rest of the family. His second wife, who he married on April 24, 1902 in Sarnia, was 21 year old Rachel Maria Young, the sister of their deceased mother and George's former sister-in-law; in other words, the children's former aunt, now their stepmother. George Sr. and Rachel Maria Young (born October 14, 1881 in Sanilac, Michigan), had two children together, step-siblings for George and his siblings. Tragically both would die very young. Eva Ruth (born January 22, 1908) was only eight months when she passed away on September 22, 1908 succumbing to cholera infantum. Lillian Margaret (born September 23, 1909) died at age 10 months two years later on August 3, 1910 from the same disease.

Prior to enlisting, George Beaumont Jr. had worked for some time as a butcher with Sarnian Alex Rose. When he was twenty, Beaumont enlisted in Sarnia with the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force on December 13, 1915, becoming a member of the 149th Battalion. He stood five feet eight and a half inches tall, had blue eyes and brown hair, was single, and was residing in Sarnia at the time. He recorded his trade or calling as butcher, and his next-of-kin as his father, George Beaumont of 191 Cobden Street.

One year later, in mid-December 1916, George spent a week in London hospital recovering from pneumonia. On March 25, 1917, he embarked overseas from Halifax aboard the *S.S. Lapland*. He arrived in Liverpool, England on April 7, 1917. He was posted initially to Camp Bramshott where he continued his training as a member of the 25th Reserve Battalion. On June 1, 1917, he was taken on strength into the 161st Battalion, stationed at Camp Witley.

Beaumont initially had problems adjusting to the strict and unyielding discipline that the military demanded of its soldiers at all times. On three occasions while at Camp Witley, George was confined to barracks for several days, a punishment levied for such offences as, "When on Active Service dirty equipment and rifle"; "When on active service having untidy bunk"; and "When on active service improperly dressed on parade." However, in mid-December 1917, George was awarded a Good Conduct Badge with the 161st Battalion at Camp Witley. In February 1918, the 161st Battalion was absorbed into the 4th Canadian Reserve Battalion.

The following August 1918, George was deployed to France and was transferred into the 18th Canadian Battalion in Etaples. On August 23, 1918, he arrived at the Canadian Corps Reinforcement Camp, where he was transferred to the 43rd Battalion, Manitoba Regiment, of the Canadian Infantry. He was a participant in what became known as "The Hundred Days Campaign." As it turns out, he fought only six weeks before he was killed.

The **Hundred Days Campaign** (August 8 – November 11, 1918 in France and Belgium) was the "beginning of the end" of the Great War. Canadians were called on again and again over the three-month period to lead the offensives against the toughest German defences. The series of victories repeatedly drove the Germans back, culminating in Germany's unconditional surrender on November 11, but it came at a cost of almost 46,000 Canadians killed, wounded and missing.

The first offensive in the Campaign was the Battle of Amiens (August 8-14, 1918), a truly all-arms battle, one that all four Canadian divisions would be involved in. Over the course of one week, in a battle that British Field Marshal Douglas Haig called "*the finest operation of the war*", the Canadians would advance nearly 14 km. The second offensive in the Campaign was the Battle of Arras and Breaking the DQ Line (August 26-September 3, 1918), where Canadians were part of a spearhead force tasked with crashing one of the most heavily fortified positions, the Hindenburg Line. General Sir Julian Byng called the Canadian victory at Arras and the DQ Line "*the turning point of the campaign*".

The third offensive in Canada's Hundred Days Campaign was the **Battle of Canal-du-Nord and Cambrai** in France (September 27-October 11, 1918). Against seemingly impossible odds and a desperate fully prepared enemy, in a series of brutal engagements in the two weeks, the Canadians would successfully channel through a narrow gap in the canal, punch through a series of fortified villages and deep interlocking trenches, capture Bournon Wood and the city of Cambrai. General Arthur Currie would call it "*some of the bitterest fighting we have experienced*" and it came at a cost of 14,000 Canadian casualties.

On October 1, 1918, while fighting in the Battle of Canal du Nord and Cambrai, Private George Beaumont

was killed by enemy machine gunfire. George Beaumont's Circumstances of Death Register records him as; *Date of Casualty: 1-10-18. "Killed in Action". This soldier was killed by an enemy machine gun bullet, during an attack. Location of Unit at time of Casualty: Near Tilloy. Cemetery: Cameron British Cemetery. Tilloy, France. Commune: Tilloy.*

Approximately five weeks after his death, the Great War would end. On November 13th 1918, two days after the Armistice was signed and with the world celebrating peace, Rachel Maria Beaumont in Sarnia received the following overseas letter about her stepson:

Lieut. Smith, 43rd Canadians overseas, France, October 14, 1918

Dear Madame,

It is with deepest regret I have to inform you of the death of your son, Pte. George Beaumont, No. 844052, killed in action October 1, 1918. Your son was killed during a counter attack made on our newly won lines, by the enemy. He was killed instantly thereby suffering no pain. He died bravely facing the enemy and defending the honour of our cause. The officers and men of the company tender their sincere sympathy in the loss of your son and may God assist you to bear the sad bereavement. I am,

Yours sincerely, S.G. Smith, Lieut. "D" Co'y, 43rd Can. Bn.

A few years later, Joseph Acton of the Salvation Army and the son-in-law of George Sr. and Rachel, had gone to France to visit George Jr.'s grave. Following is a portion of Acton's April 1921 letter to George Sr. and Rachel:

... The location of the cemetery is in a splendid district situated on the brow of a hill three miles outside of Cambrai. There are about 60 graves in this cemetery, the neighbourhood in which George fell is all under crop now, the grain was about 4 inches high when I crossed the field to the cemetery. I walked over the ground no doubt George had walked many times. I viewed the town from the fields which he had viewed it from, only in his time, the field was all trenches. I traversed the streets leading to Cambrai which George and his comrades had fought in and driven the Germans out, the devastation is everywhere, houses are smashed to the ground. The very trees along the road which leads to George's cemetery are being cut down while I was there as they are dead being hit with shrapnel. I took one or two pictures which I will forward to you later.

My visit to the battlefield was a wonderful education to me from many aspects. I saw the terrible picture which I had previously only read of. My heart ached as I looked at the many cemeteries everywhere. I was in one in Belgium with fourteen thousand British boys graves, there is another with twenty thousand graves. Another sad part is that many bodies are still being found. I saw 70 Germans being buried which had been picked up the day previous. A lamentable sad feature is the number of unknown soldiers. I went through a large cemetery and read the names on the crosses and found 70 out of every 100 unknown. The parents of these boys must often think of where their Jack is lying....

God Bless to all, Joseph Acton

George Beaumont, 23, is buried in Mill Switch British Cemetery, Tilloy-les-Cambrai, Nord, France, Grave C.16.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 2G, 6O, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10Z

BELL, A. – No information found in searched records links this name to Sarnia.

Possibly Alex Bell or another Arthur Bell. No confirmed information from a number of sources.

BELL, Arthur William (#226053)

Arthur William Bell, 24, was a popular young man who died in France after nearly a year of fighting. Gone, but not forgotten to those who knew him. A memoriam in a local paper, published on the anniversary of Arthur's death, ends with this line: *Friends we were, and pals together, he but waits for me above.*

Arthur Bell was born in Point Edward, Ontario on March 26, 1891, the son of Harry "Henry" (born December 18, 1853 in England) and Mary Jane (nee Brook, born January 23, 1854 in Ontario) Bell. Henry Bell and Mary Jane Brooks were married on September 23, 1875 in London, Ontario and later moved to 288 Campbell Street, Sarnia. Henry was a railway porter when he married, later becoming a GTR conductor in Sarnia, and later the immigration inspector for Sarnia. As Henry's work portfolio expanded, so did his family. Mary Jane and he would have seven children together over the next fifteen years: Edith (born June 20, 1876); Ella (born May 6, 1877); Albert James (born June 25, 1879); Harry Henry (born November 24, 1884); Alice Jane (born July 21, 1890); and Arthur (1891). A half sibling Ettie was born in 1882.

When Arthur was nineteen years old, Mary Jane Bell passed away on April 28, 1910. His mother, only fifty-six, succumbed to bronchitis.

Those who knew Arthur described him as being well known and popular. He had lived most of his life in Sarnia, but had moved out west residing in Winnipeg, Edmonton and Medicine Hat for a few years. Three years before enlisting, however, Bell had returned to his hometown where he worked as a machinist.

His life changed when he decided to enlist at age twenty-four. He did so in Sarnia on October 26, 1915, joining the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force with the Depot Regiment, Canadian Mounted Rifles. He stood five feet six and a half inches tall, had brown eyes and brown hair, was single, and was residing in Point Edward at the time. He recorded his trade or calling as machinist and his next-of-kin as his father, Harry Bell of 288 Campbell Street. After some time spent training in London and Hamilton, Arthur embarked overseas on May 20, 1916 aboard the *SS Empress of Britain*.

Arthur Bell disembarked in England on May 30, 1916 and was originally stationed at Shorncliffe. In mid-June 1916, he was transferred to the Fort Garry Horse Reserve Regiment (FGHRR). On September 17, 1916, he was taken on strength into the 9th Battalion and proceeded to France. Once in France, he became a member of the 10th Battalion in late September, where he served for some time as a Private in the infantry. The 10th Battalion took part in the Battle of the Somme (July 1-November 18, 1916)--one of the bloodiest and most futile battles in history. The Somme battle lasted for more than four brutal months and saw the Allies advance around 10 kilometers. A more telling statistic is the number of injuries and deaths: of the 85,000 Canadian Corps, there were more than 24,000 Canadian casualties.

In March 1917, Arthur Bell was transferred to the Canadian Army Service Corps (CASC), Reinforcement Pool as a Private. Not all infantry fatalities in the Great War were on the battlefield. Thousands of soldiers, including Arthur Bell, were victims of disease. On October 5, 1917, Arthur was suffering from tonsillitis and was admitted to No. 10 Canadian Field Ambulance. He was then moved to No. 6 Casualty Clearing Station. Still seriously ill six days later, he was transferred to St. John's Ambulance Brigade Hospital in Etaples, France. Within a week and despite the doctor's efforts, Arthur was dead on October 13, as a result of infection.

In mid-October 1917, his father Henry received the following telegram:

October 17, 1917 to H. Bell, Immigration Inspector, Sarnia, Ontario

Deeply regret to inform you 226053, Private Arthur William Bell, previously reported seriously ill, now officially reported died at St. John's Ambulance Brigade Hospital, Etaples, October 13th, 1917.

Director of Records

Arthur William Bell's Circumstances of Death Register records him as; *Date of casualty: 13-10-17. "Died" (Tonsillitis) at St. John's Ambulance Brigade Hospital, Etaples. Etaples Military Cemetery, France. Commune: Etaples. 1/100,000 Calais, 13-B-6-5-4.* At the time of his death, Arthur was survived by his father Henry, his three sisters; Mrs. Wyckoff, Sarnia, Mrs. Finch and Mrs. Earl Foster of Medicine Hat; and his two brothers, Albert in Saskatchewan (a locomotive foreman) and Harry in Fort Francis, Ontario. Unfortunately only three years after Arthur's death, Henry, his widowed father, passed away on November 10, 1920, at the age of sixty-seven in a London, Ontario hospital. Henry Bell is buried in Sarnia.

Arthur Bell, 26, is buried in Etaples Military Cemetery, Pas de Calais, France, Grave XXX.C.15A. In October 1918, one year after Arthur's death, the following 'In Memoriam' appeared in the *Sarnia Observer*: *In loving memory of Arthur William Bell, who died October 13th, 1917, in St. John's Ambulance Hospital, Etaples, France. Friends may think that he's forgotten, when at times I laugh and smile, but they little know the loneliness. Which that smile hides all the while. Friends we were, and pals together, he but waits for me above.*

A friend and pal

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 2G, 6O, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10Z

BENDALL, William George Henry (#123569)

William George Henry Bendall, 29, was killed in action mid-way through the Battle of Passchendaele. He left behind a young wife and a seven-month old son.

He was born in Marylebone, London, England on April 23, 1888, the eldest child of Mahala Ann Fonvielle (born April 1869 in Middlesex, England). Mahala had three children, all with the surname Fonvielle: William; Thomas (born May 7, 1889); and Mahala (born August 16, 1891). Tragically, the infant girl Mahala lived for only

two hours before she passed away.

Three years later, on August 5, 1894, Mahala married Joshua Scales in Marylebone Parish Church, England. They had five children together, step-siblings for William and Thomas. Joshua John Jr. (born July 1895); Albert Edward (born December 1897); Arthur Sidney (born December 26, 1899); Louis Stanley (born January 20, 1902); and Ena (born February 1, 1906) were all born in Marylebone, a borough of London, England. Unfortunately, William's stepfather, Joshua Scales passed away in 1909. William, 21, was residing with the rest of his family in London in 1911 and was employed as a clerk. The following year, he was working in the milk trade with his brother, Thomas, when he changed his surname to Bendall.

The following year, William Bendall married Ethel Louisa Collins of London, England. Ethel did not have her father's permission to marry, so they arranged a secret registry office wedding on January 23, 1913 in London and they later eloped. On May 15, 1913, the couple left England (travelling steerage) aboard the passenger ship *Sicilian* and arrived in Quebec two weeks later. William had intended to go into farming, but he had no experience.

By July 1913, William and Ethel (or Ethelwyn as he referred to her as) had settled in Sarnia, residing at 132 Savoy Street. They later moved to 426 George Street, Sarnia. The young couple's first child, William Harold George Bendall Jr., was born in Sarnia on June 7, 1914. Tragically, he passed away at six months due to enteritis on December 19, 1914. He is buried in Lakeview Cemetery, Sarnia.

In May 1914, William's brother, Thomas (also now Bendall) immigrated to Canada. He arrived in Sarnia hoping to become a factory hand like William. Instead, he enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force in Sarnia on January 16, 1915. Thomas was twenty-five years old and single, recorded his trade or calling as labourer, and his next-of-kin as his mother Mahala Bendall in London, England. He stood only five feet three and a half inches tall, and became a member of the 34th Battalion, CEF.

Private Thomas Bendall arrived in England in mid-June 1915. Two months later, on August 5, 1915, he landed in France as a member of 1st Battalion Canadian Infantry. During his time fighting in the trenches of France, he had to recover from scabies and a severe case of pneumonia. After surviving the war and being discharged on demobilization in November 1919, he returned to Sarnia and resided at 121 Proctor Street. Thomas Bendall passed away at the age of fifty-six in January 1946 and is buried in Lakeview Cemetery, Sarnia.

At least two of William's step-brothers also served in the Great War. Arthur Scales and Joshua Scales Jr., both served with the London Regiment, British Army. Private Joshua Scales Jr, age 21, of the 19th Battalion, London Regiment, was killed in action on May 22, 1917 in France.

Eight months after his brother Thomas enlisted, William did so in Sarnia on September 20, 1915. He joined the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force becoming a member of the 70th Battalion. Twenty-seven-year-old William stood five feet five inches tall, had blue eyes and light brown hair, and he and his wife were residing at 132 Savoy Street at the time. William recorded his trade or calling as cooper and his next-of-kin as his wife Ethelwyn of Savoy Street (her address later changed to 426 George Street, Sarnia). Seven months later, on April 24, 1916, William embarked overseas aboard the *SS Lapland*.

After William landed in England on May 5, 1916, he was initially stationed at Shorncliffe and became a member of the 39th Battalion at West Sandling in early June 1916. In mid-August 1916, he was transferred to the 23rd Reserve Battalion and, by November 1916, had attained the rank of Acting Corporal while stationed at Dibgate. In January 1917, Bendall was transferred twice, becoming the Officer Commanding of the 11th Battalion and later of the 14th Canadian Reserve Battalion at Shorncliffe, with the rank of Lieutenant. At some point while William was overseas, Ethelwyn returned to England, residing at Hartismere House, Fulham, London. William and Ethelwyn had a second child, Denis Lendon, born on March 25, 1917 in London.

In late-May 1917, William Bendall was transferred to the 8th Canadian Reserve Battalion in Shorncliffe and reverted to the rank of Private. He arrived in France on June 27, 1917 as a member of the Canadian Infantry, Eastern Ontario Regiment, 38th Battalion. In mid-August 1917, he was evacuated to No. 12 Canadian Field Ambulance, then No. 10 Canadian Field Ambulance because he was suffering from trench fever. He was re-deployed to his unit two weeks later and by mid-October 1917, Bendall arrived with the Canadians in an area of Flanders, Belgium known as Passchendaele.

The **Battle of Passchendaele** in Belgium (October 26 – November 10, 1917) was waged in unceasing rain on a battlefield that was a nightmarish mess of rotting, mangled corpses, gagging gas, water-filled craters and

glutinous mud. Overcoming almost unimaginable hardships and horrific fighting conditions, the remarkable Canadian victory that few thought possible, came at a cost of almost 12,000 Canadian wounded and more than 4,000 Canadians killed.

On October 31, 1917, five months after his step-brother Joshua Scales Jr. had been killed in action, Private William Bendall was wounded in action at Passchendaele when a piece of enemy shrapnel penetrated his left side. He was taken to No. 2 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station and died there as a result of wounds. William's Circumstances of Death Register records him as; *Date of Casualty: 31-10-17. "Died of wounds" (Shrapnel Wound Left Side, Penetrating) at No. 2 Casualty Clearing Station. Lijssenthoek Military Cemetery, 1 ¾ miles South West of Poperinghe, Belgium. Commune – Poperinghe.*

He left behind Ethelwyn, his wife of four years, and his seven month old son, Denis. William Bendall, 29, is buried in Lijssenthoek Military Cemetery, Belgium, Grave XXI.AA.18. On his headstone are inscribed the words, OMNIA VINCIT AMOR (Love Conquers All).

A year and a half after WWI ended, William's widowed mother, Mahala (nee Fonvielle) Scales, immigrated to Canada. Departing Liverpool, she arrived in Halifax aboard the *SS Caronia* on May 15, 1920 with three of her children by Joshua Scales: Arthur Sidney, Louis Stanley and Ena. William George Phillips, the family's enduring friend and protector, was also on board. Their destination was Sarnia. One month later, William's step-brother Albert Scales, along with his wife Lillian (nee Sage) and their infant daughter, immigrated to Canada arriving aboard the same *SS Caronia*. Their final destination was Sarnia, Albert wanted to be a farmer. Mahala had lost two sons in war, but she made a new life with her remaining children in Sarnia, residing at 121 Proctor Street.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 2G, 6O, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10Z

BENNETT, James William (#602276)

When he enlisted in Sarnia in 1915, James William Bennett left behind Emily, his young wife. A year later his dreams of returning home ended at the Battle of the Somme.

He was born in Glossop, Derbyshire, England on February 15, 1890, the eldest child of George and Mary A. Bennett, both of 89 Hall Street, Glossop, Derbyshire, England. James' siblings included John, Millie, Mary, Hester and Frank. At some point, he left his parents and siblings behind and immigrated to Canada. He arrived in Sarnia where he found work as an oiler on a steamship.

In Sarnia, he made two decisions that changed his life. The first was that he married a young lady named Emily and the newlyweds made their home at 176 Ontario Street. The second was that at age twenty-four, he enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force on January 27, 1915 in Sarnia and became a member of the 34th Battalion. He stood five feet four and a half inches tall, had grey eyes and dark hair, recorded his trade or calling as "oiler on steamship", and his next-of-kin as his wife, Emily of 176 Ontario Street, Sarnia. On October 23, 1915, James embarked overseas for the United Kingdom aboard the *S.S. California*, disembarking on November 1, 1915, at Bramshott Camp in Hampshire, England.



Private James William Bennett

James, like many soldiers, was on the move before he was deployed to France. On February 3, 1916, Private Bennett was transferred to the 23rd Battalion, stationed at West Sandling Camp. Later that month he took a cookery course at Blackheath. On June 6, 1916, he was transferred to the Canadian Infantry, 5th Canadian Mounted Rifles (CMR) Battalion, Quebec Regiment.

Private James Bennett arrived in France with the 5th CMR's the following day. James fought in the **Battle of the Somme** (July 1-November 18, 1916), one of the bloodiest and most futile battles in history. The Somme battle lasted for more than four brutal months and would see the Allies advance around 10 kilometers. The futility of the Somme battle is revealed in the telling statistics of those wounded and killed: of the 85,000 Canadian Corps, there were more than 24,000 Canadian casualties. One of those victims was James Bennett.

Sometime on October 1-2, 1916, approximately four months after he arrived in France, Private Bennett was reported missing in action. Nearly one year elapsed before he was reported "now killed in action" between October 1st and 2nd.

It must have been a terrible time for his young wife, Emily, in Sarnia. She knew he was missing, but had to wait almost one year for confirmation that he was still living or had died in battle. The dreaded news arrived by telegram to her home on Ontario Street.

*Adjutant General's Office, Militia Headquarters, Ottawa, Canada
Certificate of Death*

Certified that No. 602276, Private James William Bennett, 5th Canadian Mounted Rifles, Canadian Expeditionary Force, has been officially reported as missing between the 1st and 2nd of October, 1916, and that, after full enquiry made no information has come to hand which would indicate that he is not dead. For official purposes, therefore, his death is presumed to have occurred on or since the last named date.

W.E. Hodgins, Major General, Adjutant-General. September 5th, 1917.

His Circumstances of Death Register records him as; *Date of Casualty: 1/2-10-16. "Killed in Action". This soldier was wounded during the advance on October 1st on Regina Trench and when his Battalion retired to its former position, he was missing. No further details are available relative to the actual circumstances of his death. Location of Unit at the time of Casualty: Courcelette. Regina Trench Cemetery, Courcelette. Commune: Courcelette 61-22.c 4 ½ miles North East of Albert, France. 57.d.R.23.1.3.1.*

Emily later resided at 430 Wellington Street and then 474 Davis Street, Sarnia. James Bennett, 26, is buried in Regina Trench Cemetery, Grandcourt, Somme, France, Grave II.D.10. On his headstone are inscribed the words, GOD TOOK HIM HOME IT WAS HIS WILL BUT IN OUR HEARTS HE LIVETH STILL.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 2G, 6O, 7C, 8A, 8X, 8Y, 10Z

BENTLEY, David Benjamin (Doctor)

When he enlisted in September 1914, Dr. David Benjamin Bentley, 49, was more than double the age of most of the soldiers he treated. He died three years later but not before saving the lives of hundreds of wounded men on the battlefield. Of note, David Bentley's experiences at the front lines and back in England parallel those of Lt-Col. John McCrae, the author of iconic poem 'In Flanders Fields'.

He was born in Warwick Township, Ontario, on December 16, 1864, the son of John (of Yorkshire, England) and Julia Ann (nee Rogers) Bentley. John Bentley and Julia Ann Rogers were married on December 15, 1863 in Warwick, Lambton County. John Bentley worked as a farmer to support Julia and their five children: sons David, George Albert (born October 1867); William Joseph (born March 3, 1871); and John Rogers (born February 21, 1873) and daughter Anne Louisa (born June 1869). Tragically, when David was eight, his father John passed away on September 2, 1873 at the age of thirty-five in Warwick.

Education was important to David and it determined his path in life. He attended public school in Woodstock and then Woodstock College and Trinity Medical College in 1887. Four years later, he graduated in medicine from the University of Toronto. He was a busy young man.

The year before he graduated in medicine, on November 13, 1890, David, 25, married twenty-three-year-old Ellen Evelyn Allen of Wyoming, in Toronto. Their union eventually produced three sons—Othel Allan (born January 24, 1891); Albert William (born August 9, 1893); and David Walter (born January 7, 1900). Before they had children, David and Ellen settled in Sarnia sometime in 1891 after they had resided in Oil Springs and then Forest. They lived at 197 Wellington Street where David practiced medicine. The Bentley family attended St. Andrew's

Presbyterian Church and needed all the consolation and prayers that the church community could offer when Ellen passed away on March 9, 1904 at the age of 37. It must have been a difficult time for the males in the family: for David who had also lost his father at a young age and for their three young sons, now without a mother.

In June 1904, David Bentley became a member of the Mason Victoria Lodge No. 56. Two years after his wife's death, forty-two-year-old widower Dr. David Bentley remarried, to thirty-eight-year-old Alice Shaw (nee Shepherd, born in Plympton) on October 31, 1906, in St. Mary's, Ontario. The family continued to live at 197 Wellington Street, and in August 1907, Alice gave birth to their only child together, Margaret Alice.

Fighting in the Great War was a young man's game, but someone forgot to tell David Bentley the rules. On September 23, 1914, after leaving behind his practice and his family, forty-nine-year-old Dr. David Bentley enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force with the First Contingent at Valcartier Camp, Quebec. He stood five feet eight inches tall, had blue eyes and grey hair, recorded his trade or calling as physician, and his next-of-kin as his wife Alice of 195 Wellington Street. He was made a member of the Canadian Army Medical Corps (CAMC), 2nd Field Ambulance, with the rank of Major. Doctors were a valuable commodity for the military then.

Dr. David Bentley went overseas in October 1914, first spending several months stationed at Salisbury Plains, England. In late November 1914, he wrote a letter home to A.F. McVicar, a friend of his in Sarnia. Following is a portion of that letter:

November 28, 1914

Dear Friend Alf,

.... I am sitting on my sleeping bag in my tent, one of those hospital tents, and by the way they are pretty comfortable, notwithstanding the fact that the weather conditions are bad, rain nearly every day and mud, very bad around the camp. The Downs or Plains, are ideal for training purposes...land is very rolling, hills and valleys making it ideal for all sorts of training for every branch of the service, artillery, cavalry, infantry, etc.. Weather conditions have interfered very materially with the training, but all are keen for business and very little grumbling is ever heard.

At present we are acting as a clearing hospital for two brigades. We only keep patients for four days and all who are not fit are sent to a general hospital. We have ten ambulance wagons and about fifteen G.S. wagons, about 260 men and 11 officers, so you can judge about the amount of road space we take up when on the march. I am in command of B Section...

This is a great life, there being just enough variation to it to prevent it becoming monotonous. If we get across the channel I am sure we will find less comforts than at present. Most of the medical work so far is being attended to in this country as the wounded can be brought over within 24 hours or 48 hours and I believe some are in hospitals within a few hours of their being brought back from the firing line.

Yours very truly, Major D.B. Bentley

In early January 1915 while still in England, David wrote a letter to his wife Alice about his holiday time there. The following is an excerpt from that letter:

January 10th, 1915

I found one of your letters waiting for me on my return from holiday.... Capt. Fraser and I went to London and spent New Year's Eve at the Savoy. I sent you their social calendar, which shows a picture of how the last night of the year is spent by society in London. Dinner began about 11 p.m. after which or during which the fun began, all sorts of bon bons (as noisy as firecrackers) being pulled, and grotesque headgear, etc., resulting. All were soon properly decorated, and all were soon friends. A delightful orchestra in every dining room enlivened the place. Then all adjourned to the beautiful ballroom, where the most beautiful women with most exquisite gowns were in crowds. I had only two dances, but such a crowd. On the following day we proceeded to Birmingham, where we stayed with friends of Capt. Fraser... Here we had a most enjoyable, old-fashioned, home-like visit, in a splendid old English home, with such comfortable rooms, cheery fireplaces, hot water heating and too much to eat....

On Sunday night we went to Edinburgh, which we found in such a fog that our pleasure there was not so great. However, we saw through the castle and did a little running around, staying at a splendid hotel.... On our return, we found to our surprise that our camp had been deserted, and new quarters taken in a grand old manor.... Two of our sections (200 men), are now conducting a hospital, with good large rooms, well heated, grates and hot water radiators, clean and comfortable....

On February 11, 1915, Dr. Bentley arrived in France with the Canadian Army Medical Corps. He wrote this letter to Alice upon his arrival.

Sunday, February 14, 1915

S.S. City of Dunkirk

Here we are on the coast of France at St. Navaire, after being on board since Tuesday night. We embarked at Avenmouth, near Bristol and had a rather rough voyage. Fortunately I was one of the few who was not seasick and never missed a meal. It would appear that we are due to remain on board until midnight as the tide is out and several other troop ships are in port ahead of us waiting. This is a cattle boat and accommodation rather limited for officers, but we managed to get on ok. Our men of course had their blankets and had to do as best they could on the floors between decks. Our horses came through in very good condition, but the poor animals have had no chance to lie down. Where we will go of course is not known, but the whole contingent will be here and will likely have some weeks or longer on the lines of communication before seeing the trenches. At present we are anchored in a bay within sight of a town.

Our last month has been a very comfortable one as far as housing is concerned and about which I have written rather fully. We are in hopes that letters written on the boat will reach you earlier than if we waited until ashore. We are rather a long way from where Will is but may go in that direction. Our men are in good condition and will be ready for any emergency. Being pretty well up in the seniority list, I had a good place to sleep on the trip. It was too rough to get about on the ship very much, but I managed to take one look around and found many who were quite done up with sickness. However, all are around this morning and look quite recovered. Many kept quiet and did not appear for meals, but say they were not ill. Our whole unit are on the boat together with some artillery and the headquarters staff of the Highland Brigade.

As there is nothing very important about which to write on a short voyage like this, I will close with love to all at home who will be glad to know that we have not been exposed to submarines and have reached terra firma again.

D.B. Bentley

David younger brother, **William Bentley**, was also a doctor—a dentist. At the age of forty-three, William enlisted on September 23, 1914 – the same day as his brother. Both brothers embarked overseas to England in early October 1914. Serving as a dentist with the Canadian Army Medical Corps, Dr. William Bentley rose to the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel. The paths that the two brothers took as the war progressed were markedly different.

In early February 1915, William, who was also with the No. 2 Canadian Stationary Hospital, wrote a letter to his friend H. Gorman in Sarnia. The following is a portion of that letter:

February 8, 1915 Le Touquet, Boulogne Base, France

Dear Sir,

I wish to tender my personal thanks for the copies of the Observer. It is certainly a source of much satisfaction, I can assure you, to us members of this corps from the home town to receive them.... I am glad to say that the Sarnia quota are all in the very best of health and in excellent spirits. Our hospital is a credit to the Dominion... While it is not as large and commodious as some of the others, nevertheless it enjoys the reputation of being one of the most thoroughly equipped in France. We provide accommodation at the present time for three hundred patients... Since opening we have taken care of a large number of wounded. Many of the cases have proven most interesting from a professional standpoint and the success of numerous operations performed have reflected much credit upon the status of our Medical Officers. We were recently honored by a visit from H.R.H. Prince of Wales... He expressed himself as being most favorably impressed with what he saw. Even the minutest detail was not slighted during his tour of inspection, every ward being visited.

I might also mention the fact that following the futile attacks of the enemy upon the Allies' lines on the anniversary of the Kaiser's birthday, we have had the first prisoners of war interned in our hospital. Subsequently they were transferred via hospital ship to England from Boulogne base, as soon as favorably convalescent to warrant them taking passage across the channel.

Life while on active service is one strenuous demand in the discharge of duties. We are kept constantly on the "go" to use a common expression. Ambulance trains are continually arriving from "rail head," at irregular and intermittent periods, in fact any hour of the day or night, we never can tell, as we get but brief notice in advance of their coming, possibly a half an hour at the extreme, that is all. Therefore it may be seen that we are required to hold ourselves in readiness at all times, in order to be able to take care of all emergencies...

Sincerely yours, W. J. Bentley

Dr. William Bentley served in both England and France with the Canadian Army Medical Corps (CAMC) and the Canadian Army Dental Corps (CADC). In January 1918, he was made a Member of the Most Excellent

Order of the British Empire (Military Division). In June 1919, for his valuable services rendered in connection with the War, he was made an Officer of the Order of the British Empire. He was discharged in July 1920 on general demobilization. In October 1924, Dr. William Bentley married Helen Addah Taylor in Sarnia, and the couple would reside at 193 Queen Street in Sarnia. William Bentley passed away in March 1934, and is buried in Lakeview Cemetery, Sarnia.

Captain John Adda MacDonald of the Army Medical Corps in France sent this letter to his parents on South Brock Street. MacDonald's letter references the Bentley brothers and describes the process of handling the wounded at No. 2 Stationary Hospital, First Canadian Expeditionary Force, Le Touquet, France.

March 28th, 1915

Dear Father and Mother,

I received your letter of February 24 a day or so ago and was more than delighted to get it and know that all are well. We receive our mail quite regularly, a noncommissioned officer being to go to Bontogne daily for that purpose. Our Canadian mail comes in about two weeks, although I have known some mail to come in thirteen days. We have now been in France almost five months. About the first of December, we came here and converted a large hotel into one of the finest Field hospitals in France, and have been busy constantly ever since. In your letter you ask how we handle the wounded etc. Well, I will endeavour to give you a brief outline of the way we do it.

When a train load of wounded arrive, the ambulance drivers are immediately warned for duty, also the squad for duty at the train and when ready leave for the station, some distance away. Meanwhile the hospital is got in readiness for the reception of the wounded. Hot cocoa and oxo are prepared in the kitchen and by the time the first ambulance arrives the sisters have the wards prepared. The patients are transferred from the ambulance to the reception room where the registrar gets all particulars concerning the patient, such as name, rank, age, regiment, length of service, religion etc. They are then removed to the wards; by the way, we have ten wards, each bearing the name of a Canadian province. Ontario being the officer's ward.

On arriving in the ward, the orderly removes all the patients clothing which is often torn and covered with mud and blood, and gives him a bath, then the patient receives medical attention. Often the wounded present a pitiful appearance, men with frightful wounds, covered with mud, but full of pluck and very seldom, even a murmur comes from them although they are suffering terrible pain in many cases. We have had very few deaths among the patients, thanks to the constant attention and good nursing care of the sisters, and the skillful surgery and treatment by the physicians. Often bullets and splinters are located by means of the x-ray. When I see a man all smashed up I wonder that he is alive at all, so bad are some of his wounds.

***Capt. Bentley** is kept busy looking after "Tommy's" teeth, and has a beautiful dental office fitted up with field dental instruments. **Staff Sergeant C. Luscombe, Sergt. Jack Smuck and Corp. S. Battley** are all well and kept busy. I may add that the rumor of **Jack Ward's** death was unfounded and Jack is very much alive. Corporal Battley is now in the wards and is acquiring a great deal of valuable information in surgery.*

*I heard indirectly from **Maj. D.B. Bentley** a short time ago and the major was quite well. I was in Bologne a short time ago and saw a London man, Sergt. Murray, who is attached to the post office department. Last night a large bundle of Observers arrived for me per kindness of Mrd. McGibbon who sends a bundle about every two weeks. I can assure you they looked good to me; after reading them I pass them on to the rest of the boys.*

Hoping to hear from you soon, believe me.

Yours lovingly, J.A. MACDONALD

NOTE: Other soldiers of No. 2 Stationary Hospital were referenced by Captain MacDonald:

Capt. Bentley – (later Lieutenant Colonel) is William Joseph Bentley, a younger brother of David's, and a dental surgeon with the Canadian Army Dental Corps.

Sergeant Major John Crawford Luscombe – born in Sarnia (son of James Luscombe) and survived the war.

Lance Sergeant John (Jack) Wesley Smuck – born in Point Edward (son of Emily Smuck) and survived the war (see page 65); however, his brother, David Smuck, did not (his story is included in this Project on page 373).

Corporal Sinclair Battley – service #34267, survived the war (see page 66 and 86).

Lance Corporal Jack Ward – born in Courtright, the son of Joseph E. Ward of Sarnia, and survived the war.

Note: Another letter written by Captain John Adda MacDonald is on page 71.

In April 1915, **Private John Carolan**, of Sarnia, wrote a letter home describing how he owed his life to Dr. David Bentley. Pte. Carolan was hit on April 23 at Ypres. He was with his unit of the 1st Battalion and rushing to fill a breach in British defence lines when he declared he felt a burning pain in his head. The *Observer* covered the story in October of 1915. The following is a portion of that story:

Shot through the head during the hottest part of the engagement of Canadian troops at Ypres, Pte. John Carolan of Sarnia, declares he owes his life to Dr. Bentley. When Carolan was carried to the rear, among hundreds of others who had fallen under the grueling fire from the enemy's guns, practically unconscious from the loss of blood and exposure on the battlefield, about the first face he recognized was that of Dr. Bentley. "Why that's one of my boys" Carolan says he remembers coming from the doctor's lips through the haze. Dr. Bentley at once gave Carolan the immediate attention that was needed if his life was to be saved. The result of that attention is that Carolan is now well on to the road to recovery. The wounds in his skull, where the bullet entered and plowed its way out, are practically healed, and give him little trouble he says, although at times there is a burning and almost unbearable pain in his head. His left arm is partly paralyzed, but this too, doctors have declared, will be better in time.

John Carolan was born in Ireland and resided for many years in Africa and the East. After being wounded, John was honourably discharged and returned to Canada. More information on John Carolan is on page 111.



Major Dr. David Benjamin Bentley



Major Dr. David Bentley with two of his sons Albert (L) and David (R)

In late April 1915, while still in France, David wrote another letter home to his wife Alice. The following is a portion of that letter:

April 30th, 1915

My Dear Alice,

You have no doubt read of this terrific battle in which our good Canadian troops played such an important part. It is impossible for me to describe just what our brave men did. I had been waiting for several days for leave... when this sudden battle began. I am glad indeed that I had not got away for our experience was one which we may never again witness. I was at the main dressing station and during the four days there passed through our hands an average of 600 wounded daily. I worked through it all and was able to give attention to a great number. I had two tables going all the time and had one patient being prepared while attending to another. This went on for hours and hours without let up. Two or three other officers were doing similar work, so you can imagine how fast they were cared for. Some of our officers and all of our bearers were at advanced dressing stations and in the trenches caring for and removing the wounded back. We had three of our men killed, 15 men wounded but no officers killed or wounded. Considering the severe character of the fighting it is really miraculous that our casualties were not greater. Our men worked unceasingly and bravely through it all and gave us every reason to be proud of them. James Mair and Sidney Smith, both from Sarnia, are among the wounded, and have been sent down to the base – neither are so far as I can learn, serious. As you will have read the Germans poured poisonous gases into the trenches, which rendered fighting very difficult, but it did not prevent our men from saving the situation and earning them the praise and gratitude of the British Empire.

At present we are some miles back in the country, giving our men a much needed rest for a few days. We are living in a field and bivouacking. I have a large tarpaulin for a tent, which is simply a pole with a water proof covering over it.... Since coming here we have been sleeping, cleaning up and taking our ease and I can assure you

all very much needed the change after five days and nights of constant strain. When not working we could not rest for we were shelled out of every place we were in and some of the buildings which we occupied as dressing stations are now in ruins. It is feared that our last mail was burned, as our post office was set on fire by an incendiary shell and no trace so far has been found of it. Hoping to soon write you from England.

Yours lovingly, D.B. Bentley

During his three months in France, Dr. David Bentley served on the front lines between Armentieres and Ypres and then through the Second Battle of Ypres, Belgium where he was slightly gassed. By the early part of May 1915, he had returned to England, where he was appointed to the command of the Canadian Convalescent Hospital, Monk's Horton Hospital, in Kent. He wrote a letter to his wife Alice to inform her of the news. In part, it reads as follows:

London, May 4, 1915

My Dear Alice,

Just a few lines today to let you know that I am back in England and have orders to proceed to Shorncliffe tomorrow afternoon to take command of and to complete the organization of the Canadian Convalescent Camp. I received a very warm reception this morning when I presented myself to the General, due there is no doubt, to the fact that he has received none but good reports of the efficient work of the Canadian Field Ambulances in the recent engagements in Belgium. I have gone over all the correspondence having a bearing on the work of organization and find that although a lot has been done there still remains much to be done to complete the organization. I hope to be able to call to my assistance several of my old officers and N.C.O.'s, particularly those who have already done good service under trying conditions and have earned a change. I have another reason to hope for this as it will make way for some of the officers of the later contingents to get nearer to the firing line where they will be better able to redeem the good name of their native land as some are reported to have said they intend doing.

This afternoon I took a trip out a few miles to see another convalescent home for Canadian officers, which has just been opened out at Bromley Park Hotel, Kent.... The city is still kept pretty dark at night, but the general gaiety indoors keeps up pretty well. Most of the men in khaki that one sees however have a decided limp or are carrying an arm in a sling. I somehow felt as if I should find a quiet corner and keep in the shade as I have no sign of having gone through the horrors of war. I can tell a remarkably thrilling story however, if necessary, but so far I have not been challenged to say why I am here.

With love to yourself and the children.

Yours lovingly, D.B. Bentley

In June 1915, Dr. Bentley wrote a letter home to his friend Mr. Gorman in Sarnia, describing the Canadian Convalescent Hospital, in Kent. The hospital's purpose was to accept and to care for all convalescent Canadians from the many different hospitals in France and England. The following is a portion of that letter:

Monks Horton, Kent, England, near Hythe, June 20th, 1915

My Dear Mr. Gorman,

... we are now serving our mother land and camping on the grounds where the Royal Canadian regiment were camped 57 years ago. The old Cinque Ports are still interesting places and the old forts and canals still remain, though of no military value today.... The old Roman road from Hythe to Canterbury runs past this estate and I often think how nice it would be if we could exchange some of these old roads for the paved street in Sarnia which has to be taken up every winter and laid again in the spring...

The hospital is one which will most probably develop to immense proportions as it is intended as a clearing house for all Canadian sick and wounded who are ready to leave the ordinary hospitals in all parts of the British Isles, but are not as yet fit for duty. Here they will receive further treatment, will be fed, comfortably housed or tented, given such work or recreation as each individual case demands until such time as it is decided that they are again fit for duty or should be otherwise disposed of. We are being provided with indoor and outdoor games and the estate is one which lends itself admirably to all sorts of outdoor enjoyment. There are beautiful hedges, wooded areas, fine gardens and everything which goes to make one enjoy living.... We hope to have a number of motor vehicles in time with which to entertain our boys who so well deserve all the comfort which can be given them. Even now we seldom go on a business trip without taking one or more of them along for a motor ride...

Already we have had splendid results from this country life to poor chaps who came to us in very nervous conditions due to the effect of wounds and the shock of continued exposure to shell fire, and we hope to do great benefit to many more who might otherwise do badly....

Yours very truly, D.B. Bentley

In August 1915, Alice and her three step-sons Othel, Albert and David Jr., arrived in England from Sarnia.

While there, on August 26, 1915, David Jr. at the age of fifteen years and seven months, enlisted in the Canadian Army Medical Corps. The medical doctor who examined him and pronounced him fit for service was his father, Major Dr. David Benjamin Bentley.

Private David Bentley Jr. served most of the war in England with the Canadian Army Medical Corps Base Depot Medical Stores. He did serve briefly in France at the end of the war with the Canadian Army Dental Corps at 4th Canadian Clearing Casualty Clearing Station. Private Bentley was discharged on demobilization in May 1919 and returned to Sarnia to 195 Wellington Street.

In September 1915, Dr. David Bentley wrote the following letter to his friends Mr. and Mrs. Hugh Chittick in Sarnia:

Malvern House, East Park Terrace, Southampton, August 18, 1915.

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Chittick,

I wish to thank you for your thoughtful remembrances. Mrs. B. and the youngsters had a very nice voyage and got by without meeting any "tin fishes". I met them at Liverpool and we came direct to this place. This town is quite a pretty place in which to live and our windows look out on one of its many pretty parks. It is only a short run by boat from here to the Isle of Wight. There are also some large Forest Parks not far from here, numerous military camps, remount depots with horses and mules by the thousand. There is a good "tram car" service and train service to all the places of interest near by.

We get a lot of rainfall here, and although the heat is not so great as at home the humidity of the atmosphere makes one feel rather lazy. David is not particularly pleased by the remarks which he hears passed about his bloomers. All the boys here, or nearly all, wear tight fitting long trousers. So he is quite an attraction. As the only Canadians in this town are my own small staff, we are quite conspicuous. English people however, have an unbounded respect for Canadians, as they all know the good work done by the mistrusted and unjustly criticized "First Canadian Contingent"

With love, yours very truly, D.B. Bentley

The previous month, Major David Bentley had been appointed to command the Canadian Medical Stores, Base Depot, in Southampton, England. He wrote a letter home to his friends A.B. Johnston and Alex J. Kelly in Sarnia. The following is an excerpt from that letter:

August 18, 1915

My Dear Friends,

Just a few lines to let you both know where I am and what I have been doing. The fortunes of war have now placed me as O.C. of the Canadian Medical Stores, Base Depot, Southampton, with a small unit made up of a quartermaster, one staff sergeant, two corporals and five men. Our work here is to assemble all technical, medical and ordnance equipment for Canadian hospitals going overseas....

My office is in the docks and here we see troops passing through daily, the train being run into the docks and the troops at once placed on board the numerous transports in waiting. We don't ask questions or give information as to how many there are or as to their destination, but we know and see the best troops obtainable in the world passing on their way to do battle with our enemies in all parts of the war zone. Were it not for the presence of so many khaki uniforms one would scarcely know there was a war on. In this port too, we see numerous hospital trains daily coming to meet the hospital ships, take on their load of wounded and depart for the numerous hospitals in all parts of the British Isles.... The organization of the medical service from the firing line back to the hospitals in England is well high perfect, and I have had an opportunity of observing it from both extremes....

I hope some day to have an opportunity of giving you an account of some of our experiences during the last few days of April in Ypres, Brielen, Vlanenturghe and Poperinghe. It was one of the grandest and most terrific exhibitions of fireworks which I ever witnessed for with every explosion there was something happening either overhead, or around us. To attempt to write about it is rather a huge task. Give my regards to all the old boys.

Yours very truly, D.B. Bentley

Major Bentley had never been well since being in France, but was always able to look after his duties. In mid-December 1916, he consulted a specialist who sent him to the Royal Victoria Military Hospital at Netley. He remained for some weeks but did not improve much. Diagnosed with "chronic interstitial Nephritis with high blood pressure", his treatment included complete rest in bed, light diet and small doses of iodides. After spending a few days with his family, he was sent to a Canadian Hospital at Ramsgate in mid-February 1917, where he was listed as "dangerously ill". For a few weeks his condition seemed to have improved; however, by the first of April he developed pneumonia that his weakened body could not shake. On April 3, he was listed as "dangerously ill". The

next day his condition was assessed as “critically ill and sinking rapidly”.



Major Dr. David Benjamin Bentley

During his last weeks in Ramsgate, David longed for his beloved home on Wellington Street. On April 5, 1917, Major David Benjamin Bentley passed away at Granville Hospital, Ramsgate, Kent, England. At his bedside when he passed were his wife Alice, their daughter Margaret (age ten), his son David Jr. (age seventeen) and his brother, William. The cause of death was officially recorded as, *Nephritis Chr. And Lobar Pneumonia, Left*.

Major Bentley was posthumously awarded the following medals: The British War Medal, the Silver Memorial Cross and the 1914-1915 Star. The Lambton County Archives is currently in possession of these medals. Alice presented additional personal items to the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 62, Sarnia. These items—the doctor’s officer’s riding crop and spurs—are preserved and on display at the Legion.

Fifty-two-year-old Doctor David Benjamin Bentley is buried at Ramsgate and St. Lawrence Cemetery, Kent, United Kingdom. Grave LA.657. He was laid there with full military honours – a large firing party of perhaps three hundred from the Queen’s Regiment fired a salute and the Queen’s Buglers sounded the “Last Post”.

On his headstone are inscribed the words, AT THE GOING DOWN OF THE SUN AND IN THE MORNING WE SHALL REMEMBER THEM. At Lakeview Cemetery in Sarnia, a headstone commemorates David and Alice Bentley. On their headstone are inscribed these words: IN MEMORY OF MAJOR DAVID B. BENTLEY M.D. 1864 – 1917 WHO DIED AND IS BURIED IN RAMSGATE, KENT ENGLAND. HIS WIFE ALICE BENTLEY 1868 – 1947. The name of Sarnia’s oldest fallen soldier in the Great War is inscribed on Sarnia’s cenotaph.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 2G, 6O, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10Z, 2s

BENWARE, Neil (#6886)

In a letter he wrote home a month before he was killed in 1916, Private Neil Benware, 27, thought the war would be over soon, that the Allies would *finish the job, which will be this summer*. Little did Neil or anyone know that the fighting, waged in brutal, nightmarish conditions, would continue for another thirty months.

He was born in Sombra, Ontario, on June 10, 1888, the son of Tuffield and Margaret (nee Quinn, born February 7, 1858 in Springfield, Ontario) Benware, of Courtright, Ontario. Tuffied Benware, born August 25, 1860 in Mooretown, Ontario, worked as a labourer. Fortunately, he found work for Margaret and he had six sons to feed and clothe: Gabriel (born February 1887); Neil; Patrick (born March 25, 1893); Grant Louis (born April 17, 1894); Charles (born March 22, 1896); and Albert (born June 1898). The Great War changed the fortune of many families and the Benwares were no exception. Neil and two of his brothers joined the war effort with completely different results.

After joining the 149th Battalion, CEF on February 23, 1916 in Courtright with the rank of Private, **Patrick Benware** was discharged one year later on February 8, 1917 in London, Ontario. Though his conduct, habits and character were deemed “Good”, he was recommended for discharge as he was deemed medically unfit because of issues with varicose veins in his legs.

Grant Benware enlisted on January 26, 1916 in Courtright and, like Patrick, became a Private with the 149th Battalion, CEF. Nine months later, on October 11, 1916, he was discharged at Camp Borden because he was declared as medically unfit due to vision problems. The front line losses that Canada suffered were staggering and to replace those killed, the government introduced and enforced conscription. Thus it was that a year after he was discharged for poor vision that Grant was drafted under the Military Service Act of 1917, Class One. He underwent his medical examination in Sarnia on November 2, 1917 and was called to service on January 9, 1918 where he reported to the 1st Depot Battalion, Western Ontario Regiment in London, Ontario. His poor vision, however, was still an issue. Four months after being drafted, on May 28, 1918, he was discharged from the Canadian Garrison Regiment (CGR) in London, Ontario. Though his conduct and character were deemed “Very Good”, he was recommended for discharge. The reason was that Grant was declared medically unfit due to his defective vision.

Neil Benware’s story in WWI, unfortunately, would be altogether different from his brothers’ medical discharges in Canada. Before joining the service, he was employed as a sailor and had some prior military experience with the 27th Regiment, St. Clair Borderers. When war broke out, Neil, now 26, enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force on September 22, 1914 in Valcartier Camp, Quebec. He stood five feet nine inches tall, had brown eyes and brown hair, was single, and was residing in Point Edward at the time. He listed his next-of-kin as his brother, Gabriel of Courtright, later Point Edward, Ontario. Neil became a member of the Canadian Infantry, Western Ontario Regiment, 1st Battalion. He embarked overseas for the United Kingdom on October 3, 1914 and four months later, on February 11, 1915, arrived in France with the 1st Battalion, part of the 1st Brigade of the 1st Canadian Division.

In early April 1915, the 1st Division of Canadians arrived at the Ypres salient battlefield in Belgium, an area known as Flanders. It was here that the Canadians engaged in their first battle of the war, the Second Battle of Ypres, their baptism by fire. It was here that the Germans unleashed the first lethal chlorine gas attack in the history of warfare. In the first 48 hours at Ypres (April 22-24), there were more than 6,000 Canadian casualties. Fighting continued in the Ypres salient on and off until May 25, 1915 including battles at St. Julien, Festubert, and Givenchy. In just over one month at Ypres, one third of the Canadian force, over 8,600 soldiers were killed, wounded or captured. Neil Benware survived this first major engagement in Belgium.

More than one year after arriving in France, in March 1916, Neil wrote the following letter from France to his former employer in Sarnia:

Dear Mr. Grace

I received your welcome letter last night and was very glad to hear that everything, and all the boys are getting on good. I have seen a few boys here that I used to sail with. I am in the trench mortars and we can soon knock a trench down. I got your cigarettes last week. They were badly damaged, but I had a few good old smokes. I think we boys are nearly due to go back (to the front). If the young men in Canada would only join up we would have been out by this time, but if they don’t we will have to finish the job, which will be this summer.... I have something good to tell you. I was called over to our company today and was congratulated by four of our old men. Wondered what was coming, when I was told I am recommended for a D.C. medal. So that isn’t so bad for the old 27th St. Clair Borderers. It is getting late so I must close. Be sure and remind me to all the boys.

Pte. Neil Benware 58th Trench Mortar Battery, 1st Canadian Division, France

On May 23, 1916, two months after writing the above letter, Private Neil Benware died while fighting in Belgium. On that day, he was hit in the right shoulder and back with pieces of shrapnel and died a few hours afterward a result of the wounds. His Circumstances of Death Register records him as; *Date of Casualty: 23-5-16. “Died of Wounds” at No. 10 Casualty Clearing Station. Lijssenthoek Military Cemetery. Commune – Poperinghe.* He was posthumously awarded the following: the 1914/15 Star; the British War Medal (1914-18); and the Victory Medal (1914-18).

Sometime after Neil’s death, Private **Leonard F. Allingham** of Sarnia (see page 115) wrote a letter to his mother at 402 Wellington Street, Sarnia. A portion of his letter reads, *Neal Benware was killed a few days ago. He was hit by a couple of pieces of shrapnel and died a few hours afterward. I looked up his grave. He is buried near us in Lyssenthock military cemetery, Grave plot No. 7-A-17, so you can inform his mother.*

Twenty-seven-year-old Neil Benware is buried in Lijssenthoek Military Cemetery, Belgium, Grave VII.A.17. On his headstone are inscribed the words, IN LOVING MEMORY HE GAVE HIS LIFE FOR HIS COUNTRY MAY HIS SOUL REST IN PEACE. On the Sarnia cenotaph, his name is inscribed as N. Benward. Neil Benware’s

name is also inscribed on the plaque on the cenotaph in Veterans Memorial Park in the village of Point Edward.

It was undoubtedly a difficult time for the Benware family. Fifteen months prior to Neil's death, on February 15, 1915, Tuffield and Margaret lost their son, Gabriel, when he accidentally drowned at age twenty-eight. Tragedy followed Neil's death when a third son, Charles, died at thirty-one when he was struck by a train on October 8, 1927. Gabriel and Charles, along with parents Margaret (passed October 1929) and Tuffield (passed June 1933) are all buried in Our Lady of Mercy Roman Catholic Cemetery in Sarnia.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 2G, 6O, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10Z

BISSETT, Cameron Robertson (#3131545)

Cameron Robertson* Bissett, 21, was drafted to fight in The Great War and arrived in France in time to fight in The Hundred Days Campaign. Three months later, as he was "digging in" with the rest of his company, an enemy shell burst close to him, killing him instantly. Cameron has no known grave.

He was born in Brooke Township, Ontario on October 30, 1896, the only son of Cameron R. Sr. (born September 1863) and Margaret (nee Smith, born February 1866) Bissett. Cameron R. Bissett Sr. and Margaret Smith were both born in Scotland, but at some point they immigrated to Canada with their families or by themselves. On May 18, 1892 they were married at Margaret's residence in Plympton Township. Cameron Bissett Sr. farmed in Brooke Township to support Margaret and their children: Margaret Jane (Maggie, born August 21, 1892); Elizabeth (born November 13, 1893) and Cameron Jr. The Bissett family were members of St. Andrew's congregation, Inwood. In 1901, four year-old Cameron Bissett was residing in Brooke Township with his thirty-one-year-old uncle George Bissett, the son of James and Jane Bissett, who had emigrated from Scotland in 1889.

Years later, Cameron's two sisters would both marry. Elizabeth Bissett became Mrs. Ed Ironsides and resided in North Brooke Township. Sister Margaret Jane Bissett married George Reid on December 13, 1911 in Petrolia. Margaret Jane and George Reid resided at 136 Dundas Street, Sarnia. Despite being in her early twenties, Margaret Jane (nee Bissett) Reid became a war widow when her husband, George Reid, was killed in a training accident in London, Ontario. George Reid's story is included in this Project on page 357.



Private Cameron Robert Bissett

In Europe, with the Canadian troops thinning at an alarming rate and no end to the war in sight, the government instituted the Military Service Act in 1917. In 1917, Cameron, 21, was drafted under the Military Service Act of 1917, Class One. After undergoing his medical examination in Sarnia on October 9, 1917, he was called to service on January 9, 1918. Cameron immediately reported to the 1st Depot Battalion, Western Ontario Regiment in London, Ontario. He stood five feet eleven inches tall, had hazel eyes and light hair, was single, and was residing on Dundas Street in Sarnia with his family at the time. He recorded his trade or calling as a farmer and his next-of-kin as his mother Margaret Bissett of 136 Dundas Street. Bissett became a member of the Canadian Infantry, Western Ontario Regiment, embarking overseas from Halifax for the United Kingdom aboard the *S.S. Grampian* on February 5, 1918. When he arrived eleven days later, Cameron became a member of the 4th Canadian Reserve

Battalion, stationed at Bramshott. After over four months of training in the U.K., he arrived in France on June 2, 1918, as a member of the 47th Battalion, British Columbia Regiment.

Private Bissett ended up fighting in what became known as The Hundred Days Campaign. The **Hundred Days Campaign** (August 8 – November 11, 1918 in France and Belgium) was the “beginning of the end” of the Great War. Canadians were called on again and again over the three-month period to lead the offensives against the toughest German defences. The series of victories repeatedly drove the Germans back, culminating in Germany’s unconditional surrender on November 11, but it came at a cost of almost 46,000 Canadians killed, wounded and missing.

The first offensive in the Campaign was the Battle of Amiens in France (August 8-14, 1918), a truly all-arms battle, one that all four Canadian divisions would be involved in. Over the course of one week, in a battle that British Field Marshal Douglas Haig called “*the finest operation of the war*”, the Canadians would advance nearly 14 km.

The second offensive in Canada’s Hundred Days Campaign was the **Battle of Arras and Breaking the DQ Line** in France (August 26-September 3, 1918), where Canadians were part of a spearhead force tasked with crashing one of the most heavily fortified positions, the Hindenburg Line – a series of strong defensive trenches and fortified villages. General Sir Julian Byng called the Canadian victory at the 2nd Battle of Arras and breaking of the DQ Line “*the turning point of the campaign*”, but it came at a cost of 11,400 Canadian casualties.

On September 3, 1918, three months after arriving in France and less than eight months after being conscripted to service, Private Cameron Bissett was killed by enemy shellfire while fighting in the 2nd Battle of Arras/DQ Line. Cameron Bissett’s Circumstances of Death register records him as; *Date of Casualty: 3-9-18. “Killed in Action”. This soldier was instantly killed by an enemy shell bursting close to him as he was ‘digging in’ with the rest of his company just after an advance. Location of Unit at time of Casualty: Near Saudemont. Cemetery: Provisional & Missing Memorial. Reported location of Grave: Sht. 5lb.P.24.c.90.10.*

In mid-September 1918, Margaret Bissett would receive a telegram informing her that her only son, Cameron, had been killed in action on September 3rd, 1918. Twenty-one-year-old Cameron Bissett has no known grave. He is memorialized on the Vimy Memorial, Pas de Calais, France.

*[Note: Ontario Birth Records record Cameron’s middle name as Robertson, but his Military Records record it as Robert].

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 2G, 6O, 7C, 8A, 8X, 8Y, 10Z

BOLTON, Mason Walter (#331605)

Four months after completing his Military Will and eight weeks after arriving in France, Gunner Mason Walter Bolton was fatally wounded in action in Belgium. He was only twenty-one.

He was born in Adelaide, Lambton County, Ontario, on June 18, 1895, the youngest son of Charles J. and Sarah (nee Scott) Bolton. Charles J. Bolton (born January 1863) and Sarah Scott (born December 1865) were married on October 20, 1886 in Warwick Township. Mason had an older brother, Frederick George, born in Strathroy on September 19, 1891. Charles initially supported his wife and two sons by farming. In 1901, the Bolton family was residing in Middlesex West District, but a decade later, they were residing at 122 South Forsyth Street in Sarnia. Some time after 1911, the family moved out west, residing at R.R. #1, Chilliwack, British Columbia.

Both Bolton sons served in the Great War. **Frederick Bolton**, 23, enlisted on May 1, 1915 in Montreal, becoming a member of the 27th Battery, 7th Brigade, Canadian Field Artillery (CFA), CEF. He was employed as a Royal Bank clerk at the time, recording his next-of-kin as his father Charles J. Bolton in Chilliwack, B.C. Gunner Frederick Bolton arrived in Plymouth, England on August 18, 1915. His rise in the ranks was rapid.

Five months later, Frederick embarked for France, arriving in Havre on January 18, 1916. In mid-November of 1916, he was appointed in the field as Acting Bombardier of the 7th Brigade. In late August 1917, he was promoted to Bombardier of the 4th Brigade, Canadian Field Artillery.

His good fortune ran out two months later on October 30, 1917 when he was killed in action in Belgium. Bombardier Frederick Bolton’s Circumstances of Death Register records him as; *Date of Casualty: 30-10-17. “Killed in action” at Zonnebeke. Brandhoek New Military Cemetery. 1 ¼ miles West of Vlamertinghe, Belgium.* Frederick George Bolton, 26, is buried in Brandhoek New Military Cemetery No. 3, Belgium, Grave I.M.16.

Frederick’s younger brother, Mason, was living on Welwyn Street in Vancouver, B.C. and working as a

mercantile reporter when he enlisted. **Mason Bolton**, 20, enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force in Vancouver on February 22, 1916 (nine months after his older brother Frederick had enlisted). A strapping young man, he stood six feet tall, had blue eyes and brown hair, and was single at the time. He recorded his next-of-kin as his mother Mrs. C. Bolton of Chilliwack, B.C. He was originally a member of the 68th Overseas Depot Field Battery but by early June 1916, he was stationed at Camp Petawawa and was then transferred to the 3rd Section, 4th Canadian Division Ammunition Column (DAC), Canadian Field Artillery (CFA).



Gunner Mason Walter Bolton

Private Mason Bolton embarked overseas from Halifax for the United Kingdom on September 12, 1916 aboard the *S.S. Northland*. Disembarking in Liverpool, England ten days later, he became a member of the 15th Brigade, Canadian Field Artillery, stationed at Camp Witley. Four months later, on January 25, 1917, Mason completed his Military Will on the required page of his Pay Book. He wrote, "In the event of my death I give the whole of my property and effects to my Mother Mrs. Chas. J. Bolton R.R. #1, Chilliwack, B.C. Canada". He signed the Will with Mason W. Bolton, Driver, 3rd Sec. 4th DAC.

On March 13, 1917, Mason Bolton was posted to the 82nd Howitzer Battery. Five days later, he arrived in France as a member of the 2nd Brigade, Canadian Field Artillery, with the rank of Gunner. Unfortunately, he was dead eight weeks later.

On May 11, 1917, Private Mason Bolton was killed as a result of multiple shot or shell wounds in his head, body and legs. He was taken from the battlefield but died as a result of his wounds at No. 4 Canadian Field Ambulance. His Circumstances of Death Register records him as; *Date of Casualty: 11-5-17. "Died of Wounds" at No. 4 Canadian Field Ambulance. Aux Rietz Military Cemetery. South West of Neuville St. Vaast, 3 ¾ miles North of Arras, France.* Twenty-one-year-old Mason Walter Bolton is buried in La Targette British Cemetery, Pas de Calais, France, Grave II.A.14. Five months after Mason lost his life in France, his older brother Frederick, age 26, was killed in action in Belgium.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 2G, 6O, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10Z

BREARLEY, Norman Osborne (#602786)

Norman Brearley lied about his age to get into the army. After beating the odds and surviving the Somme and Vimy Ridge, Private Brearley, 17, was killed by enemy shellfire.

He was born in London, Ontario, on June 13, 1899, the youngest son of Edward and Carlina (nee Broad) Brearley. Edward Brearley (born March 1865 in Oxford County) and Carlina Broad (born October 1865 in Coburg, Ontario) were married on March 11, 1890 in Norwich, Ontario. Edward and Carlina moved from 7 Pearl Street, London; to 454 Drew Street, Woodstock; 585 George Street, Oxford; and then to 183 Terrace Hill Street, Brantford. Perhaps the many moves were because of Edward's job, originally a farmer, then a carpenter, and then a salesman at a lumberyard. The family grew to include three sons--Earl Watson (born May 1, 1891), Vernon Adolphus (born September 12, 1894) and Norman. Norman would never know Vernon who passed away in London on March 13, 1898 at the age of three.

When he was sixteen, Norman enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force in Woodstock on

July 24, 1915, and became a member of the 34th Battalion. A discrepancy existed with his age. His official Ontario birth records indicate he was born June 13, 1899. On his Attestation papers, Norman recorded his birth year as 1897, making himself two years older than he actually was.

He stood five feet nine inches tall, had blue eyes and blonde hair, was single, and was residing at home with his parents in Woodstock at the time. He recorded his trade or calling as student, and his next-of-kin as his father Edward Brearley of 454 Drew Street, Woodstock, Ontario.

On October 23, 1915, Norman Brearley embarked overseas for the United Kingdom aboard the *S.S. California*. When he arrived in England on November 1, 1915, he was stationed at Camp Bramshott where he was transferred to the 12th Battalion. Like many recruits, he spent time at different camps and with different battalions. In February 1916, he continued his training with the 12th Battalion at Shorncliffe. In late April 1916, he trained for two months as a member of the 1st Canadian Tank Battalion (CTB), Machine Gun Company, before returning to the 12th Battalion. On July 5, 1916, Private Norman Brearley arrived in France as a member of the Canadian Infantry, 13th Battalion, Quebec Regiment.



Private Norman Brearley

The 13th Battalion was part of the 3rd Brigade of the 1st Canadian Division. As part of the 1st Canadian Division, Brearley fought with the battalion in two of Canada's major engagements in France. The Battle of the Somme (July 1-November 18, 1916) was one of the bloodiest and most futile battles in history. The Somme battle lasted for more than four brutal months and saw the Allies advance around 10 kilometers. Of the 85,000 Canadian Corps, there were more than 24,000 Canadian casualties. The Battle of Vimy Ridge (April 9-12, 1917) was the first time (and last time in the war) that all four divisions of the Canadian Corps, with soldiers from every region in the country, would surge forward simultaneously. The four-day victory at Vimy Ridge was a seminal battle, a turning point in the war for the Canadian Corps, and significant victory for Canada, later referred to as "the birth of a nation". Of the 97,000 Canadians who fought at Vimy Ridge, approximately 7,004 were wounded and 3,598 were killed in four days of battle.

The 13th Battalion remained in the area of **Vimy Ridge** following its epic capture April 9-12. They supplied parties to help clean up the battlefield and to make roads which enabled the artillery to bring up their guns. The salvage work continued in various parts of the battlefield for some days, and on April 17th, the 13th Battalion took up positions in Farbus Wood, where the men got into some of the old German dugouts. They continued to clean up the area and to repair the shattered dugouts and shelters. As they did so, enemy shellfire continually landed in their vicinity in Farbus Wood.

It was risky work and German shells claimed some victims. On the night of April 20, 1917, one casualty was Private Norman Brearley. After improbably surviving the Somme and Vimy Ridge, he was killed when his company had been relieved of its duty at Farbus Wood and was moving back to its shelter. Norman had stopped to take a rest in a shell hole and was killed by enemy shellfire. On that day, Norman was initially reported "missing" and later recorded as "previously reported missing, now killed in action." He lost his life two months before his eighteenth birthday.

His Circumstances of Death Register records him as; *Date of Casualty: 20-4-17. "Previously reported*

Missing, now reported Killed in Action.” On the night of April 20th 1917, when his company had been relieved from FARBUS WOOD and were moving back to Nine Elms, this soldier fell out at the top of Farbus Hill to rest. He was No. 1 of his Lewis gun section and carried the gun. He was afterwards found dead, having been hit by a shell which landed in the shell hole in which he was resting. Cemetery: Provisional & Missing Memorial.

Seventeen year-old Norman Brearley has no known grave. He is memorialized on the Vimy Memorial, Pas de Calais, France. On the Sarnia cenotaph, his name is inscribed as N. Brearly.
SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 2G, 6O, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10Z

BROWN, Nelson William (#273002)

At age 20, popular Sarnian Nelson Brown enlisted in the Royal Air Force but he never got to serve. Days after enlisting, he contracted the deadly Spanish influenza and died in Toronto three weeks before the Great War ended.

He was born on June 6, 1898, the son of William Alexander and Martha Arilla (nee Teeter) Brown. William Brown (born September 24, 1861) and Martha Arilla Teeter (born January 1868 in Michigan) were married on February 3, 1886 in Sarnia Township. The union of William and Martha produced a sprawling family of nine children: daughters Lena May (born December 8, 1887); Myrtle Lillian (born November 9, 1892); Orral Evaline (born December 1, 1900); and Elmira Catherine (born November 14, 1904); and sons David Mitchell (born January 1, 1889); Ernest Everett (born November 19, 1894); Nelson; John Henry (born September 1899); and Roy Alexander (born August 8, 1906). The Brown family lived at 462 Maxwell Street and later 462 Christina Street, Sarnia. The family had its share of heartache when children Lena and David passed away before 1901.

William Brown worked a series of jobs to support his family. He was employed as a fisherman for a time, then a farmer, and later became a Sarnia merchant, operating a family coal, wood and ice enterprise at 226 Front Street. Nelson attended Sarnia schools and was a member of the Free Methodist Church on Russell Street.

In early October 1918, twenty year-old Nelson Brown left Sarnia and enlisted in the Royal Air Force in Toronto. Tragically, just days later, Air Cadet Nelson Brown contracted the deadly Spanish influenza. He succumbed to the disease in Toronto on October 22, 1918. His Veterans Death Card records him as: *Cadet Recruits Depot RAF. Casualty: 22 Oct. 1918. Base Hospital Toronto. Influenza.* Of note: Ontario Death Records record his death as occurring on October 23, 1918 (after four days in hospital), and the cause of death as pneumonia and broncho pneumonia.

Nelson's body was returned to Sarnia where two days later, the funeral service and internment at Lakeview Cemetery took place. The *Canadian (Sarnia) Observer* wrote this of him: *Young Brown was well and favourably known and popular among his associates.* Following is a portion of the article from the October 31, 1918 *Sarnia Observer*:

The funeral of the late Cadet Nelson William Brown was attended by a large number of friends yesterday. Services were conducted at the residence of his parents Mr. and Mrs. W.A. Brown, 462 Christina street, conducted by the Rev. Mr. Allan, interment being held to Lakeview cemetery. The pallbearers were Jack Barrie, Thomas McGraw, Lyle Smith, Stuart Hitchcock, Wesley Allen, Jas. McGraw. About ten days ago the deceased went to Toronto and enlisted in the Royal Air Force. He contracted Spanish Influenza and passed away after only a few days illness at the age of 20 years, 4 months and 16 days. Young Brown was popular and well liked by all who had the pleasure of his acquaintance. Surviving are his parents, three sisters, Misses Myrtle, Oral and Almira, and three brothers, Ernest, John and Roy, who will have the sympathy of our citizens.

World War I ended just three weeks after Nelson's death. Three years later in November 1921, by the direction of the local branch of the Great War Veterans Association, a committee under the chairmanship of J.E. Lea, carried out the decoration of the graves of soldiers buried in Sarnia and district of those who lost their lives in the Great War. J.E. Lea and members visited the Indian Reserve, the Roman Catholic cemetery and Lakeview cemetery. At each location, they held a service and placed a flag with the motto "Lest We Forget" and a wreath of poppies on each grave or memorial. Nelson Brown's grave was included. Twenty year-old Nelson Brown is buried at Lakeview Cemetery, Sarnia.

SOURCES: C, D, E, F, L, N, 2D, 2G, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10Z, 2i

BURY, Harry Garfield (#8068)

Twenty-four-year-old Harry Bury was the second Sarnian to lose his life in the Great War and the first Lambton born casualty of the Great War. He was one of 6,000 Canadian casualties at the Second Battle of Ypres.

Harry Bury was born in Sombra, Ontario, on October 3, 1890, the eldest son of George Henry (born February 24, 1859 in Sombra Township) and Martha (nee Wells, born February 8, 1861 in Waterdown, Ontario) Bury. George Bury and Martha Wells were married on October 18, 1882 in the Township of Moore. The Bury family resided on River Road, two miles north of Sombra, and later 357 Devine Street, Sarnia. George Bury supported Martha and their two sons by farming. Harry's brother, Russell V. (born September 28, 1894), who was four years younger than Harry, was residing in Detroit at the time of Harry's death.

Prior to enlisting, Harry was a sailor on the Great Lakes, complete with tattoo marks on both forearms. He underwent his medical examination at Valcartier Camp on August 26, 1914. One month later, on September 22, 1914, twenty-three-year-old Harry Bury enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force in Valcartier Camp, Quebec. He stood five feet eight inches tall, had blue eyes and fair hair, and was single at the time. He recorded his trade or calling as sailor, and his next-of-kin as his mother Mrs. George Bury of Sombra, Ontario.

He became a member of the Canadian Infantry, Eastern Ontario Regiment, 2nd Battalion. Less than two weeks after enlisting, on October 4, 1914, Private Harry Bury of the 2nd Battalion embarked overseas from Quebec for the United Kingdom aboard the *S.S. Cassandra*.

In early April 1915, Harry arrived along with the rest of the 1st Division of Canadians at the Ypres salient battlefield in Belgium, an area traditionally referred to as Flanders. It was here that the Canadians engaged in their first battle of the war, the **Second Battle of Ypres**, their baptism by fire. It was here that the Germans unleashed the first lethal chlorine gas attack in the history of warfare. In the first 48 hours at Ypres (April 22-24), there were more than 6,000 Canadian casualties - one Canadian in every three became casualties of whom more than 2,100 died and 1,410 were captured.

It was during the Second Battle of Ypres, on April 24, 1915, that Harry Bury was killed in action. The Commanding Officer recorded that Private Bury was, *Killed on the morning of 24th April 1915 during the occupation of the recaptured German trench aaa this trench was evacuated the afternoon of the same day aaa the field was cleared & the dead were buried by the Germans aaa the approximate location of the spot where he was killed is Ypres Reference Map 1/40000 G.17 A. 3.3 aaa it was impossible to bury any of our men during the day & we were ordered to retire at 1.30 pm the same date.*

His Circumstances of Death Register records him as; *Date of Casualty: 24-4-15. "Killed in Action". He was killed on the morning of April 24th, 1915 during the occupation of a recaptured enemy trench. Location of Unit at the time of Casualty: Attack South West of St. Julien. Cemetery: Provisional & Missing Memorial.*

Twenty-four-year-old Harry Bury was the second Sarnian to lose his life in the Great War and the first Lambton born casualty of the Great War. Harry Bury has no known grave, but is memorialized on the Menin Gate (Ypres) Memorial in Belgium, Panel 10-18-26-28.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 2G, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10Z

CARSON, Joseph (#3131559)

Irish born Joseph Carson had been on the front lines for only a month when he was killed instantaneously by German machine gun fire during the Battle of Canal-du-Nord and Cambrai in France. The 26 year-old had been residing on Campbell Street when he was drafted to serve.

He was born in Fintona, Cty. Tyrone, Ireland, on July 22, 1892, the son of Samuel and Margaret Carson, of Garvallah, Siskinore, County Tyrone, Ireland. Samuel and Margaret Carson were blessed with five sons and one daughter: Edward (born 1885); Margaret (born 1889); Thomas (born 1891); Joseph; Samuel (born 1895); and Isaac (born 1899). In 1911, nineteen year-old Joseph was residing in Derrybard, Tyrone County, Ireland with his parents and his younger brothers Samuel and Isaac.

In 1913, Joseph and his brother Thomas immigrated to Canada. They departed from Glasgow, Scotland aboard the *SS Pretorian*, and arrived in Quebec on June 24, 1913. Their original intent was to work as farm labourers in Watford. Upon arriving, however, they moved to Sarnia, and lived with their relative, Mrs. William Shedden, at

322 Campbell Street. Joseph Carson was employed with Imperial Oil Company for over four years prior to joining the service.

In Europe, with the Canadian troops thinning at an alarming rate and no end to the war in sight, the government instituted the Military Service Act in 1917. When he was twenty-five, Joseph Carson was drafted under the Military Service Act of 1917, Class One. He underwent his medical examination in Sarnia on October 18, 1917 and was called to service on January 9, 1918. He reported to the 1st Depot Battalion, Western Ontario Regiment in London, Ontario. He stood five feet seven inches tall, had blue eyes and brown hair, was single, and was residing at 322 Campbell Street, Sarnia at the time. He recorded his trade or calling as a farmer, and his next-of-kin as his father Samuel Carson in Garvallah, Tyrone, Ireland.

Joseph Carson embarked overseas from Halifax for the United Kingdom on February 4, 1918 aboard the S.S. *Grampian*. He disembarked in England on February 16, 1918, and was transferred originally to the 4th Canadian Reserve Battalion, stationed at Bramshott. Three and a half months later, in early June, he was transferred to the Canadian Infantry, 47th Battalion, British Columbia Regiment stationed at Camp Witley. Joseph arrived in France with the 47th Battalion on June 2, 1918 and by mid-July, he was attached to the Canadian Corps Reinforcement Camp (CCRC). In mid-August 1918, he was deployed to the front lines with the 47th Battalion. Private Joseph Carson was soon embroiled in the intense fighting of what became known as The Hundred Days Campaign.

The **Hundred Days Campaign** (August 8 – November 11, 1918 in France and Belgium) was the “beginning of the end” of the Great War. Canadians were called on again and again over the three-month period to lead the offensives against the toughest German defences. The series of victories repeatedly drove the Germans back, culminating in Germany’s unconditional surrender on November 11, but it came at a cost of almost 46,000 Canadians killed, wounded and missing.

The first offensive in the Campaign was the Battle of Amiens (August 8-14, 1918), a truly all-arms battle, one that all four Canadian divisions would be involved in. Over the course of one week, in a battle that British Field Marshal Douglas Haig called “*the finest operation of the war*”, the Canadians would advance nearly 14 km. The second offensive in the Campaign was the Battle of Arras and Breaking the DQ Line (August 26-September 3, 1918), where Canadians were part of a spearhead force tasked with crashing one of the most heavily fortified positions, the Hindenburg Line. General Sir Julian Byng called the Canadian victory at Arras and the DQ Line “*the turning point of the campaign*”.

The third offensive in Canada’s Hundred Days Campaign was the **Battle of Canal-du-Nord and Cambrai** in France (September 27-October 11, 1918). Against seemingly impossible odds and a desperate fully prepared enemy, in a series of brutal engagements in the two weeks, the Canadians would successfully channel through a narrow gap in the canal, punch through a series of fortified villages and deep interlocking trenches, capture Bourlon Wood and the city of Cambrai. General Arthur Currie would call it “*some of the bitterest fighting we have experienced*” and it came at a cost of 14,000 Canadian casualties.

One of those 14,000 Canadian casualties was Private Joseph Carson. Mercifully, he died quickly. On September 29, 1918, during fighting in the Battle of Canal-du-Nord, Joseph died after being hit by enemy machine gun fire. In late October 1918, his relative Mrs. William Shedden in Sarnia received the news that Joseph had made the supreme sacrifice for his country on the battlefield. His Circumstances of Death Register records him as; *Date of Casualty: 29-9-18. “Killed in Action”. During operations outside of the village of Sailly, he was hit in the stomach by enemy machine gun bullets and instantly killed. Raillencourt Communal Cemetery Extension. Commune: Raillencourt. 57c.F.5.a.25.85.*

Twenty-six-year-old Joseph Carson is buried in Raillencourt Communal Cemetery Extension, Nord, France. Grave I.A.19. On the Sarnia cenotaph, his name is inscribed as R.J. Carson.
SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 2G, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10Z

CAUSLEY, Edward Frank (#844180)

The letter from her brother overseas arrived at Margaret Causley’s home in Sarnia in October 1918, one month before the Great War ended. It contained devastating news: her son, Edward, had been killed in action. Her grief stricken brother mentions that *I nearly fainted. I could not believe it until I saw his grave. He was to communion a few days before, when I last saw him. I thought the world of him, our dear, darling boy that is gone....*

Edward Causley was born in Sarnia, on November 24, 1897, the eldest child of Levi Francis (born May 18,

1868 in Sarnia) and Margaret (nee Ward, born April 4, 1877 in Selby, England) Causley. The Ward family, parents Edward and Bridget, and their children Andrew, Margaret, Mary and James, had immigrated to Canada in 1883. They had departed from Belfast, Ireland to Liverpool, England, and arrived aboard the *SS Montreal* in Quebec on July 23, 1883. Eight years later, in 1891, the Ward parents along with their four English-born children and Sarnia-born Michael and Bridget were residing in Sarnia.

Levi Francis Causley married Margaret Ward on October 12, 1896 in a Catholic Church in Sarnia. Levi Francis and Margaret Causley resided at RR#3 Sarnia Township, later 124 Bright Street, Sarnia. In 1901, Levi Causley worked as a porter at a local hotel and later was employed as a labourer. Levi needed to work to support Margaret and his growing family of six children: Edward (baptized November 28, 1897 at Our Lady of Mercy Church with his parents and sponsors Andrew and Mary Ward present); Marie Teresa (born July 22, 1899); Leo (born June 22, 1901); Andrew (born January 3, 1904); Arthur Aloysius (born December 31, 1906); and Margaret Eileen (born May 13, 1909). Tragically, Arthur, the youngest boy in the family, passed away from cholera infantum at nine months of age on October 2, 1907.

At age eighteen, Edward Causley enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force on January 26, 1916 in Sarnia with the 149th Battalion. He stood five feet two and a half inches tall, had blue eyes and black hair, was single, and was residing at home with his family at the time. He recorded his trade or calling as a labourer and his next-of-kin as his father Levi Causley of Sarnia Twp. R.R. #3.

Edward Causley embarked overseas from Halifax for the United Kingdom on March 25, 1917 aboard the *S.S. Lapland*. He arrived in Liverpool, England on April 7, 1917, becoming a member of the 25th Reserve Battalion, stationed at Bramshott. This was the first of many moves. On June 1, 1917, he was posted to 161st Battalion, stationed at Camp Witley, and it was here that Edward received a Good Conduct Badge on January 26, 1918 with the 161st. On February 23, 1918, he would be absorbed into the 4th Canadian Reserve Battalion, stationed at Bramshott. Six weeks later, on April 5, 1918, Edward arrived in France with the Canadian Infantry, 1st Battalion, Western Ontario Regiment.



Private Edward Frank Causley

Private Edward Causley was attached initially to the Canadian Corps Reinforcement Camp (CCRC), and by June 1918 was with the 1st Battalion at the front lines. Edward was soon embroiled in The Hundred Days Campaign, one that featured intense fighting as the end of the war neared. It was during this period that Edward was killed in action.

The **Hundred Days Campaign** (August 8 – November 11, 1918 in France and Belgium) was the “beginning of the end” of the Great War. Canadians were called on again and again over the three-month period to lead the offensives against the toughest German defences. The series of victories repeatedly drove the Germans back,

culminating in Germany's unconditional surrender on November 11, but it came at a cost of almost 46,000 Canadians killed, wounded and missing.

The first offensive in the Campaign was the Battle of Amiens (August 8-14, 1918), a truly all-arms battle, one that all four Canadian divisions would be involved in. Over the course of one week, in a battle that British Field Marshal Douglas Haig called "*the finest operation of the war*", the Canadians would advance nearly 14 km.

The second offensive in Canada's Hundred Days Campaign was the **Battle of Arras and Breaking the DQ Line** in France (August 26-September 3, 1918), where Canadians were part of a spearhead force tasked with crashing one of the most heavily fortified positions, the Hindenburg Line – a series of strong defensive trenches and fortified villages. General Sir Julian Byng would call the Canadian victory at the 2nd Battle of Arras and breaking of the DQ Line "*the turning point of the campaign*", but it came at a cost of 11,400 Canadian casualties.

On August 30, 1918, less than five months after arriving in France, Edward Causley was killed after being hit by enemy shellfire while fighting in the 2nd Battle of Arras. On that day, he was initially reported as "missing", and was later recorded as "previously reported as missing, now killed in action." In September 1918, Levi Causley in Sarnia received a telegram from Ottawa informing him that his son, Private Edward F. Causley, previously reported missing, was now listed as killed in action, August 30th.

Edward Causley's Circumstances of Death register records him as; *Date of Casualty: 30-8-18. "Previously reported Missing, now Killed in Action". He was hit in the head by shrapnel and died a few minutes later. Location of unit at time of casualty: Vicinity of Upton Wood. Cemetery: Upton Wood British Cemetery 8 ½ miles S.E. of Arras, France. Commune: Hendicourt Les Cagnicourt.2-5/c.51b.U.5.b.5.5.*

In October 1918, Margaret Causley in Sarnia received a letter from her brother, Jim Ward, informing her of her son's death. The following is a portion of that letter:

France, Sept. 22, 1918

My Dear Sister,

I really don't know how to start this letter. May God give you strength to bear this terrible news of our brave hero, Eddie, who was killed, charging Upton Woods in France. I was inquiring for Eddie, thinking I would see his smiling face, but when they told me the news and how brave he was, I nearly fainted. I could not believe it until I saw his grave. He was to communion a few days before, when I last saw him. How pleased I was to see him. I thought the world of him, our dear, darling boy that is gone....

He had no pain; he did not know what hit him. It was a machine gun bullet. He fought all day and went about thirteen miles on, then had the misfortune to get killed, just as they had driven the Germans out. There are three hundred in the cemetery. I will go over to his grave every day and say the beads. I have the Rosary beads he gave me in England. I am heart-broken and sorry over your terrible loss. Well, my dear sister, this is terrible and you don't know how I feel. I really loved the ground he walked on. I will write to you again soon and tell you more. With love to you and your dear family, I remain

Your loving brother, Jim

Twenty year-old Edward Causley is buried in Upton Wood Cemetery, France, Grave B.30.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 2G, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10Z

CHAPMAN, William Herbert (#123017)

The front lines, Sergeant William Herbert Chapman wrote in July 1917, were "no place for an old man." The reality was that Chapman, nearly 41, was 15 years older than the average Canadian soldier in the Great War. His age did not prevent him from serving admirably on the front, a battle he wanted to fight.

He was born in Uxbridge, Ontario, on October 29, 1876, the son of Charles Dillon (born April 1846, a factory labourer, later a farmer) and Mary Ann (nee Harmon, born January 1851) Chapman. William had four siblings: Charlotte Frances (born August 1873); Frederick Ira (born April 12, 1874); Florence Alexena (born March 1880); and Della Minnie Ellen (born June 1883). Frederick, William's older brother, died before he was one, so William never knew him. In 1891, when William was fifteen, the Chapmans were residing in York West, Toronto. In 1900, they had moved to Bingham Township, Huron County, Michigan.

On February 7, 1906, William Chapman, an established contractor, married Bessie Violet Boyd (of Newfoundland, born 1885) in Etobicoke, York. Soon after, the young couple moved to Blair, Pennsylvania, where William was employed as a contracting carpenter and house builder. In Pennsylvania, the family grew with the

addition of three daughters: Della Mary (born October 12, 1906); Florence Albertha (born December 23, 1907); and Charlotte Evelyn (born December 22, 1909).

In 1911, the Chapman family moved to Lambton County where William and Bessie would be blessed with four more children, all born in Sarnia: Dorothy May (born November 18, 1911); Ruth Marguerite (born July 17, 1913); Charles Harmon (born October 3, 1914); and James Douglas (born December 7, 1915). The Chapman family would reside at Concession 9, later at 107 South Christina Street, and then 206 Maria Street, Sarnia. Many years later, James Chapman served five years with the Royal Canadian Air Force as an instrument mechanic, attaining the rank of Sergeant. He passed away at the age of thirty, on May 8, 1946 in Toronto, the result of Cachexia and Hodgkins disease. His death was recorded as a result of his military service.

Perhaps James' desire to serve was because his father had done so years before. William Chapman could certainly have chosen not to fight in the Great War, to never enlist with the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force. And people would have understood. He was a married father of seven whose youngest son was born in the year he decided to enlist. And at 38, he was at least ten years older than the typical Canadian soldier. The need to do one's duty, however, impelled William to action.

Thirty-eight-year-old William Chapman enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force on August 27, 1915 in Sarnia, becoming a member of the 70th Battalion. He stood five feet eight and a half inches tall, had blue eyes and light brown hair, and was residing at 107 South Christina Street at the time with his family. He recorded his trade or calling as a gardener, and his next-of-kin as his wife Bessie. On April 26, 1916, William embarked overseas for the United Kingdom aboard the *S.S. Lapland* and arrived in Liverpool, England on May 5, 1916.

Like many soldiers, William experienced an indirect route to the front lines, full of training, delays and transfers. Chapman was initially stationed at Shorncliffe, and on July 6, 1916, was transferred to the 39th Battalion and promoted to the rank of Sergeant, stationed at West Sandling. Three months later, on October 6, 1916, he was transferred to Canadian Casualty Assembly Centre (CCAC), at West Sandling. The following month, on November 4, 1916, William returned to Canada aboard the *S.S. Northland* on a granted furlough scheduled to December 16, 1916. His furlough was then extended another month to January 16, 1917. While in Canada, the 39th Battalion was absorbed by the 6th Reserve Battalion, which transferred William to the 257th Battalion in Canada.



William Herbert and Bessie Violet Chapman
Daughters (L to R) Florence, Della and Charlotte



The Chapman children;
Della, Florence, Charlotte, Dorothy, Ruth, Charles, James

On February 13, 1917, Chapman, now 40, enlisted again, this time in Ottawa. It was not necessary for him to re-enlist, as he had not been discharged and was still a member of the 257th Battalion (it was an error on the part of the 257th Battalion to have him re-attested). On this Attestation Paper, he recorded his present address as 206 Maria Street, and his occupation as a building contractor. He also recorded that he had previous military experience as he had served with the 70th and 39th Battalions overseas for seventeen months. On February 16, 1917, he embarked overseas again from St. John, New Brunswick for the United Kingdom aboard the *S.S. Missanabie*. He was never to see Bessie or his children again. After arriving in England on February 27, 1917, he joined the 257th Battalion, then known as the 7th Battalion, Canadian Railway Troops. Chapman was stationed at East Sandling, and later Hastings, with the rank of Sergeant.

What makes William Chapman's experience memorable today is the written correspondence he shared with his friend, Thomas Peacock, a Sarnian who resided at 294 Wellington Street and worked as a G.T.R. Conductor. Following is the excerpt of a letter Thomas received in March 1917, one that William penned before he was deployed to France.

Dear Friends

Just a few lines to let you know how and when we arrived and how I am standing it. Well, we were not long in getting away from Canada after I joined the battalion. I reported at Renfrew on Saturday night, February 9 and we left Ottawa for overseas Tuesday, evening, Feb. 12th at 10:30. Had a rather slow trip to St. John's, New Brunswick. Did not arrive there until noon on the following Friday. Immediately went aboard ship. We sailed about 6:30 p.m. on the same Friday on which we boarded the ship. Arrived at Halifax about 2 a.m. Sunday and got our escort on another troop ship and we never knew what troops were on board of it until we arrived at our camp in England when we saw them march in and take quarters alongside of our battalion. We had a very pleasant and uneventful passage most of the way over, no rough seas at all but quite a few of the men got seasick just the same but I stood it like a veteran never missed a single meal or felt the least bit sick at any time and also never felt the least alarm about our safety at any time, not even when passing the danger zone. The last night out we were right in the midst of the submarines...

We arrived in Liverpool harbor in the evening and got off the boat or rather disembarked at nine o'clock on Tuesday morning and took the train for our destination which proved to be Penfleet Camp, Essex, only 17 miles from London at five o'clock in the evening... We were in being on the first ship to disembark as we got quartered in tin huts and the battalions off the other vessel had to go into tents. We had fine weather here until Saturday evening. It was bright and fine spring weather, birds singing and little lambs running around the fields and the farmers sowing grain; but when we got up Monday morning the ground was covered with a two inch fall of snow, which made it sloppy, but we are lucky enough to be camped on sandy soil. Next day was colder with heavy cold raw winds and we feel the cold worse than the zero weather in Canada, the climate is so damp over here. Today the sun came out bright and looked like a fine day but the wind came up again and clouded up and have just had a squall of snow. The surface of the ground is slightly frozen but saw a farmer planting potatoes yesterday with a plow.

In his letter, William discussed a weekend pass he had in London, describing the many sights that he had seen including Petticoat Lane, Trafalgar Square, Buckingham Palace, the Canadian jubilee gates, Hyde Park, the Queen Victoria monument, the residences of the Queen-mother and of the Duke of Connaught. He also gave details about having dinner at the King George and Queen Mary Soldiers' Club on Charing Cross Road and seeing the House of Parliament, Westminster Abbey and Westminster Cathedral. His letter then continues...

Expect to be soon going over as we had our medical inspection last Monday... We are expecting to get 100 mules tomorrow for our transport. A battalion alongside of us just got their 100 mules today and, believe me, it is lots of fun watching them tying them and hobbling them to the picket rope. We are looking forward to some better weather soon and I am anxiously looking for letters.... Please excuse the writing as one has to write under difficulties.

I remain as ever, your friend

Sergt. W.H. Chapman

257th Railway Con. Batt., C.E.F.

On March 29, 1917, William Chapman arrived in France, a member of the 7th Battalion, Canadian Railway Troops. These railway units played a major role in the construction and maintenance of railways of all gauges, including light railways, to transport troops and materiel to the Front Lines of the five British Army areas in France and Belgium. Their work was made more difficult by an undulating terrain full of obstacles, an almost impassable sea of mud and the constant threat of enemy gun and shell fire. On more than one occasion, it also became necessary for the railway troops to transfer themselves into fighting men.

William advanced in rank from Corporal, and by mid-June 1917, was a Sergeant. In August 1917, Thomas Peacock received another letter from William. His friend's letters, always honest and occasionally visceral, describe the horrors of the front and his unwavering belief in the Allied cause. The following is an excerpt from that letter:

Somewhere at the Front,

Thurs., July 5, 1917

Dear Friend and Bro.

Just a few lines to let you know that I am still well at present, but working hard. We have had some very

strenuous times at this part of the front as you have no doubt seen by the papers of the past month. It took lots of hard work and preparation to make the move successfully, but it was accomplished day and night under constant observation of the enemy, and he tried to put every obstacle in the way by sending over all kinds of shrapnel and high explosives. But still we outwitted him and when the time came our artillery simply smothered him with one of the greatest bombardments the world has ever known. Part of his works was blown up by one of the largest blasts ever set off. You could bury a large farm in the crater or hole of the same. Hundreds of Hun were buried in it and will never come out till judgement day. I saw the craters of no less than three of those mines. I had the opportunity of being on the battlefield directly after the big advance and saw some terrible sights. Fritz's trenches for a mile in depth were literally wiped out... Dead Germans lying all over, some partly buried by shells, some caught in the ruins of their trenches as they had been trying to climb out to come over to us to give up, others lying dead in their concrete dugouts where they had crawled to die, or by being bombed by our advancing Tommies...

We are all looking forward to the time we push the cruel Hun to final defeat which we hope will come soon. But it looks like as though those still at home will have to send a few more over to make good our losses. Victories are never won without paying the price, which in this case is human lives and must draw heavily upon the young manhood of the country as it is indeed a young man's war, for it is no place for an old man.

I was lucky enough to see the explosion of the mines mentioned, and believe me, it was a sight the like of which few will ever have the pleasure of seeing again. It literally filled the air with flame and the tremble of the ground was felt for miles around. It was a grand spectacle if one could forget that part of the setting was human lives. Talk about rivers being red with blood, here it was shell holes filled with water that was red with blood. There is nothing to compare to the work of our guns. If you see their results you would think as one German sergeant, a prisoner, said to me, that a fly could not go through the fire, and come out alive, let alone a human being. The prisoners I saw looked pretty tough, being from young boys to old men, and looked pretty shaky from the dreadful mauling they went through. Have had quite a number of miraculous escapes myself from high explosive shells and shrapnel. One sharp piece of shrapnel split the end of my thumb and cut down my puttee, ripping it or rather cutting it all down the outside of my left leg about a week ago, and three pieces put three dents in my steel helmet or "Easter bonnet" as I got it issued to me Easter Sunday, but did no further harm. The steel helmets are a God send as they ward off many a serious blow on the head which might cause a fatal wound. I had a dozen or more high explosive shells burst within fifteen and twenty feet of me and still escaped unhurt.

While I was in charge of a detachment of men on advance patrol I was on the same detachment duty for 10 weeks, and never lost a man of my patrol, but all have had some wonderful narrow escapes. It was a night patrol and sometimes had to prowl around with gas helmets on. You can imagine how interesting it was to us with gas masks on a dark night – worse than being out on the railroad on a dark night. I came off patrol two weeks ago, and believe me it is a big relief to get at something else, although we still see plenty of shells. They go whizzing over our camp at night and the nervous lads go running around chattering like magpies. I think you might just as well stay in your bed as try to run around dodging them in the dark. You are just as liable to run into one as not. I don't like them, but I feel just as safe in bed as out although a tent don't offer much protection from splinters of shell.

Had His Gracious Majesty King George around our part of the front yesterday along with the Commander-in-Chief of the British Forces here, Sir Douglas Haig. We are glad to see the advance guard of the American forces have arrived in France to help us along, and believe me, every little bit is welcome. Has the conscription bill finally passed at home yet? It seems to me to be the only fair way to get men as so many stand back and wait under the voluntary system, and let the other fellow do all the fighting, while they stay at home and enjoy all the comforts, while the other has to suffer the hardships incidental to war. They have had some terrible air raids in England. It seems horrible to think they slaughter the innocent women and children, but if they think that will stop our boys they are mistaken, as it makes them all the more determined to crush the cruel Hun. Things begin to look better on the Russian side again now.

I guess I will have to close for this time, but wish to thank the kind friends who have sent me papers and magazines, as papers are a luxury here. When I read them they are passed on to someone else. I met Sergt. Bill Walker a Sarnia man of the old 70th Batt. about a month ago, but he is a Sergt-Major now.

I remain as ever your friend,

Sergt. W.H. Chapman, 123017, A Company, 7th C.R.T., B.E.F., France.

PS. How is your garden coming on? You said you had turned gardener. My wife says she has a lovely one this summer. Wish I was there to eat some of it.

Peacock received a third letter from William in August 1917. A portion of the letter, dated ten days after the previous letter, reads as follows:

*Somewhere at the Front,
Sunday, July 15, 1917
Dear Friend,*

Just a few lines to let you know that I am still here and still on top, although my previous injury to my back bothers considerable at times, but I am still hanging on. I received a letter a few days ago from Col. R.I. Towers, colonel of the old 70th, and wish he was in command of us now. He is at home at present for a short time. Had a heavy rain last night filling up ditches and shell holes and holes in cross-country transport tracks with water and believe me, the continual stream of ammunition column teams soon turn wet clay into mud. Six horses are hitched to each ammunition wagon and when it comes wet and muddy, the reason for so much horse power is easily ascertained, for they have to drag the wagons through some awful holes, and it is simply astonishing the number of horses and mules it requires to handle things over and above the hundreds of thousand motor transports. We see some fine horses here and it is a common sight to see nice horses and mules lying dead along the road, killed by shell fire, as the poor horses get it just the same as men.

I used to think the war would end this summer, but the summer is going fast and still the end is not in sight. Hope it don't go into the winter, as winter here is just harsh, you know. Canadian winters are much more comfortable....

I guess you will have conscription by the time this reaches you. I have been informed that myself and 5 or 6 other men have been mentioned by the commanding officer for coolness and bravery under shell fire. I had charge of an advance patrol continuously without relief for ten weeks and one night when the three N.C.O.'s in charge of an emergency repair crew brought their men in, took them and myself and repaired three large shell breaks in the line under continuous shrapnel and high explosive shell fire. Kept the men at work and finished the repairs and got the men back without a casualty. I did not like the job but ammunition had to be got up to the guns, and we could not let a battery be lost through lack of ammunition, so we have to do our duty.

I sent you a German steel shrapnel helmet. You can give the German water bottle that is inside to my wife. I thought you would like something from the front as a souvenir and hope it reaches you safely. I remain as ever your friend.

Sgt. W.H. Chapman, 123017

As part of the 7th Battalion, Chapman would have taken part in the Attack on Hill 70 and Lens in France (August 15-25, 1917). It was the second-largest Canadian military undertaking up to that point in the war, second only to Vimy. It was the first major battle orchestrated by Canadian commander Lieutenant-General Arthur Currie and the first time German forces used flame-throwers and mustard gas against the Canadians. Known as "Canada's forgotten battle of the First World War", the Canadians were able to capture Hill 70 but not the city of Lens, at a cost of approximately 9,100 Canadians listed as killed, wounded or missing

Two months after writing the above letter, on September 27, 1917, Corporal William Chapman lost his life as a result of gun shot wounds in the abdomen received while fighting in Belgium. He had been admitted to No. 61 Casualty Clearing Station (CCS) on September 21, 1917, and would pass away there six days later as a result of his wounds (two days before his 41st birthday).

In October 1917, Bessie received the following letter from the chaplain of the Battalion:

*Mrs. W.H. Chapman, Sarnia, Ontario
Dear Madam,*

France, Oct. 6, 1917

You have no doubt already learned of the death of your husband, W.H. Chapman, of this battalion, and of the cause. On behalf of the commanding officer and all ranks of the battalion, I beg to offer you our most sincere sympathy. Your husband died at the post of duty. He came here knowing the danger, and he bravely made the noble sacrifice, the greatest any man can, for a good cause. Assuredly he will receive a splendid reward hereafter. Let this be your consolation in your bereavement. He was buried in a military cemetery attached to the hospital where he died, alongside so many others who have also laid down their lives at the call of duty. Assuring you once more of our sincerest sympathy.

Sincerely yours, J.R.O. Gorman, Chaplain

William's Circumstances of Death Register records him as; *Date of Casualty: 27-9-17. "Died of Wounds" (Gunshot Wound Abdomen) at No. 61 Casualty Clearing Station. Dozinghem Military Cemetery, Belgium. Commune: Westvleteren 2 ½ miles N. of Poperinghe. 2.44c.27.F.11.a.5.7.* William Chapman left behind his wife Bessie and their seven children. Forty year-old William Chapman is buried in Dozinghem Military Cemetery, Belgium, Grave V.F.7.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 2G, 6O, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10Z

CHESTER, Frederick Aloysius (#214292)

Frederick Aloysius Chester was only 22 when he was on sentry duty on a September night during the Battle of the Somme, one of the bloodiest and most futile battles in history.

He was born in Sarnia, on November 23, 1894, the son of John and Isabella Chester, of 315 North Brock Street. Twenty-one-year-old Frederick Chester enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force on April 14, 1916 in Windsor, Ontario with the 99th Overseas Battalion, Canadian Expeditionary Force. He stood five feet nine inches tall, had blue eyes and grey hair, was single, and was residing at 176 Bagg Street in Detroit, Michigan at the time (his parents were still in Sarnia). Frederick recorded his trade or calling as Chief Clerk, and his next-of-kin as his father John Chester of 315 North Brock Street, Sarnia. On May 31, 1916, Frederick Chester embarked overseas from Halifax for the United Kingdom aboard the *S.S. Olympic* (*Titanic's* sister ship).

He disembarked in Liverpool, England on June 8, 1916, and a month later, was transferred to the 35th Canadian Reserve Battalion at West Sandling. On August 6, 1916, he was transferred to the Canadian Infantry, 19th Battalion, Central Ontario Regiment and the next day, Private Chester arrived in France with the 19th Battalion. One week later, his unit was at the front lines.

Private Chester ended up fighting France during the **Battle of the Somme** (July 1-November 18, 1916), one of the bloodiest and most futile battles in history. The Somme battle lasted for more than four brutal months and saw the Allies advance around 10 kilometers. A more telling statistic is the number of injuries and deaths: of the 85,000 Canadian Corps, there were more than 24,000 Canadian casualties.

The second major offensive of the Somme battle was the week-long Battle of Flers-Courcelette (September 15-22). It was here where tanks made their first appearance in the war. Frederick Chester lost his life in the days leading up to this offensive.

On September 13, 1916, Frederick Chester was killed by enemy shellfire during the Battle of the Somme. His Circumstances of Death Register records him as; *Date of Casualty: 13-9-16. "Killed in Action". While on sentry duty, in the front line trenches about 10 P.M. on September 13th 1916, he was instantly killed by shrapnel from an enemy shell. Location of Unit at the time of Casualty: COURCELETTE. Cemetery: Missing Memorial Card only. Reported locations of grave: Sheet 57d.S.E.R.35.d.*

Twenty-one-year-old Frederick Chester has no known grave. He is memorialized on the Vimy Memorial, Pas de Calais, France. On the Sarnia cenotaph, his name is inscribed as F.J. Chester.
SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 2G, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10Z

CORRICK, Alfred James (#3131566)

When the popular Alfred James Corrick was wounded in the Battle of Valenciennes in France ten days before WWI ended, no one realized how serious his injury was.

He was born in Sarnia, on July 12, 1884, the youngest son Robert Charles (born April 2, 1846 in Taunton, Somerset, England) and Mary (nee McNally, born April 10, 1842 in Middlesex, England) Corrick. Robert (born April 2, 1843 in England) and Mary (born April 10, 1844 in England) Corrick immigrated from Kent, England to Canada in 1872. They ended up in Sarnia by accident. From their port of arrival, Robert, Mary and their three young children at the time, left by train for their intended final destination of Toronto. On arrival, they didn't get off the train, not realizing they were in Toronto. So they remained on the train until it reached the end of the line – Sarnia.

Robert, a labourer/bricklayer by trade, became a stonemason and started a successful contractor business in Sarnia. One of the first homes he built was the Corrick family home at 404 George Street. To keep the cold out, he constructed the home with two layers of yellow-coloured bricks—bricks unique to Lambton County. His business also got the contract to build the first Sarnia General Hospital at Mitton and George Streets.

Altogether, Robert and Mary were blessed with ten children: Charles Robert (born June 28, 1864); Louise Emily (born December 11, 1867, though she passed away shortly after); Emma Louise (born November 27, 1869); Annie Josephine (born April 21, 1871); Frederick (born November 20, 1873); John Augustus (born June 21, 1876); Andrew (born November 21, 1878); Alice Helen (born May 17, 1881); Alfred; and Beatrice Mary (born September 1, 1886). Years later, Charles and John moved to Detroit where they started their own contracting business that became quite successful. Alfred would join his brothers in Detroit on occasion to help construct homes.

By all accounts, Alfred was a pretty quiet individual, a skilled athlete and popular among a large circle of

friends in Sarnia. He went by “Alf” to his friends and family members. He took an active part in sports and was a baseball player of considerable ability. He was known as “Home Run Haggerty” for his batting prowess. He was a member of the local Maple Leafs indoor baseball team that won the Canadian championship, along with two of his brothers and a brother-in-law (B. Luscombe). Following is a portion of a June 1972 *Sarnia Observer* story written by O.N. (Red) Wilson:

*Rube McCart, probably the greatest softball pitcher in Sarnia’s history, bloomed during the closing days of the last century and the beginning of the 1900’s. He pitched the Maple Leafs indoor baseball team to the Canadian championship twice between 1898, when it was organized, and 1905 when it disbanded. Names of that great team are familiar to Sarnians today even if the faces are not. Andy Corrick caught; Earl Drake and W.A. (Bill) Watson played first base; Jack Corrick, second; J.B. Williams and Wm. Tennant, third; Wm. Pierce and Jimmy Thomson, shortstop; Billy Luscombe, Eddie Mills, Bob Nelson and **Alf Corrick**, outfielders. Charlie (Mike) Fleming was the manager; Fred Stanley and George B. Dawson, presidents, and Billy McDonald the club’s official referee.*



Front row, second from right: Alfred Corrick
 Front row, left side: Bill Luscombe (brother-in-law)
 Back row, right side: Jack Corrick (brother)

Alfred became a member of Sarnia Lodge, No. 126, I.O.O.F. and by trade was a mason, following in the footsteps of his father and brothers. When Alfred was twenty-seven, his father Robert, a local contractor, passed away in Sarnia on December 12, 1911 at the age of sixty-five.

In Europe, with the Canadian troops thinning at an alarming rate and no end to the war in sight, the government instituted the Military Service Act in 1917. Shortly after, thirty-three-year-old Alfred Corrick was drafted under the Military Service Act of 1917, Class One. He underwent his medical examination in Sarnia on October 4, 1917. He was called to service on January 9, 1918 in London, Ontario, reporting to the 1st Depot Battalion, Western Ontario Regiment. He stood five feet six inches tall, had blue eyes and brown hair, was single, and was residing with his widowed-mother on George Street at the time. He recorded is trade or calling as a bricklayer and his next-of-kin as his mother Mrs. Mary Corrick of 404 George Street.

On January 8, 1918, prior to his leaving for service, members of the Bricklayers Union No. 23 held a send-off for Alfred in the Board of Trade room. The following is a portion of the address given by the Union chairmen and signed by the Union president, as they presented Alfred with a gift of a wristwatch:

We, your brother members of local No. 23 Ontario, meet here tonight with mingled feelings of pride and regret. Tomorrow we all know you leave the old home town and all your old associations, for a grand purpose, that of serving your king and country and doing your little bit, with lots of boys who have gone before. Bro. Corrick, we have all known you for a number of years now and we have always found you to be a good upright and honest union man; and when you leave tomorrow for London to don the khaki you will take with you the good wishes of the union for a safe journey to France and then a happy reunion when the boys come marching home.... May this little token of our regard, ever remind you of your friends across the sea.

Alfred then spoke about how much he appreciated what they were doing. A few members delivered short speeches which expressed their regret at losing Brother Corrick. At the end of the social, all the boys joined together in wishing him the best of luck for a pleasant journey and a safe return. Within six months, Alfred was fighting in the front lines in France.

On February 4, 1918, Alfred Corrick embarked overseas from Halifax for the United Kingdom aboard the

S.S. Grampian. Arriving in England on February 16, 1918, he was initially posted with the 4th Canadian Reserve Battalion in Bramshott. Three and a half months later, on June 1, 1918, Private Corrick was transferred to the Canadian Infantry, 47th Battalion, Western Ontario Regiment. He arrived in France the next day and, two weeks later, was with the 47th Battalion at the front lines.



Private Alfred Corrick



Alfred (R), all “kitted up”

During his time overseas, Alf Corrick often wrote many letters home to his mother and siblings. Below is a postcard that he wrote on June 10, 1918 to his sister Beatrice. On the back he wrote: *Dear Sister, Just a souveneir of France I got tonight having an easy time just now. Yours lovingly, Alf*



In October 1918, Alf sent a letter home to his widowed mother in Sarnia from France. In it, he expressed that he was doing his bit and he was well. He also stated that he had several narrow escapes; and that two of his comrades on a gun had been put out of action, one being killed and the other wounded.

The **Hundred Days Campaign** (August 8 – November 11, 1918 in France and Belgium) was the “beginning of the end” of the Great War. Canadians were called on again and again over the three-month period to lead the offensives against the toughest German defences. The series of victories repeatedly drove the Germans back, culminating in Germany’s unconditional surrender on November 11, but it came at a cost of almost 46,000 Canadians killed, wounded and missing.

Alfred Corrick took part in all of the major offensives during this campaign. The first offensive in the Campaign was the Battle of Amiens (August 8-14, 1918), a truly all-arms battle, one that all four Canadian divisions would be involved in. Over the course of one week, in a battle that British Field Marshal Douglas Haig called “*the finest operation of the war*”, the Canadians would advance nearly 14 km. The second offensive in the Campaign was the Battle of Arras and Breaking the DQ Line (August 26-September 3, 1918), where Canadians were part of a spearhead force tasked with crashing one of the most heavily fortified positions, the Hindenburg Line. General Sir Julian Byng called the Canadian victory at Arras and the DQ Line “*the turning point of the campaign*”.

The third offensive in the Campaign was the Battle of Canal-du-Nord and Cambrai (September 27-October 11, 1918). Against seemingly impossible odds and a desperate fully prepared enemy, the Canadians fought for two weeks in a series of brutal engagements--successfully channelling through a narrow gap in the canal, punching through a series of fortified villages and deep interlocking trenches, and capturing Bourlon Wood and the city of Cambrai. General Arthur Currie would call it “*some of the bitterest fighting we have experienced*”.

After taking Cambrai in the second week of October 1918, Canadian forces advanced tentatively toward Valenciennes, the last major French city in German hands. Through the third and fourth weeks of October 1918, using artillery and battle patrols, they pushed east against the retreating German forces, occasionally running into significant opposition, and Canadians continued to die by the score every day.

At Valenciennes, the Germans stopped running – they held every advantage in this heavily-fortified city protected by a canal. In the **Battle of Valenciennes**, France (November 1-2, 1918), the Canadians were able to capture the city through two days of desperate fighting that included urban warfare. This last set-piece battle, the last major prearranged assault staged by the Canadian Corps, cost the Canadians 501 casualties. Private Alfred Corrick was one of those casualties.

On November 1, 1918, Private Alfred Corrick was wounded by enemy gunfire at Valenciennes. That same day, he was admitted to No. 6 Casualty Clearing Station with shrapnel wounds in the left hip/buttock. Six days later, on November 7, 1918, the Canadians would cross into Belgium toward their final goal, the German-occupied city of Mons. On November 8, 1918, Alfred Corrick was admitted to the Kitchener Military Hospital in Brighton, England with “severe shell wounds”. Three days later, on November 11, 1918, the Canadians liberated the city of Mons and World War I would end.

While recovering in hospital, Alf sent letters home to his friends in Sarnia, in which he reported that he was progressing well (he demonstrated satisfactory improvement for one month in recovery); however, complications arose, as he had symptoms of blood poisoning (streptococcus pyaemia) from the shrapnel wounds that required two more operations. They were to no avail.

On January 9, 1919, he was in hospital reported as “seriously ill”, and four days later, he was “dangerously ill”. It was unexpected news in Sarnia when on January 13, 1919, one year after his send-off in Sarnia, and two months after the war’s end, Alfred Corrick died in Kitchener Military Hospital, Brighton, as a result of the wounds that he had received two months earlier.

Alfred Corrick was the last man with his name on the Sarnia cenotaph to lose his life in the Great War. His death was officially recorded as: *Died of wounds, (previously reported wounded), dangerously ill. Gun shot wound: Buttock Septicemia. Kitchener Military Hospital, Brighton.*

In the early 1950s, a family member discovered a box of letters in the family home on George Street. The letters were those written by Alf from England and France to his mother and his younger sister Beatrice, with whom he had always been close. Unfortunately, the letters were destroyed after a family member, upon reading them, felt they were too sad a reminder of his tragic death in the Great War.

Thirty-four-year-old Alfred Corrick is buried in Seaford Cemetery, Sussex, United Kingdom, Grave A.549. On his grave marker are inscribed the words, IN LOVING MEMORY OF ALFRED J. CORRICK BORN 12TH JULY 1884 DIED AT BRIGHTON 13TH JAN: 1918. FRANCE: NOW HERE – AT REST.

NOTE: The Commonwealth War Graves Register records his death date as January 13, 1919, which is correct; however his grave marker incorrectly records his death as January 13, 1918.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 2G, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10Z, 3r

COULTER, William James (#334850)

William James Coulter beat the odds by surviving the Battle of Passchendaele, but the enemy was relentless. Four days after the battle ended, Gunner William Coulter was felled by enemy gunfire.

He was born in Woodstock, Oxford County, Ontario, on January 21, 1897, the only son of William John Coulter Sr. (of Stratford, Perth, Ontario) and Belinda Jane (nee Clark, of Oxford, Ontario) Coulter. William Coulter Sr. (born February 2, 1866) and Belinda Jane Clark (born August 22, 1871) were married on March 16, 1892 in Oxford County. To support his wife and four children, William Coulter Sr. worked as a carpenter, then as a machinist, and later as a County Constable policeman. William and Belinda Coulters first three children—daughters

Isabelle Louise (born October 26, 1892); Annie Gertrude (born December 12, 1894); and William Jr.—were born in Woodstock. Mildred Jane was born in Lambton County on July 31, 1907. At some point, William Coulter Jr. moved to Petrolia and later resided in Sarnia. Prior to enlisting, he was employed as an express driver by the Canadian Express Company and also at the Northern Navigation Company in Sarnia.

Nineteen year-old William Coulter enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force on April 24, 1916 in Guelph, Ontario with the 64th Depot Battery, Canadian Field Artillery. He stood five feet nine and one-quarter inches tall, had greyish blue eyes and brown hair, was single, and was residing at home with his parents in Sarnia at the time. He recorded his trade or calling as an express driver, and his next-of-kin as his father William John Coulter of 345 South Vidal Street, Sarnia.

On November 23, 1916, Coulter embarked overseas from Halifax for the United Kingdom aboard the *S.S. Mauretania*. Disembarking in Liverpool, England on November 30, 1916, he became a member of the Composite Reserve Brigade, Canadian Field Artillery based at Shorncliffe. Just over three months later, in mid-March 1917, he was appointed Acting Bombardier with the Reserve Brigade in Shorncliffe.

On March 21, 1917, William arrived in France with the Shorncliffe Composite Battery and was attached as a re-enforcement to the 1st Canadian Divisional Ammunition Column (CDAC). He then reverted to the rank of Gunner. Not long after arriving, he would be with the four divisions of Canadian Corps that took part in the Battle of Vimy Ridge in April 1917. It was the first time (and last time in the war) that all four divisions of the Canadian Corps, with soldiers from every region in the country, would surge forward simultaneously. The four-day victory at Vimy Ridge was a seminal battle, a turning point in the war for the Canadian Corps, and significant victory for Canada, later referred to as “the birth of a nation”. Of the 97,000 Canadians who fought at Vimy Ridge, approximately 10,600 became casualties.



Gunner William James Coulter

A few years earlier, on December 25, 1914, William’s sister Annie Gertrude married George Henry Williams (born May 21, 1890 in Lilley near Wantage, Berkshire, England) in Sarnia. When twenty-four-year-old George Williams (William Coulter’s brother-in-law) got married, he was already a soldier, having enlisted on October 26, 1914 in Sarnia with the 18th Battalion, CEF. Private George Williams (a locomotive fireman prior to enlisting), embarked overseas in mid-April 1915 with the 18th Battalion, first training in England, then moving to France in September 1915. While overseas, his wife Annie resided with her parents, William and Belinda Coulter at 345 Vidal Street. George Williams rose up the ranks to Sergeant, then Sergeant Major and then to Lieutenant. In the area of the Somme, Sergeant George H. Williams was awarded the Military Medal (MM) “for Bravery in the Field”, dated December 21, 1916. Fifteen months later, Sergeant George Williams was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal (DCM) “for gallantry and distinguished service in the field”, dated March 28, 1918. The DCM reads, “For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty in organizing a new line after the trench had been destroyed by an enemy barrage. During a heavy bombardment he succeeded in establishing communication with the company on his right.

He was unceasing in his efforts in getting rations up to the front line and guiding stretcher parties.” Also during his time overseas, George Williams was wounded yet remained on duty in May 1917, and was later hospitalized for a time in July 1918 recovering from influenza. George Williams served 34-months in France, and returned to Canada, being discharged on demobilization in mid-March 1919. While still overseas, Lieutenant George Williams would only be a few hundred yards away from his brother-in-law, William Coulter, when he was fatally wounded.

On July 7, 1917, William Coulter was transferred to the 8th Brigade, Canadian Field Artillery. He later advanced to the rank of Corporal, receiving his stripes in the field. By mid-October 1917, Gunner Coulter had arrived with the Canadians in an area traditionally referred to as Flanders, Belgium known as Passchendaele. The **Battle of Passchendaele** (October 26 – November 10, 1917) was waged in unceasing rain on a battlefield that was a nightmarish mess of rotting, mangled corpses, gagging gas, water-filled craters and glutinous mud. Overcoming almost unimaginable hardships and horrific fighting conditions, the Canadians achieved a remarkable victory that few thought possible. But it came at a cost of almost 12,000 Canadian wounded and more than 4,000 Canadians killed.

William survived the worst of Passchendaele, but he could not escape the constant fighting. On November 14, 1917, Gunner William Coulter was wounded in action by enemy gunfire in the days following the Battle of Passchendaele. He was taken to No. 3 Casualty Clearing Station but lost his life that day, as a result of the gunshot wounds in the left thigh that also severely fractured his left femur. When William Coulter met his death, he had been acting as Sergeant in place of his own Sergeant, who had been killed beforehand.

Before learning of his son’s death, William Coulter Sr. had received a letter from his son. William Jr. had also sent home his belt and many souvenirs, including buttons from German prisoners as well as buttons and emblems representing regiments from Australia, South Africa, Manitoba, Calgary Battalions, Royal Engineers, Mounted Rifles, Infantry, Gordon Highlanders, 48th Highlanders, Connaught Rangers, American Battalion, C.V.O., Buglers, Northumberland Hussars, and Devonshire Regiment, R.C.H.A. Also included in the collection were two paper knives that had been skillfully hammered out of shells. In late November 1917, one week after receiving his son’s letter and souvenirs, William Sr. received the following telegram:

Wm. John Coulter, 345 South Vidal Street, Sarnia

Deeply regret to inform you that 334850, Corporal William James Coulter, artillery, officially reported died of wounds, 3rd Casualty clearing station, Nov. 14, 1917, gunshot wound in left thigh. *Director of Records*

William Coulter’s Circumstances of Death register records him as; *Date of Casualty: 14-11-17. “Died of Wounds” (Gunshot Wound Fracture Left Thigh) at No. 3 Casualty Clearing Station. Lijssenthoek Military Cemetery. 1 ¾ miles South West of Poperinghe, Belgium.* Twenty year-old William James Coulter is buried in Lijssenthoek Military Cemetery, Belgium, Grave XXII.DD.6. On his headstone are inscribed the words, OUR ONLY SON. SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 2G, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10Z, 3h

COWAN, Stewart

Stewart Cowan was a successful barrister who left his family and girlfriend behind to fight for a cause he believed in. Less than a year after he enlisted, Lieutenant Cowan was killed at the Battle of the Somme.

He was born in Sarnia on April 30, 1890, the son of John and Eliza Ann (nee McIntire) Cowan. His paternal grandparents’--John Cowan Sr. (the eldest of nine children, born 1815 in Roxburghshire, Scotland) and Catherine Katie (nee Sinton, the eldest of six children, born 1819 in Roxburghshire, Scotland) Cowan--had left Scotland and sailed for Canada in 1849 in what became a memorable voyage for the Cowans for two reasons. John Cowan Sr. had married Catherine Sinton on April 1, 1842 in Roxburghshire, Scotland, and they had three children there, Annie (born July 1843), Mary (born May 1845) and Agnes (born October 1847). John Sr. and Catherine Cowan and their three children immigrated to Canada in July 1849. It was what happened during their cross-ocean voyage that made it memorable.

First, their youngest child Agnes, just over a year-and-a-half in age, passed away during the Atlantic crossing. Her parents hid their young daughters’ body in a lifeboat to avoid her being buried at sea. After arriving in America, they buried Agnes properly in New York. Secondly, Stewart’s father, John Jr., was born on July 8, 1849 during this trans-Atlantic voyage—or “on the high seas” as it became known in Cowan family lore.

It was the reports of excellent agricultural opportunities open to one in America that induced John Cowan Sr. to leave Scotland and come with his family to Ontario. After a short residence in Galt the family settled in 1850 upon

a farm in Huron County, and engaged in agriculture. As much of the land was new he had the undesirable task of clearing and breaking it, but in time he had as good a farm as any in the vicinity. Settling in Ontario, John Sr. and Catherine Cowan (Stewart's grandparents) were blessed with another six children to their family: Agnes (born 1852); Hector (born May 1854); James (born October 1856); Jean (born October 1858); Catherine (Kate, born April 1861); and Maggie (born 1863). John Cowan Sr., a successful farmer and father of ten children, passed away in March 1894 at age 79. Catherine Katie Cowan (nee Sinton) passed away the following year in July 1895 at age 76. John Cowan Sr. and Catherine Katie Cowan are buried in Maitlandbank Cemetery in Seaforth, Huron County.

John Cowan Jr., son of John Sr., started life as an ordinary farm boy growing up in Huron County. He had an inquisitive mind and a thirst for knowledge making him a promising student. In his early 20s he was hired out as schoolmaster in the township of Hibbert, Perth and spent his spare moments in the study of law. He went on to graduate from Osgoode Hall, Toronto in 1879, was admitted to the Bar the same year, and began practicing law in Dresden, Kent County. Six months later he moved to Watford and practiced law there until 1883. In February 1883, he formed a partnership with Mr. Lister, of Sarnia, and the Cowan family moved to Sarnia. In 1898, the firm of Cowan and McCarthy was formed, and the following year it was changed to Cowan, McCarthy and Towers. In September 1901, the firm became Cowan and Towers. A successful solicitor, he acted in that capacity for the townships of Sarnia, Moore, Warwick, Brooke, Dawn, the town of Sarnia and other municipalities, also for the Traders Bank, the Industrial, Mortgage & Savings Co., and several other institutions.

On August 31, 1881, thirty-two-year-old John Cowan Jr. married twenty-seven-year-old Eliza Ann McIntire (born April 28, 1854 in Huron County) in Stratford, Perth County, Ontario. John Cowan was residing and practicing law in Watford when he married Eliza. Eliza Ann was the daughter of John (a farmer) and Caroline Mary (nee Phelps) McIntire, and was residing in Stratford when she married John. John Jr. and Eliza Ann Cowan eventually settled in Sarnia and lived at 322 North Christina Street. John Jr. had a successful practice and they had a sprawling family of eight children together: Caroline Mary (born December 17, 1883); Kate Sinton (born October 27, 1885); John Jr. #2 (born January 6, 1888); Stewart; Annie (born December 15, 1892); Susan McIntire (born February 11, 1896); Hector (born April 4, 1897); and Frank Phelps (born March 1, 1900).



Cowan family circa 1906
 Back (L to R): Caroline, John Jr #2., Stewart, Kate
 Middle (L to R): Eliza (mother), Annie, Hector, John Jr. (father)
 Front (L to R): Susie, Frank

In 1891, the Cowan household included parents John Jr. and Eliza, and their children: Carrie (age 7); Kate (age 5); John Jr. #2 (age 3); and Stewart (age 1); along with lodger Eliza Phelps (age 61); and domestic (general

servant) Mary Heslip (age 28). Twenty years later, in 1911, the Cowan family residing at 322 Christina Street included parents John Jr. and Eliza, their children: Carrie (a stenographer, father's office); Kate (a nurse); John Jr. #2 (a law student); Stewart (a law student); Annie, Susie, Hector, and Frank; and their fifteen year-old Scottish-born servant Elizabeth Cuchan (born May 1896, had immigrated to Canada in 1901).

Stewart's younger brother **Hector Cowan** also served in the Great War. On January 22, 1916, eighteen year-old Hector Cowan, standing five feet eight and one-quarter inches tall, with blue eyes and fair hair, enlisted in Sarnia with the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force (about seven weeks after his brother Stewart had enlisted). Hector was a student at the time, residing with his family on Christina Street.

Private Hector Cowan was initially a Gunner (Cadet) in the 43rd Overseas Battery, Canadian Field Artillery (CFA), 11th Howitzer Brigade. From training camp in Guelph, Hector embarked overseas on February 26, 1916 aboard the *SS Missanabie*, arriving in England on March 12, 1916. He initially trained at Bramshott Camp, and one month later, arrived at Witley Camp. On May 25, 1916, he was transferred to the 10th Brigade, CFA., and three weeks later embarked from Portsmouth arriving in Havre, France, with the rank of Acting Sergeant. Hector would take part in the Battle of the Somme, one of the bloodiest battles in history, one that his brother Stewart would lose his life in.

On October 22, 1916, two weeks after his brother Stewart had been killed in action, Hector wrote the following letter from somewhere in France to his father John in Sarnia:

Dear Dad,

Just a little note to tell you that things are going fine and that I'm well. I suppose things have been rather blue at home lately and I can assure you that my sympathy has been with all the family. To you who are so far away from actual war the news must have come as a shock but to me Dad it was different I knew from Stew would fall sooner or later, the sooner the better for him, its the same with all infantry men they might get wounded but its just a prolongation of the worst, its simply impossible to live through what they have to endure. Ewart Towers came through for a year but now he's gone it will be the same with all of them. I haven't heard yet how Lyle and Geof came out of it but am hoping for the best. The casualties amongst our Canadian battalions were pretty large and in a few cases there is just enough men left in a brigade to make up one battalion, that is one out of every four have gone. I've been trying to locate Stewart's grave through his regiment's chaplain and as I expect word any day from him I'll see that the grave is tended to and fixed up to the best of my ability. I'll also mark and locate it well.

Now Dad since one of us has made the sacrifice I suppose you will be worrying more about my safety. I wouldn't if I were you, there's a huge difference between artillery and infantry and I'll be just as careful as I can be, the chances we run in this branch are nothing like the ones the infantry runs.

I've seen some pretty barren spots in my life but I don't think any of them can compare to this country. Around here in peace time it must be bad enough but after seeing this war its something beyond description from here up to our line I can honestly say that there isn't one tree left standing, everything is either knocked off by shells or blown up by mines, up the road from our horse liveries there used to be a town but I passed through it four times before I ever knew there was a town there at all its the same all the way up just mud and wreckage, there is a road up the line a little way where the Germans first tried to make a stand I wish you could see it now there isn't ten square yards of it that hasn't been hit by a shell do you wonder that infantry can't live through it, the way we shoot ammunitions around here is something terrible if a German battery fires anyways near any of our guns we open up and throw back a hundred for his one, consequently not many German shells come over. I think they are beginning to believe that we really have the upper hand over them if you could have seen the surprising look on some of the German's faces that came down yesterday you would believe that they thought they were nearly done for, they say that the war will be over in two months in that I can't believe it is true if next summer sees the end of this war I'll be satisfied. I was telling Mother to-night we had quite a scrap here yesterday, it came off at noon and by three o'clock in the afternoon German prisoners started to come down it sure looked good to see them too they all had that war-worn look about them and underneath that look of disgust and hatred you could see that they were quite satisfied to be alive and safe at last. There is a Canadian hospital just across the road from us and we watched the wounded arrive and leave. They get out of the ambulance at one end of the hospital, go through have their wounds dressed get ticketed either to England or to France then get into the ambulance again & by next morning they are in England its simply wonderful how fast they can put them through.

Ed and I and a boy from Pembroke a friend of Mr. Homes are living together in a sand-bag hut, we have a real good grate fire and the shack keeps out cold and the rain so we are fine, lots to eat, lots of cards and lots of time

to sleep. To-day is Sunday I hate to think of it, over here its just the same as any other day I think that's what I'll enjoy most when I get home, church and decent Sundays again. I believe the British army is making quite a mistake by ignoring religion, if it doesn't show up here it will when all the men are turned loose again.

I must close Dad, the candles getting low and six o'clock comes pretty early. Hoping you and the family are in the best of health. I am

*Your loving son
Hector Cowan*

Almost one year later, on May 5, 1917, Hector Cowan was transferred to the 8th Army Brigade, CFA. On July 29, 1917, he was granted 10 days leave to Paris, before he rejoined his unit. On October 4, 1917, he was attached to the 1st Army Rest Camp for twelve days. On November 23, 1917, he was admitted to No. 99 Field Ambulance, diagnosed with "synovitis right knee", and was then transferred to No. 18 General Hospital, Camiers. Two months later, on January 29, 1918, he was discharged from hospital.

By February 6, 1918, Hector Cowan had rejoined the 8th Army Brigade in the field. In mid-March 1918, he was granted 14 days leave in the U.K., and then rejoined his unit in the field on April 8. In early October 1918, Hector was transferred to England posted to the Canadian Artillery Reinforcement Depot (CARD) at Camp Witley, with a view to being granted a commission in the CFA. The Great War ended in November 1918. In early January 1919, Hector Cowan returned to Canada, arriving in Halifax on January 17. He was discharged on demobilization from the Canadian Field Artillery, with the rank of Cadet, in London, Ontario on February 6, 1919, and returned to Sarnia.

Hector Cowan, after graduating from the University of Toronto, like his father and his late brother Stewart, became a successful lawyer in Sarnia with Cowan, Cowan and Gray Barristers. On March 22, 1924, twenty-six-year-old Hector Cowan married twenty-four-year-old Lillian Henrietta Hayes at St. Andrew's Church in Sarnia. Hector and Lillian were blessed with three children together: Alexander Hayes (born August 20, 1925 but sadly passed away one week later); Joan (born July 11, 1927) and Anne. In March 1936, Hector Cowan skipped his team from the Sarnia Curling Club (along with William McCart, Alex Hayes and Murray Chilton) to a championship winning the Ontario Silver Tankard (Southern Ontario provincial championship). Tragically, just seven months later, on October 17, 1936, Hector Cowan was involved in a fatal car accident in Detroit. He and Maurice Chilton were on their way home from a Saturday football game when their car was in a collision with another vehicle at an intersection. Maurice Chilton was slightly injured and Hector Cowan was killed in the accident. Hector Cowan, 39, is buried in Lakeview Cemetery, Sarnia.



Hector Cowan



Lawyer Stewart Cowan

Stewart Cowan grew up in the family home on Christina Street in Sarnia and was an active young man. He attended Sarnia public elementary schools and Sarnia Collegiate where he played high school football and was a member of the Sarnia Collegiate Cadet Corps in 1907. He also enjoyed pick-up hockey games on Sarnia Bay in the winter. After high school, Stewart attended University College 1907-08; Delta Kappa Epsilon; Law School. After

graduating he became a barrister (lawyer) in Sarnia, practicing law with his father with the firm of Cowan, Towers and Cowan. He became well known outside the law firm by being a member of the newly formed Sarnia Golf Club Limited and becoming a member of the Masons in Victoria Lodge No. 56 in 1915.

Stewart was also dating a young lady, Pauline Louise Pardee, who came from a prominent family. Pauline (born January 3, 1893) was the daughter of Senator Frederick Forsyth Pardee (born December 29, 1867, Sarnia) and Mary Eleanor Johnston (born November 1, 1867, Goderich). Frederick Pardee and Mary Johnston had married on December 31, 1891. Stewart and Pauline's relationship was serious enough that they were "an item" and there was talk of marriage.

Twenty-five-year-old Stewart Cowan enlisted (and underwent his medical examine) in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force on November 26, 1915 in London, Ontario. He completed his Officers' Declaration Paper, Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force, on December 14, 1915, in London, Ontario, becoming a member of the 70th Battalion, with the rank of Lieutenant. He stood five feet nine inches tall, was single, and was residing at home with his parents at the time. He recorded his trade or calling as lawyer, his prior military experience as a member of the 27th Militia Regiment, and his next-of-kin as his mother Eliza Cowan of 322 Christina Street.



John (L) and Stewart (R) with their mother Eliza Cowan (ca. 1912)

On April 24, 1916, Lieutenant Stewart Cowan embarked overseas from Halifax for the United Kingdom with the 70th Battalion. In July 1916, Mrs. W.B. Elsworth of Sarnia received the following letter from Stewart while in England:

Dear Mrs. Elsworth,

Two dozen pairs of socks arrived today. I distributed them amongst Sarnia men who are with us. They were certainly more than glad to receive them and being from home they were doubly welcome. I wish you could have seen the men double out of their tents when they heard, "socks from Sarnia" called out. They asked me to thank the members of the Pro Patria Chapter, I.O.D.E. and to say that the socks were needed, as Kitchener boots are to say the least, a bit rough on socks.

I notice that you sent three dozen pairs. As I expect to leave for France any day now I have arranged for the distribution of the third dozen when they arrive. Our battalion is pretty well broken up. We have only about five hundred men left, and by the end of this week all the officers except five will be in France. About sixteen are there are now. Everybody would have liked to have gone across as a unit. But the Battalions in France have to be reinforced, so we are being sent to several different battalions.

Again many thanks for the socks and best regards from everybody here to all the members of the chapter.

Yours sincerely, Stewart Cowan

Shorncliffe, England July 5th, 1916

Two days after writing the above letter, on July 7, 1916, Lieutenant Cowan joined the Canadian Infantry, 24th Battalion, Quebec Regiment, CEF. On that same day, he disembarked in Boulogne, France. The next day, he joined the 24th Battalion "in the field" at the front. Lieutenant Stewart Cowan took part in the fighting during the **Battle of the Somme** (July 1-November 18, 1916), one of the bloodiest and most futile battles in history. The

Somme battle lasted for more than four brutal months, and saw the Allies advance around 10 kilometers. A more telling statistic is the number of injuries and deaths: of the 85,000 Canadian Corps, there were more than 24,000 Canadian casualties.



Lieutenant Stewart Cowan

Seven weeks after arriving, on September 1, 1916, he injured his rib, but was only out of action for one day. The second major offensive of the Somme battle was the week-long Battle of Flers-Courcelette (September 15-22). It was here where tanks made their first appearance in the war. The Battle was a stunning success for the Canadians, but it came at a cost of over 7,200 casualties. One month after injuring his rib, on October 1, 1916, Stewart Cowan lost his life “in the field” while fighting during the Battle of the Somme. He was initially recorded as, “Reported from base – killed in action 1-10-16”. His Circumstances of Death register records him as; *Date of Casualty: 1-10-16. “Killed in Action”. Killed while leading his Platoon over the parapet in an attack on enemy trenches. Location of Unit at the time of Casualty: COURCELETTE.*

The Cowan family later learned that the night Stewart was killed, brother Hector Cowan had arranged for a friend to take his shift so that he could go look for his brother. Hector along with another Sarnian and Cowan family friend Richard Lesueur, were not able to find Stewart’s body or his grave. Stewart Cowan’s body was never recovered and he has no known grave.

Following is the report on Stewart Cowan’s death from the October 13, 1916 *Sarnia Observer*, under the heading “LIEUT. STEWART COWAN MAKES SUPREME SACRIFICE”:

Another Sarnia young man has laid down his life for King and Country in the person of Lieut. Stewart Cowan, son of Mr. and Mrs. John Cowan of this city, and a promising young law student, who was killed in action somewhere in France. Sunday morning a cablegram was received by Mr. Cowan from Col. R.I. Towers in England, stating, “All Sarnia boys well on the 5th.” In the evening another cablegram was received from Col. Towers stating, “Death of Stewart Cowan reported. First information was incorrect. Trying to verify later report.” The receipt of the latter cable brought sorrow to the parents, relatives and many friends of the young soldier who was one of the most popular young men of this city. He took an active interest in all athletic sports and was especially active in the great winter game of hockey. He qualified for a Lieutenant and went overseas with the 70th Battalion leaving London last Good Friday, April 21st.

Days later, a memorial service for Lieutenant Stewart Cowan was held at St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church. Before a church filled to capacity, Reverend Mr. Patterson quoted from scripture the words, “Now when the centurion saw what was done, he glorified God, saying, certainly this was a righteous man.” Following is a portion of the words spoken by Reverend Mr. Patterson:

The note of respectful admiration inherent in the Roman Centurion’s tribute to the dead Christ is being re-echoed these days. We are conscious of it as we scan the weary casualty lists that appear with such monotonous regularity, day by day. We should be conscious of it in all memorial services—the least the Church can do for men

who have fallen in a righteous cause. In the midst of deep sorrow for losses sustained, our admiration for the heroic fortitude of our dead soldiers should bind us closer to the cause for which they died, and fill us with an ever-increasing resolve that their sacrifice will not be in vain.

... we hold this memorial service—over one young in years but who has fought a good fight and finished his course, having held fast the Faith. Stewart Cowan left us in all the flush of young manhood, buoyant, eager, enthusiastic, anxious to do his share in the world-war, as he was ever willing and anxious to do his share in anything that came to his hand. His cheeriness and kindliness of spirit endeared him to us all. He was preeminently manly in word, deed, character—just the type who would have been a credit to his profession—to the community in which he lived, and the Church in which he worshipped. When the call to arms came, he could do nothing else—he had to go. When the last great call came we believe he met it fearlessly, and without regret.

Our farewell to men of this type while sad, is not all sadness. It is both proud and sad. Sad indeed for the loss sustained, but proud that the dead left behind an unblemished character, that they hastened home early to their God, without reproach. Surely in some other sphere God has a great place and work for the hosts of young men who are appearing before him with the dew of their youth upon them.

The service concluded with Reverend Patterson appealing for donations on behalf of the British Red Cross Fund, the organist playing the Dead March, and the congregation singing the National Anthem, “bringing this most impressive service to a close.”

Pauline Louise Pardee, who had been dating Stewart before he went to war, ended up marrying Stewart’s older brother John, on March 19, 1919 in Sarnia. Pauline and John Cowan resided on Vidal Street and had two children together: Jane (born 1920) and John (born 1924). Years later, John served with the RCN in World War II.

In the mid-1930’s, Pauline and her friend, Mrs. Rooney, travelled to France to pay her respects at the grave of Stewart. In the area of Vimy, she purchased from street vendors, a ceramic arrangement of white roses and a ceramic wreath of white roses. Her intention was to leave these on Stewart’s grave. It was not until she was in France that she learned that Stewart had no grave. Stewart Cowan’s name, however, is inscribed on the Vimy Memorial, which was unveiled on July 26, 1936.

According to family members, Stewart’s parents, John and Eliza, rarely mentioned the son whom they had lost in the Great War. Pauline, however, strove to keep Stewart’s memory alive. When she returned to Sarnia with the two ceramic white rose carvings, she displayed them on a table in their family home. Today, they are the possession of her son, John.

When Pauline passed away in March 1986, she had outlived her husband, John (died January 1965), by over three decades. Both John and Pauline Cowan are buried in Lakeview Cemetery in Sarnia.

Lakeview Cemetery is also the final resting place of Stewart Cowan’s parents; John Jr. (died June 10, 1926) and Eliza Ann Cowan (died July 16, 1938). Twenty-six-year-old Stewart Cowan has no known grave. He is memorialized on the Vimy Memorial, Pas de Calais, France, and has a memorial stone in Lakeview Cemetery in Sarnia.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 2G, 6O, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10Z, 2s, 3n, 4f

CRAWFORD, Robert Palmer (#46570)

Promoted to Lance Corporal just three months before, Robert Palmer Crawford, 29, was killed in the Battle of the Somme on September 7, 1916. Inscribed on his gravestone in France are the words HE DIED FOR KING AND COUNTRY.

Robert was born in Petrolia, Ontario, on November 2, 1886, the middle son of George Johnson Adair and Lomila Kathleen (nee Stafford) Crawford, of Lambton East (Enniskillen). The family later moved to Sarnia and lived at several addresses: 323 Christina Street, then 279 Russell Street, and 110 Victoria Street. George Crawford (born 1859 in Perth County), an engineer, and Lomila Stafford (born 1859 in Dawn Mills) were married on March 19, 1877 at the bride’s father’s house in Marthaville, just outside Petrolia. George and Lomila had eight children together: sons Clifford (born 1885); Robert and Royal Bruce (see below); and daughters Bessie (born 1879); Cora (born 1881); Celia Grace (born April 1892); Murtle (born August 1893); and Vera Agnes (born June 20, 1900).

Prior to enlisting, Robert was working as a farmer and had served two years with the 27th Lambton Borderers Militia. At age twenty-eight, he enlisted in the 37th Battalion, Canadian Expeditionary Force, at Niagara Camp on May 27, 1915. Perhaps he was influenced by his younger brother Royal, age eighteen, who had enlisted

seventeen days earlier. Robert stood five feet ten inches tall, had blue eyes and fair hair, and was single at the time. He recorded his trade or calling as farmer, and his next-of-kin as his mother, Mrs. Lomila Crawford of 279 Russell Street. Less than one month later, on June 20, 1915, he was transferred to the 17th Reserve Battalion, with the rank of Private. Tragedy struck the Crawford family on July 20, 1915 when father George Crawford (an engineer) age fifty-six, drowned in the St. Clair River.

On September 6, 1915, Robert Crawford arrived in France, and was transferred to the Canadian Infantry, 15th Battalion, Central Ontario Regiment. On March 30th of 1916, Robert sent this letter from France to his widowed mother Lomila in Sarnia:

Dear Mother,

Just a few lines to let you know I am well and kicking. I have not had any mail for some time. In fact our mail system seems to have been all shot to pieces lately, or else everyone has quit writing, and I hate to think the latter. However I expect that everything will be all right soon as things are settled down again. We have moved again since my last letter. At this rate we will soon see the most of France and Belgium. We are in Belgium at present, but quite a way from the front line. This is a fine day but we have had some very nasty weather lately with cold winds and heavy frosts, but spring must come soon now. I will be pleased when the warm weather comes again. I had a few pictures taken in the last town we were in. If they are any good I will send some, otherwise I won't. Best to all.

Your loving son, Bob

On June 3, 1916, Robert was with the 15th Battalion (48th Highlanders, Machine Gun Section), and was promoted in the field to Lance Corporal. Three months later, the Lance Corporal from Lambton County was killed in France while fighting during the **Battle of the Somme**. The Battle of the Somme, waged from July 1-November 18, 1916, was one of the most futile and bloody battles in history. The Somme battle lasted for more than four brutal months and saw the Allies advance around 10 kilometers. A more telling statistic is the number of injuries and deaths: of the 85,000 Canadian Corps, there were more than 24,000 Canadian casualties.

On September 7, 1916, Lance Corporal Robert Crawford was wounded in action during fighting at the Somme. He was taken to No. 49 Casualty Clearing Station (CCS) with a gunshot wound in the left shoulder. He never left the CCS and five days later, on September 12, he was dead as a result of his wounds.

Robert died only ten days prior to his younger brother Royal's arrival in France. Robert's Circumstances of Death Register records him as; *Date of Casualty: 12-9-16. "Died of Wounds" (Gunshot Wound Left Shoulder) at No. 49 Casualty Clearing Station. Contay British Cemetery, 2 miles West of Warloy-Baillon, 7 ¼ miles west of Albert, France.*

On September 19, 1916, Lomila, now living on Durand Street, received a telegram from Ottawa informing her that her son Robert was officially reported as wounded. The following day she received another telegram from the War Record Office at Ottawa. The latter official telegram reads as follows:

MRS. L. CRAWFORD, 132 DURAND STREET,

DEEPLY REGRET INFORM YOU NO. 46570, LANCE-CORP ROBT PALMER CRAWFORD, OFFICIALLY REPORTED DIED OF WOUNDS, 49TH CASUALTY CLEARING STATION, SEPT 12TH, GUNSHOT WOUNDS SHOULDER.

SIGNED, O.I.C.R.O.

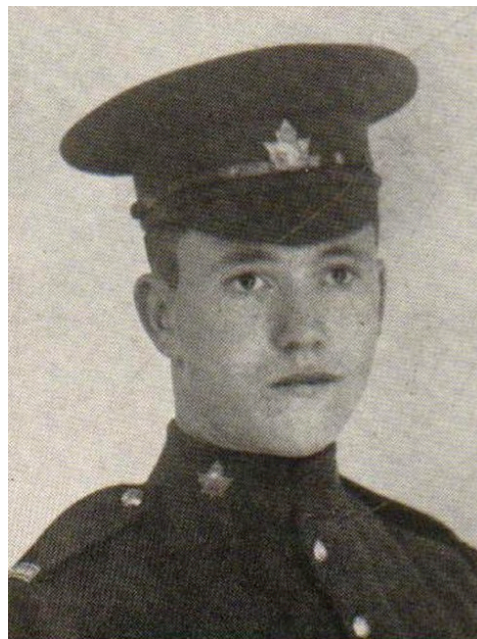
The headline in the September 22, 1916 edition of the *Sarnia Observer* read *Two Sarnia Young Men Make Supreme Sacrifice*. The second Sarnian besides Robert was Captain Norman Ewart Towers who had died of wounds eight days after Robert Crawford. (Norman Tower's story is included in this Project on page 385).

Lance Corporal Robert Crawford, 29, is buried in Contay British Cemetery, Somme, France, Grave I.C.2. On his headstone are inscribed the words, HE DIED FOR KING AND COUNTRY. Approximately two years later, Lomila Crawford lost a second son in France, twenty-one-year-old Royal Bruce Crawford. With eerie similarity, she first received the news that Royal was wounded and missing; then days later, she received the news that he had been killed in action.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 2G, 7C, 8A, 8X, 8Y, 10Z



Lance Corporal Robert Palmer Crawford



Lieutenant Royal Bruce Crawford

CRAWFORD, Royal Bruce (#400908)

The death of decorated lieutenant Royal Bruce Crawford caught many at home by surprise. In mid-October, 1918, an article in the *Sarnia Observer* stated that *Sarnia is proud of Lieut. Crawford, as it has every reason to be. Going to the front he has worked his way from the rank and file to the commissioned officers' ranks... His mother received his Military Medal a few days ago and is justly proud of the honor her son has brought on her home.* Unknown to anyone in Sarnia at the time, Royal had been killed in action on October 1, 1918.

Royal was born in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, on December 28, 1896. Royal was the youngest son of George Johnson Adair and Lomila Katharine (nee Stafford) Crawford, of Lambton East (Enniskillen). The family later moved to Sarnia and lived at several addresses: 323 Christina Street, then 279 Russell Street, and 110 Victoria Street. George Crawford (born 1859 in Perth County), an engineer, and Lomila Stafford (born 1859 in Dawn Mills) were married on March 19, 1877 at the bride's father's house in Marthaville, just outside Petrolia. George and Lomila had eight children together: sons Clifford (born 1885); Robert Palmer (see above) and Royal; and daughters Bessie (born 1879); Cora (born 1881); Celia Grace (born April 1892); Murtle (born August 1893); and Vera Agnes (born June 20, 1900).

Prior to enlisting, Royal was employed as a clerk in the office of the Imperial Oil Company. At age eighteen, he enlisted on May 10, 1915 in London, Ontario with the 33rd Overseas Battalion, Canadian Expeditionary Force. (His older brother Robert, age twenty-eight, enlisted seventeen days later). Royal stood five feet eleven inches tall, had brown eyes and black hair, and was single at the time. Royal recorded his trade or calling as Clerk, and his next-of-kin as his mother Mrs. George Crawford of 279 Russell Street. It must have been a difficult time for his mother. Not only did she see two of her sons going off to war, but tragedy struck when her husband, 56-year-old George Crawford (an engineer), drowned in the St. Clair River on July 20, 1915.

Royal received training in London, Ontario and by December 1915, had been promoted to the rank of Corporal. He embarked overseas on March 13, 1916 aboard the *S.S. Lapland* and arrived in England on March 26, 1916 with the 33rd Infantry Battalion, with the rank of Acting Corporal. Royal trained at Shorncliffe and then West Sandling. He revealed his strength of character when, on September 9, 1916, he reverted to the rank of Private at his request, so that he could get to the front sooner. He got his wish.

Royal Crawford arrived in France with the 1st Canadian Battalion on September 22, 1916. Upon his arrival, the first news he received was that Robert, his older brother, had been killed only ten days prior to Royal's arrival in France. This was a severe blow to young Royal. By early October 1916, however, Royal was with his unit in the trenches of the front lines.

On February 17, 1917, Royal was admitted to No. 2 Canadian Field Ambulance, where he remained for

eighteen days while recovering from Inflammation of Connective Tissue (ICT) in his feet, a common condition of soldiers in the trenches. Royal went on to earn his commission in the field, first being promoted to Lance Corporal. In June 1917, Royal Crawford sent a letter home to his widowed mother, Lomila, in Sarnia. The following is a portion of that letter:

Dear Mother,

I am well and getting along alright. Hope the folks are all well over there. The weather still continues fine and that is a great thing here. The country looks very nice just now only they have a nasty habit of blowing the scenery into little bits every now and then. But I guess we can stand it if Fritz can.... Hope this is soon over, so we won't have to do much writing. By the way, you can address my letters to Lance-Corporal Crawford now....

Roy

His superiors were taking note of Royal's actions in the field. On November 1, 1917, he was promoted to the rank of Corporal, then to Lance Sergeant, and on December 1, 1917 to the rank of Sergeant. In December 1917, he was awarded the Military Medal (MM) for his bravery on the field. The award reads, "*At Passchendaele on Nov 6th 1917 this N.C.O. immediately took command of the platoon when his Platoon Commander was killed during the early stages of the attack. This N.C.O. succeeded in capturing and consolidating the portion of the objective allotted to his platoon. After the objective had been gained he acted as C.S.M. the Coy S.M. having become a casualty, and rendered invaluable services in consolidating position gained. By his courage and skill he assisted greatly in keeping up the spirit of the men. Although wounded he remained on duty until the Company was relieved.*"

Recognizing his worth, his superiors recommended him for a commission, and on February 5th, 1918, he was returned to Bramshott, England to begin his course to fit him for a commissioned officer's post. Attached to the 4th Canadian Reserve Battalion, he received training at Canadian Training Schools in Shorncliffe, Camp Witley and Bexhill. Royal Crawford received his commission as Lieutenant on August 6th, 1918. In early September 1918, Lomila received her son's Military Medal that he had won for bravery on the field. It brought her great joy and pride and, perhaps, helped her forget Robert's death. On September 17, 1918, Lieutenant Royal Crawford returned to France, arriving first at the Canadian Corps Reinforcement Camp (CCRC). Ten days later, he rejoined his old unit in France, the "Fighting First" Battalion, Western Ontario Regiment.

The **Hundred Days Campaign** (August 8 – November 11, 1918 in France and Belgium) was the "beginning of the end" of the Great War. Canadians were called on again and again over the three-month period to lead the offensives against the toughest German defences. The series of victories repeatedly drove the Germans back, culminating in Germany's unconditional surrender on November 11, but it came at a cost of almost 46,000 Canadians killed, wounded and missing.

The first offensive in the Campaign was the Battle of Amiens (August 8-14, 1918), a truly all-arms battle, one that all four Canadian divisions would be involved in. Over the course of one week, in a battle that British Field Marshal Douglas Haig called "*the finest operation of the war*", the Canadians would advance nearly 14 km. The second offensive in the Campaign was the Battle of Arras and Breaking the DQ Line (August 26-September 3, 1918), where Canadians were part of a spearhead force tasked with crashing one of the most heavily fortified positions, the Hindenburg Line. General Sir Julian Byng called the Canadian victory at Arras and the DQ Line "*the turning point of the campaign*".

The third offensive in Canada's Hundred Days Campaign was the **Battle of Canal-du-Nord and Cambrai** in France (September 27-October 11, 1918). Against seemingly impossible odds and a desperate fully prepared enemy, the Canadians fought for two weeks in a series of brutal engagements. They successfully channelled through a narrow gap in the canal, punched through a series of fortified villages and deep interlocking trenches, and captured Boursin Wood and the city of Cambrai. General Arthur Currie would call it "*some of the bitterest fighting we have experienced*" and it came at a cost of 14,000 Canadian casualties.

On October 1st, 1918, Lieutenant Royal Crawford of the Canadian Infantry, 1st Battalion, Western Ontario Regiment, was killed while fighting in the Battle of Canal-du-Nord and Cambrai. He was initially reported as "wounded and missing", and later recorded as "killed in action" on the same day.

In mid-October 1918, word of Royal's death had not reached home in Sarnia. The *Sarnia Observer* printed an article on the two Crawford boys, noting that Robert had already made the supreme sacrifice. For Royal, it reported on his rise in the ranks, on his wounding and recovery, and on the Military Medal that he was awarded. It also stated:

... Sarnia is proud of Lieut. Crawford, as it has every reason to be. Going to the front he has worked his way from the rank and file to the commissioned officers' ranks, and if his past history is any criterion of what his future is to be, the young hero has not by any means reached the apex of his military career.

Previously to enlistment Roy was employed on the office staff on the Imperial Oil Company, where he has many friends, who are glad to hear of his successes in the war and hope for the return of his strength to enable him to carry on in the heroic way he has to date. His mother received his Military Medal a few days ago and is justly proud of the honor her son has brought on her home.

A few days after the above article appeared in the *Observer*, Lomila received a telegram informing her that her youngest son, LIEUT. ROY BRUCE CRAWFORD WAS OFFICIALLY REPORTED WOUNDED AND MISSING OCTOBER 1ST. A few days later, she received another telegram, this one informing her that her son, ROYAL BRUCE CRAWFORD, WHO HAD BEEN PREVIOUSLY REPORTED MISSING AND WOUNDED, IS NOW REPORTED KILLED IN ACTION, DATE OF CASUALTY, OCTOBER 1ST, 1918.

The news must have been devastating for widowed Lomila. Robert first, in September 1916, and now Royal two years later.

Royal Crawford's Circumstances of Death register records him as; *Date of Casualty: 1-10-18. "Previously reported Wounded and Missing, now Killed in Action. Was killed by machine gun bullets through the abdomen and one lung. Location of Unit at time of Casualty: VICINITY OF BLECOURT. Sancourt British Cemetery. 10 ¾ miles South East of Douai, France. Royal Crawford, 21, is buried in Sancourt British Cemetery, Nord, France, Grave I.C.19. On his headstone are inscribed the words, HE DIED FOR KING AND COUNTRY.* SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 2G, 7C, 8A, 8X, 8Y, 10Z

CREIGHTON, Thomas (#24657, also A2878)

Born in England, Thomas Creighton had immigrated to Sarnia at age thirty-five and made the Imperial City his home. A few years later, he was married and working steadily and his wife, Clara, and he were parents to Thomas Jr., their only child. Thomas, now 38, enlisted with every intention of serving overseas, but died before he got the chance.

Thomas was born in Camberley, Surrey, England, on August 31, 1876, the son of Michael (born 1850 in Ireland) and Mary (nee Degan, born 1849 in England) Creighton, of South Farnborough, England. Michael and Mary Creighton had eleven children together: seven sons--William (born 1875); Thomas; James (born 1877); Francis (born 1883); Harry (born 1885); Christie (born 1887); and Frederick (born 1889). Their four daughters were Bridgett (born 1870); Ellen (born 1873); Mary (born 1880); and Winifred (born 1893).

In June 1911, Thomas, 35, departed Liverpool, England and arrived in Canada. He disembarked in Montreal and made his way to Sarnia, with plans to be a general labourer. Six months after arriving in Sarnia, on December 16, 1911, Thomas married twenty-eight-year-old Clara Harcourt (born October 1883 in Suffolk, England, daughter of Walter and Louisa Harcourt).

Thomas Creighton was employed as a painter at the time. Early in 1911, Clara had been residing in Hertfordshire, England, residing with William and Mabel Farrell, where she was employed as a General Servant. Clara had arrived in Port Huron, Michigan in June 1911 to visit her brother Arthur Samuel Harcourt (born 1878) and his wife Lilly who had immigrated to Port Huron the previous year.

After their marriage, Thomas and Clara had one child together: Thomas (Junior) Michael Walter Creighton, born July 1, 1912 in Sarnia. Of note: Thomas' brother-in-law, twenty-seven-year-old Arthur Harcourt, enlisted in the CEF on May 24, 1917 in Windsor, Ontario (he and his wife Lilly were residing in Detroit at the time). Arthur had served in the Boer War with the Norfolk Regiment, and in the First World War he served in England with the 21st Regiment, CEF. He was discharged in January 1919.

At age 38, Thomas Creighton enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force in Sarnia on January 16, 1915. He stood five feet seven inches tall, had hazel eyes and fair hair, and was residing with his wife and son at 268 London Road at the time. Thomas recorded his previous military experience as: twelve years with the York and Lancashire Regiment in England and time with the 27th Militia Regiment in Sarnia. He recorded his trade or calling as fireman, and his next-of-kin as his mother Mary Creighton of South Farnbough, Hants., England.

Thomas Creighton became a member of the Army, Canadian Infantry, 34th Battalion, Central Ontario

Regiment, with the rank of Private. Two weeks after enlisting, on February 1, 1915, Thomas was promoted to the rank of Sergeant, attached to the 34th Battalion, Machine Gun Section. Though scheduled to go overseas, Thomas did not have the opportunity to do so.

On February 20, 1915, Thomas took ill and was taken to Guelph General Hospital. He was given the best of care including the services of a special nurse both day and night; however, on February 27, 1915, less than six weeks after enlisting, Thomas Creighton passed away due to pneumonia. He died at Guelph General Hospital, the Circumstances of Casualty officially recording him as; *Date of Death 27-2-15. Pneumonia – Admitted to hospital 20-2-15. Given every care and attention. Had special nurse night and day. Cemetery: Our Lady of Mercy, Sarnia, Ontario. Single grave, C.1, wooden marker.*

Thomas' funeral notice was in the Guelph and Sarnia newspapers.

TO BE LAID AT REST WITH MILITARY HONOURS

Funeral of Sergt. Creighton of 34th Battalion, To Be Held Tomorrow.

Guelph, February 28, 1915 – The remains of the late Sergeant Thomas Creighton, of the 34th Battalion, who died in the general hospital here, were conveyed to the Grand Trunk station at 11 o'clock this morning with full military honors for burial at Sarnia. It was one of the most impressive sights seen in this city for some time. The casket was placed on a gun carriage and the cortege was led by the Salvation Army band, playing the dead march from Saul. The 34th bugle band played "Last Post" and "Lights Out" at the station as the train moved out.

Thomas' remains arrived in Sarnia the next day, accompanied by an officer and six privates from the 34th Battalion, who acted as pallbearers. The funeral took place from his late residence, 268 London Road, on March 2, 1915 to Our Lady of Mercy Church and then to the Roman Catholic cemetery for internment. It was conducted with military honors and a firing party of twelve men from the wireless and Tunnel guards that had been detailed for duty for the occasion. The 27th regimental band also attended the funeral.

Thomas Creighton, 38, is buried in Our Lady of Mercy Roman Catholic Cemetery, Sarnia. On his headstone are inscribed the words, LOVING WIFE AND SON. After Thomas' death, Clara returned to England, and later remarried. Her second husband, Arthur George Groves, and she lived at Chesterfield, Derbyshire, England, and had two children together: Clara Louisa and Percy Ernest Groves.
SOURCES: C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 2G, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10Z

CROUCHER, Jesse Henry Edward (#602611)

Less than four months after arriving in France, Jesse Henry Edward Croucher, 28, was killed in action at the Battle of the Somme. Private Croucher has no known grave, but is memorialized on the Vimy Memorial, Pas de Calais, France.

Jesse Croucher was born in Herne Bay, Kent, England, on May 28, 1888, the son of English-born parents John Thomas and Annie Marie (nee Anderson) Croucher. John Croucher (born February 1848 in Sittingbourne, Kent, England), a labourer/brick maker at the time, married Annie Anderson (born April 1846 also in Sittingbourne, Kent, England) in England in 1865. John and Annie Croucher were blessed with twelve children together: three sons-- James Thomas (born 1868); John Thomas Jr. (born 1870); and Jesse--and nine daughters. They included Alice Matilda (born 1866); Harriett Ann (born 1872); Anne Susan (born 1875); Louisa Jane (born 1877); Elizabeth Jane "Rose" (born 1883); Isabelle (born 1885); Lizzie (born 1889); Florence Eleanor (born September 1890); and Violet May (born 1895).

Jesse originally enlisted with British Royal Engineers and Army Service Corps in Canterbury, England on December 29, 1908 when he was twenty. Like his father, Jesse was a brick maker.

Things changed for John and Annie Croucher when they, along with at least two of their children, Jesse and Violet, immigrated to Canada in 1910. Jesse, 21, arrived at the Port of Quebec aboard the passenger ship *Empress of Britain* on July 21, 1910. He listed his destination as Watford and his intended occupation as farm labourer. A number of other Croucher family members also immigrated to Canada (and Sarnia), including Jesse's siblings James Thomas, John Thomas Jr., Elizabeth "Rose", Florence and Violet May. By 1911, John and Annie, along with Jesse and Violet, were residing in Warwick Township, where both John and Jesse were employed as brick makers. Brother John Thomas Jr. also served in the First World War, as a Private with the British Army, Labour Corps, but his experience would differ from that of his younger brother.

When he was twenty-seven years old, Jesse Croucher enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary

Force on July 1, 1915 in Sarnia, becoming a member of the 34th Battalion. He stood five feet four and a half inches tall, had grey eyes and dark brown hair, was single, and was residing with his parents John and Annie at the time. Jesse recorded his trade or calling as car repairer, and his next-of-kin as his father John Thomas Croucher of Devine Street (they later resided at 353 Wellington Street and then Ontario Street, Sarnia). Jesse had several tattoos on his arms including, on his right forearm – a heart and clasped hands with a lady's face with the words "true love".



Private Jesse Croucher

Jesse Croucher embarked overseas on October 23, 1915 aboard the *S.S. California*. He arrived in England on November 1, 1915, where he was initially stationed at Bramshott. Three months later, on February 3, 1916, he was transferred to the 23rd Battalion, stationed at West Sandling. Three-and-a-half months later, on May 25, 1916, he was transferred to the 2nd Battalion and departed with them the next day to France.

On May 26, 1916, Private Jesse Croucher became a member of the Canadian Infantry, 7th Battalion, British Columbia Regiment in France. Less than two weeks after arriving in France, on June 7, 1916, Private Jesse Croucher was with his unit, the 7th Battalion, at the front lines. He soon found himself taking part in the fighting during the **Battle of the Somme** (July 1-November 18, 1916)--one of the most futile and bloody battles in history. The Somme battle lasted for more than four brutal months and saw the Allies advance around 10 kilometers. A more telling statistic is the number of injuries and deaths: of the 85,000 Canadian Corps, there were more than 24,000 Canadian casualties.

The second major offensive of the Somme battle was the week-long Battle of Flers-Courcelette (September 15-22). It was here where tanks made their first appearance in the war. In the days leading up to this offensive, and only three months after arriving at the front lines, on September 9, 1916, Jesse Croucher was killed while fighting during the Battle of the Somme. He was later officially recorded as; *Date of Casualty: 9-9-16. "Killed in Action". Location of Unit at time of Casualty: COURCELETTE. Reported Locations of Grave: Buried outside Tom's Cut Trench Somme.*

In early November 1916, St. John's Church in Sarnia held a memorial service for several of the local fallen. The following is the report on it from the *Sarnia Observer*:

MEMORIAL SERVICE AT ST. JOHN'S CHURCH

*A memorial service was held at St. John's Church Sunday evening for Thos. Littlefield, **Jesse Croucher** and George Giles, who were recently killed at the Front. There was a large attendance, and the service was of a very solemn character. A practical address was delivered by Rev. F.G. Newton, rector, who eulogized the men and their work in defence of the empire. He also spoke words of consolation to those mourning for their dead, and exhorted the congregation to do all they could by constant acts of kindness to the bereaved, to show they appreciated the sacrifice made by the men who are now no more. The music and hymns which were appropriate to the occasion, were exceedingly rendered. Mr. Hargreaves played with effect the "Dead March in Saul."*

Note: George Giles' story is included in this Project.

Twenty-eight-year-old Jesse Croucher has no known grave. He is memorialized on the Vimy Memorial, Pas de Calais, France.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 2G, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10Z

CUNNINGHAM, Alexander (#3131569)

Alexander Cunningham, 24, died in action five weeks before the Great War ended. In Sarnia, his family was devastated. His parents penned the lines *Dear son of mine, you sleep with the brave/Where no tears of your mother can drop on your grave*. His siblings expressed their grief with these words: *In life we loved you dear/In death we do the same*.

Alexander was born in Fauldhouse, Lanarkshire, Scotland, on March 28, 1894, the eldest son of James and Isabella (nee Wark) Cunningham. James and Bella had five children together over a period of fifteen years: sons Alexander; John Wark (born 1896); James (born 1902); and Robert (born 1909); and daughter Agnes (born 1898). On November 25, 1913, the entire Cunningham family immigrated to Canada (the children's ages were Alexander 19, John 17, Agnes 14, James 11, and Robert 4). They departed from Glasgow, Scotland aboard the *Cassandra* and arrived in St. John's Newfoundland. Their final destination was Sarnia where James found work as an engineman to support his family.

Alexander and his brother John both enlisted and served in the Great War, although John's stint in WWI had a much different ending. **John Cunningham**, born March 15, 1896 in Fauldhouse, Scotland enlisted in Sarnia on October 7, 1915. He was nineteen years old, stood five feet ten and a half inches tall, had blue eyes and light hair and was single at the time. He was employed as a fireman at Imperial Oil and recorded his next of kin as his father James Cunningham on George Street. John became a member of the 70th Overseas Battalion, CEF.

Four months after enlisting, on February 11, 1916, Private John Cunningham, 19, married Sarah Ann McClymont, 20, in Sarnia. Sarah was born in Scotland and had immigrated to Canada, also in 1913. John's next-of-kin was then changed to his wife Sarah, living at 112 Maria Street, and later 347 Cameron Street (with John's parents James and Bella).

Approximately six weeks after getting married, on April 24, 1916, John embarked from Halifax aboard the *SS Lapland* and arrived in England on May 5. He underwent training at Shorncliffe and later West Sandling where he was transferred to the 39th Battalion in July. John arrived in France on August 27, 1916, as a member of the 18th Battalion. He continued his training, including two weeks with the 1st Army School of Mortars. In mid-January 1917 he was promoted to Lance Corporal.

John Cunningham fought in the Battle of Vimy Ridge in France, April 9-12, 1917. It was the very first time and the only time that all four divisions of the Canadian Corps, with soldiers from every region in the country, would attack together as one formation. Of the 97,000 Canadians who fought at Vimy Ridge, approximately 7,004 were wounded and 3,598 would lose their lives in four days of battle. The Battle of Vimy Ridge was a seminal battle and significant victory for Canada, later referred to as "the birth of a nation".

On the first day of the Battle, on April 9, John was wounded in action by enemy shrapnel. His wounds were recorded as "gun shot wounds legs and left arm, severe". He was treated at #10 Casualty Field Station; then at #24 General Hospital, Etaples, before being returned to England in early May. He continued recovery at 3rd Western General Hospital, Cardiff, and in September at Canadian Convalescent Hospital Bearwood, Wokingham. In early December 1917, he was returned to Canada and continued his recovery at Guelph Convalescent Hospital. Corporal John Cunningham was discharged from the military in Guelph on February 28, 1918 as he was deemed "being medically unfit for further military service". In November 1918, the Great War ended.

John Cunningham returned to Sarnia and in 1921, Sarah and he were living at 561 George Street. John was employed as a pumpman at Imperial Oil. John and Sarah had a two-year-old son then, Alexander James—named to honour John's brother Alexander, killed in action in October 1918.

In Europe, with the Canadian troops thinning at an alarming rate and no end to the war in sight, the government instituted the Military Service Act in 1917. Twenty-three-year-old **Alexander Cunningham** was drafted under the Military Service Act of 1917, Class One. He underwent his medical examination in Sarnia on October 10, 1917. He was called to service on January 9, 1918, reporting to the 1st Depot Battalion, Western Ontario Regiment in London, Ontario. Just as Alexander was starting his military service, his brother John's service was over. John, wounded at Vimy, had just returned to Canada the previous month.

Alexander stood five feet ten and a half inches tall, had blue eyes and brown hair, was single, and was residing with his parents at the time. He recorded his trade or calling as farmer, and his next-of-kin as his father James Cunningham of 347 Cameron Street, Sarnia. Two days later, he would complete his Military Will, bequeathing his estate to his mother Mrs. Bella Cunningham.

On February 5, 1918, Alexander Cunningham embarked overseas from Halifax aboard the *S.S. Grampian*. He arrived in England on February 16, 1918, becoming a member of the 4th Canadian Reserve Battalion stationed at Bramshott. Six months later, on August 18, 1918, he was attached to the 18th Battalion at Camp Witley, and one week later was transferred to the Canadian Infantry, 43rd Highlanders Battalion, Manitoba Regiment, with the rank of Private. Private Alexander Cunningham arrived in France with the 43rd Battalion the next day, on August 26, 1918.

The **Hundred Days Campaign** (August 8 – November 11, 1918 in France and Belgium) was the “beginning of the end” of the Great War. Canadians were called on again and again over the three-month period to lead the offensives against the toughest German defences. The series of victories repeatedly drove the Germans back, culminating in Germany’s unconditional surrender on November 11, but it came at a cost of almost 46,000 Canadians killed, wounded and missing.

The first offensive in the Campaign was the Battle of Amiens (August 8-14, 1918), a truly all-arms battle, one that all four Canadian divisions would be involved in. Over the course of one week, in a battle that British Field Marshal Douglas Haig called “*the finest operation of the war*”, the Canadians would advance nearly 14 km. The second offensive in the Campaign was the Battle of Arras and Breaking the DQ Line (August 26-September 3, 1918), where Canadians were part of a spearhead force tasked with crashing one of the most heavily fortified positions, the Hindenburg Line. General Sir Julian Byng called the Canadian victory at Arras and the DQ Line “*the turning point of the campaign*”.

The third offensive in Canada’s Hundred Days Campaign was the **Battle of Canal-du-Nord and Cambrai** in France (September 27-October 11, 1918). Against seemingly impossible odds and a desperate fully prepared enemy, the Canadians fought for two weeks in a series of brutal engagements. They successfully channelled through a narrow gap in the canal, punched through a series of fortified villages and deep interlocking trenches, and captured Brouillon Wood and the city of Cambrai. General Arthur Currie would call it “*some of the bitterest fighting we have experienced*” and it came at a cost of 14,000 Canadian casualties.

Five weeks after arriving in France, on October 1, 1918, while fighting in the Battle of Canal-du-Nord and Cambrai, Private Alexander Cunningham suffered gun shot/shrapnel wounds to his right arm and to his head. He was taken to No. 30 Casualty Clearing Station and died two days later on October 3, 1918, the result of his wounds.

In mid-October 1918, James Cunningham in Sarnia received a telegram informing him of his son’s death and the cause of it. Alexander’s Circumstances of Death Register records him as; *Date of Casualty: 3-10-18. “Died of Wounds”. On October 1st 1918, he was wounded by enemy shrapnel. After receiving attention, he was evacuated to No. 30 Casualty Clearing Station where he succumbed to his wounds two days later. Bucquoy Road British Cemetery, France.*

After learning of their son’s death, Alexander’s mother Bella and father James wrote the following:

*Dear son of mine, you sleep with the brave,
Where no tears of your mother can drop on your grave,
Unknown to the world, you stand by my side,
And whisper, dear mother, death cannot divide.*

The following was written by Alexander Cunningham’s sister, sister-in-law, and brothers:

*Peaceful be thy rest, dear brother;
‘Tis sweet to breathe thy name;
In life we loved you dear;
In death we do the same.*

Approximately one month after Alexander’s death, the Great War would come to an end. Alexander Cunningham, 24, is buried in Bucquoy Road Cemetery, Pas de Calais, France, Grave IV.D.19. In November 2019, his name along with 25 others was added to the Sarnia cenotaph, engraved in stone to be remembered always.
SOURCES: C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 2G, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10Z

DAVIES, Sidney Richard (#844276)

When he enlisted in 1916, thirty-three-year-old Sidney Richard Davies was older than the typical recruit. He was a competent soldier who rose quickly in the ranks from Corporal to Sergeant. Exactly one month before the war ended, Sergeant Sidney Davies was killed by an enemy shell in the Battle of Canal-du-Nord and Cambrai.

Sidney Davies was born in Strood, Kent County, England, on August 24, 1882, the son of Richard Vickers (born 1843) and Mary Ann (nee Gorman, born 1857) Davies, of Strood, Kent, England. Richard and Mary Ann were married on May 31, 1874 in All Saints Parish Church, Frindsbury, Kent and were blessed with nine children together: sons John Thomas (born 1876); George Ernest (born 1881); Sidney; Ernest William (born 1889); Richard Stanley (born 1893); and Percy Oracio (born 1894); and daughters Eliza Jane “Sissie” (born 1878); Maud E. (born 1886); and Mabel Hilda (born 1899). To support his family, Richard had a number of jobs over the years. He was at various times a mariner; a china and glass merchant; a foreman for a coal contractor; and a stevedore dock labourer.

On March 22, 1900, at the age of seventeen and working as a plumber’s mate, Sidney Davies enlisted with the Royal Marine Light Infantry in Chatham, England. He served with them until February 1904. At some point afterwards, Sidney immigrated to Canada and eventually resided in Sarnia. Chances are Sidney never saw his parents again. His father Richard, passed away in Kent, England on January 14, 1913 at the age of seventy; and Mary Ann, his mother, passed away in Kent, England on February 26, 1916 at the age of sixty. Richard and Mary Ann Davies are buried together in All Saints Churchyard in Frindsbury, Kent, England, near the church where they were married. On the couple’s headstone is a pedestal inscribed with the words, “Sidney Richard Davies 18th Batt. Canadians – Killed in Action in France 11th October 1918 Aged 36 Years.”

Thirty-three-year-old Sidney Davies enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force on February 14, 1916 in Sarnia. He stood five feet ten and a half inches tall, had grey eyes and black hair, was single, and was residing at 132 Forsythe Street at the time. He recorded his trade or calling as Actor, and his next-of-kin as his sister Mrs. A. Wilson of 54 Longley Road, Rochester, England. Sidney initially became a member of the 149th Battalion, where he rose in rank to Corporal and then Sergeant. It would be over one year before he embarked overseas. On March 28, 1917, Sidney Davies embarked overseas from Halifax for the United Kingdom aboard the *S.S. Lapland*.

And once he arrived overseas, it would be almost a full year before he saw action at the front. On April 7, 1917, Davies arrived in Liverpool, England and was initially attached to the Segregation Camp at Bramshott. He was later transferred to the 25th Reserve Battalion, remaining at Bramshott and reverting to the rank of Private. On February 15, 1918, he was transferred to the 4th Canadian Reserve Battalion. Over one month later, on March 29, 1918, Private Sidney Davies became a member of the Canadian Infantry, 18th Battalion, “C” Company, Western Ontario Regiment. He arrived in France on April 3, 1918, at the Canadian Corps Reinforcement Camp. On April 12, 1918, he arrived with the 18th Battalion at the front lines.

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Approximately six months after arriving in France, on October 11, 1918, Sidney Davies lost his life while fighting in the Battle of Canal-du-Nord and Cambrai. His Circumstances of Death Register records him as; *Date of Casualty: 11-10-18. "Killed in Action". Was instantly killed by concussion from an enemy shell, in front of Iwuy on the morning of October 11th 1918.*

In mid-November 1918, Reverend F.G. Newton of St. John's Church in Sarnia received official notice that Private Sidney Richard Davies had been reported killed in action on October 11th. Exactly one month after Sidney's death, the Great War ended. Sidney Davies, 36, is buried in Niagara Cemetery, Iwuy, Nord, France, Grave C.26. SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 2G, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10Z

DICKINSON, George (#402727, also A2727)

Undoubtedly, English-born George Dickinson, 35, wanted to serve when he enlisted in Sarnia at age thirty-five. The reality was that he tried to serve at the front and did so briefly, but his poor health, exacerbated by his time at the front, hospitalized him. He suffered from a host of ailments brought on by nephritis, the inflammation of his kidneys that ultimately killed him in Sarnia in March 1918.

George Dickinson was born in Leeds, Yorkshire, England, on November 18, 1879, the son of Robert and Hannah (nee Barmingham) Dickinson, of Hyde Park Road, Leeds, Yorkshire, England. [NOTE: On his Attestation Paper, George Dickinson recorded his birthdate as November 18, 1879, and that date continues through his military records. However, both the 1881 and 1901 English Census' record his birth year as 1876].

Robert and Hanna Dickinson had five children together: daughters Alice (born 1873); Lucy (born 1874); and Maud (born 1883); and sons Harry (born 1878) and George. In 1881, Robert, Hannah, and four of their five children were living together living in Leeds – only eight year-old Maud was not registered as living with them. Two decades later, in 1901, the Dickinson family was still living in Leeds. Residing with parents Robert and Hannah (both age fifty-two), were George (age twenty-four), Harry (age twenty-two) and Maud (age eighteen).

At some point, George Dickinson married a young lady named Beatrice (born July 1880) in England. George immigrated to Canada, departing Liverpool aboard the *Dominion*, and arrived in Halifax on March 28, 1910. He arrived with \$45 and a written declaration that he was a plumber who intended to move to Toronto. Beatrice soon followed him to Canada and the young couple first lived at 348 Brockar Street in Toronto, where George, true to his word, was employed as a plumber. Sometime after 1911, George and Beatrice moved to Sarnia, first living at 142 Elgin Street, then 383 Russell Street and later 553 Confederation Street.

At age thirty-five, George Dickinson enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force on January 18, 1915 in Sarnia. He stood five feet five inches tall, had hazel eyes and dark hair, and was residing with his wife on Elgin Street at the time. He recorded his trade or calling as plumber, and his next-of-kin as his wife Beatrice Dickinson of 142 Elgin Street. He also recorded his prior military experience as "5 years in Territorials" and with the 27th Militia Regiment in Sarnia. He became a member of the Canadian Infantry, 34th Reserve Battalion, Central Ontario Regiment. More than five months later, George embarked overseas.

On July 5, 1915, George was in Shorncliffe, England, as a member of the 11th Reserve Battalion. One month later, on August 3, 1915, he became a member of the Canadian Infantry, 1st Battalion. In December of 1915, he had suffered severe pain in his legs that lasted for several weeks, but he was not hospitalized. After some treatment, the pain subsided. Shortly after, however, he began to experience shortness of breath and sweating a good deal on exertion, physical weakness, coughing and choking spells that affected his ability to sleep, all of which lasted for several months.

He served for a time in Flanders in 1916. On July 7, 1916, Private George Dickinson was admitted to Moore Barracks Military Hospital in Shorncliffe, with a diagnosis of bronchitis. Five days later, on July 12, his condition was described as "seriously ill".

On July 26, George was discharged from Moore Barracks Hospital, and reported to Shorncliffe Canadian Casualty Assembly Centre (CCAC), Folkestone. There he was assessed for either further treatment or return to duty. Described as "a well developed muscular man weighing 146 lbs. about his normal weight" his conditions at the time included diminished breathing sounds, shortness of breath, high blood pressure, rapid pulse increase on slight exertion and enlarged liver. He was diagnosed with chronic nephritis, high blood pressure and cardiomegaly. The Medical Board determined that his disability was the result of his active service against the enemy, and due to "strain and exposure". The medical report also stated that though the conditions were "not caused by conditions at the

front, they were intensified and hastened by active service at the front". The Medical Board recommended that he be discharged to Canada. George Dickinson embarked from England on August 9, 1916 aboard the *S.S. Olympic*.

On September 1st, 1916, Private George Dickinson of the 1st Battalion was admitted to the Military Hospitals Commission of Canada (MHCC) in London, Ontario. On September 9, 1916, he was diagnosed with nephritis. In late-April 1917, he was discharged from the army, "being no longer physically fit for war service". One and a half years after his return to Canada, on March 6, 1918, George Dickinson lost his life at Sarnia General Hospital, the result of the effects of war. The War Graves Register (Circumstances of Casualty) records him as; *Nephritis Chronic. Died from the effects of wounds and gas. Lake View Cemetery, Sarnia, Ontario. Grave C.223. Unmarked.*

Private George Dickinson's funeral in Sarnia was held with full military honours. The funeral was attended by the Sarnia Citizens Band, the Great War Veterans, the Sons of England, the Mayor and Council members, and representatives of the St. John's Ambulance Society. His comrades acted as pallbearers and there was a firing party and the playing of the "Last Post." The funeral parade route followed Plank Road to Mitton Street, onto Davis to Christina, then north, where they were met and saluted by the Collegiate Cadets at the corner of George and Christina Street. George Dickinson, 38, is buried in Lakeview Cemetery, Sarnia.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 2G, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10Z

DOXTATOR, Frederick (#844252)

Born at what is now known as Aamjiwnaang First Nations, Frederick Doxtator was a First Nations soldier who enlisted with the 149th Battalion in 1915 when he was nineteen. He trained as a Sapper and served in France, but he was diagnosed with tuberculosis and treated for it. Sadly, Frederick passed away from the disease in Halifax, four days after the war ended officially. His name is on the Aamjiwnaang First Nations cemetery.

Frederick Doxtator was born at the Sarnia Indian Reserve, on August 4, 1896, the eldest child of Edward (of Oneida Settlement, Middlesex County, Ontario) and Sarah (nee George) Doxtator. Edward and Sarah were blessed with eleven children together: Frederick; Eva Millicent (born 1898); Mattie Levina (born 1900); Norah Hazel (born 1902); Reuben Edward (born 1904); Beatrice Winnefred (born 1905); Lucinda Violet (born 1907); William Henry (born 1908); Julia (born 1909); George Leonard (born 1910); and Austin (born 1914). The Doxtator family lived at 304 Rose Street, later 319 Confederation Street, Sarnia.

Prior to enlisting, Frederick was employed as a car inspector on the Pere Marquette railway. At age nineteen, Frederick Doxtator enlisted with the 149th Lambton Battalion, Canadian Expeditionary Force in Sarnia on December 16, 1915. He stood five feet four inches tall, had brown eyes and black hair, was single, and was residing on Rose Street with his parents at the time. He recorded his trade or calling as labourer, and his next-of-kin as his father Edward Doxtator of 304 Rose Street, Sarnia.

Frederick Doxtator embarked overseas from Halifax for the United Kingdom on March 28, 1917 aboard the *S.S. Lapland*. He disembarked in England on April 7, 1917, and became a member of the 25th Reserve Battalion stationed at Bramshott. Seven months later, on November 30, 1917, Frederick arrived in France, and was initially posted to the Canadian Corps Reinforcement Camp (CCRC). During the winter of 1917/1918 in France, Frederick experienced chest symptoms that included coughing, shortness of breath and being run down, but he was always able to carry out his duties. On June 21, 1918, he became a member of the 4th Battalion, Canadian Engineers, "B Company" with the rank of Sapper. Two days later, he arrived at the front lines with the 4th Battalion.

Frederick soon found himself taking part in the preparatory and early stages of the **Hundred Days Campaign** (August 8 – November 11, 1918 in France and Belgium). It was the "beginning of the end" of the Great War. Canadians were called on again and again over the three-month period to lead the offensives against the toughest German defences. The series of victories repeatedly drove the Germans back, culminating in Germany's unconditional surrender on November 11, but it came at a cost of almost 46,000 Canadians killed, wounded and missing.

Approximately two months after arriving at the front, in mid-August 1918, Frederick was admitted to a Casualty Clearing Station, and then moved to No. 47 General Hospital in Le Treport, France. On August 31, 1918, he was invalided back to England due to his ill health that had been brought on by the hardships at the Front. Diagnosed with pulmonary tuberculosis, he remained in Second Southern General Hospital in Bristol until late September 1918. On September 28, 1918, he was admitted to Canadian Special Hospital in Lenham, Kent, where he remained until

October 30, 1918. The next day, Frederick was invalided to Canada. He was admitted to Cogswell Street Military Hospital in Halifax on November 10, 1918, with “general tuberculosis”. Frederick Doxtator would not make it home to Sarnia.

On November 11, 1918, the day that the Great War ended and the world was celebrating, Frederick’s father, Edward on Confederation Street, received a telegram informing him that his son, SAPPER FREDERICK DOXTATOR OF THE CANADIAN ENGINEERS WAS DANGEROUSLY ILL AT THE COGSWELL STREET MILITARY HOSPITAL HALIFAX. No particulars as to his ailment were given in the official telegram.

On November 15, 1918, at approximately 6:55 p.m., Frederick Doxtator lost his life, having been in the Halifax hospital for only a few days. Shortly afterwards, Frederick’s mother, Sarah Doxtator, received the following telegram; REGRET TO INFORM YOU 844252 SAPPER FRED DOXTATOR DIED AT 6:55 P.M. NOVEMBER 15. M.O. COGSWELL STREET MILITARY HOSPITAL.

The War Graves Register (Circumstances of Casualty) records the particulars of Frederick Doxtator’s passing as; *Date of Death: 15-11-18. Military Hospital, Halifax. Tuberculosis. Date of Admission to Hospital unknown. Cemetery: St. Clair Indian Reserve, Sarnia. Grave No. C6126. Marking: Nil.* At Frederick Doxtator’s funeral in November 1918 in Sarnia, he was given full military honours, with members of the Great War Veterans and Sarnia Citizens’ band in attendance. The funeral procession began at the family residence on Confederation Street and ended at the Indian Reserve Cemetery. Services were conducted by Reverend Alford of the Sarnia Reserve, assisted by Reverend Hazen, pastor of the Devine Street Methodist church. A firing squad paid their last respect of the deceased soldier.

Frederick Doxtator, 22, is buried alongside his grandparents in Sarnia Chippewa’s First Nations Cemetery, Sarnia. His name is inscribed on the Sarnia cenotaph and also on the Aamjiwnaang First Nations cenotaph in Sarnia. The central column of the Aamjiwnaang cenotaph is inscribed, *To our glorious veterans who have served our nation and its allies for peace and freedom – Lest We Forget.* One of the side columns is inscribed, *World War I – In memory of the young men from this nation who served King and country throughout the world 1914-1919 – Frederick Doxstater.*

Note: On the Aamjiwnaang cenotaph, Frederick’s surname is spelled Doxstator. The spelling used in this Project is based on the Sarnia cenotaph spelling and how Frederick spelled and signed his name on his Attestation (enlistment) Papers.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 2G, 4D, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10Z, t, 3p

EBERLY, Albert Edward (#3131578)

Albert Edward Eberly was drafted under the Military Service Act of 1917 and was called to service in January 1918. Only weeks after arriving at the Front, Albert was severely wounded in action while fighting in the 2nd Battle of Arras. He passed away as a result of his wounds the next day, on September 3, 1918.

Albert Edward Eberly was born in Parkhill, Ontario, on January 24, 1895, the first child of Elizabeth Melinda “Minnie” Eberly. On April 7, 1899, twenty-nine-year-old “Minnie” (born December 1870 in Parkhill, Middlesex County) married Irishman Charles Cathers (born February 1851, immigrated to Canada in 1861). Charles was a farmer in Middlesex County and later Lambton County East, in Bosanquet. “Minnie” and Charles Cathers had five children together (step-siblings for Albert Eberly): Lucy Ida Ellen (born October 3, 1896); Annie (born August 11, 1898); Bessie (born June 9, 1900); Ettie Beetress (born October 31, 1902); and John James Cathers (born October 29, 1905). In 1911, the Cathers family were living in Lambton East. At some point later, “Minnie” was living at 175 South Christina Street, Sarnia.

In Europe, with the Canadian troops thinning at an alarming rate and no end to the war in sight, the government instituted the Military Service Act in 1917. Twenty-two-year-old Albert Eberly was drafted under the Military Service Act of 1917, Class One. He underwent his medical examination in Sarnia on October 11, 1917 and was called to service on January 9, 1918. He reported to the 1st Depot Battalion, Western Ontario Regiment in London and filled out his personal information. Albert stood five feet five and a half inches tall, had brown eyes and dark hair, was single, and was residing with his mother in Sarnia at the time. He recorded his trade or calling as Traction Engineer, and his next-of-kin as his mother Minnie Eberly Cathers of 275 South Christina Street. Albert also recorded that he had two years of prior military service with the 136th Regiment, Edmonton Militia.

Albert Eberly embarked overseas for the United Kingdom on February 4, 1918 aboard the *S.S. Grampian*.

After arriving in England on February 16, 1918, he became a member of the 4th Canadian Reserve Battalion, stationed at Bramshott. Three and a half months later, on June 1, 1918, he arrived in France as a member of the Canadian Infantry, 47th Battalion, initially stationed at the Canadian Corps Reinforcement Camp (CCRC). Two and a half months later, in mid-August 1918, he arrived at the front lines with the 47th Battalion as a Private.

The **Hundred Days Campaign** (August 8 – November 11, 1918 in France and Belgium) was the “beginning of the end” of the Great War. Canadians were called on again and again over the three-month period to lead the offensives against the toughest German defences. The series of victories repeatedly drove the Germans back, culminating in Germany’s unconditional surrender on November 11, but it came at a cost of almost 46,000 Canadians killed, wounded and missing.

The first offensive in the Campaign was the Battle of Amiens (August 8-14, 1918), a truly all-arms battle, one that all four Canadian divisions would be involved in. Over the course of one week, in a battle that British Field Marshal Douglas Haig called “*the finest operation of the war*”, the Canadians would advance nearly 14 km. The second offensive in Canada’s Hundred Days Campaign was the **Battle of Arras and Breaking the DQ Line** in France (August 26-September 3, 1918), where Canadians were part of a spearhead force tasked with crashing one of the most heavily fortified positions, the Hindenburg Line – a series of strong defensive trenches and fortified villages. General Sir Julian Byng called the Canadian victory at the 2nd Battle of Arras and breaking of the DQ Line “*the turning point of the campaign*”, but it came at a cost of 11,400 Canadian casualties.

Only weeks after arriving at the Front, on September 2, 1918, Albert Eberly was severely wounded in action while fighting in the 2nd Battle of Arras. During an advance he received shell wounds in the back and left thigh and was taken to No. 42 Casualty Clearing Station. He passed away as a result of his wounds the next day, on September 3, 1918.

In mid-September 1918, Minnie Eberly in Sarnia received the following telegram about her son: PTE ALBERT EDWARD EBERLY INFANTRY HAS DIED OF WOUNDS AT 42ND CLEARING STATION SEPTEMBER 4TH WITH GUNSHOT WOUND IN BACK AND LEFT THIGH. His Circumstances of Death Register records him as; *Date of Casualty: 3-9-18. “DIED OF WOUNDS”. During an advance on the Arras Front September 2nd, 1918, he was severely wounded in the back and left thigh by an enemy shell. He was attended to and evacuated to No. 42 Casualty Clearing Station where he died from the effect of his wounds the following day. Aubigny Communal Cemetery Extension, 8 ½ miles North West of Arras, France.*

In October 1918, Minnie received another telegram, this one informing her that the date Albert’s death was September 3rd, 1918. Approximately two months after Albert Eberly’s death, the Great War ended. Albert Eberly, 23, is buried in Aubigny Communal Cemetery Extension, Pas de Calais, France, Grave IV.E.66. SOURCES: A, B, C, D, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 2G, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10Z

EDDY, William Peter (#333930)

William Peter Eddy, 32, was killed in action during the Second Battle of Arras in the closing days of the war. An enemy shell exploded near him and the gunner from Sarnia was killed instantly. He has no known grave, but is memorialized on the Vimy Memorial, Pas de Calais, France. In Sarnia, he is memorialized with the naming of a street after him, Eddy Drive.

William Eddy was born in Sarnia, on October 25, 1885, the only son of Walter Roach and Mary (nee Kyle) Eddy. Walter Eddy (born March 1861 in Lanlivery, Cornwall, England) emigrated from England to Canada in 1880 and ended up working as a labourer in Sarnia. There he met Mary Kyle (born April 15, 1864 in Scotland) who had immigrated to Canada in 1866. Walter and Mary Eddy were married in Sarnia on July 2, 1885 and were blessed with three children together: a son, William, and two daughters--Margaret Elizabeth Ethel (born December 20, 1887) and Elleda Mary (born December 22, 1890). The Eddy family lived on Christina Street and later at 330 South Vidal Street, Sarnia.

William Eddy’s first military experience was at the age of twenty-nine in Winnipeg, Manitoba. From June 1 through early-August 1915, William served as a Lieutenant with the 61st Battalion in Winnipeg. He resigned from the unit on August 7, 1915 (he did not proceed overseas with the 61st). Three months later, on November 15, 1915, thirty year-old William Eddy completed his Officers’ Declaration Paper, Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force with the 90th Overseas Battalion, Winnipeg Regiment in Winnipeg. He was assigned the rank of Lieutenant. At the time he was residing at 214 Donald Street, Winnipeg, was employed as an engineer, and was a member of the 90th

Regiment Winnipeg Rifles Militia. He also recorded that he had served for two months with the 61st Overseas Battalion. William Eddy served with the 90th Battalion in Winnipeg from November 15, 1915 until May 26, 1916.

On June 16, 1916, thirty year-old William Eddy completed his Attestation Paper for the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force in London, Ontario. He stood five feet eight and three-quarter inches tall, had brown eyes and dark brown hair, was single, and was residing with his parents in Sarnia at the time. He recorded his trade or calling as engineer and his next-of-kin as his mother Mrs. Mary Eddy of 330 South Vidal Street, Sarnia. He also recorded that he was a Prov. Lieutenant with the 90th Regiment Winnipeg, and that he had served six months with the 90th Regiment Winnipeg. William Eddy became a member of the 63rd Depot Battery, and in mid-August 1916 was transferred to the 55th Battery, 14th Howitzer Brigade, Canadian Field Artillery. He would revert to the rank of Gunner in the artillery in order to serve his country in the field.

William Eddy embarked overseas for the United Kingdom on September 12, 1916 aboard the S.S. *Metagama*. Disembarking in England on September 22, 1916, he was initially attached to the 2nd Canadian Command Depot (CCD) in Bramshott. Four months later, on January 22, 1917, William Eddy was transferred to the 13th Canadian Brigade at Camp Witley.

On March 21, 1917, while exercising horses while on drill at Witley Camp in England, William Eddy met with an accident when he was thrown from a bucking horse and kicked while on the ground. He was admitted to Bramshott Hospital with a diagnosed fractured right arm. In May 1917, William sent a letter home to his parents on Vidal Street, from Bramshott Camp, England. The following is a portion of that letter:

My Dear Parents,

I am sure you must be thinking something has happened to me and indeed it has but I am now recovering, although slowly. I have not been to France, but when we were at Salisbury Plains for firing practice I had the misfortune to get thrown from a runaway horse, breaking both arms. The left arm is nearly alright. I am writing with it – but my right arm is still pretty sore and it will be some time yet before I am fit for service. I am now at the Canadian Military Hospital at Bramshott... Well, how are you all at home anyway, well I hope. I get the papers you send and am glad everything goes well at home. I hope it will not be many months now before I am with you again....

Your loving son, Will

William continued his recovery from a fractured right shoulder at Princess Patricia Canadian Red Cross Special Hospital, Ramsgate, Kent from May 11, 1917 until August 17, 1917. In September 1917, William Eddy was stationed at the Canadian Artillery Reinforcement Depot (CARD) at Camp Witley.

Bad luck seemed to follow Eddy in France. Two months later, on November 2, 1917, Gunner William Eddy arrived in France with the 3rd Brigade, Canadian Field Artillery (CFA). By November 11, 1917, William was with the 3rd Brigade at the front lines. On November 29, 1917, he was admitted to No. 22 Casualty Clearing Station with diphtheria, where he would recover after twelve days. Almost three months later, on February 20, 1918, he was admitted to No. 6 Casualty Clearing Station with Trench fever. He would be moved through several locations during his recovery, including No. 18 (USA) General Hospital at Camiers, No. 6 Convalescent Depots (CD) Etaples and No. 5 CD Cayeux. He was discharged back to the front lines on April 5, 1918. Gunner William Eddy then returned to his unit, the 3rd Brigade, Canadian Field Artillery.

Four months later, he was taking part in the **Hundred Days Campaign** (August 8 – November 11, 1918 in France and Belgium)—the “beginning of the end” of the Great War. Canadians were called on again and again over the three-month period to lead the offensives against the toughest German defences. The series of victories repeatedly drove the Germans back, culminating in Germany’s unconditional surrender on November 11, but it came at a cost of almost 46,000 Canadians killed, wounded and missing.

The first offensive in the Campaign was the Battle of Amiens (August 8-14, 1918), a truly all-arms battle, one that all four Canadian divisions would be involved in. Over the course of one week, in a battle that British Field Marshal Douglas Haig called “*the finest operation of the war*”, the Canadians would advance nearly 14 km.

The second offensive in Canada’s Hundred Days Campaign was the **Battle of Arras and Breaking the DQ Line** in France (August 26-September 3, 1918), where Canadians were part of a spearhead force tasked with crashing one of the most heavily fortified positions, the Hindenburg Line – a series of strong defensive trenches and fortified villages. General Sir Julian Byng called the Canadian victory at the 2nd Battle of Arras and breaking of the DQ Line “*the turning point of the campaign*”, but it came at a cost of 11,400 Canadian casualties.

Approximately five months after being discharged from hospital, on September 2, 1918, William Eddy died while fighting during the 2nd Battle of Arras. He was killed by an enemy shell.

In October 1918, William's mother, Mary, received the following letter at her Sarnia home about her only son:

11th Battery C.F.A.

September 8th, 1918

Dear Mrs. Eddy,

It is with deep regret that I have to inform you of the death in action of your son, 333930, Gunner W.P. Eddy, and which occurred on the 2nd instant. Your son at the time was with his gun which was in action in support of the Infantry. During a period of enemy shelling a shell burst close by the gun killing your son instantly and wounding one of his comrades. He was buried by his comrades at P.25 A. 85-75, Sheet 51B., and all his personal effects have been sent to the base and will be forwarded to you. The men of the Battery have expressed their deep regret at the loss of a most popular comrade. On behalf of both officers and men I wish to extend to you our deepest sympathy in your great grief.

Sgt. Geo W. Shearer, Major O.C. 11th Battery, C.F.A.

William Eddy's Circumstances of Death Register records him as; *Date of Casualty: 2-9-18. "Killed in Action". During military operations in the vicinity of Vis-en-Artois, and Dury, whilst his Battery was supporting the Infantry, an enemy shell exploded near his gun, instantly killing him.* William Eddy, 32, has no known grave. He is memorialized on the Vimy Memorial, Pas de Calais, France. In Sarnia, he is memorialized with the naming of a street after him, Eddy Drive.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 2G, 7C, 7Y, 8X, 8Y, 10Z

EDWARDS, Fred Christopher (#402729)

People might not know the sacrifices that Fred Christopher Edwards, 27, made in the Great War, but they can appreciate his patriotism and perseverance. Before Fred saw action, he was hospitalized overseas for months to receive treatment for deafness and pleurisy. After surviving the Battle of the Somme and Vimy Ridge, Private Fred Edwards was killed on May 3, 1917, during the first day of fighting in the Battle of Fresnoy. He has no known grave.

Fred Edwards was born in Bermondsey, London, England, on December 25, 1892, the son of Frederick Christopher Edwards (Sr.) and Margaret (Mary Ann) Edwards, of Walworth, London, England. At some point, Fred immigrated to Canada and on January 11, 1915, twenty-two-year-old Fred Edwards enlisted in the Canadian Overseas Expeditionary Force in Sarnia. He stood five feet three and a half inches tall, had blue eyes and fair hair, and was single at the time. He recorded his trade or calling as Sailor, and his next-of-kin as his mother Mary Ann Edwards of 85 Linton Road, Bermoudsley, London, England. Fred became a member of the 27th Regiment, and later the 34th Battalion, Canadian Expeditionary Force.

Fred's experiences overseas were daunting to say the least. By July 5, 1915, he had arrived overseas and was attached to the 11th Battalion, stationed at Shorncliffe, England. On August 3, 1915, he became a member of the Canadian Infantry, 1st Battalion, Western Ontario Regiment with the rank of Private. While overseas, Fred was hospitalized on at least two occasions: on August 17, 1915 for over three months at Duchess of Connaught Canadian RC Hospital at Taplow and then Hillingdon House Convalescent Hospital in Uxbridge due to deafness; and on March 11, 1916 for almost a month at Canadian Convalescent Hospital in Woodcote Park, Epsom due to pleurisy. After his recovery from pleurisy, he was stationed at West Sandling. In mid-May 1916, Private Fred Edwards arrived in France as a member of the 1st Canadian Infantry Battalion.

Fred Edwards fought in and survived two of the defining battles of the war. The Battle of the Somme (July 1-November 18, 1916) was one of the bloodiest and most futile battles in history. The Somme battle lasted for more than four brutal months; saw the Allies advance around 10 kilometers; and cost the Canadian Corps more than 24,000 Canadian casualties. The Battle of Vimy Ridge (April 9-12, 1917) was the first time (and last time in the war) that all four divisions of the Canadian Corps, with soldiers from every region in the country, would surge forward simultaneously. The four-day victory at Vimy Ridge was a seminal battle, a turning point in the war for the Canadian Corps, and significant victory for Canada, later referred to as "the birth of a nation". Of the 97,000 Canadians who fought at Vimy Ridge, approximately 10,600 were casualties in four days of battle.

After taking Vimy Ridge, the Canadian Corps experienced more success in France with an attack on the

Arleux Loop on April 28-29 that drove the Germans to the village of Fresnoy-en-Gohelle. General Sir Douglas Haig then had two objectives: to secure a more defensible position and to draw German attention away from the Aisne sector, where the French Army was fighting to capture a strategic ridge. Haig planned a new attack by three armies across a 22-kilometre front, aiming to consolidate a good defensive line by mid-May. Fresnoy was the Canadian target.

Fresnoy was heavily fortified and the area of manoeuvring very small. The attack began under the cover of darkness at 3:45 a.m., May 3, 1917. But the Germans were expecting it, and began shelling the Canadians as they advanced over the open plain. The Canadians captured Fresnoy within several hours, but it was immediately counter attacked. The Germans fired some 100,000 artillery and gas shells into the village over the next week, and then stormed it. The Canadians fought them off and were relieved by British troops. The Germans attacked again the next day, and the village was lost. In the **Battle of Fresnoy**, May 3-8, the Canadian Corps suffered 1,259 casualties. The Germans suffered their deepest losses on the first day of the battle.

On May 3, 1917, approximately one year after arriving in France, Fred Edwards lost his life in action on the first day of the Battle of Fresnoy. On that day, he was initially reported wounded and missing. He was later officially recorded as “now for official purposes presumed to have died on or since May 3rd 1917.” Fred Edward’s Circumstances of Death Register records him as; *Date of Casualty: On or since 3-5-17. “Previously reported wounded and missing, now for official purposes presumed to have died.” Location of Unit at time of Casualty: ATTACK ON FRESNOY.* Fred Christopher Edwards, 27, has no known grave. He is memorialized on the Vimy Memorial, Pas de Calais, France. On the Sarnia cenotaph, his name is inscribed as F.W. Edwards.
SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 2G, 7C, 7R, 8X, 8Y, 10Z

ELLIOTT, Joseph Martin (#602999)

After working as a brakeman in Sarnia for several years, Joseph Martin Elliott enlisted in 1915 with the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force when he was twenty-eight. His stay at the front was brief and tragic. After arriving in France three months earlier, Joseph died as a result of wounds incurred at the Battle of the Somme.

Joseph Elliott was born in Point Edward, Ontario, on June 12, 1887, the youngest child of John (born October 1844 in Gloucester, England) and Alexandria (nee McKay, born December 1845 in New Brunswick) Elliott. John Elliott had emigrated to Canada in 1861 and worked in Sarnia as a car repairer and later as a Grand Trunk employee. John and Alexandria Elliott raised eight children together: Henry J. (born January 1871); Alexander (born October 1872); Harriet “Hattie” (born April 1873); John (born May 1877); Daniel (born 1879); Mary C. (born April 1882); Lettie (born October 1884) and Joseph.

The family dynamic changed when Joseph was nineteen years old. On January 7, 1906, his father John died in Sarnia at the age of 61. Five years later, in 1911, widowed mother Alexandria Elliott was residing at 147 Johnston Street with her children: Henry J. (age forty, a switchman), John (age thirty-three, a brakeman), Lettie (age twenty-five) and Joseph (age twenty-three, a brakeman).

At the age of twenty-eight, Joseph Elliott enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force on August 21, 1915 in Sarnia, becoming a member of the 34th Battalion. He stood five feet five and a half inches tall, had blue eyes and light brown hair, and was single at the time. He recorded his birth year as 1886; however, his birth registration records the year as 1887. He also recorded his trade or calling as Brakeman, and his next-of-kin as his mother Alexandra Elliott of 147 Johnston Street, Sarnia.

Joseph embarked overseas for the United Kingdom on October 23, 1915 aboard the *S.S. California*. Disembarking in England on November 1, 1915, he initially became a member of the 23rd Battalion, stationed at Bramshott. Six months later, on May 25, 1916, he embarked for France as a member of the 2nd Battalion. The next day, he was transferred to the Canadian Infantry, 7th Battalion, British Columbia Regiment with the rank of Private.

A little over one month later, Private Joseph Elliott took part in the fighting in France during the **Battle of the Somme** (July 1-November 18, 1916)--one of the most futile and bloody battles in history. The Somme battle lasted for more than four brutal months and saw the Allies advance around 10 kilometers. A more telling statistic is the number of injuries and deaths: of the 85,000 Canadian Corps, there were more than 24,000 Canadian casualties.

Just over three months after arriving in France, on September 9, 1916, Joseph Elliott was wounded while fighting during the Battle of the Somme. He was taken to No. 3 Canadian Field Ambulance and passed away that day as a result of his wounds. Joseph’s Circumstances of Death Register records him as; *Date of Casualty: 9-9-16. “Died*

of wounds” at No. 2 Canadian Field Ambulance. Albert Communal Cemetery Extension, France.

In late September 1916, Alexandria Elliott in Sarnia received word from militia headquarters in Ottawa informing her that her son, JOSEPH MARTIN ELLIOTT HAD DIED OF WOUNDS AT NO. 2 CANADIAN FIELD AMBULANCE STATION ON SEPTEMBER 9. Joseph Elliott, 29, is buried in Albert Communal Cemetery Extension, Somme, France, Grave I.L.5. His widowed mother Alexandria (nee McKay) Elliott passed away several years later, in March 1920, and is buried with her husband John Elliott in Lakeview Cemetery. SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 2G, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10Z

FAIR, Roy Nichols (#6914)

The last moments of Roy Fair’s life defined the twenty-one year old’s character. After a bullet lacerated his arm in the Battle of Givenchy, the Lance Corporal with the grenade section of the 1st Canadian Division was ordered to return to the Dressing Station. He refused and insisted on advancing to the German trenches. As he neared the closest trench, a bomb killed him instantly and his body was never recovered.

Roy Fair was born in Londesborough, Huron County, Ontario, on May 17, 1894, the son and youngest child of Reverend Hugh James (born 1854 in Brant County, Ontario) and Elizabeth “Eliza” Jane (nee Nicholls, born February 1857) Fair. Reverend Hugh Fair and Eliza Nicholls were married in 1875 in Brant County and they had six children together: Henry Egerton (born May 16, 1876); Mabel (born January 25, 1878); Clara Maud (born January 9, 1880); Mary Edith (born October 4, 1881); Hugh Harold (born July 30, 1891), and Roy Nichols. Reverend Hugh Fair was a Methodist clergyman, so the Fair family was constantly on the move and resided in a number of locations over the years: Brant County, Elgin County, Huron County, Lambton County (Warwick Township), Goderich Township, Middlesex County, and later Indian Road Crescent in Toronto.

Roy’s brother, Hugh Harold Fair, also served in the war. When he was twenty-four, **Hugh Fair** enlisted with the 84th Battalion, CEF in Niagara on September 1, 1915, one year after Roy had enlisted. An electrician at the time, Harold recorded his next-of-kin as his mother, Eliza Fair in Arkona, Ontario. By the end of that month, Harold had embarked overseas to England. Approximately three months later, in January 1916, he arrived in France and ended up serving with a number of units including the 84th Battalion, the 36th Reserve Battalion and the 1st Canadian Machine Gun Company. Harold Fair would survive the war and was discharged on demobilization in January 1919.

Roy’s experiences were vastly different. In August and September of 1914, just before enlisting, **Roy Fair** was serving with the 27th Regiment, St. Clair Borderers Militia. On September 22, 1914, Roy, age 20, enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force in Valcartier Camp, Quebec. He stood five feet nine inches tall, had blue eyes and light brown hair, and was single at the time. He recorded his trade or calling as salesman and his next-of-kin as his mother Mrs. H.J. Fair in Arkona, Ontario. Private Roy Fair embarked overseas for the United Kingdom as a member of the Canadian Infantry, 1st Battalion, Western Ontario Regiment, on October 3, 1914. He was part of the 31,000 soldiers that made up the First Contingent of Canadians that departed the port of Quebec aboard some thirty ocean-liners.

The Canadians underwent rigorous training over the cold, wet winter of 1914-1915 at Salisbury Plain, England. In February 1915, Roy, as part of the 1st Canadian Division, embarked for the trenches in France. Arriving at the front, Canadian soldiers found themselves in a cratered, eviscerated wasteland of mud, wasted vegetation, and unburied bodies. For two weeks at the end of February 1915, the Canadian Division had its first taste of action when each of its brigades did a seven-day familiarization tour with British units.

On March 3, the Canadians took over 6,400 yards of the front near Armentieres, supported a British attack, and suffered their first casualties. By the end of the month, the division had marched north to Ypres, Belgium, the centre of the salient jutting into the German line, surrounded on three sides by enemy soldiers and artillery.

Several months later, on April 6, 1915, Roy Fair was admitted to No. 2 Canadian Field Ambulance due to blistered feet. It was at the Ypres salient, an area traditionally referred to as Flanders, that the Canadians engaged in their first battle of the war, the **Second Battle of Ypres**, April 22-May 25, 1915. It was their baptism by fire. It was here that the Germans unleashed the first lethal chlorine gas attack in the history of warfare. In the first 48 hours at Ypres (April 22-24), the Canadians incurred more than 6,000 casualties. One in every three Canadians became a casualty. A staggering 2,100 were killed and 1,410 were captured. Later that month, on April 24, 1915, Roy Fair was awarded in the field the rank of Lance Corporal with the Canadian Infantry, 1st Battalion.

Fighting continued in the Ypres salient on and off until late May 1915 at a cost to the Canadian Corps of just

over 8,600 soldiers killed, wounded or captured in just over one month. Following the Battle of Ypres, the decimated units of the 1st Canadian Division marched south to join in the Allied offensives which were already under way. The Canadians were thrust into the fighting near the villages of Festubert in mid-May 1915 and Givenchy in mid-June, both in northern France, part of a wider British offensive against German lines.

The **Battle of Festubert** was the second major engagement fought by Canadian troops in the war. The main attack began on May 18, with two brigades of the 1st Division launching frontal assaults against heavy German defences near the village. The fighting here followed the grim pattern of frontal assaults against entrenched German forces that had all the advantages of terrain, firepower and well-positioned machine guns. With little planning and inaccurate maps, they repeatedly charged over open ground with little artillery support. By May 25, after a week of fighting, the battle was over. The result was slaughter on both sides, and the Canadians had made only small gains.

About three weeks later, in mid-June 1915, the 1st Canadian Division was thrust into the fighting at **Givenchy**. Supposedly, lessons had been learned at Festubert, and plans were made to address the issues of German barbed wire and machine gun nests. Three artillery pieces were secretly moved closer to the front line and a tunnel was dug under the German trenches and packed with explosives in the hope that it would eliminate a large section of the enemy front line trenches. Although the Canadians achieved some of their objectives, the gains were negligible and the cost was extremely high—2,468 casualties at Festubert and a further 400 at Givenchy.

On June 15, 1915, Lance Corporal Roy Fair died while fighting near Givenchy in France. He was wounded during an advance, was ordered back, but continued forward where he was killed by a bomb. Roy Fair's Circumstances of Death Register records him as; *Date of Casualty: 15-6-15. "KILLED IN ACTION". He was a member of the grenade section and during the attack near Givenchy on the night of June 15th, 1915 just before reaching the first trench he received a bullet wound in the arm. His wound was immediately bandaged and he was ordered to return to the Dressing Station, but he insisted on going forward, and on reaching the German trench he was hit by a bomb and instantly killed. Body not recovered for burial.*

Roy Fair, 21, has no known grave. He is memorialized on the Vimy Memorial, Pas de Calais, France. His name is also inscribed on the Village of Arkona cenotaph and on the cenotaph in the Village of Point Edward. Roy's mother Eliza, passed away the following year after the loss of her youngest son, at age fifty-nine, on November 3, 1916.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 2G, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10Z

FITZGERALD, Albert Le Roy (#124737)

Like many other young men, Albert Le Roy Fitzgerald had a brief time at the front. The Sarnia born nineteen year old died in early October 1916, one month after arriving at the front. Albert was killed during the Battle of the Somme and has no known grave.

Albert Fitzgerald was born in Sarnia, on June 29, 1897, the youngest son of Ashley Cooper and Elizabeth J. (nee English) Fitzgerald. Albert's father was born Ashley Cooper Flynn, in Hamilton on August 23, 1867. Around 1875, his surname was changed, so thereafter he became Ashley Cooper Fitzgerald. On April 10, 1886, nineteen year-old Ashley Fitzgerald, employed as a finisher, married nineteen year-old Elizabeth J. English (born 1867 in Michigan) in St. Thomas, Elgin, Ontario. Ashley and Elizabeth Fitzgerald had five children together: Bertin (born December 16, 1886 in London, Ontario); Wilbur John (born December 29, 1887); Mildred B. (born December 30, 1890); Gladys (born September 17, 1894); and Albert Le Roy. To support his family, living at 353 Devine Street, Ashley was working as a grocer in Sarnia at the time of Albert's birth. In 1905, when Albert was eight years old, his mother, Elizabeth, died at the age of thirty-eight.

Ashley Cooper Fitzgerald later wed again, this time to Alfreda Mae Williams (born August 24, 1883 in Lapeer, Michigan) on April 9, 1906 in Port Huron, Michigan. At the time, Ashley was working as a painter/finisher in Sarnia at the time. Ashley and Alfreda had four children together, step-siblings for Albert: Velma Mae (born August 5, 1906 in St. Clair, Michigan); brother Ashley Cooper Jr. (born November 26, 1908 in Sarnia); and Amy Alfreda (born March 13, 1911 in Sarnia). They had a fourth child, a baby girl born September 6, 1907 in Sarnia. Tragically, the infant girl passed away four days later. In 1911, the Fitzgerald family was residing at 593 Christina Street, Sarnia.

Eighteen year-old Albert Le Roy Fitzgerald enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force on April 5, 1916 in London, Ontario. He stood five feet seven inches tall, had blue eyes and light hair, and was single at the

time. He recorded his trade or calling as driver, and his next-of-kin as his father Ashley Cooper Fitzgerald of 200 Wellington Street, Sarnia. Albert Fitzgerald initially became a member of the 70th Battalion, Canadian Expeditionary Force.

Albert embarked overseas for the United Kingdom on April 24, 1916 aboard the *S.S. Lapland*. Disembarking in Liverpool, England on May 5, 1916, Albert was initially stationed at Shorncliffe. Two months later, on July 6, 1916, Albert was transferred to West Sandling, becoming a member of the 39th Battalion. Less than two weeks later, on July 18, Private Albert Fitzgerald arrived in France, as a member of the Canadian Infantry, 5th Canadian Mounted Rifles (CMR) Battalion, Quebec Regiment.

By September 1916, he arrived at the front lines with the 5th CMR's. Private Albert Fitzgerald was thrust into the fighting in France during the **Battle of the Somme** (July 1-November 18, 1916)--one of the most futile and bloody battles in history. The Somme battle lasted for more than four brutal months and saw the Allies advance around 10 kilometers. A more telling statistic is the number of injuries and deaths: of the 85,000 Canadian Corps, there were more than 24,000 Canadian casualties.

Approximately one month after arriving at the front lines, on October 1, 1916, Private Albert Fitzgerald was killed while fighting during the Battle of the Somme. He was initially reported "missing after action", and later recorded as "presumed to have died on or since 1-10-16." Albert's Circumstances of Death Register records him as; *Date of Casualty: On or since 1-10-16. "Previously reported missing, now for official purposes presumed to have died."* *Location of Unit at time of Casualty: ATTACK NEAR COURCELETTE. Attack near Courcellette.* Albert Fitzgerald, 19, has no known grave. He is memorialized on the Vimy Memorial, Pas de Calais, France. SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 2G, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10Z

FORD, Peter John (#6915)

Peter John Ford lived an adventurous life before he even came to Sarnia. The son of an Irishman who had enlisted as a teen in the British army, Peter followed in his father's footsteps and joined his father's former infantry unit. He fought in the Boer War from 1899-1901 and in 1914, now living in Sarnia, Peter enlisted in the Great War when he was forty years old. Sergeant Ford died tragically in action on June 15, 1915 at Givenchy, France. His body was never recovered.

Peter Ford was born in Buttevant, County Cork, Ireland, on June 29, 1874, the eldest son of John and Ellen Jane (nee: Sheehan) Ford. John Ford (born 1841) set an example for his sons when he enlisted in the British Army at the age of seventeen in 1858. He served in the army for fourteen years. In April 1872, John married Ellen Jane Sheehan (of Buttevant, Ireland, born 1851 or earlier) who was a servant in a household at the time. John continued to serve in the army, including time in China and Japan (for 3 years, 9 months); in South Africa (for 4 years, 3 months) and in Mauritius (for 6 months). Though John and Ellen's time together was intermittent, they had three children together: Peter John; William Joseph (born December 14, 1878 in Portland Castle, Dorset, England); and an unnamed daughter (born December 1880). After serving for over twenty-three years in the army, forty year-old father John Ford was discharged in Manchester on July 26, 1881. Within one year after his discharge, John Ford passed away at the age of forty-one.

Ellen, now widowed and the mother of three children, remarried one year later. Her second husband was Sergeant John McMahon, from Tulla, County Clare, Ireland. Not long after they were married at Aldershot, the main British army camp in England, Peter and William were shipped to the Duke of York School – a school for boys of soldiers who were disadvantaged. In the case of the Ford brothers, their father had passed away at a relatively young age.

At their first opportunity, both Peter and William Joe Ford enlisted in the British Army. [Note: William always went by the short form of his middle name - Joe]. Peter enlisted at the age of fifteen when he stood only five feet tall and weighed ninety-five pounds. He served for three and a half years in the Royal Garrison and then for thirteen years in the Dorsetshire Regiment of Foot, a British infantry unit and his father's old regiment. His brother, Joe, joined the British Army on December 22, 1891, just days after his thirteenth birthday. He would originally serve with the Dorsetshire as a musician.

Both Peter and Joe Ford were deployed to South Africa where they served in the Boer War from 1899 to 1901. They were at the battles of Spion Kop, Tugela Heights and the relief of Ladysmith. They returned to England when the war ended and they were stationed near Hamel Hempstead in May 1901. It was here that the brothers' lives took divergent paths but they ended up together.

Joe married a young lady named Lillian Parsons and they had two children together: Helen (born September 20, 1903); and Mary (born 1905). Joe continued to serve in the British Army and rose to the rank of full Corporal before being discharged on May 15, 1906. To earn money, the Ford brothers distributed posters that encouraged people to immigrate to Canada. They would take the invitation to heart and sailed together from Ireland to Canada in 1905 (followed later by Joe's wife Lillian and their two daughters).

By 1911, both Peter and Joe Ford were employed as railway locomotive engineers in Sarnia. At that time, Peter was residing with Joe and his family at 151 Emma Street. In August 1914, when the war broke out, forty year-old **Peter John Ford** joined the 27th Regiment, St. Clair Borderers, serving as a Private. On September 1, 1914, one month after war was declared, Peter underwent his medical examination at Valcartier Camp, Quebec, and was declared fit for service. In early September 1914 while in Quebec, Peter sent a postcard to his young niece Helen, or Nellie as he called her (it was one of many he wrote to young Nellie), with a brief message:

Dear Nellie,

Hope you are getting on alright. I suppose you are going to the big school now. Do not forget me while I am away. Good bye for the present. Uncle Pete

On September 22, 1914, forty year-old Peter John Ford completed his Attestation Paper at Valcartier, becoming an enlisted member of the 1st Battalion, Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force. He stood five feet seven and three-quarter inches tall, had hazel eyes and dark hair, and was single at the time. He recorded his trade or calling as locomotive engineer, and his next-of-kin as his brother William Joe Ford of 151 Emma Street, Sarnia. He also recorded his previous military experience with Dorsetshire Regiment-10 years, and Royal Garrison Regiment-3 years, 163 days and Foreign Service-3 years. In a nod to his religious beliefs perhaps, his forearm tattoos were of a crucifix on one arm and the Virgin Mary and child Jesus on the other.

As a member of the Canadian Infantry, 1st Battalion, Western Ontario Regiment, Peter embarked overseas for the United Kingdom on October 4, 1915 aboard the *S.S. Laureutic* (this ship would later sink when it struck two mines north of Ireland in January 1917). Canada's First Contingent of the CEF spent the cold, wet winter of 1914-15 training at Salisbury Plain in England. The 1st (Western Ontario) Battalion became part of the 1st Canadian Division, 1st Canadian Infantry Brigade. Once overseas, Private Peter Ford was soon promoted to the rank of Corporal, and on January 9, 1915, he was awarded the rank of Lance Sergeant.

In February 1915, the 1st Canadian Division embarked for France. Arriving at the front, Canadian soldiers found themselves in a cratered, eviscerated wasteland of mud, wasted vegetation, and unburied bodies. For two weeks at the end of February 1915, the Canadian Division had its first taste of action when each of its brigades did a seven-day familiarization tour with British units. On March 3, the Canadians took over 6,400 yards of the front near Armentieres, supported a British attack, and suffered their first casualties. By the end of the month, the division had marched north to Ypres, Belgium, the centre of the salient jutting into the German line, surrounded on three sides by enemy soldiers and artillery.

It was at the Ypres salient, an area traditionally referred to as Flanders, that the Canadians engaged in their first battle of the war, the **Second Battle of Ypres**, April 22-May 25, 1915, their baptism by fire. It was here that the Germans unleashed the first lethal chlorine gas attack in the history of warfare. On April 22, the Germans launched the first ever large-scale use of chlorine poison gas, the wind blowing it over the French and Canadian lines. On April 24, the Germans launched another gas attack, this time targeting the Canadian line. In the first 48 hours at Ypres (April 22-24), there were more than 6,000 Canadian casualties. One in every three Canadians became a casualty. A staggering 2,100 were killed and 1,410 were captured. On April 24, 1915, while in the field, Peter Ford was awarded the rank of Sergeant.

Following the Battle of Ypres, the decimated units of the 1st Canadian Division marched south to join in the Allied offensives which were already under way. The Canadians were thrust into the fighting near the villages of Festubert in mid-May 1915 and Givenchy in mid-June, both in northern France, part of a wider British offensive against German lines.

The **Battle of Festubert** was the second major engagement fought by Canadian troops in the war. The main attack began on May 18, with two brigades of the 1st Division launching frontal assaults against heavy German defences near the village. The fighting here followed the grim pattern of frontal assaults against entrenched German forces that had all the advantages of terrain, firepower and well-positioned machine guns. With little planning and inaccurate maps, they repeatedly charged over open ground with little artillery support. By May 25, after a week of

fighting, the battle was over. The result was slaughter on both sides, and the Canadians had made only small gains. It was about this time that Peter sent his last letter home to Joe in Sarnia.

About three weeks later, in mid-June 1915, the 1st Canadian Division was thrust into the fighting at **Givenchy**. Supposedly, lessons had been learned at Festubert, and plans were made to address the issues of German barbed wire and machine gun nests. Three artillery pieces were secretly moved closer to the front line and a tunnel was dug under the German trenches and packed with explosives in the hope that it would eliminate a large section of the enemy front line trenches. Although the Canadians achieved some of their objectives, the gains were negligible and the cost was extremely high—2,468 casualties at Festubert and a further 400 at Givenchy.

In the early evening of June 15, 1915, Sergeant Peter Ford was killed in action at Givenchy, France. His battalion was ordered to attack the German trenches. To weaken the enemy, a mine was set to explode under the German trenches at approximately 5:45 p.m. The mine, however, was not placed far enough forward and more than fifty men from the 1st Battalion simply vanished in the explosion. Peter Ford was one of those men. He was initially reported “wounded”, updated to “wounded and missing”, and later recorded as “for official purposes presumed to have died on or since 15-6-15 in the field”. Sergeant Peter Ford’s Circumstances of Death register records him as; *Date of Casualty: 15-6-15. “Previously reported wounded and missing, now for official purposes presumed to have Died.” Location of unit at time of Casualty: AT CALONNE.* Forty year-old Peter Ford’s body was never found, and he has no known grave. He is memorialized on the Vimy Memorial, Pas de Calais, France.

Some time after Peter’s death, brother Joe in Sarnia received a commemorative Next of Kin Plaque (Dead Man’s Penny) and Memorial Scroll that read; *He whom this scroll commemorates was numbered among those who, at the call of King and Country, left all that was dear to them, endured hardness, faced danger, and finally passed out of the sight of men by the path of duty and self-sacrifice, giving up their own lives that others might live in freedom. Let those who come after see to it that his name be not forgotten. Sergt. Peter J. Ford, Canadian Infantry Bn.*



Peter John Ford



William Joseph "Joe" Ford

Undoubtedly, his older brother’s death six months earlier led **William Joseph “Joe” Ford** to enlist in the Great War in December 1915. He enlisted on December 27, 1915 in Sarnia despite having promised Lillian, his wife, that he would never enlist again. At the time, Joe and Lillian were living at 245 Chippewa Street with their five children: Ellen Annie, Mary Ann, Michael Anthony, Nora Bridget and their youngest Peter Joseph Festubert.

Thirty-seven-year-old Joe stood five feet seven and a half inches tall, had blue eyes and brown hair, and recorded his birthplace as Buttevant, Ireland. He also listed his previous service of fourteen years with the Dorset Regiment in England and his present occupation as a locomotive engineer. Joe became a member of the 149th Battalion, and embarked overseas on March 25, 1917 aboard the *Lapland*. Arriving in Liverpool on April 7, 1917, from the 1st Segregation Camp, he was initially posted to the 25th Reserve Battalion at Bramshott.

Five months later, on September 10, 1917, Joe Ford (#844404) arrived in France, as a member of the Canadian Railway Troops, 85th Canadian Eng. Crew Company with the rank of Sapper. Two months later, in November 1917, he was gassed in France. In August 1918, he began to have attacks of rheumatism. Joe survived the war and in early February 1919, he would be returned as "invalid sick" to England, posted to CRT Depot in Knotty Ash. On February 9, 1919, he was admitted to #16 Canadian General Hospital, Orpington, England, diagnosed with myalgia (muscle pain) and rheumatism. Joe was discharged from hospital on March 18, 1919 and returned to Canada aboard the *SS Aquitania*, arriving in Halifax on May 25, 1919.

On his return, Joe Ford entered the Military Hospital at Wolseley Barracks in London, Ontario. He would be treated there with rest and fresh air in hospital, due in part from "infection gas and exposure under active service conditions." He was diagnosed with rheumatism, chronic bronchitis and flat feet. He remained in hospital until June 24, 1919, and was honourably discharged from service on June 26, 1919 in London, Ontario.

For his service, William Joe Ford was awarded the British War Medal and the Victory Medal. He returned to his family in Sarnia where they still resided on Chippewa Street until moving to 403 Confederation Street. Joe and Lillian had a sixth child, John Jack Ford. Years later, their son Peter Joseph Festubert Ford served in the Canadian Army during World War II. Joe Ford passed away in Sarnia at the age of sixty on November 16, 1939, and is buried in Our Lady of Mercy Cemetery. The cause of his death was recorded as "Coronary thrombosis, etc. Death was due to service".

One of Joe Ford's granddaughters is Judy Arthurs in Sarnia. In her words, "I never knew him personally as he died the month that I was born. I certainly heard lots of stories about him over the years. He and Lillian lived on Confederation at Stuart Street where later Whitie Stapleton was to grow up. My sisters would tell about running to that house after first Friday mass at St. Joes and jumping into bed with Grandpa yelling at Lil to get these girls some breakfast. I often think about him and what I learned about that war over the years. I have a piece of memorabilia that was his. I don't what it is called but it is a brass gizmo that a soldier would slide under a brass button when cleaning it and it would keep the cleaning agent off the fabric. That article has probably traveled and seen more of the world than I could ever hope to. I also have his medal from Africa. I don't have many pictures of him but there is a story that goes with each picture." When Judy and husband Peter were first married, he was teaching in St. Catharines and was a leader in the Cadet Corps where he used the same gizmo to polish his uniform buttons.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 2G, 4A, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10Z, 2u

GARROD, Angus (#53571)

English born Angus Garrod immigrated to Canada before the Great War and was working as a labourer at Imperial Oil when war broke out in 1914. He enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force on October 23, 1914 in Sarnia and departed overseas on April 18, 1915. Nearly a year later, Private Garrod was killed in the trenches at the Battle of St. Eloi in Belgium. Angus, 28, has no known grave.

Angus Garrod was born on January 21, 1888 in Clayton near Bradford, Yorkshire, England, the only son of Jesse (born 1864 in Tibenham, Norfolk, England) and Mary Ann (nee Archer, born March 1863 in Lincolnshire, England) Garrod. Jesse Garrod and Mary Ann Archer were married on November 20, 1886 in St. Peter Bradford Cathedral in Yorkshire, England and they had two children together: son Angus and daughter Mabel, born December 1890 in Clayton, Yorkshire. Angus was baptized on July 29, 1888 at Wesleyan Methodist Chapel in Bradford. In 1891, the Garrod family was residing in Clayton, Yorkshire, where father Jesse was supporting his family as a weaving overlooker. In October 1893, when Angus was five years-old, he lost his mother Mary Ann Garrod, who passed away at the age of thirty-one.

On October 28, 1896, Jesse Garrod remarried, his second wife being Elizabeth Thrower (born 1866). In 1901, the Garrod family was still residing in Yorkshire, England with Jesse still employed as a weaving overlooker. Angus, now thirteen, worked as a worsted spinner (a method to spin yarn). When Angus was sixteen years old, he became a registered member of the Royal Navy of Seaman's Services. He served with the Royal Navy for almost two years -- his first service date was March 17, 1904, aboard the ship *Vivid I*, and his last service date was January 26, 1906 aboard the *Euryalus*.

At the age of twenty-two, Angus Garrod immigrated to Canada, departing from Liverpool, England aboard the *SS Lake Manitoba*, and arrived in St. John New Brunswick on April 10, 1910. On August 24, 1911, he crossed from Port Huron, Michigan into Sarnia, with the intention to work as a farm labourer. In 1914, Angus was residing at 122 Mary Street, Sarnia and working as a labourer at Imperial Oil.

Twenty-six-year-old Angus Garrod enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force on October 23, 1914 in Sarnia. He stood five feet seven and a quarter inches tall, had blue eyes and light hair, and was single at the time. He recorded his trade or calling as laborer, and his next-of-kin as his father Jesse Garrod, of Clayton, Bradford, Yorkshire, England. Angus also recorded his previous military service of two years in the Royal Navy. Angus became a member of the 18th Battalion (Western Ontario Regiment), Canadian Infantry.

Private Angus Garrod embarked overseas from Halifax aboard the *SS Grampian* on April 18, 1915. He arrived in England on April 29, 1915. Four and a half months later, on September 14, 1915, Angus arrived in France with the 18th Battalion. Approximately two months later, on November 10, 1915, he was admitted to 5th Canadian Field Ambulance due to rheumatism. Two days later, he was transferred to Div. Rest Station in Locre. On November 19, he was admitted to No. 6 Canadian Field Ambulance, diagnosed with influenza. He was discharged from care the next day. On November 21, 1915, he rejoined his unit in the field at the front.

Four and a half months later, on April 10, 1916, Private Angus Garrod of “C” Company, 18th Battalion, was killed in action during the **Battle of St. Eloi** in Belgium (March 27-April 16, 1916). This battle, known as “the Battle of the Craters” would be two weeks of attacks and counterattacks with Canadians dealing with thigh deep mud, incessant rain, poor communication, a lack of coordination and reconnaissance, and superior positioned German artillery. When the battle was over, more than 1,370 Canadian soldiers were killed or wounded.

Private Angus Garrod’s Circumstances of Casualty records him as; “*Killed in Action*” Location: *TRENCHES AT ST. ELOI. No record of burial.* The Commonwealth War Graves Register records him as, “No record of burial, killed in area of St. Eloi”. The April 27, 1916 *London Free Press* reported that; “Pte. Angus Garrod, of Sarnia, killed, was an old British navy man and had seen much previous service.” In early May 1916, the *Sarnia Observer* reported the following: “Pvt. Angus Garrod, whose death was mentioned in yesterday’s casualty list, leaves many relatives here to mourn his loss. They are his aunt Mrs. J. Baker, Martin St. and several cousins including Private Archie Baker, Private Willie Waller and Private Alfred Weston... Private Garrod had resided in Sarnia for several years prior to enlisting. While here he was employed at the Imperial Oil Company Works.”

Angus Garrod, 28, has no known grave. Though his name is not on the Sarnia cenotaph, it is recorded on the Sarnia Royal Canadian Legion Memorial Plaque. Angus Garrod is memorialized on the Menin Gate (Ypres) Memorial, Belgium, Panel 10-26-28. In November 2019, his name along with 25 others was added to the Sarnia cenotaph, engraved in stone to be remembered always.
SOURCES: C, D, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 2G, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10Z

GILES, George Thomas (#124381)

The fact that he was a husband and a father of four young children did not prevent George Thomas Giles from enlisting. He joined the Canadian Expeditionary Force in November 1915 and six months later was at the front lines. George, 29, was killed during the brutal fighting at the Battle of the Somme and has no known grave. The real tragedy of his death is that George never got to meet his fourteen grandchildren and fifteen great-grandchildren.

George Thomas Giles was born in Liverpool, England on April 6, 1887, the eldest son of Edwin and Annie (nee Rooney) Giles. Both Edwin (born 1865) and Annie (born 1864) were born in Liverpool, and they got married in their hometown in 1885 when they were in their early 20s. They were blessed with four sons: George Thomas; James Edwin (born June 6, 1888, but passed away at the age of three in 1891); Frederick Wright (born September 8, 1890); and Edwin Jr. (born February 13, 1893). George Giles was baptized on April 17, 1887 at Everton, St. Polycarp, Lancashire. In 1894, when George was only seven years old, his mother, Annie, passed away at the age of thirty.

In 1901, Edwin Giles remarried, his second wife being twenty-one-year-old Mary Jane Foulds (born January 1880), in Berkinhead, Cheshire. Mary Jane Giles gave birth to three daughters in a six-year span. Mary Elizabeth May (born May 1, 1903); Doris (born 1908); and Selina (born 1909) were step-sisters to George and his brothers. In 1911, Edwin, a baker’s manager, and Mary Jane were residing in Cheshire, England with their children: Edwin Jr. (age eighteen); Mary E. May (age seven); Doris (age two); and Selina (age one).

Four years earlier, George Thomas Giles had married Sophia Ann Walker on December 30, 1907 at St. Nicholas Church in Liverpool, England. Some time after marrying, the young couple emigrated from England to Canada and eventually made it to Sarnia where they resided at Confederation Street and later Campbell Street. George and Sophie Ann Giles had four children together: Annie (born 1912); Lillian Edith (born October 3, 1913); Marty, and George Jr.

Now a father of four, twenty-eight-year-old George Giles enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force on November 9, 1915 in Sarnia. He stood five feet nine inches tall, had blue eyes and brown hair, and was residing on Campbell Street with his wife Sophie Ann and their four children at the time. George recorded his trade or calling as R.R. Fireman and his next-of-kin as his wife Sophie Giles of 418 Campbell Street, Sarnia. He also recorded his prior military service of "4 years Territorials". George Giles became a member of the 70th Battalion, Canadian Expeditionary Force, with the rank of Private.

Five months after enlisting, on April 24, 1916, Private George Giles embarked overseas. He arrived in England on May 5, 1916 and approximately six weeks later, on June 18, 1916, he was transferred to the Canadian Infantry, 58th Battalion, Central Ontario Regiment. George arrived in France with the 58th Battalion the next day, June 19, 1916. Two days later, on June 21, 1916, he arrived at the front lines.

Private George Giles soon found himself taking part in fighting during the **Battle of the Somme** (July 1-November 18, 1916)--one of the bloodiest and most futile battles in history. The Somme battle lasted for more than four brutal months and saw the Allies advance around 10 kilometers. A more telling statistic is the number of injuries and deaths: of the 85,000 Canadian Corps, there were more than 24,000 Canadian casualties.

The second major offensive of the Somme battle was the week-long Battle of Flers-Courcelette (September 15-22). It was here where tanks made their first appearance in the war. The Battle was a stunning success for the Canadians, but it came at a cost of over 7,200 casualties. Approximately two weeks after this battle, and three and a half months after arriving at the front lines, on October 7, 1916, Private George Giles was killed in action while fighting during the Battle of the Somme. George Giles' Circumstances of Death Register records him as; *Date of Casualty: 7-10-16. "Killed in Action". Location of Unit at time of Casualty: TRENCHES AT COURCELETTE. No record of burial.*



Private George Thomas Giles

In early November 1916, St. John's Church held a memorial service for several local fallen. The following is the report on the service from the *Sarnia Observer*:

MEMORIAL SERVICE AT ST. JOHN'S CHURCH

*A memorial service was held at St. John's Church Sunday evening for Thos. Littlefield, Jesse Croucher and **George Giles**, who were recently killed at the Front. There was a large attendance, and the service was of a very solemn character. A practical address was delivered by Rev. F.G. Newton, rector, who eulogized the men and their work in defence of the empire. He also spoke words of consolation to those mourning for their dead, and exhorted the congregation to do all they could by constant acts of kindness to the bereaved, to show they appreciated the sacrifice made by the men who are now no more. The music and hymns which were appropriate to the occasion, were exceedingly rendered. Mr. Hargreaves played with effect the "Dead March in Saul."*

[Jesse Crouchers' story is also included in this Project].

George's wife, Sophie Ann and their four children were residing on Bank Street in Ottawa at time of

George's death. Over five decades later, Sophie Ann Giles passed away at the age of eighty-three in January 1970 in Ottawa. Among those who she left behind were her four surviving children: Mrs. James E. Sherman (Annie); Mrs. N.E. Arnold (Lillian); Mrs. F.H. Nielson (Marty), of Ottawa; and George E. of Kingston; along with 14 grandchildren and 15 great-grandchildren. George Giles, 29, has no known grave. He is memorialized on the Vimy Memorial, Pas de Calais, France.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 2G, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10Z

GORE, George (#844493)

George Gore's story differs from many Sarnians who fought in the Great War. First, he was an American who, at some point, immigrated to Sarnia. And, at thirty-six, he was much older than others when he enlisted in 1916.

George Gore was born in Mound City, U.S.A, on April 18, 1880. At some point, George immigrated to Canada and resided in Sarnia. At age thirty-six, he enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force on May 15, 1916 in Sarnia. He stood five feet seven inches tall, had brown eyes and black hair, and was single. He recorded his present address simply as "Sarnia" and his trade or calling as a cook. He did not immediately record any next-of-kin, but amended it later to his cousin George Core in Mound City, USA. Later, George changed it again to Magnolia Lewis, a friend at 620 East Harrison Street in Danville, Illinois, USA.

George Gore initially became a member of the 149th Battalion, Canadian Expeditionary Force. He embarked overseas from Halifax for the United Kingdom on March 25, 1917 aboard the *S.S. Lapland*. Disembarking in Liverpool, England on April 7, 1917, he became a member of the 25th Reserve Battalion, stationed at Bramshott. One month later, on May 2, 1917, Private George Gore was transferred to 36 Company, Canadian Forestry Corps (CFC), stationed at Sunningdale. Eleven days later, on May 13, 1917, now with the rank of Acting Sergeant, George Gore arrived in Havre, France, a member of 57th Company, Canadian Forestry Corps, where he served as a cook. Four months later, on September 21, 1917, George Gore reverted to the rank of Private, at his own request.

More than seven months later, on May 1, 1918, a seriously ill Private George Gore was admitted to Canadian Forestry Corps Hospital La Joux Jura, France. He passed away in hospital that day, the result of a Haematuria Cerebro-Haemorrhage. This is a type of bleeding that occurs inside the skull, around or within the brain, often caused by some type of head trauma.

George Gore's Circumstances of Death Register records him as; *Date of Casualty: 1-5-18. "DIED" (Haematuria cerebro haemorrhage) at Canadian Forestry Corps Hospital La Joux Jura. Location of Grave: Campagnole Communal Cemetery, Jura, near Andelot between Pontalier and Dyon.* George Gore, 38, is buried in Champagnole Communal Cemetery, Jura, France, Grave A.12.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 2G, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10Z

GRAY, George (#81334)

George Gray of Sarnia was a Private in the 32nd Battalion, Canadian Expeditionary Force, when he arrived in France in February 1915. He was killed in The Battle of Festubert, the second major engagement fought by Canadian troops in the war. The only consolation for George especially, as well as for his family and for his fellow soldiers who admired him greatly, is that his death was painless and instantaneous. Private Gray, 26, was killed when an enemy shell exploded in a trench near him. He has no known grave.

George Gray was born in Sarnia on November 30, 1888, the youngest son of Scottish born parents Donald (born September 3, 1833) and Mary (nee Black) Gray. Donald Gray had emigrated from Scotland to Canada in 1852 and by 1871, he had wed Mary and was working as a farmer in Plympton Township. Donald and Mary Gray had five children together: James (born December 26, 1876); Daniel A. (born May 29, 1879); Euphemia (born October 3, 1881); George and Jessie. Sometime before 1891, Mary Gray passed away and in 1901, widowed father Donald was still residing in Plympton with four of his children; James, Daniel, Euphemia and George. At some point after, Donald Gray moved into Sarnia and resided at 327 Russell Street until he passed away at age seventy-nine on September 23, 1912.

George Gray resided in Sarnia until he finished his schooling and then moved to the Canadian Northwest. At the age of twenty-six, he enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force on December 12, 1914 in Winnipeg, Manitoba. He stood five feet ten inches tall, had grey-blue eyes and medium brown hair, and was single at the time. He recorded his trade or calling as farmer, and his next-of-kin as his brother Daniel A. Gray of 327 Russell Street, Sarnia. George Gray became a Private in the 32nd Battalion, Canadian Expeditionary Force. Two months

later, on February 23, 1915, he embarked overseas for the United Kingdom aboard the *S.S. Vaderland*.

Private George Gray trained in England for a little over nine weeks and then embarked for France on May 5, 1915. He soon found himself taking part in the final weeks of the Second Battle of Ypres.

The 1st Canadian Division soldiers had arrived at the front in February 1915 and found themselves in a cratered, eviscerated wasteland of mud, wasted vegetation, and unburied bodies. By the end of March, the division had marched north to Ypres, Belgium, the centre of the salient jutting into the German line, surrounded on three sides by enemy soldiers and artillery. It was at the Ypres salient, an area traditionally referred to as Flanders, that the Canadians engaged in their first battle of the war, the Second Battle of Ypres, April 22-May 25, 1915, their baptism by fire. It was here, on April 22, with the wind blowing it over the French and Canadian lines, that the Germans unleashed the first lethal chlorine gas attack in the history of warfare. On April 24, the Germans launched another gas attack, this time targeting the Canadian line. In the first 48 hours at Ypres (April 22-24), there were more than 6,000 Canadian casualties. One in every three Canadians became a casualty. A staggering 2,100 were killed and 1,410 were captured.

Following the Battle of Ypres, the decimated units of the 1st Canadian Division marched south to join in the Allied offensives that were already under way. On May 5, 1915, George Gray became a member of the Canadian Infantry, Eastern Ontario Regiment, 2nd Battalion, No. 12 Platoon, #3 Company. The Canadians were thrust into the fighting near the villages of Festubert in mid-May 1915 and Givenchy in mid-June, both in northern France, part of a wider British offensive against German lines.

The **Battle of Festubert** was the second major engagement fought by Canadian troops in the war. The main attack began on May 18, with two brigades of the 1st Division launching frontal assaults against heavy German defences near the village. The fighting here followed the grim pattern of frontal assaults against entrenched German forces that had all the advantages of terrain, firepower and well-positioned machine guns. With little planning and inaccurate maps, they repeatedly charged over open ground with little artillery support. By May 25, after a week of fighting, the battle was over. The result was slaughter on both sides, and the Canadians had made only small gains.

On May 30, 1915, Private George Gray was killed in action while fighting near Festubert in France. He was killed by an enemy shell. His Circumstances of Death Register records him as; *Date of Casualty: 30-5-15. "Killed in Action". Location of Unit at time of casualty: TRENCHES IN VICINITY OF FESTUBERT. No record of burial.*

About three weeks later, in mid-June 1915, the 1st Canadian Division were thrust into the fighting at **Givenchy**. Supposedly, lessons had been learned at Festubert, and plans were made to address the issues of German barbed wire and machine gun nests. Although the Canadians achieved some of their objectives, the gains were negligible and the cost was extremely high—2,468 casualties at Festubert and a further 400 at Givenchy.

In early June 1915, George's brother, Daniel, in Sarnia received the following letter informing him of the circumstances of his brother's death:

France, June 2nd, 1915 D.A. Gray, Esq, 327 Russell Street, Sarnia
Dear Sir,

I am sorry to have to advise you of the death of your brother George who was killed in action on Sunday night, the 30th of May. He, with a party of men from my platoon, was detailed to complete a communication trench from our own to that of our No. 4 company, which was 100 yards ahead of us.

Suddenly, without warning a big German shell struck the side of the trench and exploded almost beside him. I was close by, and immediately had him lifted out of the trench. Pieces of the shell had struck him in the back and his death was painless and virtually instantaneous. We did what was possible before he passed away and I then took his papers, which I am sending through our orderly room, who will forward them through the regular channels.

Four of his chums carried him back behind our lines and laid him decently in a grave which they had dug. I have marked this with a cross, giving his name and regiment number and stating that he was killed in action on the 30th of May, 1915. George was a very fine man and most popular with his companions. I have had a very high opinion of him since I took command of the platoon, and I feel his loss very keenly. There is little I can say to make the blow easier for you to bear, but a man can ask no finer end than death met in the service of his country and though the toll is heavy it must be paid to prevent German savagery overrunning the world. Please accept my sincere sympathy in your bereavement and believe me I share the sorrow with you.

Yours sincerely, T.C. Biggar

Lt. No. 12 Platoon, No.3 Co., 2nd Batt., C.E.F.

At the time of George Gray's death, his siblings were residing in different areas: James was in Camlachie; Daniel A. (a Grand Trunk engineer) was at 327 Russell Street, later 229 Brock Street in Sarnia; Euphemia was in Sarnia residing with brother Daniel; and Jessie was in Milburn, Ontario. George Gray, 26, has no known grave. He is memorialized on the Vimy Memorial, Pas de Calais, France. His name is also inscribed on the Camlachie Cenotaph. In November 2019, his name along with 25 others was added to the Sarnia cenotaph, engraved in stone to be remembered always.

SOURCES: C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 2G, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10Z

GUERTIN, Percival Edward (#649389)

Percival (Percy) Edward Guertin was one of four brothers who served in the Great War and the only one of the four to be killed. A father of four, Percy was killed in action in April 1918 four months after arriving in France. He has no known grave.

Percival (Percy) Guertin was born in Chatham, Ontario, on September 29, 1886, the son of Alexander Napoleon and Julia (nee Turcott) Guertin. Alexander Guertin was born January 1, 1857 in the U.S.A. and came from a military family. His grandfather was a veteran of the American Civil War and his great-grandfather a veteran of the War of 1812. Three years before Confederation, Alexander immigrated to Canada in 1864 where he was initially employed as a grocer and later a general labourer.

Alexander and Julia (born August 23, 1856 in Ontario) Guertin had nine children together: Joseph Edward (born December 13, 1882); Florence Adelaide (born June 14, 1884); William John (born July 8, 1886); Percival; Clyde Alexander (born August 14, 1888); Mary Stella (born April 26, 1892); Norman Peter (born June 12, 1893); Charles Edmond (born September 14, 1895); and Rena Margaret (born March 15, 1900). Alexander Guertin was an employee of the Dominion Salt Company for forty years, and the Guertin family lived first at 352 Maxwell Street and later 143 Elgin Street, Sarnia. The American born patriarch, Alexander, lived in Sarnia for fifty-three years, before passing away at the age eighty-five in June 1943 and being interred at Our Lady of Mercy Cemetery, Sarnia.

Four sons—William, Clyde, Norman and Percival—served with Canadian regiments during the First World War. During the Second World War, at least two of Alexander and Julia's grandsons followed the family tradition: Lt. T.J. Forlan, son of Florence Forlan (nee Guertin), was a flight commander overseas with the American Air Force; and Sgt. William Guertin, son of Norman Guertin, served with the R.C.A.F., and ended up as a prisoner of war in an Italian prison camp.

William John Guertin (#171778) was the first son to enlist. Born July 8, 1886 in Chatham, Ontario, he enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force on August 17, 1915 in Toronto. The twenty-nine-year-old stood five feet five inches tall, had brown eyes and dark brown hair, was married, and was living in Toronto at the time. He recorded his trade or calling as blacksmith, and his next-of-kin as his wife Olive Guertin at 905 Queen Street, Toronto. William became a member of the 83rd Overseas Battalion, as a signaller and embarked overseas for the United Kingdom on April 24, 1916 aboard the *S.S. Olympic*. He arrived in Liverpool on May 7, 1916.

During training at West Sandling, he was transferred to the 39th Battalion. Private William Guertin arrived in France on December 22, 1916 as a member of the 27th Battalion, Canadian Infantry. Less than four months later, he would be part of the 97,000 Canadians who fought in the Battle of Vimy Ridge, April 9-12, 1917. It was the very first time (and last time in the war) that all four divisions of the Canadian Corps would attack together as one formation. The seminal battle resulted in a significant victory for Canada, but at a cost of approximately 7,004 wounded and 3,598 lost lives in four days of battle. The following month, in May 1917, William Guertin was gassed in France.

Private William Guertin also took part in the Battle of Passchendaele, Belgium, October 26-November 10, 1917. Fought in unceasing rain on a battlefield that was a nightmarish mess of rotting, mangled corpses, gagging gas, water-filled craters and glutinous mud, and overcoming almost unimaginable hardships and horrific fighting conditions, the Canadians achieved a remarkable victory that few thought possible. It came at a cost of almost 12,000 Canadian wounded and more than 4,000 Canadians killed. Days after the Battle, on November 19, 1917, William Guertin was awarded the "Military Medal for Bravery in the Field".

In early August 1918, the Canadians began their Hundred Days Campaign, the "beginning of the end" of the Great War, where they were called on again and again over the three-month period to lead the offensives against the toughest German defences. On August 9, 1918 Private William Guertin was wounded in action, the result of a "gun

shot wound right hand". The rifle bullet was removed from his hand at the 18th American General Hospital in France; he was discharged from hospital after a month of recovery and was then returned to England.

William Guertin returned to Canada in December 1918, and was discharged as "medically unfit for further military service" in January 1919 in Toronto. His wounds resulted in partial loss of function of his right hand and his lungs.

Clyde Alexander Guertin (#186128) was the second son to enlist. Born August 14, 1888 in Fish Creek, Michigan, he enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force on November 15, 1915 in Winnipeg, Manitoba. The twenty-seven-year-old stood five feet six and a half inches tall, had blue eyes and dark brown hair, was single, and was living in Brandon, Manitoba at the time. He recorded his trade or calling as barrel maker and his next-of-kin as his father Alex Guertin at 351 Maxwell Street, Sarnia. Clyde became a member of the 90th Canadian Infantry Battalion (Winnipeg Rifles), and embarked overseas for the United Kingdom on May 31, 1916 aboard the *S.S. Olympic*, arriving in Liverpool on June 8, 1916.

Private Clyde Guertin arrived in Havre, France on August 21, 1916 as a member of the 78th Battalion, Canadian Infantry and was later transferred to the 24th Battalion. In August 1916, Clyde mailed a letter home from France to their sixteen year-old sister, Miss Rena Margaret Guertin of 351 Maxwell Street. The following is a portion of that letter:

Dear Sister,

I am just going to say "Hullo" for there isn't much else to say. We have just been over a few days, and it's pretty much like England. I guess they took me for a Scot for I am in the 78th (a Scotch Battalion) from Winnipeg. They are a great bunch of fellows, and we are all happy, no matter what comes or goes. There isn't many more of my old Battalion in it. I am well and happy and hope all at home are the same. Do your best to keep mother cheered up. I know she worries like the mischief having four sons out of five in the army, but the only thing to do is to look on the bright side. I am glad I'm here, and the other boys are in it... if it should happen that I am one of the ones that don't come back, don't feel sorry, as I'll give a good account of myself over here. You can bet your sweet life on that. We have a good name here and will do our best to keep it up till the last. Well dear, be a good girl and I'll bring you back a lock of the Kaiser's hair – or at least a German helmet. With lots of love and kisses, I will say goodbye to the dearest sis in the world.

Your brother Clyde.

PS. Give my best to everyone at home.

Private Clyde Guertin was wounded in action the first time on April 10, 1917, during the Battle of Vimy Ridge, the result of a "gun shot wound left arm, fracture". Approximately ten weeks later, he was discharged from hospital and returned to his unit. On August 9, 1918, during the Battle of Amiens, he was wounded again, the result of a "gun shot wound, bullet, scalp". Clyde Guertin survived the Great War, and returned to Canada in April 1919 where he was discharged on demobilization in Montreal.

Norman Peter Guertin (#844465) was the third son to enlist. Born June 12, 1893 in Sarnia, he enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force on January 17, 1916 in Sarnia. The twenty-two-year-old stood five feet two and a quarter inches tall, weighed 104 pounds, had brown eyes and black hair, was single, and was living in Sarnia at the time. He recorded his trade or calling as an electrician, and his next-of-kin as his father Alexander Guertin at 351 Maxwell Street, Sarnia. Private Norman Guertin became a member of the 149th Battalion.

In March 1917, medical officials were concerned about his health as he had some breathing difficulties -- diagnosed as due to possible disease of nasal framework, bronchitis or asthma--and was undersized. He weighed a mere 104 pounds and had, since birth, a "congenital undersized chest". He was transferred to No. 1 Special Service Company in London to be given one month "special physical training in order to develop his chest size to normal". In October 1917, he was promoted to the rank of Sergeant with the 1st Depot Battalion, Western Ontario Regiment. Norman served only in Canada and was discharged on demobilization in January 1919 in London, Ontario.

Two days before his twenty-second birthday, **Percival (Percy) Edward Guertin** (a labourer at the time) married Maud Grace (nee Noel, of Bay City, Michigan) Guertin on September 27, 1908 in Sarnia. Like her husband, Maud came from a family of nine children. One of her brothers, eight years her junior, was Urban Joseph Noel. Urban Noel, of Sarnia, also served in the Great War and, at age twenty-two, lost his life in action in Somme, France on August 8, 1918. Urban Joseph Noel's story is included in this Project on page 343.

One year after their marriage, Percy and Maud Guertin were residing at 355 Maxwell Street, Sarnia, and Percy was employed at a local sawmill. The couple later moved to South Porcupine, Ontario, before returning to Sarnia, where they lived at 109 Collingwood Street and then at 214 Parker Street. Percy and Maud Grace had four children together: Percy Edward Jr. (born August 2, 1909 in Sarnia); Francis Alexander (born December 19, 1910); Laura Genevieve (born June 11, 1913); and Marguerite Louise (born 1914).

Twenty-nine-year-old Percy Guertin enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force on May 23, 1916 in South Porcupine, Ontario. He was the fourth Guertin son to enlist. He stood five feet six inches tall, had brown eyes and dark hair, and was a married father of four, residing in South Porcupine at the time. He recorded his trade or calling as moulder and his next-of-kin as his wife Maud Guertin of South Porcupine, Ontario. He also recorded that he had prior military experience with the 97th Regiment. Percy became a Private with the 159th Battalion, Canadian Expeditionary Force and embarked overseas for the United Kingdom on October 31, 1916 aboard the *S.S. Empress*.

Percy's brothers, William and Clyde, also served overseas in the Great War. Percy was able to meet-up for a brief time with his brother Clyde overseas. Their encounter turned out to be shortly before Percy's death.

Percy Guertin disembarked in England on November 11, 1916. More than two months later, on January 30, 1917, he became a member of the 8th Reserve Battalion stationed at Seaford. On February 9, 1917, he was transferred to the 4th Canadian Railway Troops (CRT) stationed at Shoreham, and then Purfleet. Later that month, on February 24, 1917, Percy arrived in France as a Sapper with the 4th CRT. Eleven months later, on January 26, 1918, he was transferred to the Canadian Infantry, 24th Battalion, Quebec Regiment, with the rank of Private.



Private Percival Edward Guertin



Maud Guertin with son Francis Alexander

Fourteen months after arriving in France, on April 11, 1918, Private Percy Guertin was killed in action during fighting there. His Circumstances of Death Register records him as; *Date of Casualty: 11-4-18. "Killed in Action". Location of Unit at time of Casualty: TRENCHES EAST OF NEUVILLE VITASSE. Reported locations of grave: Sheet 5lb.N.19.a.08.75.* In late April 1918, Maud Guertin, residing at 109 Collingwood Street, received the following telegram:

OTTAWA ONT APRIL 23

MRS MAUD GUERTIN, SARNIA ONT

DEEPLY REGRET TO INFORM YOU THAT 649389 PRIVATE PERCY ED. GUERTIN INFANTRY, OFFICIALLY REPORTED KILLED IN ACTION APRIL 11TH.

DIRECTOR OF RECORDS

Percy Guertin left behind his wife of nine years Maud and their four children. Percy Guertin, 31, has no known grave. He is memorialized on the Vimy Memorial, Pas de Calais, France. Four months after her husband Percy's death, Maud Guertin's brother, Urban Joseph Noel, was killed in action in Somme, France.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 2G, 6O, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10Z, v

HALL, George (#189862)

George Hall enlisted at age thirty-two and arrived in England in early April 1917. A week before his thirty-fifth birthday, he was killed by enemy shell fire while fighting in the Battle of Arras.

George was born in Highgate, Kent, Ontario, on September 4, 1883, the son of Henry and Hannah (nee Jacques) Hall. Henry (born January 1841) and Hannah (born August 1852) both emigrated from England to Canada, (Henry in 1857, and Hannah in 1869), and together had twelve children, all born in Ontario: Margaret (born 1873); John (born March 1874); Emma (born September 1876); Mary (born 1877); Frederick (August 1879); Harry William (born October 1881); George; Thomas (born November 1885); Ann (born 1889); Rosie (July 1890); Velma (July 1892, later Velma McClung); and Frank (August 1895).

In 1881, the Hall family was residing in Bothwell, Ontario, where Henry was working as a farmer, and in 1891 through to 1901, the Hall family was residing in Oxford, Elgin West District. In 1911, they were residing in Highgate Village, Kent East District. Their father Henry was employed as a labourer, while sons Frederick, 32, and George, 28, were both employed as bricklayers.

At age thirty-two, George Hall enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force on January 14, 1916, in Ridgeway, Ontario. He stood five feet four and a half inches tall, had light brown eyes and dark brown hair, was single, and was residing with his father in Highgate at the time. George recorded his trade or calling as bricklayer, and his next-of-kin as his father Henry Hall of Highgate, Ontario. Initially a member of the 91st Battalion, he was transferred to the 186th Overseas Battalion, Canadian Expeditionary Force on February 28, 1916. George embarked overseas from Halifax bound for the United Kingdom on March 28, 1917 aboard the *S.S. Lapland*.

George Hall arrived in Liverpool, England on April 7, 1917 where he became a member of the 4th Canadian Reserve Battalion, stationed at Bramshott. Four and a half months later, on August 24, 1917, George arrived in Etaples, France and became a member of the Canadian Infantry, 18th Battalion, Western Ontario Regiment. George Hall was part of the 18th Battalion when it took part in the Battle of Passchendaele in Belgium (October 26 – November 10, 1917). It was waged in unceasing rain on a battlefield that was a nightmarish mess of rotting, mangled corpses, gagging gas, water-filled craters and glutinous mud. Overcoming almost unimaginable hardships and horrific fighting conditions, the remarkable Canadian victory that few thought possible, came at a cost of almost 16,000 Canadian casualties.

Nine months after arriving in France, on May 31, 1918, George was admitted to No. 5 Canadian Field Ambulance, the result of a shell wound in the back. He was discharged six days later and rejoined the 18th Battalion. Two months later, he was taking part in the **Hundred Days Campaign** (August 8 – November 11, 1918 in France and Belgium)—the “beginning of the end” of the Great War. Canadians were called on again and again over the three-month period to lead the offensives against the toughest German defences. The series of victories repeatedly drove the Germans back, culminating in Germany’s unconditional surrender on November 11, but it came at a cost of almost 46,000 Canadians killed, wounded and missing.

The first offensive in the Campaign was the Battle of Amiens (August 8-14, 1918), a truly all-arms battle, one that all four Canadian divisions would be involved in. Over the course of one week, in a battle that British Field Marshal Douglas Haig called “*the finest operation of the war*”, the Canadians would advance nearly 14 km. The second offensive in Canada’s Hundred Days Campaign was the **Battle of Arras and Breaking the DQ Line** in France (August 26-September 3, 1918), where Canadians were part of a spearhead force tasked with crashing one of the most heavily fortified positions, the Hindenburg Line – a series of strong defensive trenches and fortified villages. General Sir Julian Byng called the Canadian victory at the 2nd Battle of Arras and breaking of the DQ Line “*the turning point of the campaign*”, but it came at a cost of 11,400 Canadian casualties.

Approximately two and a half months after being released from hospital, on August 28, 1918, Private George Hall was killed by enemy shell fire while fighting in the Battle of Arras. George’s Circumstances of Death Register records him as; *Date of Casualty: 28-8-18. “Killed in Action”. During operations in front of Vis-en-Artois on the afternoon of August 28th, 1918, he was instantly killed by enemy shell fire.* In mid-September 1918, George’s brother Harry, in Sarnia, received a telegram informing him of his brother George’s death. George Hall, 34, has no known grave. He is memorialized on the Vimy Memorial, Pas de Calais, France.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 2G, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10Z

HANNA, William Neil

William Neil Hanna was born with a sense of adventure that never left him. Born into a prominent Sarnia family, Neil was studying law when the Great War started and the call to serve his country drove him to the battlefields of Europe. A pilot in the RAF, Neil was killed when his aircraft crashed in Italy ten days after the war officially ended.

Neil Hanna was born in Sarnia, on January 18, 1895, the only son of prominent Sarnian William John “Jack” Hanna (born October 13, 1862, of Adelaide Township, Middlesex County, Ontario), and his first wife Jean Gibson (nee Neil, born in 1863 in Sarnia). A few years before Neil was born, William (known as “Jack”) had fallen in love with the beautiful red-headed Jean Neil who lived in Point Edward. Jean Neil was the great-niece of Canada’s second Prime Minister, Alexander Mackenzie. Jack Hanna and Jean Neil were married on January 1, 1891 at St. Paul’s Rectory in Point Edward.

Four years into their marriage, Jean (nee Neil) Hanna passed away on January 25, 1895 in Sarnia at the age of thirty-three. Her death was the result of William Neil’s birth, where after seven days in hospital, she died as a result of septicemia (a serious bloodstream infection). Jack was devastated by Jean’s death and named their son after her surname. As author Debbie Marshall noted, “the ghost of Jean Neil would never entirely leave him. Her memory would long be reflected in the face of their son Neil.” Jean (Neil) Hanna is buried in Lakeview Cemetery in Sarnia.

The grief-stricken Jack was ill-prepared to care for his son, especially with a busy practice to run. His mentor, Robert MacAdams, suggested that his daughter, 25 year-old Maud (born August 6, 1870), help care for Neil. Jack agreed and in the ensuing months was drawn to Maud. Within a year, Jack Hanna and Maud MacAdams married on June 30, 1896 at St. George’s Church in Sarnia. Jack was a member of Central Methodist (United) Church while Maud was a life-long member of St. George’s Anglican Church.

Maud MacAdams, the daughter of Robert and Catharine (nee Brown) MacAdams of Sarnia, had three brothers: Leslie, Johnston and William; and two sisters, Roberta and Mary. Of note, Maud’s sister, Roberta Catherine MacAdams, served in the war and went on to be a women’s political trailblazer. Born in Sarnia in 1880, Roberta attended the Ontario Agriculture College and graduated from the Macdonald Institute for Domestic Science (now the University of Guelph) in 1911. Shortly afterward, she made her way to Alberta where she worked with the provincial government as one of the first domestic science instructors – a job that required her to travel to rural communities to teach about health and nutrition.

In 1916, Roberta enlisted in the Canadian Army Medical Corps and was given the rank of Lieutenant. She performed the first-ever role of dietician at the Ontario Military Hospital in Orpington, England (in 1917 the hospital was renamed No. 16 Canadian General Hospital). While she serving in England in 1916, the Alberta government created a special constituency for the 38,000 Alberta soldiers and nurses serving overseas. The 1917 provincial elections was the first time the vote was extended to white women in Alberta. Roberta MacAdams decided to run as a candidate – her campaign slogan, “Give one vote to the man of your choice and the other to the sister.” On September 18, 1917, she was elected as a Representative at Large for the nurses and soldiers overseas – one of the first two women elected to any legislature in the British Empire.



Roberta MacAdams
Lieut., C.A.M.C. Ontario Military Hospital,
Orpington, Kent



Roberta MacAdams and other military MLA’s
in front of Alberta Legislature

Roberta MacAdams remained dedicated to helping soldiers. The first piece of legislation she introduced was the “Great War Next-of-Kin Association,” which was intended “To secure economic justice for men and women who have taken part in the Great War.” It passed and she earned the distinction of being the first woman in the British Empire to introduce legislation. Subsequently, she returned to England and began working for Khaki University, a place for returning soldiers to continue their education. When the war ended, she served as a chaperone to British war brides travelling to Canada. She was eventually appointed to the Alberta Soldier Settlement, a body which granted land rights to returning veterans. In 2016, the Roberta MacAdams School in Edmonton was named in her honour.

Jack and Maud Hanna had two daughters together, step-sisters for Neil: Margaret (born April 13, 1897, later Margaret Spaulding); and Katherine (born November 3, 1899, later Katherine Sproat). In 1901, also residing with the Hanna family in Sarnia was their sixteen year-old servant, Agnes Druscilla Siddall. Agnes Siddall was born on June 26, 1884 in Sarnia Township, the youngest daughter of Robert John Siddall (a farmer in Sarnia Township) and Mary Ann (nee Laforge) Siddall. On August 18, 1905, twenty year-old Agnes Siddall married twenty-three-year-old David Kerr, a labourer in Sarnia originally from Scotland. Agnes and David Kerr had four children together. In 1915, David Kerr enlisted in Sarnia to serve in the war. He was killed in action on the first day of the Battle of Vimy Ridge. David Kerr’s story is included in this Project.

In 1911, Jack and Maud Hanna, and their children Neil, Margaret and Katherine, along with their twenty-three-year-old Domestic Bessie Dale, were residing at 236 Brock Street N., Sarnia. Jack Hanna was an influential force in the community and beyond. As the years passed, the Hanna’s were recognized as one of Sarnia’s most prominent families. And besides its social status and political connections, the family was wealthy—by 1912, Jack was a millionaire. At the couple’s home, they entertained such dignitaries as future prime minister Arthur Meighen and the Royal Highness Princess Patricia of Connaught, the granddaughter of Queen Victoria. Jack had graduated from Sarnia Collegiate Institute at seventeen, taught at a primary school near his home for three years, and then attended law school at Osgoode Hall in Toronto. He was called to the bar in 1890 and settled into his law practice in Sarnia. In 1902, he was elected to the Ontario legislature for Lambton West as a Conservative cabinet member.

While practicing law and building his political base, he had many connections. He was counsel for Imperial Oil Company from the time it came to Sarnia in 1897; and was a director with several companies including Imperial Bank of Canada, the Sterling Bank of Canada, and the Western Canada Settlers Mutual Company. As a legislative member, Jack Hanna had an enormous capacity for political work. For example, by 1914 he had brought in nearly forty changes to liquor legislation for the purpose of restricting sales and distribution. In March 1916 he introduced the Ontario Temperance Act, which closed all bars, clubs, and liquor shops for the duration of World War I, and prohibited sales except for medicinal, scientific, or sacramental purposes. After the war broke out, Jack Hanna served as one of Prime Minister Robert Borden’s advisors. When food shortages and inflationary prices appeared to threaten the war effort, Jack was appointed food controller for Canada on June 21, 1917. In ill health, he resigned his political position in January 1918, and later that year he assumed the presidency of Imperial Oil. In fact in December of that year, he initiated collective bargaining and employee benefits at Imperial.

From an early age, their son Neil Hanna, showed an adventurous streak that never left him. No tree was unclimbable; no horse, unrideable; no dare, unacceptable. A family member described Neil as being “as rough and tumble as his father.” Neil was educated in Sarnia public schools and Sarnia Collegiate, and then attended St. Andrew’s College in Aurora from September 1908 to June 1910. Having graduated from high school, Neil was not yet ready for university--or so his parents thought. Jack, therefore, arranged for Neil to article in the summer at his law office of Hanna, LeSueur and McKinley at 145 ½ Front Street. His articling experience must have been positive, for Neil decided to study law. With his parents’ blessing, he attended Victoria College Delta Upsilon, University of Toronto from 1913 until 1915. He fully intended to practice law as a profession, but the lure of serving his country in the Great War proved too strong for Neil.

Early in 1915, Neil registered at the Royal Military College in Kingston to train as a gunner. He was planning to attend a military aviation course in Hendon, England in September. The news distressed his parents, but they kept their emotions to themselves. They hoped he would remain with the Artillery, for his odds of surviving were much better on the ground than in the air. They got their wish in the spring of 1915.

That spring, twenty year-old William Neil Hanna, single at the time, enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force and became a member of the Army, Royal Field Artillery 26th Battery, Gunner. He embarked overseas in September 1915. He obtained his commission in England in the Royal Field Artillery, and departed for

France with his unit early in 1916. He requested and was soon transferred to the cavalry. Jack and Jean Hanna in Sarnia wrote Neil a few times each week and sent news of his replies to other family members concerned about his safety. According to historian Debbie Marshall, “the sun rose and set” on their only son.

A little more than a year after enlisting, the Hanna’s received news of Neil’s wounding in battle in mid-July 1916, during the early stages of the Battle of the Somme (July 1-November 18, 1916). Neil Hanna was severely wounded in his hip at Mametz Wood on July 12, 1916. Mametz Wood had been one of the worst battles of the war thus far. The battle began along a twisting series of trenches stretching forty kilometres long north of the Somme River in the heart of Picardy. British and French troops had planned to mount an extensive infantry attack on the German trenches, thus creating a breach in the line that would allow the Allied cavalry to ride to victory. The first day of the battle was the bloodiest. It began with the Allies launching 250,000 shells at the Germans. At the end of the barrage, the troops emerged from their trenches and moved forward into the hellstorm of enemy fire. At the end of the first day, 21,000 Allied soldiers were dead and another 21,000 were wounded.

The Allies were successful in taking the villages of Mametz and Montauban as well as the Leipzig Redoubt, an important German fortification. On July 12, the British took Mametz Wood, just north of the village of Montauban. At some point, the order was given for the British cavalry to charge into the battle-scarred remains of Mametz Woods. As Neil charged on horseback amidst the exploding shells and machine gun fire, his horse stampeded and fell, throwing him to the ground. In the next instant, he was run over by a gun carriage. He regained consciousness in No. 13 Field Ambulance, was later transferred to No. 2 Stationary Hospital at Abbetville, and then moved to England. Convalescing at Queen Alexandra’s Hospital in London, Neil had a cracked rib and a fracture of the crest ileum—a pelvic injury that caused him much pain.

In October 1916, Neil Hanna returned to Sarnia on leave to recover and was greeted by his anxious and relieved parents. He was, however, experiencing intense pain even though he seldom complained. Jack and Maud insisted he see a specialist in bone fractures and the news was not good. The doctor noted that *Neil’s left iliac bone of the pelvis is very much crushed and fractured, the upper fragment is markedly displaced downwards and impinges somewhat upon the hip joint interfering with its freedom of action. In addition to this, one of the processes of the lumbar spine is fractured.* The doctor warned Neil that if he returned to the trenches, he risked permanent disability. Neil wanted to continue serving, but in his current capacity, he would be a liability to his artillery unit. He had to find another way to do his duty, so he returned to London, England and took a desk job at Canadian headquarters. He would not be there for long. In February 1918, Neil Hanna expressed a desire to do what he wanted to do in the first place: to join the RAF like his cousin Harold.

In April 1918, Jack Hanna’s nephew, Harold, celebrated his seventeenth birthday by enlisting in the Royal Air Force and starting flight training in England. Less than a month later, he died when his plane crashed. In a letter to William, Jack provided more details: *Harold was making his last flight for that course and had given a perfect performance up to the time of the accident. Just what happened is not definitely known, but it would appear that coming down at a distance of 1500 feet from the ground, the controllers broke or otherwise went wrong and he struck the ground at a very high speed, probably never knowing what happened.*

Life in a comfortable desk job was not to Neil’s liking, so he chose to return to his unit in France. By May, he was “in a quiet part of the line” and, despite Harold’s death, was lobbying his superiors to transfer him to the Royal Air Force. In May 1918, when his request was finally granted, he started his training with the RAF.

Jack Hanna, of course, disapproved of his son’s decision. In a letter to Neil, the concerned father wrote, *I do think it would be a great mistake for you to attempt to push your way as a pilot. I do not believe you are fitted for it. We want you back alive and able to carry on here. Please exercise the necessary care.* Jack had every reason to be worried. Flying, still in its infancy, was extremely dangerous. The wooden-framed planes were flimsy and equipping the light aircraft with heavy weaponry was problematic. The demands of war meant that pilot training was often cursory. Many recruits had only a few hours of instruction before being expected to fly solo; consequently, more pilots died from accidents and mechanical failure than from enemy fire. By war’s end, almost a quarter of all British flyers were Canadian. Of 6,166 British Empire air service fatalities, 1,388 were Canadian. An additional 1,130 Canadians were wounded or injured, and 377 became prisoners of war or were interned.

After successfully passing his initial training, Neil Hanna was appointed to service with the Royal Flying Corps, 36th Training Squadron, with the rank of Lieutenant. In mid-October 1918, Lt. Neil Hanna was sent to Italy to complete his training. While there he was engaged in flying over the Austrian front. Shortly after his arrival in Italy,

the Austrian armies surrendered. The Armistice Treaty was signed on November 11th, officially ending the war.



Lieutenant William Neil Hanna

Ten days later, in his oak-lined study in Sarnia, an elated Jack Hanna wrote a letter to Neil, his thoughts pouring out from relief that his son had survived the war. They hadn't heard from Neil since he had begun training as a pilot in Italy, but Neil's latest letter had arrived at their Brock Street home earlier that day. In it, Jack and Maud learned that Neil had been bedridden with influenza, but had survived it and was eager to return home. The burden of worrying about Neil's safety disappeared, and Maud and he could look forward to the comfortable life they wanted for him when he returned. Jack signed his letter *With love from all here, Very sincerely, Your dad* and set the letter aside. He would ask his secretary to type it and send it by the first post tomorrow.

Jack and Maud Hanna went on a short trip to New York where he had to attend to some legislative business, and a few days later, Jack made his way home alone. It was late on Sunday, November 24, 1918 in Toronto when a knock on the front door drew Jack to answer it. Before him stood a messenger holding a buff-coloured envelope. Jack knew immediately what news it contained, opened it and read the telegram, DEEPLY REGRET TO INFORM YOU LIEUTENANT W.N. HANNA ROYAL AIR FORCE IS REPORTED TO HAVE BEEN KILLED ON NOVEMBER TWENTIETH PERIOD AIR COUNCIL EXPRESS THEIR SYMPATHY. They were given no particulars about how the fatality occurred. Few details emerged other than Neil had been observing the Austrian retreat and had been killed in a flying accident in Italy on November 20, 1918.

The next morning, Jack sent telegrams to his daughters Margaret (Mrs. Harry Spaulding) and Katherine, both in New York, providing them with the details of the cable that he had received the previous night. Jack and Maud soon received letters of condolence from friends. Following are portions of some of them;

Dear W.J. Hanna,

Let me tell you how much grieved we were to hear of the loss of your dear son. After so bravely doing his part in the great struggle it seems peculiar and hard he should not return when peace with victory is in sight. To live in the hearts of those we love and leave behind is not to die...

Dear Jack,

We were completely knocked out this evening when the news of Neil came. It must be worse of course for you people. I cannot write any words to express our feelings & sympathy better than you know both us and our feelings where Neil is concerned. We are all sure here that if the Almighty and white angels are in heaven to welcome white clean boys our Neil has a front seat for he was white through and through and will require no training whatever as he lived his life doing decent things for people...

My Dear Jack,

Please accept my heartfelt sympathy; may your wonderful courage remain with you in your overwhelming sorrow. With love and sympathy for Maud and the girls.

Dear Jack,

Leslie has just telephoned me of the cable. There is of course, nothing to be said – but if sympathy is of any help be sure it is yours. Dot and I feel it's a dreadful shock and a great grief. Our much love and all sympathy to you and Maud.

In December 1918, the St. Andrew's College yearbook included a section on former students who had lost their lives while serving in the Great War. Included was a synopsis on William Neil Hanna's education, military career and tragic loss. It concluded with, *Quiet, unassuming and steadfast, Neil Hanna endeared himself to many friends and he will be missed by all who knew him at school and in his later days.* Neil Hanna had also attended Victoria College at the University of Toronto. The Soldiers' Tower was built at the University of Toronto between 1919-1924 in memory of those lost to the University in the Great War. Lt. William Neil Hanna is among the 628 names carved on the Memorial Screen in the Tower. To this day, each year, the university awards "The William Neil Hanna Scholarship". It is awarded to "the Third Year student who, by her or his academic standing and by other qualities displayed in college life, shows outstanding promise of leadership and public service."

The loss of his only son was devastating for Jack Hanna. He had become president of Imperial Oil but had been in ill-health for a while. He travelled to Augusta, Georgia that winter for warmer weather. While in Augusta, fifty-six year-old Jack Hanna suffered a stroke and passed away on March 20, 1919, only four months after his son William Neil's death. Jack Hanna had been an influential figure in both national and provincial politics and his passing garnered much attention. According to *Saturday Night Magazine*, "his health was undermined not merely by his strenuous activities during the past decade, but by grief over the death of his only son." William John "Jack" Hanna is buried in Lakeview Cemetery.

His second wife, and William Neil Hanna's step-mother Maud Hanna was very public minded, serving her community in many ways, and became a celebrated Sarnia philanthropist. She contributed half of the money the city needed in 1932 to purchase the land for Canatara Park. She also made another large donation toward the purchase of Lake Chipican. She made many other contributions: donating land on Mitton Street for Hanna Park; purchasing the Horticultural Garden on College Avenue; paying the cost of operating the street car to Huron Park, so children could use the beach; and contributing to services benefitting children such as playground equipment, the hospital and to schools. Shortly after Maud Hanna's death in 1946, the Sarnia School Board opened its newest school at 369 Maria Street. The name for the new building, "Hanna Memorial School" was chosen to honour the memory of Mrs. Maud Hanna who had done so much philanthropic work in Sarnia. In Lakeview Cemetery, there is a large memorial "Hanna" stone in honour of all of the family buried there. In front of the large Hanna stone are a group of smaller stones, each commemorating a family member, including Margaret Hanna Spaulding, Maud Hanna, W.J. Hanna and Neil Hanna, Lieutenant R.A.F.

Twenty-three-year-old William Neil Hanna is buried in Montecchio Precalcino Communal Cemetery Extension, Italy, Plot 9, Row A, Grave 6. On Neil Hanna's headstone are inscribed the words, BELOVED AND ONLY SON OF JEAN NEIL & WILLIAM J. HANNA BORN AT SARNIA, ONT. JAN. 16, 1895.
SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, L, N, 2D, 2G, 3G, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 9Q, 10K, 10Z, 3y

HARRIS, George Henry (#123570)

English born George Henry Harris was residing in Sarnia when he enlisted in September 1915. He had been married for only three years and was the father of a two year-old daughter when he arrived at the front lines in France. Six months later, Private Harris, 26, was killed in action in the area known as Vimy Ridge.

George Harris was born in Brockley, Kent, England, on November 30, 1890, the son of Benjamin and Elizabeth (nee Bates) Harris, both originally of Middlesex, England. Benjamin and Elizabeth were blessed with seven children together: Benjamin Jr. (born January 9, 1880); Matilda (born February 14, 1882); Mary Ann (born 1885); John W. (born 1887); Emma E. (born 1889); George; and Ellen Rosina (born December 27, 1892). George Harris was baptized on December 24, 1890 in Deptford St. John Lewisham, England. In 1911, the Harris family was residing in Lewisham, London, England with Benjamin supporting his large family working as a brick maker. Elizabeth took care of their home and by now some of their children were working: John, as a milk carrier; Ellen, as a drapers assistant; and twenty year-old George as timekeeper.

In 1913, part of the Harris family immigrated to Canada. Benjamin and Elizabeth Harris, along with their children Benjamin Jr., 33—including his wife, Alice, and their four children; twenty-two-year-old George and twenty

year-old Emma departed Liverpool aboard the *Tunisian* and arrived in Quebec on May 26, 1913. Their final destination was Sarnia, where they resided at 278 Bright Street. Eventually, all the Harris children immigrated to Canada. Benjamin Jr. and Alice (nee: Howe) resided in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia. Matilda, with husband William immigrated to Canada in 1919 and were residing in Point Edward. Mary Ann, who married Sidney William Savage, lived in Sarnia as did John Harris and his wife Hannah Beatrice Chappell. Emma married Albert Christopher Blay and resided in Lambton. Ellen, who married Bertram Leslie Pusey, resided in Sarnia. Benjamin and Eliza Harris spent the rest of their lives in Sarnia and both are buried in Lakeview Cemetery, Sarnia.

On March 7, 1914, twenty-three-year-old George Harris, then a labourer, married twenty-four-year-old Alice Savage at St. George's Church in Sarnia. Alice was born December 29, 1889 in Lewisham, London, England, the daughter of William and Susanah (nee Akers) Savage. George and Alice Harris, the newlywed couple, resided at 264 Cameron Street, and later 401 George Street, Sarnia. George and Alice Harris had one child together, a daughter, Renee May Harris, born January 11, 1915 in Sarnia.

Twenty-four-year-old George Harris enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force on September 20, 1915 in Sarnia. He stood five feet seven and a quarter inches tall, had dark brown eyes and black hair, was married with a newborn at home, and was residing on Cameron Street at the time. George recorded his trade or calling as pumpman, and his next-of-kin as his wife Alice of 264 Cameron Street, Sarnia. He also recorded that he had 154 previous days military experience with the West Yorkshire Regiment. George became a member of the 70th Battalion, Canadian Expeditionary Force with the rank of Private and embarked overseas from Halifax bound for the United Kingdom on April 24, 1916 aboard the *S.S. Lapland*.

Private George Harris arrived in Liverpool, England on May 5, 1916. In late May and into mid June 1916, George had to spend twenty-one days in Moore Barracks Canadian Hospital in Shorncliffe recovering from the mumps. On July 6, 1916, he was transferred to the 39th Battalion, stationed at West Sandling. Six weeks later, on August 20, 1916, he was transferred to the Canadian Infantry, 73rd Battalion, Quebec Regiment. He arrived in Havre, France the next day.

In early September 1916, Private George Harris arrived with the 73rd Battalion at the front lines. He joined the battalion during the Battle of the Somme (July 1-November 18, 1916)--one of the bloodiest and most futile battles in history. The Somme battle lasted for more than four brutal months and saw the Allies advance around 10 kilometers. A more telling statistic is the number of injuries and deaths: of the 85,000 Canadian Corps, there were more than 24,000 Canadian casualties. George Harris survived this battle.

In the spring of 1917, Private Harris and his battalion, along with the rest of the Canadian Corps, made their way to an area in northern France dominated by a long hill known as Vimy Ridge. Just over six months after arriving in France, on March 1, 1917, Private George Harris was killed in action in the lead up to the famous Battle of Vimy Ridge (April 9-12, 1917). George Harris was initially reported as "Missing" on March 1, and later recorded as "Now reported Killed in Action". His Circumstances of Death Register records him as; *Date of Casualty: 1-3-17. "Previously reported Missing, now Killed in Action." Location of Unit at time of Casualty: NEAR VIMY.*

George Harris left behind is wife of less than three years Alice, and their two year-old daughter Renee, who were both then residing in Lewisham, London, England. Twenty-six-year-old George Harris has no known grave. He is memorialized on the Vimy Memorial, Pas de Calais, France.
SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 2G, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10Z

HAZEN, Thomas Douglas (#2265916)

Thomas Douglas Hazen, the only son of John and Lydia, enlisted in July 1917 and eventually became a member of the Royal Flying Corps (RFC). Unfortunately, only three months after arriving in France, on August 19, 1918, RFC Lieutenant Thomas Hazen lost his life while fighting during Canada's final Hundred Days Campaign.

Thomas Hazen was born in Forestville, Norfolk County, Ontario, on March 13, 1896, the only son of John William (born January 1865 in Charlotteville, Norfolk) and Lydia (nee Martin, born February 1868 in Walpole Township) Hazen. John Hazen, a carpenter and later a cabinet-maker, married Lydia Martin on November 14, 1888 in Charlotteville, Norfolk County. Together, they had four children together: Thomas, and daughters Elizabeth Marsh "Bessie" (born February 24, 1889); Frances Edith "Fannie" (born November 3, 1891); and Olive Ester Louise "Lula" (born August 25, 1898).

In 1891, John, now a farmer, and Lydia were residing in Norfolk South with their only child at the time, two

year-old Elizabeth, along with John's mother Mary Hazen (born March 1829). A decade later in 1901, John, a labourer, and Lydia were still residing in Norfolk District but their household had grown to include Bessie, Fannie, Douglas, Lula and paternal widowed grandmother, Mary Hazen. At some point, the Hazen family moved to Sarnia and resided at of 123 Proctor Street and later 239 Proctor Street.

Twenty-one-year-old Thomas Hazen enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force on July 4, 1917 in Sudbury, Ontario. He stood six feet tall, had blue eyes and fair hair, was single, and was residing in Matheson, Ontario at the time. He recorded his trade or calling as school teacher, and his next-of-kin as his mother Lydia Hazen of 123 Proctor Street, Sarnia. Thomas became a member of the Divisional Signal Corps Corps, Canadian Engineers with the rank of Sapper. He began his training at the Signal Training Depot in Ottawa.

Two and a half months later, on September 28, 1917, Thomas was discharged from the Signal Training Depot so that he could enlist in the Air Force, Royal Flying Corps (RFC). He received air training in Toronto and Texas and would become a member of RFC 56th Squadron, with the rank of Lieutenant. Thomas Hazen embarked overseas in February 1918, where he continued his training in England. Three months later, in May 1918, Lieutenant Thomas Hazen arrived in France.



Parents John William and Lydia Hazen & baby "Bessie"



Lieutenant Thomas Douglas Hazen

Just over two months later, Thomas Hazen found himself taking part in Canada's **Hundred Days Campaign** (August 8 – November 11, 1918 in France and Belgium). This campaign was the "beginning of the end" of the Great War. Canadians were called on again and again over the three-month period to lead the offensives against the toughest German defences. The series of victories, the greatest of the Canadian Corps, repeatedly drove the Germans back, culminating in Germany's unconditional surrender on November 11, but it came at a cost of almost 46,000 Canadians killed, wounded and missing.

The first offensive in the Campaign was the Battle of Amiens (August 8-14, 1918), a truly all-arms battle, one that all four Canadian divisions would be involved in. Over the course of one week, the Canadians would advance nearly 14 km. The second offensive in the Campaign was the Battle of Arras and Breaking the DQ Line (August 26-September 3, 1918), where Canadians were part of a spearhead force tasked with crashing one of the most heavily fortified positions, the Hindenburg Line. It was in the lead up to the second offensive where Thomas Hazen lost his life.

Only three months after arriving in France, on August 19, 1918, RFC Lieutenant Thomas Hazen was killed in action at Bapaume, France while fighting there during Canada's Hundred Days Campaign. In late August 1918, his mother Lydia, in Sarnia received a brief telegram informing her that her only son Thomas, had been reported missing on August 19th, and that a letter would follow later. Until then, the details would not be known. In early September 1918, several weeks after Thomas' death, his father, John, received a telegram informing him that his son, **FLIGHT LIEUTENANT THOMAS DOUGLAS HAZEN, WHO HAD BEEN REPORTED MISSING SOME TIME AGO, WAS NOW OFFICIALLY REPORTED AS A PRISONER OF WAR IN GERMANY.**

It was not until 1921 that John and Lydia Hazen in Sarnia received a War Service Gratuity of \$240.00 for the loss of their only son. John and Lydia Hazen resided at 239 Proctor Street at least into 1921, and by 1926 they were living in Middlesex County.

Thomas Hazen, 22, has no known grave. He is memorialized on the Arras Memorial, Pas de Calais, France. He is also memorialized on his father's grave in Dorchester Union Cemetery in Dorchester, Ontario. The headstone reads J. WILLIAM HAZEN 1865-1926 BELOVED HUSBAND OF LYDIA MARTIN 1868-1952 THEIR SON LT. T. DOUGLAS HAZEN 1896-1918 SLEEPING IN FRANCE. On the Sarnia cenotaph, his name is inscribed as G.D. Hazen.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, N, 2D, 2G, 7C, 8A, 8X, 8Y, 10Z

HICKEY, Frank J. (#402759, also A2759)

The war ended on November 11, 1918, but it was a bittersweet time for Frank Hickey. He was a newlywed but the war had taken a drastic toll on Frank's health. When he died in Windsor on September 1, 1919, Frank's cause of death was recorded as *Circumstances of Casualty: Cause: Renal Calculus Left Kidney (nephritis). Death due to Service.*

Frank Hickey was born in Clifford, Ontario, on December 24, 1882, the eldest son of James B. (born February 4, 1851) and Bridget (nee O'Donnell, born March 6, 1850) Hickey. James and Bridget Hickey were blessed with five children together: Katie A. (born August 11, 1876); Frank; Dell (born May 19, 1883); John J. (born March 13, 1886); and Wilfred (born August 1, 1888). In 1901, the Hickey family was residing in Colchester, Essex South, where James was employed as a railway section foreman. Also working on the railway were Dell, 24, as a bookkeeper, and Frank, 19, as a railway labourer/brakeman. In 1911, James, now a railway foreman, and Bridget were residing at 312 Vidal Street, Sarnia. Living with them were; a lodger, Frank Hubbard, a twenty-one-year-old store bookkeeper and; a boarder, twenty-four-year-old bookkeeper, Mary Brady.

At age thirty-two, Frank Hickey enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force on January 27, 1915 in Sarnia. He stood five feet nine and a half inches tall, had blue eyes and fair hair, and was single at the time. He recorded his trade or calling as RR switchman, and his next-of-kin as his father James Hickey in Sarnia. He also recorded that he had prior military experience with 27th Regiment Militia. He became a member of the 34th Battalion with the rank of Private. Private Frank Hickey embarked overseas bound for the United Kingdom on June 19, 1915 aboard the *S.S. Corsican*.

On July 5, 1915, Frank Hickey was attached to the 11th Battalion, stationed at Shorncliffe. One month later, on August 3, 1915, he became a member of the 1st Canadian Infantry Battalion, and embarked with them to France. Three months later, in late November 1915, Private George Hickey was wounded in the right hand by a bullet. His hospitalization, including his recovery from septic poisoning, lasted until November 1916.

The following spring, on March 12, 1917, Frank Hickey was transferred to the 14th Canadian Reserve Battalion, and in early April 1917, was transferred to the Western Ontario Reserve Depot (WORD) stationed at Bramshott. At the end of April, he was posted to the 4th Reserve Battalion. In August 1917, he returned to WORD and was discharged back to Canada. His last posting was with the 1st Battalion, Canadian Garrison Regiment.

On August 22, 1918, in London, Ontario, Frank Hickey was discharged "as medically unfit for further general service." He had lost part of his right hand index finger prior to the war and had lost another finger in his right hand during the war (making handling a rifle difficult). He also had bunions on both feet and cramping of toes—both conditions made walking difficult. His address when discharged was 312 Vidal Street, Sarnia. At least there was some good news for Frank personally. Six days after being discharged, on August 28, 1918, thirty-six-year-old Frank Hickey married twenty-seven-year-old Sarah Jane Patterson (born in Belfast, Ireland, residing in Brooklyn, New York at time of marriage) in London, Ontario.

The Armistice that ended the Great War was signed on November 11, 1918. Approximately ten months later, on September 1, 1919, Frank Hickey lost his life in Windsor, due to nephritis, his death the result of his service. His Veterans Death Card records his death as, *Renal calculus left kidney. Death was related to service.* Frank Hickey's Circumstances of Casualty Record records him as; *Date of Casualty: 1-9-19 (midnight). Circumstances of Casualty: Cause: Renal Calculus Left Kidney (nephritis). Death due to Service. Location of Casualty: At Hotel Dieu Hospital, Windsor, Ontario.* Frank Hickey's funeral was held from the residence of his mother, Mrs. James Hickey, of 312 Vidal Street. His wife Sarah Hickey would later reside in Astoria, Long Island, New York. Frank Hickey, 37, is

buried in Our Lady of Mercy Roman Catholic Cemetery, Sarnia. In November 2019, Frank Hickey's name along with 25 others was added to the Sarnia cenotaph, engraved in stone to be remembered always.
SOURCES: C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 2G, 7C, 8X, 10Z

HOWARTH, John Lewis (#844551)

John Lewis Howarth was born in England and immigrated to Sarnia with his young wife, Emma. Described by a fellow soldier as "a straight-forward young man, obliging, and a good soldier," John, 29, became the last Sarnian to die before the Armistice. He was killed instantly by an enemy shell five days before the war ended officially.

John Lewis Howarth was born in Rochdale, Lancashire, England, on June 25, 1889, the son of John Sr. (born 1860) and Harriet (born 1866) Howarth. John Sr. and Harriet Howarth had four children together: Marion Macmanus (born 1888); John Jr.; Harry Macmanus (born 1890); and Clara (born 1897). In 1901, the Howarth family was residing in Rochdale, England--John Sr. was supporting his family as an overlooker in a cotton mill, while thirteen year-old John Lewis Howarth was a hairdresser's assistant. In 1911, Harriet, still recorded as married, was residing in Heywood, Lancashire with daughters Marion and Clara where all three were employed in the cotton industry. Harriet and Clara were reelers/cotton spinning; and Marion was a cotton weaver. At some point, John Jr. married his wife Emma and they immigrated to Canada. The young couple ended up in Sarnia residing at 260 Mitton Street and later 296 Queen Street.

Twenty-six-year-old John Jr. Howarth enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force on September 14, 1915 in Sarnia, with the 70th Overseas Battalion. He stood five feet five and a half inches tall, had grey eyes and dark brown hair, and was married and residing on Queen Street at the time. He recorded his trade or calling as labourer, and his next-of-kin as his wife Emma Howarth of 296 Queen Street, Sarnia. Three months later, in early December 1915, he was discharged from the 70th Battalion in London, Ontario.

Intent on joining the service, only days after being discharged, on December 9, 1915, John Howarth completed another Attestation Paper for the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force, this time becoming a member of the 149th Battalion in Sarnia. Still married, residing on Queen Street and employed as a labourer, his eye colour was now recorded as brown and his hair colour as black. It would be approximately fifteen months before John Howarth went overseas.

He embarked overseas from Halifax bound for the United Kingdom on March 25, 1917 aboard the S.S. *Lapland*. He arrived in Liverpool, England on April 7, 1917. From the Segregation Camp at Bramshott, he was taken on strength into the 25th Reserve Battalion. Early the following year, in mid-February 1918, John was moved to the 4th Canadian Reserve Battalion and, in late-March 1918, was with the 47th Battalion at Bramshott. Only days later, on April 2, 1918, he became a member of the 43rd Battalion and arrived in France. By May 1918, John Howarth was a member of the Canadian Machine Gun Corps, 3rd Battalion.

Four months after arriving in France, John Howarth was taking part in the **Hundred Days Campaign** (August 8 – November 11, 1918 in France and Belgium)—the "beginning of the end" of the Great War. Canadians were called on again and again over the three-month period to lead the offensives against the toughest German defences. The series of victories repeatedly drove the Germans back, culminating in Germany's unconditional surrender on November 11, but it came at a cost of almost 46,000 Canadians killed, wounded and missing.

Private John Howarth took part in all of the major offensives during this campaign. The first offensive in the Campaign was the Battle of Amiens (August 8-14, 1918), a truly all-arms battle, one that all four Canadian divisions would be involved in. Over the course of one week, in a battle that British Field Marshal Douglas Haig called "*the finest operation of the war*", the Canadians would advance nearly 14 km. The second offensive in the Campaign was the Battle of Arras and Breaking the DQ Line (August 26-September 3, 1918), where Canadians were part of a spearhead force tasked with crashing one of the most heavily fortified positions, the Hindenburg Line. General Sir Julian Byng called the Canadian victory at Arras and the DQ Line "*the turning point of the campaign*".

The third offensive in the Campaign was the Battle of Canal-du-Nord and Cambrai (September 27-October 11, 1918). Against seemingly impossible odds and a desperate fully prepared enemy, the Canadians fought for two weeks in a series of brutal engagements--successfully channelling through a narrow gap in the canal, punching through a series of fortified villages and deep interlocking trenches, and capturing Bourslon Wood and the city of Cambrai. General Arthur Currie would call it "*some of the bitterest fighting we have experienced*".

After taking Cambrai, Canadian forces advanced tentatively toward Valenciennes, the last major French city in German hands. There, the Germans stopped running – they held every advantage in this heavily-fortified city protected by a canal. In the Battle of Valenciennes (November 1-2, 1918), the Canadians were able to capture the city through two days of desperate fighting that included urban warfare.

After capturing Valenciennes in France (November 2), the Canadian forces continued advancing tentatively east towards Mons, Belgium. Using artillery and battle patrols, they pushed against the retreating German forces, occasionally running into significant opposition. With the war winding down, in their **Pursuit to Mons**, Canadians were still being killed by the score every day, the result of German ambushes, rearguard snipers, machine-gun nests, artillery fire, booby traps and aircraft strafing fire.

Seven months after arriving in France, on November 6, 1918, Private John Howarth was killed by an enemy shell while fighting during the Pursuit to Mons, part of Canada's final Hundred Days Campaign. The Canadians crossed into Belgium on November 7, 1918, toward their final goal, the German-occupied city of Mons. Only five days after he was killed, the Canadians liberated Mons, and the Armistice agreement was signed ending the Great War. Private John Howarth was the last Sarnian to be killed in action prior to the Armistice.

In late November 1918, his wife Emma Howarth received a telegram informing her that her husband, 844551, PVT. JOHN LEWIS HOWARTH, MACHINE GUN CORPS, HAS BEEN OFFICIALLY REPORTED KILLED IN ACTION ON NOVEMBER 6TH. John Howarth's Circumstances of Death Register records him as; *Date of Casualty: 6-11-18. "Killed in Action". He was killed by enemy shell fire on the morning of November 6th 1918, while taking part with his Battalion in operations in the vicinity of Onnaing. Valenciennes Communal Cemetery British Extension, France.*

In January 1919, widowed Emma Howarth received a letter from Private Allen Kirk, L Battery, Third Canadian M.G.C., France, a companion of her husband. In the letter, Private Kirk expressed his sympathy on the death of Private Howarth, who had been instantly killed. Private Kirk stated that they had received parcels since the death of the young soldier. Private Kirk was a Hamilton, Ontario man, with a wife and two children. He extended an invitation to Emma Howarth to visit their home in Hamilton when he returned, when he would give her the particulars of her husband's death. In closing his letter, Private Kirk said of the dead hero, *"He was a straight-forward young man, obliging, and a good soldier, and often spoke of his wife to me."*

Emma Howarth later returned to England and would reside in Rochdale, Lancashire. John Howarth, 29, is buried in Valenciennes (St. Roch) Communal Cemetery, Nord, France, Grave II.E.19.
SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 2G, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10Z

HOWE, Charles (#A/2753)

English born Charles Howe immigrated to Sarnia and enlisted with the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force on January 11, 1915 in Sarnia. Less than two years later, at age 30, he was killed instantly by enemy gunfire during the second major offensive in the Battle of the Somme.

Charles Howe was born in Boston Spa, Yorkshire, England, on June 21, 1886, the eldest son of Joseph (born about 1851) and Ada (born about 1858) Howe. Yorksire born Joseph and Ada Howe had four children together: daughter Annie (born about 1883); and sons Charles, Robert (born about 1889), and Wilfred (born about 1890). In 1891, the Howe family--parents Joseph and Ada, along with their children Annie, Charles (age four), Robert and Wilfred were residing in Boston Spa, Yorkshire, England where Joseph supported his family working as a groom/domestic servant at the time. Ten years later, in 1901, the Howe family—parents Joseph and Ada, along with their three sons Charles (age fourteen), Robert and Wilfred--were residing in Walton, Yorkshire. In 1911, Joseph and Ada, along with their son Wilfred and three year-old granddaughter Doreen Howe, were residing in Boston Spa, Yorkshire. At some point, Charles Howe immigrated to Canada and resided in Sarnia.

Twenty-eight-year-old Charles Howe enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force on January 11, 1915 in Sarnia. He stood five feet six inches tall, had blue eyes and fair hair, and was single at the time. He recorded his trade or calling as farmer, and his next-of-kin as his father Joseph in Boston Spa, Yorkshire, England. Charles initially became a Private in the 34th Battalion, Canadian Expeditionary Force. He embarked overseas bound for the United Kingdom on June 19, 1915 aboard the *S.S. Corsican*.

Once in England, Private Howe was attached to the 11th Battalion stationed in Shorncliffe. In early August 1915, he became a member of the Canadian Infantry, 1st Battalion, Western Ontario Regiment. In mid-August 1915,

Private Charles Howe arrived with the 1st Battalion in France.

Four and a half months later, in early January 1916, he was granted a nine-day leave to England. He returned to France, and by that summer, Charles Howe found himself fighting in the **Battle of the Somme** in France (July 1–November 18, 1916)—one of the most futile and bloody battles in history. The Somme battle lasted for more than four brutal months and saw the Allies advance around 10 kilometers. A more telling statistic is the number of injuries and deaths: of the 85,000 Canadian Corps, there were more than 24,000 Canadian casualties.

The second major offensive of the Somme battle was the week-long **Battle of Flers-Courcelette** (September 15–22). It was here where tanks made their first appearance in the war. The Battle was a stunning success for the Canadians, but it came at a cost of over 7,200 casualties. It was during this second major offensive of the Somme battle where Private Charles Howe was killed in action.

Eight months after returning to his unit, on September 22, 1916, Private Charles Howe of the 1st Battalion, lost his life while fighting in the Battle of Flers-Courcelette. He was struck by enemy gunfire during an attack. He was initially recorded as “Previously reported Missing, Believed Killed”, and later recorded as “NOW KILLED IN ACTION”. Charles Howe’s Circumstances of Death Register records him as; *Date of Casualty: 22-9-16. “Previously reported Missing, believed Killed, now Killed in Action”. While taking part with his Battalion in an attack in the vicinity of Courcelette, he was hit by a bullet and instantly killed. Adanac Military Cemetery 6 ¼ miles North East of Albert, France.*

Charles Howe’s remains were initially buried near Courcelette, 5 ¾ miles North East of Albert, and were later exhumed and reburied in Adanac Military Cemetery. Charles Howe, 30, is buried in Adanac Military Cemetery, Miraumont, Somme, France, Grave II.B.26. On his headstone are inscribed the words, UNTIL THE DAY BREAK AND THE SHADOWS FLEE AWAY.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 2G, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10Z

ILIFFE, Roy Spencer (#6927)

Roy Spencer Iliffe was born in England and immigrated to Sarnia sometime after 1911. He served with the St. Clair Borderers for five weeks before enlisting with the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force on September 22, 1914. Six months later, the former bank clerk was killed in Belgium on the first day of the Second Battle of Ypres. Roy, 28, became the first person from Sarnia killed in The Great War.

Roy Iliffe was born in Nuneaton, Warwickshire, England, on July 6, 1886, the son and youngest child of George (born 1847 in Nuneaton) and Caroline Laura (nee George, born 1846 in Wales) Iliffe. Newdegate Square, Nuneaton, Warwickshire natives George Iliffe and Caroline George were married in October 1875 in Middlesex, England. Their union blessed them with six children together: Laura Marion (born August 4, 1876); Oliver George (born February 4, 1878, would serve with the Royal Army Medical Corps); Gwendolen Mary (born February 16, 1881); Kathleen Margaret (born October 23, 1882); Gladys Myfanwy (born September 4, 1884); and Roy Spencer. Roy Spencer Iliffe was baptized on October 3, 1886 in Nuneaton.

In 1891, George and Caroline Iliffe, along with their six children Laura, Oliver, Gwendolen, Kathleen, Gladys, and Roy (age four) were residing in Nuneaton, Warwickshire where George supported his family working as a pharmaceutical chemist. Also residing with the Iliffe family at that time were Harriet Davies, a 24 year old domestic housekeeper; Maria Jones, a general servant, age twenty; and boarder Valentine Barford, a 26 year old chemist’s assistant. Ten years later, in 1901, the entire Iliffe family—George and Caroline, and children Gwendolen, Kathleen, Gladys, and Roy (age fourteen), along with their seventeen year-old domestic housemaid, Annie Penfold, were residing in Nuneaton, Warwickshire.

In 1906, twenty year-old Roy suffered the death of his mother Caroline Iliffe, who passed away at the age of sixty-one in England. In 1911, widowed father George, along with his daughters Gwendolen and Gladys, and his son Roy, 24, and their general servant, twenty-one-year-old Ellen Knight, were residing in Nuneaton, Warwickshire. George Iliffe was still employed as a pharmaceutical chemist and Roy worked as a bank clerk.

Sometime after 1911, Roy Iliffe immigrated to Canada and came to reside in Sarnia. From August 12 to September 21, 1914, Roy served with the St. Clair Borderers in Sarnia. Now twenty-eight, Roy Iliffe enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force on September 22, 1914 in Valcartier Camp, Quebec. It had been only six weeks since the United Kingdom, and Canada, declared war on Germany. Roy stood five feet five and three-quarter inches tall, had grey blue eyes and dark brown hair, and was single at the time. He recorded his trade or calling as

clerk, and his next-of-kin as his father George Iliffe of Newdegate Sq. Nuneaton Wk., England. Roy embarked overseas bound for the United Kingdom on October 3, 1914, part of the 30,000 men of the First Contingent, travelling overseas aboard thirty ocean-liners.

Arriving in England in mid-October, Roy became a member of the Canadian Infantry, 1st Battalion, Western Ontario Regiment, with the rank of Private. The First Contingent would spend that cold, wet winter training at Salisbury Plain in England. Two months after arriving in England, in December 1914, Roy received the sad news that his father George had passed away at the age of sixty-seven in Nuneaton, England.

In early February 1915, the then named First Canadian Division, including the 1st Battalion, embarked to France and the Western Front. The following month, on March 17, 1915, Roy was diagnosed with bronchitis and admitted to No. 1 Canadian Field Ambulance in Sailly. He was returned to duty nine days later. In mid-April 1915, the Canadians arrived at the Ypres salient battlefield in Belgium, an area traditionally referred to as Flanders.

It was here that the Canadians engaged in their first battle of the war, the **Second Battle of Ypres**, their baptism by fire. It was here that the Germans unleashed the first lethal chlorine gas attack in the history of warfare. In the first 48 hours at Ypres (April 22-24), there were more than 6,000 Canadian casualties--one Canadian in every three became casualties of whom more than 2,100 died and 1,410 were captured.

On April 22, 1915, Private Roy Iliffe lost his life while fighting on the first day of the Second Battle of Ypres, in Belgium. He was initially reported "killed in action between April 22 and April 30, 1915." Roy Iliffe's Circumstances of Death Register records him as; *Date of Casualty: 22/30-4-15. "Killed in Action". Location of Unit at time of Casualty: VICINITY OF ST. JULIEN. No record of burial.* His Commonwealth War Graves Register includes *No record of burial. Unofficially reported to have been buried on banks of Yser Canal 2 miles from Ypres.*

Roy Iliffe was killed approximately eight months after the start of the war, and on the first day of Canada's first major battle. According to *Sarnia Observer* reports at the time, Roy Iliffe was the first man from Sarnia to lose his life in the Great War. Roy Iliffe, 28, has no known grave but is memorialized on the Menin Gate (Ypres) Memorial, Belgium, Panel 10-26-28.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 2G, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10Z

IVESON, Amos (#844603)

Born in Norway, Amos Iveson, a sailor by trade, left for war two weeks after getting married. While he was overseas, his wife gave birth to their daughter, Amy Patricia "Pat", whom he would never get to meet. In the final months of the Great War, Amos was wounded in the arm by shrapnel from an enemy shell and died in action. Amos, 31, has no known grave.

Amos Iveson was born in Drobak, Norway, on February 27, 1887, the son of John and Mary (nee Swanson) Iveson of Norway. At some point, Amos immigrated to Canada and resided in Sarnia. At age twenty-nine, Amos Iveson enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force on March 14, 1916 in Sarnia. He stood five feet seven inches tall, had brown eyes and brown hair, was single, and was residing at 178 Cameron Street in Sarnia at the time. He recorded his trade or calling as sailor, and his next-of-kin as his mother Mary Iveson in Drobak, Norway. Amos Iveson initially became a member of the 149th Battalion.

One year after enlisting, on March 12, 1917, soldier Amos Iveson, 30, married twenty-six-year-old Mary Ada (nee Donohue, of Courtright, Ontario) in Sarnia. Mary Ada Donohue, who went by her middle name, was born September 6, 1890 in Moore Township, Lambton County, the daughter of Michael James, a farmer, and Sarah Alice (nee Hardick) Donohue. Ada Donohue was baptized on September 21, 1890 at St. Joseph's Church in Corunna.

Ada came from a sprawling family. Her parents, Michael (born March 1857) and Sarah (born November 1862), married on June 29, 1881 in Sarnia and had nine children together: George Lawrence (born April 1882); Martha Jane (born February 1884); John Sylvester (born August 1887); Margaret Alice (born November 1888, died before 1891); Mary Ada; James Harvey (born May 1894); Edward Roy (born July 1897); William Thomas (born April 1899); and Helen Loretta (born April 1907).

Ada's brother, Edward, would be conscripted into service under the Military Service Act of 1917. Enlisting in early January 1918, Edward departed Halifax bound for the United Kingdom on February 5, 1918. Eight months later, on October 29, 1918, he arrived in France as a Private in the 47th Battalion. Less than two weeks later, the Armistice was signed ending the Great War. Edward Donohue returned to Canada in July 1919. His brother-in-law from Norway would not be as fortunate.

Two weeks after marrying Ada, Amos Iveson left for war. He embarked overseas from Halifax on March 25, 1917 aboard the *S.S. Lapland* and arrived in Liverpool, England on April 7, 1917. From the Segregation Camp he was taken on strength into the 25th Reserve Battalion stationed at Bramshott. Ten months later, in mid-February 1918, he was still at Bramshott, then as a member of the 4th Reserve Battalion. The following month, and just over one year after getting married, on March 28, 1918, Private Amos Iveson became a member of the Canadian Infantry, 18th Battalion, Western Ontario Regiment. He arrived in France the next day with the 18th Battalion. Two weeks later, in mid-April 1918, he arrived at the front lines.

While Amos was overseas, Ada gave birth to their baby girl, Amy Patricia (Pat) in Corunna. Amos sent letters home to Ada back in Courtright and Ada would bake cookies to send to Amos by post on the battlefield. She would press their baby daughter's hand on each one. Sadly, Pat Iveson would never know her father.



Amy Patricia Iveson 1922 (age five)



Amy "Pat" Iveson 1936 (age nineteen)

Approximately four months after arriving in France, Amos Iveson was taking part in the **Hundred Days Campaign** (August 8 – November 11, 1918 in France and Belgium)—the “beginning of the end” of the Great War. Canadians were called on again and again over the three-month period to lead the offensives against the toughest German defences. The series of victories repeatedly drove the Germans back, culminating in German unconditional surrender on November 11, but it came at a cost of almost 46,000 Canadians killed, wounded and missing.

The first offensive in the Campaign was the Battle of Amiens (August 8-14, 1918), a truly all-arms battle, one that all four Canadian divisions would be involved in. Over the course of one week, in a battle that British Field Marshal Douglas Haig called “*the finest operation of the war*”, the Canadians would advance nearly 14 km.

The second offensive in Canada's Hundred Days Campaign was the **2nd Battle of Arras and Breaking the DQ Line** in France (August 26-September 3, 1918), where Canadians were part of a spearhead force tasked with crashing one of the most heavily fortified positions, the Hindenburg Line – a series of strong defensive trenches and fortified villages. General Sir Julian Byng called the Canadian victory at the 2nd Battle of Arras and breaking of the DQ Line “*the turning point of the campaign*”, but it came at a cost of 11,400 Canadian casualties.

Five months after arriving in France, on August 27, 1918, Private Amos Iveson was killed during an attack by an enemy shell while fighting in the 2nd Battle of Arras. He was initially reported as “Wounded and Missing after Action”, and later recorded as “Now for official purposes Presumed to have Died on or since 27-8-18.” Amos Ivesons' Circumstances of Death Register records him as; *Date of Casualty: On or since 27-8-18. “Previously reported Wounded and Missing, now for official purposes presumed to have died.” When last seen he had been wounded in the arm by shrapnel from an enemy shell, while taking part with his Company in an attack near Vis-en-Artois in front of Arras.*

In 1921, Amos' widow, Ada, and their four year-old daughter Pat, were residing in Moore Township, with Ada's parents Michael (a farmer) and Alice Donohue, along with four of her siblings: John Sylvester (age thirty-four, a farmer); Edward Roy (age twenty-three, a sailor); William Thomas (age twenty-two, a farmer); and Helen Loretta

Donohue (age fourteen, a student).

Fifteen years later, Amy “Pat” Iveson would marry. After obtaining their marriage license on August 24, 1936 in North Bay, nineteen year-old Pat Iveson married twenty-six-year-old truck driver Lawrence Albert Muxlow on September 5, 1936 in Kearney, Parry Sound, Ontario. The bride and groom were both from Courtright. Lawrence and Pat Muxlow would have eleven children together: Alice, Margaret, Charles, Robert, James, twins Ronald and Donald, Mary, Bill, twins Jerry and Lynn (sadly, both Jerry and Lynn died at birth). Their third child, and first boy, was named Charles Amos, to honour Pat’s father.

Ada Iveson never remarried. She raised her daughter, Pat, on the family’s dairy farm in Courtright, and worked alongside her brother John Donohue. They raised cattle and chickens, and sold milk, cream and eggs. Ada kept the letters that Amos had mailed home to her while he was overseas. Her grandchildren remember the letters sitting on their grandmother’s dresser. The granddaughters used to peek at them as kids and have a wee giggle, as they always started with, “To my Dearest Ada”.

Amy Pat (nee Iveson) Muxlow passed away at the age of forty-two on December 27, 1959 in Sarnia. She is buried in St. Joseph’s Catholic Cemetery in Corunna. Her mother, Ada Iveson, passed away at the age of eighty in February 1970. After her death, no one knows what happened to the letters that Amos had mailed to her. Ada is buried alongside her brother John Donohue in St. Joseph’s Catholic Cemetery in Corunna.

Thirty-one-year-old Amos Iveson has no known grave. He is memorialized on the Vimy Memorial, Pas de Calais, France.

NOTE: The spelling of Amo’s surname “Iveson” used in this Project is based on Amos Iveson’s own signature on his Marriage Certificate and in his WWI Personnel File (although the odd time, he did sign as Iverson). Even in his Personnel File, most documents have his surname spelled “Iveson”, and a few as “Iverson”. On the CWGC and CVWM websites, and on the Vimy Memorial, his name is recorded as Amos Iveson. On the Sarnia cenotaph, his name is inscribed as A. Ireson.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 2G, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10Z, 3I

JANES, G.J. – No information found in searched records links this name to Sarnia.

JOHNSON, Frederick (#124029)

On April 9, 1917, Frederick Johnson, 29, was killed in action on the first day of the Battle of Vimy Ridge, ten months after arriving in France. If his mother, Delia, found any consolation in her son’s death, it would have, perhaps, been from the letter that arrived in Sarnia the month after Frederick’s death. Battalion Chaplain, Captain C. Stuart consoled the grieving mother by telling Delia that Frederick “was always so cheerful in his work, and in his whole life as a soldier that he won a feeling of respect and esteem with both officers and men. His loss is one which we all feel, and yet how better can a man die than in defence of a cause which defends his home, his country and his God.”

Frederick Johnson was born in London, Ontario, on September 24, 1888, the son of James and Amelia Julia ‘Delia’ (nee Cahill) Johnson. James Johnson, born in September 1868 in Ontario married Amelia Julia Cahill, born June 14, 1862 in Portsmouth, England, on June 29, 1887. Their union blessed them with four children: Frank Lawrence (born May 17, 1887 in Middlesex County); Frederick; Charlotte May (born December 15, 1890 in London, Ontario); and Edward Norman (born January 27, 1894 in Petrolia). Frederick was baptized at St. Peter’s Cathedral in London, Ontario on November 4, 1888.

Twenty-seven-year-old Frederick Johnson enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force on October 9, 1915 in Sarnia. He stood five feet nine inches tall, had blue eyes and brown hair, was single, and was residing on Rose Street in Sarnia at the time. He recorded his trade or calling as labourer, and his next-of-kin as his father James Johnson of Piccadilly Street, London, Ontario. His next-of-kin was later changed to his mother Mrs. James Johnston of 278 Rose Street, Sarnia. Frederick initially became a member of “A” Company of the 70th Battalion, Canadian Expeditionary Force. He embarked overseas bound for the United Kingdom on April 26, 1916 aboard the *S.S. Lapland*.

Private Frederick Johnson arrived in England on May 5, 1916. Six weeks later, on June 28, 1916, he was transferred to the Canadian Infantry, 24th Battalion, Quebec Regiment at Shorncliffe. The next day, he arrived in France. Two weeks later, on July 14, 1916, Frederick Johnson arrived at the front lines with the 24th Battalion.

Five months later, in December 1916, Frederick mailed a letter from France to his brother Frank, at 516 Christina Street, Sarnia:

Well, I suppose you heard all about the Canadians down on the Somme. We had some hard fighting and we beat the Huns at every turn and I came out with the best of luck. We were a hard looking lot of fellows. We were mud from head to foot, but we don't mind that as long as we are beating the Huns and taking his trenches. They won't stand and fight with us for they don't like the bayonet. I suppose old Sarnia is just the same old place.

Your loving brother, Pte. Fred Johnson

In the spring of 1917, Private Frederick Johnson and his battalion along with the rest of the Canadian Corps, made their way to an area in northern France dominated by a long hill known as Vimy Ridge. The **Battle of Vimy Ridge** (April 9-12, 1917) was the first time (and last time in the war) that all four divisions of the Canadian Corps, with soldiers from every region in the country, would surge forward simultaneously. The first day of the battle, April 9, 1917, was the single bloodiest day of the entire war for the Canadian Corps and the bloodiest in all of Canadian military history. The four-day victory at Vimy Ridge was a seminal battle, a turning point in the war for the Canadian Corps, and significant victory for Canada, later referred to as "the birth of a nation". Of the 97,000 Canadians who fought at Vimy Ridge, approximately 7,004 were wounded and 3,598 were killed in four days of battle.

Ten months after arriving in France, on April 9, 1917, Private Frederick Johnson was killed in action during fighting on the first day of the Battle of Vimy Ridge, France. Another Sarnian, David Kerr of the Royal Canadian Regiment, also lost his life in the same battle on the same day (David Kerr is included in this Project on page 311).

Frederick Johnson's Circumstances of Death Register (which has his surname misspelled as Johnston) records him as; *Date of Casualty: 9-4-17. "Killed in Action". Location of Unit at time of Casualty: AT VIMY RIDGE.* It was in the May 11, 1917 edition of the *Sarnia Weekly Observer* that Sarnians learned the news that, *Private Fred Johnson of the 70th Battalion, transferred to the 24th Mounted Rifles, was killed in action April 9, 1917 at the Battle of Vimy Ridge, France.*

In late May 1917, Frederick's mother Amelia, received a letter in Sarnia from the 24th Battalion Chaplain, Captain C. Stuart. The following is a portion of that letter:

Dear Madam,

I am sorry to have been so long in writing to express my sympathy with you in the loss of your son, Pte. F. Johnson, No. 124029, of this battalion, who was killed in action on April 9th.... Your son as you know, was killed in the advance at Vimy Ridge and was buried there in a forward cemetery on the Ridge itself, side by side with his comrades. One can only express to you our deep sympathy and appreciation of the life and the noble example of your son. He was always so cheerful in his work and in his whole life as a soldier that he won a feeling of respect and esteem with both officers and men. His loss is one which we all feel, and yet how better can a man die than in defence of a cause which defends his home, his country and his God.

I always feel so strongly that these lads are continually in the presence of God, that when the end comes, he goes to meet them with hands outstretched, saying, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of the Lord." For it is a good faithful service they have rendered, the same sort of service which Jesus Christ himself offered in His life, and death on the Cross. But one knows the sadness his loss must bring into your heart, and one can only pray that these may be also a pride and solace in the thought that he has lived and died as a Christian soldier... May God send you His Holy Spirit to comfort you in these sad days.

Yours faithfully, C. Stuart, Chaplain, 24th Can. Bn.

Twenty-nine-year-old Frederick Johnson has no known grave. He is memorialized on the Vimy Memorial, Pas de Calais, France.

NOTE: The spelling of Frederick's surname as "Johnson" (vs. Johnston) used in this Project is based on the spelling found most often in his genealogical records and the documents in his WWI Personnel File. In his file, most of the time, Frederick signed his own surname without the "t", but a few times he included it. On the CWGC and CVWM websites, his name is recorded as Frederick Johnson. On the Sarnia cenotaph, his name is inscribed as F. Johnston.

Frederick Johnson's younger brother **Edward Norman Johnson** also served in the Great War. On March 30, 1916, at the age of twenty-two, and while residing at 273 Shamrock Street, Sarnia and recording his occupation as labourer, Edward enlisted in Sarnia with the Lambton 149th Battalion, CEF (he enlisted five months after his older brother Frederick had enlisted). Almost one year later, on March 2, 1917, Edward Johnson married Elizabeth Caroline Carter in Point Edward. Less than four weeks later, on March 28, 1917, Private Edward Johnson embarked

overseas from Halifax bound for England. Less than two weeks later, his older brother Frederick died in action in France.

Exactly one year after he had departed Canada, on March 28, 1918, Private Edward Johnson arrived in France as part of the 47th Battalion, Canadian Infantry. Just over four months later, Edward became part of Canada's Hundred Days Campaign (August 8 – November 11, 1918 in France and Belgium). This campaign was the “beginning of the end” of the Great War. Canadians were called on again and again over the three-month period to lead the offensives against the toughest German defences. The series of victories repeatedly drove the Germans back, culminating in German unconditional surrender on November 11, but it came at a cost of almost 46,000 Canadians killed, wounded and missing.

The first offensive in the Campaign was the Battle of Amiens (August 8-14, 1918), a truly all-arms battle, one that all four Canadian divisions would be involved in. Over the course of one week, in a battle that British Field Marshal Douglas Haig called “*the finest operation of the war*”, the Canadians would advance nearly 14 km. On August 8, 1918, on the first day of the Amiens offensive, Private Edward Johnson was wounded slightly, yet remained on duty. The second offensive in the Campaign was the Battle of Arras and Breaking the DQ Line (August 26-September 3, 1918), where Canadians were part of a spearhead force tasked with crashing one of the most heavily fortified positions, the Hindenburg Line – a series of strong defensive trenches and fortified villages. General Sir Julian Byng called the Canadian victory at the 2nd Battle of Arras and breaking of the DQ Line “*the turning point of the campaign*”, but it came at a cost of 11,400 Canadian casualties.

On the last day of this second offensive, on September 3, 1918, Edward Johnson was wounded in action again, this time by shell fragments and/or shrapnel that caused “multiple gun shot wounds” in both feet, his thigh and his left arm. Initially Edward was treated at No. 33 Casualty Clearing Station, but the damage to his “shattered” left arm was so bad that it had to be amputated two days later at No. 2 Stationary Hospital in Abbeville. Edward Johnson was returned to England where he underwent a number of operations—including to remove chunks of metal and pieces of bone and to have his arm re-amputated on October 21, 1918.

Edward Norman Johnson survived the war, was invalided to Canada on September 11, 1919, and was discharged as medically unfit for service in late October 1920 in Toronto. Edward and his wife Elizabeth would reside in London, Ontario for a number of years after the war before returning to Sarnia and residing at 124 Brock Street.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 2G, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10Z, 2k

JOHNSTON, George Charles (#2006885)

When he enlisted with the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force in December 1917, George Johnston, 36, left behind his wife of two years in Detroit and his parents in Sarnia. He arrived in France in early July 1918 as a Sapper with the Canadian Engineers, 5th Battalion. During the Battle of Canal-du-Nord and Cambrai a gunshot wound in his thigh proved fatal and George succumbed to his injury on the same day. The Great War officially ended a month after the 37 year-old Sarnian was buried in Pas de Calais, France.

George Johnston was born in London, Ontario, on March 25, 1881, the son of William Harry and Mary Catharine (nee Walker) Johnston, of 182 Napier Street, Sarnia. George had at least one sibling, William Harry Jr., born April 19, 1891 in Sarnia. In Sarnia on September 28, 1915, George Johnston, 34, a machinist at the time, married Isabella Morgan, a Montreal born widow who was residing in Detroit, Michigan at the time. Isabella, 39, was the daughter of Stephen Mallette and Isabelle (nee Chapleau) Morgan.

When George Johnston, 36, enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force in Windsor two years later on December 28, 1917, the couple were residing on 12th Street in Detroit, Michigan. He stood five feet six and a quarter inches tall, had grey eyes and dark hair, and recorded his trade or calling as woodworker and carpenter, and his next-of-kin as his wife Isabella Johnston of 878 12th Street, Detroit, Michigan. George became a member of the 7th Field Company, Canadian Engineers Training Depot (CETD). He embarked overseas bound for the United Kingdom on February 28, 1918 aboard the *S.S. Metagama*.

George disembarked in England on March 11, 1918. By May 21, he was stationed at Seaford where he became a member of the Canadian Engineer Railway Battalion (CERB). One month later, on June 23, 1918, he was posted to the Canadian Engineers Reinforcement Pool (CERP). The following day, George Johnston arrived in France. One week later, on July 2, 1918, Johnston became a member of the Canadian Engineers, 5th Battalion, with the rank of Sapper.

George Johnston soon found himself part of **Canada's Hundred Days Campaign** (August 8 – November 11, 1918 in France and Belgium). This campaign was the “beginning of the end” of the Great War. Canadians were called on again and again over the three-month period to lead the offensives against the toughest German defences. The series of victories repeatedly drove the Germans back, culminating in Germany's unconditional surrender on November 11, but it came at a cost of almost 46,000 Canadians killed, wounded and missing.

The first offensive in the Campaign was the Battle of Amiens (August 8-14, 1918), a truly all-arms battle, one that all four Canadian divisions would be involved in. Over the course of one week, in a battle that British Field Marshal Douglas Haig called “*the finest operation of the war*”, the Canadians would advance nearly 14 km. The second offensive in the Campaign was the Battle of Arras and Breaking the DQ Line (August 26-September 3, 1918), where Canadians were part of a spearhead force tasked with crashing one of the most heavily fortified positions, the Hindenburg Line. General Sir Julian Byng called the Canadian victory at Arras and the DQ Line “*the turning point of the campaign*”.

The third offensive in Canada's Hundred Days Campaign was the **Battle of Canal-du-Nord and Cambrai** in France (September 27-October 11, 1918). Against seemingly impossible odds and a desperate fully prepared enemy, the Canadians fought for two weeks in a series of brutal engagements. They successfully channel through a narrow gap in the canal, punched through a series of fortified villages and deep interlocking trenches, and captured Boursin Wood and the city of Cambrai. General Arthur Currie would call it “*some of the bitterest fighting we have experienced*” and it came at a cost of 14,000 Canadian casualties.

Just over three months after arriving in France, on October 6, 1918, Sapper George Johnston was wounded in action by enemy gunfire while fighting in the Battle of Canal-du-Nord and Cambrai. He was taken to No. 22 Casualty Clearing Station with a gunshot wound in the right thigh, recorded as “wounds, GSW R thigh, dangerously ill”. George died that day as a result of his wounds. His Circumstances of Death register records him as; *Date of Casualty: 6-10-18. “Died of Wounds.” At No. 22 Casualty Clearing Station. Bucquoy Road British Cemetery, Ficheux, South of Arras, France.*

In mid-October 1918, George's brother Harry Johnston at the Wanless Grocery store in Sarnia, received a telegram informing him of his brother George's circumstances of death—that George had lost his life at the 22nd Clearing Station, as a result of wounds that he received, a gunshot wound in the thigh. Approximately one month after George's death, the Armistice was signed ending the Great War.

George Johnston, 37, is buried in Bucquoy Road Cemetery, Pas de Calais, France. Grave IV.E.2. In 1921, George's parents were still living at 182 Napier Street in Sarnia. Harry, 71, was still working as a watchman and Catharine, 72, was a housewife. Isabella Johnston, George's widow, later remarried and resided in Torrance, California as Isabella Fulton.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 2G, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10Z

JONES, George Andrew (#334403)

Sarnian George Andrew Jones wanted to serve his country, but one impediment prevented him from doing so until the summer of 1916. His family was of the “African” or “Negro” race as recorded on Canada census records, or the “Black race”, as recorded on George's Attestation papers. It was not until the summer of 1916, when recruiting sources had largely dried up, that army officials allowed minorities to serve. On October 8, 1918, George lost his life as a result of the wounds he received in the brutal Battle of Canal-du-Nord and Cambrai. Just over one month after George died, the Great War ended.

George Jones was born in Sarnia on December 12, 1898, the youngest child of William Andrew and Georgina Ella (nee Ford) Jones. William Jones and Georgina Ford were married on May 24, 1886 in Port Huron, Michigan. Although they were both born in Sarnia—William (born January 7, 1864) and Georgina (born September 8, 1862)—their parents and George's grandparents were born in the United States.

William and Georgina Jones were both residing in Sarnia when they married, and William was employed as a painter. They lived at 167 Cameron Street and together had five children: William Andrew Jr. (born April 14, 1887); Ellen Elizabeth (born October 11, 1891); Carrie (born December 22, 1893); John Austin (born December 24, 1895) and George Andrew. Tragedy struck the Jones family on September 19, 1894, when first born William Andrew Jr. passed away as a result of appendicitis in Sarnia at the age of seven. The Jones family was of the “African” or “Negro” race as recorded on Canada Census records, or the “Black race”, as recorded on George Jones' Attestation papers.

At the start of the war, racist beliefs prevalent in the military (and reflecting those of the larger society) resulted in visible minorities such as Blacks, Ukrainians and Japanese, being excluded from the First Contingent. It was not until the summer of 1916, when recruiting sources had largely dried up, that army officials allowed minorities to serve.^{4F}

George's older brother **John Austin Jones** also served in the war and enlisted approximately fifteen months before George did. John Austin Jones, 21, enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force on January 25, 1916 in Sarnia. He stood five feet eleven and a half inches tall, had brown eyes and black hair, was single, and residing at home with his parents on Cameron Street at the time. He recorded his trade or calling as painter, and his next-of-kin as his father William Andrew Jones of 167 Cameron Street, Sarnia. John Jones became a member of the 149th Battalion, CEF. Just over six months after enlisting, on August 3, 1916, John Jones married twenty-two-year-old Elizabeth Ethel Hunt in Sarnia. Elizabeth Hunt was born in London, England, the daughter of Harry and Louisa (nee Thurlow) Hunt. Elizabeth Hunt had immigrated to Canada in 1913.

Private John Austin Jones embarked overseas on March 28, 1917 aboard the *SS Lapland* and arrived in England on April 7, 1917 (his brother George would enlist one month later). Once in the U.K., Private John Jones became a member of the 25th Reserve Battalion (Western Ontario Regiment) at Bramshott and was later transferred to the 2nd Canadian Pioneers. Seven months after arriving in England, John arrived in France on November 27, 1917, as a Sapper with the Canadian Engineers.

On June 22, 1918, he was transferred to the 6th Battalion, Canadian Engineers, and the next day arrived with that unit at the front lines. John Jones soon found himself part of Canada's Hundred Days Campaign (August 8 – November 11, 1918 in France and Belgium). His brother George Jones also found himself part of Canada's Hundred Days Campaign.

Sapper John Jones survived this final campaign and the war. Six months after the war's end, he was discharged on demobilization on May 29, 1919 in Ottawa. He returned to Sarnia and resumed his pre-war life. He and his wife Elizabeth lived at 179 Cameron Street, just down the street from John's parents, and John's job as a painter supported his family. In 1920, Elizabeth gave birth to their daughter, Marion. On November 5, 1967, World War I veteran John Austin Jones passed away at the age of seventy-two. He is buried in Lakeview Cemetery in Sarnia.

Eighteen year-old **George Andrew Jones** enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force on May 14, 1917, in Sarnia. He stood five feet seven inches tall, had brown eyes and black hair, was single, and was residing at home with his parents on Cameron Street at the time. He recorded his trade or calling as painter, and his next-of-kin as his father William Andrew Jones of 167 Cameron Street, Sarnia. George Jones became a member of the 63rd Depot Battery, Canadian Field Artillery with the rank of Gunner. Seven months after enlisting, on December 14, 1917, George Jones embarked overseas bound for the United Kingdom aboard the *S.S. Missanabie*.

Gunner George Jones arrived in England on December 19, 1917 and was in Glasgow on December 31, 1917. He became a member of the Reserve Battalion, Canadian Field Artillery stationed at Witley. Three months later, at the end of March 1918, George arrived in France joining the Canadian Corps Reinforcement Camp (CCRC). Days later, on April 4, 1918, he was transferred from the Artillery Pool, and became a member of the Canadian Field Artillery, 4th Light Trench Mortar Battery.

Four months after arriving in France, George Jones found himself taking part in **Canada's Hundred Days Campaign** (August 8 – November 11, 1918 in France and Belgium). This campaign was the "beginning of the end" of the Great War. Canadians were called on again and again over the three-month period to lead the offensives against the toughest German defences. The series of victories repeatedly drove the Germans back, culminating in Germany's unconditional surrender on November 11, but it came at a cost of almost 46,000 Canadians killed, wounded and missing.

The first offensive in the Campaign was the Battle of Amiens (August 8-14, 1918), a truly all-arms battle, one that all four Canadian divisions would be involved in. Over the course of one week, in a battle that British Field Marshal Douglas Haig called "*the finest operation of the war*", the Canadians would advance nearly 14 km. The second offensive in the Campaign was the Battle of Arras and Breaking the DQ Line (August 26-September 3, 1918), where Canadians were part of a spearhead force tasked with crashing one of the most heavily fortified positions, the Hindenburg Line. General Sir Julian Byng called the Canadian victory at Arras and the DQ Line "*the turning point of the campaign*".

The third offensive in Canada's Hundred Days Campaign was the **Battle of Canal-du-Nord and Cambrai** in France (September 27-October 11, 1918). Against seemingly impossible odds and a desperate fully prepared enemy, the Canadians fought for two weeks in a series of brutal engagements. They successfully channel through a narrow gap in the canal, punched through a series of fortified villages and deep interlocking trenches, and captured Bourlon Wood and the city of Cambrai. General Arthur Currie would call it "*some of the bitterest fighting we have experienced*" and it came at a cost of 14,000 Canadian casualties.

Six months after arriving in France, on September 27, 1918, Private George Jones was wounded in action by enemy artillery fire while fighting during Canada's final Hundred Days Campaign. He was admitted to No. 33 Casualty Clearing Station with "shell wound right buttock". A week later, on October 5, he was recorded as "dangerously wounded". On October 7, he was at No. 20 General Hospital, Dannes, Camiers recorded as "now reported dangerously ill". On October 8, 1918, George Jones lost his life as a result of the wounds received. Just over one month after George Jones died, the Great War ended.

In mid-October 1918, William and Georgina Jones on Cameron Street received a telegram from England and Ottawa with news of their youngest son informing them that; 334403, PVT. GEORGE ANDREW JONES, ARTILLERY, PREVIOUSLY REPORTED DANGEROUSLY WOUNDED, NOW REPORTED DANGEROUSLY ILL AT 20TH GENERAL HOSPITAL, DANNES, CAMIERES.

Approximately one month after George Jones death, the Armistice was signed ending the Great War. George Jones' Circumstances of Death Register records him as; *Date of Casualty: 8-10-18. "Died of Wounds." (Shrapnel wound, right buttock). At No. 29 General Hospital, Camiers. Etaples Military Cemetery, France.* The following is the October 17, 1918 *Sarnia Observer* report of his death:

Local Man Dies of Wounds

The citizens of the city will regret to learn of the death of another of Sarnia's war heroes in the person of Private George Andrew Jones, of the artillery, a message arriving to that effect. The young man was a son of Mr. and Mrs. W.A. Jones, 167 Cameron Street, and was known as a quiet, unassuming young fellow and well liked by all who knew him. He went overseas a couple of years ago with an artillery draft of the 63rd battery. He was in his 20th year, and is survived by his parents, two sisters, and a brother Private Austin Jones, now with the Canadian forces in France.

William Andrew and Georgina Ella Jones lived at 167 Cameron Street in Sarnia their entire lives. Georgina passed away on June 17, 1929 in Sarnia at the age of sixty-seven. She was buried in Lakeview Cemetery, Sarnia. George Jones, 19, is buried in Etaples Military Cemetery, Pas de Calais, France, Grave LXVI.H.17. On the Sarnia cenotaph, his name is inscribed as A. Jones.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 2G, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10Z

KERR, David (#402653)

Scottish born David Kerr wanted to serve his country despite his age, 35, and his situation—a married father of four children under the age of eleven. Four months after arriving in France, Sergeant David Kerr was killed on the first day of the Battle of Vimy Ridge. The popular Sarnian is buried in La Chaudiere Military Cemetery, Vimy, Pas de Calais, France. On his headstone are inscribed the words, ASLEEP IN JESUS BLESSED SLEEP FROM WHICH NONE EVER WAKE TO WEEP. WIFE AND FAMILY.

David Kerr was born in Newton Grange, Midlothian County, Scotland, on September 5, 1881, the eldest child of Alexander and Helen 'Ellen' (nee Hare) Kerr, of Scotland. Alexander Kerr, born April 23, 1856, Scotland, and Ellen Hare, born March 16, 1858, were married on November 21, 1879 in Newbattle Manse, Scotland. They had four children together: sons David and Thomas Harwell (born August 13, 1883); and daughters Euphemia Hare (born September 3, 1885) and Jane (Jennie) Meek (born January 24, 1889).

In 1901, at age nineteen, David Kerr was residing in Musselburgh, Scotland and was working as a coal miner, like his father. All of their lives were to change dramatically in the next few years. The following year, on April 13, 1902, David's mother Ellen, passed away as a result of lung and heart problems at the age of forty-four. In June 1903, Alexander remarried, this time to Ellen Reid (born June 29, 1870) in Scotland. Shortly after, the Kerr family decided to immigrate to Canada. On July 11, 1903, David and his family left Glasgow, Scotland and arrived at the port of Montreal aboard the *Corinthian*. On October 25, 1905 in Halifax, Ellen gave birth to a son, Alexander Jr., a half-sibling for David.

Two years later, on August 18, 1905, twenty-three-year-old David Kerr, a labourer at the time, married twenty year-old Agnes Druscilla (nee Siddall) in Sarnia. Agnes Siddall was born on June 26, 1885 in Sarnia Township, the youngest daughter of Robert John Siddall, a farmer in Sarnia Township, and Mary Ann (nee Laforge) Siddall, of Wellington Street, Sarnia.

Four years earlier, in 1901, sixteen year-old Agnes Siddall was living with the Hanna family in Sarnia and was employed as a servant. The Hanna family included father William John Hanna and his second wife Maude (nee MacAdams) Hanna, along with their three children: William Neil Hanna, Margaret and Katherine Hanna. Agnes Siddall's employer, William John "Jack" Hanna, was an influential and well-respected member of the community--he was a lawyer, and member of the Ontario legislature. One of the Hanna children, William Neil Hanna, served in the Great War, and would lose his life only days after the Armistice. William Neil Hanna's story is included in this Project.

David and Agnes Kerr resided first at 310 Cromwell Street and later at 136 N. Brock St. in Sarnia. They had four children together: Alexander Hugh (born June 14, 1906); twin girls Florence Mae and Helen Fidelis (born May 21, 1908); and Angus Stewart (born July 28, 1911). David was a well-known singer in Sarnia who sang on special occasions in connection with the different churches of the city. He was, for a few years, connected with the Prudential Life Insurance Company (as an agent) and was a member of the old Concert Band.

Thirty-three-year-old David Kerr enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force on January 15, 1915 in Sarnia. He stood five feet seven and a half inches tall, had blue eyes and fair hair, and was married with four young children at the time. He recorded his trade or calling as labourer, and his next-of-kin as his wife Agnes Kerr of 136 Brock Street, Sarnia. He also recorded that he had prior militia experience with the 27th Regiment. He was initially a Private with the 34th Battalion, Canadian Expeditionary Force. Five months later, in June 1915, he was promoted to Sergeant, receiving a raise in pay from \$20 to \$25 a month. On August 17, 1915, David Kerr embarked overseas bound for the United Kingdom aboard the *S.S. Hesperian*.



Sergeant David Kerr

Arriving at Devonport, England on August 26, 1915, David Kerr became a member of the 9th Reserve Battalion, "B" Company, stationed at East Sandling. From October 18 to November 12, 1915, he attended a military school in Shorncliffe where he earned a certificate in a bomb-throwing course. In mid-December of 1915, the *Sarnia Observer* printed a letter that David Kerr had mailed to them from East Sandling Camp, Shorncliffe, England. Following is a portion of that letter:

Dear Mr. Editor

Allow me a small space in your valuable paper to let you know how the Sarnia boys are faring in England. We left Canada on August 17, and had a very good trip overseas until we came into the danger zone, then we had to sleep on deck all night, so as to be ready for the life boats in case the German subs were near, but luckily for us they let us pass, but the Hesperian was doomed on her return trip to Canada. She landed us at Devonport on the 26th of

August, and was sunk on Sept. 4th, so when we heard about the mishap to her we said: "God bless the Germans", but we thought of other words which would look bad on paper.

Now I'll start with our camp life here. The first is the weather, which is very bad. It rains every other day, and the mud is supreme. Salisbury was no worse than Shorncliffe. The mud is ankle deep, but the boys shut their eyes and plough, which is the only way to do, as we have come too far to kick now.... Now for our training, which finished Saturday, December 4, after 14 weeks pretty hard drill. We get up at 6 a.m., fall in at 7:30, physical drill till 8, breakfast 8:15, fall in at 9, inspection by company officer, then we have an inspection by the colonel, which takes about an hour, and we have to stand at attention all the time; but thank God, the Brigadier put a stop to that. You had to shave, clean your buttons and shoes, and if he couldn't see his face in your buttons it was Orderly room at 4 p.m. The boys call him some funny names. We have three route marches a week, from ten to fifteen miles, and full marching at that.... One thing we miss here is the brown shoes which were issued to us in Canada. We have the black ones here, with heel plates and hob nails, but they are good shoes for marching with, though when we go up town you would think it was a team of Clydes we make so much noise on the pavement....

We are attached to the 9th Reserve Battalion and they come from Edmonton, but the most of them have either been wounded, killed or taken prisoners, and we are filling up the gaps. They are coming and going all the time. I will give you an instance, it is hard to believe but is nevertheless true. I shook hands with a Sergeant going out on draft on Thursday morning and I was in Folkestone on Saturday evening watching the hospital ship come in, and the same Sergeant was the second man to come ashore, wounded, shot through the left shoulder. We are only six hours journey from the trenches. We can hear the big guns bombarding the Belgium coast, so you see it doesn't take long to get put out of commission over there. All the boys here are ready for the fray. I don't think it will be long till they get their wish, as the quartermaster sergeant has everything ready for them. I don't think I will get away with them, as I am instructing in bomb throwing. I was at school for a month for instruction and I got through with a first class certificate. I go to London next week to finish my course in explosives.

The scenery around here is lovely. We have lots of old land marks, such as the oldest house in Kent, and that makes the route marches more agreeable to the boys, and they enjoy them. The people have always a cheery word for the Canuck's wherever we go, and the roads are good, which makes it better for us.

Now about the food; the most important factor of all. Well, it is wholesome and we get plenty of it.... The men have porridge, bacon and tea, bread and butter for breakfast and it is changed from time to time. For dinner they have roast, spuds, stew, at times it is always changed. Supper, tea and different kinds of fruit. I pay six cents for extras in the sergeant's mess, and we feed good. I have to see the rations we are getting, and I know I never felt better in my life.

Well, Mr. Editor, all the Sarnia boys join me in wishing you and your staff and readers a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year, and tell the young men of Sarnia that they are needed here to do their bit. We don't want Sarnia the Imperial City to have the name of having "Slackers" in its boundaries. From the boys of the Second draft of the old 34th Battalion, C.E.F. I remain one of the boys,

Sergt. D. Kerr

In mid-March 1916, David Kerr spent five days infirmed at Moore Barracks Hospital, Shorncliffe, due to bronchitis. Fifteen months after arriving in England, on November 27, 1916, he was transferred from the 9th Reserve Battalion to the Royal Canadian Regiment (RCR) with the rank of Sergeant. Sergeant David Kerr arrived in France with the RCRs the next day. A little over two months later, in early February 1917, David Kerr spent two weeks infirmed at No. 8 Canadian Field Hospital and Corps Rest Station due to influenza. After his release from hospital, David rejoined his unit in an area in northern France dominated by a long hill known as Vimy Ridge.

The **Battle of Vimy Ridge** (April 9-12, 1917) was the first time (and last time in the war) that all four divisions of the Canadian Corps, with soldiers from every region in the country, would surge forward simultaneously. The first day of the battle, April 9, 1917, was the single bloodiest day of the entire war for the Canadian Corps and the bloodiest in all of Canadian military history. The four-day victory at Vimy Ridge was a seminal battle, a turning point in the war for the Canadian Corps, and significant victory for Canada, later referred to as "the birth of a nation". Of the 97,000 Canadians who fought at Vimy Ridge, approximately 7,004 were wounded and 3,598 were killed in four days of battle.

Just over four months after arriving in France, on April 9, 1917, Sergeant David Kerr of the RCR, lost his life while fighting on the first day of the Battle of Vimy Ridge in France. His Circumstances of Death register records him as *Date of Casualty: 9-4-17. KILLED IN ACTION. Location of Unit at time of Casualty: ATTACK AT VIMY*

RIDGE. La Chaudiere British Cemetery, 3 miles South South West of Lens, France. Remarks: Exhumed from 1 ½ miles South of Givenchy-en-Gohelle, 4 ¾ miles South South West of Lens. Sheet 44a.S.27.b.7.6.

Sarnians learned of David Kerr's death on the front page of the April 27, 1917 *Sarnia Weekly Observer*, with the first line; *Word was received here Tuesday of the death in action of Sergt. David Kerr, a well known and popular young Sarnian.* He would receive the citation: The 1914-15 Star. Another Sarnian, Frederick Johnson of the 24th Infantry Battalion, also lost his life in the same battle on the same day (Frederick Johnson is also included in this Project on page 306).

David Kerr left behind his wife Agnes Kerr and their four small children (ages six through eleven), who were residing at Market Square in Windsor, Ontario at the time of his death. The Kerr family later resided at Field Avenue, Detroit, Michigan. David Kerr, 35, is buried in La Chaudiere Military Cemetery, Vimy, Pas de Calais, France, Grave IX.B.12. On his headstone are inscribed the words, ASLEEP IN JESUS BLESSED SLEEP FROM WHICH NONE EVER WAKE TO WEEP. WIFE AND FAMILY.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 2G, 6O, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10Z, 2k, 2t

KETCH, Albert Harold Willsea (#405569)

Harold Ketch had responsibility thrust upon him in his teens and he was up to the challenge. After his father died, Harold quit school and, at age 15, assumed his father's job—running the printing office of the *Alvinston Free Press*. He also came from a military family and honoured the tradition of serving his country. At age 23, the remarkable and decorated Harold Ketch died on August 15, 1917 while fighting on the first day of the Attack on Hill 70. He has no known grave.

Albert Harold Ketch was born in Oil Springs, Ontario, on July 16, 1894, the only son of Albert Edward and Helena Pamela (nee Willsie) Ketch. Albert Edward Ketch was born on December 26, 1870 in Manchester, England. Fifteen years later, in 1885, he arrived in Toronto and entered the printing establishment of Warwick Brothers. He remained in Toronto for three years and then went to London, Ontario where he attended a military school for three years, and then a cavalry school in Quebec for three months. He returned to London and worked in different offices until 1893 when he came to Alvinston, Ontario. Eight years after immigrating to Canada, on October 7, 1893, Albert Edward Ketch married Helena Pamela Willsie (born April 1869 in Avon, Ontario) in Alvinston. Albert Edward Ketch purchased the *Oil Springs Chronicle*, and ran it for six years. After selling the paper in August 1899, he purchased the *Alvinston Free Press*. In the meantime, the Ketch family was expanding with the birth of three children: eldest son Albert Harold; and daughters Lylla Marilla (born January 1896), and Clara Hazel (born October 1897, later resided in London, Ontario, employed at the London Free Press).

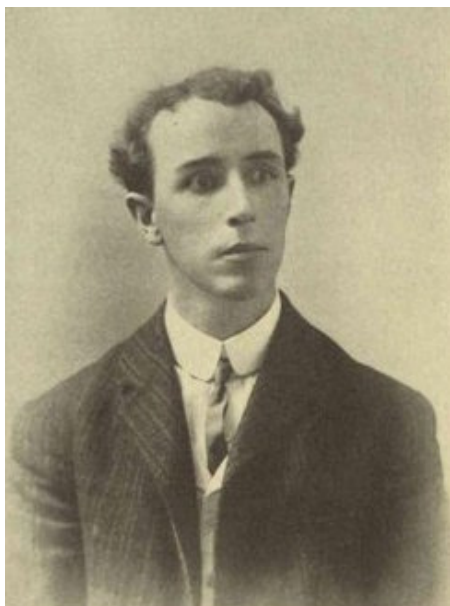
Albert "Harold" Ketch came from a military family. His father Albert Sr. had first-class certificates from Military College and from London; and his uncle, Robert Ketch, was an officer who was killed in the trenches of France in March 1915. A cousin, Henry Ketch, was also killed at the Dardanelles--there were only 35 soldiers left out of 1,000 who were trying to land at that time.

Harold had a rather tumultuous time in his teens due to events beyond his control. As a young boy, he was an enthusiast in baseball, football and hockey but tragedy struck Harold when he was fifteen years old--his thirty-nine-year-old father, Albert, passed away on November 3, 1909 in Alvinston, due to coronary disease (he is buried in Alvinston Cemetery). Less than two years later, on July 12, 1911, forty-two-year-old widow Helena Ketch remarried in Sarnia, to fifty-two-year-old widower James N. Dodd. Both were residing in Alvinston at the time and later moved to 108 Durand Street, Sarnia.

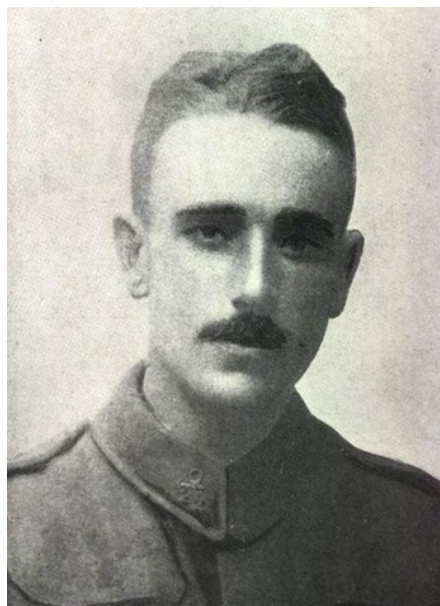
After his father had passed away, Harold left high school at the age of fifteen. He took charge of the printing office of the *Alvinston Free Press* and devoted himself to it full time. Realizing the importance of an education, he returned to school two years later and obtained his second-class certificate. He had experience in several well-equipped offices, such as *The Montreal Herald* and the *Simcoe Reformer*. He then returned to once again take charge of the *Alvinston Free Press*. Albert Ketch was a member of the St. Clair Press Association and the Canadian Press Association.

Twenty year-old Harold Ketch enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force, 48th Highlanders, in Toronto on May 10, 1915. He stood six feet and three quarter inches tall, was single, and recorded his trade or calling as printer, and his next-of-kin as his mother, Mrs. J.N. Dodd of 108 Durand Street, Sarnia. He also recorded his birth year as 1893 (not 1894, the correct date) making himself one year older than he actually was. Harold Ketch

completed a course as a signaler in Toronto, and was transferred to the 35th Battalion, "D" Company, Canadian Expeditionary Force. He embarked overseas bound for the United Kingdom on October 16, 1915 aboard the S.S. *Metagama*.



Albert Edward Ketch (father of A.H.W. Ketch)



Lance Corporal Albert Harold Willsea Ketch

Just over four months after arriving in the U.K., in early March 1916, Harold Ketch became a member of the 24th Battalion, Canadian Infantry, Signal Section. At that time, Harold wrote a letter home to his mother Helena Dodd. Following is the letter as it was printed in an April 1916 edition of the *Sarnia Observer*, under the headline, "*HAROLD KETCH IS A POPULAR SOLDIER*":

My dear mother,

I have just finished telling Hazel (his sister) some news that I consider the best of news, and that is by the time you receive this letter, I will likely be somewhere in France. Two others and I volunteered to reinforce the signal section of the 24th Battalion, which is at the front. We volunteered this morning when Lieut. Woods called for volunteers. We were lucky to be in the front rank and in a jiffy we were out in front. We have had medical examination, and our rifles have been inspected, our bayonets sharpened and we had also had our kit inspected. We have identification discs about our neck on a string. On it is "No. 405569, Pte. A.H.W. Ketch, 24th Batt., Inf., Canadians". On Monday, the 6th, we have a final inspection and then I suppose we leave. The two fellows who go with me, are good chaps and as we have three of our signalers with the 24th now, it won't be like going to a strange bunch by any means. You should see the big black English army boots I have on, No. 10, and I have two pair of socks on. When I get back to civis again I sure won't be able to wear freak shoes. We take the Oliver equipment with us and the Ross rifle. We also take two suits of underwear, three pairs of socks, one rubber sheet, one blanket and a few necessities issued by the army. The rest we pack in our kit bags and they are stored away for us till we claim them. I got the papers you sent to Hettie. Don't worry about me. Buck up and assist in anything you can to help us win the war. Be cheery under all circumstances. Regards to my Sarnia friends and acquaintances. HAROLD

Days after writing the above letter, on March 9, 1916, Harold Ketch arrived in France with the Canadian Infantry, 24th Battalion, First Quebec Regiment. Three months later, on June 8th of 1916, Harold sent his mother Helena another letter, this from Flanders. Following is an excerpt from that letter:

Dear mother,

I am going to write several letters today as there is no telling when I'll get the chance again for as you are aware already by the papers, we are in the thick of things now. I will let you know how I make out at every opportunity. Our regiment has a distinctive hat badge now. It is very bright and is the shape of a star surmounted with a crown. It has the letters V.R.C. on it (Victoria Rifles of Canada)...

Well, we are likely to be in the heat of things so what is in store for me is uncertain. What we want is more help from Canada in the way of willing men. We have a hard fight yet ahead before we beat Fritz, and all the men are needed. If the fellows at home would just stop to realize fully where their duty lay. If they were over here a few

minutes just to see what noble sacrifices our fellows are making for the glory of the old empire, I'm sure they would enlist by the thousands. Well Mother, be cheery and don't worry about me. If anything happens to me you'll know I did my best in a good cause and work hard all the time for more recruits and assistance to those over here....

Well, be cheery and send me a parcel of eats and newspapers.

Lovingly, Harold

In just over one year at the front, Harold Ketch took part in two defining battles of the Great War. The Battle of the Somme (July 1-November 18, 1916) was one of the bloodiest and most futile battles in history. The Somme battle lasted for more than four brutal months and saw the Allies advance around 10 kilometers. A more telling statistic is the number of injuries and deaths: of the 85,000 Canadian Corps, there were more than 24,000 Canadian casualties. In the spring of 1917, the Canadian Corps made their way to an area in northern France dominated by a long hill known as Vimy Ridge. The Battle of Vimy Ridge (April 9-12, 1917) was the first time (and last time in the war) that all four divisions of the Canadian Corps, with soldiers from every region in the country, would surge forward simultaneously. The four-day victory at Vimy Ridge was a seminal battle, a turning point in the war for the Canadian Corps, and significant victory for Canada, later referred to as "the birth of a nation". Of the 97,000 Canadians who fought at Vimy Ridge, approximately 7,004 were wounded and 3,598 were killed in four days of battle.

Harold Ketch of the 24th Battalion, Quebec Regiment, was wounded at Vimy Ridge. On April 10, 1917, he had been appointed Lance Corporal. On April 14, 1917, he was admitted to No. 6 Casualty Clearing Station with a gunshot or shell wound, right knee. He returned to duty the next day. He was awarded a Good Conduct Badge on May 10, 1917, and a Military Medal on May 17, 1917. The Military Medal award read: "*For conspicuous bravery at VIMY RIDGE on April 9th, 1917, when as a Lineman attached to BN. Report Centre, he showed great courage and determination in laying lines and keeping them in repair under heavy artillery fire, thereby enabling communication to be maintained throughout the operation. Although wounded he carried on with his duties for over twenty-four hours, when he was ordered out by his Officer. His action was indeed a most excellent example to his comrades.*"

Sometime in July 1917, Harold Ketch went on furlough in England and was able to visit his uncle, George Ketch. Harold returned to his unit in France on August 12, 1917. Harold then took part in the second-largest Canadian military undertaking up to that point in the war, second only to Vimy. The **Attack on Hill 70 and Lens** in France (August 15-25, 1917) was the first major battle orchestrated by Canadian commander Lieutenant-General Arthur Currie and the first time German forces used flame-throwers and mustard gas against the Canadians. Known as "Canada's forgotten battle of the First World War", the Canadians were able to capture Hill 70 but not the city of Lens, at a cost of approximately 9,100 Canadians listed as killed, wounded or missing.

Three days after returning to his unit, on August 15, 1917, Lance Corporal Harold Ketch of the 24th Battalion, lost his life while fighting on the first day of the Attack on Hill 70. Harold Ketch's Circumstances of Death Register records him as; *Date of Casualty: 15-8-17. "Killed in Action". Location of Unit at time of Casualty: ATTACK NORTH OF LENS. Locations of Grave: He was buried on the roof of a bomb store between two deep Dugout Tunnels, back of Lens, between St. Elio or St. Emile and another small place. Remarks: Grave cannot be located as bomb store and dugouts have been blown up.*

In early September 1917, Mrs. Helena Dodd received the following short telegram from the Director of Records about her only son:

OTTAWA, ONT. SEPTEMBER 3

DEEPLY REGRET TO INFORM YOU 405569, LANCE CORPORAL ALBERT HAROLD WILLSIE KETCH, INFANTRY, OFFICIALLY REPORTED KILLED IN ACTION, AUGUST 15, 1917.

Only a day or two before receiving the above telegram, Helena Dodd had received a letter from Harold, dated August 12th, 1917. In it, he described how he was in England on leave visiting his cousin and uncle George, and that he was that day leaving to return to France.

In mid-September 1917, the *Sarnia Observer* included "an appreciation story" on Harold Ketch. A portion of that story read, *A brilliant journalistic and literary life has been cut short in the death of Lance-Corp. Ketch, but such nobility in sacrifice should steel the hearts of the living, to aid in crushing the satanic power of the would be oppressor of mankind whose only rule is 'might makes right' We submit this appreciation to the memory of one whom we very highly regarded.* A memorial service was held at the Methodist Church at Alvinston on September 16, 1917.

Helena Dodd later resided on Elias Street in London, Ontario. Helena passed away on May 3, 1922 at age fifty-three in London Hospital and is buried in Alvinston Cemetery. Albert Harold Ketch, 23, has no known grave. He is memorialized on the Vimy Memorial, Pas de Calais, France. Harold Ketch's name is also inscribed on the Village of Alvinston's Memorial.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 2G, 7C, 8A, 8X, 8Y, 10Z

KNIGHT, Charles Edwin (#654629)

The legacy of Charles Knight lives on today with his family. The Sarnian survived the Battle of Vimy Ridge, but died in Belgium on October 26, 1917 on the first day of fighting at the brutal Battle of Passchendaele. Charles, 23, has no known grave. He was awarded the Allied Mothers Badge and the Memorial Cross which the Canadian Government presented to his mother, Catherine "Jennie". Jennie wore the Memorial Cross for the remainder of her life, after which it was passed on to her grandson, Fred. Now, it is treasured by her great granddaughter, Jodi.

Charles Knight was born in Sarnia, on July 27, 1896, the son of William Russell, a barber, and Catherine Jean "Jennie" (nee Saunders) Knight. Thirty year-old William Knight (born April 26, 1852 in Hawkestone, Simcoe County) married twenty-two-year-old Catherine Jennie Saunders (born June 28, 1858 in Goderich) in Goderich on October 5, 1882. William and Jennie honeymooned in Kakebeka Falls, west of Thunder Bay, before returning to Goderich, where William worked as a hairdresser/barber.

Their union blessed them with nine children: Alberta Louise (born November 18, 1883, died at birth); William Ernest (born February 9, 1885); Harry Wallace (born May 26, 1887); Arthur Russell (born February 18, 1889); Oliver Saunders (born February 14, 1892, died two weeks later on March 1, 1892); James Abraham (born September 24, 1892); Jennie Mae (born January 12, 1895); Charles Edwin; and Clarence Homer (born April 30, 1899, died at 6 months on November 17, 1899). Sometime around 1892, the Knight family moved to Sarnia and resided at 158 North Brock Street. William Knight continued his career as a barber to support his large family.

Charles' older brother William also served in the war. Two months before Charles enlisted, thirty year-old **William Ernest Knight** enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force in Toronto on January 7, 1916. He stood five feet five and a half inches tall, had brown eyes and dark brown hair, was single, and was residing at 318 Jarvis Street, Toronto at the time, where he was employed as a druggist. He recorded his next-of-kin as his mother Jennie Knight of 158 Brock Street North, Sarnia. He also recorded that he had three months military experience as a Private in the Canadian Army Medical Corps (CAMC).

Arriving in England aboard the *SS Olympic* in mid-April 1916, William was initially detailed for duty to No. 1 Assistant Director of Medical Services (ADMS), and later was posted to Canadian Army Medical Corps Training Centre (CAMCTC). Almost a year later, in March 1917, William went on to serve with the CAMC on hospital ships *Letitia*, *Araguaya*, *Liverpool* and *Llandovery Castle* and made twenty-four round trips across the ocean. He made several trips on the *Llandovery Castle* except, ironically and fortunately, its last ill-fated trip in June 1918. The *Llandovery Castle* was torpedoed by a German submarine, killing two hundred thirty-four, including Private David Smuck of Sarnia (his story is included in this Project).

Prior to the last fateful voyage of the *Llandovery Castle*, William Knight had reverted to the rank of Private so that he could serve in France. On September 10, 1918, Private Knight arrived in Havre, France where he served as a stretcher-bearer with the 13th Field Ambulance. William survived the war that ended in November 1918, and in December 1918, he was admitted to No. 32 Stationary Hospital in Wimereux, France where he was diagnosed with chronic bronchitis. He received treatment in France and in England, and was invalided to Canada in mid-May 1919. On July 5, 1919, William was discharged in Toronto, declared "medically unfit for service".

Despite his hardships, William survived the war, but his younger brother, Charles, wouldn't be as fortunate. On March 20, 1916, nineteen year-old **Charles Edwin Knight** enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force in Goderich. He stood five feet two inches tall, had brown eyes and dark brown hair, was single, and was residing in Goderich at the time. He recorded his trade or calling as factory hand, and his next-of-kin as his father William R. Knight of 158 Brock Street, Sarnia. Charles became a member of the 161st Huron Battalion, Canadian Expeditionary Force. More than seven months later, on November 1, 1916, he embarked overseas bound for the United Kingdom aboard the *S.S. Lapland*. Charles Knight arrived in England on November 11, 1916, and was transferred to the Canadian Infantry, 58th Battalion, Central Ontario Regiment, stationed at Shorncliffe.

Less than three weeks after disembarking in the U.K., on November 29, 1916, Private Charles Knight of the

58th Battalion arrived in France. In the spring of 1917, the Canadian Corps made their way to an area in northern France dominated by a long hill known as Vimy Ridge. The Battle of Vimy Ridge (April 9-12, 1917) was the first time (and last time in the war) that all four divisions of the Canadian Corps, with soldiers from every region in the country, would surge forward simultaneously. Of the 97,000 Canadians who fought at Vimy Ridge, approximately 7,004 were wounded and 3,598 were killed in four days of battle. The victory at Vimy Ridge was a seminal battle, a turning point in the war for the Canadian Corps, and significant victory for Canada. Charles Knight took part in fighting and survived the Battle of Vimy Ridge in April 1917.



Private Charles Edwin Knight

Less than three months later, on July 2, 1917, Charles Knight was admitted to No. 22 General Hospital at Camiers due to inflammation of connective tissue (ICT) in his heels. He was discharged eighteen days later from No. 6 Convalescent Depot in Etaples and rejoined his unit at the front. By mid-October 1917, he was part of the Canadian Corps that arrived in an area of Flanders, Belgium known as Passchendaele.

The **Battle of Passchendaele** in Belgium (October 26 – November 10, 1917) was waged in unceasing rain on a battlefield that was a nightmarish mess of rotting, mangled corpses, gagging gas, water-filled craters and glutinous mud. Overcoming almost unimaginable hardships and horrific fighting conditions, the remarkable Canadian victory that few thought possible, came at a cost of almost 12,000 Canadian wounded and more than 4,000 Canadians killed.

On October 26, 1917, the first day of the nightmarish Battle of Passchendaele, Charles Knight was killed in action during an attack. Another Sarnian, James Millar Pirrie, also lost his life in the same battle on the same day (James Pirrie's story is included in this Project on page 345).

Medals presented after the war to Charles Knight's mother Catherine "Jennie" Knight;



Allied Mother's Badge
(International Order of Allied Mothers in Sacrifice Medal)



Memorial Cross

Charles Knight's Circumstances of Death register records him as; *Date of Casualty: 26-10-17. "Killed in Action"*. *Location of Unit at time of Casualty: ATTACK WEST OF PASSCHENDAELE*. He was awarded the Allied Mothers Badge and the Memorial Cross, which were presented to his mother, Catherine "Jennie", by the Canadian Government. She wore the Memorial Cross for the remainder of her life and passed it on to her grandson, Fred. Now, it is treasured by her great granddaughter Jodi. Charles Knight, 21, has no known grave. He is memorialized on the Menin Gate (Ypres) Memorial, Belgium, Panel 18-24-26-30.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 2G, 6O, 7C, 8A, 8X, 8Y, 10Z

KNOWLES, Thomas Neville (#226125)

Popular Point Edward resident, Thomas Neville Knowles, 24, was a candy maker in Stratford when he enlisted with the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force in 1916. Two years later, he was killed in action at the Battle of Moreuil Wood, recognized by historians as "the last great cavalry charge." Thomas has no known grave, but he is memorialized on the Vimy Memorial at Pas de Calais, France.

Thomas Knowles was born in Point Edward, on January 28, 1891, the eldest son of John (born January 25, 1864) and Hughmina "Mina" Elizabeth (nee Mooney, born August 12, 1867) Knowles. John and Mina Knowles had five children together: Sadie Armatage (born March 27, 1889); Thomas Neville; John William (born March 23, 1894); Hughmina V. (born March 26, 1897); and Bernice Winnifred (born July 13, 1903). John Knowles supported his family by working first as a GTR locomotive fireman and then as a retail shoe merchant in Sarnia. The Knowles family lived at 335 London Road and later 339 Christina Street, Sarnia.

Thomas' younger brother, **John William Knowles**, left Sarnia in October of 1915 for London, Ontario to take a course at the Military school there in preparation to enlist for active service. Both Thomas and he enlisted in the same month. Eleven months later, in September 1916, twenty-two-year-old John Knowles completed his Officers' Declaration Paper at Camp Borden and became a Lieutenant with the 149th Battalion, CEF. He stood five feet eight inches tall, had hazel eyes and black hair, was single, and recorded his next-of-kin as his father John Knowles of Sarnia. Six months after becoming a lieutenant, in late March 1917, John Knowles embarked overseas from Halifax bound for the United Kingdom aboard the *SS Lapland*. He arrived in England on April 7, 1917, and became a member of the 25th Reserve Battalion at Bramshott. In mid-February 1918, John was taken on strength into the 4th Reserve Battalion, and on April 9, 1918, Lieutenant John Knowles proceeded to France as a re-enforcement with the 1st Battalion.

Four months later, at the start of Canada's Hundred Days Campaign, on August 9, 1918 at Folies, France (near Amiens), Lt. John Knowles of the 1st Battalion was wounded in action. A bullet passed through his right hip and left leg, and another bullet passed through his left hand. He received initial treatment at No. 48 Casualty Clearing Station and then at No. 2 Stationary Hospital in Abbeville, and later at Royal Free Hospital in London. In December 1918, six months after being wounded (and one month after the Armistice), John was discharged from Granville Canadian Special Hospital in Buxton. He was transferred to Canada where he was admitted to St. Andrew's Military Hospital and later the Dominion Orthopaedic Hospital in Toronto, where he remained until June 1919. John Knowles was discharged in October 1919, struck off strength being declared medically unfit for service.

Thomas Neville Knowles spent his boyhood days in Point Edward village, and later in Sarnia, where he was a popular young man with many friends. Prior to enlisting, he was employed with the Mooney Biscuit Company of Stratford, Ontario. At age twenty-four, Thomas Knowles enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force on October 6, 1915, in Stratford, Ontario. He stood five feet eight inches tall, had brown hair and dark brown hair, was single, and was residing at 57 Church Street in Stratford at the time. He recorded his trade or calling as candy maker and his next-of-kin as his father John Knowles of 335 London Road, Sarnia. Thomas became a member of the "B" Squadron, Canadian Mounted Rifles (CMR), Depot Regiment. He embarked overseas bound for the United Kingdom on April 28, 1916 aboard the *S.S. Metagama*.

He arrived in England on May 6, 1916 and was initially posted at the Canadian Corps Depot (CCD) in Shorncliffe. On June 12, 1916, Thomas became a member of the Canadian Cavalry, Royal Canadian Dragoons Reserve Regiment (RCDRR) stationed at Shorncliffe. Four months later, on November 16, 1916, Knowles of the Royal Canadian Dragoons arrived in France.

More than nine months later, on September 1, 1917, Thomas was admitted to No. 12 Stationary Hospital in St. Pol, France due to scabies (itchy skin infestation caused by mites). He returned to his unit six days later. On September 12, 1917, he was appointed the rank of Lance Corporal. In mid-November 1917, he was granted fourteen

days leave when he was able to return to England and on December 4, Thomas rejoined his unit in France.

During part of their 1918 Spring Offensive, the Germans were able to advance until they occupied Moreuil Wood, a commanding ridge on the riverbank of the Avre River overlooking the village of Moreuil, about 20 kilometers south of Amiens, France. It was here that the Canadian Cavalry Brigade (that included Lord Strathcona's Horse, Royal Canadian Dragoons and Fort Garry Horse) was tasked with holding the Germans back. To this point in the war, mounted cavalry charges were of limited use against barbed wire, deep trenches, mechanized artillery and machine-guns. With the British fighting retreating and fluid enemy lines, the battlefield opened up, so on March 30, the Canadian Cavalry Brigade (CCB) saw their opportunity.

On March 30, 1918, Lance Corporal Thomas Knowles of the Royal Canadian Dragoons took part in the **Battle of Moreuil Wood**, France. At the one-day battle, the charge of the Canadian Cavalry Brigade at Moreuil Wood was the biggest Canadian cavalry charge of the war. Confronting the enemy head-on, the Germans found facing several hundred men and horses riding en masse, with swords drawn, a terrifying experience.

While taking part in a cavalry charge, Lance Corporal Thomas Knowles was hit by a bullet from an enemy rifle and instantly killed. His Circumstances of Death Register records him as *Date of Casualty: 30-3-18. "KILLED IN ACTION". While taking part in a Cavalry charge near the Bois de Moreuil, he was hit just below the heart and instantly killed by a bullet from an enemy rifle. Reported Locations of Grave: North West corner of Bois de Moreuil.* Thomas Knowles' remains were never recovered.

On April 18, 1918, his father, John, on London Road in Sarnia received the following telegram about his son from the Director of Records in Ottawa: SINCERELY REGRET TO INFORM YOU 226125 PRIVATE THOS. NEVILLE KNOWLES, CAVALRY, OFFICIALLY REPORTED KILLED IN ACTION MARCH 30TH 1918.

In May 1918, the *Sarnia Observer* published a review of the engagement in which two Sarnians participated—Private Thomas Knowles lost his life and Private Leonard Galloway received serious injuries. Both men were attached to the Royal Canadian Dragoons. Following is the article:

Review of Great Battle in Which Sarnia Boys Played a Big Part

The commander in chief has mentioned the splendid work of the British cavalry in the recent fighting and I am now able to write things which I wanted to write before because in the first days of this battle I saw cavalry riding out to meet the enemy round about Ham and Guiscard, and afterward on patrol work below Delville Wood and Pozieres. From March 22 onward they fought mounted and dismounted, helped to stop gaps in the line and stem the German tide, charged Germans on foot and Germans on horseback, cleared woods and roads with machine guns and rifles, rode out in patrols to reconnoiter the enemy's position, chased German advance guards out of villages and acted as rearguards to the British infantry. Their losses were not light but light for all the service they did on the hours and days and nights of grave peril.

On March 22 they dismounted and held the Ollezy-Ham line when the enemy was bearing down in vast numbers, and some dragoons fought all night, covering the withdrawal of the tired troops. They could leave only a few men to look after the horses and it was the men of a labor battalion who one night led their horses to the next position, each man with 15 horses tied together on one rope, which was not an easy job on a dark night, with poor, frightened beasts.

The British cavalry had hard fighting around Guivry, and on the 26th they moved up to help the French, who were meeting the enemy hordes bearing down on Noyon. The British squadrons had their left flank exposed when they were ordered to hold Porquericot Ridge, on which the enemy was moving. They went at full speed, pressing their horses forward to something like a gallop, and the infantry soldiers cheered at the sight of this living tide of fine men and fine beasts streaming over the slopes. The enemy was already on the ridge, but the cavalry held the southern side of it, stopping the enemy from gaining the height.

When the allied line withdrew to the Driette river it was necessary for the cavalry to conform to this movement which they did with the enemy again on their left flank, so that the Lancers, Hussars and Canadian cavalry were under furious machine gun fire. After supporting the British infantry near Marcelcave, the dismounted cavalry with one mounted squadron, made a gallant attack through Moreuil Wood and cleared out the enemy. Afterward, however, it was again filled with Germans who had many machine guns and the cavalry were again asked to clear it. It was a perilous task, for two battalions of the enemy held the wood, and their machine gun fire swept through the glades; but in this wood of Moreuil on the morning of April 1 British cavalry performed a feat as fine as the Balaklava charge, and this also should be made into a ballad and learned by heart.

Twelve hundred men who had been riding all through the night went forward in three waves and charged that dark wood next morning at a hard gallop. The first wave rode to the edge of the wood, and the second to the centre, and the third wave went right through to the other side, riding through the enemy and over his machine guns and in the face of a hail of bullets from hidden machines. They cleared the wood of Moreuil and brought back prisoners and thirteen machine guns, but there were many empty saddles, and many men and horses fell.

That was the finest exploit of the British cavalry, but elsewhere it did splendid work, and everywhere the men were gallant and cool, as when some of the dragoons came under a heavy shrapnel fire near Gentille, and many men had to shoot their wounded horses to put them out of their agony.

Despite heavy losses, over 300 casualties, the Battle at Moreuil Wood was a key Allied victory that contributed greatly to the halt of the German Spring Offensive. The charge of the Canadian Cavalry Brigade at Moreuil Wood was not the first Canadian cavalry charge in the First World War, but it was the biggest. Some historians refer to the events of this battle as “the last great cavalry charge,” as there were few other military charges on horseback after this one. Thomas Knowles, 27, has no known grave. He is memorialized on the Vimy Memorial, Pas de Calais, France. On the Sarnia cenotaph, his name is inscribed as N. Knowles.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 2G, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10Z

LECKIE, Norman Chester (#472813)

The death of Norman Chester Leckie exemplified the cruelty and brutality of the Great War. At age 26, Norman enlisted and ten months later was wounded in the Battle of the Somme on October 20, 1916. Enemy shrapnel had torn into his left hip, his lower back, and his pelvis. Despite several operations and two years of painful yet hopeful convalescence in England and in Toronto, Norman succumbed to his wounds a month before the Great War officially ended. A full military funeral in Sarnia was held in Norman’s honour before he was interred at Lakeview Cemetery.

Norman Leckie was born in Sarnia, Ontario on May 7, 1889, the youngest child of Robert (born April 23, 1850) and Margaret “Maggie” (nee McVicar, born June 4, 1854) Leckie. Robert and Margaret Leckie had four children together: Elymer Robert (born December 11, 1881); Christy Ann (born July 28, 1883); Sarah Ethel (born August 1, 1886); and Norman Chester. Robert Leckie supported his family working as a farmer in Sarnia.

In 1911, twenty-two-year-old Norman was residing in Battleford, Saskatchewan with his twenty-nine-year-old brother Elymer Leckie, Elymer’s wife Rose, and their infant daughter Freida. Rose was born about 1891 in Germany and immigrated to Canada in 1908. Brothers Norman and Elymer were farming together in Battleford in 1911.

At age twenty-six, Norman Leckie enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force on December 13, 1915 in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. He stood five feet nine and three-quarter inches tall, had blue eyes and black hair, was single, and was residing with his parents in Unity, Saskatchewan at the time. He recorded his trade or calling as farmer, and his next-of-kin as his father Robert Leckie of Unity, Saskatchewan (the address was later changed to Sarnia, Ontario). Norman became a member of the 65th Battalion, Canadian Expeditionary Force. Six months later, on June 18, 1916, he embarked overseas from Halifax bound for the United Kingdom aboard the *S.S. Empress of Britain*.

Private Leckie arrived in England on June 28, 1916, and became a member of the Canadian Infantry, 54th Battalion, Central Ontario Regiment, stationed at Bramshott. Approximately six weeks later, on August 13, 1916, Leckie departed England, crossed the English Channel and arrived the next day in Havre, France. Norman Leckie arrived one and a half months into the **Battle of Somme** – one of the bloodiest and most futile battles in history. The Somme battle lasted for more than four brutal months and saw the Allies advance around 10 kilometers. A more telling statistic is the number of injuries and deaths: of the 85,000 Canadian Corps, there were more than 24,000 Canadian casualties.

Two months after arriving in France, on October 20, 1916, Private Norman Leckie, still with the 54th Battalion, was wounded in action by shrapnel. He was struck by a number of pieces of shrapnel, in the left hip and lower back, some pieces piercing portions of his pelvis. He then walked three miles to the Dressing Station and was dressed an hour-and-a-half after being wounded. About five hours after being hit, he was operated on at the Casualty Clearing Station and “some shrapnel was removed.”

Four days after being wounded, on October 24, 1916, Norman was admitted to No. 13 General Hospital in

Boulogne, where doctors recorded he was “dangerously ill with a gun shot wound back”. He was operated on and three more shrapnel pieces were removed. Three days later, still at No. 13 General Hospital, his condition was again recorded as, “dangerously ill, not doing very well, gun shot wound back”. On November 12, 1916, he was at Hacksbury Road Military Hospital in York with “gun shot wound left buttock.” Norman was confined to bed there for two months and underwent another operation where more metal fragments were located and removed along with several small pieces of dead bone. He was able to walk on crutches at times.

On February 5, 1917, Leckie was at King’s Canadian Red Cross Convalescent Hospital at Bushy Park, Hampton Hill, Middlesex with “very deep wounds, several pieces of dead bone and foreign bodies have been discharged,” and was reported weak and anemic. On February 14, he was admitted to Moore Barracks Canadian Hospital at Shorncliffe, still recovering from his “gun shot wound left buttock”. He still had fragments of shrapnel inside his body, including in his arm and some that moved around putting pressure on his spine causing sharp pain. On March 9, he underwent another operation. Two months after that operation, on May 11, 1917, Norman was discharged, “invalided to Canada for further medical treatment”. Two days later, with a recorded “gun shot wound left leg” he sailed from Liverpool bound for Canada aboard the hospital ship *S.S. Letitia*.

When Norman returned to Canada, he was admitted to the Davisville Military Hospital in Toronto. He lay there for over a year with an open wound in the hip, with constant discharge from the wound. He underwent several more operations, including one where pieces of shrapnel were removed from his arm, and another where several small pieces of bone were removed.

On October 10, 1918 at 4:20 p.m., while still in Davisville Hospital, Norman Leckie passed away, the tragic result of the wounds that he had received two years prior. The poison and infection from the German shell that had lacerated his hip could not be stemmed by medical operations. His Circumstances of Casualty Register records him as *Davisville Military Hospital, Davisville, Ontario. Gun shot Wound left Buttock and Thigh. Admitted to hospital on May 25th, 1917, operated on for sequestrum. Three other operations for the same condition. Died at 4:20 P.M. October 10th, 1918. Lakeview Cemetery, Sarnia, Ontario.*

Norman Leckie’s body was returned to the home of his sister, Mrs. Levi Fair, who resided on the 2nd Line in Sarnia Township. His funeral with full Military Honours took place on October 13, 1918. It was one of the largest military funerals seen in the city at that time. It began with a very solemn service at the home of Norman’s sister, with his comrades as pallbearers and members of the Great War Veteran’s Association as guard of honour. The cortege then departed for the deceased’s final resting place. Accompanying the hearse in the full military funeral parade were comrades, infantry veterans, relatives, family members and friends, who travelled in a procession of automobiles and buggies, in a line over half a mile in length. The parade made its way into Sarnia, down Mitton, Davis, and Christina Streets to Exmouth Street on its way to Lakeview Cemetery.

At the cemetery, the funeral party was met by a military band, firing party and wreath bearers. After the burial, a service was read by Reverend Morrison and the band played “Nearer My God to Thee”. The firing party then took its place over the grave and fired three volleys, which was followed by the playing of the “Last Post”. When the military parade left, his parents and relatives remained to view for the last time on earth their son and brother Norman Leckie who paid the supreme sacrifice. One month after Norman Leckie’s death, the Armistice agreement was signed, ending the Great War. Parents Robert and Margaret Leckie later resided in Kitscoty, Alberta, and then Eburne, British Columbia. Norman Leckie, 29, is buried in Lakeview Cemetery, Sarnia. In November 2019, his name along with 25 others was added to the Sarnia cenotaph, engraved in stone to be remembered always.

SOURCES: C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 2G, 6O, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10Z

LITTLEFIELD, Thomas Edward (#402781)

Born in England, Thomas Littlefield immigrated to Sarnia and enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force in January 1915. Within a year and a half, he was killed in action in the Attack at Maple Copse, part of the Battle of Mont Sorrel in Belgium. Thomas, 19, has no known grave but is memorialized on the Menin Gate (Ypres) Memorial in Belgium and the Sarnia Cenotaph.

Thomas Littlefield was born in London, Middlesex, England on August 7, 1896, the son of Jane Littlefield of Rayne, Braintree, Essex, England. At some point he immigrated to Canada and resided in Sarnia.

Eighteen year-old Thomas Littlefield enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force on January 16, 1915 in Sarnia. He stood five feet nine inches tall, had hazel eyes and light hair and was single at the time. He

recorded his occupation as apprentice machinist and his next-of-kin as his widowed mother Jane Littlefield in Rayne, Essex, England. He also recorded his prior military experience with the 27th Regiment, St. Clair Borderers Militia. Thomas became a member of the 34th Battalion and seven months later, in August 1915, he embarked overseas bound for the United Kingdom as part of the Second Contingent.

He arrived in England on August 26, 1915 and was taken on strength into the 9th Battalion at Shorncliffe on the coast of Kent. He trained in England for almost five months before arriving in France in January 1916 where he became a member of the Canadian Infantry, 4th Canadian Mounted Rifles (2nd Central Ontario Regiment).

Note: Sources including the Commonwealth War Graves Commission and Veterans Affairs Canada as well as the Canadian Virtual War Memorial record Thomas Littlefield as a member of the 4th Canadian Mounted Rifles; however his Personnel Records list him as a member of the 5th Canadian Mounted Rifles.

In May 1915, the 4th Canadian Mounted Rifles (4th CMR) had been asked to volunteer for overseas service as a dismounted unit. With many regrets in abandoning the horses, the men were eager to get to the field of action and so, the following month they joined the 5th and 6th CMRs at Valcartier to form the 2nd Canadian Mounted Rifles Brigade. In mid-July 1915, the *S.S. Hesperian* carried the 4th and 5th CMRs to England, where on July 29 they continued their training at Shorncliffe. Note: The *S.S. Hesperian* was afterwards torpedoed and sunk by the Germans, while returning on her second voyage after conveying the 4th CMR to England.

Three months later, in late October 1915, the Regiment departed England and arrived in Boulogne, France. One month later, they arrived at the front lines in Flanders, Belgium. In late December 1915, with the formation of the Third Canadian Division, six regiments of Mounted Rifles were converted into four battalions of infantry, making the 1st, 2nd, 4th and 5th Battalions of the 8th Brigade.

Private Thomas Littlefield arrived in France on January 21, 1916, and approximately three weeks later, he became a member of the Canadian Infantry, 4th Canadian Mounted Rifles (2nd Central Ontario Regiment). The following are excerpts from Captain S.G. Bennett's 1926 regimental history *The 4th Canadian Mounted Rifles 1914-1919*:

The month of January 1916 had been spent doing infantry training, and by mid-March the Regiment took over the trenches in front of Zillebeke, Belgium. The trenches here were old and known as the most unpleasant of habitations. The very name of the (Ypres) Salient was a nightmare to every man who knew it. *The weather was cold and raw; it had been snowing. Added to these unpleasant conditions were the discomforts of the sodden trenches. Everyone lived a rodent life; in the daytime, nothing stirred but at night the Salient was a hive of moving troops and transports, entering in small groups to relieve and ration the men in the front line. Machine guns raked the roads, shells of all descriptions enfiladed this strategic death-trap, high explosives crashed on the pave or fell in the town of Ypres. The night was made more unreal by the flares and Verrey lights which seemed to surround the mysterious darkness. During the days in the front line, the men's lives were menaced by bombs and grenades. Dodging minnenwerfers and repairing the damage occupied many hours on duty.*

In early May 1916, the 4th CMR went into new trenches located more northerly, again in front of Zillebeke and in Sanctuary Wood. *The water-logged soil did not permit deep dugouts in this low undulating country. The trenches were built up above the surrounding ground and even then in many places the men crouched in water up to their knees. The weather was cold and wet and except for the welcome braziers, improvised from oil-drums, life would have been unbearable. Toward the end of the month the temperature suddenly became warmer, and the men, instead of being chilled to the marrow and grovelling in slime, were now sweltering in the brilliant sunshine. The weather probably more than any other thing, affected the spirits and outlook of the men; good weather enormously diminished their discomforts, though floods of sunshine did not extinguish their irresistible tendency and privilege to "grouse" at the elements.*

In mid-May, the Battalion moved from the front-line trenches toward Ypres, Belgium and beyond where they remained in Divisional Reserve for two weeks. *They had drill and bath parades and prepared themselves for their next move. Little did they know for what they were preparing.*¹⁰⁵

It was during this time that British High Command, hoping to relieve the pressure on their French Ally at Verdun, began preparations for an offensive, which developed into the famous Battle of the Somme (July 1 – November 18, 1916), one of the bloodiest and most futile battles in history.

At the end of May, the 4th CMR returned to the front lines and found themselves skirting the south-easterly

edge of Armagh Wood and holding the strategic elevation of Mount Sorrel. The 5th CMR were in support in Maple Copse and Railway Dug-Outs at Zillebeke-Bund. They both soon found themselves part of the **Battle of Mont Sorrel** in Belgium (June 2-13, 1916). Mont Sorrel was the last remaining high ground in the Ypres salient still in British hands.

The following are more excerpts from Captain S.G. Bennett's *The 4th Canadian Mounted Rifles 1914-1919*:

Daylight on June 1st disclosed clean and dry trenches which afforded the best cover and most comfort of any heretofore occupied. There were good fire-bays and many elephant-shelters with gas curtains protecting the spirit, if not the flesh. It was an unusually beautiful, clear, early-summer day except for some definite shelling on Sanctuary Wood and the appearance of several captive-balloons, there was nothing to foreshadow an impending blow.

Lieut-General Sir Julian Byng had just taken over the command of the Canadian Corps. The large concentrations of enemy troops, the amount of artillery which had been "registered" on vulnerable points for days past and the activity of the Germans building new trenches and saps were menacing, and had been worrying the Staff for some time. Visibility had been poor. Heavy mists had covered the industrious enemy for several days. Preparations against possible attack had been made... but despite an increasing vigilance no definite indications appeared as to the exact point of attack, or when it would be launched.

At sunrise on June 2, 1916, everyone was about early preparing for a visit from Divisional Commander Major-General Mercer. At about 8 a.m., the dignitaries were escorted towards the front line. *It was a calm, beautiful and noticeably quiet morning. Suddenly, without warning, from a heavenly, peaceful sky broke a deafening detonation and cloud of steel which had no precedent for weight and violence. Every conceivable type of gun, howitzer and trench-mortar around Ypres poured everything it had upon the Third Divisional front. The most extravagant imagination cannot picture such a downpour of destruction. Even those who had tasted the bitterest in modern warfare were staggered by the violence of this onslaught.*

Nothing like it had been experienced heretofore and it is doubtful if its fierceness was exceeded by any later bombardment. It continued for four-and-a-half hours. The greatest concentration was directed against the 8th Brigade, but even the trenches which were shelled the least became mere jagged scars, unfit for defence. That anyone lived through it is a miracle. Trenches were soon demolished, shelters caved in, the ground over which tall weeds and long grass had grown was ploughed, beaten and pock-marked by shells. Sanctuary Wood, Armagh Wood and Maple Copse which a few hours before were verdant woods were transformed into charred, jagged stumps.

The intense bombardment continued for five hours with no stopping. Three mines were sprung about 1 p.m. on the Battalion front. *At 1 o'clock the bombardment ceased, but only as a signal for the preparation of further violence. The ground quivered and gently heaved and then came the volcanic roar of a mine. It hurled into the air a large part of the front line and its defenders. Sandbags, wire, machine guns, bits of corrugated iron and bits of men were slung skyward. After this final eruption all was quiet, even our own guns. Immediately the German infantrymen appeared in full equipment, with large spades slung over their backs. They advanced in large numbers with an air of assurance and confidence that all resistance had been removed by their artillery.*

As soon as the bombardment commenced, all realized that this was an affair of prime importance. The men manned the fire-bays until blown out or buried under the debris; some searched for cover to save their lives for the attack they knew would follow. A few went to the "Tunnel", only to be buried or taken prisoner in the defenceless trap. A very few survived to tell what happened on that terrible morning...

... For the 4th CMR it was a day of obliteration. Only three officers out of twenty-two came back from the trenches. Seventy-three men out of 680 answered their names on June 4th... The 1st CMR on the left had an equally bad time and their casualties were almost as heavy. The 5th CMR which so nobly supported the Brigade in Maple Copse, was also cut up. Both of these Battalions lost their commanding officers.¹⁰⁸

In those first few days, the Germans gained some 300 to 700 yards along a varied front by penetrating the front line and some of the support trenches of the Brigade. They subsequently failed to consolidate their gains. Over two weeks of fighting that resulted in almost no change in the ground held by both sides, the "June Show," as the Battle of Mont Sorrel was known informally, came at a cost of 8,700+ killed, wounded or missing Canadians.

Just over four months after arriving in France, on June 2, 1916, Private Thomas Littlefield was killed in action in the area of the Ypres Salient during the attack on Maple Copse, part of the Battle of Mont Sorrel. He was originally reported as "missing between June 2 and June 3". His Circumstances of Casualty record him as

“Previously reported Missing, now Killed in Action, June 2/3, 1916, Attack at Maple Copse.” There was no record of burial.

Thomas Littlefield, 19, has no known grave. He is memorialized on the Menin Gate (Ypres) Memorial in Belgium, Panel 30 and 32. His name is also etched on one of the large Memorial plaques that were part of the original Sarnia cenotaph as having served in World War I. The plaques are now located on the outside wall of the Sarnia Canadian Legion. In November 2019, his name along with 25 others was added to the Sarnia cenotaph, engraved in stone to be remembered always.

SOURCES: C, D, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 2G, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10S, 10Z

LUMLEY, Roy Henry (#123137)

At age twenty-one, Roy Henry Lumley left his job with Cleveland Sarnia Saw Mills Company to enlist in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force on September 7, 1915. During the Battle of Vimy Ridge in the spring of 1917, Roy was wounded in action and had to be cut from barbed wire entanglements. Within days, the Sarnian, 23, passed away as a result of his wounds. He is buried in Lapugny Military Cemetery, Pas de Calais, France.

Roy Lumley was born in Wheatley, Kent, Ontario, on March 4, 1894, the son of Richard Henry (born June 1853, Egermont Twp, Grey) and Sarah Elizabeth (nee Brown, born June 1860) Lumley. Richard Lumley, a farmer at the time, married Sarah Brown on August 25, 1881 in Brooke, Lambton County. He later worked as a labourer with Cleveland-Sarnia Saw Mills Company and they lived at 254 Maria Street; at 241 Exmouth Street; and later on Water Street, Sarnia. Richard and Sarah Lumley had eight children together: William Albert (born 1880); Jida May (born March 1885); Frank (born 1888); Laura Jane (born 1892, passed away at age twelve on January 11, 1904, the result of diabetes); Roy Lumley; Maryle (born July 1896); Dewey Admiral (born December 22, 1901); and Ella (born August 18, 1906).

Prior to enlisting, Roy Lumley, like his father, was an employee of the Cleveland Sarnia Saw Mills Company in Sarnia. At age twenty-one Roy enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force on September 7, 1915 in Sarnia. He stood five feet six inches tall, had dark blue eyes and light brown hair, was single, and recorded his trade or calling as labourer, and his next-of-kin as his father Richard Lumley of Exmouth Street, Sarnia (it was later changed to Water Street, Sarnia). Roy became a member of the 70th Battalion, Canadian Expeditionary Force. Seven months later, on April 24, 1916, Roy Lumley embarked overseas from Halifax bound for the United Kingdom aboard the *S.S. Lapland*.

He arrived in Liverpool, England on May 5, 1916, where like all privates, he earned his \$30 a month pay. On July 6, 1916, he was transferred to the 39th Battalion stationed at Shorncliff and then was moved to West Sandling. On July 23, 1916, he was admitted to Moore Barracks Canadian Hospital in Shorncliffe suffering from German measles. He remained in hospital for over two weeks and was discharged on August 8, 1916. Two months later, on October 13, 1916, he was transferred to the Canadian Infantry, 21st Battalion, Eastern Ontario Regiment. The next day, Private Roy Lumley of the 21st Battalion arrived in France.

In the spring of 1917, Private Roy Lumley and his battalion along with the rest of the Canadian Corps, made their way to an area in northern France dominated by a long hill known as Vimy Ridge. The **Battle of Vimy Ridge** (April 9-12, 1917) was the first time (and last time in the war) that all four divisions of the Canadian Corps, with soldiers from every region in the country, would surge forward simultaneously. The first day of the battle, April 9, 1917, was the single bloodiest day of the entire war for the Canadian Corps and the bloodiest in all of Canadian military history. The four-day victory at Vimy Ridge was a seminal battle, a turning point in the war for the Canadian Corps, and significant victory for Canada, later referred to as “the birth of a nation”. Of the 97,000 Canadians who fought at Vimy Ridge, approximately 7,004 were wounded and 3,598 were killed in four days of battle.

It was during the Battle of Vimy Ridge that Roy Lumley was wounded in action and had to be cut from barbed wire entanglements. He was taken to No. 23 Casualty Clearing Station to be treated for his wounds. A few days later, on April 15, 1917, Roy Lumley lost his life, the result of fatal wounds he had received in action in the field at Vimy Ridge. His Circumstances of Death Register records him as; *Date of Casualty: 15-4-17. “Died of Wounds.” At No. 23 Casualty Clearing Station. Lapugny Military Cemetery, 5 miles West of Bethune, France.*

Not long after her son’s death, Sarah Lumley received a letter written by the nurse who was caring for her son the day after he had entered the hospital. At the same time, Sarah received another letter from a comrade of her son, which he had penned only the day before the young hero died. The writer apparently had been at the hospital only a short time, and on leaving, was hopeful of Roy’s recovery. The letter reads as follows:

France, April 14th, 1917

Dear Madam,

I am dropping you a few lines at your son's request as I know him quite well. I saw him after he was wounded and he was alright then, and likely he is in England by this time. He went through the hospital on the 11th and I dropped you a card at that time. I hope Madam that you will take no offence at me writing, for your son and myself were in the same battalion in London, Ont., and you don't need to worry for he is all O.K., and hopes to be alright soon. He was very cheerful when I saw him and we had quite a chat together while they were dressing his wounds. He can thank his knife for saving his life. I hope you get a letter soon from him and hope he gets well.

One of his chums, Pte. W.C. Hopwood, B.E.F. France

(Note: the reference in the letter to Roy's knife was taken by his friends to mean that it was used to cut him out of wire entanglements).

In mid-June 1917, Richard and Sarah Lumley on Exmouth Street in Sarnia received a personal letter of sympathy about their son from Honourable A.E. Kemp, Minister of Militia and Defence for Canada. Roy Lumley, 23, is buried in Lapugnoy Military Cemetery, Pas de Calais, France, Grave III.D.11.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 2G, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10Z, 2k

MAJOR, Charles Robson (#231712)

At the age of 32, Charles Robson Major enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force in July 1916. Thirteen months later, he was killed in action at the Battle of Hill 70 and Lens, the "forgotten battle of the First World War." Charles Major, 34, has no known grave and is memorialized on the Vimy Memorial, Pas de Calais, France.

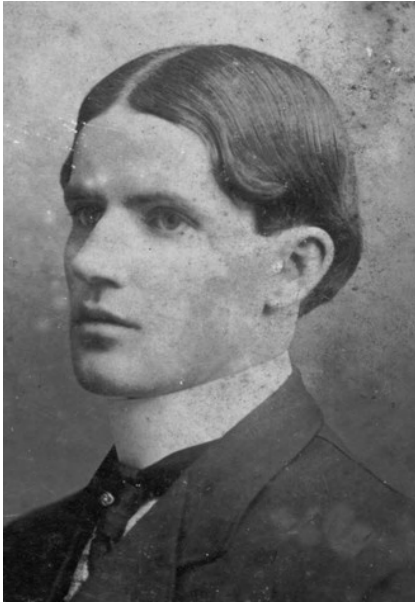
Charles Robson Major was born in Sarnia, on October 30, 1883, the eldest son of Charles Hedley (born August 1859 in Moore Township) and Catharine Alice (nee Dodds, born 1863 in Plympton Township) Major. At the age of twenty-three, Charles Hedley Major married nineteen year-old Catharine Alice Dodds on November 22, 1882 in Moore Township, Ontario. Residing at 273 Davis Street in Sarnia, Charles and Catharine Major had two children together: Charles Robson and his brother, Melvin Willis (born June 15, 1886). Charles was working as a miller when he married, and by 1891 he was employed as an engineer.

When Charles Jr. was five years old, his mother, Catharine, passed away on October 20, 1888 at the age of twenty-five. One year later, on September 9, 1889, Charles Sr. remarried in Sarnia, this time to twenty-three-year-old Chestina Jesse Moffat (born in Edinburgh Township, New York, USA). Charles and Chestina Major had three children together, half siblings for Charles Jr. and Melvin: Herbert Earl (born September 17, 1890); Grace Pearl (born January 1894); and Edna May (born March 1898). The family continued to reside at 273 Davis Street, Sarnia.

At some point, Charles Jr. moved out west. In 1906, the twenty-three-year-old was residing as a roomer in Souris District, Manitoba, and in 1916, he was residing in the town of Camrose, Victoria District, Alberta. At the age of thirty-two, he enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force on July 13, 1916 at Sarcee Camp, Calgary, Alberta. He stood five feet nine and one-quarter inches tall, had blue-grey eyes and black hair, was single, and was residing in Camrose, Alberta at the time. He recorded his trade or calling as clerk, and his next-of-kin as his father Charles Hedley Major, of 273 Davis Street, Sarnia. Charles Robson Major became a member of the 202nd (Edmonton Sportsman) Battalion, Canadian Expeditionary Force. He embarked overseas from Halifax bound for the United Kingdom on November 23, 1916 aboard the *S.S. Mauretania*.

Charles Major arrived in Liverpool, England on November 30, 1916. Approximately six months later, on May 27, 1917, Private Major was transferred to the Canadian Infantry, 31st Battalion, Alberta Regiment at Camp Witley. The next day, he arrived in France with the 31st Battalion. By mid-June 1917, Private Charles Major was at the front lines.

Two months later, in August 1917, Charles Major took part in the second-largest Canadian military undertaking up to that point in the war, second only to Vimy. The **Attack on Hill 70 and Lens** in France (August 15-25, 1917) was the first major battle orchestrated by Canadian commander Lieutenant-General Arthur Currie and the first time German forces used flame-throwers and mustard gas against the Canadians. Known as "Canada's forgotten battle of the First World War", the Canadians were able to capture Hill 70 but not the city of Lens, at a cost of approximately 9,100 Canadians listed as killed, wounded or missing.



Private Charles Robson Major



Brother Melvin Willis Major

Less than three months after arriving in France, on August 21, 1917, Charles Major lost his life in action while fighting during the Attack on Hill 70, France. His Circumstances of Death Register records him as; *Date of Casualty: 21-8-17. "KILLED IN ACTION". WEST OF LENS, France.*

On September 5, 1917, Charles Hedley Major, at 273 Davis Street in Sarnia, received the following telegram from the Director of Records in Ottawa: DEEPLY REGRET TO INFORM YOU 231712 PTE. CHARLES ROBSON MAJOR, INFANTRY, OFFICIALLY REPORTED KILLED IN ACTION AUGUST 21ST.

Charles Major Sr. passed away in Sarnia on June 19, 1919, at the age of sixty, the result of carcinoma. It was less than two years after his son's death. He is buried in Lakeview Cemetery, Sarnia. Charles Robson Major's step-mother Chestina, passed away in 1935, and is also buried in Lakeview Cemetery, Sarnia. Melvin Major, Charles' brother, married Kathleen Sheppard in July 1909. They had three daughters together, and resided at 298 George Street, Sarnia, where Melvin worked as a machinist. Melvin passed away in Sarnia in February 1942 and Melvin and his wife Kathleen are also both buried in Lakeview Cemetery, Sarnia. Thirty-four-year-old Charles Robson Major has no known grave. He is memorialized on the Vimy Memorial, Pas de Calais, France.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 2G, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10Z

MANNING, Daniel Edward Vincent (#401650)

Daniel Edward Manning was born in England but came to Canada when he was fourteen. He was part of the British Home Children, a program designed to give impoverished and orphaned children a chance for a better life in Canada. He returned to England in March 1916 as a thirty-one-year-old member of the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force.

Daniel Edward Vincent Manning was born in Marylebone, Middlesex, England, on December 25, 1883. At the age of seven, in 1891, he was residing at St. Mary's Orphanage for Boys at North Hyde Heston, Middlesex, England, a residence housing approximately one hundred orphan boys between the ages of seven and sixteen. He became a member of a group known as **British Home Children**.

Between 1869 and 1948, over 100,000 children, most between six and fifteen years of age, were sent to Canada from the British Isles during the "British Child Emigration Movement". Circumstances in Britain had resulted in their families experiencing hard times. Churches and philanthropic organizations sent these impoverished, abandoned and orphaned children to Canada in the belief that they would have a better chance for a healthy, moral life in rural Canada. Canadian families welcomed them however far too many were used as a source of cheap farm labour and domestic help.

In 1898, Daniel Manning, now 14, was sent to Canada as part of a group of approximately sixty "poor Catholic children from the Westminster Diocese" in England (the children ranged in age from three to sixteen). The

children departed Liverpool aboard the *Numidian* and arrived in Montreal on September 24, 1898. Sent by the Canadian Catholic Emigration Committee, they were taken into care by St. Marylebone Parish, first settling in St. Sulpice, L'Assomption County, Quebec. At some point, Daniel Manning ended up in Sarnia.

At age thirty-one, Daniel Manning enlisted in Sarnia in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force on August 27, 1915. He stood five feet five inches tall, had dark blue eyes and gray hair, was single, and recorded his trade or calling as clerk. He originally recorded no next-of-kin, but it was later changed to Mrs. E. Seveft, of 24 Prospect Avenue, London, Ontario. Daniel enlisted with the 70th Battalion, CEF, but by late October 1915, he was a member of the 33rd Overseas Battalion, Canadian Expeditionary Force. Daniel embarked overseas from Halifax bound for the United Kingdom on March 13, 1916 aboard the *S.S. Lapland*.

He arrived in England on March 26, 1916. Five weeks later, on May 6, 1916, he was taken on strength into the 36th Battalion, stationed at Shorncliffe. Just over two months later, on July 17, 1916, Private Daniel Manning became a member of the Canadian Infantry, 1st Battalion, Western Ontario Regiment. The next day, he arrived in France with the 1st Battalion.

Private Daniel Manning was thrust into fighting in France during the **Battle of the Somme** (July 1-November 18, 1916)--one of the most futile and bloody battles in history. The Somme battle lasted for more than four brutal months and saw the Allies advance around 10 kilometers. A more telling statistic is the number of injuries and deaths: of the 85,000 Canadian Corps, there were more than 24,000 Canadian casualties.

Less than two months after arriving in France, on the night of September 10, 1916, Private Daniel Manning was wounded by shrapnel while in action during the Battle of the Somme. He was taken to a dressing station and then to No. 21 Casualty Clearing Station, but passed away there the following day, the result of wounds received. His Circumstances of Death Register records him as; *Date of Casualty: 11-9-16. "DIED OF WOUNDS". Was wounded by shrapnel in the stomach while on a working party on the night of September 10th, 1916. He was taken to a dressing station, from there evacuated to No. 21 South Midland Casualty Clearing Station where he died the following day. Warloy-Baillon Communal Cemetery Extension, 5 miles West of Albert, France.* Daniel Manning, 32, is buried in Warloy-Baillon Communal Cemetery Extension, Somme, France, Grave VI.A.10. In November 2019, his name along with 25 others was added to the Sarnia cenotaph, engraved in stone to be remembered always. SOURCES: C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 2G, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10Z

MANNING, Herbert John (G/9457)

Herbert John Manning was part of a truly patriotic family. Herbert's mother Marion had five brothers and thirteen brothers-in-law who served in the Great War. Harry Manning, the father of the family, along with four of his sons served in the War. Of Harry and his four sons who went to war, only Herbert made the supreme sacrifice.

Herbert John Manning was born in Colchester, Essex, England in January of 1891, the eldest son of Harry Samuel and Marion Manning. Marion (also spelled Mary Ann in early records) went by two maiden names: Marion Mayes – her mother's surname, and Marion Graves – her father's surname. Harry Manning was born in Barrow Green, Suffolk, England on December 9, 1868. In 1881, at the age of fourteen, Harry Manning was working as a farm labourer, alongside his sixteen year-old brother Albert and their father (Michael Manning) in Norfolk, England. Marion Mayes/Graves was born in Thurston, Norfolk, England in 1867. In 1881, at the age of fifteen, Marion Graves was working as a servant under a nurse in Surrey, England.

Harry Manning and Marion Mayes/Graves were married in 1890 in England and they had ten children together: Susanna Graves (born January 1886); Herbert John (born January 1891); William (born 1892); Cecil Francis (born April 8, 1893 or 94); Evelyn Sarah (born 1896, later married George Frederick Ferris, a soldier, on February 12, 1918 in Sarnia and would reside in Point Edward); Harry Frederick (born February 18, 1897 or 98); Alfred George (born August 21, 1899 or 1900 and later married Eva Butler on December 2, 1920 in Sarnia and would reside in Point Edward); Frederick Charles (born 1903, later married Beatrice Maude Herendeen on January 19, 1924 in Sarnia); Gladys Bertha (born 1907); and Frank (born 1909). Note: For a few of the birth years above, official Census records indicate different birth years.

In 1891, residing in Colchester, Harry Manning was a soldier with the British Army, Norfolk Regiment, and Marion Manning was employed as a tailoress, while raising two young children at the time: Susannah (age five) and Herbert (age three months). Ten years later, in 1901, the Manning family was residing in Greenwich, London, England – the household included parents Harry (a general labourer) and Marion, and their four boys: Herbert (age

ten), Cecil (age seven), Harry Jr. (age three) and Alfred (age seven months). In 1911, the Manning family was residing in Croydon, London, England and included parents Harry (general labourer) and Marion, and their children: Cecil (age seventeen, a painter), Evelyn (age fifteen), Harry Jr. (age thirteen), Alfred (age ten), Frederick (age eight), and Gladys (age four). In 1914, Harry and Marion Manning and several of their children---Frederick Charles, Gladys, Alfred George and Frank--emigrated from England to Canada. They ended up living in Point Edward, Ontario.

Marion Manning had five brothers, and thirteen brothers-in-law who served in the Great War (two of whom were killed in action). Marion also had a cousin who lost both legs and arms in the war. Showing her patriotism, she was quoted as saying, "I would enlist myself if I could." Harry Manning, along with four of his sons--Cecil Francis, Harry Frederick Jr., Alfred George and Herbert John--all served in the Great War. Harry and sons Cecil, Harry Jr. and Alfred all enlisted with in the Canadian Expeditionary Force, while Herbert John Manning enlisted in the British Forces.

Herbert's father **Harry Samuel Manning** had seen twelve years of service in the British Army, Norfolk Regiment while residing in England. On December 27, 1915, forty-seven-year-old Harry Manning enlisted in Sarnia in the Canadian Expeditionary Force, Lambton 149th Battalion. At the time, three of his sons--Cecil, Harry Jr. and Herbert--had already enlisted and were serving overseas. His fourth son enlisted one week after he did.

Harry recorded his birthdate as December 9, 1873, making himself five years younger than he was (so recruiters believed he was forty-two years old). He stood five feet seven inches tall, had hazel eyes and dark brown hair, and recorded his occupation as labourer, and his next-of-kin as his wife Marion, living in Point Edward (Victoria Avenue), Ontario. He advanced in rank from Private, to Lance Corporal, to Corporal and then Sergeant in mid-June 1916. Nine months later, he was transferred to No. 1 Special Service Company (S.S. Co.), CEF in mid-March 1917. All of his service was completed in London, Ontario. He was unable to go to France on account of his age. In January 1918, his services with S.S. Co. were no longer required. Sergeant Harry Manning, then recorded as forty-nine years old, was discharged on January 7, 1918 in London, Ontario.

The first Manning son to enlist was **Cecil Francis Manning**. The twenty-one-year-old Cecil enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force on August 1914 in Watford. He was a farmer and had been employed (by Mr. W.H. Kenny) as a chauffeur in the city. Cecil enlisted again on September 22, 1914 in Valcartier, Quebec, becoming a member of the 1st Battalion, CEF. He stood five feet six inches tall, had blue eyes and light brown hair, was single, and recorded his occupation as painter, and his next-of-kin as his mother Marion Manning of R.R. #5, Kingscourt, Watford, Ontario. [Note: Cecil recorded his birth year as 1892; however census records list it as 1893 and 1894]. In early October 1914, Cecil embarked overseas bound for England aboard the *SS Laurentic*. In January 1915, Cecil was promoted to the rank of Lance Corporal, and three months later in France, in April 1915, he was promoted in the field to the rank of Corporal.

In early April 1915, the 1st Division of Canadians arrived at the Ypres salient battlefield in Belgium, an area known as Flanders. It would be here that the Canadians engaged in their first battle of the war, the Second Battle of Ypres, their baptism by fire. On April 24, 1915, Cecil Manning was gassed at St. Julian. Approximately seven weeks later, on June 15, 1915, Corporal Cecil Manning was wounded in action at Givenchy, France. He was injured by shrapnel in the left foot and was buried by a shell explosion. His disability was recorded as "gunshot wound, left foot, severe and neurasthenia". Cecil was in Boulogne Hospital for two days, then No. 8 Stationary Hospital, Wimereux, and then Red Cross Hospital at Broughty Ferry for three weeks, before he was transferred to Canadian Convalescent Hospital, Monks Horton in Kent where he remained for six weeks. He then reported to Dibatgate Camp where he was assigned light duty. In late September 1915, Cecil was transferred to the 36th Battalion at West Sandling, and in late October 1915, he was recommended for Home Service in Canada. Corporal Cecil Manning was discharged on June 10, 1916 in London, Ontario, declared medically unfit for service. After his discharge, Cecil returned to reside in Brixton, London, England.

Another one of Herbert's younger brothers, **Harry Frederick Manning Jr.**, enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force on August 16, 1915 in Watford, becoming a member of the 34th Battalion, CEF. The eighteen year-old stood five feet seven inches tall, had light brown eyes and dark brown hair, was single, and recorded his occupation as farm labourer and his next-of-kin as his father Harry Manning, of R.R. #5, Kingscourt (Watford), Ontario. [Note: Harry Jr. recorded his birth year as 1897, however census records list it as 1897 and 1898]. On October 23, 1915, Harry Jr. embarked overseas bound for England aboard the *S.S. California*. Seven months later, on May 26, 1916, Private Harry Manning Jr. arrived in France as a member of the 2nd Battalion, Canadian Infantry and was then transferred to the 7th Battalion.

One month later, on July 25, 1916 at Ypres, Harry Manning Jr. was blown up by a mine explosion and was buried, causing shock and an injury ("contusion") on his right knee. He was taken to a field dressing station where his knee was bandaged and was then sent through a casualty clearing station to No. 14 General Hospital where his treatment included "hot fomentations". On July 29, 1916, he was sent back to England and admitted to Bagthorpe Military Hospital, Nottingham, as a result of his right knee contusion. He remained there for almost three months, until October 12, 1916, and was then transferred to the King's Canadian Red Cross Convalescent Hospital, Hampton Hill, where he remained for almost a month. He was finally discharged on November 9, 1916. Harry Jr. was then sent to the Canadian Record Office in London, England where he was assigned light duty. In July 1918, the military granted him permission to marry his wife Florence, who lived in Dartmouth Park Hill, Highgate in London, England. Harry Jr. arrived back in Canada in November 1918. He was discharged from service, declared medically unfit, on December 24, 1918 in London, Ontario. Harry Manning Jr. and his wife Florence Manning lived at Victoria Avenue, Point Edward.

Another one of Herbert's younger brothers **Alfred George Manning**, enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force on January 3, 1916 in Sarnia, becoming a member of the 149th Battalion, CEF. He stood five feet one inch tall, had dark blue eyes and brown hair, was single, and recorded his address as Sarnia, his occupation as labourer and his next-of-kin as his mother Marion Manning, of 4 Grand Trunk House, Point Edward, Ontario. Alfred recorded his birthdate as August 21, 1897, when in fact it was August 21, 1899 or 1900, making himself at least two years older than he actually was. Recruiters thought he was 18 years old when he was actually 16 ½ years old. [Note: Alfred Manning recorded his birth year as 1897, however Census records list it as 1899 and 1900]. Private Alfred Manning served with the 149th Battalion until early March 1917. It was then that the Medical Officer recorded that Alfred Manning was underage ("was 17 on August 21st, 1916") and that he had flat feet, though it was recorded that Alfred, "has taken in all route marches and feet have caused no trouble. Some marches were fifteen to twenty miles long. Has reported sick three times in fourteen months service for minor disabilities."

Four months later, on July 26, 1917, Alfred Manning was transferred to the Special Service Company, Class "A". One year later, in early August 1917, he was again recorded as underage ("will be 18 on August 21st 1917"), and as having "flat feet", which were "painful on route marches of five miles or more or when standing in one position any length of time." Approximately two months later, on October 25, 1917, the eighteen year-old Private Alfred Manning arrived in England as a member of the Canadian Forestry Corps. He served there for the duration of the war and returned to Canada in late March 1919. Alfred Manning was discharged as "medically unfit" in April 1919.

Eldest son **Herbert John Manning** (born in Colchester, Essex, England in January of 1891) enlisted at the age of twenty-four with the British Forces in Battersea, Surrey, England in 1915. Herbert became a Sergeant with the Queen's (Royal West Surrey) Regiment, 10th Battalion, Regimental Number G/9457. In early May 1916, the Queen's Regiment, 10th Battalion (Battersea) landed in Havre, France and was engaged in various actions on the Western Front until the end of the war. This included the 1916 Battles of Flers-Courcelette and Transloy Ridges; the 1917 Battles of Messines, Pilkem Ridge, Menin Road and some time on the Italian Front; and the 1918 Battles of St. Quentin, Bapaume, Arras, Lys, Ypres and Courtrai.

Herbert Manning spent two years in the trenches before losing his life on March 27, 1918, during fighting near Arras, France. In early May of 1918, Herbert's mother Marion in Point Edward received a cablegram advising her that her son had fallen while in action.

Herbert John Manning was the only one of the family of five Mannings fighting in the Great War to pay the supreme sacrifice. Their patriotism was outstanding. Herbert John Manning, 27, is memorialized on the Arras Memorial, Bay 2, Pas de Calais, France. Herbert's parents, Marion Graves Manning (passed away in September 1938) and Harry Samuel Manning (passed away in 1955) are both buried in Lakeview Cemetery in Sarnia. SOURCES: A, B, C, F, N, 2D, 2G, 8X, 10Z

McDONALD, Albert Alexander (#3131667)

For Mary McDonald, the loss of her son had to have been particularly devastating. Four years prior to the start of the war, she lost her husband of twenty years. In the final year of the war, her son Albert, was drafted for military service. While fighting in the Hundred Days Campaign, in the closing months of the war, Albert McDonald was killed in action by enemy shrapnel. Albert was Mary's only son.

Albert McDonald was born in Bosanquet, Lambton County, Ontario, on January 5, 1894, the only son of

Alexander (born 1861, a farmer) and Mary (nee Perkins, born June 15, 1873) McDonald. In April 1890, twenty-nine-year-old Alexander McDonald (a labourer at the time, the son of James and Sarah McDonald) married eighteen year-old Mary Perkins (the eldest daughter of Albert and Margaret Perkins) in Petrolia. Alexander and Mary McDonald resided in Courtright for a time, and later 216 Essex Street, and then 237 Bright Street, Sarnia. They had three children together: son Albert, and daughters Edna Mary (born 1895, married Howard Thomas Chambers on November 5, 1913 in Sarnia), and Sarah Jane (born 1898, married Howard Stubbs on January 20, 1920 in Sarnia). When Albert was sixteen years old, he lost his father Alexander, who died in 1910 at the age of forty-nine.

Prior to his service, Albert McDonald was employed for two years in the butcher shop of W.J. Laughlin, North Front Street. In Europe, with the Canadian troops thinning at an alarming rate and no end to the war in sight, the government instituted the Military Service Act in 1917. At the age of twenty-four, Albert was drafted under the Military Service Act of 1917, Class One. He underwent his medical examination in Sarnia on October 29, 1917 and was called to service on January 9, 1918, reporting to the 1st Depot Battalion, Western Ontario Regiment in London, Ontario. He stood five feet eight and a half inches tall, had blue eyes and brown hair, was single and lived at 121 Collingwood Street, Sarnia at the time. He recorded his trade or calling as butcher, and his next-of-kin as his mother Mary McDonald, living in Courtright, Ontario. Albert embarked overseas bound for the United Kingdom on February 5, 1918 aboard the *S.S. Grampian*.



Private Albert Alexander McDonald

Albert arrived in England on February 16, 1918, and became a member of the 4th Reserve, stationed at Bramshott. Approximately three and a half months later, on June 1, 1918, he became a member of the Canadian Infantry, 18th Battalion, Western Ontario Regiment, with the rank of Private. He arrived in France soon after and within two months found himself part of Canada's Hundred Days Campaign.

The **Hundred Days Campaign** (August 8 – November 11, 1918 in France and Belgium) was the “beginning of the end” of the Great War. Canadians were called on again and again over the three-month period to lead the offensives against the toughest German defences. The series of victories repeatedly drove the Germans back, culminating in Germany's unconditional surrender on November 11, but it came at a cost of almost 46,000 Canadians killed, wounded and missing.

The first offensive in the Campaign was the Battle of Amiens (August 8-14, 1918), a truly all-arms battle, one that all four Canadian divisions would be involved in. Over the course of one week, in a battle that British Field Marshal Douglas Haig called “*the finest operation of the war*”, the Canadians would advance nearly 14 km.

The second offensive in Canada's Hundred Days Campaign was the **Battle of Arras and Breaking the DQ Line** in France (August 26-September 3, 1918), where Canadians were part of a spearhead force tasked with crashing one of the most heavily fortified positions, the Hindenburg Line, a series of strong defensive trenches and fortified villages. General Sir Julian Byng called the Canadian victory at the 2nd Battle of Arras and breaking of the DQ Line “*the turning point of the campaign*”, but it came at a cost of 11,400 Canadian casualties.

Less than three months after joining the 18th Battalion, on August 28, 1918, Private Albert McDonald was killed in action by enemy shrapnel while fighting in the 2nd Battle of Arras. Several weeks later, in mid-September of 1918, Albert's mother, Mary on Essex Street in Sarnia, received a telegram informing her that her son, PTE. ALBERT MCDONALD HAD BEEN KILLED IN ACTION ON AUGUST 28TH. Albert McDonald's Circumstances of Death Register records him as: *Date of Casualty: 28-8-18. "KILLED IN ACTION". Was hit in the body by shrapnel and killed, during military operations near Vis-en-Artois in front of Arras. Vis-en-Artois British Cemetery, France.*

Albert McDonald, 24, is buried in Vis-En-Artois British Cemetery, Haucourt, Pas de Calais, France, Grave I.B.33. On his headstone are inscribed the words, FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH. In Pinehill United Cemetery in Thedford, there is a headstone that marks the graves of Albert's parents Alexander and Mary McDonald. Inscribed on the headstone are the words, McDONALD ALEXANDER 1861-1910 HIS WIFE MARY PERKINS 1872-1940 PTE ALBERT A. 1894-1918.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 2G, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10Z

McGIBBON, David Hegler (#152600)

Before the war started, David's mother Agnes McGibbon was already a widow and was raising three teenagers on her own. When war came, her two sons that were old enough to fight did just that. Her middle son, David, became a member of the Royal Flying Corps that at the time was a new and highly dangerous endeavor. Two months after arriving in England, David McGibbon lost his life in a flying accident.

David Hegler McGibbon was born in Sarnia, on November 4, 1897, the middle son of David Christie and Agnes Ada (nee Ferguson) McGibbon. Twenty-nine-year-old David Christie McGibbon (born July 26, 1865 in Halton County, Ontario) married twenty-four-year-old Agnes Ferguson (born October 20, 1871 in Ingersol, Ontario) on June 20, 1894 in Ingersol. David was a lumber merchant, like his father, residing in Sarnia at the time of his marriage. David Sr. and Agnes McGibbon had three children together, all boys: Finlay Ferguson (born June 22, 1895); David Hegler; and Kenneth Charles (born December 22, 1901). The McGibbon family lived at 366 Christina Street in Sarnia. At the age of twelve, David lost his father David McGibbon Sr., who passed away in Guelph on August 15, 1910 at the age of forty-five.

David's older brother **Finlay Ferguson McGibbon** also served in the war. The twenty-one-year-old Finlay McGibbon enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force on May 1, 1916 in Toronto, becoming a member of the 92nd Battalion. He stood five feet six and a half inches tall, had blue eyes and fair hair, was single, and lived in Sarnia with his widowed mother and his two brothers. Finlay recorded his trade or calling as advertisement writer, and his next-of-kin as his mother Mrs. D.C. McGibbon at 363 Christina Street, North, Sarnia (later changed to 366 Christina St.). He also recorded that he was a member of the Active Militia, 27th Regiment. On May 20, 1916, Private Finlay McGibbon embarked overseas aboard the *SS Empress of Britain*. He arrived in England nine days later.

Three months later, on August 27, 1916, Finlay McGibbon departed England bound for France, a Sergeant with the 15th Battalion, Canadian Infantry. He was soon part of the Battle of the Somme (July 1-November 18, 1916), one of the bloodiest and most futile battles in history. Just over two months after arriving, in early November 1916, Finlay was evacuated to a field ambulance suffering from influenza and a sprained back. By the end of that month, he was returned to England, and was finally discharged from hospital in April 1917. Finlay served the remainder of the war in England. He returned to Canada and was discharged in July 1919. Six years later, on June 25, 1925, Finlay McGibbon (an insurance broker) married Catharine Eliza Langdon (a graduate nurse) in Toronto.

In mid-1917, one year after his older brother Finlay had enlisted, nineteen year-old **David Hegler McGibbon** enlisted. David McGibbon became a member of the Air Force, Royal Flying Corps, 42nd Training Squadron, with the rank of 2nd Lieutenant.

Flying, still in its infancy, was extremely dangerous. The wooden-framed planes were flimsy and equipping the light aircraft with heavy weaponry was problematic. The demands of war meant that pilot training was often cursory. Many recruits had only a few hours of instruction before being expected to fly solo; consequently, more pilots died from accidents and mechanical failure than from enemy fire. By war's end, almost a quarter of all British flyers were Canadian. Of 6,166 British Empire air service fatalities, 1,388 were Canadian. An additional 1,130 Canadians were wounded or injured, and 377 became prisoners of war or were interned.

Only in England for about two months, on September 15, 1918, David McGibbon lost his life in a flying accident. In late September 1918, the sad news of Flight Lieutenant David McGibbon's death was received in Sarnia via two telegrams: one from the Secretary of Air Ministry, London, England; the other from Major James G. Merrison. Besides expressions of sympathy, the messages contained very little information beyond the fact that David had been killed in an airplane accident on September 15th.

David Hegler McGibbon, 20, was buried on September 22, 1918 in St. Gregory and St. Martin Churchyard, Wye, Kent, United Kingdom, Grave 125. On his gravestone are inscribed the words, IN LOVING MEMORY OF 2ND LIEUT. D.H. McGIBBON, R.A.F. SARNIA, CANADA. KILLED IN A FLYING ACCIDENT SEPT 15TH 1918. AGED 20 YEARS & 10 MONTHS. Both of David's parents, David Christie McGibbon (passed away in 1910), and Agnes Ada McGibbon (passed away in 1940), are buried in Lakeview Cemetery, Sarnia. On the Sarnia cenotaph, David Hegler McGibbon's name is inscribed as H. Mc Gibbon. SOURCES: A, B, C, D, L, N, 2D, 2G, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10Z

McINTOSH, Andrew (#124472)

Andrew McIntosh, at age thirty-two, was a railroad conductor in Sarnia when he decided to serve his country. Ten months later, in one of the most horrific battles in all of history, he was killed instantly during an attack when he was struck by an enemy shell. His body was never recovered and he is memorialized on the Vimy Memorial.

Andrew McIntosh was born in London, Ontario, on September 30, 1883, the son of Andrew McIntosh Sr. (born June 1855 in Melrose, Scotland) and Sophie McLarren (nee McPhee, born April 1858 in Inverness, Scotland) McIntosh. At some point, both Andrew McIntosh Sr. (as a child) and Sophie McPhee immigrated to Canada. In 1861, five year-old Andrew McIntosh Sr. was living in Goderich with his family, while Sophia McPhee was residing in Scotland.

On October 22, 1879, twenty-four-year-old Andrew McIntosh (Sr.) married twenty year-old Sophia McPhee in Hamilton, Ontario. At the time, Andrew was employed as a baggageman in Hamilton, and Sophia was residing in London, Ontario. In 1881, Andrew (Sr.) and Sophia, and their two young children at the time, were living in London, Ontario where Andrew was employed as a brakeman. Andrew Sr. and Sophia McIntosh had seven children together: Maggie (born February 15, 1879); Thomas (born January 1880); Andrew Jr.; Mary (born February 1885); Isabelle (born February 15, 1887); Raymond (born 1890); and Alexander (born January 3, 1893). When Andrew McIntosh Jr. was seventeen years old, he lost his father Andrew Sr., who passed away in December 1900 at the age of forty-five. By 1901, widowed Sophia McIntosh and her children had moved to Toronto.

Thirty-two-year-old Andrew McIntosh enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force on November 16, 1915 in Sarnia. He stood five feet eight inches tall, had blue eyes and brown hair, was single, and lived in Sarnia at the time. He recorded his trade or calling as R.R. conductor, and his next-of-kin as his mother Sophia McIntosh, residing at 79 Ryerson Avenue, later changed to 224 Spadina Avenue, Toronto. Andrew became a member of the 70th Battalion, Canadian Expeditionary Force.

Andrew McIntosh embarked overseas from Halifax bound for the United Kingdom on April 24, 1916 aboard the *S.S. Lapland*. He arrived in England on May 5, 1916. Approximately six weeks later, on June 18, 1916, Andrew became a member of the Canadian Infantry, Central Ontario Regiment, 58th Battalion, with the rank of Private. The next day, he arrived in France with the 58th Battalion.

Within weeks, Andrew McIntosh found himself fighting in the **Battle of the Somme** in France (July 1-November 18, 1916)--one of the most futile and bloody battles in history. The Somme battle lasted for more than four brutal months and saw the Allies advance around 10 kilometers. A more telling statistic is the number of injuries and deaths: of the 85,000 Canadian Corps, there were more than 24,000 Canadian casualties.

The second major offensive of the Somme battle was the week-long **Battle of Flers-Courcelette** (September 15-22). It was here where tanks made their first appearance in the war. The Battle was a stunning success for the Canadians, but it came at a cost of over 7,200 casualties. It was during this second major offensive of the Somme battle where Andrew McIntosh was killed in action.

Three months after arriving in France, on September 17, 1916, Private Andrew McIntosh was killed by an enemy shell during an attack in the Battle of Flers-Courcelette. His Circumstances of Death Register records him as; *Date of Casualty: 17-9-16. "KILLED IN ACTION". While taking part in an attack at Courcelette, he was instantly*

killed in the early morning of September 17th, 1916, by the explosion of a heavy caliber shell. No record of burial.
Andrew McIntosh, 32, has no known grave. He is memorialized on the Vimy Memorial, Pas de Calais, France.
SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 2G, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10Z

McKENZIE, Walter Wake

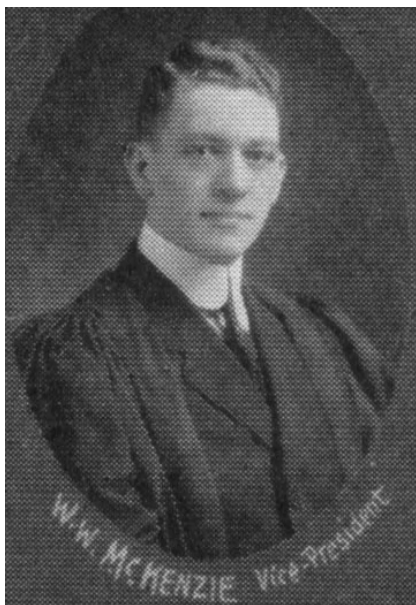
Walter McKenzie's parents were no doubt proud to see their only son go off to war but also somewhat uneasy. Walter at age 24, was a young doctor with a bright future ahead of him when he decided to serve his country. Nine months after arriving in England, he succumbed to illness there, the result of a serious brain disorder.

Walter Wake McKenzie was born in Point Edward, Ontario, on April 28, 1891, the only son of Thomas and Alice Emily (nee Wake) McKenzie. On June 20, 1888, Thomas McKenzie (born May 23, 1860 in Ireland, had immigrated to Canada in 1863) married Alice Wake (born October 4, 1867 in Point Edward) in Point Edward, Ontario. Thomas was employed as a fireman when he married, and later worked as a GTR engineer and a bursar at the Mercer Reformatory. Thomas and Alice McKenzie had two children together: Walter Wake and Frances Alice (born February 18, 1896 in Point Edward). Originally residing in Point Edward (in 1891) and then Sarnia (in 1901), the McKenzie family moved to Toronto in 1911.

Walter McKenzie received his early education in Sarnia public schools, and then attended Parkdale Collegiate, Toronto, and then University of Toronto Medicine (1909-14), becoming a physician. After graduating, Walter was on the medical staff of the Hamilton Insane Asylum for a year, becoming Vice President, Medical Society Staff, of the Hamilton Asylum.

Twenty-four-year-old Walter McKenzie enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force on September 8, 1915 in Niagara, Ontario. He stood six feet two inches tall, had blue eyes and fair hair, and was single at the time. He recorded his trade or calling as physician, and his next-of-kin as his mother Mrs. Thomas McKenzie, living at 66 Melbourne Avenue, Toronto. Two months later, in November 1915, Doctor Walter McKenzie was promoted to Captain and Medical Officer of the 83rd Overseas Battalion, Canadian Expeditionary Force. Six months later, on April 1, 1916, he completed his Officers' Declaration Paper and was declared medically fit at Riverdale Barracks in Toronto. Captain Walter McKenzie of the 83rd Battalion, Canadian Army Medical Corps (CAMC) embarked overseas from Halifax bound for the United Kingdom on April 28, 1916 aboard the *S.S. Olympic*. He arrived in Liverpool, England on May 7, 1916.

In July 1916, Captain Walter McKenzie was attached to the 12th Battalion at West Sandling. Two months later, in mid-September 1916, after suffering a fainting attack, Walter spent eight days as a patient in the Shorncliffe Hospital with stomach trouble--gastritis. On October 10, 1916, he was transferred to the CAMC Training School (attached to the 83rd Battalion), at Shorncliffe Military Hospital. Two months later, in mid-December 1916, he spent nine days as a patient at Westcliff Eye and Ear Hospital in Folkestone due to tonsillitis.



Walter McKenzie, Univ. of Toronto yearbook



Captain Walter Wake McKenzie

In letters home to his parents, even in mid-January 1917, Walter said that he was doing well. In late January, the Director of the Shorncliffe Hospital cabled that Captain Walter McKenzie had taken seriously ill. In late January 1917, he was declared “permanently unfit for general service but fit for home service”. On February 17, 1917, he was admitted to the Shorncliffe Military Hospital recorded as “seriously ill--epilepsy”. Two days later, at approximately 12:30 p.m. on February 19, 1917, Walter McKenzie succumbed to the disease recorded as “cerebrospinal meningitis” at Helena Officers Hospital, Shorncliffe. Captain Walter McKenzie’s death was officially recorded as; *Date of Death: 19-2-17. Died. (Epilepsy) Helena Officers Hospital, Shorncliffe.*

Walter McKenzie, 25, is buried in Shorncliffe Military Cemetery, Kent, United Kingdom, Grave M.506. On his headstone are inscribed the words, HIS NAME LIVETH FOREVER. In Westminster Memorial Park in Toronto, a memorial marker indicates the location of Walter McKenzie’s parents’ graves. Inscribed on it are the words, MCKENZIE IN LOVING MEMORY OF THOMAS MCKENZIE MAY 23, 1860-NOV. 4, 1931 ALICE EMILY WAKE OCT. 4, 1867-APR. 1, 1955 WALTER WAKE MCKENZIE M.B. APRIL 28, 1891-FEB. 19, 1917 GONE BUT NOT FORGOTTEN.

SOURCES: C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 2G, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10Z

McMULLIN, Leonard Calvin (#844831)

Leonard McMullin’s mother Irene, like thousands of Canadian parents who suffered, was forced to grieve without closure, the body of her teenaged son lying in an overseas grave she could never afford to visit. A single mom, her only son had been killed in the trenches of France in May 1918.

Immediately after the Great War ended Sarnians were debating how the city should honour its fallen soldiers. There were a number of different proposals including that of a more traditional monument--the proposal that Irene McMullin preferred. Late in November 1918 she penned a heartfelt letter to the editor of the *Canadian (Sarnia) Observer*. The powerful words of a grieving mother no doubt resonated with others. Three years after the end of the Great War, the Sarnia Cenotaph Memorial was unveiled.

Leonard Calvin McMullin was born in Bradshaw, Lambton County, Ontario, on November 28, 1898, the only son of William Claude (born April 1869) and Irene (nee Tiderington) McMullin. In 1881, both twelve year-old William McMullin and eleven year-old Irene Tiderington were residing in Bothwell, Ontario. On May 4, 1896, twenty-seven-year-old William McMullin married twenty-five-year-old Irene Tiderington in Wallaceburg, Ontario. Irene (born July 29, 1870 in Cayuga, Ontario) was the daughter of Archibald Tiderington (born September 1836 in Ontario, a blacksmith and later a farmer) and Elizabeth Tiderington (born May 1842 in Scotland).

William and Irene McMullin had only one child together, Leonard Calvin. Ontario Birth Records record Leonard’s middle name as Claude (and his father’s middle name as Claude). However, in all of Leonard’s military records, including his Attestation Papers and his own signature, Leonard recorded his middle name as Calvin. In 1901, Leonard’s father William was residing as a boarder in Chatham, employed as a carpenter, while Irene and Leonard were residing in Sombra with Irene’s parents Archibald and Elizabeth Tiderington. In 1914, Leonard’s parents William and Irene divorced. Irene McMullin would live at 418 South Vidal Street, and later 466 Davis Street, Sarnia.

Growing up in Sarnia, Leonard was an all-round athlete, a great reader and musician and a popular member and willing worker with Devine St. Methodist Church. At age seventeen, Leonard McMullin enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force on February 4, 1916 in Sarnia. He stood six feet tall, had blue eyes and light brown hair, was single and lived on South Vidal Street with his divorced mother at the time. He recorded his trade or calling as labourer, and his next-of-kin as his mother Irene McMullin of 418 South Vidal Street, Sarnia. Leonard became a member of the 149th Battalion, Canadian Expeditionary Force with the rank of Private. Ten months later, on October 20, 1916, Leonard entered the military hospital in London where he spent forty-one days recovering from scarlet fever.

On March 28, 1917, Leonard embarked overseas from Halifax bound for the United Kingdom aboard the *SS Lapland*. Arriving in Liverpool, England on April 7, 1917, he moved to Bramshott Segregation Camp, and was then transferred to the 25th Reserve Battalion. Shortly after his arrival in England, Leonard wrote a letter to his mother Irene in Sarnia. Following is a portion of that letter:

Dearest Mama,

Just a line to let you know we arrived safe. We got into Liverpool about three...our ship had struck a mine in the bay outside the city and had a big hole put in the boat, but we got to the dock O.K. We started on the train

(some jittery it is, too) about an hour ago and I expect we will go to Bramshott. One fellow from the 244th Battalion, from Montreal was drowned and two hurt when the boat struck. It knocked me out of my bunk. We arrived at Bramshott Camp this afternoon at 4 p.m. and are quarantined for ten days so as to be sure that no disease is brought over 'ome from dear old Canada. A man of the 198th Buffs (I have their badge) fell down a hatch of one of the fleet of boats at Halifax and was killed. It is also said that 4 men have died from shock and hurts when the Lapland struck that mine.

The 186th Battalion arrived a little while ago, also the 246th Scots from Halifax, (I also have their badge) and we are all together. We are in tents, but after our ten days (C.B. the boys call it) we will be moved into huts across the road. This place is very much like Camp Borden. You might send me a cake and a pair of woolen mitts: the leather ones are cold.

Your boy, Leonard



Private Leonard C. McMullin

Seven months after arriving in England, on November 17, 1917, Leonard was transferred to the 4th Canadian Reserve Battalion at Bramshott. Four days later, on November 21, he arrived in France, initially posted to the 1st Battalion. Two weeks later, he became a member of the Canadian Infantry, Western Ontario Regiment, 18th Battalion, with the rank of Private.

Six months later, on May 25, 1918, Private Leonard McMullin lost his life in France--he was instantly killed in action by the concussion of a German trench mortar shell. Leonard McMullin's Circumstances of Death Register records him as; *Date of Casualty: 25-5-18. "Killed in Action". While sleeping in his funk hole in a front line trench, near Neuville Vitasse in the early morning of May 25th, 1918, he was killed by an enemy 'fish tail' bomb that dropped near him. Wailly Orchard Cemetery 3 ¼ miles South West of Arras, France.*

On June 6, 1918, Leonard's mother Irene in Sarnia received the following telegram from the Director of Records in Ottawa: DEEPLY REGRET TO INFORM YOU THAT 844831, PTE. LEONARD CALVIN MCMULLIN, INFANTRY, IS OFFICIALLY REPORTED KILLED IN ACTION ON MAY 25TH, 1918.

Not long after learning the news of the death of her only child, Irene McMullin wrote the following poem, which she submitted to the *Sarnia Observer*:

Somewhere in France

*"Somewhere in France," so weary, so faithful! "Innocence," dreaming whilst shells scream overhead;
Dreaming of Home and the Land of the Maple; Knapsack his pillow, the clay for his bed.*

*"Somewhere" in No Man's Land! God grant that mother, Never shall dream what we're bidden to do!
Stake we our life's blood, but leave for no other. Strenuous deeds which a soldier must do!*

*"Somewhere," a mother so lonely is waiting, Craving good tidings from over the sea;
Praying, "O God, should it be Thy good pleasure, Send my darling in safety to me."*

continued over...

*"Somewhere," in Heaven, past troubles and tears, For a voice, "Come, thou blessed," in mercy he heard,
'Neath his cross, khaki clad, fitting garb for our heroes, His dearly loved form now lies undisturbed.*

*"Somewhere in France" his life work has ended, As o'er parapets gleam the first rays of sun.
'Twixt boyhood and man, not a score yet of summers! Now peace, grand, eternal – a living "Well done."*

*Tho' poppies may fade, or the lark's wing grow weary, Mother love – oh so boundless – no living, no end!
Sleep well son! Dear Heart, we ne'er shall forget thee, For thy life thou hast given, for country and friends.*

Leonard McMullin, 19, is buried in Wailly Orchard Cemetery, France, Grave II.F.15. On his headstone are inscribed the words, THE ONLY SON OF HIS MOTHER HE LOVED HONOUR MORE THAN HE FEARED DEATH. On the Sarnia cenotaph, his name is inscribed as L.C. McMullen.

At the end of the Great War, debates ensued in Sarnia as to how the city would pay tribute to the fallen soldiers. Several suggestions for memorials were discussed and included the following: the planting of oak trees with metal plates inscribed with the names of the fallen; the building of some sort of community memorial building; and the erecting of some form of a monument.

Six months after her son's death, in late November 1918, Leonard's mother Irene wrote a letter to the *Canadian (Sarnia) Observer* expressing her preference. She was one of thousands of Canadian families who were forced to grieve without a body, or without an expensive overseas visit to a grave. Many thousands were unable to achieve the necessary closure so important to those who had never had a chance to say a proper goodbye. Following is Irene McMullin's heartfelt letter:

Editor Canadian Observer

Dear Sir,

May I speak for my boy? He is sleeping somewhere in France. I do want to tell you what I believe would please him, could he but speak. For some years prior to enlisting in Lambton's 149th O.S. Bn., he had taken great pleasure in the public library and the park surrounding it (Victoria Park) and since a memorial to the boys who will never return has been under discussion, my greatest comfort has seemed to centre there, and always I can picture to myself a monument of suitable design, bearing the names of all our city's fallen heroes, their graves beyond the reach of loving hands to tend and care for, with no mark save a temporary wooden cross.

Reader, have you a boy sleeping over there? If so, does not the little white wooden cross seem a frail thing? And many of our precious boys have not even that much. A granite monument would be a memorial which would withstand the elements for many generations to come and in that way would perpetuate their names as nothing else could. Also it would be something which the residents of our city and visitors as well, would have cause to admire and revere. Furthermore, if this proposed memorial to the boys who have lost their lives should take the form of a home, or a Y.M.C.A. or Y.W.C.A., it would be natural for the original motive to be lost sight of, within a few years.

There are already associations formed for the purpose of bringing comfort and pleasure to the returned heroes. We feel that they can never be fully repaid for their sacrifices and services for humanity. They are deserving of as good as can be produced, but our city and country are prosperous and wealthy, and can well afford to give our beloved dead a separate memorial.

In the years of the future, when one by one our returned heroes have gone to their reward in the Great Beyond, their earthly remains laid to rest beside their father and mother, perhaps, their names and record engraved upon the family monument, or possibly a gravestone of their very own (not only they but you and I together with all others who have known and loved and been loyal to our faithful armies) this proposed granite monument would still stand firm ever beaming the message of peace on earth.

The little white wooden crosses over there seem to send us the message "Do not forget us," though only wrapped in a blanket, perhaps and buried khaki clad, in a soldier's grave.

Thanking you, Mr. Editor for space and patience, I am

Yours truly,

The Mother of One, Mrs. Irene McMullin, 466 Davis Street.

In 1921, the Sarnia cenotaph was unveiled. That year, Irene McMullin was residing with her Scottish-born mother Elizabeth Tiderington at 118 Samuel Street, Sarnia. Their neighbour at 120 Samuel Street, was Charles Augustus Lester, a local painter. Irene McMullin no doubt visited the memorial with her son's name on it. She later remarried, at the age of fifty-six, on June 18, 1927, in Port Huron, Michigan to fifty-four-year-old Charles Augustus Lester (his third marriage). Irene and Charles Lester resided in Sarnia. On March 20, 1931, at the age of sixty, Irene

Lester (McMullin) passed away in Sarnia, the result of a cerebral hemorrhage. She was buried three days later in Bradshaw Cemetery in Sombra Township, Lambton County.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 2G, 7C, 8A, 8X, 8Y, 10Z

McMUTRIE, John A. (#53602)

British-born John McMutrie was a thirty-nine-year-old labourer working in Sarnia when he enlisted, an opportunity to return to his home and family and to serve his country. He fought for over a year in France, losing his life in one of the most horrific and prolonged battles in history. His body was never recovered and he is memorialized on the Vimy Memorial.

John McMutrie was born in Manchester, England, on July 3, 1875, the son of William Arnold McMutrie, of Regent Road, Salford, Manchester, England. At some point, John McMutrie immigrated to Canada, and took residence in Sarnia.

On November 2, 1914, thirty-nine-year-old John McMutrie enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force in Sarnia, becoming a member of the 18th Battalion. He stood five feet eight and one-half inches tall, had brown eyes and black hair, was single, and recorded his trade or calling as labourer, and his next-of-kin as his father William McMutrie of Regent Road, Salford, England. John's next-of-kin was later changed to his niece, Mrs. Ellinor Cattermole of 37 Dalton Street, Salford, Lancashire, England. He also recorded that he had served three years with the militia. John McMutrie embarked overseas from Halifax bound for the United Kingdom on January 18, 1915 aboard the *SS Grampian*.

Eight months after his arrival in England, on September 14, 1915, John arrived in France, a member of the Canadian Infantry, Western Ontario Regiment, 18th Battalion, with the rank of Private. He served in France for over a year, including during the **Battle of the Somme** (July 1-November 18, 1916)--one of the most futile and bloody battles in history. The Somme battle lasted for more than four brutal months and saw the Allies advance around 10 kilometers. A more telling statistic is the number of injuries and deaths: of the 85,000 Canadian Corps, there were more than 24,000 Canadian casualties.

The second major offensive of the Somme battle was the week-long Battle of Flers-Courcelette (September 15-22). It was here where tanks made their first appearance in the war. The Battle was a stunning success for the Canadians, but it came at a cost of over 7,200 casualties. In the days following this battle, John McMutrie was killed in action.

Thirteen months after his arrival in France, on October 3, 1916, Private John McMutrie lost his life in action during the Battle of the Somme. His Circumstances of Death Register records him as; *Date of Casualty: 3-10-16. "Killed in Action". TRENCHES AT COURCELETTE. No record of burial.*

After the war, John's medals and decorations were sent to his niece, Mrs. Ellinor Cattermole of Dalton Street, Salford, Manchester, England. John McMutrie, 41, has no known grave. He is memorialized on the Vimy Memorial, Pas de Calais, France.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 2G, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10Z

MONTGOMERY, David Chester (#782092)

At Vimy Ridge in the spring of 1917, during the battle that helped define our nation, David Montgomery was severely wounded in action. Sixteen days later, the twenty-three-year-old passed away as a result of his wounds. He is buried in Etaples Military Cemetery in Pas de Calais, France. He was remembered by his seven brothers and sisters when they inscribed on his headstone, IN MEMORY OF OUR BELOVED BROTHER WHO DIED FOR HIS COUNTRY.

David Chester Montgomery was born in Kars, Carleton, Ontario (near Ottawa) on August 1, 1893, the youngest child of James and Harriet Irene 'Hattie' (nee Lee) Montgomery. On March 8, 1878, James Montgomery (born 1851, North Gower, Carleton, Ontario) married Harriet Irene Lee (born December 25, 1860, Marlborough Township, Carleton, Ontario) in Carleton, Ontario. In 1878 and 1881, James was supporting his family working as a farmer in North Gower, Carleton. James and Harriet Montgomery had eight children together: John Simpson (born June 16, 1878, later resided Rouleau, Saskatchewan); James Howard (born February 7, 1880, later resided Chaplin, Saskatchewan, and then Burnaby, B.C.); Laura Eva (born June 7, 1881, resided Carleton, and in April 1904 married blacksmith John Albert McEwen in Carleton); Ida May (born February 1, 1883, and in January 1907 married engineer Stephen James Martin in Ottawa, and later resided Calgary, Alberta); Violet Mabel (born October 29, 1884,

and in 1910 married Ellwood Phillips, and resided Regina, Saskatchewan, and then Sarnia); William Bower (born February 4, 1888, later resided Calgary, Alberta); Robert Henry (born February 26, 1889, later resided Calgary, Alberta) and David Chester.

In 1891, James and Harriet Montgomery and their seven children (David hadn't been born yet) were residing in Carleton District, Ontario, where father James was working as a tanner. Four years later, on October 19, 1895, when David Chester was only two years old, he lost his father, James, who had an accidental death at the age of forty-four. Six years later, in 1901, widowed Harriet Montgomery, the head of household, and her eight children were still residing in Carleton District. Several of her children were now working: John was employed as a farm labourer; James was a carpenter; Laura Eve was a tailor; and Ida was employed as a servant. Tragedy struck the Montgomery family again in March 1907 when Harriet passed away in Carleton at the age of forty-six, the result of pneumonia. For David, now thirteen years old, he had now lost both of his parents.

David's older brother, Robert Henry Montgomery, at the age of twenty-six, enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force on August 2, 1915 in Calgary, becoming a member of the 56th Battalion, CEF. Private Robert Montgomery, still a recruit, was struck off service after only two months. Despite his six foot frame, he was deemed "not likely to become an efficient soldier" by both the Medical Officer and Approving Officer. He was discharged on October 2, 1915 at Sarcee Camp (near Calgary). Four months after Robert Montgomery was discharged, his younger brother David Montgomery enlisted.

David Chester Montgomery's name is inscribed on the Sarnia cenotaph--the following is his link to Sarnia: David's sister Violet Mabel Montgomery married Ellwood Stewart Phillips (of Watford, Ontario) in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan on July 12, 1910. By 1919, Violet and Ellwood Phillips were residing on Errol Road West in Sarnia. Violet and Ellwood had six children together: Franklin James, Stewart Lee, Harry Ardiel, Alexander Ellwood, Dorothy Caroline and Irene Pearl Phillips (the latter two were born in Sarnia). Violet (nee Montgomery) Phillips was very close to her younger brother David, who spent some time living in Sarnia with his sister before he moved out west to live with his brother James.

Ellwood and Violet Phillips remained and raised their family in Sarnia. Ellwood Phillips passed away in 1941, and Violet Phillips passed away in 1970, and both are buried in Lakeview Cemetery, Sarnia. Of note, Ellwood Avenue in Sarnia is named after Ellwood Stewart Phillips. Of Ellwood and Violet Phillips six children, two served during World War II. Their first child, Franklin James Phillips, served in the Royal Canadian Air Force. Their second child, Stewart Lee Phillips, served in the 4th Anti-tank Regiment, part of the 5th Canadian Armoured Division, seeing action in North Africa, Italy, Holland and Germany. An accomplished athlete, in 1988, Stewart Lee Phillips was inducted into the Sarnia-Lambton Sports Hall of Fame.

Twenty-two-year-old David Montgomery enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force on February 9, 1916 in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan. He stood five feet nine inches tall, had blue eyes and dark brown hair, was single, and lived in Avonlea, Saskatchewan at the time. He recorded his trade or calling as a hardware salesman, and his next-of-kin as his brother James Howard Montgomery in Chaplin, Saskatchewan. David became a member of the 128th Overseas Battalion, Canadian Expeditionary Force. Six months later, on August 15, 1916, David embarked overseas from Halifax bound for the United Kingdom aboard the *S.S. Grampian*.

Private David Montgomery arrived in Liverpool, England on August 24, 1916. Just over three months later, on December 5, 1916 at Bramshott, he became a member of the Canadian Infantry, 49th Battalion, Alberta Regiment. The next day, he arrived with the 49th Battalion in France. Two months later, in mid-February 1917, David Montgomery and his battalion along with the rest of the Canadian Corps made their way to an area in northern France dominated by a long hill known as Vimy Ridge.

The **Battle of Vimy Ridge** (April 9-12, 1917) was the first time (and last time in the war) that all four divisions of the Canadian Corps, with soldiers from every region in the country, would surge forward simultaneously. The first day of the battle, April 9, 1917, was the single bloodiest day of the entire war for the Canadian Corps and the bloodiest in all of Canadian military history. The four-day victory at Vimy Ridge was a seminal battle, a turning point in the war for the Canadian Corps, and significant victory for Canada, the battle later referred to as "the birth of a nation". Of the 97,000 Canadians who fought at Vimy Ridge, approximately 7,004 were wounded and 3,598 were killed in four days of battle.

On April 10, 1917, Private David Montgomery was wounded in action by enemy gunfire at Vimy Ridge.

That day, he was admitted to No. 24 General Hospital, Etaples with a “gun shot wound face, fracture base of skull and gun shot wound leg”. Twelve days later, on April 22, he was reported, “dangerously ill (GSW. Fract. base skull & GSW leg)”. On April 26, 1917, Private David Montgomery lost his life as a result of the wounds he received in action. His death was recorded as, “Previously reported dangerously ill now died of wounds received in action – GSW. Frac. Base Skull, 24 General Hospital, Etaples.” His Circumstances of Death Register records him as; *Date of Casualty: 26-4-17. “Died of wounds” (Gunshot Wound Fracture Base Skull) at No. 24 General Hospital, Etaples. Etaples Military Cemetery, France.*



Private David Chester Montgomery

David Montgomery, 23, is buried in Etaples Military Cemetery, Pas de Calais, France, Grave XVIII.A.3. On his headstone are inscribed the words, IN MEMORY OF OUR BELOVED BROTHER WHO DIED FOR HIS COUNTRY.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 2G, 6O, 7C, 7Y, 8X, 8Y, 10Z, 2k

NASH, Harold (#123209)

Harold Nash, 19, and his brother Frank, 23, immigrated together from England destined for Sarnia where they planned to work as farmers. In September 1915, the brothers left their good jobs at Imperial Oil and enlisted together to serve their country. They embarked overseas together in the same ship and trained together in England. They arrived in France one week apart and both fought in one of the most horrific battles in all of history. Both brothers were seriously wounded on the Somme battlefield, one survived, the other did not.

Harold Nash was born in Great Missenden, Buckinghamshire, London, England, on August 3, 1893, the son of Thomas and Alice Ruth (nee Fulford) Nash, of Buckinghamshire, England. On September 18, 1881, Thomas Nash (the son of a blacksmith, born January 1860) married Alice Ruth Fulford (born January 1861) in Great Missenden, Buckinghamshire, England. Thomas and Alice Nash had thirteen children together: Thomas William (born April 1883); Sarah Maria (born December 1884); Lucy (born April 1888); Frank (born March 7, 1890); Kirby (born July 1891); Harold; Alice Julia (born January 1896); Charles (born July 1898); Dorothy (born August 1899); Oscar (born April 1901, passed away in January 1903 before the age of two); Esther Ruby (born October 1902); Walter (born April 1904); and Mervyn (born August 1905).

In October 1910, when Harold was seventeen years old, he lost his father Thomas who died in England at age fifty. In the spring of 1911, widowed Alice Nash was still residing in Buckinghamshire, England, along with her children Frank, Harold, Charles, Dorothy, Esther Ruby, Walter and Mervyn. Two of her sons, twenty-two-year-old Frank and fourteen year-old Harold were both employed as gardeners.

In the early part of 1913, nineteen year-old Harold and his older brother Frank (age twenty-three), both immigrated to Canada. They departed from Liverpool, England aboard the *SS Tunisian* and arrived in Halifax on March 30, 1913. They both recorded their intended destination as Sarnia; their occupations as gardeners; and their intended occupations as farmers. Harold and Frank Nash lived at 189 Ross Avenue in Sarnia.

Years later, almost four years after the end of the Great War, the youngest Nash sibling, Mervyn Nash, would also immigrate to Canada. Sixteen year-old Mervyn Nash, with \$10 in his pocket, arrived as a 3rd Class passenger aboard the *SS Andonia* at Quebec in June 1922 (his passage was paid for by the Salvation Army). Mervyn recorded his intended occupation as farm work and he came to live in Sarnia. Unfortunately, ten months after his arrival in the country, on April 27, 1923, Mervyn Nash passed away at Sarnia General Hospital at the age of seventeen. His death was due to Landry's ascending paralysis, and he is buried at Lakeview Cemetery in Sarnia.

On September 10, 1915, both Harold Nash and his brother Frank enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force in Sarnia. Both Nash brothers gave up good positions at Imperial Oil Company to enlist and to serve their country. Their widowed mother, Alice, still in England, now had four sons serving in the Great War. Besides Harold and Frank, two others were already fighting in the trenches in France.

Twenty-five-year-old **Frank Nash** enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force on September 10, 1915 in Sarnia. He stood five feet nine inches tall, had dark blue eyes and brown hair, was single, and recorded his trade or calling as fireman, and his next-of-kin as his mother Alice Nash at Great Kingshill, Buckinghamshire, England. He became a member of the 70th Overseas Battalion, Canadian Expeditionary Force. Seven months later, on April 24, 1916, Private Frank Nash embarked overseas from Halifax bound for the United Kingdom aboard the *S.S. Lapland*. He arrived in Liverpool, England on May 5, 1916 and was soon training at Shorncliffe, where on July 6, 1916 he was transferred to the 39th Battalion. Three months after arriving in England, on August 10, 1916, Private Frank Nash was transferred to the 18th Battalion, and two days later he arrived in France.

Frank Nash soon found himself in the Battle of the Somme (July 1-November 18, 1916)--one of the bloodiest and most futile battles in history, a battle that lasted for more than four brutal months. Approximately six after arriving in France, on September 30, 1916, Private Frank Nash was wounded in action by shrapnel at the Somme. He was first taken into a dug-out, and then a field ambulance where his wounds were dressed. The next day, he was taken to a Casualty Clearing Station where he was operated on, and shrapnel was removed. He was then admitted to #10 General Hospital in Rouen with "gun shot wound buttock, left thigh, face, dangerously ill". He remained in various hospitals for close to ten months, including Springburn Woodside Hospital in Glasgow; King's Canadian Red Cross Convalescent in Bushy Park; and Canadian Convalescent Hospital Bearwood in Wokingham, where he would undergo two further operations (haemorrhage and abscess), treatment and convalescing.

Frank Nash was finally discharged from hospital in late June 1917, though his wounds prevented him from returning to the Front. He remained on duty in England for the duration of the war, at Bearwood, Shorncliffe and Orpington. In early March 1918, he was granted permission to marry. On March 13, 1918, Frank Nash married Lucy Rosina Gray (born May 1889 in Paddington, London, England) at St. Columb Church in Notting Hill, London, England. Frank and Lucy Nash's first child, Irene Nash, was born June 17, 1919 in London, England.

In mid-March 1919, Frank was admitted to Canadian General Hospital, Orpington, to receive further treatment for his "debility", that included partial loss of function of his left leg--a permanent condition. He was discharged from the hospital three months later. In July 1919, he was discharged from military service in London, England on demobilization. After being discharged, Frank returned to life in Sarnia, initially residing at 153 Essex Street. His wife Lucy Nash and their daughter Irene immigrated to Sarnia in 1919. The following year, Lucy's parents, her two sisters and her brother also immigrated to Canada and moved to Sarnia. In 1921, Frank Nash, employed as a fireman, and Lucy Nash, along with their daughter Irene, were residing at 228 Maria Street, Sarnia. Residing with them were Lucy's parents Walter and Florence Gray; her sisters Amy (age twenty) and Florence (age nine); and her brother Frederick Gray (age twelve).

Twenty-two-year-old **Harold Nash** enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force on September 10, 1915 in Sarnia (along with his older brother Frank). He stood five feet nine and one-quarter inches, had blue eyes and brown hair, was single, and recorded his trade or calling as stationary engineer, and his next-of-kin as his mother Alice Nash at Great Kingshill, Buckinghamshire, England. He became a member of the 70th Overseas Battalion, Canadian Expeditionary Force. Private Harold Nash and his brother, Frank, embarked overseas from Halifax bound for the United Kingdom on April 24, 1916 aboard the *S.S. Lapland*.

Harold Nash arrived in Liverpool, England on May 5, 1916 and was soon training at Shorncliffe where on July 6, 1916 he was transferred to the 39th Battalion at West Sandling, along with his brother. Six weeks later, on August 20, 1916, Private Harold Nash arrived in France as a member of the 39th Battalion (his brother Frank had arrived one week earlier with the 18th Battalion). The next day, Harold became a member of the Canadian Infantry,

73rd Battalion, Quebec Regiment.

Like his brother Frank, Harold Nash soon found himself in the Battle of the Somme (July 1-November 18, 1916)--one of the bloodiest and most futile battles in history. The Somme battle lasted for more than four brutal months and saw the Allies advance around 10 kilometers. A more telling statistic is the number of injuries and deaths: of the 85,000 Canadian Corps, there were more than 24,000 Canadian casualties.

Frank Nash was seriously wounded by shrapnel on September 30 at the Somme, and though he survived, his war was over. For Harold Nash, approximately six weeks after arriving in France, on October 4, 1916, during the Battle of the Somme, he completed his Military Will on page twenty of his Pay Book. In it he wrote, "In the event of my Death I give the whole of my property & effects to my Mother – Mrs. Alice Nash, Hatches Lane, Gt. Kingshill Near High Wycomb, Bucks, England."

Harold Nash survived the Battle of the Somme, but not for much longer. One month after the "end" of the Battle of the Somme, Private Harold Nash was wounded by enemy gunfire while fighting in the area of the Somme. On December 26, 1916, Harold was admitted to No. 23 Casualty Clearing Station recorded as, "DANGEROUSLY WOUNDED". Two days later, Private Harold Nash was recorded as "DIED OF WOUNDS. Dec. 28th, 1916, at No. 23 C.C.S.. Nature of Casualty ascertained to be gun shot wound right arm & abdomen." His Circumstances of Death Register records him as; *Date of Casualty: 28-12-16. "DIED OF WOUNDS" (Gun Shot Wounds Right Arm, and Abdomen) at No. 23 Casualty Clearing Station. Lapugnoy Military Cemetery, 5 miles West of Bethune, France.*

Four years after Harold Nash's death, in December 1920, his widowed mother Alice Nash passed away in Buckinghamshire, England at the age of fifty-nine. Harold Nash, 23, is buried in Lapugnoy Military Cemetery, Pas de Calais, France, Grave II.A.4.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 2G, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10Z

NICHOL, Donald Lee (#1045461)

Donald Nichol was just eighteen years old when he made the decision to serve his country. Unfortunately he never had the chance to serve overseas. Only three months after enlisting, he was in hospital suffering from an infection. Three months after that he lost his life the result of pneumonia. He is buried in Woodland Cemetery in London, Ontario, alongside his mother and father.

Donald Lee Nichol was born in Sarnia, Ontario on March 31, 1898, the son of Reverend Frank Ormiston and Margaret Shaw (nee Brown, born April 17, 1866) Nichol. Reverend Frank Nichol (born March 12, 1866 in Brantford, Ontario) was a Presbyterian clergyman of Scottish descent who worked for a time at St. Andrew's in Amherstburg, Ontario. On July 15, 1891, twenty-five-year-old Rev. Frank Nichol married twenty-six-year-old Wilhelmina Minnie Manson in Port Hope, Ontario. A little over one year later, on August 5, 1892, Wilhelmina passed away.

On September 26, 1894, Rev. Frank Nichol remarried, to Margaret Shaw Brown in Austin, Illinois. Rev. Frank and Margaret Nichol had five children together: Arthur (born July 11, 1895 in Sarnia); Donald Lee; Frances (born December 1902); Ewart Gordon (born December 21, 1904 in Bruce); and Norman Grant (born December 5, 1911 in Middlesex). In 1901, the Nichol family was living in Greenock, Bruce, Ontario, and ten years later, in 1911, they were residing in Delaware, Middlesex Township.

Eighteen year-old Donald Nichol enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force on November 3, 1916 in Windsor, Ontario. He stood five feet eight inches tall, had blue eyes and brown hair, was single, and lived at 14 Windermere Road in Walkerville, Ontario at the time. He recorded his trade or calling as a clerk, and his next-of-kin as his father Frank who lived in Amherstburg, Ontario. Donald Nichol became a member of the Canadian Infantry, 241st Overseas Battalion, Quebec Regiment, Canadian Expeditionary Force.

Private Donald Nichol did not have the opportunity to serve overseas. Three months after enlisting, on February 9, 1917, he was admitted to Wolseley Barracks Hospital suffering from otitis media (an infection causing inflammation in the middle ear). He was later transferred to Victoria Hospital in London. Approximately three months after being admitted to Wolseley Barracks Hospital, on May 6, 1917, Private Donald Nichol of the 241st Battalion, lost his life at Victoria Hospital, in London, Ontario.

The Circumstances of Casualty Register records Donald Nichol's death as; *Date of Death: 6-5-17. London, Ontario Victoria Hospital. Circumstances of Death: Pneumonia – Admitted to Hospital 15-2-17 from Wolseley Barracks Hospital where he had been admitted 9-2-17 for Otitis Media. Received every care and attention.*

Woodland Cemetery, London, Ontario. NOTE: In Donald Nichol's Personnel File, the Veterans Death Register, and the Ontario Death Records, his death date is (incorrectly) recorded as April 6, 1917. Nineteen year-old Donald Nichol is buried in London (Woodland) Cemetery, London, Ontario, Grave 194. Section N. On the Woodland Cemetery grave registration report, the date of Donald Nichol's death is correctly recorded as May 6, 1917.

Eight months after Donald's death, on January 24, 1918, his father Rev. Frank Nichol passed away in Amherstburg at the age of fifty-one, the result of cancer. Rev. Frank Nichol is buried alongside his son Donald in Woodland Cemetery, London. In 1921, Donald's fifty-six-year-old widowed mother Margaret Nichol was residing at 166 North Vidal Street in Sarnia, along with her children: Arthur (age twenty-five, employed as a messenger); Frances (age eighteen, a student); Ewart (age sixteen, a student); and Norman (age nine, a student). In December 1947, Donald's mother Margaret Nichol passed away at the age of eighty-one. She is buried alongside her husband Frank and son Donald Lee Nichol.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 2G, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10Z

NOEL, Urban Joseph (#226970)

Urban Noel arrived at the front lines in France only one month after his brother-in-law had been killed there in the trenches. Ten weeks later, Urban was killed by enemy gunfire during an attack at the Battle of Amiens. The Battalion Chaplain who was beside him later described Urban as a noble soldier and a good devout Practical Catholic.

Urban Joseph Noel was born in Bay City, Charlevoix, Michigan, on August 3, 1896, the son of Francis "Frank" P. and Marie Amanda "Maud" (nee Beaudoin) Noel. Frank Noel (born May 23, 1865 in Quebec) married Maud Beaudoin (born March 9, 1868 in Quebec) on July 6, 1886 in Bay City, Michigan. Frank and Maud Noel had eleven children together: Maud Grace (born November 1888 in Michigan); Francis "Frank Jr." (born July 1889); Bertha (born June 1892 in Michigan); Laura (born June 1894 in Michigan); Urban Noel; Eva (born June 1898 in Michigan); Della (born May 10, 1900 in Michigan); Rita Belle (born February 4, 1902 in Ontario); Thelma Margaruite (born January 1, 1904 in Lambton); Verna (born May 31, 1908 in Sarnia); and Norma (born May 1911). In 1900, the Noel family was residing in Munising Township, Alger, Michigan where Frank Sr. was employed as a "day labourer". By 1904, the Noel family had moved to Sarnia, living at 109 Collingwood Street and later 174 Cotterbury Street, Sarnia. In May 1910, thirteen year-old Urban Noel was confirmed at Our Lady of Mercy Catholic Church, Sarnia.

In September 1908, Urban's older sister, Maud Grace, married Percival Guertin in Sarnia. Like Urban, Percival Guertin also served in the Great War. Percival lost his life during fighting in the trenches of France in April of 1918. He is memorialized on the Vimy Memorial and on the Sarnia cenotaph. (Percival Guertin's story is included in this Project on page 289).

Twenty year-old Urban Noel enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force on May 29, 1917 in Hamilton, Ontario. He stood five feet five and a half inches tall, had blue eyes and light brown hair, was single, and was living in Peterborough, Ontario at the time. He recorded his trade or calling as machinist, and his next-of-kin as his father Frank Sr., living at 226 Balcom Street in Eau Claire, Wisconsin, USA. Urban became a member of the Depot Regiment, Canadian Mounted Rifles, Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force.

Urban Noel embarked overseas from Halifax bound for the United Kingdom aboard the *SS Scandinavian* on October 20, 1917. He arrived in Liverpool, England on November 1, 1917 and was transferred to the 8th Reserve Battalion the next day, stationed at Shorncliffe. Five months later, on April 7, 1918, Urban became a member of the Canadian Infantry, 102nd Battalion, Central Ontario Regiment, with the rank of Private. Two days later, Urban arrived in France at the Canadian Corps Reinforcement Camp (CCRC). Just over one month later, on May 20, 1918, Private Urban Noel arrived at the front lines with the 102nd Battalion.

Just over two months after arriving at the front, Urban found himself taking part of the last campaign of the war. The **Hundred Days Campaign** (August 8 – November 11, 1918 in France and Belgium) was the "beginning of the end" of the Great War. Canadians were called on again and again over the three-month period to lead the offensives against the toughest German defences. The series of victories repeatedly drove the Germans back, culminating in Germany's unconditional surrender on November 11, but it came at a cost of almost 46,000 Canadians killed, wounded and missing.

The first offensive in Canada's Hundred Days Campaign was the **Battle of Amiens** in France (August 8-14,

1918), a truly all-arms battle, one that all four Canadian divisions would be involved in. Over the course of one week, in a battle that British Field Marshal Douglas Haig called “*the finest operation of the war*”, the Canadians advanced nearly 14 km--but it came at a cost of 11,822 Canadian casualties.

Approximately ten weeks after arriving at the front lines, on August 8, 1918, Private Urban Noel was killed by enemy gunfire during an attack at the Battle of Amiens. His Circumstances of Death Register records him as; *Date of Casualty: 8-8-18. “Killed in Action.” He took part with his Company in an attack and when emerging from Beaucourt Wood he was hit in the head by a bullet and killed, between the first and second objective. Cemetery: Beaucourt Churchyard, 3 ½ miles East of Moreuil, France.*

In September 1918, Frank Sr. and Maud Noel at 174 Cotterbury Street in Sarnia, received a letter from the Battalion Chaplain. The following is an excerpt from that letter:

102nd Can. Inf. Battalion, France, Aug. 15, 1918

My Dear Mr. Noel,

It is my sad duty to announce to you the death of your son U.J. Noel, No. 226970 which occurred on Aug. 8th while he was in action with the enemy. I was with your son, but a few hours before he met death, and heard his confession and gave him Holy communion. In paying the supreme price for the cause of right your son merits a martyr's crown in Heaven and an inestimable debt of gratitude from mankind. He was a noble soldier and a good devout Practical Catholic.

Your son was buried in the 11th Can. Inf. Batt. Cemetery at Beaucourt en Santerre on Aug. 10th with Military honors and Catholic services.... His personal effects will be forwarded to you in due time through proper channels. Accept my heartfelt sympathy and assurance of prayers for the repose of your son's soul.

Very Sincerely, Chas. A. Fallon, R.C. Chaplain

Urban Noel, 22, is buried in Beaucourt British Cemetery, Somme, France, Grave B.18. Urban's sister Maud had lost her husband Percival Guertin only four months earlier. In 1921, parents Frank Sr. (then a fireman) and Maud Noel were still residing at 174 Cotterbury Street in Sarnia, along with their children: Frank Jr. (age thirty-two, a pipefitter); Rita (age nineteen); Thelma (age seventeen); Verna (age thirteen); and Norma (age ten). On September 2, 1923, Frank Noel Sr., a refinery employee, passed away in Sarnia at the age of fifty-nine. Amanda “Maud” Noel passed away in 1939 in Sarnia at the age of seventy-one. Both Frank Sr. and Amanda Noel are buried in Our Lady of Mercy Roman Catholic Cemetery in Sarnia.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 2G, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10Z

NORWOOD, James Hamilton (#53605)

Born in Ireland, James Norwood immigrated to Canada in his late teens and less than two years later he enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force in Sarnia. As a soldier, he did what he could to help support his mother--assigning most of his pay to her and bequeathing all his personal belongings to her. One month after arriving at the front lines, Corporal Norwood was killed in action during a major offensive in one of the war's most brutal and prolonged battles.

James Hamilton Norwood was born in Belfast, Ireland, on November 5, 1893, the eldest child of Samuel and Alice Norwood of Belfast, Ireland. Samuel and Alice had seven children together: James, Elizabeth, Mary Jane, Annie, Matthew, Martha and Samuel. In 1901, the Norwood family was residing at 45 Ravenhill Road, Ormeau, Down, Ireland--parents Samuel (age thirty-one) and Alice (age thirty), along with their children James (age seven), Elizabeth “Lillie” (age five), and Mary Jane. Ten years later, in 1911, the Norwood family was residing at 71 Ravenhill Road—parents Samuel (age forty) and Alice (age thirty-nine), along with their children James (age seventeen), Elizabeth (age fifteen), Mary Jane, Annie (age eleven), Matthew (age eight), Martha (age six) and Samuel (age three).

In the spring of 1913, nineteen year-old James Norwood immigrated to Canada. Departing from Liverpool, he arrived in Quebec aboard the *Lake Manitoba* on May 28, 1913. With \$25 in his pocket, he recorded his occupation as moulder, and his destination as Walkerville, Ontario. Two weeks later, on July 10, 1913, James crossed by Canadian Pacific Rail into Detroit, Michigan. Again he recorded his occupation as moulder, and he now had \$16 with him.

Two days before his twenty-first birthday, James Norwood enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force on November 3, 1914 in Sarnia. He stood five feet five inches tall, had gray eyes and red hair, and was single. He recorded his trade or calling as farmer, and his next-of-kin as his father Samuel Norwood of 62 Raven Hill Road,

Belfast, Ireland. James became a member of the Canadian Infantry, 18th Battalion, Western Ontario Regiment. Private James Norwood embarked overseas from Halifax bound for the United Kingdom aboard the *SS Grampian* on April 18, 1915. He arrived in England on April 29, 1915.

After four months of training in England, including time at West Sandling, on September 14, 1915, Private James Norwood embarked for France. Six months later, on March 2, 1916, he was promoted to the rank of Lance Corporal. Of the approximately \$30 a month he was earning as a Private (\$1.10 a day), he assigned \$20 per month of that amount to his mother in Ireland.

Seven months after arriving in France, on April 13, 1916, James Norwood was admitted to No. 6 Canadian Field Ambulance due to a ruptured eardrum. Three days later, on April 16, 1916, he was transferred to a Casualty Clearing Station, and then admitted to No. 13 General Hospital, Boulogne, diagnosed with a ruptured left eardrum and pharyngitis. Five days later, he was admitted to No. 1 Convalescent Depot in Boulogne, and was later discharged to his base on May 5, 1916. Eight days later, on May 13, 1916, he rejoined his unit in the field. On June 6, 1916, James Norwood was promoted to the rank of Corporal in the 18th Battalion. Five days after that, he completed his Military Will, bequeathing all his personal belongings to his mother, Mrs. Norwood of 62 Ravenhill Road, Belfast, Ireland.

James Norwood soon found himself fighting in the **Battle of the Somme** in France (July 1-November 18, 1916)--one of the bloodiest and most futile battles in history. The Somme battle lasted for more than four brutal months and saw the Allies advance around 10 kilometers. A more telling statistic is the number of injuries and deaths: of the 85,000 Canadian Corps, there were more than 24,000 Canadian casualties.

The second major offensive of the Somme battle was the week-long **Battle of Flers-Courcelette** (September 15-22). It was here where tanks made their first appearance in the war. The battle was a stunning success for the Canadians, but it came at a cost of over 7,200 casualties. It was during this second major offensive of the Somme battle that James Norwood was killed in action.

Three months after completing his Military Will, on September 15, 1916, Corporal James Norwood was reported missing while fighting in the Battle of Flers-Courcelette. Later in the day he was recorded as, "previously reported missing, now reported killed in action." James Norwood's Circumstances of Death Register records him as; *Date of Casualty: 15-9-16. "Previously reported Missing now Killed in Action." ATTACK AT COURCELETTE. No record of burial.*

James Norwood, 22, is buried in Serre Road Cemetery No. 2, Somme, France, Grave XXXV.C.4. He was awarded the: Canadian Memorial Cross Medal.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 2G, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10Z

PIRRIE, James Miller (#602739)

Scottish-born James Pirrie was in his mid-teens when he immigrated with his family to Sarnia. He was just eighteen years old when, following in his brother's footsteps, he enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force in July 1915. Another older brother joined just two months later. James Pirrie took part in some of Canada's most defining battles—the Somme, Vimy Ridge, and Hill 70. Fate finally caught up with him during one of the war's most brutal and costly battles.

James Miller Pirrie was born in Paisley, Scotland, on June 26, 1897, the son of John Alexander and Marion Harkness (nee Wylie) Pirrie. John Alexander Pirrie (born January 27, 1867) and Marion Harkness Wylie (born December 23, 1866) were both born in Paisley, Renfrewshire, Scotland, and were married there on March 7, 1890. John and Marion Pirrie had six children together: John Jr. (born January 18, 1891); Annie (born 1894); Thomas Wyllie (born September 27, 1895); James Miller; Catherine (born 1901); and Ferguson Stewart (born June 23, 1907). In 1891, John Pirrie Sr. was employed as a hot presser, living in Paisley, Renfrewshire along with his wife Marion Pirrie and their two month-old baby John Jr.. Ten years later, in 1901, the Pirrie family was still living in Renfrewshire--parents John Sr. (employed as a printers cutter) and Marion (both age thirty-four), along with their children John Jr. (age ten), Annie (age seven), Thomas (age five), James (age three) and Catherine (age five months).

In 1913, forty-six-year-old John Pirrie Sr. immigrated to Canada. Departing from Glasgow, he arrived aboard the *SS Letitia* in St. John's, Newfoundland on April 14, 1913. He recorded his final destination as Sarnia, and his former, and intended, occupation as printer's cutter. The rest of the Pirrie family immigrated to Canada soon after. Thomas Wyllie Pirrie, age seventeen, immigrated to Canada on his own. He departed Glasgow aboard the *SS*

Cassandra, and arrived in Quebec on July 8, 1913. With \$10 in his pocket, he recorded that he was going to his father in Sarnia, and that his own former, and intended, occupation was as an engineer. The rest of the Pirrie family immigrated the following year, departing from Glasgow aboard the *SS Athenia* and arriving in Montreal in late April 1914. Their recorded ages and occupations were: Marion Pirrie (forty-seven, housewife); and children John Jr. (twenty-three, grocer, along with his twenty-three year-old wife Georgina); Annie (twenty, weaver); James (sixteen, labourer); Catherine (thirteen, scholar); and Ferguson (six, scholar). The Pirrie family resided at 304 Campbell Street, Sarnia. Two of James Pirries' brothers also served in the war.

Thomas Wyllie Pirrie was the first Pirrie to join, enlisting in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force on September 23, 1914, just days before his nineteenth birthday, in Valcartier, Quebec. He stood five feet seven and a half inches tall, had light blue eyes and fair hair, was single, and recorded his trade or calling as machinist, and his next-of-kin as his father Mr. John Pirrie Sr. at 304 Campbell Street, Sarnia. Thomas became a member of the Canadian Army Medical Corps (CAMC), No. 2 Field Ambulance. Private Thomas Pirrie embarked overseas from Quebec bound for the United Kingdom aboard the *SS Cassandra* on October 4, 1914. Four months later, on February 9, 1915, he arrived in France, with the 2nd Field Ambulance.

That spring, on April 20, 1915 at the Second Battle of Ypres, Private Thomas Pirrie was admitted to No. 2 Canadian Stationary Hospital in Le Touquet with a "sprained ankle". On April 27, he was evacuated to England and moved to 2nd Southern General Hospital in Bristol. There he was treated for his fractured right (fibula) leg and ankle. On May 5, he was receiving treatment for his fractured fibula at the Military Hospital at Suffolk. One month later, on June 8, 1915, he was discharged to duty from hospital after seven days furlough. Private Thomas Pirrie spent the remainder of his service in England.

He trained as a masseur and performed that duty at locations including hospitals in Monk's Horton, Bushy Park and Orpington. He was awarded Good Conduct Badges in late August 1916, and again in late September 1916. On May 18, 1918 he was granted permission to marry. Twenty-three-year-old Thomas Pirrie married twenty-four-year-old Florence Lillian Helena Fanner (born in England) on June 16, 1918 at St. John the Evangelist in Hammersmith, England. Thomas was living in the Military Hospital in Orpington at the time.

Private Thomas Pirrie survived the war. In mid-January 1919, he spent two weeks in No. 16 Canadian General Hospital in Orpington, receiving treatment for influenza. He was discharged from hospital two weeks later, and eight months later, in early September 1919, he sailed from Liverpool and returned to Canada. Private Thomas Pirrie of the CAMC was discharged from service on demobilization on September 15, 1919. In 1921, Thomas (employed as a mail carrier) and Florence Pirrie, and their one-year-old daughter Iris, were living at 115 Ann Street, Sarnia.

Twenty-four-year-old **John Pirrie Jr.** was the third Pirrie to join, enlisting in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force on September 20, 1915 in Sarnia. He stood five feet six inches tall, had brown eyes and dark hair, and recorded his trade or calling as brass worker, and his next-of-kin as his wife Georgina Pirrie at 304 Campbell Street, Sarnia (the address was later changed to 143 Samuel Street, Sarnia). Private John Pirrie Jr. became a member of the 70th Battalion, CEF. He embarked overseas from Halifax bound for the United Kingdom aboard the *SS Lapland* on April 24, 1916. He arrived in Liverpool, England on May 5, 1916.

On June 2, 1916, he was admitted to Moore Barracks, suffering with a severe case of influenza. He recovered after three weeks but had suffered a hernia brought on by excessive coughing while in hospital. On June 29, 1916, he was admitted to Shorncliffe Military Hospital in Hastings where he remained for three and a half months, receiving treatment for his hernia, and varicose veins and chest conditions. While there, on July 10, 1916, John Pirrie Jr. was made a member of the 39th Battalion. He was discharged from the military hospital on October 10, 1916.

Almost three months later, on January 4, 1917, he was transferred to the 6th Reserve Battalion at West Sandling. He remained in England, with some chest trouble, at the Canadian Casualty Assembly Centre (CCAC) at East Sandling, and then the Eastern Ontario Regimental Depot (EOR) at Seaford. On October 31, 1917, he was transferred to the Central Ontario Regimental Depot (CORD), and days later, transferred to Canadian Discharge Depot (CDD) in Buxton. On November 6, 1917, he sailed from Liverpool aboard the *SS Olympic*, to be discharged in Canada. In early December 1917, he was admitted to the London Military Convalescent Hospital. In early January 1918, he was treated for bronchitis. On February 5, 1918, Private John Pirrie was discharged in Guelph, Ontario, "being medically unfit for further military service".

Eighteen year-old **James Miller Pirrie** was the second Pirrie to join, enlisting in the Canadian Over-Seas

Expeditionary Force on July 12, 1915 in Sarnia. He stood five feet seven inches tall, had hazel eyes and light brown hair, was single, and recorded his trade or calling as labourer, and his next-of-kin as his father John Pirrie Sr. at 304 Campbell Street, Sarnia. James also recorded his place of birth as Sarnia (though he was born in Scotland). James Pirrie became a member of the 34th Battalion, Bugle Band, Canadian Expeditionary Force.

Private James Pirrie embarked overseas aboard the *SS California* on October 23, 1915, arriving in England on November 1, 1915. Six months later, in mid-May 1916, following a route march, he noticed swelling of his left leg, with pain on walking. The pain was getting worse and his puttees seemed to cause more pain. On May 17, 1916, he was admitted to Moore Barracks, Canadian Hospital, in Shorncliffe, due to varicose veins. Five days later he was transferred to VAD Hospital in Ashford, where he remained until June 16, 1916. In early July 1916, he was transferred to the 36th Battalion, based at West Sandling, and by the end of the month he was transferred to the 35th Battalion.

Approximately six weeks later, on September 10, 1916, James Pirrie became a member of the Canadian Infantry, 4th Battalion, Canadian Mounted Rifles (CMR), with the rank of Private. [Note: Initially the 4th Regiment, CMR, but in January 1916 it was redesignated the 4th Battalion, CMR]. Days after becoming part of this battalion, in mid-September 1916, James arrived in France. The 4th Battalion, CMR was soon thrust into the Battle of the Somme (July 1-November 18, 1916)--one of the bloodiest and most futile battles in history. The Somme battle lasted for more than four brutal months and saw the Allies advance around 10 kilometers. A more telling statistic is the number of injuries and deaths: of the 85,000 Canadian Corps, there were more than 24,000 Canadian casualties.

One month into the Battle of the Somme, on October 21, 1916, James Pirrie was admitted to No. 1 Convalescent Depot in Boulogne due to V.D.S. ulcers. The following day, he was transferred to No. 39 General Hospital in Havre, where he remained until being discharged on December 13, 1916. On January 21, 1917, he was admitted to No. 8 Canadian Field Ambulance, due to influenza, remaining there for five days. On January 30, 1917, he was admitted to No. 10 Canadian Field Ambulance, and the following day was transferred to Divisional Rest Station, due to conjunctivitis. He remained there until February 8, 1917, when he rejoined his unit.

In the new year, the 4th Battalion, Canadian Mounted Rifles took part in two of the defining battles of that year in France. The Battle of Vimy Ridge (April 9-12, 1917) was the first time (and last time in the war) that all four divisions of the Canadian Corps, with soldiers from every region in the country, would surge forward simultaneously. The four-day victory at Vimy Ridge was a seminal battle, a turning point in the war for the Canadian Corps. It was a significant victory for Canada, and later referred to as “the birth of a nation”. The Attack on Hill 70 and Lens (August 15-25, 1917) was the second-largest Canadian military undertaking up to that point in the war, second only to Vimy. It was the first major battle orchestrated by Canadian commander Lieutenant-General Arthur Currie and the first time German forces used flame-throwers and mustard gas against the Canadians. Known as “Canada’s forgotten battle of the First World War”, the Canadians were able to capture Hill 70 but not the city of Lens.

By mid-October 1917, James Pirrie arrived with the Canadian Corps in an area in Flanders, Belgium known as Passchendaele. The **Battle of Passchendaele** (October 26 – November 10, 1917) was waged in unceasing rain on a battlefield that was a nightmarish mess of rotting, mangled corpses, gagging gas, water-filled craters and glutinous mud. The Canadian soldiers overcame almost unimaginable hardships and horrific fighting conditions. The remarkable Canadian victory that few thought possible, came at a cost of almost 12,000 Canadian wounded and more than 4,000 Canadians killed.

On October 26, 1917, Private James Pirrie of the 4th CMR lost his life in action during the horrific Battle of Passchendaele, Belgium. His Circumstances of Death Register records him as; *Date of Casualty: 26-10-17. “Killed in Action.” Location of unit at time of Casualty: ATTACK WEST OF PASSCHENDAELE.* Another Sarnian, Charles Edwin Knight, lost his life in the same battle on the same day (Charles Knight’s story is included on page 317).

James Pirrie, 20, has no known grave. He is memorialized on the Menin Gate (Ypres) Memorial, Belgium, Panel 30, 32. On the Sarnia cenotaph, his name is inscribed as J.M. Pierrie. In 1921, the Pirrie family, fifty-four-year-old parents John Sr. (a carpenter) and Marion, and their children Catherine (age twenty) and Ferguson (age fourteen) were still living at 304 Campbell Street, Sarnia. Catharine Pirrie later married James William West on October 19, 1924 in Sarnia. On November 3, 1934, Ferguson Stewart Pirrie (a graduate of Sarnia Collegiate, residing at 214 Emma Street, Sarnia), married Marjorie Ruth Swainson (residing at 196 Queen Street, Sarnia) in Sarnia.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 2G, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10Z

PLAYNE, Leslie (#6985)

Leslie Playne was born in England but came to Canada when he was seventeen. In Sarnia he worked at the Bank of Commerce, was active in local athletics, and was one of the first to enlist in September 1914. Two-and-a-half years later, he was an officer in the Royal Flying Corps, one of the most dangerous postings of the war. Less than a year later, he was killed in action during an attack against the enemy. He has no known grave and is memorialized on the Arras Memorial in France.

Leslie Playne was born in Amberley, Gloucestershire, England on September 15, 1894, the son of Alexander Whateley and Florence Elizabeth (nee Field) Playne, of Stanley Street, Bedford, England. Alexander Playne (born January 1854, Gloucestershire) married Florence Field (born 1863 in Bengal, India) on April 14, 1887 in West Kensington St. Andrew, England. Alexander and Florence Playne had nine children together: daughters Nora (born January 1888); Violet (born October 1889); and Doreen (born July 1906); and sons Penderel (born January 1894); Leslie; Osman (born March 1898); Norman (born July 1900); Vernon (born January 1902); and Courtenay (born October 1903). Leslie Playne was baptized on October 13, 1895 in Amberley. In 1901, the Playne family was residing in the town of Theescombe in Gloucestershire--parents Alexander and Florence, and their children Nora, Violet, Penderel, Leslie, Osman and Norman, and their fourteen year-old servant Lilian Lewis.

Ten years later, in 1911, the Playne family was residing in Bedford, Bedfordshire—parents Alexander and Florence, and their children Violet, Norman, Vernon, Courtenay and Doreen. Alexander supported his family as a master woolen cloth manufacturer, who at the time, was engaged in private indigo dyeing research work. Sixteen year-old Leslie Playne was a student residing in Horsham, Sussex, England attending the Christ's Hospital School, also called Bluecoat School in West Horsham, Sussex (at the time, approximately one hundred boys were registered there, ages 12 – 18).

In February 1912, seventeen year-old Leslie Playne immigrated to Canada, sailing from Liverpool, England aboard the passenger ship *Corsican* and arriving in Halifax, Nova Scotia on February 10, 1912. With \$50 in his pocket, he recorded his final intended destination as Toronto, and his intended occupation as a clerk. At some point after, he ended up in Sarnia working as an accountant at the Canadian Bank of Commerce.

On his twentieth birthday, September 15, 1914, Leslie Playne enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force in Sarnia. He had been a member of the 27th Regiment, St. Clair Borderers, with the rank of Private. He completed his Attestation Paper on September 22, 1914 at Valcartier Camp, Quebec. He stood five feet six and three-quarter inches tall, had brown eyes and black hair, was single, and recorded his trade or calling as bank accountant, and his next-of-kin as his mother Florence Playne at 9 Stanley Street in Bedford, England. He also recorded that he had three years prior military service, in the Officers Training Corps, Christ's Hospital Division, England. Leslie embarked overseas bound for the United Kingdom aboard the *S.S. Laurentic* on October 3, 1914, part of the 1st Division of the Canadian Expeditionary Force, as a member of Canadian Infantry, 1st Battalion.

Two months later, on December 1, 1914, Leslie Playne was stationed in England acting as Pay Sergeant attached to a staff. Four months later, on April 1, 1915, Leslie was taken on strength into the Canadian Pay and Record Office Details in London, England with the rank of Sergeant. Nine months later, on January 6, 1916, Leslie was admitted to No. 2 London General Hospital, Chelsea with a diagnosis of varicocele (a vein enlargement). He remained there for almost three weeks, being discharged to duty on January 26, 1916.

Approximately eight months later, on October 2, 1916, Leslie Playne ceased to be attached to the Pay Office, and was taken on strength to the 36th Battalion in West Sandling for duty. In late December 1916, Leslie proceeded to Royal Flying Corps (RFC) School for Officers Training Course. In early February 1917, he was transferred to the 3rd Reserve Battalion in West Sandling, and two months later in mid-April 1917, he received an appointment to commission in the British Army, Royal Flying Corps (RFC).

Flying, still in its infancy, was extremely dangerous. The wooden-framed planes were flimsy and equipping the light aircraft with heavy weaponry was problematic. The demands of war meant that pilot training was often cursory. Many recruits had only a few hours of instruction before being expected to fly solo; consequently, more pilots died from accidents and mechanical failure than from enemy fire. By war's end, almost a quarter of all British flyers were Canadian. Of 6,166 British Empire air service fatalities, 1,388 were Canadian. An additional 1,130 Canadians were wounded or injured, and 377 became prisoners of war or were interned.



2nd Lieutenant Leslie Playne

Eleven months after receiving his commission in the Royal Flying Corps (RFC), on March 27, 1918, Leslie Playne lost his life during action in France. A RFC 2nd Lieutenant, he was simply recorded as “missing 27-3-18, France”. In May 1918, the *Sarnia Observer* received a letter reporting that the former Sarnia man was missing. Following is a portion of the *Observer* article:

Former Young Sarnia Bank Clerk Is Reported Missing

Lieut. Leslie Playne Pouring Shot and Shell into Enemy When Last Seen

A letter has been received in this city, reporting that a former young Sarnia man was missing... He was reported missing March 27th. The following message was received by his parents: “Regret to inform you that Second Lieutenant Leslie Playne, R.A.S., reported missing March 27th.” Lieut. Playne, prior to his enlistment, was on the staff of the Canadian Bank of Commerce, in Sarnia, and was one of the first to respond to the call, going to England with the First Canadian Contingent, and has been in active service since the early days of the war. He returned to France on March 23rd, after a fortnight’s leave to England and had been on the firing line four days, when he was reported missing. From information received, the last seen of the heroic young officer, he was attacking German infantry with bombs and machine gun. Since then he has failed to return. There is a slight chance that he was taken prisoner and in the hands of the Germans. What ever his fate, the young man did his work nobly and fought to the last. While in Sarnia, he made a host of friends for his manly and gentlemanly ways and was esteemed by all who had the pleasure of his acquaintance. He was a lover of sports, and was actively engaged in the organization of an athletic association in Sarnia when the war broke out.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission website and the Canadian Virtual War Memorial (Veterans Affairs Canada) website both record Second Lieutenant Leslie Playne as a member of the Air Force, Royal Flying Corps, 16th Squadron. Leslie Playne, 23, has no known grave. He is memorialized on the Arras Memorial, Pas de Calais, France. His name is inscribed on the Sarnia Canadian Bank of Commerce Plaque (pg. 1173). In November 2019, his name along with 25 others was added to the Sarnia cenotaph, engraved in stone to be remembered always. SOURCES: C, D, E, F, L, N, 2D, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10Z

POTTER, Albert Edwin (#845109)

Albert Potter was a young man who came from a family that had a long military background and he got to the front through sheer determination. It took him three years to get to the front lines and soon after he witnessed the death of two of his friends. While fighting in a campaign that changed the course of the war, Albert was killed instantly by an enemy shell. He is buried in Longueau British Cemetery, Somme, France.

Albert Edwin Potter was born in Point Edward, Ontario, on July 9, 1896, the son of Albert Victor and Flora Louisa (nee Beaseley) Potter. (NOTE: Ontario Birth Records record Albert Edwin Potter’s birth date as July 10, 1896, however Albert recorded his birthdate in his Military Personnel Files as July 9, 1896). Albert Victor Potter (born September 29, 1867 in Dorsetshire, England) had immigrated to Canada in 1871, and married Flora Louisa Beaseley (born June 3, 1876 in Point Edward, Ontario) on December 27, 1893 in Point Edward, Ontario. Albert Sr.

and Flora Potter had six children together: William Olive (born December 7, 1894); Albert Edwin Jr.; Gordon Clifford (born December 16, 1899); Clarence Willard (born August 21, 1901); Hubert (born 1907); and Lillian Genevieve (born October 7, 1910). The Potter family lived at 173 South Brock Street in Sarnia.

Albert Potter Jr. came from a family that had a long military background; for example, his father, Albert Sr. a GTR locomotive fireman, also tried to enlist in WWI but was not allowed to join. His maternal grandfather ran away at the age of seventeen to fight his country's battles, going through the Crimean and other wars in Europe. After serving for fifteen years, Albert's maternal grandfather immigrated to Canada. Many years later, Albert Potter Jr. trained at Aldershot, the same site in England where his grandfather had trained more than half a century before.

Albert's older brother **William Potter** also served in the war. Twenty year-old William enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force (CEF) on January 27, 1915 in Sarnia. He stood five feet nine inches tall, had blue eyes and fair hair, was single, and recorded his job or calling as painter, and his next-of-kin as his father Albert Potter Sr. of Sarnia, Ontario. William Potter became a member of the 7th Canadian Mounted Rifles, with the rank of Private. He embarked overseas bound for the United Kingdom on June 9, 1915. For almost a year, he remained in England training at locations including Shorncliffe, Aldershot, Bulford and Newcastle. He was also hospitalized a few times while in England due to different illnesses.

On May 21, 1916, William Potter embarked for France. Two months later, in late July, he was in No. 3 Canadian General Hospital in Boulogne with an illness. In late August 1916, he returned to England where he remained for more than a year. While there, he served with a number of units including the Fort Garry Horse Reserve Regiment (FGHRR) in Shorncliffe; the 64th Battalion at Hastings; the 2nd Canadian Labour Battalion (CLB) at Seaford; the 16th Reserve Battalion; and the Canadian Reserve Cavalry Regiment (CRCR). William returned to Canada aboard the *SS Carmania* on September 8, 1917 and was transferred to the Canadian Military Police Corps (CMPC), No. 1 Detachment. Lance Corporal William Potter was discharged on demobilization on February 6, 1919 in London, Ontario.

Albert Edwin Potter Jr. was a young man who got to the front through sheer determination, for he had been rejected three times for active service. On February 12, 1915, at the age of eighteen, he enlisted for the first time in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force (CEF) in Sarnia (two weeks after his older brother William had enlisted). Albert recorded his trade or calling as clerk, and his next-of-kin as his father Albert Potter Sr. of 173 South Brock Street, Sarnia. He stood five feet six and a half inches tall and was single. He became a member of No. 3 Stationary Hospital Corps and remained with that unit for three months. His first rejection occurred when he was discharged as medically unfit for service following a severe attack of pneumonia. When his strength returned, he volunteered himself through a reinforcement draft of his old unit, No. 3 Stationary Hospital Unit in July of 1915. He was in uniform barely twenty-four hours when he was again stricken with pneumonia. After his recovery, he was discharged, his second rejection.

Nineteen year-old Albert Potter Jr. enlisted again in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force (CEF) on February 9, 1916 in Sarnia. He stood five feet seven inches tall, had blue eyes and light brown hair, was single, and lived on Brock Street with his parents at the time. He again recorded his job or calling as clerk, his next-of-kin as his mother Flora Potter of Brock Street, Sarnia, and that he had prior military service with #3 Stationary Hospital C.E.F. When the Lambton 149th was organized, he became a member of the Lambton 149th Battalion Band in Sarnia. He trained with the battalion at London and Camp Borden. On August 22, 1916, he entered the hospital at Camp Borden where he remained for eight days due to influenza. The following spring, on March 25, 1917, Albert Potter of the 149th Band, embarked overseas from Halifax bound for the United Kingdom aboard the *SS Lapland*. He arrived in Liverpool, England on April 7, 1917.

In England, Albert remained with the band until drafts for active service in France dissolved the band. He was initially posted to Segregation Camp at Camp Bramshott, a member of the 25th Reserve Battalion. On June 1, 1917, he was taken on strength into the 161st Canadian Infantry Battalion, at Camp Witley. Two months later, on August 6, 1917, he was transferred to the 156th Canadian Infantry Battalion, still at Camp Witley. He offered his services to fight but was again rejected as unfit, his third rejection, and became a member of the 156th Battalion Band.

Albert went with that organization on a tour of all the hospitals, giving musical programs throughout England, cheering up the wounded British and colonial soldiers and sailors. He remained with the 156th Battalion Band until February 1918. On February 28, 1918, Albert was at last successful in getting on a draft of

reinforcements, becoming a member of the Canadian Infantry, Eastern Ontario Regiment, 21st Battalion. More than three years after he had first enlisted in Sarnia as an eighteen year-old, on February 28, 1918, twenty-one-year-old Albert Potter finally proceeded to France, as a member of the 21st Battalion, with the rank of Private.



Private Albert Edwin Potter

On March 3, 1918, Private Albert Potter arrived at the front line reinforcement camp with the 21st Battalion. In his first few months there, he saw two of his best chums killed, one on the 1st of April of 1918, and another on the 31st of May. This was a sad blow to the young soldier but, despite his troubles and heartaches, Albert's letters home were never anything but cheery and optimistic. In his last letter to his parents in Sarnia, he told them not to worry, that he was enjoying himself, and that he hoped to be back home with them soon.

Five months after arriving in France, Albert Potter found himself part of **Canada's Hundred Days Campaign** (August 8 – November 11, 1918 in France and Belgium). This campaign was the "beginning of the end" of the Great War. Canadians were called on again and again over the three-month period to lead the offensives against the toughest German defences. The series of victories repeatedly drove the Germans back, culminating in Germany's unconditional surrender on November 11, but it came at a cost of almost 46,000 Canadians killed, wounded and missing.

The first offensive in Canada's Hundred Days Campaign was the **Battle of Amiens** in France (August 8-14, 1918), a truly all-arms battle, one that all four Canadian divisions would be involved in. Over the course of one week, in a battle that British Field Marshal Douglas Haig called "*the finest operation of the war*", the Canadians would advance nearly 14 km--but the achievement came at a cost of 11,822 Canadian casualties.

In the lead up to the Battle of Amiens, on August 6, 1918, Private Albert Potter of the 21st Battalion was killed in action. Albert and his battalion had been moving forward of Villers Bretonneux to occupy new positions in the front line trenches when he was killed by an enemy shell. Albert Potter's Circumstances of Death Register records him as; *Date of Casualty: 6-8-18. "Killed in Action." On the morning of August 6th, 1918, his Battalion moved forward of Villers Bretonneux to occupy new positions, and whilst passing an ammunition dump nineteen men were killed when an enemy shell hit the dump, causing a big explosion. Longueau British Cemetery, 2 ½ miles South East of Amiens, France.*

Mrs. Flora Potter at 173 South Brock Street in Sarnia received a telegram from the Director of Records in early-September 1918, informing her of the circumstances of her son Pte. Albert Potter's death:
Madam,

I beg to transmit herewith a copy of the report setting forth the circumstances under which the late soldier marginally noted (A.E. Potter 845109) killed 6-8-18, met his death: "On the morning of August 6-18, the 21st Can. Bat. moved forward to occupy new positions and while passing one of our ammunition dumps an enemy shell hit the dump, causing explosion, and killing the above mentioned soldier and several others belonging to this unit.

Two days after Albert Potter met his death, the last of the quartet of chums, Sergt.-Major Traynor, "went

West.” This was also a blow to the Potter family, as Sgt.-Major Traynor was the one upon whom the Potter family depended for all particulars of their soldier son. Back in Sarnia, Flora Potter received the following letter of condolence from the 21st Canadian Battalion Chaplain in October of 1918:

Dear Madam,

Our Colonel has asked me to express the sorrow of the whole battalion for the death of your gallant son, Albert Edwin Potter who was killed in the Battle of Amiens on August 8th. He died instantly and suffered no pain. His effects will be sent to you in due course. He was a good soldier.

Yours lovingly, Rev. Renison

Following is a portion of the *Sarnia Observer* newspaper article reporting on Albert Potter’s death:

What a price we are paying for liberty? Sarnia and Lambton sons a few years ago in the schools of this city or district – many of them are to-day sleeping in Flanders – because at the sound of the bugle which sounded the call of the Motherland, they went to stop the advancing hun....

The youngsters are the ones who are paying the toll in this great carnage. Albert was just a boy, barely twenty-two, with his whole life before him. He tried twice to do his bit and could have stayed in Canada with honor, but his was a spirit that would not stay down. His ambition to do his best to the full, and while his passing brings a tear to the eye of all who knew him, they have the consolation of knowing that they had a MAN to call a friend. His parents mourn the heroic passing of a noble son as “One more gone for England’s sake, Where so many go, Lying down without complaint.”

Albert Potter, 22, is buried in Longueau British Cemetery, Somme, France, Grave I.A.I. On his headstone are inscribed the words, THE LORD KNOWETH THEM THAT ARE HIS. II TIMOTHY 2.19. In 1921, the Potter family was still residing in Sarnia--parents Albert Sr. (an engineer) and Flora, and children William (a painter), Gordon (a machinist), Clarence (a teacher), Hubert and Lillian (both students). Flora Louisa Potter passed away in January 1935, and Albert Victor Potter passed away in 1942. Both are buried in Lakeview Cemetery in Sarnia. SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 2G, 7C, 8A, 8X, 8Y, 10Z

POWELL, Thomas Edwin (#6948)

English born Thomas Edwin Powell, like his two brothers, were “British Home Children” who were sent to Canada when their parent or parents did not have the resources to care for them. Thomas was working at Imperial Oil when he enlisted in September 1914 with the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force. Thomas, 23, was killed at the Battle of Ypres on April 30, 1915, six months after he was overseas. He has no known grave.

Thomas Powell was born in London, England, on February 22, 1892, the middle son of Edward Scott Powell Sr. and Fanny (nee Bennett, born about 1865) Powell. Thomas had an older brother, Edward Scott Jr. (born December 6, 1889) and two younger siblings: Henry John (born August 13, 1894); and Ada Louisa Powell (born 1896). Thomas Powell, and his two brothers, were **British Home Children**, who would be sent to Canada by Barnardo Homes.

Between 1869 and 1948, over 100,000 children, most between six and fifteen years of age, were sent to Canada from the British Isles during the “British Child Emigration Movement”. Circumstances in Britain had resulted in their families experiencing hard times. Churches and philanthropic organizations sent these impoverished, abandoned and orphaned children to Canada in the belief that they would have a better chance for a healthy, moral life in rural Canada. Canadian families welcomed them however far too many were used as a source of cheap farm labour and domestic help.

At the age of twelve, in late March 1904, Thomas departed Liverpool aboard the “*Southwark*”, and arrived in Portland on April 5, 1904. His intended destination was Toronto, and he would initially reside in Forest, Ontario. Nine months after his arrival, in late January 1905, Thomas wrote a letter to Mr. A.B. Owen in Toronto, of Barnardo Homes. Following is his letter:

Dear Sir,

I thought of writing to you to let you know how I am getting along. I am getting along very well. My boss thought that I was a great help to him last summer. I can hitch up the team, drive the pony, plough and harrow, disk, stook, help to build a load of grain or hay. I can milk like a milkmaid. I have gained twelve pounds in weight since I came here. We are not milking any cows now since Christmas. I have been going to school since the first of November, and have not missed a day. I have got into the Third Book. I got a nice little Bible at New Year’s from my Sunday school teacher. I hear quite often from my mother. She sent me a nice card at Christmas. I paid my brother a

visit. We are having a nice winter, but it is very cold now. We have fourteen head of cattle, three horses and a little colt that we call "Fly," three pigs and a lot of hens, turkeys, geese and ducks. I have skates, and I have lots of fun. All for this time, I remain one of your devoted Home boys.

Thomas E. Powell

In 1911, nineteen year-old Thomas Powell was residing as a "domestic" with the Core family in Plympton Township. The Core family comprised parents Amos (a farmer) and Lillie Core, and their three children Wesley (age twelve); Roy (age six); and Bruce (age three). But what of the other members of the Powell family?

Widowed mother Fanny Powell, along with her fourteen year-old daughter **Ada Louisa Powell** (born 1896), immigrated to Canada in 1911. Mother and daughter arrived in Halifax aboard the *Corinthian* on May 8th, where Fanny recorded her previous occupation as nurse; her destination as Forest, Ontario; and her intended occupation as a domestic. Later that year, forty-six-year-old Fanny Powell was employed as a domestic at the Warwick home of brothers Samuel (age forty-eight) and Walter (age forty-one) Scott, both farmers, and their mother Jeanette Scott.

Fanny and daughter Ada ended up moving several times. They later resided with Mrs. James Williams of R.R. #4 in Petrolia. In 1921, Ada was employed as a housemaid at the home of Isaac and Coubrough Adams and their three young sons, at 339 Blanche Street, Sarnia. Years later, on May 22, 1935, Ada, now thirty-eight and a cook, residing at 109 N. MacKenzie Street married thirty-three-year-old Nelson Roy Yeates, a farmer in Sarnia Township. Ada Louisa (nee Powell) Yeates is buried in Blackwell Cemetery, Sarnia.

Thomas' two brothers led eventful lives. Also sent by Barnardo Homes, **Edward Scott Powell Jr.**, the oldest sibling, arrived in Canada from Liverpool at the age of eleven in 1900 and was placed with the Evans Martin family residing in Forest, Ontario. In 1901, records show that the Martin family included parents Evans (farmer) and Elizabeth Martin, and their two young children, George (age three) and Alice (age two), with eleven year-old Edward Powell recorded as a domestic. A decade later, in 1911, Edward was a rooming at 171 Victoria Street, Sarnia, and was employed as a sailor on a steamer.

On December 25, 1916, twenty-seven-year-old Edward Powell Jr., then a teamster residing in Sarnia, married twenty-three-year-old Annie May Dobbie (born September 16, 1893 in Halton) in Kitchener, Ontario. Edward and Annie Powell would have one child together, Thomas Edward Powell, who was born April 1918 in Sarnia. The parents named their son after his uncle Thomas Edwin Powell, who had been killed in the war in April 1915. In 1921, Edward, a labourer at Imperial Oil, and his family were residing at 160 Bright Street, Sarnia. Years later, Edward Jr. and Annie Powell's only child, Thomas, served in World War II, as a Warrant Officer-Pilot in the RCAF. Thomas died in October 1942. Note: Thomas Edward Powell's story is included in the WWII section of this Project on page 945.

The youngest brother, **Henry "John" Powell**, was born August 13, 1894 in England. Like his brothers, John was a British Home Child, sent by Barnardo Homes to Canada. Departing from Liverpool, he arrived in the port of Boston aboard the "*New England*" on July 25, 1902. John was seven years old, one of 117 children on board from Dr. Barnardo's with their intended destination as Toronto and Peterborough. Years later, John also served in the First World War.

Now twenty-one, John enlisted in the Canadian Expeditionary Force on August 19, 1915 in Niagara, Ontario. He stood five feet seven and a half inches tall, had blue eyes and brown hair, was single, and recorded his trade or calling as lumberjack, and his next-of-kin as his mother Mrs. Fannie Powell of Petrolia, Ontario. John became a member of the 37th Battalion, CEF, with the rank of Private. He embarked overseas for England from Halifax aboard the *SS Lapland* on November 27, 1915. He spent time in England, training at such camps as Aldershot, Shorncliffe and Bramshott. Six months after arriving overseas, on May 7, 1916, John was transferred to the 60th Battalion, and he would arrive in France the next day. On June 22, 1916, Private John Powell completed his Military Will (a perforated sheet from his Pay Book). In it, he stated that "In the event of my Death I give the whole of my property and effects to my mother Mrs. Fanny Powell RR No 4 Petrolia Ontario".

Ten months later on April 23, 1917, John was transferred to the 87th Battalion, Quebec Regiment. Less than four months later on August 15, 1917, Private John Powell of the 87th Battalion was "Reported from Base missing". Soon after, he was recorded as, "Now for official purposes presumed to have Died on or since 15-8-17". John's Circumstances of Death Register records him as; *Date of Casualty: On or since 15-8-17. "Previously reported Missing now for official purposes presumed to have Died". ATTACK AT LENS.* Twenty-three-year-old Private John Powell has no known grave. He is memorialized on the Vimy Memorial, Pas de Calais, France.

Thomas Edwin Powell had many friends in Sarnia as well as Forest, where he had formerly resided. Prior to enlisting, Thomas Powell was employed at the Imperial Oil Works and boarded with Mrs. Cameron, of 192 Lochiel Street, Sarnia (the *Observer* recorded his address as the Union Hotel, Sarnia). The United Kingdom, including Canada and Newfoundland, declared war on Germany on August 4, 1914. Among the first to join was twenty-two-year-old Thomas Edwin Powell, a member of the 27th Regiment, St. Clair Borderers, who enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force on September 22, 1914 in Valcartier Camp, Quebec. He stood five feet five inches tall, had grey eyes and dark brown hair, was single, and recorded his trade or calling as Ironworker, and his next-of-kin as his brother Edward Powell residing at 192 Lochiel Street in Sarnia (and later with the Wright brothers in Petrolia, Ontario).

Thomas Powell embarked overseas bound for England on October 3, 1914 aboard the *SS Laurentic*. He became a member of the Canadian Infantry, Western Ontario Regiment, 1st Battalion, with the rank of Private. In early April 1915, Thomas and the 1st Battalion along with the rest of the 1st Division Canadians, arrived at the Ypres salient battlefield in Belgium, an area traditionally referred to as Flanders. It was here that the Canadians engaged in their first battle of the war, the **Second Battle of Ypres**, their baptism by fire. It was here that the Germans unleashed the first lethal chlorine gas attack in the history of warfare. In the first 48 hours at Ypres (April 22-24), there were more than 6,000 Canadian casualties--one Canadian in every three became casualties of whom more than 2,100 died and 1,410 were captured.

Fighting continued in the Ypres salient on and off until May 25, 1915 including battles at St. Julien, Festubert, and Givenchy. In just over one month at Ypres, one third of the Canadian force, over 8,600 soldiers were killed, wounded or captured. It was during the Battle of Ypres that Private Thomas Powell, six months after arriving overseas, lost his life. On April 30, 1915, Thomas died during an attack in the area of Langemarck in the Second Battle of Ypres, Belgium. His Circumstances of Death Register records him as; *Date of Casualty: 30-4-15. "Killed in Action". ATTACK AT ST. JULIEN. No record of burial.*

Thomas Powell, 23, has no known grave. He is memorialized on the Menin Gate (Ypres) Memorial, Belgium, Panel 10-26-28. Thomas' name is also inscribed on the Village of Camlachie's Memorial.
SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 2G, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 9R, 10N, 10Z

PRINGLE, Albert Stewart (#2356439)

Sarnia-born Albert Pringle was a thirty-six-year-old pipefitter and a married father of six when he enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force in February 1918. Less than six months later he was in France and soon after, was taking part in the last great campaign of the war. During the brutal fighting of the final offensive, Private Albert Pringle was killed in action by an enemy shell during an advance in the Battle of Canal-du-Nord. One and a half months after his death, the Great War ended.

Albert Stewart Pringle was born in Sarnia, on June 18, 1881, the youngest child of William Elliott and Sarah Jane (nee Williamson) Pringle. William Pringle (born 1833 in Selkirkshire, Scotland) and Sarah Jane Williamson (born April 9, 1846 in York County, Ontario) were married on July 6, 1863 in St. Clair County, Michigan. William and Sarah Pringle had six children together: William James (born 1869); Elizabeth (born 1871); Thomas Edward (born 1872); Margaret (born November 3, 1875); George (born September 2, 1877); and Albert Stewart Pringle. William Pringle was supporting his family working as a tailor in Sarnia at the time of Albert's birth. In 1891, the Pringle family in Sarnia included parents William (a tailor) and Sarah Pringle, and children Elizabeth (a dressmaker), Thomas (a tailor), Margaret, George and Albert (age nine).

Ten years later, in 1901, the Pringle family lived on Brock Street in Sarnia. That year, nineteen year-old Albert lost his father William Pringle, who passed away in Sarnia on March 29, 1901 at the age sixty-eight. On the 1901 census, nineteen year-old Albert Pringle (a clerk at the time) was residing in Sarnia with his widowed mother Sarah and his siblings George (age twenty-three, a painter) and Margaret (age twenty-five). In 1914, Albert lost his mother Sarah Jane, who passed away due to heart disease in Elgin, Ontario on April 30, 1914 at the age of sixty-eight. William Elliott and Sarah Jane Pringle are both buried in Lakeview Cemetery, Sarnia.

On June 4, 1907, twenty-six-year-old Albert Pringle, residing in Detroit and employed as a timekeeper, married twenty-two-year-old Elizabeth Marie (nee Block, of Michigan, USA, born 1885) in Detroit, Michigan. Albert and Elizabeth Pringle had six children together, all born in Michigan: Albert Elliot (born 1907); Elmira May (born 1909); Marion Lorraine (born February 12, 1911); Dorothy Jane (born 1912); James Stewart (born August 17, 1913); and Virginia Jean (born February 5, 1914).

Thirty-six-year-old Albert Pringle enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force on February 26, 1918 in London, Ontario. Albert and his family lived at 1525 Canton Avenue in Detroit, Michigan at the time. He stood five feet six and a half inches tall, had blue eyes and black hair, was married with six children, and recorded his trade or calling as pipefitter, and his next-of-kin as his wife Mrs. Elizabeth Marie Pringle of Canton Avenue, Detroit. He also recorded that he had two years of prior military experience with the 27th Regiment in Sarnia. For some reason, Albert recorded his birthdate as June 18, 1880 (however his birth certificate records his birthdate as June 18, 1881). Albert became a member of the 1st Depot Battalion, Western Ontario Regiment.

Albert Pringle embarked overseas bound for the United Kingdom on March 24, 1918 aboard the SS *Grampian*, and arrived in England on April 3, 1918. He was initially posted to the 4th Reserve Battalion at Bramshott. After training for four and a half months, in mid-August 1918, Albert was transferred to Camp Witley becoming a member of the Canadian Infantry, Western Ontario Regiment, 47th Battalion, with the rank of Private. Days later, on August 20, 1918, Private Albert Pringle arrived in France with the 47th Battalion. He was soon thrust into the last great campaign of the war.

The **Hundred Days Campaign** (August 8 – November 11, 1918 in France and Belgium) was the “beginning of the end” of the Great War. Canadians were called on again and again over the three-month period to lead the offensives against the toughest German defences. The series of victories repeatedly drove the Germans back, culminating in Germany’s unconditional surrender on November 11, but the victories came at a cost of almost 46,000 Canadians killed, wounded and missing.

The first offensive in the Campaign was the Battle of Amiens (August 8-14, 1918), a truly all-arms battle, one that all four Canadian divisions would be involved in. Over the course of one week, in a battle that British Field Marshal Douglas Haig called “*the finest operation of the war*”, the Canadians advanced nearly 14 km. The second offensive in the Campaign was the Battle of Arras and Breaking the DQ Line (August 26-September 3, 1918), where Canadians were part of a spearhead force tasked with crashing one of the most heavily fortified positions, the Hindenburg Line. General Sir Julian Byng called the Canadian victory at Arras and the DQ Line “*the turning point of the campaign*”.

The third offensive in Canada’s Hundred Days Campaign was the **Battle of Canal-du-Nord and Cambrai** in France (September 27-October 11, 1918). Against seemingly impossible odds and a desperate fully prepared enemy, in a series of brutal engagements in the two weeks, the Canadians successfully channeled through a narrow gap in the canal, punched through a series of fortified villages and deep interlocking trenches, and captured Bourlon Wood and the city of Cambrai. General Arthur Currie would call it “*some of the bitterest fighting we have experienced*” with the victories coming at a cost of 14,000 Canadian casualties.

Just over one month after arriving in France, on September 27, 1918, Private Albert Pringle of the 47th Battalion was killed in action by an enemy shell during an advance in the Battle of Canal-du-Nord. Albert’s Circumstances of Death register records him as; *Date of Casualty: 27-9-18. “Killed in Action.” Whilst taking part in the advance from North West of Moeuvres to Bourlon Wood he was instantly killed by enemy shell fire. Quarry Wood British Cemetery, Sains-lez-Marquion, France.* One and a half months after Albert’s death at Canal du Nord/Bourlon Woods, the Great War ended.

In mid-October 1918, Albert’s sister, Mrs. Hugh Oliver, formerly of Sarnia, then living in St. Thomas, Ontario, received the news of her brother’s death in action. Albert’s widowed wife Elizabeth Pringle returned to her home state of Michigan, residing at 1011 Forest Avenue, and then 4230 Granby Avenue in Detroit, where she received Albert’s medals and her War Service Gratuity. In 1920, Elizabeth Pringle was living at 541 Mack Avenue in Detroit, along with their children Albert Elliott, Elmira May, Marion, Dorothy, James and Virginia. Albert Pringle, 37, is buried in Quarry Wood Cemetery, Pas de Calais, France, Grave II.B.30. In November 2019, his name along with 25 others was added to the Sarnia cenotaph, engraved in stone to be remembered always.

SOURCES: C, D, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 2G, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10Z

RAE, John Duthie Buchan (#505534)

Scotland born and raised John Rae immigrated to Canada in his mid-twenties and moved to Sarnia to live with his sister. He was 27 when he enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force, an opportunity to return to his home and family and to serve his country. After serving for more than a year at the front, the war became too much for him. He is buried in Quatre-Vents Military Cemetery, Pas de Calais, France.

John Duthie Buchan Rae was born in Falkirk, Stirlingshire, Scotland on May 11, 1888, the youngest son of William and Janet (nee Sutherland) Rae. William Rae (born 1852) and Janet Sutherland (born 1855) were married on July 28, 1876 in Falkirk, Scotland. William and Janet Rae had five children together: Livingston Alexander Baird (born April 27, 1877), James Sutherland (born 1880), Maggie McIndoe (born January 22, 1885), John, and Mary Hay (born 1890). The Rae family lived at 107 Union Road, Camelon, Falkirk, Scotland and William supported his family working as an iron-moulder. In 1901, John was living with his family in Falkirk, and in 1914, was living in at Gibsongray Street in Bainsford, Scotland. At some point after he immigrated to Canada.

John's sister, Mary Hay Rae, at age 23, immigrated to Canada aboard the *SS Scandinavian*, arriving in Quebec on May 10, 1914. Just over one month later, on June 21, 1914, Mary Hay Rae married Robert Liddell Hastings in Sarnia. Scotland born Robert Hastings was working as a carpenter in Sarnia. They lived at 121 John Street and later 199 Kathleen Avenue in Sarnia.

Twenty-seven-year-old John Rae enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force on April 8, 1916 in Sarnia. He was living at 121 John Street at the time, with his sister Mary Hay Hastings. He stood five feet six and a half inches tall, had blue eyes and brown hair, was single, and recorded his trade or calling as carpenter, and his next-of-kin as his father, William Rae, in Falkirk, Scotland. His parents' address was later changed to Pennure, Stenhouse St., Cowdenbeath, Fife, Scotland. John became a member of the Canadian Engineers. On September 1, 1916, John allocated \$20 a month of his pay to Mrs. Robert L. Hastings of 121 John St., Sarnia.

Five months after enlisting, John Rae embarked overseas aboard the *SS Scandinavian* and arrived in the United Kingdom on September 22, 1916. He was initially taken on strength into the Canadian Engineers at the training depot at Shorncliffe. Three months later, on December 27, 1917, he completed his Military Will and bequeathed all of his cash, property and effects to his father William. On January 21, 1917, he was taken on strength as a member of the 4th Army Troops Company, Canadian Engineers (4ATCCE) at Crowboro. Two days later, on January 23, Sapper John Rae of the 4ATCCE arrived in Havre, France.

Army Troop Companies and Canadian Engineers worked in the corps area on the construction of defences, accommodation and route communications. In addition, they ran corps workshops and parks, built positions for heavy guns and worked on water supply, frequently in forward areas. One of the most important functions of the Sappers was to dig trenches and dig tunnels for mines underneath enemy trenches.

During the year of 1917, the Canadian Engineers were part of some of the defining battles of that year in France and Belgium. The Battle of Vimy Ridge (April 9-12, 1917) was the first time (and last time in the war) that all four divisions of the Canadian Corps, with soldiers from every region in the country, would surge forward simultaneously. The four-day victory at Vimy Ridge was a seminal battle, a turning point in the war for the Canadian Corps. It was a significant victory for Canada, and later referred to as "the birth of a nation", but it came at a cost of 10,600 casualties.

The Attack on Hill 70 and Lens (August 15-25, 1917) was the second-largest Canadian military undertaking up to that point in the war, second only to Vimy. It was the first major battle orchestrated by Canadian commander Lieutenant-General Arthur Currie and the first time German forces used flame-throwers and mustard gas against the Canadians. Known as "Canada's forgotten battle of the First World War", the Canadians were able to capture Hill 70 but not the city of Lens at a cost of approximately 9,100 casualties.

The Battle of Passchendaele (October 26 – November 10, 1917) was waged in unceasing rain on a battlefield that was a nightmarish mess of rotting, mangled corpses, gagging gas, water-filled craters and glutinous mud. Overcoming almost unimaginable hardships and horrific fighting conditions, the remarkable Canadian victory that few thought possible, came at a cost of almost 16,000 Canadian wounded and killed.

On December 8, 1917, John Rae was granted 14 days leave in the United Kingdom. However, the endless digging, strain of prolonged fighting and nightmarish conditions of war had taken a toll on John Rae as it had many others. Ultimately it became too much for him. Thirteen months after arriving in France, at about noon on February 19, 1918, Sapper John Rae was in a dugout when he took his own life by committing suicide. In the investigation that followed, it was determined that the "cause of death has now been ascertained to be died from wounds willfully self-inflicted during temporary insanity."

A Court of Inquiry was assembled in the field the next day for the purpose of inquiring into and reporting on the death of Sapper John Rae. A number of witnesses from 4th ATCCE gave their testimony of the event. Corporal

R.B.C. Hammond stated, *At about 12 noon on Feb 19th I was having dinner in the dugout of the forward billet. I had previously noticed Sapper Rae standing by his bunk about 8 feet away from me. I had my back to where he had been standing. I heard a peculiar squeal or shriek and turned about. I saw Sapper Rae draw his hand (right) across his throat. I slipped around him got behind him and grabbed both of his wrists. He was still hacking at his throat with a razor and blood was gushing from the wound. He was making peculiar squealing noises. I struggled with him for a fraction of a minute when he fell to the ground with me on top of him. I succeeded in wresting the razor from him and handed it to Sapper Deans who was standing close by. Nothing could be done to stop the bleeding. He was dead in 3 or 4 minutes. The deceased had lately seemed despondent, especially the last few days. He was very quiet and seemed to be brooding. I remarked to him a few days previously cheer up Jack. He then said every body was looking at him.*

Sapper Andrew Deans stated, *At about noon on Feb. 19th I was in the same dugout with Sapper Rae but in another aisle. I was sitting on my bunk. I heard a peculiar squeal and a sound like rushing water. When I heard the squeal I got up and went to the passage. I saw Corp. Hammond seize the deceased and struggle to take a razor away from him. They fell to the floor and Corp. Hammond succeeded in getting the razor which he handed to me. I did not actually see the deceased cut his throat. I left the dugout to find an officer. When I returned in about 8 minutes Sapper Rae was dead. Sapper Rae had seemed very quiet and despondent lately and unlike his usual self.*

Sapper J.R. Kerr stated, *At about noon on Feb. 19th I was having lunch in the dugout with my back to the deceased. When I came in I had noticed him standing by his bunk but we did not speak. I heard several short squeals and turned around. I saw Sapper Rae striking at his throat and thought he was choking. I then noticed blood flying and a razor in the hand of deceased. Corp Hammond then stepped around him, got behind him grabbed him and attempted to take the razor away from him. They both fell to the floor and Corp Hammond obtained the razor and handed it to Sapper Deans. Spr. Rae had seemed unusually quiet and depressed lately.*

Corp. Hammond said get the Sergt. and I left the dugout. When I got outside the dugout I found that the Sergt. Had gone down to the scene of the accident by another entrance. I at once returned to where Spr. Rae was lying. He was dead by this time. This was not more than five minutes from the time I first noticed him striking his throat. It was impossible to stop the flow of the blood.

Lt. R.V. Heathcott stated, *I was in the Officers dugout at about 12:15 on Feb. 19th at the forward billets of the 4th A.T.Coy.C.E. Sapper Deans came into me and said an accident has occurred. I said what has happened? He replied Sapper Rae has cut his throat. I immediately went to the front dug out which was about 100^x-150^x distant and found Sapper Rae lying on the floor in a pool of blood. Corp Hammond, Spr. Kerr and a few others were standing about. Spr Deans gave me the razor. Sapper Rae's pulse had stopped and he was dead. I arranged to have his body removed to Company Headquarters.*

Captain J.D. Stewart, C.A.M.C. examined the body of Sapper Rae about 10 o'clock the next morning. He stated, *I found a large wound extending from one inch below the right ear to about two inches below the left ear, apparently caused by a sharp instrument. The large blood vessels on the right side of the neck had been severed and the resulting hemorrhage had been profuse. Death was due to loss of blood.*

The Court concluded that Sapper J.D.B. Rae "committed suicide by cutting his throat with a razor while temporarily insane." John Rae, 29, was given a full discharge after his death and a military burial. He is buried in Quatre-Vents Military Cemetery, Pas de Calais, France III.C.2. On his headstone are inscribed the words, FOR LIBERTY AND RIGHT.

Sources: C, D, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 2G, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10Z

REID, George Alexander (#403181)

Scotland-born George Reid immigrated to Canada and came to work and live in Petrolia and in Sarnia. At the age of 31 and married less than four years, George made the decision to serve his country. Unfortunately he never had the chance to serve overseas. Only days after he enlisted in October 1915, he was accidentally killed in bizarre circumstances. A full military funeral was held for Private George Reid in Petrolia.

George Alexander Reid was born in Glasgow, Scotland on February 3, 1884, the son of Robert (a policeman) and Jane "Jeanie" (nee Murray) Reid. It is unknown exactly when the Reid family immigrated to Canada, but in March 1909, twenty-five-year-old George Alexander Reid and his parents were living in Petrolia. On December 13, 1911, twenty-seven-year-old George Reid married nineteen year-old Margaret Jane Bissett, in Petrolia, Ontario.

George Reid's wife, Margaret Jane Bissett, born August 21, 1892, was the daughter of Cameron Bissett Sr. (a farmer) and Margaret (nee Smith) Bissett, both from Scotland. Margaret's parents Cameron Bissett Sr. and Margaret Smith were married in May 1892 in Plympton Township, Lambton County, and later lived at 136 Dundas Street, Sarnia. Margaret Bissett had resided in Enniskillen Township and the town of Petrolia all her life. Margaret Bissett had one sister, Elizabeth (born November 1893) and one brother, Cameron Robertson Bissett Jr. (born October 1896). Margaret's brother, Cameron Robertson Bissett Jr. also served in the Great War. Cameron Bissett Jr. was killed in action in September 1918 (his story is included in this Project on page 238).

For a time before he enlisted, George Alexander Reid was employed as a bartender in Petrolia. Thirty-one-year-old George Reid enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force on October 1, 1915 in London, Ontario, becoming a member of the 34th Battalion. He stood five feet seven inches tall, had brown eyes and brown hair, and recorded his trade or calling as clerk, and his next-of-kin as his wife Margaret Jane Reid in Petrolia. George also recorded that he had three years of prior military experience with the Gordon Highlanders (an infantry regiment of the British Army).

Only a few days after enlisting, George Reid lost his life in bizarre circumstances. On October 5, 1915, while doing training exercises in London, Ontario, he was accidentally killed when he was struck by a westbound Grand Trunk train. George had become delirious as a result of being inoculated for typhoid fever earlier in the day, and in a demented condition had wandered away from the camp and out of the city. His Circumstances of Death Register records him as; *Date of Casualty: 5-10-15. Accidently killed by train. Body found on G.T.R. tracks a mile east of Fairfield Station. Was badly mangled. Actions had been noticed to be rather strange just before the accident. Hillsdale Cemetery, Petrolia, Ontario.* Less than three weeks after George Reid's death, the 34th Battalion embarked overseas bound for the United Kingdom.



Private George Alexander Reid

A full military funeral was held for Private George Reid in Petrolia. Prior to the funeral, his body lay in uniform in the Steadman undertaking parlor, guarded by two of Private Reid's friends and fellow soldiers. During the evening prior to, and in the morning of the funeral, nearly one thousand friends, men, women and children viewed the remains. The funeral was held at the Presbyterian Church by Reverend Mr. McGillivray, with a procession headed by the citizen's band, followed by members of the Masonic Order, of which Private Reid was a member. The coffin was draped with a Union Jack, and the "Last Post" was sounded over the grave.

George Reid, 31, is buried in Petrolia (Hillsdale) Cemetery, Petrolia, Ontario. His name is also inscribed on the Petrolia Memorial in the Town of Petrolia. For George's wife, Margaret Jane Reid, tragedy would come again almost three years later. Her brother, Cameron Robertson Bissett Jr., would lose his life during fighting in Amiens, France in September of 1918.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 2G, 7C, 8A, 8X, 8Y, 10Z

REYNOLDS, William Henry (#845188, #845197)

William Reynolds was born in England but came to Canada when he was ten, part of the British Home Children, a program designed to give impoverished and orphaned children a chance for a better life in Canada. It took two attempts for him to successfully enlist to serve. An officer in the Salvation Army, he felt that God had special work for him to do saying, "If only I could get into the trenches as a stretcher bearer just think of how much I could do for Jesus". Four months after arriving at the front, William lost his life after being severely wounded by enemy machine gun fire near Amiens.

William Henry Reynolds was born in Kent County, England, on October 9, 1892. William Reynolds was a **British Home Child**, who had been sent to Canada by Barnardo Homes. Between 1869 and 1948, over 100,000 children, most between six and fifteen years of age, were sent to Canada from the British Isles during the "British Child Emigration Movement". Circumstances in Britain had resulted in their families experiencing hard times. Churches and philanthropic organizations sent these impoverished, abandoned and orphaned children to Canada in the belief that they would have a better chance for a healthy, moral life in rural Canada. Canadian families welcomed them however far too many were used as a source of cheap farm labour and domestic help.

At the age of ten, William Reynolds departed Liverpool aboard the *Dominion*, and arrived in Montreal, Quebec on July 24, 1903. William was among a group of 209 boys on board the ship from Dr. Barnardo's, and their intended destination was Toronto. William soon after lived in the community of Blackwell, Ontario, with Mr. West. Approximately a year and a half after arriving in Canada, on February 13, 1905, William wrote a letter from Blackwell Post Office (his employer was Mr. David May) to Barnardo Homes in Toronto. Following is a portion of his letter:

[Note: "Ups and Downs" was a quarterly publication printed in Toronto under the auspices of Dr. Barnardo's Homes].

Dear Sir,

As I have seen so many of the boys' letters in the UPS AND DOWNS, I thought I would like to write too, and let you know how I am getting along. I am going to school just now; I started at the New Year, and I am getting along very nicely. I have learned to do a great many kinds of work on the farm, and I am going to try to learn a great deal more, if I can. I have learned to drive the horses, and to plough with the riding plough, and if there is any other boy that can do that at twelve years old I would like to hear of them; and I can rake hay with the horse-rake, and harrow and lots of other things. Last summer I used to go to the lake, about half a mile away, and go in swimming. It was great fun. We have eighteen head of cattle and three horses and two colts. We have a nice warm barn, with concrete stables underneath. It is nice and warm to go into to do the chores.... I am going to church and Sunday school, and I have only missed about two Sundays since I came here, and I will be here a year in April... I have got into as nice a home as any boy would want. I sometimes go out hunting with Mr. West, and we get some rabbits. We set some snares to-day, and we hope to catch some that way. I am having a good time living here, and I hope all the boys and girls who came out the same time as I did (that was in June 1903) are having as good a time as I am. I have a good home and lots of good food....

William Henry Reynolds

William Reynolds later lived in Sarnia, making his home with Mrs. Frederick Sproule at 115 Mitton Street. Prior to enlisting, William, an active worker in the Salvation Army, was promoted to Lieutenant, and stationed at Leamington and Goderich.

Twenty-three-year-old William Reynolds enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force on April 11, 1916 in Sarnia, becoming a member of the 149th Battalion. He stood five feet nine inches tall, had blue eyes and light brown hair, was single, and recorded his trade or calling as Officer in Salvation Army, and his next-of-kin as Mrs. Frederick Sproule, Guardian, 115 Mitton Street, Sarnia. Six months later, on October 10, 1916, William was discharged from the 149th at Camp Borden "in consequence of being medically unfit". William had a pre-service joint condition in his left foot that "hinders him from marching, causing him discomfort and pain".

Five months later, on March 16, 1917, twenty-four-year-old William Reynolds enlisted again with the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force, Western Ontario Regiment, 149th Battalion, in London, Ontario. With a new regimental (service) number 845197, he was recorded as five feet eight and one-quarter inches tall, with brown eyes and dark brown hair and was single. He recorded his trade or calling as pipe fitter, his present address as 115 Mitton Street, Sarnia, and his next-of-kin as his friend Mrs. Fred Sproule at the same address in Sarnia. Twelve days later, on March 28, 1917, Private William Reynolds embarked overseas from Halifax bound for the United Kingdom aboard the *S.S. Lapland*.

William Reynolds arrived at Liverpool, England on April 7, 1917, and was processed at the Segregation Camp at Bramshott, and then taken on strength into the 25th Reserve Battalion at Bramshott. After ten months of training, on February 15, 1918, he was transferred to the 4th Reserve Battalion, still at Bramshott. Three weeks later, on April 7, 1918, he proceeded across the English Channel to the Canadian Corps Reinforcement Camp at Etaples, France as a member of the 18th Battalion. William joined the 18th Battalion as a stretcher-bearer at the front on May 15, 1918. He soon found himself taking part in the last great campaign of the war.

The **Hundred Days Campaign** (August 8 – November 11, 1918 in France and Belgium) was the “beginning of the end” of the Great War. Canadians were called on again and again over the three-month period to lead the offensives against the toughest German defences. The series of victories repeatedly drove the Germans back, culminating in Germany’s unconditional surrender on November 11, but the victories came at a cost of almost 46,000 Canadians killed, wounded and missing.

The first offensive in Canada’s Hundred Days Campaign was the **Battle of Amiens** in France (August 8-14, 1918), a truly all-arms battle, one that all four Canadian divisions would be involved in. Over the course of one week, in a battle that British Field Marshal Douglas Haig called “*the finest operation of the war*”, the Canadians advanced nearly 14 km--but the success came at a cost of 11,822 Canadian casualties.

On August 8, 1918, Private William Reynolds of the 18th Battalion, was wounded in action by machine gun fire while fighting in the Battle of Amiens. He was transferred to No. 5 Casualty Clearing Station with wounds recorded as “gun shot wounds thumb and chest”. The following day, on August 9, 1918, William lost his life as a result of his wounds. His Circumstances of Death Register records him as; *Date of Casualty: 9-8-18. “Died of Wounds.” While taking part in operations east of Amiens, on August 8th, 1918, he was severely wounded in the chest by enemy machine gun bullets. His wounds were dressed and he was taken to No. 5 Casualty Clearing Station where he died the following day. Crouy British Cemetery, 10 miles North West of AMIENS, FRANCE.*

In August 1918, William Reynold’s friend and next of kin in Sarnia, Mrs. Fred Sproule on Mitton Street, received the following telegram: DEEPLY REGRET TO INFORM YOU 845197, PTE. WM. HENRY REYNOLDS, INFANTRY, OFFICIALLY REPORTED DIED OF WOUNDS, 5TH CANADIAN CLEARING STATION AUGUST 9TH, 1918 GUNSHOT WOUNDS TO CHEST.

In late August 1918, over 400 local citizens of Sarnia joined the Salvation Army in a packed memorial service for William Reynolds at the citadel. The following is an excerpt of the address given by Captain Ashby, Commander of the Sarnia Salvation Army Corps:

Sarnia’s first Salvationist, William Reynolds has fallen in the fight for liberty and freedom “Somewhere in France.” ‘Billie’ died of wounds on August 9th, 1918, from gunshot wounds in the chest, and there is no doubt he would be trying to help some mother’s boy when he received the fatal shot. He enlisted during 1916 in the 149th Battalion but was rejected for further service in the fall of the same year as medically unfit, but on returning here again felt that God had special work for him to do. “If only I could get into the trenches as a stretcher bearer just think of how much I could do for Jesus”, was a frequent saying of his and so he tried again and proceeded overseas as a stretcher bearer in the 18th. As a man in khaki, he took every opportunity to work for his Master and there are many who will thank God that he enlisted. The writer would like to bear witness to his work when at Camp Borden, open air services were conducted at every chance that came his way and it was not a matter of entertaining the boys but always the leading of them to his Saviour and many sought and found Jesus in that camp, thank God....

In mid-November 1918, a special service was held at the Salvation Army in which a memorial tablet was unveiled by Colonel John Rawling, Divisional Commander for the London division, in memory of Private William Reynolds. The tablet commemorated William’s death on August 9th, 1918 and by then, more details of his death had been released: *A young man named Billings found young Reynolds lying in a shell hole badly wounded and asked him if there was anything he could do for him. Willie’s last reply was, “Yes, write to my mother and tell her I was not afraid of death and I was game to the last.”*

Following the war, William’s mother, Mrs. Harriet Moon of 67 Forest Road, Tunbridge Wells, Kent, England, received a Plaque and Scroll Memorial and the Memorial Cross for the loss of her son. William’s brother, Horace Sellar, was also residing at that address. William Reynolds, 25, is buried in Crouy British Cemetery, Crouy-Sur-Somme, Somme, France, Grave VI.A.13. On his headstone is inscribed the word, CROWNED. William Reynolds was the first member of local Sarnia Salvation Army Congregation to lose his life in the war. SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 2G, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 9R, 10N, 10Z

ROBINSON, Frederick John (#542328)

Born in England, Frederick Robinson immigrated to Sarnia and just before his eighteenth birthday enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force. It was an opportunity to return to his home and family and to serve his country. He arrived in the United Kingdom in May 1917 and approximately a year later was in France. Soonafter, he was taking part in the last great campaign of the war. Five months after arriving in France, Private Frederick Robinson was killed in action while fighting in the Battle of Canal-du-Nord, near Cambrai.

Frederick John Robinson was born in England, on October 23, 1898, the son of Thomas Robinson. At some point, Frederick immigrated to Canada, and lived in Sarnia. On October 12, 1916, approximately two weeks before his eighteenth birthday, Frederick Robinson enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force in London, Ontario. He stood five feet five inches tall, had brown eyes and brown hair, was single, and recorded his trade or calling as tinsmith, and his next-of-kin as his friend C.K. White of 109 Brock Street, Sarnia. Both Frederick Robinson and C.K. White were residing at a boarding house at 109 Brock Street, Sarnia at the time. Frederick's next-of-kin/guardian was later changed to Mrs. John Courtney of Mooretown, Ontario, and later 294 Devine Street, Sarnia. At enlistment, Frederick was attached to the Divisional Cyclist Depot in Toronto.

In late April 1917, Frederick Robinson embarked overseas from Halifax bound for the United Kingdom aboard the *SS Justicia*, and arrived in Liverpool, England on May 14, 1917. At Chiseldon Camp, he was taken on strength into the Canadian Reserve Cyclists Company. On June 30, 1917, he became a member of the 4th Canadian Reserve Battalion. Nine months later, on March 28, 1918, at Bramshott, he became a member of the Canadian Infantry, Western Ontario Regiment, 1st Battalion, with the rank of Private. He soon crossed the English Channel with his battalion and arrived in France. Approximately four months later, he was taking part in the last great campaign of the war.



Private Frederick Robinson

The **Hundred Days Campaign** (August 8 – November 11, 1918 in France and Belgium) was the “beginning of the end” of the Great War. Canadians were called on again and again over the three-month period to lead the offensives against the toughest German defences. The series of victories repeatedly drove the Germans back, culminating in Germany's unconditional surrender on November 11, but the victories came at a cost of almost 46,000 Canadians killed, wounded and missing.

The first offensive in the Campaign was the Battle of Amiens (August 8-14, 1918), a truly all-arms battle, one that all four Canadian divisions would be involved in. Over the course of one week, in a battle that British Field Marshal Douglas Haig called “*the finest operation of the war*”, the Canadians advanced nearly 14 km. The second offensive in the Campaign was the Battle of Arras and Breaking the DQ Line (August 26-September 3, 1918), where Canadians were part of a spearhead force tasked with crashing one of the most heavily fortified positions, the Hindenburg Line. General Sir Julian Byng called the Canadian victory at Arras and the DQ Line “*the turning point of the campaign*”.

The third offensive in Canada's Hundred Days Campaign was the **Battle of Canal-du-Nord and Cambrai**

in France (September 27-October 11, 1918). Against seemingly impossible odds and a desperate, fully prepared enemy, in a series of brutal engagements in the two weeks, the Canadians successfully channeled through a narrow gap in the canal, punched through a series of fortified villages and deep interlocking trenches, and captured Bourlon Wood and the city of Cambrai. General Arthur Currie would call it “*some of the bitterest fighting we have experienced*” coming at a cost of 14,000 Canadian casualties.

Five months after arriving in France, on September 27, 1918, Private Frederick Robinson of the 1st Battalion was killed in action while fighting in the Battle of Canal-du-Nord. His Circumstances of Death Register records him as; *Date of casualty: 27-9-18. “Killed in Action.” Location of Unit at time of Casualty: Attack west of HAYNECOURT. Ontario British Cemetery, 6 miles West of CAMBRAI, FRANCE.* In late October 1918, his next of kin, Mr. White of Brock Street, received a telegram informing him that, PTE. F.J. ROBINSON, INFANTRY, WAS OFFICIALLY REPORTED KILLED IN ACTION ON SEPTEMBER 27TH.

One and a half months after Frederick Robinson’s death, the Great War ended. Frederick Robinson, 19, is buried in Ontario Cemetery, Sains-Les-Marquion, Pas de Calais, France. Grave I.B.4.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 2G, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10Z

RODBER, Albert (#845157)

Albert Rodber was born in England but came to Canada when he was five. He was part of the British Home Children, a program designed to give impoverished and orphaned children a chance for a better life in Canada. At the age of 19, he enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force. Fifteen months later he arrived in the United Kingdom. After arriving in France, four and a half months later he was taking part in the last great campaign of the war. Albert was killed in action in August 1918 after being hit by enemy shrapnel. He has no known grave and is memorialized on the Vimy Memorial.

Albert Rodber was born in England, on June 9, 1896, the son of Alice Mary Rodber (born in Suffock County, England about 1871). Albert Rodber was a **British Home Child**, who would be sent to Canada by Barnardo Homes. Between 1869 and 1948, over 100,000 children, most between six and fifteen years of age, were sent to Canada from the British Isles during the “British Child Emigration Movement”. Circumstances in Britain had resulted in their families experiencing hard times. Churches and philanthropic organizations sent these impoverished, abandoned and orphaned children to Canada in the belief that they would have a better chance for a healthy, moral life in rural Canada. Canadian families welcomed them however far too many were used as a source of cheap farm labour and domestic help.

In the fall of 1901, at age five, Albert Rodber departed Liverpool aboard the *Tunisian*, and arrived in Montreal, Quebec on September 27, 1901. Young Albert Rodber was among a group of 117 children on board the ship from Dr. Barnardo’s, and his intended destination was Peterborough. Albert Rodber came to live in Arkona, later at R.R. #1 Forest, and later still at 212 Durand Street, Sarnia, working for families throughout his childhood. In 1911, fifteen year-old Albert Rodber was residing and working as a “Home Boy” (servant), with the family of Laman Armitage (age thirty-nine, a farmer), Margaret Armitage (age eighty-four, Laman’s mother), and Mary Wells (age fifty-eight, Laman’s sister) in Forest, Bosanquet District.

Nineteen year-old Albert Rodber enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force on December 20, 1915 in Arkona, becoming a member of the 149th Battalion. He stood five feet six inches tall, had blue eyes and red hair, was single, and recorded his present address as Arkona, Ontario. He recorded his trade or calling as farmer, and his next-of-kin as his widowed mother Mrs. Rodber in Arkona. Albert underwent training at London, Ontario and Camp Borden (where he was hospitalized for 13 days due to influenza).

Albert Rodber embarked overseas from Halifax bound for the United Kingdom on March 28, 1917 aboard the *S.S. Lapland*, and arrived in Liverpool, England on April 7, 1917. He was processed at the Segregation Camp at Bramshott, and then taken on strength into the 25th Reserve Battalion at Bramshott. After ten months of training, on February 15, 1918, Albert became a member of the 4th Reserve Battalion, still at Bramshott. Approximately six weeks later, on March 28, 1918, he became a member of the 47th Battalion at the Canadian Base Depot. Days later, he arrived in France with that battalion, and moved to the front lines. Four and a half months later, he was taking part in the last great campaign of the war.

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offensives against the toughest German defences. The series of victories repeatedly drove the Germans back, culminating in Germany's unconditional surrender on November 11, but the victories came at a cost of almost 46,000 Canadians killed, wounded and missing.

The first offensive in the Campaign was the Battle of Amiens (August 8-14, 1918), a truly all-arms battle, one that all four Canadian divisions would be involved in. Over the course of one week, in a battle that British Field Marshal Douglas Haig called "*the finest operation of the war*", the Canadians advanced nearly 14 km--but the success came at a cost of 11,822 Canadian casualties. Private Albert Rodber survived this first offensive, and as it closed, on August 14, he was transferred to the 44th Battalion, Canadian Infantry, Manitoba Regiment.

The second major offensive in this Campaign was the Battle of Arras and Breaking the DQ Line (August 26-September 3), where Canadians were part of a spearhead force tasked with crashing one of the most heavily fortified positions, the Hindenburg Line--a series of strong defensive trenches and fortified villages. General Sir Julian Byng would call the Canadian victory at Arras and the DQ Line "*the turning point of the campaign*".

In the days leading up to this second offensive, and just over one week after joining the 44th Battalion, Private Albert Rodber was killed in action on August 22, 1918 after being hit by enemy shrapnel. His Circumstances of Death Register records him as; *Date of Casualty: 22-8-18. "Killed in Action." His Battalion was holding the line in the vicinity of FRANSART when a shell burst at his machine gun post, shrapnel hitting him in the legs and shoulder, killing him instantly.*

While Albert Rodber was serving overseas in France, his widowed mother, Alice Mary Rodber, lived in Sarnia (according to the 1921 Census, she had immigrated to Canada in 1908). On July 8, 1918, forty-seven-year-old Alice Mary Rodber married fifty-three-year-old widower Angus William Mitchell (born in Strathroy, a labourer) in Sarnia. Alice Mary and Angus Mitchell lived at 212 Durand Street in Sarnia.

Two months after marrying, in early September 1918, Alice Mary Mitchell of Durand Street, received an official telegram informing her that her son, PRIVATE ALBERT RODBER HAD BEEN KILLED IN ACTION ON AUGUST 22ND. Three years later, in 1921, fifty year-old Alice Mary Mitchell and her fifty-six-year-old husband Angus William Mitchell, were still living at 212 Durand Street, along with their daughters May Rodber (age twenty-two, born in England) and Gladys Rodber (age four, born in Ontario). Albert Rodber, 22, has no known grave. He is memorialized on the Vimy Memorial, Pas de Calais, France.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 2G, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10N, 10Z

ROGERS, Archibald (#2005528)

Archibald Rogers was married and working in his chosen career when he made the decision to serve his country in early 1917. Within a year of enlisting in Sarnia, he arrived at the horrendous front line trenches in France. Six months later, he lost his life as a result of the horror and gruesome conditions he endured. Twenty-six-year-old Archibald Rogers is buried in Aubigny Communal Cemetery Extension, Pas de Calais, France.

Archibald Rogers was born in London, Ontario, on June 6, 1892, the son of Edward John and Alice (nee Harwood) Rogers. Both of Archibald's parents were born in England: Edward Rogers, born August 22, 1861, had immigrated to Canada in 1875; and Alice Harwood, born June 12, 1860, had immigrated to Canada in 1874. After their marriage, Edward and Alice Rogers had four children together: sons William (born August 29, 1883); Archibald; and Alfred (born July 2, 1899); and daughter Nellie (born August 10, 1886).

In 1891, the Rogers family was residing in London, Ontario where Edward supported his family working as a carpenter. Along with Alice were their children William (age seven) and Nellie (age four). Ten years later in 1901, the Rogers expanded family was residing on Lyle Street in London—parents Edward (still a carpenter) and Alice, and their children William (age seventeen, a bookmaker), Nellie (age fourteen), Archibald (age nine) and Alfred (age one). Edward Rogers later worked as a car builder in London.

On December 26, 1910, eighteen year-old Archibald Rogers, an electrician in London, married eighteen year-old Annie Gould in Petrolia, Ontario. Annie Gould, born October 10, 1892 in Oil Springs, was the daughter of Robert McNaughton (a driller) and Frances "Fanny" Letitia (nee Wade) Gould of Petrolia. Archibald and Annie Rogers initially lived at 408 Cromwell Street, Sarnia, and the following year, they along with her seventeen year-old brother John Gould, were living at 317 Maxwell Street, Sarnia. Archibald continued his work as an electrician and his brother-in-law John Gould was a waiter at a restaurant.

On February 23, 1917, twenty-four-year-old Archibald Rogers enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas

Expeditionary Force in Sarnia. He stood six feet tall, had brown eyes and fair hair, was married and lived at 408 Cromwell Street at the time. He recorded his trade or calling as electrician. He originally recorded his next-of-kin as his father Edward Rogers of 389 Lyle Street, London, but later changed it to his wife Annie Rogers of 408 Cromwell Street. Archibald became a member of the Canadian Engineers with the rank of Private.

Archibald Rogers embarked overseas from Halifax bound for the United Kingdom on board the *S.S. Justicia* on May 3, 1917. He arrived in England on May 14, 1917, becoming part of the Canadian Engineers Training Depot at Crowborough. Six months later, in November 1917, he proceeded from the Canadian Engineers Pool in Seaford to France. He arrived in France on November 17, 1917. Approximately ten weeks later, on February 3, 1918, Archibald Rogers joined his unit in the field, a member of the Canadian Engineers, 7th Field Company with the rank of Sapper.

Only four and a half months later, on June 26, 1918, Private Archibald Rogers was admitted to No. 8 Canadian Field Ambulance, recorded as PUO (Pyrexia – of unknown origin fever of an undetermined cause). The next day, he was transferred to No. 4 Casualty Field Ambulance. Two days later, on June 29, 1918, he was admitted to No. 42 Casualty Clearing Station, recorded as dangerously ill with pleurisy. Only nine days later, on July 8, 1918, Sapper Archibald Rogers lost his life as a result of the conditions of war, recorded as “*Died of Sickness (Pneumonia) attributable to Field Operations*”. His Circumstances of Death Register records him as; *Date of Casualty: 8-7-18. “Died (Pneumonia), at No. 42 Casualty Clearing Station.” Aubigny Communal Cemetery Extension. 8 ¼ miles North West of ARRAS, FRANCE.*

Archibald Rogers, 26, is buried in Aubigny Communal Cemetery Extension, Pas de Calais, France, Grave IV.J.39. His widow later remarried. On July 12, 1919, twenty-six-year-old Annie married thirty-six-year-old John McDonald (born Chatham Township, a labourer), in Wallaceburg, Kent County.
SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 2G, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10Z

SALSBURY, John Reginald Sergeant (#803168)

England born John Salisbury immigrated to Canada and enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force in April 1916. Seven months later he arrived in France where over the following year, he had to be hospitalized several times; he survived the Battle of Vimy Ridge; and was wounded by enemy gun fire. In September 1918, in the last big offensive of the final campaign of the war, John Salisbury was killed in action while acting as a stretcher-bearer. On his headstone are inscribed the words, “To live in hearts we leave behind is not to die”.

John Reginald Sergeant Salisbury was born in Northampton, England, in March 1893, the son of Thomas and Mary Jane (nee Pateman) Salisbury. John’s recorded birthdate is based on British Birth Index and Census Records (he recorded his birthyear differently when he enlisted). Thomas Salisbury (born 1868 in Bedfordshire, England) married Mary Jane Pateman (born September 1869 in Bedfordshire, England) in April 1889 in Bedfordshire. Thomas and Mary Jane Salisbury lived at 5 Abington Street, Northampton, and later Ringstead Cottage (near Thrapston, Northants), England, and they had four children together: Thomas Francis (born February 17, 1891); John Reginald Sergeant; Hilda Mary (born June 1894); and Winifred (born March 1896).

In 1901, the Salisbury family was living in Northamptonshire, England—parents Thomas (age thirty-three, a tobacconist, working at home) and Mary Jane (age thirty-two), and their children Thomas (age ten), John Reginald (age eight), Hilda (age six) and Winifred (age five), along with their seventeen year-old domestic servant Priscilla Scrivener. Ten years later, in 1911, the Salisbury family were still living in Northamptonshire--parents Thomas (a shopkeeper/tobacconist, working at home) and Mary Jane, and their children Thomas (age twenty, a motor engineer), John Reginald Sergeant (age eighteen, assisting in the shop), Hilda (age sixteen, assisting in the house) and Winifred (age fifteen, a student). John’s brother, Thomas Francis Salisbury, also served in the Great War, as a member of the British Army – Royal Army Medical Corps.

In April 1912, twenty year-old John Salisbury immigrated to Canada. He departed from Liverpool aboard the *Empress of Britain* and arrived in St. John’s, New Brunswick on April 27, 1912. The ship’s passenger list recorded his surname as Salisbury, and his intended destination as Toronto.

Two years later, twenty-two-year-old John Salisbury enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force on April 18, 1916 in Strathroy, Ontario. For some reason, he recorded his birthdate as January 19, 1897 (not March 1893), and as a result, a few of his military files record him as being three years younger than he was (even though the medical examiner at enlistment correctly recorded John’s “apparent age” as twenty-two). John stood five feet seven and a half inches tall, had blue eyes and auburn hair, was single, and lived at R.R. #5 Strathroy at the time.

He recorded his trade or calling as farmer, then labourer, and his next-of-kin as his mother Mrs. Mary Jane Salsbury, of 5 Abington St., Northampton, England. John became a member of the 135th (Middlesex) Battalion, Canadian Expeditionary Force.

John embarked overseas bound for the United Kingdom aboard the *S.S. Olympic* on August 22, 1916, arriving in Liverpool, England on August 30, 1916. One and a half months later, on October 15, 1916, he was transferred to the 134th Battalion at Witley. On November 28, 1916, he was transferred again, becoming a member of the Canadian Infantry, 15th Battalion. The next day, Private John Salsbury arrived in France with the 15th Battalion. Several weeks later, on December 24, 1916, he completed his Military Will in which he bequeathed all of his personal effects to his mother.

The poor conditions in France caused John to be admitted to the hospital several times in the early part of 1917: January 16, sick; January 25, defective vision; and March 30, sick, rejoining his unit on April 8, 1917. The 15th Battalion took part in the Battle of Vimy Ridge (April 9-12, 1917) in France. It was the first time (and last time in the war) that all four divisions of the Canadian Corps, with soldiers from every region in the country, would surge forward simultaneously. The four-day victory at Vimy Ridge was a seminal battle, a turning point in the war for the Canadian Corps, and significant victory for Canada. The battle was later referred to as “the birth of a nation”.

Three months after rejoining his unit, on July 10, 1917, John was admitted to No. 56 General Hospital in Etaples, initially recorded with wounds SW (shell fragment or shrapnel wound). His wounds would be updated to GSW (gun shot wounds—multiple). One month later, on August 9, 1917, he was admitted to No. 6 Convalescent Depot, Etaples, recorded as GSW arms. The next day he was transferred to No. 5 Convalescent Depot Cayeux, recorded as SW left shoulder. He remained there until August 21, 1917, when he was discharged to Base Depot in Etaples, still recorded as GW left shoulder.

In mid-March 1918, John Salsbury rejoined his unit in the field, and three months later, on June 18, 1918, he was granted two weeks leave in the U.K. He returned from leave to the 15th Battalion on July 4, 1918, and soon found himself taking part in the last great campaign of the war. The **Hundred Days Campaign** (August 8 – November 11, 1918 in France and Belgium) was the “beginning of the end” of the Great War. Canadians were called on again and again over the three-month period to lead the offensives against the toughest German defences. The series of victories repeatedly drove the Germans back, culminating in Germany’s unconditional surrender on November 11, but the final victory came at a cost of almost 46,000 Canadians killed, wounded and missing.

The first offensive in the Campaign was the Battle of Amiens (August 8-14, 1918), a truly all-arms battle, one that all four Canadian divisions would be involved in. Over the course of one week, in a battle that British Field Marshal Douglas Haig called “*the finest operation of the war*”, the Canadians would advance nearly 14 km. The second offensive in the Campaign was the Battle of Arras and Breaking the DQ Line (August 26-September 3, 1918), where Canadians were part of a spearhead force tasked with crashing one of the most heavily fortified positions, the Hindenburg Line. General Sir Julian Byng called the Canadian victory at Arras and the DQ Line “*the turning point of the campaign*”.

The third offensive in Canada’s Hundred Days Campaign was the **Battle of Canal-du-Nord and Cambrai** in France (September 27-October 11, 1918). Against seemingly impossible odds and a desperate, fully prepared enemy, the Canadians fought for two weeks in a series of brutal engagements. They successfully channeled through a narrow gap in the canal, punched through a series of fortified villages and deep interlocking trenches, and captured Bournon Wood and the city of Cambrai. General Arthur Currie would call it “*some of the bitterest fighting we have experienced*” and the success came at a cost of 14,000 Canadian casualties.

In late September 1918, the General Currie-led Canadian Corps had been assigned the tasks of taking the Marquion Line, the village of Bournon, and Bournon Woods. The first obstacle the Canadians had to overcome was the Canal Du Nord. As the canal was impassable on the northern part of his front, Currie shifted almost 2.5 km to the south, and proceeded with preparations for the Canadian Corps to make its initial attack through a dry area between Sains-lez-Marquion and Moeuvres. The whole Corps would have to move through a narrow opening before fanning out with four divisions engaged on a battlefield that would rapidly expand to over 10,000 metres. In the dusk of the evening of September 26, 1918, the Canadians moved forward. By midnight they were assembled opposite the dry section of the canal, huddled together for warmth, and for the most part in the open. As dawn broke, at 05:20, the Canadian artillery’s opening barrage flashed out, and all four divisions attacked, shocking the enemy into action. Before they could retaliate, the initial waves had crossed the canal and were fanning out from the bridgehead.

Nevertheless, the follow-up troops suffered casualties as the enemy subjected the canal bed to a violent bombardment.

John Salsbury and the 15th Battalion, commanded by Major John Girvan, began its September 27th morning advance towards the canal at 08:45. Under constant fire, the 15th Battalion dashed across the canal and then the Agache River by making a plank bridge. The companies spread out, taking different routes northwards between the canal and the main road. A bitter struggle began for the streets with the German defenders fighting for every house. By 14:00, Marquion had been taken and the 15th Battalion had reached their final objective. During the day, the 15th Battalion captured 300 prisoners, but the cost had been 153 casualties.

On that September 27, 1918, Private John Salsbury of the 15th Battalion, lost his life while fighting in the Battle of Canal-du-Nord. He was acting as a stretcher-bearer when he was killed by enemy gunfire, shot through the head. His Circumstances of Death Register records him as; *Date of Casualty: 27-9-18. "Killed in Action". Whilst acting as a stretcher bearer with his Platoon in an attack at MILL COPSE, south of MARQUION, he was shot through the head by a bullet and instantly killed. Sains-Les-Marquion British Cemetery, 11 ¼ miles South of DOUAI, FRANCE.* That day, the Canadian Corps were successful in acquiring the canal, and attained the essential objective of capturing Bourslon Wood, a forested high ground.

Today, the "Bourslon Wood Canadian Memorial", located adjacent to the town of Bourslon and about 10 km west of Cambrai, commemorates the attack across the Canal Du Nord. A grey granite block monument sits atop of a hill and bears the message: "The Canadian Corps on 27th Sept. 1918 forced the Canal Du Nord and captured this hill."

The Canadians went on to take Cambrai, Denain, Valenciennes and Mons; then marched to the Rhine with the victorious Allies. One and a half months after John Salsbury's death, the Great War ended. John Salsbury, 25, is buried in Sains de Marquion British Cemetery, Pas de Calais, France. Plot I.A.30. On his headstone are inscribed the words, TO LIVE IN HEARTS WE LEAVE BEHIND IS NOT TO DIE. On the Sarnia cenotaph, his name is inscribed as J. Salisbury. John Reginald's father Thomas Salsbury passed away the following spring, in March 1919, in Northamptonshire, England.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10Z

SCOTT, Walter Frank

At age 22, Walter Scott left his career as a schoolteacher in order to serve his country. He arrived in France in March 1918 and was soon taking part in the last great campaign of the war. On the third day of the Battle of Amiens, a battle that British Field Marshal Haig called "the finest operation of the war", Walter Scott was killed by enemy machine-gun fire. He is buried in Cerisy-Gailly Military Cemetery, Somme, France.

Walter Frank Scott was born in the village of Brussels, Huron County, Ontario, on August 11, 1893, the youngest child of Peter (born January 18, 1851 in Huron County) and Margaret 'Maggie' Marion (nee Brine, born May 13, 1860 in Huron County) Scott. On November 13, 1883, thirty-two-year-old Peter Scott (a blacksmith) married twenty-three-year-old Margaret Brine in Harpurhey, Huron County, Ontario. Peter and Margaret Scott resided in Brussels and had five children together: Joseph Brine (born December 15, 1884); Donald Stewart (born December 6, 1886); Margaret 'Maggie' Aileen (born April 17, 1889); James Cline (born October 11, 1892); and Walter Frank Scott.

After being educated at Brussels' public school and Seaforth Collegiate, Walter Scott began teaching at Auburn and Colinville. He then attended the University of Toronto Faculty of Education 1913-14 and became Assistant Principal at Earl Grey School, Toronto the following year. Having taught school at Colinville and being employed by the Reid Wrecking Company for around a year, Walter was well known in Sarnia and the vicinity. Walter's nephew, Archie Scott, and a cousin, Mrs. Bolt Reid, lived in Sarnia as well.

Twenty-two-year-old Walter Scott enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force on December 23, 1915 in Clinton, Ontario, becoming a member of the 33rd Huron Regiment. At the time, he was employed as a schoolteacher in Toronto. He then completed his Officer's Declaration Paper and was appointed Lieutenant of the 161st (Huron County) Battalion. He stood five feet eight and a half inches tall, and recorded his address as Brussels, Ontario, his next-of-kin as his father Peter in Brussels, and his profession as schoolteacher. Walter embarked overseas from Halifax bound for the United Kingdom on October 30, 1916, arriving in Liverpool, England on November 11, 1916.



Lieutenant Walter Frank Scott

Two months later, on January 12, 1917, Walter was at Shorncliffe where he qualified as first class in Musketry. Eleven months later, on December 27, 1917 at Witley Camp, Lieutenant Walter Scott was reported seriously injured, with no particulars given. The next day, his injuries were recorded as not serious--the listed injuries included; incision left eye-lid, forehead and left side of face swollen, lips of mouth swollen and scabbed.

After being under medical care for several days, on January 1, 1918, Lieutenant Scott rejoined the 161st Battalion. On February 23, 1918, he was transferred to the 4th Reserve Battalion at Bramshott, and approximately three weeks later, on March 15, 1918, he was transferred to the Canadian Infantry, 47th Battalion, Western Ontario Regiment. Two days later he arrived at the Canadian Corps Reinforcement Camp in France.

Two months after arriving in France, in mid-May 1918, Walter Scott joined the 47th Battalion for duty at the Front. One month after arriving at the front lines, on June 11, 1918, he was admitted to No. 3 Canadian Field Ambulance with a sprained right ankle. Four days later, he was transferred to No. 20 General Hospital in Camiers where he remained for almost three weeks. On July 3, 1918, he was discharged from the General Hospital to return to his battalion. He soon found himself fighting in the last great campaign of the war.

The **Hundred Days Campaign** (August 8 – November 11, 1918 in France and Belgium) was the “beginning of the end” of the Great War. Canadians were called on again and again over the three-month period to lead the offensives against the toughest German defences. The series of victories repeatedly drove the Germans back, culminating in Germany’s unconditional surrender on November 11, but it came at a cost of almost 46,000 Canadians killed, wounded and missing.

The first offensive in Canada’s Hundred Days Campaign was the **Battle of Amiens** in France (August 8-14, 1918), a truly all-arms battle, one that all four Canadian divisions would be involved in. Over the course of one week, in a battle that British Field Marshal Douglas Haig called “*the finest operation of the war*”, the Canadians advanced nearly 14 km--but the success came at a cost of 11,822 Canadian casualties.

Five weeks after being discharged from hospital, on August 10, 1918, the third day of the Battle of Amiens, Lieutenant Walter Scott of the 47th Battalion, lost his life during an attack, killed by enemy machine-gun fire. His Circumstances of Death Register records him as; *Date of Casualty: 10-8-18. “Killed in Action”. While leading his platoon in the attack upon the village of FOUQUESCOURT about noon on August 10th, he was struck by a machine gun bullet and although his wound was immediately dressed, he died half an hour afterwards. Beauport British Cemetery, 8 miles East of MOREUIL, FRANCE.*

Walter Scott, 25, is buried in Cerisy-Gailly Military Cemetery, Somme, France, Grave II.N.15. His name is also listed on the “Roll of Honour of the Ontario Teachers Who Served in the Great War.”

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 2G, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10Z

SIMMONS, Earl Sylvester (#845301)

Earl Simmons was eager to serve his country. He enlisted twice, the first time with his older brother, but health issues kept getting in the way of his ability to get overseas. Five weeks after the Great War ended, he lost his life in Sarnia where a full military funeral was held in his honour before he was interred at Lakeview Cemetery.

Earl Sylvester Simmons was born in Petrolia, Ontario, on May 1, 1894, the youngest son of Charles Solomon and Ellen Jane (nee Cleland) Simmons. Note: On both the 1901 and 1911 Censuses Earl Simmon's birth year was recorded as 1893; however, on his Attestation Paper, Earl recorded his birth year as 1894.

Charles Simmons (born November 15, 1864 in Stratford, Ontario) married Ellen Jane Cleland (born January 27, 1864 in Adelaide, Ontario) on November 15, 1884 in Oil City, Ontario. Charles supported his family working as a machinist, and he and Ellen Jane had three children together, all boys, all born in Petrolia: John Edward (born September 27, 1885, was later employed with Mueller Manufacturing Co.); Melville James (born March 10, 1889, also served in the Great War, losing his life fighting in France--see below); and Earl Sylvester Simmons.

In 1891, Charles and Ellen Jane Simmons lived in Petrolia, with their two children at the time, sons John (age six) and Melville (age two). In 1901, the Simmons family was living in Sarnia and included parents Charles and Ellen Jane (both age thirty-five), and their children John (age fifteen), Melville (age twelve) and Earl Sylvester (age eight). Six years later, on April 11, 1907, eldest son John Simmons, age 21 and a machinist, married twenty-one-year-old Sarah Rosanna Zealand in Sarnia. In 1910, John and Sarah Rose Simmons were living in Wayne Michigan, and in 1921, they were living at 309 Maxwell Street in Sarnia. John and Sarah Rose Simmons had seven children together: Earl Melville, Noble Charles, Dwight Sylvester, Edward John, James Percival, Margaret Gertrude and Ellen Maria Simmons.

In 1911, Charles and Ellen Jane Simmons (both age forty-four) lived at 112 Euphemia Street, Sarnia with their two sons: twenty-two-year-old Melville and eighteen year-old Earl Sylvester. Both father Charles and son Melville were employed as machinists at the time, while Earl was a labourer. On September 4, 1911, middle son Melville Simmons, 23, married Rhoda Jane Clark, 22, in London, Ontario, and they would live at 175 Christina Street, Sarnia. By that time, parents Charles and Ellen Simmons were residing at 257 Christina Street.

The next year, on August 12, 1912, Earl Simmons, age 21 and a machinist residing in Sarnia, married eighteen year-old Florence Cora Wagner (residing in Dawn Township) in Petrolia. Cora Wagner was the daughter of George (a farmer) and Sara (nee Morningstar) Wagner of Oil Springs. Earl and Cora Simmons would live at 299 Vidal Street, Sarnia.

Twenty-one-year-old Earl Simmons, along with his brother Melville, enlisted together in the Canadian Overseas Expeditionary Force on January 26, 1916 in Sarnia. Earl stood five feet eleven and a half inches tall, had brown eyes and black hair, was married, and recorded his trade or calling as machinist, and his next-of-kin as his wife Cora at 299 Vidal Street, Sarnia. Earl became a member of "A" Company, the Lambton 149th Battalion, Canadian Expeditionary Force. Approximately nine months later, on October 10, 1916, Private Earl Sylvester Simmons was discharged at Camp Borden, Ontario. Though his conduct and character while in the service was recorded as "good", he was discharged being declared "medically unfit".

One and a half years after Earl was discharged, in mid-April of 1918, parents Charles and Ellen Jane received the news that their middle son, Private Melville James Simmons, was officially reported dead, having passed away from wounds received in action in France.

Three months later, on July 27, 1918, twenty-four-year-old Earl Simmons enlisted a second time with the Canadian Overseas Expeditionary Force. He enlisted in Toronto, becoming a member of the Canadian Infantry, 1st Depot Battalion, 1st Central Ontario Regiment, with the rank of Private. This time he recorded his birthdate as May 1, 1893 in Sarnia, and his "present address" as Independence Road, Kansas City, Missouri, U.S.A. He recorded his trade or calling as machinist, and his next of kin as his wife, Mrs. H. Simmons, of 257 Christina Street, Sarnia (his parents address. It was later changed to 3rd Street, Fort Madison, Iowa). Earl also recorded that he had 10 ½ months prior military experience with the 149th Overseas Battalion, as a Private. On August 1, 1918, Private Earl Sylvester Simmons was approved for service by the Medical Board at Niagara Camp.

Two weeks later, on August 14, 1918, Earl was admitted to the hospital station at Niagara Camp, diagnosed with dermatitis seborrhoeica. Six days later, on August 20, 1918, he was discharged, recorded as "skin condition cured, readmission advised on surgical ward, diagnosis orchitis". On August 26, 1918, he was admitted to Toronto Base hospital diagnosed with orchitis (inflamed, enlarged and tender testicles).

In early October 1918, he was suffering headache, chills, and pain. He remained in hospital until mid-October, being discharged on October 16, 1918 with the recommendation for seven days sick leave. On October 30, 1918, he was admitted to a Toronto Stationary Hospital with influenza, pneumonia and tonsillitis. He remained in hospital for thirty-two days until December 2, 1918, before being transferred to Toronto Stationary Hospital at Exhibition Camp, for convalescence, diagnosed with influenza. He remained there for 4 days, recovered, and was released on December 6, 1918 and recommended for a ten days leave. Earl Simmons never had the opportunity to serve overseas.

Eleven days after being released from hospital in Toronto, on December 17, 1918, Private Earl Sylvester Simmons of the 1st Depot Battalion, Central Ontario Regiment, suddenly lost his life while at his Christina Street home in Sarnia. At the time of his death, the *Sarnia Observer* reported that, "he was a returned soldier, having been up and about the city up to almost the time of his death, which resulted from heart trouble". On the official death report, the doctor recorded that his death was the result of "accidental poisoning" at home. His Veterans Death Card records his death as, "*Died at his residence, No. 257 Christina St., Sarnia, Ontario, 17-12-18, Auto Intoxication*". His Canada War Grave Register records him as; *Circumstances of Death: Auto Intoxication – Taken ill at his home on December 16th, 1918. Dr. A.R. McMillan, of Sarnia, and Dr. R.G.R. McDonald, of Sarnia, were in attendance. Died at 12:30 A.M. December 17th, 1918. Lake View Cemetery, Sarnia, Ontario.* For parents Charles and Ellen Jane Simmons, their youngest son Earl's death came only eight months after they had received the news that their middle son, Melville, had been killed in action in France.

So a few days before Christmas 1918, Charles and Ellen Jane Simmons bid goodbye to their second child. Earl Simmon's funeral was held with full military honors from the family home on Christina Street. Services were conducted by Reverend George Hazen of the Devine Street Methodist Church and included members of the Great War Veterans' Association, the Sarnia Citizen's band, a firing party and a bugler playing the "Last Post". Earl Sylvester Simmons, 24, is buried in Lakeview Cemetery, Sarnia. On his headstone are inscribed the words, 845301 PRIVATE SYLVESTER E. SIMMONS CENT. ONT. REGT. C.E.F. 17TH DEC. 1918 and on the lower half is 845299 SAPPER MEL J. SIMMONS 11TH FIELD CO. C.E.F. DIED OF WOUNDS IN FRANCE 6.4.18. After the war, Charles and Ellen Jane Simmons moved to Fort Madison, Iowa, U.S.A.

Note: Earl Sylvester Simmons signed all documents in his Military File as "Earl Sylvester Simmons"; however, the name on his grave is inscribed as, "Sylvester E. Simmons".

SOURCES: C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 2G, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10Z

SIMMONS, Melville James (#845299)

Melville Simmons, 26, had been married for more than four years and was working as a mechanic when he made the decision in January 1916 to serve his country. Eleven months after arriving in France, Sapper Melville Simmons of the Canadian Engineers was killed in action by a bomb dropped from an enemy aeroplane. He is buried in Roclincourt Military Cemetery, Pas de Calais, France.

Melville James Simmons was born in Petrolia, Ontario, on March 10, 1889, the middle son of Charles Solomon and Ellen Jane (nee Cleland) Simmons. Charles Simmons (born November 15, 1864 in Stratford, Ontario) married Ellen Jane Cleland (born January 27, 1864 in Adelaide, Ontario) on November 15, 1884 in Oil City, Ontario. Charles supported his family working as a machinist, and he and Ellen Jane had three children together, all boys, all born in Petrolia: John Edward (born September 27, 1885, was later employed with Mueller Manufacturing Co.); Melville James; and Earl Sylvester Simmons (born May 1, 1894, also joined the 149th Battalion, Canadian Infantry, 1st Battalion--see above).

In 1891, Charles and Ellen Jane Simmons were residing in Petrolia, with their two children at the time, sons John (age six) and Melville (age two). In 1901, the Simmons family was living in Sarnia and included parents Charles and Ellen Jane (both age thirty-five), and their children John (age fifteen), Melville (age twelve) and Earl Sylvester (age eight). Six years later, on April 11, 1907, eldest son John Simmons, age 21 and a machinist, married twenty-one-year-old Sarah Rosanna Zealand in Sarnia. In 1910, John and Sarah Rose Simmons were living in Wayne Michigan, and in 1921, they were living at 309 Maxwell Street in Sarnia. John and Sarah Rose Simmons had seven children together: Earl Melville, Noble Charles, Dwight Sylvester, Edward John, James Percival, Margaret Gertrude and Ellen Maria Simmons.

In 1911, Charles and Ellen Jane Simmons (both age forty-four) were living at 112 Euphemia Street, Sarnia with their two sons: twenty-two-year-old Melville and eighteen year-old Earl Sylvester. Both father Charles and son

Melville were employed as machinists at the time, while Earl was a labourer.

Later in the year, on September 4, 1911, twenty-three-year-old Melville Simmons married twenty-two-year-old Rhoda Jane Clark in London, Ontario. Rhoda Jane Clark, residing in Eastwood, Ontario at the time, was the daughter of Alfred Henry (a farmer) and Georgina Elizabeth (nee Sibbans) Clark, of Woodstock, Ontario. Melville and Rhoda Jane Simmons would reside at 175 Christina Street, Sarnia. By that time, Melville's parents Charles and Ellen Simmons were residing at 257 Christina Street. The following year, on August 12, 1912, the youngest Simmons boy--Earl Sylvester, 21, married Florence Cora Wagner, 18, in Petrolia, Ontario.

Melville Simmons was a resident of Sarnia for nineteen years and, prior to enlistment, was an employee of the Sarnia Fence Company. Twenty-six-year-old Melville, along with his younger brother Earl Sylvester, enlisted together in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force on January 26, 1916 in Sarnia. Melville stood five feet ten inches tall, had grey eyes and black hair, was married and lived at 175 Christina Street in Sarnia at the time. He recorded his trade or calling as mechanic, and his next of kin as his wife Rhoda Simmons of 175 Christina Street, Sarnia. Melville became a member of the Lambton 149th Battalion, Canadian Expeditionary Force. His training took him to Camp Borden, where in early September 1916, he spent six days in hospital due to an illness.

One year after enlisting, on January 26, 1917, Melville embarked overseas from Canada bound for the United Kingdom aboard the *SS Grampian*. He arrived in England on February 6, 1917. Initially, Melville was taken on strength into the Canadian Engineers Training Depot, at the Army Camp at Crowborough. Three months later, on May 9, 1917, he sailed from England and arrived in France the next day to be part of the Engineers Pool. Eleven days later, on May 21, 1917, he was transferred to the 11th Field Company, 4th Division of Canadian Engineers, with the rank of Sapper. Sapper Melville Simmons joined this unit on the front line on May 23, 1917.

Approximately eleven months after arriving in France, on April 6, 1918, Sapper Melville Simmons of the 11th Field Company, Canadian Engineers, was wounded by a bomb from an enemy aeroplane. The attack happened at approximately 1:00 p.m. Melville lost his life half an hour later, the result of the wounds received after being hit. His Circumstances of Death Register records him as; *Date of Casualty: 6-4-18. Died of Wounds. Wounded by a bomb dropped from an enemy aeroplane at about 1 p.m. on April 6th, 1918, and died about half an hour later. ROCLINCOURT MILITARY CEMETERY, 2 miles North of ARRAS, FRANCE.*

Thirteen days later, on April 19, 1918, Charles Simmons at 257 South Christina Street in Sarnia received the following telegram from the Director of Records in Ottawa: DEEPLY REGRET TO INFORM YOU THAT 845299 PRIVATE MELVILLE J. SIMMONS, ENGINEERS, OFFICIALLY REPORTED DIED OF WOUNDS, APRIL 6, 1918. At the time of his Melville's death, his wife Rhoda Simmons was living in Woodstock, Ontario. Melville Simmons, 29, is buried in Roclincourt Military Cemetery, Pas de Calais, France, Grave VI.B.14.

Eight months after Melville's death, tragedy struck Charles and Ellen Jane Simmons again. In December 1918, their youngest son Earl Sylvester Simmons (who had enlisted with Melville), a former member of the 149th Battalion, lost his life in Sarnia, the result of accidental poisoning. Earl's funeral was held with full military honours, originating at the family home on Christina Street. Charles' and Ellen Jane's thoughts that day would also have been with their son Melville, buried somewhere in France. Earl Sylvester Simmons, 24, is buried in Lakeview Cemetery in Sarnia. On his headstone are inscribed the words, 845301 PRIVATE SYLVESTER E. SIMMONS CENT. ONT. REGT. C.E.F. 17TH DEC. 1918 and on the lower half is 845299 SAPPER MEL J. SIMMONS 11TH FIELD CO. C.E.F. DIED OF WOUNDS IN FRANCE 6.4.18. After the war, Charles and Ellen Jane Simmons moved to Fort Madison, Iowa, U.S.A.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 2G, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10Z

SKINNER, William Bruce (#226164)

Raised by his grandparents in Point Edward, William Skinner was only eighteen years old when he enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force in October 1915 in Sarnia. Nine months later he arrived in France as a member of the Canadian Cavalry. He was killed in action in one of the most brutal and horrific battles of the war. William has no known grave but is memorialized on the Menin Gate (Ypres) Memorial, Belgium.

William Wallace Wellington Bruce Skinner was born in St. Thomas, Elgin County, Ontario, on January 2, 1897, the son of Peter Cunning and Bella (nee McKerry) Skinner. William's grandparents were Angus and Mary McRury both originally from Scotland. Angus McRury was born about 1830 in North Uist, Outer Hebrides, Scotland, and had immigrated to Canada in 1851. Mary (nee MacKenzie) McRury was born about 1833 in North

Uist, Outer Hebrides, Scotland, and had immigrated to Canada in 1852. Both Angus and Mary McRury came to reside in Point Edward, Ontario. William was raised by his Point Edward grandparents, Angus and Mary McRury, after his own mother and father had passed away when he was an infant. William's other local relatives included his aunts Miss Sarah McRury, of 175 North Front Street (later 281 Emma St.); and Mrs. George Culley; L. McRury; and Mrs. D.J. McRury, of the city of Sarnia.

Angus and Mary McRury had five children of their own: Alexander, Catherine Georgina, Donald John, Archibald Ronald and Sarah McRury. In 1901, Angus (a dock labourer) and Mary McRury were residing in Point Edward with two of their children; twenty-seven-year-old Archibald (a farm labourer) and nineteen year-old Sarah McRury. In 1911, fourteen year-old William Skinner was living on Alexander Avenue in Point Edward with his grandparents, seventy-two-year-old Angus McRury (a labourer, GTR shed) and sixty-eight-year-old Mary McRury, and their daughter Sarah McRury (age twenty-nine, a grocery clerk). At the time, despite his young age, William was employed as a labourer at the Grand Trunk Railroad shed, alongside his grandfather Angus.

Eighteen year-old William Skinner enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force on October 26, 1915 in Sarnia. He stood five feet ten inches tall, had blue eyes and brown hair, was single, and lived in Point Edward with his grandparents Angus and Mary McRury at the time. He recorded his trade or calling as machinist, and his next-of-kin as his grandfather Agnes McRury of Point Edward. William became a member of the "B" Squadron, 2nd Depot Regiment, Canadian Mounted Rifles, with the rank of trooper. Trooper William Skinner embarked overseas bound for the United Kingdom on April 2, 1916 aboard the *HMS Olympic*.

William Skinner arrived in England on April 12, 1916 and was taken on strength at Shorncliffe into the Royal Canadian Dragoons (a heavy cavalry unit). Almost three months later, in early July 1916, William completed his Military Will (a perforated sheet from his pay book) in which he wrote; "In the event of my death, I give the whole of my property and effects to my aunt, Miss Sarah McRury, Point Edward, Ontario." On July 6, 1916, William arrived in France, becoming a member of the Canadian Cavalry Brigade (CCB), with the rank of Private.

Seven months later, on February 21, 1917, the unit was renamed the Canadian Light Horse (CLH). One month later, on March 28, 1917, William was attached to the Assistant Provost Marshal (APM) Canadian Corps (a group of military police). He served with them for five months.

On August 28, 1917, William Skinner rejoined his CLH unit and was then granted leave until September 9, 1917. By mid-October 1917, William was back with his unit as it arrived with the rest of the Canadians in an area of Flanders, Belgium known as Passchendaele. On October 24, 1917, William was briefly attached to No. 1 Canadian Motor Machine Gun (CMMG) Brigade before returning to the CLH.

The **Battle of Passchendaele** in Belgium (October 26 – November 10, 1917) was waged in unceasing rain on a battlefield that was a nightmarish mess of rotting, mangled corpses, gagging gas, water-filled craters and glutinous mud. Canadians overcame almost unimaginable hardships and horrific fighting conditions, and achieved a remarkable Canadian victory that few thought possible. But it came at a cost of almost 12,000 Canadian wounded and more than 4,000 Canadians killed.

Three weeks after arriving at Flanders, on November 7, 1917, Private William Skinner of the Canadian Cavalry, Canadian Light Horse, lost his life while fighting in the Battle of Passchendaele. William's death was officially recorded as, *Date of Death: 7-11-17. Killed in Action*. He has no known grave.

Private William Skinner, 20, is memorialized on the Menin Gate (Ypres) Memorial, Belgium, Panel 10. William's name is also inscribed on the plaque on the Memorial in the Village of Point Edward. William's grandfather, Angus McRury, passed away in March 1919 at the age of eighty-eight. William's grandmother Mary McRury passed away in May 1920 at the age of eighty-six. Both Angus and Mary McRury are buried in Lakeview Cemetery, Sarnia.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 2G, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10Z

SMITH, Harry (#3131723)

England born Harry Smith, 28, was living in Sarnia when he was drafted under the Military Service Act of 1917. He never had the opportunity to serve overseas. Only weeks after being called to service in January 1918, he was admitted to hospital in London, Ontario. He died there a month later as a result of tuberculosis. Harry Smith is buried in Lakeview Cemetery, Sarnia.

Harry Smith was born in Burton-on-Trent, Stafford, England, on June 11, 1889, the son of William and

Minnie (nee Wood) Smith of England. Harry had at least one brother, William Smith Jr., born about 1888 in Staffordshire, England. At some point in his youth, Harry lost his father William Smith Sr., who passed away at age forty. In 1902, still residing in England, Harry had an attack of pneumonia and was sick for six weeks. He had employment for a time in a brewery, but on account of the dampness, he was forced to quit. He had a cough that was persistent throughout his life.

In 1907, eighteen year-old Harry and his brother William Jr., along with their mother Minnie Smith, immigrated to Canada. Only six weeks after arriving in Canada, Harry suffered a second attack of pneumonia and was unable to work for ten months. Harry ended up living in Sarnia with his widowed mother Minnie Smith at 492 Confederation Street. Two years before joining the military, Harry fell off an engine in the Sarnia round house, resulting in unconsciousness and coughing up a lot of blood. Harry was a member of St. John's Anglican Church, and was employed for a time with Imperial Oil Company before becoming a letter carrier.

In Europe, with the Canadian troops thinning at an alarming rate and no end to the war in sight, the government instituted the Military Service Act in 1917. Twenty-eight-year-old Harry Smith was drafted under the Military Service Act of 1917, Class One. He underwent his medical examination in Sarnia on November 15, 1917. He was called to service on January 9, 1918, reporting to the 1st Depot Battalion, Western Ontario Regiment (W.O.R.) in London, Ontario. Harry stood five feet eight and a half inches tall, had blue eyes and dark hair, and was single. He recorded his trade or calling as letter carrier and his next-of-kin as his mother Mrs. Minnie Smith of 492 Confederation Street, Sarnia.



Private Harry Smith

Private Harry Smith never had the opportunity to serve overseas. Less than two weeks after being called to service, after experiencing ill-health symptoms that included chills, malaise and coughing, he was admitted to the Army Medical Centre in London on January 19, 1918. There he was diagnosed with pneumonia. His mother Minnie Smith was able to visit him from Sarnia on January 23. While being treated in hospital, Harry experienced symptoms that included breathing difficulties, headaches, coughing with phlegm, difficulty sleeping, and considerable chest pain, that all deteriorated over time. By February 13, his condition had worsened and was recorded as: "breathing very difficult, pulse irregular, eyes rolling backward, respiration very laboured, perspiring profusely and condition shows no improvement."

On February 15, 1918, Private Harry Smith passed away at 1:15 A.M., as a result of tuberculosis, at Wolseley Barracks Hospital, London, Ontario. His remains were brought back to Sarnia where a funeral was held at his late residence. The Canada War Grave Register recorded his death as; *Acute Tuberculosis – admitted to hospital Jan. 20th, 1918 – had had previous attacks of lung trouble. Nursed by special nurse. Died from exhaustion. Lake View Cemetery, Sarnia, Ontario.*

Harry Smith, 28, is buried in Lakeview Cemetery, Sarnia, Ontario. On his headstone are inscribed the words, UNTIL THE DAY BREAK AND THE SHADOWS FLEE AWAY. On December 17, 1919, Harry's thirty-one-year-

old brother William Smith Jr. (a clerk) married thirty-two-year-old Rhoda Evelyn Lakin (born in England, immigrated to Canada in 1919) at St. John's Church in Sarnia. In 1921, sixty year-old widowed Minnie Smith was still residing at 492 Confederation Street in Sarnia, along with her son William Jr. (a labourer), his wife Rhoda Evelyn (both age thirty-three), and their infant daughter Miriam Smith.
SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 2G, 8A, 8X, 8Y, 10Z

SMUCK, David Radcliffe (#03676)

Sarnian David Smuck was a victim of one of the most tragic and controversial incidents in the Great War. Stationed aboard the *Llandovery Castle*, a Canadian hospital ship heading to England from Halifax, Private Smuck died when a German U-boat, against the rules of the Hague Convention, sank the defenseless ship in June 1918. David Smuck and his crew mates are memorialized on the Halifax Memorial.

David Smuck was born in Sarnia, on May 18, 1893, the son of Peter and Emily (nee Porter) Smuck. On November 25, 1876 in Brantford, Ontario, Peter Smuck, a 23 year old railway employee from Stratford, Ontario married Emily Porter, age 20, who was born November 14, 1856 in Ancaster, Ontario.

Peter and Emily Smuck had nine children together: George (born February 9, 1876); twin sisters May and Mabel Smuck (born May 24, 1884); Peter (born April 1, 1886); Blanche Emily (born January 5, 1888); John Wesley (born July 2, 1891); David Radcliff; Bertha (born November 30, 1895); and Marygald Cathelene Smuck (born March 12, 1898). In 1881, Peter and Emily, along with their four year-old son George were residing in Goderich, Ontario. Ten years later, in 1891, Peter and Emily had moved to Sarnia with their five children: George, May, Mabel, Peter and Blanche Smuck. Eight years later, on November 2, 1899, when David was six years old, Peter Smuck was killed accidentally when he was working as a railroad brakeman. The young father of nine was only 46. In 1901, forty-two-year-old widowed Emily Smuck was residing at 202 South Mitton Street in Sarnia, the head of the household, with all nine children ranging in age from twenty-nine to three: George (a brakeman with the GTR), May, Mabel, Peter, Blanche, John, David (age seven), Bertha and Marygald.

David's older brother (by two years) **John Wesley Smuck** enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force on September 23, 1914 in Val Cartier, Quebec. Twenty-three-year-old John Smuck stood five feet six inches tall, had blue eyes and light brown hair, was single, and recorded his trade or calling as a machinist and his next-of-kin as his mother, Emily Smuck, in Sarnia. John became a member of #2 Stationary Hospital, Canadian Army Medical Corps (CAMC). As part of the First Contingent, he embarked overseas bound for the United Kingdom on October 3, 1914. In November 1914, Joseph Hay, G.T.R. locomotive foreman at Sarnia tunnel, received a letter from his friend John Smuck, with the Canadian Army Medical Corps, of the First Overseas Contingent. Following is a portion of that letter:

On Board H.M.T. City of Benares, November 7, 1914

My Dear Mr. Hay,

Just a few lines to give you a rough idea of our trip to date. We spent three weeks at Long Branch, seven miles outside of Toronto, and then to the notorious Valcartier camp. This place was more like a young city, board walks, electric lights, water works, and sewage system and banks. After three weeks more of life under tents we embarked at Quebec city on H.M.T. Scotian.

Here life was a change. Good beds or rather berths, and plenty to eat. We had 22 transports, besides our escorts. At night not one light was seen. Sometimes we felt a little creepy, but would retire to our large dining room to play cards or enjoy good music. After 21 days on water we arrived at Devenport. We were on board one week before disembarking. All noncoms. were granted shore leave to see the old historic city and also Plymouth. The reception given us was something to be well remembered.

On disembarking we marched to the railway station to entrain for Salisbury Plains, where we arrived the following day. It rained 23 out of 24 days we were camped there and we had wet feet continually, but not one man sick, which is considered a good record. Our unit is the first of the Canadians to leave for the front and are on our way now for the continent. Where? We do not know and if we did it would be impossible to let you know, but it is probably France. In sight of land now, but are anchored in the English channel. Why? Ask Kitchener! Our company is ready for anything from good to bad and hope to be home some day to relate my experiences in full.

Sincerely yours, John Smuck

No. 11 Stationary Hospital, C.A.M.C. First Canadian Expeditionary Force

Private John Wesley Smuck of the CAMC arrived in France with #2 Canadian Stationary Hospital on

November 8, 1914. By April 1915, he had been promoted up the ranks to Lance-Sergeant and then Sergeant. While overseas, John was hospitalized on a number of occasions: in late October 1915 due to a hernia; in late January 1916 (back in Shorncliffe, England) due to epilepsy; in late February 1917 (in Boulogne, France) due to influenza; and on two occasions in 1918 (in France) due to mumps. In early August 1917, John reverted to the rank of Private at his own request so he could be transferred to the 15th Battalion. John Smuck served in England and France and survived the war, being discharged on demobilization in London, Ontario on June 12, 1919.

Eight months later, on February 11, 1920, twenty-eight-year-old John Smuck married twenty year-old Emilie Olikier in St. John, New Brunswick. Emilie was born around 1899 in Belgium and had immigrated to Canada in 1920. In 1921, John (a machinist) and Emilie Smuck were residing at 186 Ross Avenue, Sarnia. Two days before Christmas of 1922, tragedy struck the young couple when John, 31, passed away in Sarnia. The cause of death was recorded as rheumatic endocarditis (an infection of the inner lining of the heart). The War Graves Register (Circumstances of Casualty) recorded that his death was attributed to his military service. John Smuck is buried in Lakeview Cemetery in Sarnia. Also see page 65 and 232.

Nine months after his brother John had enlisted, twenty-two-year-old **David Radcliffe Smuck** enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force on June 28, 1915 in Sarnia. David stood five feet eight and a half inches tall, had blue eyes and fair hair, was single, and recorded his trade or calling as a barber, and his next-of-kin as his mother Mrs. Smuck at 202 Mitton Street, Sarnia. He also recorded that he was an active member of the 14th Field Artillery Militia. One month later, by late July 1915, David arrived overseas in England. Once there, he became a member of the Canadian Army Medical Corps (CAMC), No. 3 Stationary Hospital, with the rank of Private. Only days after arriving in England, on August 1, 1915, David proceeded to Dardanelles in Turkey.

In early September 1915, David wrote a letter to his mother Emily in Sarnia. In it, he described his travels so far aboard ship as it travelled from England, up the English Channel out into the North Sea, passing along the coast of Spain and Portugal, through the Straits of Gibraltar (*but I did not see the rock as it was about 2:00 a.m. in the morning*), into the Mediterranean Sea, along the north coast of Africa, and then by Algeria. Following is a portion of the letter he wrote while his ship was anchored in the harbor of Malta:

My Dear Mother,

Just a few lines to let you know we are this far on our trip, and I am feeling fine, hope everybody is well at home. We had a fine trip so far, excepting last Monday, and it was very rough coming through the Bay of Biscay, and I guess I know now what sea sickness is. We left Southampton a week ago today about 2:30 p.m., and we are still on board ship. I hope we soon get off as I am tired of travelling. We have No. 1 stationary hospital from France on board with us. From what I hear they are going to put all the Canadians down in the Dardanelles. They expect to have Constantinople in three months, but you can never tell...

The weather here is awfully warm, 110 to 114 in the shade, so that is going some. They are going to give us all a new outfit of clothing, something like overalls with big helmets. We do not hear much about the war at all. I haven't seen a paper for over a week, so I do not know what is going on. When in Shorncliffe all we could see was men in khaki. There seems to be great numbers of them, and signs up "Enlist Today." I saw young "Wireless" Smith since I have been over here, from Sarnia, and he said it was something awful in the trenches last winter for a couple of weeks. The water was up to his knees, and you had to half stand up, and if you stood straight up you would get a bullet....

Well, mother, I think I have told you all for the time. Give all at home my very best.

From your loving son, Dave

Certainly, the young barber from Sarnia did not have an easy time of it. On October 17, 1915, David was admitted to No. 3 Stationary Hospital in West Mudros (island of Lemnos, Greece) due to diarrhea. He would be discharged to duty three weeks later. On December 30, 1915, he was again admitted to No. 3 Stationary Hospital, Mudros, this time due to jaundice, and recorded as "seriously ill". By mid-January 1916, he had been transferred to No. 3 Canadian Stationary Hospital in Abasia, Egypt, where his status had changed from "previously reported seriously ill" to "now reported dangerously ill". On January 17, 1916, Emily received the following telegram from Ottawa at her Mitton Street home: SINCERELY REGRET TO INFORM YOU NO. 3676, PTE. DAVID RADCLIFFE SMUCK, NO. 3 STATIONARY HOSPITAL, OFFICIALLY REPORTED SERIOUSLY ILL. JAUNDICE. WILL SEND FURTHER PARTICULARS WHEN RECEIVED.

ADJT.-GENERAL

On January 21, 1916, still suffering with jaundice, David was admitted to Valletta Military Hospital in Malta,

and the next day was transferred to St. Andrew's Military Hospital in Malta. One month later, on February 19, 1916, he was invalided back to Shorncliffe, England aboard the hospital ship *Essequibo*. On February 27, 1916, he was admitted to Royal Victoria Hospital in Netley, near Southampton, England, where his condition was recorded as "casualty now reported to be ineffective – jaundice" and "enteric fever". On March 16, 1916, he was transferred to Addington Park War Hospital in Croydon because he suffered from enteric fever. One month later, on April 19, 1916, he was admitted to the Woodcote Park Convalescent Hospital in Epsom, still with enteric fever. Nearly five weeks later, David was declared fit for duty and was discharged from Woodcote Park on May 22, 1916.

More than nine months later, on March 5, 1917, David Smuck returned to Canada on furlough aboard the SS *Metagama*. He remained in Sarnia until May 14, 1917. By October 1917, David was back in Shorncliffe, England. Three months later, on January 22, 1918, he was posted to No. 16 Canadian Field Ambulance, Shorncliffe. Two months later, on March 21, 1918, Private David Smuck was posted to the Canadian Hospital Ship *Llandoverly Castle*. The **HMHS *Llandoverly Castle*** was an 11 000 ton Canadian Hospital Ship. It had been chartered by the Canadian Government and was in the service of carrying wounded and sick from England to Canada for many months.

In June 1918, the ship was returning to Liverpool, England after having brought 644 Canadian casualties back to Halifax, Nova Scotia. Being a Hospital Ship, it was, in accordance with international law, clearly identified as such. On each side of the *HMHS Llandoverly Castle*, a brightly illuminated Red Cross was displayed with full strings of electric lights. The ship was unarmed and was sailing without escort. On board, the crew comprised one hundred and sixty-four men, eighty officers and men of the Canadian Medical Corps (including Private David Smuck), and fourteen nurses, for a total of two hundred and fifty-eight persons. According to the Hague Convention, an enemy vessel had the right to stop and to search a Hospital Ship, but not to sink it.

On the night of June 27th, 1918, at about 9:30 p.m., German submarine U-86 made no attempt to search the Hospital Ship. Captain Helmut Patzig of U-boat 86 was suspicious, and, without warning, U-86 torpedoed the *Llandoverly Castle*, about 114 miles southwest of the Fastnet Rock (Ireland). The *Llandoverly Castle* sank within ten minutes; however, a number of lifeboats were lowered successfully. Those who survived the blast proceeded to attempt to rescue many of the survivors struggling in the water. They were interrupted by Captain Patzig of the surfaced German submarine, who started interrogating crew members to obtain proof that the *Llandoverly Castle* was also an ammunition carrier or was sheltering American airmen on board. When the German Captain could secure no proof, he prepared for diving and ordered his crew below deck.

Captain Patzig, two officers and the boatswain's mate stayed on deck. The U-boat did not dive, but started firing with machine guns at the life boats to kill all witnesses and to cover up what had happened. When the submarine did leave, it attempted to ram the lifeboats in the water, and once clear, launched shells into the area of the survivors. To further conceal this event, Patzig extracted promises of secrecy from his crew and faked the course of U-86 in the logbook. Only one lifeboat survived the attack. Thirty-six hours after the attack, twenty-four survivors were rescued in the remaining lifeboat. In total, two hundred thirty-four persons lost their lives in the sinking of the *Llandoverly Castle* Hospital Ship, including eighty-eight of the ninety-four Canadians on board, and all fourteen Nursing Sisters who had managed to board one of the lifeboats.

Private David Smuck of the Canadian Army Medical Corps, lost his life in the brazen June 27, 1918 enemy attack on the Canadian Hospital Ship *Llandoverly Castle*. Initially listed as, *Missing*, David Smuck was later officially listed as, *Previously reported missing believed drowned now for official purposes presumed to have died on or since 27-6-18. Lost at sea on "Llandoverly Castle". The Halifax Memorial, Halifax, Nova Scotia*. Private David Smuck, 25, of Sarnia has no known grave. He is memorialized with his shipmates on the Halifax Memorial, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Panel 2.

The attack on and sinking of the *Llandoverly Castle* was not only one of the most controversial events during World War I--it was also the most significant Canadian naval disaster of war. Canadians were rightly incensed after the attack and used the fate of the doomed hospital ship as a rallying cry for the Canadian troops during the final months of the war in its Hundred Days Campaign.

After the War, the British initiated a War Crimes trial (the Leipzig trials) against the officers of U-86. The German Captain Helmut Patzig could not be found and was never brought to trial. He would re-appear in time to serve with the German Navy in the Second World War. The two officers were tried and convicted, and sentenced to four years of hard labour. On their way to prison, the officers escaped, were never recaptured, and never served any time in prison.

As the war ended, and in the few years after, a number of the Smuck family members would pass away. David's twenty year-old sister Marygald Cathelene Smuck (a bookkeeper), passed away on October 18, 1918 in Sarnia, the result of pneumonia. David's twenty-eight-year-old sister Blanche Emily Smuck (then Arnold), passed away on January 3, 1919 in Chicago, Illinois. David's thirty-one-year-old brother, World War I veteran John Wesley Smuck, passed away on December 23, 1922 in Sarnia, the result of rheumatic endocarditis that was attributed to his military service. The matriarch of the family, Emily Smuck, a housekeeper, passed away at the age of sixty-nine on July 31, 1929 in Sarnia. A number of the Smuck family members, including war veteran John Wesley Smuck, and matriarch Emily Smuck, are buried in Lakeview Cemetery in Sarnia.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 2G, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10Z

SOPER, Russell Wright

Russell Wright Soper, an architect in Sarnia, enlisted in the Great War in 1916. He survived Passchendaele, but was killed in April 1918, 11 days before his only child, Ernest, turned one. Lieutenant Soper of the 116th Battalion, was killed in action while fighting in France. When the unit to the left of his was forced to retire near Mericourt, the position of his Battalion was threatened. He was in charge of filling in a communication trench to block the enemy's advance. At approximately two minutes past midnight while in the trench with his brother-in-law Ernest Hartley Nutting, the Sarnian was killed. The 28 year old officer Russell Wright left behind his wife, Alma, and one son.

Russell Wright Soper was born in Whitby, Ontario on April 20, 1889, the son of Armon (born June 16, 1846) and Elizabeth Ann (nee Wright, born July 16, 1854) Soper. On November 25, 1875, Armon, a professor of electricity at the time, married Elizabeth Wright in Prince Albert, Ontario. Armon and Elizabeth Soper had two children together. Unfortunately, their first child, Clarence Percy, born December 12, 1877, passed away at a young age. Nine year-old Clarence died as a result of diphtheria on October 12, 1887, a year and a half before Russell was born.

In 1891, Armon and Elizabeth Soper along with two year-old Russell Wright, were residing in Port Perry, Ontario, where Armon supported his family working as a telegraph operator. Ten years later, in 1901, Armon and Elizabeth Soper, and their eleven year-old son Russell, along with their sixteen year-old domestic Victor Wilson and twelve year-old servant Maud Buchanan, were residing in Cardwell District, Ontario. At the time, Armon was employed as a merchant and domestic Victor Wilson was employed as a clerk. The next year, on September 25, 1902, when Russell Soper was thirteen years old, Armon Soper passed away in Port Perry at the age of fifty-six.

Russell Soper was educated in Port Perry public and high schools and, upon graduating from collegiate, he taught there for two years. Russell then attended the University of Toronto in the Applied Science Program and obtained a four-year degree in Architecture (1909-13). In 1911, twenty-two-year-old Russell was rooming at the house of Hannah Stiver (age sixty) at 225 Robert Street in Toronto, along with two other roomers: Gertrude Sewell (age fifty-nine) and James Stiver (age twenty-seven). The following is a portion of what was written below Russell's photograph in the 1913 University of Toronto yearbook; *As a student of Architecture at S.P.S., he has fully justified his choice of a profession, both from the excellence of his work in design, his geniality, and his ability to cope with any situation as it arises.* On April 21, 1913, one day after his twenty-fourth birthday, Elizabeth Ann, Russell's mother, passed away at the age of fifty-eight.

Russell Soper worked as an architect in Sarnia for several years and had opened his office in the Carter building on Front Street. Rapidly making a name for himself among local builders and contractors, Russell drafted plans for several buildings in the city and vicinity. He was also an active member of the Sarnia Tennis Club and a member of the 27th Lambton Regiment. In the Sarnia City Directory 1916, Russell was recorded as residing at 168 Front Street.

Provisional Lieutenant Russell Soper of the 27th Lambton Regiment attended a School of Infantry in London, Ontario from March 6, 1916 to April 30, 1916, where he obtained his Certificate of Military Qualifications and earned the rank of Lieutenant. On May 20, 1916, Lieutenant Russell Soper obtained another Certificate of Military Qualification at an Officer's training course in London, Ontario. He passed a prescribed examination that qualified him for the rank of Captain.

Four days later, on May 24, 1916, twenty-seven-year-old Russell Soper married twenty-four-year-old Alma Priscilla (nee Nutting) in Uxbridge, Ontario. Alma, born July 6, 1891 in Cannington, Ontario, was the daughter of Marshall Lafayette, a teacher, and Priscilla Sarah (nee Jones) Nutting, of Uxbridge, Ontario. Alma's younger brother was **Ernest Hartley Nutting**, born December 18, 1894. Ernest Nutting enlisted with the 116th Battalion on

November 26, 1915 in Uxbridge. He arrived in England on July 31, 1916 and in France on February 11, 1917 where he rose to the rank of Sergeant with the 116th. He allocated much of the money that he earned each month while serving overseas to his widowed mother, Priscilla Nutting in Uxbridge. Both Ernest Nutting and Russell Soper served with the 116th Battalion; in fact, they were together in the same trench when Russell was killed. Ernest Nutting survived the war and was discharged on demobilization in Toronto in March 1919.

Russell and Alma Soper had one child together, Ernest Haig Soper, born April 13, 1917 in Uxbridge, Ontario, while Russell was overseas.

Six weeks after getting married, twenty-seven-year-old Russell Soper enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force (CEF) on July 10, 1916, at Niagara Camp, Niagara on the Lake. He stood five feet nine inches tall, had hazel eyes and brown hair, recorded his present address as Uxbridge, Ontario, his trade or calling as architect, and his next-of-kin as his wife Alma Soper in Uxbridge, Ontario. He also recorded his prior military experience with the 27th Regiment in Sarnia, six months as a Lieutenant. On July 23, 1916, Russell Soper was appointed Acting Sergeant in the Canadian Infantry with the 116th Battalion, Central Ontario Regiment at Camp Borden.



Lieutenant Russell Wright Soper

Two months after marrying, Russell embarked overseas from Halifax on July 23, 1916, bound for the United Kingdom aboard the *SS Olympic*. He arrived in Liverpool on July 31, 1916. Two and a half months later, on October 14, 1916, Russell was promoted to temporary Lieutenant of the 116th Battalion at Camp Witley. Four months later, on February 12, 1917, he was transferred to the 2nd Reserve Battalion at Camp Bramshott. After five more months, Lieutenant Russell Soper proceeded from East Sandling to France with the 116th Battalion on August 2, 1917. He arriving the following day and by the first week of September 1917, he arrived at the front lines.

Russell Soper served with the 116th Battalion in one of the most brutal battles of the war. The Battle of Passchendaele in Belgium (October 26 – November 10, 1917) was waged in unceasing rain on a battlefield that was a nightmarish mess of rotting, mangled corpses, gagging gas, water-filled craters and glutinous mud. Overcoming almost unimaginable hardships and horrific fighting conditions, the remarkable Canadians obtained a victory that few thought possible. It came, however, at a cost of almost 12,000 Canadian wounded and more than 4,000 Canadians killed. Surviving this battle, the 116th saw action on the Lens Front into the winter months.

On January 26, 1918, Lt. Russell Soper was granted fourteen days leave in Nice, France. He rejoined his unit at the front lines on February 10, 1918. Approximately three weeks later, on April 2, 1918 (eleven days before his son's first birthday), Lieutenant Russell Soper of the 116th Battalion, was killed in action while fighting in France. When the unit to the left of his was forced to retire near Mericourt, the position of his Battalion was threatened. He was in charge of filling in a communication trench to block the enemy's advance. At approximately two minutes past midnight while in the trench with his brother-in-law Ernest Hartley Nutting, the Sarnian was killed.

Lieutenant Russell Wright Soper's death was officially recorded as, *Killed in Action, In the Field (France)*

on April 2, 1918. Following is an excerpt from the records of the 116th Battalion in France that includes a reference to the death of Russell Soper:

Towards the end of February the battalion moved back to its old familiar hunting ground around Avion, where, although the trenches and general conditions were excellent, we sustained a series of misfortunes. Patrols went out every night through the ruins of Avion to try and locate enemy posts and whilst engaged in this work we lost two of our officers, Lieutenant C. R. Hillis and Lieutenant R. W. Biggar, within a few days of each other. From this front we moved south and on the 1st of April we were situated in the New Brunswick trench, in front of Mericourt.

During the last three months two important changes in our organization took place which it may be wise to record.

Major G. R. Pearkes, recently awarded the Victoria Cross for gallant work at Passchendaele with the 5th C.M.R., was appointed Officer Commanding 116th Battalion, to replace Colonel Sharpe, whose illness in England seemed likely to keep him away from France for an indefinite period.

Major J. Sutherland, at one time a Company Commander in the 52nd Battalion, but recently an instructor at Ferfay, was appointed second in command to Lt.- Colonel Pearkes.

The German grand offensive, which was to land him at the gates of Paris, had commenced, and in consequence the "staff" were showing very distinct signs of nervousness commonly called "wind up."

The First, Second and Fourth Canadian Divisions had been, or were being withdrawn from the line to be in readiness for action wherever they might most be needed, and the Third Division was left to defend Vimy Ridge as best it could, with nothing behind it except its own artillery and a couple of labour battalions employed in agricultural work, which had lately become a feature of modern warfare. During the day the Brigadier paid a visit to Battalion Headquarters, and, amongst other things, suggested that we might carry out some kind of raid in order to get identification, and by this means discover the enemy plans.

At 6 p.m. a meeting of the Company Commanders was called, and within the hour it was arranged to send out a battle patrol of one officer and twenty-five O.R s. from each Company, to work independently on given frontages. It was also arranged that whichever patrol was successful in capturing a prisoner, would send up a red flare immediately. The operation was scheduled to commence at 11 p.m., without artillery or machine gun support.

At 9 p.m. a message was received from the Divisional Commander stating that identification on our front might be necessary, and at 10 p.m. the Corps Commander wired in saying that it was necessary, so that, all things considered, our preparations were probably well timed.

"D" Company patrol, under Captain Baird, was the first to start the quarry, for shortly after setting out it ran into a strong German patrol on its way over to our lines. With the battle cry "Come on Toronto," Captain Baird, followed by his patrol, rushed on the Germans before they had time to move and a regular scrimmage took place, during which Captain Baird lost the use of his right arm, due to the displacement of one of the muscles. He was in the act of capturing the German patrol leader when his right arm collapsed and his revolver dropped from his hand. The German officer immediately seized him round the neck and was giving him a rough time when one of our party shot the German dead. In the meantime the remainder of our patrol had succeeded in capturing two prisoners and put the rest to flight.

*Red flares were immediately sent up and all parties returned to our lines in high spirits, having obtained the "necessary identification" asked for by the Corps only two hours previously, although this achievement was greatly dimmed by the loss of two officers killed (Lt. J. A. Gibson and **Lt. R. W. Soper**).*



Ernest Haig Soper (son of Russell Wright and Alma Priscilla Soper)

Russell Soper left behind his wife Alma Priscilla (nee Nutting) Soper and their one year-old son Ernest. In 1921, twenty-nine-year-old widow Alma Soper (a teacher) and their four year-old son Ernest, were residing in Uxbridge, along with her sixty-three-year-old mother Priscilla Nutting, and eighty-three-year-old grandmother Elizabeth Jones. Years later, Russell and Alma Sopers' son, Ernest Haig Soper, served in World War II.

Russell Wright Soper, 28, is buried in La Chaudiere Military Cemetery, Vimy, Pas de Calais, France, Grave I.C.3. Alma Soper lived to one hundred years of age. In the Uxbridge Cemetery in Durham, Ontario, there is a grave commemorating both Russell and Alma Soper. Inscribed on the gravestone are the words, IN LOVING MEMORY OF RUSSELL WRIGHT SOPER LIEUT. 116 BATT. C.E.F. APRIL 20, 1889 – APRIL 2, 1918, KILLED IN ACTION AND HIS BELOVED WIFE ALMA PRISCILLA NUTTING JULY 6, 1891 – DEC. 27, 1991. SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 2G, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10Z

STEELE, James (#3130337)

After emigrating from Scotland and finding work at Imperial Oil, James Steele, 34, was drafted into the Canadian army under the Military Service Act of 1917. In mid-August 1918, Private Steele was deployed to the front as a member of the Canadian Infantry, 5th Battalion. Three weeks later, while fighting during the Hundred Days Campaign, James was wounded by enemy shrapnel during the Battle of Arras and Breaking the DQ Line. He died later that day as a result of his wounds and is buried in Ligny-St. Flochel British Cemetery, Averdoint, Pas-de-Calais, France.

James Steele was born in Shotts, Lanarkshire, Scotland, on May 6, 1883, the son of Mary Steele. At some point, James and his sister Margaret Steele immigrated to Canada and came to reside in Sarnia. In 1914, James and Margaret were residing at 232 Devine Street. In 1916 and 1917, James was still residing at 232 Devine Street and was employed as a pumper at Imperial Oil Company.

In Europe, with the Canadian troops thinning at an alarming rate and no end to the war in sight, the government instituted the Military Service Act in 1917. Thirty-four-year-old James Steele was drafted under the Military Service Act of 1917, Class One. He underwent his medical examination in Sarnia on October 12, 1917 and was called to service on January 3, 1918, reporting to the 1st Depot Battalion, Western Ontario Regiment in London, Ontario. James stood five feet ten inches tall, had blue eyes and brown hair, was single, and was residing at 360 Maria Street in Sarnia at the time. He recorded his trade or calling as locomotive fireman, and his next-of-kin as his sister, Margaret Steele, who was residing at 284 Davis Street in Sarnia.

One month later, on February 4, 1918, James embarked overseas bound for the United Kingdom aboard the *S.S. Grampian*. He arrived in England on February 16, 1918. He was taken on strength into the 4th Canadian Reserve Battalion at Bramshott. Approximately three and a half months later, on June 2, 1918, James departed from Camp Witley and arrived in France that day, where he was transferred to the 47th Battalion. Two weeks later, he was taken on strength into the Canadian Corps Reinforcement Camp (CCRC)--where troops were held before being sent to reinforce existing units. Nine weeks later, on August 14, 1918, Private James Steele became a member of the Canadian Infantry, 5th Battalion, Saskatchewan Regiment, joining that unit at the front line the next day. He soon found himself taking part in the final campaign of the Great War.

The **Hundred Days Campaign** (August 8 – November 11, 1918 in France and Belgium) was the “beginning of the end” of the Great War. Canadians were called on again and again over the three-month period to lead the offensives against the toughest German defences. The series of victories repeatedly drove the Germans back, culminating in Germany's unconditional surrender on November 11, but it came at a cost of almost 46,000 Canadians killed, wounded and missing.

The first offensive in the Campaign was the Battle of Amiens (August 8-14, 1918), a truly all-arms battle, one in which all four Canadian divisions would be involved in. Over the course of one week, in a battle that British Field Marshal Douglas Haig called “*the finest operation of the war*”, the Canadians would advance nearly 14 km.

The second offensive in Canada's Hundred Days Campaign was the **Battle of Arras and Breaking the DQ Line** in France (August 26-September 3, 1918), where Canadians were part of a spearhead force tasked with crashing one of the most heavily fortified positions, the Hindenburg Line--a series of strong defensive trenches and fortified villages. General Sir Julian Byng called the Canadian victory at the 2nd Battle of Arras and breaking of the DQ Line “*the turning point of the campaign*”, but it came at a cost of 11,400 Canadian casualties.

Less than three weeks after arriving at the front, on September 1, 1918, Private James Steele was killed in

action during the Battle of Arras and Breaking the DQ Line. He was killed after being hit by enemy shrapnel. On that day, Private Steele was recorded as “dangerously wounded” and “shrapnel wound hip”. He was taken to No. 7 Casualty Clearing Station and passed away that day as a result of the wounds he had received.

In early September 1918, James’ sister Margaret in Sarnia, received word that her brother, *Pte. James Steele, infantry, had been dangerously wounded and admitted to the 7th Canadian Casualty Clearing Station*. Later, she received the news that Private James Steele was officially recorded as, *Died of Wounds – No. 7 Casualty Clearing Station*. James mother, Mary Steele, who was residing at South Bridge Street in Airdrie, Scotland, received the Memorial Cross after the war for the loss of her son. James Steele, 35, is buried in Ligny-St. Flochel British Cemetery, Averdoint, Pas-de-Calais, France, Grave III.D.2.
SOURCES: A, B, C, D, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 2G, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10Z

STOTT, Herbert (#845252)

Herbert Stott had many reasons not to fight in The Great War. He was married, had five children, and was 33. Nevertheless, when he decided to enlist in early December of 1915, the *Sarnia Observer* reported that the first recruit to be taken on by the Lambton 149th Battalion was Herbert Stott. Herbert, unfortunately, died less than three months before the war ended. Complications from wounds he suffered while fighting in the early stages of the Battle of Amiens led to his death. Herbert left behind his wife, Annie, his five children, and his parents in England. Herbert Stott, 36, is buried in Dewsbury Cemetery, Yorkshire, United Kingdom, in his father’s plot.

Herbert Stott was born in Ravensthorpe, Yorkshire, England, on March 1, 1882, the son of John and Annie Stott, of Dewsbury, England. At some point while in England, Herbert married Annie Hicks (born about 1888 in Bingley, Yorkshire, England) and the couple had five children together: John Alfred (born about 1905); William (born about 1907); Leonard (born about 1908); Sarah Annie (born about 1910); and Edith (born about 1915 in Ontario).

In 1911, Herbert Stott, 28, and Annie Stott, 23, were residing in Yorkshire, along with their four children. At the time, Herbert was employed as a silk spinning overlooker and Annie was employed as a worker in the silk mill. Two years later, in 1913, the Stott family immigrated to Canada, and by 1916 they were residing at 294 Queen Street, Sarnia.

Thirty-three-year-old Herbert Stott enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force (CEF) on December 3, 1915 in Sarnia. He stood five feet three inches tall, had blue eyes and brown hair, and recorded his trade or calling as labourer, and his next-of-kin as his wife Annie Stott of 294 Queen Street, Sarnia. Herbert became a member the Lambton 149th Battalion, CEF. In early December of 1915, the *Sarnia Observer* reported that the first recruit to be taken on by the Lambton 149th Battalion was Herbert Stott. One year later, in mid-December 1916, Herbert Stott of the 149th Battalion spent a week in the military hospital in London due to rubella. In the 1916 and the 1917 Sarnia Directory’s, Herbert’s occupation was recorded as “soldier”.



Private Herbert Stott

The married father of five embarked overseas from Halifax bound for the United Kingdom aboard the SS *Lapland* on March 25, 1917. He arrived in Liverpool on April 7, 1917, and was first taken on strength into the 25th Reserve at Bramshott. Approximately two months later, on June 1, 1917, Herbert was taken on strength into the 161st Battalion at Camp Witley. Eight and a half months later, on February 24, 1918, he was transferred into the 4th Reserve Battalion at Bramshott. Four days later, Private Herbert Stott arrived at the Canadian Base Depot in France, becoming a member of the Canadian Infantry, 1st Battalion, Western Ontario Regiment (WOR). In the early days of April 1918, he was at Canadian Corps Reinforcement Camp, and on May 13, 1918, he joined his unit at the front lines.

Herbert Stott of the 1st Battalion, WOR, soon found himself part of the last great campaign of the war. The **Hundred Days Campaign** (August 8 – November 11, 1918 in France and Belgium) was the “beginning of the end” of the Great War. Canadians were called on again and again over the three-month period to lead the offensives against the toughest German defences. The series of victories repeatedly drove the Germans back, culminating in Germany’s unconditional surrender on November 11, but it came at a cost of almost 46,000 Canadians killed, wounded and missing.

The first offensive in Canada’s Hundred Days Campaign was the **Battle of Amiens** in France (August 8-14, 1918), a truly all-arms battle, one that all four Canadian divisions would be involved in. Over the course of one week, in a battle that British Field Marshal Douglas Haig called “*the finest operation of the war*”, the Canadians would advance nearly 14 km – but it came at a cost of 11,822 Canadian casualties.

Less than three months after arriving at the front lines, on August 8, 1918, Private Herbert Stott was wounded in action while fighting in the early stages of the Battle of Amiens. On that day, he was hit by enemy gunfire. He was admitted to 1st Canadian Field Ambulance, then a Canadian Casualty Station, suffering a gunshot wound, left thigh. The next day, he was admitted to #5 General Hospital, Rouen, his injuries recorded as “*gun shot wound lower extremities. Flesh Lt.*” Five days later, on August 14, he was admitted to a War Hospital in Exeter, England, recorded with a gun shot wound left side, seriously ill. Herbert Stott’s parents, John and Annie Stott in England, even had the opportunity to visit their son in hospital during his recovery.

Doctors operated on Herbert Stott on August 15, where an incision showed gas gangrene so they decided to amputate his left leg. Early the next day, he was assessed as “dressed stump looks well, general condition much improved.” Later that evening, on redressing the wound, some gas was noticed and his pulse was very low. The following morning, on August 17, 1918, at 6:00 a.m., Herbert Stott lost his life as a result of the wounds he had received. His death was later officially recorded as, *Died of Wounds – (SW.Lt.Side) War Hospital, Exeter.*

On August 19, 1918, Annie Stott on Queen Street in Sarnia received the following telegram from the Director of Records in Ottawa: DEEPLY REGRET TO INFORM YOU 845252, PTE. HERBERT STOTT, INFANTRY, OFFICIALLY REPORTED DIED OF WOUNDS AT WAR HOSPITAL EXETER, ON AUGUST 17TH, 1918, GUNSHOT WOUND IN SIDE AND AMPUTATION OF LEG.

Only days prior to receiving the above telegram, Annie had been sent a message that her husband Private Herbert Stott had been wounded. When Annie received the telegram announcing her husband’s death, she and their five children--the youngest child Edith being three years of age--were preparing for a picnic. There would be no picnic that day.

Following is an article from a Dewsbury, England newspaper, reporting on the death of Herbert Stott:

Westtown Soldier Buried with Military Honors

Another painful local casualty is that of Pte. Herbert Stott, the son of Mr. and Mrs. J. Stott, of 12 Cemetery Road, Westtown, who has died of wounds. He was a Canadian soldier, joining the Dominion forces in Lambton’s Own at the beginning of the war, and a sad feature of the case is that his wife and five young children are left at Ontario, Canada. He was wounded in the trenches in the thigh on the 10th August, and was brought to Exeter. On Thursday last week his parents received a wire saying: “Son seriously wounded, come at once.” They immediately visited him and though the amputation of his leg had become necessary and the operation had been performed, when they left him on the Friday evening he was quite cheerful. Mr. and Mrs. Stott reached home on Saturday morning, and at six o’clock in the evening came a wire to say their son was dead.

The internment, with military honors, took place at Dewsbury Cemetery on Wednesday, the Rev. J.J. Baldwin, Vicar of St. Matthew’s, Westtown officiating. There was a very considerable expression of public sympathy,

and a military escort (with firing party), under the command of Sergt. Major Hemingway. A band with muffled drums was in the procession. The coffin, wrapped in the Union Jack, was borne by the soldiers from the top of the Cemetery road to the graveside, where after the last rites had been performed, several volleys were fired and the "Last Post" sounded.

It was a strange coincidence, which Pte. Stott himself remarked, that when he arrived in Canada several years ago it was on the 28th March, that he sailed from Canada with his unit on that date, and that he went to France from Bramshott this year on the same date. "I wonder," he said, "where I shall be the next 28th of March?"

Herbert Stott wasn't the only member of his family to see action. His brother, Robert, was a Private with the Northumberland Fusiliers, and survived being gassed in France. He was unable to attend his brother Herbert's funeral. Herbert's brother-in-law, Pte. Herbert Drake, had his knee-cap blown off and had been discharged.

On December 23, 1920, thirty-three-year-old widow Annie Stott remarried, her new husband being Englishman John Horace Hyne, 26, a boilermaker who had immigrated to Sarnia in 1907. Annie and John Hyne resided at 501 Confederation Street, Sarnia, along with Annie and Herbert's five children: John Alfred, William, Leonard, Sarah Annie and Edith Stott.

At least three of the Stott children married in Sarnia: John Alfred Stott (at age twenty, of 480 Wellington Street, a CNR employee) married Helen Victoria Ash on September 11, 1924 at St. John's Rectory in Sarnia; Sarah Annie Stott (at age seventeen, of Sarnia, a spinster) married Eric Wray on June 26, 1926 in Wainfleet, Welland County, Ontario; William Stott (at age twenty, of 480 Wellington Street, a machinists helper) married Mildred Marshman on September 6, 1926 in Sarnia; and Leonard Stott (at age twenty-one, of 418 Wellington Street, a Sectionman) married Mildred Vietta Waite on June 16, 1928 in Sarnia.

Herbert Stott, 36, is buried in Dewsbury Cemetery, Yorkshire, United Kingdom, Grave K."U" 340, in his fathers plot. On Herbert's headstone are inscribed the words, GREATER LOVE HATH NO MAN THAN THAT HE LAY DOWN HIS LIFE FOR HIS FRIENDS.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 2G, 7C, 8A, 8X, 8Y, 10Z

SUMMERS, M.J. - No information found in searched records links this name to Sarnia.

Possibly Earl Summers. No confirmed information from a number of sources.

THOMSON, Daniel Alexander Edward (#845352)

Daniel Alexander Edward Thomson suffered a fate that too many soldiers in The Great War experienced. After enlisting in 1915, Daniel, age 21, was deployed overseas but did not arrive in France until early in 1918. Approximately six months after arriving in France, on September 3, 1918, Private Daniel Thomson Jr. of the 47th Battalion was killed in action in the battle to break the DQ Line. Daniel Thomson's body was never recovered. He was simply recorded as *Date of Casualty: 3-9-18. Killed in Action*. Twenty-four-year-old Daniel Thomson Jr. has no known grave. He is memorialized on the Vimy Memorial, Pas de Calais, France.

Daniel Thomson was born in Alvinston, Ontario, on June 24, 1894, the youngest son of Daniel Thomson Sr. a carpenter born about 1858, and Ellen (nee Gunn) Thomson, who was twelve years her husband's junior. Daniel Thomson, age 33, married Ellen Gunn, 21 in Alvinston, Ontario on January 6, 1891. Daniel and Ellen spent some time in Dawn Township before moving to 338 Cameron Street in Sarnia. They were blessed with five children: Alvin Ernest (born April 10, 1891); William James Connell (born September 15, 1892, passed away at the age of eleven on October 23, 1903 due to diptheria); Daniel Alexander Edward; Mary Margaret (born September 2, 1896); and Kathleen (born August 21, 1898). When Daniel Jr. was only four years old, his father passed away in March of 1899, five months before Daniel's sister Kathleen was born.

Ellen Thomson remarried on December 30, 1902, her new husband being Lawrence "Larry" Roberts, a labourer in Kent County. Ellen and Larry Roberts had three daughters together--stepsisters for Daniel and his siblings: Katherine "Katie" Elizabeth (born March 18, 1905); Annie Violet (born June 14, 1908); and Velma (born February 10, 1911). In 1911, the Thomson/Roberts family was residing together at 458 George Street, Sarnia. Living with parents, Larry and Ellen, were their children: Alvin (age twenty, employed as a machinist, along with Alvin's wife Fyrne Levina); Daniel Jr. (age sixteen, employed with the railroad); Mary (age fourteen); and Kathleen (age twelve) Thomson; and Katie (age six); Annie (age three); and Velma (age eight months) Roberts.

Daniel's older brother, **Alvin Ernest Thomson**, 24, also enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary

Force in Sarnia on December 22, 1915. He did so two weeks after his younger brother, Daniel Jr., had enlisted and Alvin became a member of the Lambton 149th Battalion. Employed as a machinist, Alvin was residing at 276 Maria Street at the time, with his wife Fyrne Levina Thomson, who he recorded as his next-of-kin.

Nine months later, Alvin Thomson was discharged, the result of being A.W.L. Three months later, on December 27, 1916, Alvin enlisted again with the 149th Battalion in London, Ontario. Alvin and his wife Fyrne were residing at 196 Penrose Street in Sarnia at the time. Unfortunately for Private Alvin Thomson, he never had the opportunity to serve overseas. Two months after his second enlistment, on February 9, 1917, he was struck off strength from the 149th Battalion, declared as medically unfit for service (his index and middle finger of his left hand were missing, lost in a corn shredder accident).

Daniel Alexander Edward Thomson, 21, enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force (CEF) on December 7, 1915 in Sarnia two weeks before his older brother Alvin enlisted. Daniel stood five feet eight inches tall, had blue eyes and brown hair, was single, and recorded his present address as Sarnia, Ontario. He also recorded his trade or calling as labourer, and his next-of-kin as his mother, Ellen Roberts residing in Dawn (R.R. #2, Sarnia), Ontario. Her address was later changed to 252 Shamrock Street, Sarnia.

Daniel Thomson Jr. became a member of the 149th Battalion, Western Ontario Regiment, CEF and during his initial training, Daniel was injured a couple of times. On July 22, 1916, he sprained his ankle and was admitted to the hospital at Camp Borden. He was discharged three days later. On November 7, 1916, he was promoted to the rank of Lance Corporal. On January 22, 1917, he was admitted to the Military Hospital in London, the result of a sprained wrist and injury to his hand. After having a splint applied and with his injuries improving, he was discharged from the hospital on January 30, 1917.

Approximately fifteen months after enlisting, on March 25, 1917, Daniel Thomson Jr. embarked overseas from Halifax bound for the United Kingdom aboard the *SS Lapland*. He arrived in Liverpool on April 7, 1917, and from the Segregation Camp was transferred to the 25th Reserve Battalion, CEF, at Bramshott. Less than two months later, on June 1, 1917, he was taken on strength into the 161st Canadian Infantry Battalion at Camp Witley. Eight months later, on February 28, 1918, Private Daniel Thomson Jr. proceeded from Camp Witley and arrived in France, becoming a member of the Canadian Infantry, 47th Battalion, British Columbia Regiment.

Approximately five months later, Daniel Thomson Jr. found himself part of the final great campaign of the war. The **Hundred Days Campaign** (August 8 – November 11, 1918 in France and Belgium) was the “beginning of the end” of the Great War. Canadians were called on again and again over the three-month period to lead the offensives against the toughest German defences. The series of victories repeatedly drove the Germans back, culminating in Germany’s unconditional surrender on November 11, but it came at a cost of almost 46,000 Canadians killed, wounded and missing.

The first offensive in the Campaign was the Battle of Amiens (August 8-14, 1918), a truly all-arms battle, one that all four Canadian divisions would be involved in. Over the course of one week, in a battle that British Field Marshal Douglas Haig called “*the finest operation of the war*”, the Canadians would advance nearly 14 km.

The second offensive in the Campaign was the **Battle of Arras and Breaking the DQ Line** in France (August 26-September 3, 1918), where Canadians were part of a spearhead force tasked with crashing one of the most heavily fortified positions, the Hindenburg Line – a series of strong defensive trenches and fortified villages. General Sir Julian Byng called the Canadian victory at the 2nd Battle of Arras and breaking of the DQ Line “*the turning point of the campaign*”, but it came at a cost of 11,400 Canadian casualties.

Approximately six months after arriving in France, on September 3, 1918, Private Daniel Thomson Jr. of the 47th Battalion was killed in action in the battle to break the DQ Line. Daniel Thomson’s body was never recovered. He was simply recorded as; *Date of Casualty: 3-9-18. Killed in Action.*

Shortly after Daniel Thomson was killed in action, communication from the military about his death was sent to his mother, Mrs. Ellen Roberts c/o Mr. George Pilkey, R.R. #1 (12th Line), Corunna, Ontario. Twenty-four-year-old Daniel Thomson Jr. has no known grave. He is memorialized on the Vimy Memorial, Pas de Calais, France. SOURCES: A, B, C, D, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 2G, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10Z

TIMPSON, Edward Arthur (#602317)

Edward Arthur Timpson emigrated from England, found work as a florist in Sarnia, and enlisted at age 21. After surviving the Battle of the Somme, the Battle of Vimy Ridge, the Battle of Lens and Hill 70 and the Battle of

Passchendaele, Corporal Edward Timpson was wounded when he was hit by enemy shellfire in the final days of the Battle of Amiens in August 1918, ten days before his 25th birthday. He died later that day from the severity of his wounds. Edward's remains were buried in Dury Hospital Military Cemetery and later exhumed and reburied at Villers-Bretonneux Military Cemetery.

Edward Arthur Timpson was born in Great King's Hill, High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire, England, on August 25, 1893, the son of Edward Osborne and Hester Augusta (nee Fulford) Timpson, both of Great King's Hill, England. NOTE: This birthdate is based on what Edward recorded on his Attestation Paper when he enlisted. Therefore, in his military Personnel Records, his age at enlistment, and age at death are based on this birthdate. However, in both the 1901 and 1911 England and Wales Census records, Edward's birth year is recorded as **1897**. The England and Wales Civil Registration Birth Index record his birthdate as sometime in October-November-December 1896. [These records also list his first name as Edwin vs. Edward. Throughout his military Personnel Records, he signed his first name as Edward]. Based on the England/Wales census and birth index, it is possible that Edward Timpson lied about his age at enlistment. He may have been three or four years younger than the age he recorded.

On December 19, 1880, Edward Osborne Timpson, born 1856 in Buckinghamshire, England, married Hester Augusta Fulford of Hertfordshire, England who was also born in 1856. The marriage took place at St. James in Paddington, Westminster, England and, over the years, Edward Sr. and Hester were blessed with ten children together: Charles Edward (born 1881); Mary Augusta (born 1883); Claritta Elizabeth Ellen (born 1884); Lilian Eliza (born 1886); Frank (born 1888); Harry Osborne (born 1890); Lucy Alice (born 1892); William Herbert (born 1894); Edward Arthur (born 1893 or 1897); and Isabel Elizabeth (born 1899).

In 1891, the Timpson household included parents Edward Sr. and Hester and their six children: Charles Edward, Mary Augusta, Claritta, Lilian Eliza, Frank and Harry Osborne Timpson. In 1901, the Timpson family was residing in Great King's Hill where Edward Sr. supported his family as a carpenter and nine children lived with them: Charles Edward (a carpenter), Lilian Eliza, Frank, Harry Osborne, Lucy Alice, William Herbert, Edwin Arthur (age four), and Isabel Elizabeth. Ten years later, in 1911, much of the Timpson family were still residing together in Great King's Hill, England--parents Edward Sr. (a carpenter) and Hester and their five children: Frank (age twenty-three, an upholsterer); Harry Osborne (age twenty-one, a grocer); William Herbert (age sixteen, a baker); Edwin Arthur (age fourteen); and Isabel Elizabeth (age eleven), and a granddaughter Gertrude Clarrita Timpson (age eight).

Older brother Charles Edward Timpson, who married in 1905, immigrated to Canada in 1913, along with his wife Elizabeth (nee Shorey) and their three children at the time: Ena Myrtle, Stanley Frederick and George Edward Timpson. Charles and Elizabeth Timpson resided at 178 Penrose Street, Sarnia, and Charles supported his family by working as a carpenter. Charles and Elizabeth Timpson would have two more children together: Margaret and Jean Timpson.

Edward Arthur Timpson immigrated to Canada the year after his older brother Charles. Edward departed from Southampton, England and Cobh, Ireland aboard the *SS Andania*, and arrived in the port of Quebec on May 10, 1914. He was recorded as nineteen years old, his intended destination as Sarnia, his former occupation as gardener, and his intended occupation as fruit farmer.

Prior to enlisting, Edward was employed by A. Macklin, florist, in Sarnia. Twenty-one-year-old Edward Timpson enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force (CEF) on January 14, 1915 in Sarnia. He stood six feet and one inch tall, had hazel eyes and black hair, was single, and recorded his trade or calling as gardener, and his next-of-kin as his father Edward Timpson Sr., of Great King's Hill, Buckinghamshire, England. Edward Timpson became a member of the 34th Battalion, CEF.

Nine months after enlisting, on October 23, 1915, Private Edward Timpson embarked overseas bound for the United Kingdom aboard the *SS California*. He arrived in England on November 1, 1915, and was initially stationed at Camp Bramshott. Three months later, on February 3, 1916, he was transferred to the 23rd Battalion, stationed at West Sandling, and three weeks after that, on February 26, he was promoted to Acting Corporal.

Three months later, on May 25, 1916, Edward Timpson reverted to the rank of Private on his request, and was transferred to the 2nd Battalion. The next day, May 26, Private Edward Timpson arrived in France, where he was taken on strength into the 10th Battalion, Alberta Regiment. He departed the Canadian Base Depot in France on June 6, 1916, joining the 10th Battalion in the field the next day. Nine days later, on June 16, 1916, Edward Timpson was promoted in the field to Lance Corporal in the 10th Battalion.

For more than a year-and-a-half after Timpson joined this unit, as part of the 1st Canadian Division, the 10th Battalion took part in many of the major battles involving the Canadian Corps in France and Belgium. This included the Battle of the Somme (July 1-November 18, 1916)--one of the bloodiest and most futile battles in history; the Battle of Vimy Ridge (April 9-12, 1917)--the first time (and last time in the war) that all four divisions of the Canadian Corps, with soldiers from every region in the country, would surge forward simultaneously; the Attack on Hill 70 and Lens (August 15-25, 1917)--where they faced enemy flame-throwers and mustard gas for the first time; and the Battle of Passchendaele (October 26 – November 10, 1917)--one waged in unceasing rain on a battlefield that was a nightmarish mess of rotting, mangled corpses, gagging gas, water-filled craters and glutinous mud.

On two occasions during that time, Edward Timpson was promoted in rank: on August 22, 1917, he was appointed Acting Corporal, and less than two months after that, on October 10, 1917, he was promoted to Corporal in the 10th Battalion.

By mid-1918, Edward Timpson found himself taking part in the final great campaign of the war. The **Hundred Days Campaign** (August 8 – November 11, 1918 in France and Belgium) was the “beginning of the end” of the Great War. Canadians were called on again and again over the three-month period to lead the offensives against the toughest German defences. The series of victories repeatedly drove the Germans back, culminating in Germany’s unconditional surrender on November 11, but it came at a cost of almost 46,000 Canadians killed, wounded and missing.

The first offensive in Canada’s Hundred Days Campaign was the **Battle of Amiens** in France (August 8-14, 1918), a truly all-arms battle, one that all four Canadian divisions would be involved in. Over the course of one week, in a battle that British Field Marshal Douglas Haig called “*the finest operation of the war*”, the Canadians would advance nearly 14 km – but it came at a cost of 11,822 Canadian casualties.

Ten days before his 25th birthday, on August 15, 1918, Corporal Edward Timpson was wounded in action--hit by enemy shellfire, during the final days of the Battle of Amiens. He was taken to No. 47 Casualty Clearing Station (CCS) where his wounds were recorded as; “*SW (shell or shrapnel wound) penet. Abdomen and SW hand and leg right and neck.*” That day, Corporal Edward Timpson passed away as a result of his wounds at No. 47 Casualty Clearing Station. Edward’s Commonwealth War Graves Register records him as *Date of Death: 15-8-18. Died of Wounds – No. 47 Casualty Clearing Station. S.W. Penet abdomen etc...* Edward’s remains were buried in Dury Hospital Military Cemetery, ¾ miles South of Amiens, and later exhumed and reburied at Villers-Bretonneux Military Cemetery.

In mid-September 1918, Edward’s brother, Charles Timpson, of 142 Penrose Street, Sarnia, received the news of his brother’s death. Edward Arthur Timpson was the second Timpson son to lose his life in the war. Three years prior to Edward’s death, his brother **William Herbert Timpson**, had been killed in action with the British Army in Flanders. Private William Herbert Timpson, of the 10th (Service) Battalion, Gloucestershire Regiment, was killed in action on September 25th, 1915. A third brother, **Harry Osborne Timpson**, had also enlisted with the British Army when the war broke out. Harry Timpson survived the war. It is worth noting that Edward’s mother, Hester Augusta Timpson, and her sister, Mrs. Nash, both residing in England, had ten sons in their families, eight of whom enlisted. Of the three Timpson boys who enlisted, two lost their lives in war--Edward Arthur Timpson and William Herbert Timpson. Edward Arthur Timpson, 24, is buried in Villers-Bretonneux Military Cemetery, Somme, France, Grave VI.AA.10.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 2G, 6O, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10Z

TOWERS, Norman Ewart

Sarnia born Norman Ewart Towers had been practicing law for four years when he enlisted at age 27 in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force (CEF) on April 15, 1915. Three months after being promoted, Captain Towers of the 7th Canadian Light Trench Mortar Battery was wounded in action during the Battle of Flers-Courcelette—he was hit multiple times by enemy gunfire. According to the medical report, Captain Towers *never rallied & never became quite conscious & died at 1 A.M. Sept 20, 1916.*

Twenty-nine-year-old Norman Towers is buried in St. Sever Cemetery, Rouen, Seine-Maritime, France. On his headstone are inscribed the words, BORN IN SARNIA, CANADA. His name is also inscribed on the First World War Memorial in Osgoode Hall’s Great Library, Toronto.

Norman Towers was born in Sarnia, Ontario on October 7, 1887, the youngest son of Thomas Foard and

Mary Ann (nee Huggart) Towers. Thomas Foard Towers, born November 1845, in Airth, Stirlingshire, Scotland, emigrated from Scotland with his family in 1856. Sixteen years later, on September 17, 1873, twenty-seven-year-old Thomas married twenty-seven year-old Mary Ann Huggart (who was born July 1846, Durham, Ontario) in Putnamville, North Dorchester, Middlesex, Ontario.

By 1875, Thomas and Mary Ann Towers were residing in Sarnia, and eventually at 231 College Avenue, where they raised six sons together: Alfred St. Clair (born April 21, 1875); Robert Irwin (born October 29, 1876); James Crawford (born November 17, 1879, passed away on November 15, 1910 due to carcinoma of liver, leaving behind his wife Florence and their 7-month old son James); Gordon King (born June 18, 1881); Thomas Logan (born July 15, 1884) and Norman Ewart Towers. Over the years, Thomas Towers supported his family by working at a number of occupations, including being a bookkeeper, a clerk, an accountant and a hardware merchant. In 1895, Thomas was a member of the Lambton 27th Battalion, St. Clair Borderers, along with his nineteen year-old son Robert.

In 1891, the Towers household in Sarnia included parents Thomas (a book keeper) and Mary Ann Towers, along with their children: Alfred (a bank clerk), Robert, James, Gordon, Thomas and four year-old Norman Ewart, along with seventy year-old Agnes Towers, the mother of Thomas. Ten years later, in 1901, the Towers household included parents Thomas (an accountant) and Mary Ann, along with their children: Robert (a barrister), James (an assistant bookkeeper), Thomas, and thirteen year-old Norman Ewart Towers, along with their general servant, twenty-two-year-old Mary Toban.

Two of Norman's brothers, Robert Irwin and Thomas Logan Towers, also served overseas during the Great War. Thirty-eight-year-old **Robert Irwin Towers**, a barrister at law, enlisted on September 14, 1915 in London, Ontario. Robert completed his Officers' Declaration Paper soon after, and was appointed Lieutenant-Colonel with the 70th Battalion, CEF. In April 1916, he embarked overseas from Halifax bound for the United Kingdom. In England, he was appointed a member of the Board for adjustment of Regimental Funds. In February 1917, Robert was appointed President of Regiment Funds Board. He returned to Canada in May 1917. Robert Towers was discharged from service and struck off strength in October 1917.

Thirty year-old **Thomas Logan Towers**, a physician, enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force on January 25, 1915 in Guelph. Initially Thomas was appointed the medical officer of the 108th Regiment with the rank of Lieutenant. In June 1915, he embarked overseas and once in England, was taken on strength into the Canadian Army Medical Corps (CAMC). He was appointed Captain, and was initially attached to the Canadian Convalescent Hospital, Monks, Horton. On July 6, 1916, the then Major Thomas Towers arrived in France, as a member of the CAMC. He served in a number of general hospitals and Canadian field ambulance units in France. Thomas Towers survived the war and was struck off strength on general demobilization in May 1919.

Norman Ewart Towers was educated at Sarnia's public and high school, and then attended the University of Toronto, first receiving his Bachelor of Arts (Political Science) 1905-08, followed by his law degree in 1911. Norman became a barrister and practiced law in Port Arthur, Ontario with the firm of Keefer, Keefer & Towers.



Captain Norman Ewart Towers

Twenty-seven-year-old Norman Towers enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force (CEF) on April 15, 1915 in Port Arthur, Ontario (he completed a second Attestation Paper on April 30, 1915). Norman stood five feet seven inches tall, had blue eyes and brown hair, was single, and was employed as a “barrister-at-law”. He recorded that he was a member of the Active Militia, the 96th Lake Superior Regiment, and that he had four years prior military experience in the 1st Hussars, Canada. He also recorded his next-of-kin as his father Thomas F. Towers, of Sarnia. Norman became a member of the Army, 52nd Reserve Battalion, CEF. Just prior to going overseas, Norman returned to Sarnia to visit his parents.

On June 17, 1915, Norman Towers embarked overseas from Montreal bound for the United Kingdom aboard the *SS Scandinavian* with a special draft of 250 men from 52nd Battalion. On June 29, 1915 in England, he was transferred to the 32nd Reserve Battalion, CEF. One month later, on July 29, 1915, Lieutenant Norman Towers’ April 15, 1915 Attestation Paper was certified by a magistrate, and his Certificate of Medical Examination was signed at Shorncliffe Camp, England. Two months later, on September 23, 1915, he was transferred to the Royal Canadian Regiment (RCR). Five weeks later, on November 1, 1915, Lieutenant Norman Towers arrived in Boulogne, France with the RCRs.

On November 15, 1915, Norman wrote a letter from France to his parents Thomas and Mary Ann Towers in Sarnia. The following is a portion of that letter:

Dear Father,

I presume that by now mother will have received my letter and also post card. At present we are comfortably settled at billets. Each company billets by itself and there are seven of us in one room no larger than our sitting room at home and there we eat, and sleep and live, and also do our own cooking, but it is surprising what one can get used to when you try, and it is warm at night, which is a big consideration. Yesterday we saw a wonderful sight, aeroplanes dodging the anti-aircraft guns and on a tremendous scale it reminds one of trying to shoot hawks at a great height.

This country is an awfully pretty one, more so than England, and is just like the pictures one sees – particularly the long rows of tall trees laid in absolutely straight lines. Naturally, I can’t tell you anything of our position or movements, etc., but as yet we have not been in the front trenches, though we may be soon. Persistent rumors of peace negotiations are circulating, but I daresay you people at home know more about that than we do. The mail service is excellent and last night I got yours and mothers letters, and some others... I was the most envied man in the company that night, for letters are the main thing over here.

I find that I have brought over practically everything that I need, although my boots have shrunk a bit with the continued wet and I have come to the conclusion that the only way to do it is to buy boots at least two sizes too large – they are one of the main troubles over here, as there is lots of marching to do. In spots the mud is fearful, but nothing to what it would be if this war were round Oil Springs. Do you remember some of our trips out there and in particular the one when you and I and Rob and mother got lost coming home at night – it is still fresh in my memory.

Where we are just now, although the enemy were at one time in possession of it, there are no signs of war. Perriman and I were out for a walk today and it was just like one at home in the country. We both wished it might have been. From now on my letters will have to be shorter as the opportunities for them are few and as a rule we are dog-tired. I am enjoying the life immensely and will continue to do so for a time anyway – every moment there is something new. Be sure to write often as letters are doubly welcome now, and even if I only send a card, it will serve to let you know that I am well and going. Much love as ever, to you both, and you are constantly in my thoughts, as I am sure I am in yours.

Yours lovingly, Ewart

Lt. N.E. Towers, “D” Company, R.C.R. Canadian Corps

Four months after writing the above letter, on March 13, 1916, Norman became a member of the 7th Canadian Light Trench Mortar Battery. Three months after that, on June 14, 1916, he was promoted to Temporary Captain in command of the 7th Canadian Light Trench Mortar Battery.

Norman Towers soon found himself fighting in the **Battle of the Somme** (July 1-November 18, 1916). It was one of the bloodiest and most futile battles in history. The Somme battle lasted for more than four brutal months and saw the Allies advance around 10 kilometers. A more telling statistic is the number of injuries and deaths: of the 85,000 Canadian Corps, there were more than 24,000 Canadian casualties.

The second major offensive of the Somme battle was the week-long **Battle of Flers-Courcelette** (September 15-22). It was here where tanks made their first appearance in the war. The Battle was a stunning success for the

Canadians, but it came at a cost of over 7,200 casualties. It was during this second major offensive of the Somme battle where Norman Towers was killed in action.

Three months after being promoted to Captain, on September 19, 1916, Captain Norman Towers of the 7th Canadian Light Trench Mortar Battery was wounded in action during the Battle of Flers-Courcelette—he was hit multiple times by enemy gunfire. On the Medical Case Sheet, Norman Towers was recorded as “*Lieutenant Norman Towers of the RCR*” and that he “*was admitted to No. 2 Red Cross Hospital, Rouen, at about 4:00 a.m. on September 19, 1916*”. Also on the Medical Case Sheet, the doctor recorded that Towers had, “*GSW Multiple*” and “*was suffering with multiple wounds involving scrotum and penis, right thigh and buttock, and left thigh*”, and “*On admission he was very collapsed and there were signs of ‘gas’ infection of the thighs*”. Norman Towers was operated on by two doctors that morning at 9:30 a.m., where one doctor recorded, “*shell fragments were removed from both thighs and gas gangrene present.*”

The next day, on September 20, 1916, at No. 2 Red Cross Hospital, Rouen, Norman Towers was recorded as “*GSW (gun shot wound) buttock, dangerously ill*”. Later the doctor added to Norman Towers Medical Case Sheet that, “*The patient never rallied & never became quite conscious & died at 1 A.M. Sept 20, 1916*”. Norman Towers’ Commonwealth War Graves Register records him as; *Date of Death: 20-9-16. Died of Wounds No. 2 Red Cross Hospital, Rouen.*

On September 20, 1916, Norman’s parents in Sarnia received two telegrams, both from the official war records office at Ottawa. The two official telegrams read as follows:

Thos. F. Towers, Sarnia, Ont.

Sincerely regret to inform you Captain Norman Ewart Towers, artillery, officially reported dangerously ill at Red Cross Hospital, Rouen, Sept. 20th. Gunshot wounds. Will send further particulars when received.

Signed, Officer in Charge, Record Office.

and

Thos. F. Towers, Sarnia, Ont.

Deeply regret to inform you Captain Norman Ewart Towers, artillery, officially reported died of wounds, Sept. 20 at No. 2 Red Cross Hospital, Rouen. Signed, O.I.C.R.O.

Sarnians learned of the death of Norman Towers in the September 22, 1916 *Sarnia Observer* with the front page headline; *Two Sarnia Young Men Make Supreme Sacrifice* (Sarnians also learned that Lance Corporal Robert Palmer Crawford had died of wounds eight days earlier – Robert Crawford’s story is also included in this Project).

Twenty-nine-year-old Norman Towers is buried in St. Sever Cemetery, Rouen, Seine-Maritime, France, Grave Officers, A.101.5. On his headstone are inscribed the words, BORN IN SARNIA, CANADA. His name is also inscribed on the First World War Memorial in Osgoode Hall’s Great Library, Toronto. The Osgoode Hall memorial contains the names of law students and graduates who died as a result of the war. There is also a memorial stone in Lakeview Cemetery in Sarnia. Inscribed on it are the words; 1887-1916 CAPT. N.E. TOWERS O.C. 7TH CAN. T.M.B. FELL AT COURCELETTE FRANCE SEPT. 16, 1916 FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH I WILL GIVE THEE A CROWN OF LIFE.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 2G, 6O, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10Z

TURNER, George (#47966)

George Turner was twenty-seven years old when he made the decision in May 1915 to serve his country. Only days later he was sent overseas and within five months he was on the front lines. Two months later he was killed in action in Flanders Fields. His mother had the following inscribed on his grave; The Place Made Vacant in Our Home Can Never More be Filled.

George Turner was born in London, Ontario, on January 25, 1888, the son of Mrs. Mary Jane McCarthey of 232 Davis Street, Sarnia (later Mrs. Robert V. Harrison, of R.R. #1 Corunna, Ontario). [NOTE: In a couple of George Turner’s military records, his mother’s surname is recorded as McArthur.] At age twenty-seven, George enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force (CEF) on May 31, 1915 in Niagara Camp, Ontario. He stood five feet five and a half inches tall, had dark brown eyes and dark hair, was single, and recorded his trade or calling as blacksmith, and his next-of-kin as his mother Mrs. Mary Jane McCarthey in Sarnia. George Turner became a member of the 37th Battalion, CEF.

Only days after enlisting, in early June 1915, George Turner embarked overseas from Montreal bound for the

United Kingdom aboard the *SS Hesperian*. On June 20, 1915 in England, he was transferred to the 17th Reserve Battalion at Shorncliffe. Like all Privates overseas, George earned his \$1.00 + \$0.10 (field allowance) per day.

In early September 1915, while on leave, George Turner suffered an accident—while skating at a roller rink, he fell and injured his hip. The medical officer recorded, “*Examination showed the hip in a very bad bruised condition & a large haematoma present.*” George spent over two weeks in hospital recovering from the injury—from September 6-11 at M.B.C.H., Shorncliffe, and from September 11-21 at Quex Park Military Hospital in Birchington, Kent. Approximately six weeks later, on November 1, 1915, he was transferred, becoming a member of the 42nd Battalion, Quebec Regiment. That same day, he departed with the 42nd Battalion for France.

Just over two months after arriving in France, on January 11, 1916, Private George Turner of the 42nd Battalion was killed in action while fighting in Belgium. His death was recorded as *O.C. Battalion Reports: Killed in Action, 11-1-16*. George Turner’s Commonwealth War Graves Register records him as; *Date of Death: 11-1-16. Killed in Action. Place of Burial: 50 yds, N of gate and 25 yards East of barn at R.E. Farm Cemetery near Wulverghem, Belgium. Sheet 28 – N.35.D.8.7. Cross erected.*

In late January 1916, the telegraph company in Sarnia received the following telegram from the Adjutant-General in Ottawa:

Mrs. Mary Jane MacCarthur, Sarnia, Ont.

Deeply regret to inform you that No. 47966, Private George Tuner, of Sarnia, of 42nd formerly 37th Battalion, officially reported killed in action. Signed, Adj.-Gen.

The telegraph company officials could not immediately deliver the telegram, as Mrs. Mary Jane MacArthur (George Turner’s mother and next of kin), was no longer residing in Sarnia. Shortly after, she was located in Hamilton, and the telegram was forwarded to her.

Following is a portion of the war diary of the 42nd Battalion for January 1916 that records the death of Private George Turner along with five other soldiers:

The efforts of the 7th Canadian Infantry Brigade during three weeks in 1st Brigade area earned the following letter from Major Currie, C.B., Commanding 1st Canadian Division:

“It gives me a great deal of pleasure to inform you that during the stay of the 7th Infantry Brigade in the 1st Brigade area, they behaved at all times most gallantly. Besides, they did a great deal of very necessary and useful work.”

“At the time they took over the line, the trenches, owing to the very bad weather, were not in the best of shape but your fellows have made a great difference. I went over the line last Saturday morning and was delighted with what I saw had been done and so expressed myself to Brigadier General MacDonell. I asked him to convey my thanks to all the ranks of his Brigade: I know he will, but I want you to know as well how I have appreciated them. They were active in their patrolling, did a lot of wiring, greatly improved the front trenches, worked hard on supporting points and were aggressive always. While I deeply regret their casualties I do not think they were excessive.”

“Brigadier General Hughes has written me in warm terms of praise of what has been accomplished by MacDonell’s Brigade.”

*7th Brigade total casualties during three weeks were 13 O.R killed, 2 Officers 69 O.R. wounded, of these 42nd Battalion total casualties were 3 O.R. killed (Ptes Matthews, E., **Turner, G.** and Ward G.) 39 O.R. wounded of whom 3 O.R. died of wounds (Ptes Wells, W.B., Belhumeur, J., McKillop, A.).*

In May 1921, George’s mother, then Mrs. Robert V. Harrison of Froomfield, received the Mother’s Cross in memory of her son who had been killed in action on the battlefield of Flanders. She also received the Mons Star and Military Medal from the war office. George Turner, 27, is buried in R.E. Farm Cemetery, Heuvelland, Belgium, Grave III.A.12. On his headstone are inscribed the words, THE PLACE MADE VACANT IN OUR HOME CAN NEVER MORE BE FILLED MOTHER.

SOURCES: C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 2G, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10Z

VALLIS, Clifford George (#264281)

England born Clifford Vallis immigrated to Canada at the age of seventeen. Six years later when he made the decision to serve his country, he was living with and helping to support his widowed mother in Sarnia. By the time he arrived in England five months later, he was already suffering from illness. Three months later he was returned to

Canada where he never fully recovered, the illness ultimately took his life. Clifford is buried in Mount Pleasant Cemetery, London.

Clifford George Vallis was born in Pimlico, London, England, on March 10, 1893, the eldest son of William George and Kate (nee Fanner) Vallis. On April 3, 1892, twenty-eight-year-old William Vallis (born March 1864, Worcester Park, Surrey, England) married twenty-six-year-old Kate Fanner (born September 1866, Stepney, Surrey, England) in St. Michael and All Angels, Bedford Park Hounslow, England. William and Kate Vallis were blessed with two children together: Clifford George and Herbert William (born February 24, 1897 in Pimlico, England). In April 1897, four year-old Clifford Vallis started school at Holy Trinity School in Westminster. In 1901, the Vallis family--parents William (a coachman) and Kate Vallis, along with eight year-old Clifford and four year-old Herbert, were residing in London, England in the county of Kensington, Brompton Ward.

In September 1910, seventeen year-old Clifford Vallis immigrated to Canada from London, England. He arrived aboard the passenger ship *Lake Erie* at the Port of Quebec on September 29, 1910, with his stated destination as Toronto, Ontario. In early 1911, his parents William (a motor car washer) and Kate Vallis, along with their fourteen year-old son Herbert were still residing in London, England.

Later that year, Clifford's forty-four-year-old mother Kate and his younger brother Herbert immigrated to Canada. They arrived in Montreal aboard the *Grampian* on May 8, 1911. Initially, Kate and her sons Clifford and Herbert resided in Toronto, lodging with George and Esther McBride. Clifford Vallis' occupation was recorded as an inspector in a department store, and Herbert's occupation was a clerk in a wholesale store. Father William Vallis arrived in Canada in July 1911. The following year, on March 5, 1912, patriarch of the family William passed away in Toronto at the age of forty-eight due to pneumonia.

Twenty-three-year-old Clifford Vallis enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force (CEF) on July 17, 1916 in Sarnia and Camp Borden. He stood five feet nine and three quarter inches tall, had grey eyes and brown hair, was single, and lived at home with his mother Kate at the time, at 253 Devine Street, Sarnia. Clifford recorded his trade or calling as shipping clerk (he was employed with Mueller Mfg. Company) and his next-of-kin as his widowed mother Kate Vallis on Devine Street. At the time, Clifford was helping to support his mother by giving her \$40.00 a month. Clifford also recorded that he had prior military experience, serving four years (1910-1913) with the Queens Own Rifles, Toronto.

Clifford became a member of the Canadian Infantry, 213th Battalion, Eastern Ontario Regiment, CEF. Three months after enlisting, on October 17, 1916, he was transferred to the 173rd Battalion, Canadian Highlanders, CEF, with the rank of Private. Just over three weeks later, on November 10, 1916, Clifford was admitted to the Sussex Military Hospital in New Brunswick, diagnosed with nephritis. He was given treatment and remained in hospital for five weeks. Five months after enlisting, in mid-December 1916, Clifford Vallis embarked overseas bound for the United Kingdom to join his battalion (the 173rd Battalion had embarked overseas from Halifax aboard the *SS Olympic* on November 14, 1916).

On December 28, 1916 in England, Private Clifford Vallis was transferred to the 40th (Reserve) Battalion, Canadian Infantry. Less than two weeks later, on January 7, 1917, he was admitted to Moore Barracks Canadian Hospital, Shorncliffe diagnosed with nephritis. While in hospital, he was made a member of the 40th Reserve Battalion. At Moore Barracks Hospital, his Medical Case Sheet recorded that Clifford *had influenza and rheumatism last winter, and was laid up for two and a half months in Toronto. His first attack of nephritis followed immediately. Second attack developed in Sussex, New Brunswick, 10-11-16. He was treated in St. John N.B. for five weeks. This the third attack commenced four days ago. First he noticed his face swollen, weakness and headache with some backache followed.*

On February 10, 1917, Clifford was reported as *much improved but will not be fit for service being boarded for discharge to Canada*. He was discharged from Moore Barracks Hospital on March 12, 1917, with his diagnosis changed to "nephritis chronic". The next day, he sailed from Liverpool on the hospital ship *Letitia*, returning to Canada for discharge. The next month, on April 15, 1917 at the Discharge Depot in Quebec, Private Clifford Vallis was "Struck off Strength" from the 213th Battalion, discharged as "medically unfit". Less than four weeks later, on May 10, 1917, Clifford was re-attested and taken on with the 213th Battalion in London, Ontario for further medical treatment. On that day, he was admitted to the Military Hospitals Commission of Canada (MHCC) at Wolseley Barracks in London.

Seven months later, on December 20, 1917, at 1:15 p.m., Private Clifford Vallis lost his life at Wolseley

Barracks Hospital in London, Ontario. The cause of death was recorded as nephritis and Vincent angina (infection of the pharynx). Clifford's Canada War Graves Register records him as *Date of Death: 20-12-17. London, Ontario Military Hospital. Nephritis – Discharge at Quebec, 15-4-17 but re-attested with M.H.C.C. for further medical treatment May 10th, 1917. Given every care and attention.*

Kate Vallis later received a War Service Gratuity of \$180.00 for the loss of her son Clifford. In 1921, she moved to Greenwood Avenue, Toronto. On December 28, 1920, Clifford's twenty-three-year-old brother Herbert Vallis, married twenty-two-year-old Mary Annie Phillips (born Watford, Ontario) at St. John's Church in Sarnia, Ontario.

Clifford Vallis, 24, is buried in Mount Pleasant Cemetery, London, Ontario, Plot Section X.R.1. Originally, a wooden cross was erected over Clifford Vallis' grave with all the particulars. The wooden cross was later replaced by a headstone. On his headstone are inscribed the words, AT REST. On the Sarnia cenotaph, his name is inscribed as H. Wallis.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 2G, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10Z

WADE, Robert (#124061)

England born Robert Wade along with his brother immigrated to Canada in their early twenties and came to live and work in Sarnia. Other Wade family members followed and three of the Wade boys would enlist in Sarnia in the same year. In fact, the three Wade boys fought together in one of the most horrific battles of the war. All three were wounded only days apart—for Robert, his wounds were fatal. He left behind his parents, siblings and his wife in Sarnia.

Robert Wade was born in Boroughbridge, Yorkshire, England, on August 24, 1890, the son of William Alfred and Mary Ann (nee Robshaw-Burkhill) Wade, of Yorkshire, England. William Wade (born 1861) married Mary Ann Robshaw-Burkhill (born 1865) in December 1886 in Yorkshire. William and Mary Ann were blessed with nine children together: Sarah Ann (born 1887); John William (born 1888); Annie Elizabeth (born 1889); Robert; Alfred (born July 25, 1893); Walter (born April 19, 1895); Herbert (born 1896); Emily (born 1898); and Hetty (born 1906).

In 1891, the Wade family was residing in Humberton, Yorkshire—parents William (an agricultural worker) and Mary Ann Wade, along with their children: Sarah Ann, John William, Annie Elizabeth and infant Robert Wade. In 1901, the Wade family was residing in Harrogate, Yorkshire—parents William (a waggoner at a corn mill) and Mary Ann Wade, along with most of their children: Sarah (age fourteen), Annie (age eleven), Alfred (age seven), Walter (age five), Herbert (age four) and Emily (age two). In 1911, some of the Wade family were still residing together in Yorkshire—parents William (a hay cutter) and Mary Ann Wade, along with fifteen year-old Walter (an apprentice boot maker), twelve year-old Emily and five year-old Hetty who were both still in school.

Two of the Wade children immigrated to Canada in 1911: twenty-one-year-old Robert Wade and twenty-three-year-old John departed Liverpool, England aboard the *SS Corsican* and arrived in Halifax on March 30, 1911 with \$70 between them. Their intended destination was Sarnia to work as farm labourers. Other members of the Wade family would follow, and they would reside in at 301 Cameron Street in Sarnia. In the 1914 Sarnia Directory, residing at 301 Cameron Street were William Wade (labourer), Alfred Wade (Broderick & Co.) and Robert Wade (W.J. McIntyre). In the 1917-18 Sarnia Directory, residing at 301 Cameron Street were William, Alfred (a soldier) and Walter (a soldier) Wade. Three of the Wade boys served in the Great War. All three of them enlisted in the same year, and all three of them fought and were wounded in the same battle, only days apart.

Twenty-two-year-old **Alfred Wade** (#402867) was the first to enlist, signing up with the Canadian Overseas Expeditionary Force (CEF) on January 29, 1915 in Sarnia. He stood five feet eleven inches tall, had blue eyes and fair hair, was single, and recorded his trade or calling as a clerk (later changed to tailors cutter - apprentice) and his next of kin as his father William at 301 Cameron Street, Sarnia. He became a member of the 34th Battalion and arrived in England on June 30, 1915 and was transferred to the 11th Reserve Battalion. On August 3, 1915, he was transferred to the 1st Battalion, and arrived with that unit in France the next day.

After serving for more than a year in France, on September 3, 1916, Private Alfred Wade was wounded in action, a gunshot wound to the thumb, during the Battle of the Somme. He was treated in several hospitals in France including at Boulogne, Etaples and Havre, before being returned to Moore Barracks Canadian Hospital in Shorncliffe, England on October 14, 1916. Suffering from frequent colds, cough and steady loss of weight for

months, he was also treated for “bronchitis” while there. His condition was later diagnosed as pulmonary tuberculosis, the result of his time in the trenches. In late December he was moved to Hastings Sanatorium Hospital. In mid-January 1917, he was invalided to Canada, sailing from Liverpool because of his “general debility”. In Canada, he entered Queen Alexandra Sanatorium in Byron for treatment. He was discharged on November 30, 1917 in London, Ontario “being no longer physically fit for war service”. He returned to his parents home on Cameron Street in Sarnia. Alfred Wade passed away on August 18, 1958 at the age of sixty-five.

Twenty year-old **Walter Wade** was the second Wade to enlist. Initially signing up with the Canadian Overseas Expeditionary Force (CEF) on June 24, 1915 (#90886), he became a member of the 29th Battery, Canadian Field Artillery, 1st Howitzer Brigade. One month later, on July 20, 1915, he was transferred to the 34th Battalion. One month after that, on August 30, 1915, Walter completed another CEF Attestation Paper in Sarnia, becoming a member of the 70th Battalion (#123033). Walter stood five feet five and a half inches tall, had brown eyes and brown hair, was single, and recorded his trade or calling as a butcher and his next of kin as his mother Mary Ann Wade on Cameron Street, Sarnia.

In late December 1915-early January 1916, Walter was in a London, Ontario hospital for a week due to bronchitis. Back in 1908, Walter had had pneumonia and was ill for six months. After he recovered, he dealt with bronchitis ever since.

On April 26, 1916, Walter Wade embarked from Canada bound for the United Kingdom aboard the *SS Lapland*, arriving in England on May 5 as a Private with the 70th Battalion. Less than two months later, on June 28, 1916, Private Walter Wade was transferred to the 24th Battalion and arrived the next day with that unit in the field in France (he arrived with his brother Robert who was in the same battalion). Soon after arriving in France, Walter experienced increased coughing and shortness of breath. His expectorations got worse and he lost weight. He reported sick at LeHavre and was put under treatment by his Medical Officer.

Despite his ill-health, Walter soon found his way to the front. On September 12, 1916, Private Walter Wade was wounded in action, hit on his abdomen by a piece of shell that knocked him over, during the Battle of the Somme. He was laid out for about two hours and was taken to a dressing station and then to a field ambulance about six hours after being hit. On September 19, he was assigned to a rest camp, and the next day, was sent to 16th General Hospital at LeTreport. For almost three weeks, he vomited some blood and vomited after every meal. He was moved to other hospitals for treatment in France before returning to England. In England, he convalesced at Graylingwell War Hospital, Chichester (Oct. 11-23), and Canadian Convalescent Hospital, Epsom (Oct. 23-Dec. 13).

In mid-December 1916 he was in Moore Barracks Military Hospital, Shorncliffe, diagnosed with bronchitis. One week later, he was moved to Ontario Military Hospital, Orpington, Kent where his symptoms of coughing and expectoration, shortness of breath and loss of weight persisted. He was diagnosed with the disability “tubercle of lung” and eventually discharged from hospital on April 11, 1916. On May 3, 1916, he was invalided to Canada for further medical treatment. At Spadina Military Hospital in Toronto he was diagnosed with pulmonary tuberculosis. Walter Wade was discharged from the military on August 31, 1917 in Toronto, declared as “medically unfit for war service”, and returned to Sarnia.

On March 31, 1914, twenty-three-year-old **Robert Wade** (a clerk) married twenty-three-year-old Vanny Louisa Twiner in Sarnia. Robert’s brother Alfred Wade and his sister Emily Wade (of 301 Cameron Street) were the witnesses on the Marriage Certificate. Vanny Louisa Twiner was the daughter of Joseph (a farmer) and Elizabeth (nee Pash) Twiner. Robert and Vanny Wade lived at 317 Maxwell Street, Sarnia.

Approximately 1 ½ years after getting married, twenty-five-year-old Robert Wade enlisted in the Canadian Overseas Expeditionary Force (CEF) on October 8, 1915 in Sarnia. He stood five feet five and a half inches tall, had blue eyes and brown hair, and recorded his trade or calling as grocer’s clerk, and his next-of-kin as his wife Vanny Wade of 317 Maxwell Street. Robert became a member of the 70th Overseas Battalion, CEF.

Six months after enlisting, on April 24, 1916, Private Robert Wade embarked overseas from Halifax bound for the United Kingdom aboard the *SS Lapland*, arriving in England on May 5, 1916. Two months later, on June 28, 1916, he was transferred to the Canadian Infantry, 24th Battalion, Quebec Regiment, at Shorncliffe. The next day, June 29, 1916, Private Robert Wade crossed the Channel and moved with the 24th Battalion to the front in France. His brother Walter, also with the 24th Battalion, arrived in France with him. Their brother Alfred had arrived in France with the 1st Battalion ten months earlier. The three Wade brothers all took part in fighting in one of the most horrendous battles of the war.

The **Battle of the Somme** (July 1-November 18, 1916) was one of the bloodiest and most futile battles in history. The Somme battle lasted for more than four brutal months and saw the Allies advance around 10 kilometers. A more telling statistic is the number of injuries and deaths: of the 85,000 Canadian Corps, there were more than 24,000 Canadian casualties.

All three Wade brothers were wounded in a two week period in September 1916, one fatally. On September 3, Private Alfred Wade was wounded in action, hit in the hand by enemy gunfire. On September 12, Private Walter Wade was wounded in action, hit in the abdomen by a piece of enemy shellfire.

The second major offensive of the Somme battle was the week-long **Battle of Flers-Courcelette** (September 15-22). It was here where tanks made their first appearance in the war. The battle was a stunning success for the Canadians, but it came at a cost of over 7,200 casualties. It was during this second major offensive of the Somme battle where Robert Wade was killed in action.

Two and a half months after arriving in France, on September 16, 1916, Private Robert Wade of the 24th Battalion, was killed in action on the Somme battlefield during the Battle of Flers-Courcelette. In his Personnel File, there are five entries recorded in sequence: *Reported from base wounded Sept. 16th, 1916 - shell shock; Reported wounded Inquires have been made; Previously reported wounded now missing since Sept. 16th, 1916; Previously reported missing now for official purposes presumed to have died on or since Sept. 16th 1916; and Previously reported missing presumed dead now reported killed in action Sept. 16, 1916.*

Robert Wade's Commonwealth War Graves Register records him as; *Date of Death on or since: 16-9-16. Previously reported Missing now for Official purposes presumed to have died – now Killed in Action.* At some point, Robert's remains were exhumed from the original place of burial, and then reburied in Adanac Military Cemetery, 6 ¼ miles North East of Albert. His widow Vanny Wade received a War Service Gratuity of \$180.00 for the loss of her husband. She resided at 128 Essex Street, Sarnia for a time and later moved to Water Lane, Selsley, Nr. Stroud, Gloucester, England. Robert Wade, 26, is buried in Adanac Military Cemetery, Miraumont, Somme, France, Grave II.B.2.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 2G, 6O, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10Z

WALTERS, Joseph John

Sarnia born Joseph Walters, an only child, was twenty-one years old in April 1916 when he made the decision to serve his country. Within six months, he was a Lieutenant taking part in one of the bloodiest and most futile battles in history. Joseph survived this horrendous battle but the following spring, he was killed in action while fighting to rid France of its German oppressors.

Joseph John Walters was born in Sarnia, Ontario on September 26, 1894, the only child of Jacob D. and Anna K. (nee Peiffer) Walters. In 1901, the Walters family was residing in London, Ontario--parents Jacob (born April 14, 1866, occupation recorded as traveller) and Anna Walters (born January 8, 1870 in Nova Scotia); their six year-old son Joseph John; along with a twelve year-old cousin Mabel Peiffer (born in Nova Scotia). Ten years later, in 1911, the Walters London household included parents forty-four-year-old Jacob and forty year-old Anna Walters; along with their fifteen year-old son Joseph Walters. Note: On the 1901 Census, the Walters family is recorded as having German origin. On the 1911 Census, they are recorded as having Scottish origin.

Twenty-one-year-old Joseph Walters completed his Officers' Declaration Paper with the Canadian Overseas Expeditionary Force on April 22, 1916, receiving his medical approval in St. Thomas, Ontario. He stood five feet six inches tall and lived at home with his parents at 1029 Richmond Street in London, Ontario at the time. He recorded his occupation as journalist ("reporter newspaper"), and his next-of-kin as his mother, Mrs. J.D. Walters of 1029 Richmond Street, London. He also recorded that he had prior active militia experience with the 25th Elgin Regiment, St. Thomas, Ontario, and that he had several years' military service in the cadets. Joseph became a member of the 91st Battalion, Canadian Expeditionary Force, with the rank of Lieutenant. He embarked overseas from Halifax bound for the United Kingdom aboard the *SS Olympic* on June 28, 1916. He arrived in Liverpool on July 5, 1916.

On July 15, 1916, Lieutenant Joseph Walters was transferred to the 35th Battalion at West Sandling. Seven weeks later, on September 7, 1916, he earned qualifications in a "bombing course, C.M.S.". Later that month, on September 29, 1916, he was transferred to the Canadian Infantry 20th Battalion, Central Ontario Regiment, and embarked across the English Channel to the front lines in France.

Lieutenant Walters joined his unit in the field on October 8, 1916 and was thrust immediately into a horrendous battle. The Battle of the Somme (July 1-November 18, 1916) was one of the bloodiest and most futile battles in history. The Somme battle lasted for more than four brutal months and saw the Allies advance about 10 kilometers. A more telling statistic is the number of injuries and deaths: of the 85,000 Canadian Corps, there were more than 24,000 Canadian casualties. Joseph Walters survived this harrowing experience.

In the New Year, on January 21, 1917, Joseph was granted ten days leave, and returned to England. He returned to the field in France on February 4, 1917. A month and a half later, he was admitted to No. 22 Casualty Clearing Station (CCS) as a result of P.U.O. (pyrexia – of unknown origin fever of an undetermined cause). One week later, on March 31, 1917, he was admitted to Duchess of Westminster's Hospital at Le Touquet, France, diagnosed with P.U.O. slt. He remained there for one week, being discharged to Details Camp Etaples on April 6, 1917. On April 14, 1917, two days after the Battle of Vimy Ridge, Lieutenant Joseph Walters returned to the field rejoining his unit, the 20th Battalion.

Less than one month after returning to his unit, on May 10, 1917, Lieutenant Joseph Walters was killed in action while fighting in France. On May 19, 1917 in Rouen, France, the Officer in Command of the 20th Battalion recorded on the Field Service Record that Lieutenant J.J. Walters was "*Killed in Action, In the Field (France), 10-5-17*". Joseph Walters' Commonwealth War Graves Register records him as; *Date of Death: 10-5-17. Killed in Action.*

Joseph Walters remains were originally buried in Acheville Road Cemetery, and later exhumed and reburied in Lievin Communal Cemetery, 2 miles W.S.W. of Lens. Not long after Joseph's death, his parents Jacob and Anna Walters were residing in Clover House, Rochester, New York, U.S.A. Joseph Walters, 22, is buried in Lievin Communal Cemetery Extension, Pas de Calais, France, Grave III.A.16. In November 2019, his name along with 25 others was added to the Sarnia cenotaph, engraved in stone to be remembered always.
SOURCES: C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 2G, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10Z

WATSON, Edward Phillip (#3131744)

American born Edward Watson, 22, was living in Sarnia with his parents and only brother when he was drafted for military service. Seven months after being called to service, he was fighting in the last great and costly campaign of the war. He was killed in action five weeks before the Great War came to an end and is buried in Sancourt British Cemetery, Nord, France. His parents commemorated his sacrifice locally in Lakeview Cemetery and Parker Street United Church.

Edward Phillip Watson was born in Flint, Genesee County, Michigan, USA, on July 8, 1895, the youngest son of Edward Proctor Watson Sr. and Ella (nee Barron) Watson. On January 21, 1893, twenty-three-year-old tinsmith Edward Watson Sr. (born May 29, 1869 in Sarnia) married twenty year-old Ella Barron (born February 26, 1872 in Sarnia) in Port Huron, Michigan. Both Edward Sr. and Ella were residing in Sarnia at the time. Edward Sr. and Ella Watson were blessed with two children together: Harold Barron Watson, born March 24, 1893, and Edward Phillip Watson Jr. Though Edward Sr. and Ella Watson were both born in Sarnia, their two sons were both born in the USA.

In 1901, the Watson family in Sarnia included parents Edward Sr. (age thirty-one) and Ella Watson (age twenty-eight); and their two boys eight year-old Harold and five year-old Edward Jr. Father Edward Sr. supported his family working as a tinsmith at the time. Ten years later, in 1911, the Watson family was living at 146 Watson Street, Sarnia and included; Edward Sr. (employed as a tinsmith at Goodisons) and Ella Watson; and their two boys Harold (age seventeen, a book seller) and Edward Jr. (age fifteen, an express clerk).

In Europe, with the Canadian troops thinning at an alarming rate and no end to the war in sight, the government instituted the Military Service Act in 1917. Twenty-two-year-old Edward Watson Jr. was drafted under the Military Service Act of 1917, Class One. He underwent his medical examination in Sarnia on November 6, 1917 and was called to service on January 9, 1918, reporting to the 1st Depot Battalion, Western Ontario Regiment in London, Ontario. He stood five feet ten and three-quarter inches tall, had grey eyes and dark brown hair, was single, and lived at home with his parents on Watson Street at the time. He recorded his trade or calling as hammer operator, and his next-of-kin as his father Edward Sr. of Watson Street, Sarnia.

On February 21, 1918, Edward Watson Jr. embarked overseas from Halifax bound for the United Kingdom aboard the *SS Cretic*. He arrived in England on March 4, 1918, and the next day, was taken on strength into the 4th Canadian Reserve Battalion at Bramshott. Five months later, on August 18, 1918, Private Edward Watson Jr.

proceeded from Camp Witley bound for France, becoming a member of the Canadian Infantry, 1st Battalion, Western Ontario Regiment. He arrived at the Canadian Base Depot in France on August 20, 1918, and three days later, arrived at the Canadian Corps Reinforcement Camp (CCRC). Twelve days later, on September 1, 1918, Edward Watson joined the 1st Battalion in the field at the Front.

Private Edward Watson Jr. was soon immersed in the final great campaign of the war. The **Hundred Days Campaign** (August 8 – November 11, 1918 in France and Belgium) was the “beginning of the end” of the Great War. Canadians were called on again and again over the three-month period to lead the offensives against the toughest German defences. The series of victories repeatedly drove the Germans back, culminating in Germany’s unconditional surrender on November 11, but it came at a cost of almost 46,000 Canadians killed, wounded and missing.

The first offensive in the Campaign was the Battle of Amiens (August 8-14, 1918), a truly all-arms battle, one that all four Canadian divisions would be involved in. Over the course of one week, in a battle that British Field Marshal Douglas Haig called “*the finest operation of the war*”, the Canadians would advance nearly 14 km. The second offensive in the Campaign was the Battle of Arras and Breaking the DQ Line (August 26-September 3, 1918), where Canadians were part of a spearhead force tasked with crashing one of the most heavily fortified positions, the Hindenburg Line. General Sir Julian Byng called the Canadian victory at Arras and the DQ Line “*the turning point of the campaign*”.

The third offensive in Canada’s Hundred Days Campaign was the **Battle of Canal-du-Nord and Cambrai** in France (September 27-October 11, 1918). Against seemingly impossible odds and a desperate, fully prepared enemy, the Canadians fought for two weeks in a series of brutal engagements. They successfully channeled through a narrow gap in the canal, punched through a series of fortified villages and deep interlocking trenches, and captured Brouillon Wood and the city of Cambrai. General Arthur Currie would call it “*some of the bitterest fighting we have experienced*” and victory came at a cost of 14,000 Canadian casualties.

Private Edward Watson Jr. of the 1st Battalion lost his life during this third offensive in France. Exactly one month after arriving at the front, on October 1, 1918, he was killed in action. His loss was originally recorded as, *Reported missing after action October 1st, 1918*. In mid-October 1918, his parents Edward Sr. and Ella in Sarnia received information from the War Office that their youngest son, EDWARD WATSON, HAS BEEN OFFICIALLY REPORTED MISSING. By the end of that month, Private Edward Watson Jr.’s death was officially recorded as, *Previously reported missing, now reported killed in action October 1st, 1918*. His Commonwealth War Graves Register records him as; *Date of Casualty: 1-10-18. Reported from Base Missing. Now Killed in Action. Buried Sancourt British Cemetery, 10 ¾ miles S.E. of Douai, France*.

Approximately five weeks after Edward Watson’s death, the Great War came to an end. Edward Watson Jr., 23, is buried in Sancourt British Cemetery, Nord, France, Grave I.C.5. In Lakeview Cemetery in Sarnia, there is a memorial grave marker in honour of Edward Watson. The marker reads: IN MEMORY OF EDWARD PHILIP WATSON 1895-1918 PTE. 1ST BTN. W.O.R. FELL AT CAMBRAI OCT. 1, 1918 BURIED IN SANCOURT BRITISH CEMETERY FRANCE ‘FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH I WILL GIVE THEE A CROWN OF LIFE’.

On September 23, 1920, Edward Jr.’s twenty-seven-year-old brother Harold Watson married thirty-two-year-old Alice Victoria Millard (born November 6, 1887 in Sarnia) in Sarnia. In 1921, parents Edward Sr. (a tinsmith with Imperial Oil) and Ella Watson, along with their son Harold (a meter reader) and his wife Alice Watson were residing together at 147 Watson Street, Sarnia. Seven years later, in 1928, a stain glass memorial window was unveiled in Parker Street United Church in Sarnia to commemorate the sacrifice made by Private Edward Watson. The inscription at the base of the window reads, *In Loving Memory of Pte. E.P. Watson Killed in Action on Oct. 1, 1918*. The window is still there today, in what is now called Lighthouse Community Church. Parents Edward Sr. and Ella Watson, along with their son Harold and his wife Alice Watson, are all buried in Lakeview Cemetery in Sarnia. SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 2G, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10Z

WEATHERILL, Bertrand Peter (#123146)

Bertrand Weatherill was twenty-two years old in September 1915 when he made the decision to serve his country. His older brother enlisted soon after and together, they embarked overseas and arrived in France in the same battalion. Both brothers were soon fighting in one of the most atrocious battles of the war. Approximately one year after enlisting, Bertrand was killed in action on the Somme battlefield. The twenty-three-year-old has no known grave but is memorialized on the Vimy Memorial, Pas de Calais, France.

Bertrand Peter Weatherill was born in Oil City, Lambton County, on November 8, 1892, the youngest child of Robert Weatherill Sr. and Laura Louisa (nee Keating) Weatherill. On June 22, 1887, thirty-one-year-old Robert Weatherill (born September 1854 in Toronto) married twenty-three-year-old Laura Louisa Keating (born September 12, 1863 in Oil Springs) in Oil City, Lambton, Ontario. Robert and Laura Weatherill were blessed with three children together: Helen Eskelly Mitchell (born March 13, 1888); Robert Jr. James (born September 9, 1889); and Bertrand Peter.

In 1891, the Weatherill family was residing in Enniskillen, Lambton East-- parents Robert Sr. (a storekeeper) and Laura Weatherill, along with their children Helen (age three) and Robert Jr. (age one). Robert Weatherill Sr. was a merchant in Oil City before engaging in a brokerage business, and later in fruit farming. Tragedy hit the family eight years later when they suffered the loss of Robert Weatherill Sr. (Bertrand was not quite seven years old). On September 20, 1899, forty-four-year-old Robert Sr., father of three, passed away on his farm from the effects of septicemia (blood poisoning).

In the spring of 1901, thirty-seven-year-old widow Laura Weatherill was raising three young children on her own, thirteen year-old Helen, eleven year-old Robert and eight year-old Bertrand in Plympton, Lambton West. On December 16, 1901, Laura remarried, to fifty-nine-year-old widower John Palmer Jarman (born October 1842) in Huron County. Ten years later, in 1911, the family was residing in Plympton Township--parents John (a farmer) and Laura Jarman; along with their children Robert Jr. (a bank clerk), Helen (a school teacher) and Bertrand Weatherill (a farmer); along with a farm labourer, George Laugman (born 1885 in England, had immigrated to Canada in 1911).

Bertrand's older brother, **Robert Jr. Weatherill**, also served in the war, enlisting less than two months after Bertrand had enlisted. Twenty-five-year-old Robert Weatherill enlisted with the 45th Overseas Battalion of the Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF) on October 29, 1915 in Swan River, Manitoba. He stood five feet eight inches tall, had blue eyes and brown hair, and was single at the time. He recorded his trade or calling as bank clerk, and his next-of-kin as his mother, Mrs. L.L. Jarman in Wyoming, Ontario. Less than four months later, Robert was transferred to the 70th Battalion, CEF, the same battalion as his brother Bertrand. Private Robert Weatherill embarked overseas with his brother Bertrand aboard the *SS Lapland* on April 24, 1916, arriving in England on May 5, 1916. Robert was hospitalized for five days that first month due to influenza. One month later, Robert Weatherill was transferred to the 58th Battalion along with his brother, and together they arrived in France on June 19, 1916. Both brothers were soon fighting in one of the most atrocious battles of the war—the Battle of the Somme.

On two occasions, five days in August 1916, and six days in November 1916, Private Robert Weatherill was hospitalized in France due to PUO (pyrexia - of unknown origin fever of an undetermined cause). Approximately seven months after arriving in France, on January 8, 1917, Robert was promoted in the field to Sergeant. Three months later, in early April 1917, Robert was transferred to England with a view to obtaining a commission and was posted to 2nd Central Ontario Regiment Depot (CORD) in East Sandling. On July 1, 1917, he was a Lieutenant, a member of the 8th Reserve Battalion in Shorncliffe. In early September 1917, he was seconded for duty with the Royal Air Force (RAF), attending the Royal Flying Corps School of Aeronautics in Reading. The Great War ended in November 1918. Lieutenant Robert Weatherill remained with the RAF in England until early May 1919, and then returned to Canada in late June 1919. Robert Weatherill was discharged on demobilization in Ottawa in July 1919. In September 1921, Robert married Elizabeth Marion McKay in Swan River, Manitoba. Robert and Elizabeth had two daughters together. Robert Weatherill passed away at the age of sixty-nine in October 1958 in St. Catharines, Ontario.

Twenty-two-year-old **Bertrand Peter Weatherill** enlisted in the Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF) on September 7, 1915 in London, Ontario (two months later, his older brother Robert enlisted). Bertrand stood five feet six and three-quarter inches tall, had grey eyes and brown hair, and was single at the time. He recorded his trade or calling as banker, and his next-of-kin as his mother, Laura Louisa Jarman living in Wyoming, Ontario. He also recorded that he had militia experience, serving one year with the Queen's Own Rifles, Toronto. Bertrand became a member of the 70th Battalion, CEF. Two months later, on November 15, 1915 in London, Bertrand was promoted to the rank of Sergeant. Four months later, on March 17, 1916 in London, he reverted to the rank of Private.

The following month, on April 17, 1916, while on his way from London to Halifax, Bertrand was promoted again to the rank of Sergeant. Six days later, he again reverted to the rank of Private at his own request. Bertrand embarked overseas from Halifax bound for the United Kingdom aboard the *SS Lapland* on April 24, 1916, along with his older brother Robert. The two Weatherill brothers disembarked in England on May 5, 1916. Six weeks later, on

June 19, 1916, Private Bertrand Weatherill and his brother arrived in France as members of the Canadian Infantry, 58th Battalion, Central Ontario Regiment. Two days later, on June 21, 1916, Bertrand and his brother arrived for duty at the Front with the 58th Battalion.

Private Bertrand Weatherill soon found himself taking part in one of the most horrendous battle of the war. The **Battle of the Somme** (July 1-November 18, 1916) was one of the bloodiest and most futile battles in history. The Somme battle lasted for more than four brutal months and saw the Allies advance about 10 kilometers. A more telling statistic is the number of injuries and deaths: of the 85,000 Canadian Corps, there were more than 24,000 Canadian casualties. During the first month of this battle, on July 25, 1916, Bertrand Weatherill was promoted to the rank of Corporal while in the field in France.

The second major offensive of the Somme battle was the week-long **Battle of Flers-Courcelette** (September 15-22). It was here where tanks made their first appearance in the war. The Battle was a stunning success for the Canadians, but the victory came at a cost of over 7,200 casualties. It was during this second major offensive of the Somme battle where Bertrand Weatherill was killed in action.

Approximately three months after arriving in France, on September 17, 1916, Corporal Bertrand Weatherill of the 58th Battalion was killed in action on the Somme battlefield during the Battle of Flers-Courcelette. His loss was originally recorded as: *Reported from Base MISSING since Sept. 17th, 1916*. Days later, his status was changed to: *Previously reported missing, now reported wounded Sept. 25th, 1916*; and later recorded as: *Previously reported wounded, now reported "wounded and missing" since Sept. 17th, 1916*; and finally recorded as: *Previously reported wounded and missing, now for official purposes presumed to have died on or since 17-9-16*. Corporal Bertrand Weatherill's Commonwealth War Graves Register records him as; *Date of Casualty: 17-9-16. Previously reported Wounded and Missing now for Official purposes presumed to have died*.

Bertrand Weatherill, 23, has no known grave. He is memorialized on the Vimy Memorial, Pas de Calais, France. He was posthumously awarded the Victory Medal and the British War Medal. Bertrand Weatherill's name is also included on a World War I memorial tablet in St. Paul's Anglican Church, in Toronto, along with the names of seventy-five other men of that church who lost their lives during the Great War. On the Sarnia cenotaph, his name is inscribed as C. Weatherill.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 2G, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10Z

WESTON, Alfred (#603167)

Alfred Weston, who immigrated to Canada from England, enlisted with the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force in August 1915, two weeks after he was married. By the end of May 1916, Private Weston arrived in the front lines in France. Unfortunately, he died two months later at the Battle of the Somme, one of the deadliest battles in the history of the Great War. Alfred, 22, had been wounded by enemy gunfire to his stomach and he never recovered. He is buried in Lijssenthoek Military Cemetery, Belgium.

Alfred Weston was born in Birmingham, Warwickshire, England, on August 14, 1893, the son of Thomas William and Florence Emma (nee Wells) Weston. Thomas Weston (born 1861 in Staffordshire, England) and Florence Wells (born 1867 in Worcestershire, England) were married in 1892 in England. Their union produced six children: Charles Thomas (born 1892); Alfred; Arthur E. (born May 6, 1896); Hilda Florence (born October 2, 1897); Horace (born June 22, 1899); William Sayers (born 1904).

In 1901, the Weston family was residing in Aston Manor, Warwickshire. Thomas supported Florence and their five children by working as a hinge finisher. Along with Florence and their children Charles (age eight), Alfred (age seven), Arthur (age four), Hilda (age three), and Horace (age one), was a thirty-nine-year-old boarder, William Wells. At some point between 1901 and 1911, the patriarch Thomas, passed away. In 1911, the Weston family was still residing in Warwickshire, England and, if nothing else, had diverse occupations: widowed mother Florence Weston was a bullet maker; and her children Alfred (seventeen) was a lathe hand; Arthur (fifteen) was a rubber maker; while Hilda (thirteen) and Horace (eleven) were in school, and six year-old William Weston was still at home. In the summer of 1913, at the age of twenty, Alfred Weston immigrated to Canada. He departed from Avonmouth, England aboard the *Royal Edward* and arrived in the port of Quebec on August 30, 1913. Alfred declared his final destination as Toronto, and his intended occupation as labourer.

Over the years, most members of the Weston family followed Alfred to Canada. His mother, Florence Weston, arrived in Quebec alone in June 1914 and ended up residing in Hamilton. Alfred's brother, Charles, had also

immigrated to Canada some time before the war and resided in Sarnia. On August 24, 1914, Charles Weston married Beatrice Hall (of London, England), at St. John's Rectory in Sarnia. The couple returned to England, where Charles served with the British Army during the war. Alfred's brother, Arthur, married Dora Ellen Pugh in July 1919 in England and Arthur and Dora Weston immigrated to Canada two months later. In June 1921, Arthur and Dora were residing at 384 S. Vidal Street, Sarnia, along with his brother Horace Weston, and sister-in-law, Eva Weston. Arthur and Dora Weston had two children together—Alfred Arthur and Norman Weston—and the family later resided in Fort Gratiot, St. Clair, Michigan.

Alfred's brother Horace Weston, had also immigrated to Canada and on December 25, 1920, he married Eva Harriet Pugh (of England) in Sarnia. Horace and Eva Weston were blessed with two children together: Dorothy and Kenneth. Eventually, the family settled in nearby St. Clair, Michigan. Alfred's sister, Hilda, also immigrated to Canada and on April 11, 1919, she married Frank Cooke (of England) in Sarnia. Hilda and Frank Cooke had three children together: Hilda May (born December 1920 in Sarnia); William Edward (born September 1923 in Point Edward); and Frank Thomas Cooke (born July 1929 in Michigan). Hilda and Florence Cooke later resided in Wayne County, Michigan. Alfred's youngest brother, William, also immigrated to Canada. On July 10, 1926, William Weston married Canadian Evelyn F. Carson in Hamilton.

Alfred Weston, now 22, married eighteen year-old Rebecca Jane "Jenny" Baker (born in Harrowgate, England, the daughter of William and Jane Baker) in Sarnia on August 25, 1915. The young couple resided at 337 Mitton Street, Sarnia, but on September 7, 1915, two weeks after getting married, Alfred enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force (CEF) in Sarnia. He stood five feet seven and a half inches tall and had dark blue eyes and light brown hair. He recorded his trade or calling as electrician, and his next-of-kin as his newlywed wife Jennie, who was residing at 337 Mitton Street, Sarnia. Alfred became a member of the 34th Battalion, CEF. Six weeks later and two months after getting married, Alfred embarked overseas aboard the *SS California* as part of the 2nd Canadian Contingent. Alfred Weston arrived in England on November 1, 1915.



Private Alfred Weston

Initially stationed at Bramshott, Alfred was transferred three months later on February 3, 1916, taken on strength into the 23rd Battalion at West Sandling. Three months later, in May 1916, he completed his Military Will (a perforated sheet from his Pay Book) writing, "I, Pte. Alf Weston 603167 E Com, 23 Batt leave everything I possess to my wife Jenny Weston 337 Mitton St. Sarnia Ontario Canada." Days later, on May 25, 1916, Private Weston was transferred to the 2nd Battalion and then proceeded to France. The next day, on May 26, 1916, he was taken on strength into the Canadian Infantry, 10th Battalion, Alberta Regiment.

Private Alfred Weston soon found himself taking part in one of the most horrendous battle of the war. The **Battle of the Somme** (July 1-November 18, 1916) was one of the bloodiest and most futile battles in history. The Somme battle lasted for more than four brutal months and saw the Allies advance around 10 kilometers. A more telling statistic is the number of injuries and deaths: of the 85,000 Canadian Corps, there were more than 24,000 Canadian casualties.

Approximately two months after arriving in France, on July 31, 1916, Private Alfred Weston was hit by enemy gunfire during the Battle of the Somme and died as a result of his wounds. He was initially recorded as *Dangerously wounded at No. 3 Casualty Clearing Station July 31st, 1916*. That same day, his status was changed to *Died of wounds No. 3 Casualty Clearing Station July 31st, 1916 GSW (Gun shot wound) abdomen*. Alfred's Commonwealth War Graves Register records him as *Date of Casualty: 31-7-16. Died of Wounds. No. 3. Can. Casualty Clearing Station. Burial: Soldiers' Cemetery, Lijssenthoek, 1 ¾ miles S.W. of Poperinghe*.

One year later, in August 1917, the *Sarnia Weekly Observer* included three "In Memoriams" to Alfred Weston submitted by his family members. Following is his wife Jenny Weston's memoriam; *In loving and honoured memory of my dearest husband, Private Alfred Weston, who died of wounds one year ago today, July 31, 1916, "Somewhere in France." Gone but not forgotten*. Alfred Weston's mother, sister and brothers added the passage; *"The Lord said unto him well done, thy good and faithful servant, enter thou into eternal rest."* Alfred Weston's sister, brothers and niece also added the passage:

*And when he saw his work was done,
He gently called to him: My son! My Son!
I need thee for a greater work than this
Thy faith, thy zeal, thy fine activities
Are worthy of My larger liberties.
Then drew him with the hand of welcoming grace
And side by side they climbed the heavenly ways.*

Florence Weston, Alfred's widowed mother, received her Memorial Cross for the loss of her son at her house at 337 Mitton Street, Sarnia. Alfred's widow, Jennie, later remarried becoming Jennie Causley, who resided at 230 South Brock Street, Sarnia. Alfred Weston, 22, is buried in Lijssenthoek Military Cemetery, Belgium, Grave VII.D.16.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 2G, 7C, 8A, 8X, 8Y, 10Z

WHEATLEY, George Percival (#101577)

In the early 1990s, the city of Sarnia named five streets after five fallen soldiers from Sarnia. Wheatley Drive, located off Michigan Line west of Modeland Road, is named for George Percival Wheatley who was killed in action in the Great War. On January 16, 1917, Private Wheatley of the 102nd Battalion died in the Somme area of France. He had been sent "up top" to take compass readings that would determine the path of the next section of the underground tunnel. Unfortunately, he was spotted by a German sniper who fired the fatal shot. George Wheatley, 37, is buried in Villers Station Cemetery, Villers-Au-Bois, Pas de Calais, France.

George Percival Wheatley was born in Blackwell, in the Township of Sarnia, Ontario on June 28, 1880, the youngest son of Thomas Coulson (a farmer) and Gratia Abigail (nee: Clark) Wheatley, of RR #3 Sarnia. Thomas Wheatley was born in 1841 in the hamlet of Froomefield, a village located just south of Sarnia, which was named after brothers Froome and Field Talfourd, early settlers in the area. George's paternal grandfather was John Wheatley (1815-1891), who was also an early settler to this area. John Wheatley had come from England in 1837 at the age of twenty-two as a fully qualified (7-year apprenticeship) wheelwright or wagon maker. John served in the local militia for two years and married Alvira Proctor (1822-1913), who was also an immigrant. John and Alvira Wheatley were blessed with thirteen children together and George's father, Thomas Coulson, was the oldest, born November 4, 1841 in Moore, Sarnia Township.

Thomas Coulson Wheatley (referred occasionally in records by the initials T.C.), married twenty-six-year-old Gratia Abbie Clark (born 1846, daughter of Peter and Angeline Clark) on July 16, 1872 in Sarnia. Thomas and Gratia resided in the Lakeshore area near Blackwell Station, and they had five children together: their first was a still-birth, Mary Florence (born March 30, 1875); John (born 1876); Thomas Edward (born 1878); and their youngest George Percival. When George was only four years old, his mother, Gratia, died on December 29, 1884. The thirty-eight year old matriarch passed away as the result of exophthalmic goiter (Grave's disease, an endocrine disorder).

Thomas Coulson Wheatley remarried on June 20, 1888 in Sarnia, to Margaret Jane "Jennie" Campbell (born in Dundas in 1851, daughter of John and Margaret Campbell). Thomas and Margaret Jennie Wheatley had three children together: Margaret (born November 1889); and twins Charles Coulson and Addison Campbell (born October 29, 1890). Thomas and his family settled on land between Lake Huron and Wawanosh Swamp (which was later drained). In 1891, the Wheatley household in Sarnia included parents Thomas (a farmer) and Margaret, along with

their children: Mary Florence (age sixteen); John (age fourteen); Thomas Edward (age thirteen); George Percival (age ten); Margaret (age two); and twins Charles and Addison (age five months).

Ten years later, in 1901, the Wheatley household included parents Thomas Coulson (a farmer) and Margaret as well as their children: Florence (age twenty-six, a teacher); George (age twenty, a farm labourer); Margaret (age eleven); Charles; and Addison (age ten). Thomas Wheatley was a skilled, active and very successful farmer and market gardener. He was also a leader in the community; for example, he was a “stand-in” Methodist clergyman and choir leader, and became chairman of the school board (Blackwell School). In 1911, a decade later, the Wheatley household included parents Thomas (a farmer) and Jennie and their children: Florence (age thirty-six, a teacher); Margaret (age twenty-one, a teacher); and twenty year-old twins Charles (a farmer) and Addison (at school) Wheatley.

To earn money for college, George’s eldest brother, John, worked in a lumber camp in Minnesota for a time. John fell in love there with an immigrant Norwegian girl, and they were married in Cookstown, Minnesota on October 4, 1899. George and his older brother, Edward, both attended the wedding in Minnesota, with George acting as the “best man” at the wedding. John and his wife eventually returned to the Sarnia (Blackwell) area, but for brothers George and Edward, the Minnesota trip generated an interest in life out west. This was at a time when the government was offering free or very low price land to young Canadian males as an incentive in order to settle the west.

Edward Wheatley moved to Watrous, Saskatchewan around 1905, and George, at age twenty-five, moved to Alberta about the same time. George took a large piece of land in the Peace River area of northern Alberta, and starting from “scratch”, became a rancher/farmer. When war broke out, George sold his cattle at the end of the season and headed to Edmonton to enlist.

Thirty-five-year-old George Wheatley enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force (CEF) on December 20, 1915 in Edmonton, Alberta. He stood five feet eight inches tall, had blue eyes and light brown hair, was single, and recorded his trade or calling as labourer, and his next-of-kin as his father Thomas Wheatley in Sarnia. George became a member of the 66th Overseas Battalion, CEF. Four months later, on April 28, 1916, Private George Wheatley embarked overseas from Halifax bound for the United Kingdom aboard the *SS Olympic*. He arrived in England on May 7, 1916, and one month later, on June 8, 1916, he was transferred to the 14th Field Artillery Howitzer Brigade. A month passed before he was transferred again, taken on strength into the 9th Reserve Battalion in Shorncliffe on July 6, 1916.



George Wheatley c. 1899



George with nephews Lloyd and Clark – March 1916
(during his last visit to Ed Wheatley’s home near Watrous, Sask.)

A note on George’s two nephews in the above photo: The older nephew Clark died at age ten. The younger nephew, Lloyd, served in World War II, as part of an RAF bomber crew. After his aircraft was shot down over Germany, Lloyd was captured and spent the rest of the war as a POW. He survived the war and returned to Canada.

A little over one month later, in August 1916, George was transferred again, to the 102nd Battalion, British Columbia Regiment. He crossed the Channel with that unit, arriving at Havre, France on August 20, 1916. When he completed his Military Will, he bequeathed all of his property and effects to his brother, Edward, in Dellwood, Saskatchewan, including his bank account in the Bank of Commerce in Watrous Saskatchewan, one saddle and one rifle. By the end of September 1916, Private George Wheatley and the 102nd Battalion, part of the 4th Canadian Division, had arrived at the Front Lines.

George Wheatley soon found himself taking part in the Battle of the Somme (July 1-November 18, 1916)—one of the bloodiest and most futile battles in history. The Somme battle lasted for more than four brutal months and saw the Allies advance around 10 kilometers. A more telling statistic is the number of injuries and deaths: of the 85,000 Canadian Corps, there were more than 24,000 Canadian casualties.

Approximately one month after arriving in France, on October 22, 1916, Private George Wheatley suffered a gunshot wound to his face (nose) and one finger on his left hand. That day he was evacuated through an Australian Casualty Clearing Station and then moved to No. 3 Canadian General Hospital in Boulogne. Two days later, he was transferred to No. 7 Convalescent Depot in Boulogne, where he remained until November 9, 1916. George rejoined the 102nd Battalion on November 21, 1916.

It appears that sometime between his being wounded and his return to his unit, George's documents were lost or destroyed; in fact, all the original files for members of the 102nd Infantry Battalion were destroyed, likely either in a fire or by enemy action. All members of the unit went through a new enrolment in France in December 1916. So on December 7, 1916, thirty-six-year-old Private George Wheatley completed a second Attestation Paper with the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force (CEF). He stood five feet eight inches tall, had blue eyes and brown hair, was single, and recorded his trade or calling as farmer, and his next-of-kin as his father, Thomas Coulson Wheatley, at R.R. #3 Sarnia, Ontario.

On December 23, 1916, George Wheatley and the 102nd Battalion were temporarily attached to 182 Tunnel Company, Royal Engineers. Their work with the engineers involved repairing and building defensive positions, field fortifications, communication trenches and transportation tunnels. The tunnels were used, for example, to bring ammunition forward and the wounded back to medical facilities. The engineers of the Tunnel Company provided the knowledge and leadership, while the infantry provided the labour. As the Canadians made preparations for the upcoming offensive at Vimy Ridge in April 1917, much of the work was done at night under the cover of darkness, while under enemy fire.

On January 16, 1917, Private George Wheatley of the 102 Battalion was killed in action in the Somme area of France. He had been sent "up top" to take compass readings that would determine the path of the next section of the underground tunnel. Unfortunately, he was spotted by a German sniper and killed. His body was buried the next day. George's Commonwealth War Graves Register records him as *Date of Casualty: 16-1-17. Killed in Action. Buried: Villers Station Military Cemetery, 1 mile N.W. of Villers-au-Bois, 3 ¼ miles S.W. of Aix-Neulette.*

The 102nd Battalion went on to distinguish itself in the fighting at Vimy Ridge in April 1917 and lost most of its men in the process. After the war, surviving members of the battalion erected a memorial on Vimy Ridge on which were recorded the names of unit members who had been killed or who had died from wounds received during the war. (NOTE: a number of battalions erected memorials at Vimy Ridge to commemorate their fallen comrades). Several years later, after the Government of Canada decided to construct a National War Memorial on Vimy Ridge, all unit memorials were ordered removed from the Ridge. The 102nd Battalion's memorial was dismantled, transported to Canada, and re-erected in a place of honour. For many years it was at Canadian Forces Base at Chilliwack, British Columbia, and when this base closed, the plaque was moved to an armoury in Kamloops, British Columbia. George Wheatley's name is included on that memorial plaque.

George Wheatley, 37, is buried in Villers Station Cemetery, Villers-Au-Bois, Pas de Calais, France, Grave VI.A.17. George's father, Thomas Coulson Wheatley, passed away only eight years later, on March 28, 1925 in Sarnia, at the age of eighty-three.

George Wheatley's stepbrother, Charles Wheatley, 27, was drafted to serve in the war under the Military Service Act of 1917, Class One. In Europe, with the Canadian troops thinning at an alarming rate and with no end to the war in sight, the government had instituted the Military Service Act in 1917. Charles Wheatley underwent his medical examination in Winnipeg, Manitoba on November 16, 1917, and was called to service on January 5, 1918,

reporting to the 1st Depot Battalion, Manitoba Regiment in Winnipeg, Manitoba. He stood five feet six inches tall, had blue eyes and red hair, was single, and was attending Manitoba Agricultural College in Winnipeg at the time. He recorded his trade or calling as farmer, and his next-of-kin as his father, Thomas C. Wheatley, who was residing at R.R. #3 in Sarnia, Ontario. Charles also recorded his birthdate as October 29, 1889, making himself one year older than he actually was (his birthdate was October 29, 1890). Private Charles Coulson Wheatley did not go overseas, and in late January 1919, he was struck off service in Winnipeg on demobilization.

In Sarnia, George Percival Wheatley is memorialized by the naming of a street after him—Wheatley Drive. Louis Bratanek, a local developer, was responsible for naming the street in 2005, coinciding with the Year of the Veteran. In that year, Sarnia City Council asked Bratanek if he would consider naming a street he was currently developing off Michigan Avenue after a local fallen soldier. Bratanek agreed and when he read the list of Sarnia's fallen, he saw the name "G. Wheatley" and knew he'd found his street name. Bratanek had no idea who G. Wheatley was but he recognized the surname Wheatley. Over three decades earlier, his father had purchased a farm in Blackwell from Abigail Wheatley, a market gardener. As it turned out, Abigail was George's niece who was a teenager when her uncle was killed in war nearly nine decades earlier.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 2G, 7C, 7Y, 8X, 8Y, 10Z, 3a

WILKINSON, W. – No information found in searched records links this name to Sarnia.

WILLIAMS, Frederick James (#2448462)

On July 10, 1917, at age forty-two, Frederick Williams enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force in Windsor, Ontario. He was much older than the average soldier and Eve, his wife of twenty-five years, and he had been blessed with three children together. Still, Frederick felt compelled to enlist and saw action in France. At the Battle of Amiens, enemy fire hit him in the abdomen and right leg. Despite the doctors' best efforts, Frederick died nearly two months later and one month before the end of the Great War. Frederick Williams, 43, is buried in Mont Huon Military Cemetery, Le Treport, Seine-Maritime, France.

Frederick Williams was born in Sarnia, Ontario on December 6, 1874, the son of David J. and Melissa Ann (nee Finch) Williams. On September 9, 1871, twenty-two-year-old David Williams (born 1846 in Wales) married twenty-one-year-old Melissa Finch (born January 1951) in Port Huron, Michigan (they were both residing in Sarnia at the time). David and Melissa Williams had nine children together: Ella M. (born May 1870); Charles Herbert (born June 16, 1872); Frederick James; Frank B. (born March 2, 1877); Arthur David (born March 11, 1880); Elmer Clarence (born April 25, 1882); Mabel Alice (born March 10, 1885); George H. (born October 15, 1887); and Gordon W. (born May 16, 1890).

In 1881, David, a labourer, and Melissa Williams were residing in Sarnia with their five children: Ella (age eleven), Charles Herbert (age eight), Frederick James (age six), Frank (age four) and Arthur David (age one). Ten years later, in 1891, the Williams household in Sarnia included parents David, now a farm labourer, and Melissa and eight of their children: Charles (age nineteen, a farm labourer); Frederick James (age sixteen); Frank (age fourteen); Arthur (age eleven); Elmer (age nine); Mabel (age six); George (age three); and Gordon (age one).

Tragedy struck the Williams family on February 22, 1901 when the patriarch, David Williams, passed away at the age of fifty-five. Later in 1901, the Williams household included widowed mother, Melissa Williams, along with her children: Charles (age twenty-seven, a soldier); Frank (age twenty-four, a sailor); Arthur (age twenty-one, a painter); Elmer (age nineteen, a sailor); Mabel (age sixteen); George (age thirteen); and Gordon (age ten). Two of Frederick Williams' brothers also served in the war.

Frederick's younger brother, **Arthur David Williams**, enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force on September 20, 1915. The thirty-five-year-old stood five feet five inches tall, had brown eyes and dark brown hair, and recorded his trade or calling as contractor, and his next-of-kin as his wife Mrs. Letitia (nee Corcoran) Williams, who was residing at 360 Maria Street (later 167 North Brock Street), Sarnia. Arthur also recorded that he had four years militia experience with the 27th Regiment and had served 13 months with the U.S.A. Force in the Spanish American War.

Arthur Williams became a member of the 34th Battalion with the rank of Lieutenant. The following month, on October 23, 1915, he embarked overseas bound for the United Kingdom. He continued his training in England, at Bramshott and Shorncliffe, and in mid-March 1916 was transferred to the 17th Reserve Battalion and then the Royal Canadian Regiment (RCR). In early June 1916, he was seconded from the RCRs to become a member of the 7th

Brigade, Machine Gun Company and then proceeded to France.

Three months later, in mid-September 1916, Lt. Arthur Williams was hospitalized at #14 General Hospital in Boulogne and then #2 Western General Hospital in Manchester. He had been diagnosed with severe myalgia, later sciatica "due to exposure in trenches" while in the Ypres Salient. He was returned to England and remained in hospital for fifty days. Arthur was returned to Canada on leave in November 1916 aboard the *S.S. Grampian*. The Medical Board in Canada recommended extending his leave to June 6, 1917 due to his ill health. The Board later determined that he had an attack of acute articular rheumatism, and now had a valvular disease of the heart, a permanent condition. On December 19, 1917, Lt. Arthur David Williams was discharged, struck off strength and assessed as being "medically unfit for overseas service". On May 26, 1941, Arthur Williams passed away at the age of sixty-one in Sarnia. His cause of death was recorded as, "Cerebral haemorrhage, arterio-sclerosis, etc. Death was due to service." Arthur Williams is buried in Lakeview Cemetery, Sarnia.

Fredericks' older brother, **Charles Herbert Williams**, enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force on October 8, 1915 in Sarnia, Ontario. The forty-three-year-old stood five feet six inches tall, had blue eyes and brown hair, and recorded his trade or calling as acid stiller, and his next-of-kin as his wife Zillah (nee Worsley) Williams. They had resided at 273 Cameron Street and later 481 George Street, then at 215 Water Street and then 360 Nelson Street, Sarnia. (Note: For some reason, the recruiter recorded Charles' age as thirty-five.)

Charles also recorded that he had six years military experience with the U.S.A. Force in the Spanish American War. Charles became a member of the 70th Battalion and six months later, on April 26, 1916, he embarked overseas bound for the United Kingdom. During training in England, he advanced in rank from Private to Sergeant. Four months after arriving in England, in late August 1916, Charles Williams reverted to the rank of Private on his own request in order to proceed across the Channel.

Private Charles Williams arrived in France as a member of the 18th Battalion Canadian Infantry on August 27, 1916. During his time in France, Charles escaped being wounded or gassed and survived the war. After being discharged on demobilization on May 24, 1919, he returned to Sarnia, raised his family, and worked as a labourer at Imperial Oil. On June 12, 1943, Charles Williams passed away four days before his seventy-first birthday and is buried in Lakeview Cemetery, Sarnia.

Sometime during 1892, **Frederick James Williams** and his future wife, Eva Scott, moved to Michigan. Eva Scott was born November 18, 1875 in Sarnia, along with her twin sister Alice. The two girls were the daughters of George, a Grand Trunk Railway switchman, and Christina Scott (nee Ferguson). On May 1, 1893, nineteen year-old Frederick Williams married eighteen year-old Eva Scott in Detroit, Michigan. Frederick and Eva Williams were blessed with three children together, all born in Michigan: Pearl (born January 1893); Vera (born August 1894); and George (born March 1897). In 1900, Frederick and Eva, along with their three children, were residing on Miller Street in Detroit, and Frederick was employed as a bartender at the time.

Ten years later, in 1910, Frederick and Eva Williams were residing on Lysander Street in Detroit with their two children: daughter Pearl G. (age seventeen) and their son George E. (age thirteen). Also residing with them were Frederick's twenty-one year old brother, George; brother-in-law, Herbert B. Shannon, 25; and sisters-in-law Cassie B. Shannon, 27, and Margaret F. Scott, 24. Frederick Williams was employed as a manager of a café at the time.

On July 10, 1917, at age forty-two, Frederick Williams enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force in Windsor, Ontario. He stood five feet three and a half inches tall, had brown eyes and black hair, and recorded his present address as 432 Pingree Avenue, Detroit. He also recorded his trade or calling as an assembler, and his next-of-kin as his wife, Mrs. Eva Williams, who was residing at 432 Pingree Avenue, Detroit, Michigan. Frederick became a member of 21st Regiment, Overseas Company and was soon transferred to the 1st Depot Battalion, Western Ontario Regiment, CEF. Sometime after her husband enlisted, Eva Williams returned to Sarnia, where she resided at 189 College Avenue.

Five months after enlisting, on December 21, 1917, Private Frederick Williams embarked overseas from Halifax bound for the United Kingdom aboard the *SS Grampian*. He arrived in Glasgow, Scotland on December 31, 1917. Later, in Bramshott, England, he was transferred to the 4th Canadian Reserve Battalion. Just over three months after arriving overseas, on April 7, 1918, Frederick was posted to the Canadian Infantry, 18th Battalion, Western Ontario Regiment. He arrived in France with the 18th Battalion the next day and two days later, he arrived at the Canadian Corps Reinforcement Camp. About one month later, on May 7, 1918, Private Frederick Williams joined the 18th Battalion in the field at the front lines.

Private Frederick Williams soon found himself taking part in the final great campaign of the war. The **Hundred Days Campaign** (August 8 – November 11, 1918 in France and Belgium) was the “beginning of the end” of the Great War. Canadians were called on again and again over the three-month period to lead the offensives against the toughest German defences. The series of victories repeatedly drove the Germans back, culminating in Germany’s unconditional surrender on November 11, but it came at a cost of almost 46,000 Canadians killed, wounded and missing.

The first offensive in Canada’s Hundred Days Campaign was the **Battle of Amiens** in France (August 8-14, 1918), a truly all-arms battle, one in which all four Canadian divisions would be involved. Over the course of one week, in a battle that British Field Marshal Douglas Haig called “*the finest operation of the war*”, the Canadians would advance nearly 14 km – but it came at a cost of 11,822 Canadian casualties.

It was in the Battle of Amiens with the 18th Battalion that Frederick Williams suffered wounds that proved fatal. Three months after arriving at the front lines, on August 9, 1918, he was wounded in action, hit multiple times by enemy gunfire. Frederick was admitted to No. 16 General Hospital in Le Treport with a gunshot wound to the abdomen and right leg. He was also recorded as, “dangerously ill, may be visited”. Four days later, on August 13, he was recorded as, “previously dangerously ill, now seriously ill”.

One month after being wounded at Amiens, on September 14, Frederick was recorded as, “still seriously ill”. Five weeks after he was wounded in action, Eva received a telegram at her home at 189 College Avenue which informed her that her husband, PTE. FRED JAMES WILLIAMS, INFANTRY, IS SERIOUSLY ILL AT SIXTEENTH GENERAL HOSPITAL, LE TREPORT. On September 23 and still at No. 16 General Hospital, Frederick was recorded as, “GSW abdomen and right leg, removed from seriously ill list”. One week later, on September 30, he was again recorded as, “dangerously ill, may be visited”. Several days later, on October 3, 1918, Private Fred Williams passed away at No. 16 General Hospital, Le Trepot, the result of the wounds he had received in action at Amiens. His Commonwealth War Graves Register records him as; *Date of Casualty: 3-10-18. Died of Wounds – No. 16 Gen. Hosp. Le Treport.*

In mid-October of 1918, Eva received a telegram officially informing her that her husband, PRIVATE FRED JAMES WILLIAMS, INFANTRY, WAS OFFICIALLY REPORTED AS HAVING DIED OF WOUNDS AT THE 16TH GENERAL HOSPITAL, WOUNDS IN HIS RIGHT LEG. Approximately one month after Frederick’s death, the Great War would end.

Frederick Williams was survived by his widow Eva, and their three children: Pearl, Vera and George. He was also survived by his mother, Melissa, and his eight siblings George; Charles (18th Battalion) in France; Frank in Sarnia; Elmer in New York; Gordon in London; Lieut. Arthur D. Williams, who saw service in the Spanish-American War and WWI; and his two sisters, one in Detroit and one in the northwest.

A little over a year after the Great War ended, on February 5, 1920, Frederick’s wife Eva Williams passed away at the age of forty-four. Frederick’s post-war medals, decorations, scrolls and Memorial Cross were all delivered to his mother, Mrs. David (Melissa Ann) Williams in Sarnia. Frederick Williams, 43, is buried in Mont Huon Military Cemetery, Le Treport, Seine-Maritime, France, Grave VIII.G.10B.
SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 2G, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10Z

WILSON, C.B. - No information found in searched records links this name to Sarnia.

Possibly Charles B. Wilson. No confirmed information from a number of sources.

WILSON, John Alexander (#402865 and A/2865)

On May 19, 1916, Private John Wilson was killed in action while fighting in Belgium. His death was simply recorded as, *Killed in action, May 19, 1916*. John, 23, was awarded the 1914-15 Star, the British War Medal, and the Victory Medal and is buried in Chester Farm Cemetery, Belgium. On his headstone are inscribed the words, WHILE ETERNAL AGES RUN REST IN THY SAVIOUR’S LOVE. John Wilson’s name is also inscribed on the Oil Spring’s Memorial in the Town of Oil Springs.

John Alexander Wilson was born in Oil Springs, Ontario, on January 27, 1894, the eldest son of John Wilson Sr. (an oil operator/engineer in Lambton) and Dinah Jane (nee Smyth) Wilson. John Wilson Sr. was born on November 30, 1856 in Lanarkshire, Scotland, and had immigrated to Canada in 1885. In 1891, thirty-five-year-old John Wilson Sr. was residing in Oil Springs with his brother Alexander Wilson (a general merchant) and his wife

Annie Alice Wilson, along with their two year-old daughter Della May Wilson, and Alexander's brother-in-law Albert Henry Martin and sister-in-law Della Martin.

The following year, on November 30, 1892, thirty-six-year-old oil producer John Wilson Sr. married twenty-three-year-old Dinah Jane Smyth (born May 1, 1870 in Wyoming, Ontario) in Oil Springs. John Sr. and Dinah Wilson were blessed with six children together: John Alexander Jr.; Mina Smyth (born November 11, 1895); William Allan Wilson (born May 13, 1898); Geneva Evelyn (born 1902); Arthur Craven (born 1908); and Charles Kenneth Stanley Wilson (born 1912). In 1901, the Wilson family residing in Oil Springs included parents John Sr. (an engineer) and Dinah Wilson along with their children: John Alexander Jr. (age seven), Mina (age five) and William (age two).

John Jr.'s younger brother, **William Allan Wilson**, also served in the war. Seventeen and a half year-old William enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force in Oil Springs on January 12, 1916 and became a member of the 149th Battalion (William enlisted one year after his older brother John Jr.). William Wilson embarked overseas from Halifax bound for the United Kingdom on March 28, 1917. After arriving in Liverpool, he was taken on strength into the 25th Reserve Battalion, and was later transferred to the 4th Reserve Battalion at Bramshott.

Approximately seven months after arriving in England, on November 24, 1917, Private William Wilson arrived at the Canadian Corps Reinforcement Camp (CCRC) in France. William became a member of the 18th Battalion, Canadian Infantry and arrived in the field on December 6, 1917. Almost six months later, on May 28, 1918, William was admitted to No. 1 Australian General Hospital after being wounded in action--a gunshot wound in the right thigh. After two and a half months of recovery, in August 1918, William Wilson rejoined his battalion in the field.

William Wilson took part in the final campaign of the war. The Hundred Days Campaign (August 8 – November 11, 1918 in France and Belgium) was the “beginning of the end” of the Great War. Canadians were called on again and again over the three-month period to lead the offensives against the toughest German defences. The series of victories repeatedly drove the Germans back and culminated in Germany's unconditional surrender on November 11; however, victory came at a cost of almost 46,000 Canadians killed, wounded and missing. William Wilson survived this campaign and the war and was discharged on demobilization in London, Ontario in May 1919.

On January 27, 1915, on his twenty-first birthday, **John Alexander Wilson Jr.** enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force in Sarnia. He stood six feet tall, had brown eyes and auburn hair, was single, and recorded his trade or calling as labourer, and his next-of-kin as his father, John Wilson in Oil Springs, Ontario. He also recorded that he had prior militia experience in the 27th Regiment. Private John Wilson became a member of the Canadian Infantry, 1st Battalion, CEF.



Private John Alexander Wilson

Private John Wilson embarked overseas bound for the United Kingdom with the 2nd Canadian Contingent in the spring of 1915. On July 5, 1915, John was attached to the 11th Reserve Battalion in Shorncliffe. One month later,

on August 3, 1915, he arrived in France as a member of the 1st Battalion, Canadian Infantry. After six months at the Front, on February 21, 1916, John was granted nine days leave in England. Afterwards, he rejoined the 1st Battalion on March 1, 1916.

Two and a half months later, on May 19, 1916, Private John Wilson was killed in action while fighting in Belgium. His death was simply recorded as, *Killed in action, May 19, 1916*. John's Commonwealth War Graves Register records him as *Date of Casualty: 19-5-16. Killed in Action. Buried: Chester Farm Military Cemetery, 1 mile E. of Voormezele, 1 3/4 miles S. of Ypres*. John was posthumously awarded the 1914-15 Star, the British War Medal, and the Victory Medal. John Wilson, 23, is buried in Chester Farm Cemetery, Belgium, Grave II.A.3. On his headstone are inscribed the words, WHILE ETERNAL AGES RUN REST IN THY SAVIOUR'S LOVE. John Wilson's name is also inscribed on the Oil Spring's Memorial in the Town of Oil Springs.
SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 2G, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10Z

WRIGHT, Thomas William (#845567)

The death of Thomas William Wright, a British Home Child who arrived in Ontario in 1894, illustrates the indiscriminate cruelty of war. In his late thirties when he enlisted, the married father of six children arrived in France in July 1917. More than a year passed and Thomas survived the three major battles of what became known as "The Hundred Days Campaign." He was assigned the rank of Lance Corporal in late October 1918 but in early November was hospitalized because of influenza and broncho-pneumonia. He never recovered and died at a casualty clearing station two days before the Armistice was signed.

Thomas William Wright was born on the Isle of Guernsey, England, on April 15, 1881, the son of John Albert Wright, a shoemaker, and Julia Elizabeth (nee Le Noury), also from Guernsey. John and Julia Wright had eight children together: Flora (born November 1876, died in July 1904); Albert Ernest (born April 1878); Maud Mabel (born October 1879); Thomas William; Walter Edward (born July 16, 1882); Harriet (born November 1883, died in 1884); Julia (born 1885); and John Albert (born in September of 1886, three months after the death of his father). In June 1886, when Thomas was only five years old, his father, John, passed away from heart disease.

After the death of the patriarch, the family broke apart. Maud and Julia Wright went to an orphanage on Guernsey; the two oldest, Florence and Albert Wright, resided with relatives; and John Wright went with his mother Julia. Thomas and his brother Walter Wright ended up in the Leopold House, in London, England. Both Thomas and Walter, thirteen and twelve respectively, were sent to Canada by Annie MacPherson Homes as **British Home Children**. They arrived in the summer of 1894, where they were placed on nearby farms in Forest, Ontario.

Between 1869 and 1948, over 100,000 children, most between six and fifteen years of age, were sent to Canada from the British Isles during the "British Child Emigration Movement". Circumstances in Britain had resulted in their families experiencing hard times. Churches and philanthropic organizations sent these impoverished, abandoned and orphaned children to Canada in the belief that they would have a better chance for a healthy, moral life in rural Canada. Canadian families welcomed them; however, far too many were used as a source of cheap farm labour and domestic help.

Following is a portion of a December 1895 article from *Ups and Downs*, a monthly Toronto publication under the auspices of Dr. Barnardo's Homes:

Two of our little men of whom we have the highest expectations are Thomas and Walter Wright... who came out to Canada in the summer of 1894, are aged 15 and 13 respectively. They have good homes close to each other in Bosanquet township. Each is striving hard to do his duty. It may almost be said that Thomas has already engaged in stock raising on his own account, his employer last Christmas rewarding him for his good conduct with a ewe, which in the spring gave birth to a lamb... One of the greatest sources of happiness to the young brothers is that they are able to see each other frequently. As they grow older we fervently trust that the strong bond of love which at present unites them may lose nothing of its strength, and that under God's guidance they may side by side build up a future of happiness and prosperity.

In 1901, Thomas Wright was recorded as a domestic residing with the Lusby family in Bosanquet Township, Lambton East. The head of the house was sixty-nine-year-old Joseph Lusby, a farm labourer, along with his ninety-six-year-old mother Martha Lusby. Also residing in the house was fifty-one-year-old Julia Simmons (born in England, had immigrated to Canada in 1894), who was also recorded as a domestic.

Thomas remained at his placement for at least three years, earning a medal for Good Conduct and Length of

Service from Dr. Barnardo's Homes in recognition for his hard work. The medal is inscribed with the words: *Who so shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me*. In August 1903, the *Ups and Downs* publication wrote; *Our friend Thomas Wright, we look upon as not only one of those who has done the highest credit to the Homes, but who is himself a staunch ally of the work. We frequently hear from Thomas in connection with applications from farmers and others in the neighbourhood of Forest, where he is now a salesman in one of the principal stores and a highly respected citizen.*

In February 1905, Thomas Wright, now residing in Forest, married English-born Harriet Selena Wisby. Harriet was the daughter of David Samuel and Harriet (nee Knights) Wisby, who were married in July 1877 in Cambridgeshire, England. David and Harriet Wisby had three children: Margaret (born April 6, 1878 in Cambridgeshire, England); Harriet Selena (born November 4, 1879 in Harston, South Cambridgeshire, England); and William John (born and died in early 1881) Wisby. In early 1881, one year-old Harriet lost her mother Harriet (Sr.), who passed away at the age of thirty-three (likely a result of birth complications).

Later that year, the young Harriet Wisby was residing in Harston, Cambridge, England, along with her two year-old sister Margaret, their thirty year-old widowed father David (a flour and pollard dealer, and farmer of eighteen acres) and his sixty-eight-year-old widowed mother Lydia Wisby. Ten years later, in 1891, eleven year-old Harriet was still residing in Cambridge County, England, along with her twelve year-old sister Margaret, their forty year-old widowed father David Wisby (a farm merchant), and his seventy-nine-year-old widowed mother Lydia Wisby.

On January 20, 1900, sisters Harriet and Margaret lost their father David Wisby, who passed away on that date at the age of forty-nine in Chesterton, Cambridgeshire, England. One year later, twenty-one-year-old Harriet was residing in Croydon, England where she was employed as a domestic servant in the home of George and Ellen Watts and their five children. In 1905, twenty-five-year-old Harriet Wisby immigrated to Canada. Departing from Liverpool, England aboard the *SS Pretorian*, she arrived at the port of Halifax on February 5, 1905. Harriet recorded her occupation as domestic-to be married and her intended destination as Forest, Ontario.

Only five days after arriving in Canada, on February 10, 1905, twenty-five-year-old Harriet Wisby married twenty-four-year-old Thomas Wright (a clerk residing in Forest) at the Methodist Parsonage in Toronto, York County, Ontario. Thomas and Harriet Wright resided in Forest, and had three children together: Herbert Wisby (born February 26, 1906); Ellis John (born December 16, 1909); and Florence Ada Wright (born October 15, 1911). In early 1911, the Wright family in Forest included parents Thomas (a salesman) and Harriet "Hattie" Wright, along with their two children at the time; Herbert (age five) and Ellis John Wright (age one). One year later, tragedy struck the Wright family and Thomas in particular. On February 28, 1912, Thomas' wife Harriet, age thirty-two, passed away a result of tuberculosis. And only a few days after Harriet's death, their infant daughter, Florence Ada Wright, also passed away the result of meningitis.

In 1901, Harriet's sister, Margaret Wisby, then twenty-two years old, was residing in Meldreth, Cambridgeshire, England, where she worked as a servant-cook in the home of Mackenzie and Adelaide Butlin, along with their two children and two other servants: nineteen year-old Susan Hopwood (housemaid) and twenty-one-year-old Rosina Hopwood (nurse). Five years later and one year after her sister, Margaret Wisby immigrated to Canada. Departing from Liverpool, England aboard the *SS Tunisian*, twenty-eight-year-old Margaret arrived at the port of Montreal on June 8, 1906. She recorded her occupation as cook, and her intended destination as Forest, Ontario.

Four years after her arrival, on June 2, 1910, thirty-two-year-old Margaret Wisby married thirty-five-year-old Charles Umferille Kershaw (a farmer, originally from England) in Forest, Ontario. Charles and Margaret (nee Wisby) Kershaw had one child together: Mary Umfreville Kershaw, born August 17, 1911. Tragically, two weeks after the birth of their daughter, on August 30, 1911, thirty-five-year-old father Charles Kershaw, a gardener, passed away in Forest, the result of arterio-sclerosis and nephritis.

Thomas William Wright (father of two) and Margaret Wisby (mother of one) were now both widowers. On March 5, 1914 in Forest, Ontario, thirty-two-year-old Thomas Wright married thirty-five-year-old Margaret (nee Wisby) Kershaw, the older sister of his first wife Harriet Wisby. When Thomas married Margaret (nee Kershaw), he recorded his residence as Port Huron, Michigan. Thomas and Margaret Wright had three children together: Clifford Wisby (born September 1914); and twins Edith Selena and James LeNoury Wright (born August 19, 1916). Thomas and Margaret Wright's son James LeNoury Wright later served in World War II and tragically lost his life while serving. Flying Officer-Pilot James LeNoury Wright's story is included in this Project on page 1057. *Thomas

William Wright and James LeNoury Wright are the only father and son combination from Sarnia to both lose their lives while serving Canada in two different World Wars.



The Wisby sisters - Margaret (L) and Harriet (R)

Two of Thomas Wrights' brothers also served in the Great War. Older brother **Albert Ernest Wright** (born 1878) enlisted in the British Army at the age of fourteen and went on to serve the entire war. Younger brother **Walter Edward Wright** (born July 16, 1882 in Guernsey, Channel Islands) enlisted in the Canadian Expeditionary Force on January 27, 1916 in Sarnia, becoming a member of the 149th Battalion. Thirty-three-year-old Walter Wright was a married fireman residing at 514 Christina Street, Sarnia at the time. He recorded his next-of-kin as his wife, Mrs. Myrtle Wright on Christina Street, and that he had prior military experience serving 1 ½ years in the U.S. Army.

Walter Wright had married Myrtle Adella Mann, the daughter of Levi and Sarah Mann of Sarnia, on December 31, 1907 in Sarnia. Walter did not have the opportunity to serve overseas. Approximately nine months after he enlisted, on October 10, 1916, though his conduct and character were recorded as "Good", Walter was discharged at Camp Borden, declared medically unfit. Walter returned to Sarnia and worked as a fireman. Later residing at 178 Cotterbury St., Walter and Myrtle Wright had four children together, all born in Sarnia: Harold Chester (born November 1908); Stewart Malcolm (born June 1913); Doris Victoria (born May 1915); and Lloyd George (born March 1921).

Prior to enlisting, **Thomas William Wright** operated a grocery store on Christina Street in Sarnia (it later became Glaab's barber shop). Thomas was a member of Sarnia Lodge No. 126, I.O.O.F., and a member of the Sarnia Citizens Band and the Forest Band. When he enlisted, Thomas was residing at 128 Penrose Street in Sarnia with his wife Margaret and their four children at the time: Herbert Wisby and Ellis John Wright (from Thomas' first marriage); Mary Umfreville Kershaw (from Margaret's first marriage) and Clifford Wisby Wright.

Thirty-four-year-old Thomas Wright enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force (CEF) on February 18, 1916 in Sarnia (three weeks after his younger brother Walter had enlisted). He stood five feet two and a half inches tall, had blue eyes and brown hair, recorded his trade or calling as grocer, and his next-of-kin as his wife Margaret Wright at 128 Penrose Street. Thomas became a member of 149th Battalion, CEF. The Wright family later resided at 240 Bright Street, Sarnia. Six months after he enlisted, in August 1916, Thomas and Margaret's twins, Edith and James, were born.

Seven months after enlisting, in September 1916, Thomas spent nine days in hospital at Camp Borden, recovering from a scabies infestation. In January 1917, Thomas Wright completed a form that was required to be filled out by all men joining units for overseas service. On the form, Thomas recorded he and his wife Margaret's address as 128 Penrose Street and the names of his six children: Herbert Wisby (age 11), Ellis John (age 7), Mary Umfreville Kershaw Wright (age 5), Clifford Wisby (age 2), and twins James LeNoury and Edith Salina (age 4 months). Thomas also recorded that his mother, who was still alive, was Julia Peters, of Canada House, 68 Mt. Durand Guernsey Channel Is., England.

Almost fourteen months after enlisting, on April 2, 1917, Private Thomas Wright was transferred to the 216th Battalion. He embarked overseas from Halifax bound for the United Kingdom aboard the *SS Scandinavian* on

April 18, 1917. He arrived in Liverpool on April 29, 1917, and the next day, was transferred to the 3rd Canadian Reserve Labour Battalion at West Sandling. Just over two months later, in early July 1917 and still at West Sandling, Thomas was transferred to the Central Ontario Regimental Depot, and a week later to the 1st Labour Battalion. On July 19, 1917, Private Thomas Wright arrived in France, as a member of the 3rd Canadian Labour Battalion. The 3rd Canadian Labour Battalion was later designated as the 11th Battalion, Canadian Railway Troops (CRT). Seven months after arriving in France, on February 18, 1918, Thomas Wright, in his role as a Sapper, was awarded a Good Conduct Badge in the field.



Lance Corporal Thomas William Wright

Approximately one year after arriving in France, Thomas found himself taking part in the final campaign of the war. The **Hundred Days Campaign** (August 8 – November 11, 1918 in France and Belgium) was the “beginning of the end” of the Great War. Canadians were called on again and again over the three-month period to lead the offensives against the toughest German defences. The series of victories repeatedly drove the Germans back, culminating in Germany’s unconditional surrender on November 11; however, victory came at a cost of almost 46,000 Canadians killed, wounded and missing.

There were three major offensives in Canada’s Hundred Days Campaign in France. The first offensive in the Campaign was the Battle of Amiens (August 8-14, 1918), a truly all-arms battle, one that all four Canadian divisions would be involved in. Over the course of one week, in a battle that British Field Marshal Douglas Haig called “*the finest operation of the war*”, the Canadians would advance nearly 14 km. The second offensive in the Campaign was the Battle of Arras and Breaking the DQ Line (August 26-September 3, 1918), where Canadians were part of a spearhead force tasked with crashing one of the most heavily fortified positions, the Hindenburg Line. General Sir Julian Byng called the Canadian victory at Arras and the DQ Line “*the turning point of the campaign*”.

The third offensive in the Campaign was the Battle of Canal-du-Nord and Cambrai (September 27-October 11, 1918). Against seemingly impossible odds and a desperate fully prepared enemy, the Canadians fought for two weeks in a series of brutal engagements--successfully channelling through a narrow gap in the canal, punching through a series of fortified villages and deep interlocking trenches, and capturing Bourslon Wood and the city of Cambrai. General Arthur Currie would call it “*some of the bitterest fighting we have experienced*”.

On October 22, 1918, Thomas Wright was appointed the rank of Acting Lance Corporal, 11th Battalion, Canadian Railway Troops. Twelve days after being appointed Acting Lance Corporal, on November 3, 1918, Thomas was admitted to No. 56 Casualty Clearing Station (CCS) where his condition was recorded as “dangerously ill, influenza”. Six days later, on November 9, 1918, Thomas Wright passed away at No. 56 CCS, the result of broncho-pneumonia. (Note: his rank was originally recorded as Sapper, but was later changed to Acting Lance Corporal). Acting Lance Corporal Thomas Wright’s Commonwealth War Graves Register records him as; *Date of Casualty: 9-11-18. Died (Influenza & Broncho-pneumonia) No. 56 Casualty Clearing Station. Buried: Grevillers British Cemetery, 1 mile W. of Bapaume, France*. Two days after Thomas’ death, the Armistice was signed, ending the Great War.

In early November 1918, after Thomas had been overseas for a little over two years, Margaret received a telegram at their home on Penrose Street, informing her that her husband, Private Thomas Wright, was dangerously ill with influenza. Almost two weeks after the Great War ended, Margaret received the sad official news that her husband, 845567 PTE. THOMAS WILLIAM WRIGHT HAS DIED OF BRONCHO PNEUMONIA AT A CASUALTY CLEARING STATION ON NOVEMBER 9TH.



Thomas Wright

In late November 1918, the secretary of Sarnia Lodge No. 126, I.O.O.F. received a letter that had been written by Thomas Wright prior to his death. Thomas was proud to be a member of the order and had been anxiously waiting his return home, so he could attend the meetings of his beloved order. Following is that letter:

Somewhere in France, Oct. 6, 1918.

Wm. Batten, Sec'y I.O.O.F. Sarnia

Dear Sir,

A few lines to let you know I have not forgotten Sarnia Lodge No. 126, I.O.O.F. I am very proud of being an Odd Fellow and, moreover, I must thank the lodge for the kindness tendered to my wife and family during my absence. I am very sorry to hear the sad news of the death of the late James Galbraith. He was always ready with a helping hand to help any brother in need no matter who he was. So Sarnia loses a good brother. I am very sorry not to have written a few lines before but I trust we shall meet again. The boys out here in France have learned some good lessons and you can count on having a good number of our boys once we are permitted to return home. I am looking forward to being able to meet again in 126 lodge room. How good it would be to be there. Yet we must wait a while longer. We are very cheerful and the news at present one can hardly wait to see the paper. May it continue and then victory. Germany is certainly in a very bad position. The sooner he gives in the better for him and us all. I am writing this few lines on a German field letter card, having picked it up on the battlefield along with the enclosed iron cross ribbon and needle found in one of the German trenches. I can't tell you where, but some day I hope to. Kindest regards to all the boys of 126 lodge.

Yours, in F.L. & T. Thos. Wright

Thomas William Wright, 37, is buried in Grevillers British Cemetery, Pas de Calais, France, Grave XVII.E.8. Thomas left behind his wife, Margaret, and their five children: Herbert, Ellis, Mary, Clifford, Edith and James. Thomas' first wife, Harriet, who passed away in Forest in 1912, and his second wife Margaret, who was Harriet's sister and who passed away in Sarnia in 1964, are both buried in Beechwood Cemetery in Forest. An empty spot still lies between them, for their husband Thomas William Wright. That spot will always be there, as Thomas Wright is buried in France with his fallen brothers in arms.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 2G, 6O, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 9R, 10N, 10Z

WYSEMAN, Andrew (#811870)

Three Wyseman brothers enlisted, but Andrew was the only one to die in the Great War. To this day, no one really knows what happened to Andrew Wyseman in the weeks following the Battle of Vimy Ridge. A fellow soldier mentioned later that when Andrew and he "went over the top" they were surrounded by Germans. They managed to drive the enemy back but in the fighting, all contact with Andrew was lost. He was never seen again. Andrew

Wyseman, 37, is memorialized on the Vimy Memorial, Pas de Calais, France.

Andrew Wyseman was born in Falkirk, Stirlingshire, Scotland, on August 7, 1879, the eldest child of Robert and Agnes (nee Gibb) Wyseman. Robert Wyseman (born December 30, 1856 in Stirlingshire, Scotland) and Agnes Gibb (born June 13, 1860 in Polmont, Stirlingshire, Scotland) were married on June 13, 1879 in Polmont, Stirlingshire, Scotland. Robert and Agnes were blessed with six children: Andrew; Richard Gibb (born September 28, 1885); Robert Gibb (born February 24, 1888); William (born December 10, 1891); James Hunter (born 1898); and Mary (born 1900).

In 1891, Robert and Agnes Wyseman were residing on Thornhill Road in Falkirk, Stirlingshire, with their children: Andrew (age eleven), Richard (age five), Robert (age three) and William (age three months). Robert supported his family by working as a moulder. Ten years later, in 1901, the Wyseman family was still residing on Thornhill Road, Falkirk, and Robert was still working as an iron-moulder; however, they had more mouths to feed for the family had swelled to Robert, Agnes and their six children: Andrew (age twenty-one, employed as an iron-moulder like his father); Richard; Robert; William; James and Mary.

The Wyseman family immigrated to Canada in 1907. The patriarch Robert left first on April 20, 1907, departing from Glasgow, Scotland aboard the *Corinthian*. He arrived in Montreal, Quebec on May 6, 1907, recording his occupation was moulder and his intended destination was London, Ontario. One month later, in late May 1907, forty-seven-year-old Agnes, along with their children Robert, William, James and Mary departed Glasgow, Scotland aboard the *Corinthian*. They arrived in Montreal, Quebec on June 4, 1907 and also recorded their intended destination as London, Ontario.

Not long after, the Wyseman family was residing at 130 South Brock Street in Sarnia. Robert supported his family working as a moulder in Sarnia. On December 10, 1910, tragedy struck the family when Andrew's younger brother, Richard Wyseman, who was employed as a moulder in Sarnia, passed away in Sarnia at the age of twenty-five, due to infantile paralysis. Three and a half years later, on June 16, 1914, Andrew's youngest brother, James (of 130 S. Brock Street, Sarnia, a cashier), married Anna Elizabeth Scott, a stenographer who was living at 133 Essex Street.

Two of Andrew Wyseman's younger brothers also served in the Great War. Brother **William Wyseman**, age twenty-three, was the first Wyseman brother to enlist in the Canadian Expeditionary Force, on February 10, 1915 in Sarnia. On his Attestation Paper, William recorded the spelling of his surname as "Wiseman". William stood five feet seven and three-quarter inches tall, had dark blue eyes and fair hair, was single, and recorded his occupation as machinist, and his next-of-kin as his father Robert Wiseman of 130 Brock Street, Sarnia.

Private William Wiseman became a member of No. 3 Stationary Hospital, Canadian Army Medical Corps (CAMC). He arrived in England in mid-April 1915. Once there, William spent a lot of time in hospitals as a patient, since he was persistently burdened with illnesses, including gastritis, para-typhoid and a recurring influenza. Fourteen months after arriving overseas, on June 3, 1916, William arrived in France. He served in France with the 7th Canadian General Hospital, the 3rd Canadian Stationary Hospital and the 2nd Canadian Field Ambulance. William Wiseman survived the war and was discharged on demobilization in London, Ontario in May 1919.

Robert Gibb Wyseman, 27, was the second brother to enlist in the Canadian Expeditionary Force. Robert enlisted on April 19, 1915 in Hamilton, Ontario, and became a member of the 36th Battalion, CEF. He was working as a moulder at the time and was married (he had married Marion Kath Lawson three and a half years earlier, on October 5, 1911). Robert stood five feet five and three-quarter inches tall, had blue eyes and light brown hair, recorded his occupation as a clerk, and his next-of-kin as his wife Marion Wyseman at their home address of 25 West Street in Brantford, Ontario (she later resided at 171 Kathleen Avenue, Sarnia).

On June 19, 1915, Private Robert Gibb Wyseman embarked overseas bound for the United Kingdom aboard the *SS Corsican* and arrived in England on June 28, 1915. Robert served only in England, as a Sergeant with the Canadian Ordnance Corps (COC) and Canadian Army Pay Corps (CAPC). Robert was not allowed to embark to France/Belgium because of a congenital defect with his vision. Sergeant Robert Wyseman survived the war and was discharged in London, Ontario on June 4, 1919.

At some point, **Andrew Wyseman** moved out west and was residing in Alberta. On February 1, 1916, at the age of thirty-six, Andrew enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force (CEF) in Edmonton, Alberta, where he became a member of the 138th Battalion, CEF. Andrew stood five feet eight inches tall, had blue eyes and

light brown hair, was single, was residing at 70 May Street, Edmonton, and was employed as a mail carrier at the time. He recorded his next-of-kin as his father Robert Wyseman, who was living at 130 Brock Street, Sarnia. Andrew also recorded that he had seven months of prior militia experience with the 101st Active Militia.

One month after enlisting, on April 8, 1916 in Edmonton, Andrew completed an "Application for Entry for a Homestead". The application was made for a section of agricultural land that he planned to reside on and cultivate for his own. Approximately six and a half months after enlisting, on August 21, 1916, Private Andrew Wyseman embarked overseas from Halifax bound for the United Kingdom aboard the *SS Olympic*. He arrived in Liverpool, England on August 30, 1916.

Two months later, on October 26, 1916, Andrew was transferred to the 137th Battalion at Camp Witley. Two and a half months after that, on January 10, 1917, he was transferred to the 21st Reserve Battalion, Alberta Regiment at Seaford. Just over one month later, on February 16, 1917, he was transferred again, to the 31st Battalion. The next day, Private Andrew Wyseman arrived in Havre, France. From the Canadian Base Reinforcement Depot, Andrew and the 31st Battalion arrived at the front five days later, on February 22, 1917. In the spring of 1917, his battalion and the rest of the Canadian Corps made their way to an area in northern France dominated by a long hill known as Vimy Ridge.

The Battle of Vimy Ridge (April 9-12, 1917) was the first time (and last time in the war) that all four divisions of the Canadian Corps, with soldiers from every region in the country, would surge forward simultaneously. The first day of the battle, April 9, 1917, was the single bloodiest day of the entire war for the Canadian Corps and the bloodiest in all of Canadian military history. The four-day victory at Vimy Ridge was a seminal battle, a turning point in the war for the Canadian Corps and significant victory for Canada, later referred to as "the birth of a nation". Of the 97,000 Canadians who fought at Vimy Ridge, approximately 7,004 were wounded and 3,598 were killed in four days of battle.

Three weeks later, on May 3, 1917, Private Andrew Wyseman of the 31st Battalion, was killed in action during fighting in the vicinity of Vimy Ridge. Though the pivotal Battle of Vimy Ridge had occurred just weeks earlier, the fighting in the area continued in the following weeks. On May 3, 1917, after an attack against the enemy, Andrew was not seen again. He was originally reported missing. As the days passed, no further information was furnished from the casualty branch. Months later, Private Andrew Wyseman was recorded as, *Previously reported missing, now for official purposes presumed to have died on or since May 3rd, 1917.*

In June 1917, Agnes on Brock Street in Sarnia received the following letter from one of her son's comrades, conveying that he was missing:

Dear Mrs. Wyseman,

I am sorry to inform you that Andy is missing. I don't know if you have been informed through the War Office or not, but before we went into the line, Andy gave me his address, and I gave him mine, and we promised each other if anything should happen, we would write home after several days. There is a great possibility of him being taken a prisoner, for the day we went over the top, Andy and myself were together and we were surrounded by Germans, but we drove them back and in the excitement, I lost Andy. He is reported missing and I have been waiting this last week thinking I might hear news of him. As I have not heard anything, I thought I would let you know. My address is Pte. Maurice Kew, No. 811605, 31st Canadian Battalion E.F., France. My home address is Kidmore, Reading Berks, England. I joined up with Andy, being in the 138th Band with him, and have been with him right along. Therefore I miss him very much, and I am awfully sorry this has happened. We must hope for the best. If you should hear of him as a prisoner or otherwise, you might let me know and I will certainly do the same, therefore, wishing you the best of luck will close. I am yours very truly.

Maurice Kew

Eight months later, in late January 1918, the Deputy Adjutant-General, G.H.Q., 3rd Echelon, Canadian Division, completed a "Missing Man (Acceptance of Death for Official Purposes)" form. In reference to Private Andrew Wyseman of the 31st Battalion, the following was recorded: *Reference has been made to the Unit, the Record Office and the Base, on the printed missing list, but no evidence of material value has been received which would indicate that he is not dead. In accordance with the decision of the Army Council, this soldier is to be regarded for official purposes as having died on or since 3-5-17.* It also recorded that no Will, either in his Pay Book or as a separate document was ever received. Andrew Wyseman's Commonwealth War Graves Register records him as; *Date of Casualty: 3-5-17. Previously Reported Missing now for Official purposes presumed to have DIED on or since 3-5-17.*

Andrew Wyseman, 37, has no known grave. He is memorialized on the Vimy Memorial, Pas de Calais, France. On the Sarnia cenotaph, his name is inscribed as A. Wiseman. Andrew's parents Robert and Agnes resided at 130 Brock Street in Sarnia for the rest of their lives. Robert Wyseman passed away at the age of seventy-four on February 6, 1932. Agnes Wyseman passed away at the age of seventy-five on February 8, 1935. Both Robert and Agnes Wyseman are buried at Lakeview Cemetery, Sarnia.
SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 2G, 6O, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10Z

A Canadian's Message

(from a postcard mailed home by a WWI soldier)

*Although to-day we're parted,
And your hand I cannot take;
I send this loving message,
With a thought for old times sake.*

*All the time we're divided,
You are ever in my mind;
And the lonely days now passing,
Shall our hearts more closer bind.*

*So when you get this greeting
You will know what thoughts are mine;
And that my love I send you
For the sake of Auld Lang Syne.*

n.d. (1915)



Perhaps

*Perhaps some day the sun will shine again,
And I shall see that still the skies are blue,
And feel once more I do not live in vain,
Although bereft of You.*

*Perhaps the golden meadows at my feet
Will make the sunny hours of spring seem gay,
And I shall find the white May-blossoms sweet,
Though You have passed away.*

*Perhaps the summer woods will shimmer bright,
And crimson roses once again be fair,
And autumn harvest fields a rich delight,
Although You are not there.*

*Perhaps some day I shall not shrink in pain
To see the passing of the dying year,
And listen to Christmas songs again,
Although You cannot hear.*

*But though kind Time may many joys renew,
There is one greatest joy I shall not know
Again, because my heart for loss of You
Was broken, long ago.*

WORLD WAR II (1939-1945)

Following is a description of important historical events, people and key battles and campaigns of the Second World War. As in the Great War, Sarnia-Lambton's sons participated in every major battle and campaign fought by Canadian troops. Many made the supreme sacrifice.

- **THE “GOOD WAR”:** The Second World War has been referred to as the last “good war,” “the just war,” and “the necessary war.” It was a war of democracy against Nazism and fascism, good against evil. It was fought against a repulsive tyranny and villainous ideology that included the remorseless and bestial cruelty on the Eastern Front and in the Pacific; the killing of hundreds of thousands of civilians through ruthless and relentless bombing campaigns; and the unspeakable horror of the Holocaust that would claim some six million Jews.^{4H} The Second World War was not just one war but a series of campaigns and battles around the world. The war pitted the **Axis Powers** of Germany, Italy, Japan, and a number of less influential nations against the **Allied Powers** of Britain (and its dominions and colonies – Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Newfoundland, South Africa, and India) – along with France, the Soviet Union (summer of 1941), the United States (December 1941), and other nations.

- **VIMY UNVEILED:** In the summer of 1936, there was the most remarkable peacetime outpouring of national fervor that Canada had yet seen. **The Canadian National Vimy Memorial** was unveiled by King Edward VIII on a warm, sunny July 26, 1936 afternoon before a crowd of more than 100,000 spectators, including more than 6,200 Canadian veterans and their families who, at the height of the Depression, paid their way across the Atlantic to stand on Vimy Ridge. The journey – the largest ever peacetime movement of people from Canada to Europe – required five ocean liners for them all, and was properly called a **pilgrimage**. The Canadian Radio Broadcasting Commission (forerunner of the CBC) broadcast the unveiling ceremony live to Canada over the national radio network, while the British shortwave broadcast was heard worldwide.^{7Z, 8H}

The Vimy Memorial stands as a tribute to all who served Canada in battle in World War I. More information about the Memorial is on page 146. It is inscribed with the names of 11,285 Canadian soldiers who were killed in France whose final resting place is unknown, including 28 young men from Sarnia.

On that same day, Sarnians observed Vimy Day with a dual celebration in Sarnia and Port Huron. Parades and ceremonies were held in both cities, and included delegation members of the Sarnia Canadian Legion, the Lambton Regiment, the Imperial Pipe Band, the Ladies Auxiliary and a number of Great War veterans from Sarnia, Petrolia, Forest and Wallaceburg. Along with the Canadian veterans, American, British, Belgian and even several German veterans also attended the events.

Just three years after the Vimy Memorial was unveiled, World War II would begin and Canadians would have to go to war again. Nine months later, Canadians were shocked to read the headlines and see the photographs of a victorious Adolf Hitler and his Nazi entourage at the Vimy Memorial.

- **THE LEAD UP TO WAR:** Approximately twenty years after the end of World War I, the storm clouds of war were brewing again. The war began, arguably, in the **Far East**, when in November 1936, Japanese backed forces attempted to take control of the Republic of China province of Suiyuan. Though the campaign was unsuccessful, it enflamed tensions between the two nations. The Empire of Japan and the Republic of China went to war in July 1937. Also in November 1936, Imperial Japan and Nazi Germany signed the Anti-Comintern Pact that declared the hostility of the two countries to international communism (an alliance aimed against the Soviet Union). One year later in November 1937, Italy would join the pact, and in April 1939, Spain would join the pact.

In July 1936, a vicious civil war began in **Spain**, fought between the Republicans (democrats, anarchists, socialists and communists supported by the Soviet Union and Mexico) and the Nationalists (the army, church and monarchists supported by Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy). During the three years of war, thousands of volunteers from around the world, desperate to prevent a wave of fascism across Europe, flocked to Spain to fight with the Spanish Republicans. This included nearly 1,600 Canadians, armed volunteers in the anti-fascist cause, many of them recent immigrants and the unemployed leaving behind the poverty-stricken conditions of the Great Depression in Canada. In 1937, there was even a Canadian battalion established, the **Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion**. This, even though at the time in the country, the Foreign Enlistment Act of 1937 expressly forbade Canadians from joining or recruiting others to enlist. The Spanish civil war would last almost three years and resulted in millions of Spaniards being displaced, and hundreds of thousands being killed the result of systematic killings, mob violence, torture and other brutalities. Approximately one third of the Canadians that fought in Spain were killed in the war.^{9V, 9X}

In October 1935, **Italy** who under its' dictator Benito Mussolini, invaded Abyssinia (now Ethiopia). Italian armed forces won a major victory there in April 1936, and had captured the capital of Abyssinia, Addis Ababa, by May 1936. Created to maintain peace by solving international disputes, the League of Nations response to this aggression was slow, and when it did occur, was half-hearted and ineffective. The League's credibility was undermined, and Fascist Italy would ally with Nazi Germany for the first time, the two countries forming a Rome-Berlin Axis alliance in October 1936.

In **Germany**, Adolf Hitler of the National Socialist German Workers Party ("Nazi Party" for short) had been appointed Chancellor in late January 1933. He moved quickly to dismantle Germany's democracy by suspending individual freedoms of press, speech and assembly; murdering or arresting leaders of opposition parties; giving himself dictatorial powers; and creating the Gestapo and SS secret police. Also in 1933, Nazi racist extremism practices began to be instituted, including: public book burnings; spreading of hate-mongering propaganda blaming the "inferior" Jews for Germany's problems; and in 1935, the **Nuremberg laws** were passed that progressively stripped German Jews of their property, employment and basic rights; that led to forced sterilization of deemed genetic "inferiors"; and imprisonment of "undesirables" and "enemies of the state" in concentration camps. In December 1936, Hitler mandated that all males ages 10-18 would have to join the Hitler Youth.

The final shattering of Jewish existence in Germany came on the night of November 9, 1938 – "**Kristallnacht**" (also known as the "Night of Broken Glass" – for the shattered glass from the store windows that littered the streets). Beginning on this night, a wave of violence broke out against Jewish people and property throughout Germany and Nazi controlled areas. Synagogues were burned; rioters ransacked and looted Jewish businesses; Jewish hospitals, homes, schools and cemeteries were vandalized; and at least ninety Jews were killed and approximately thirty thousand Jewish males were arrested and sent to concentration camps.

Throughout the 1930's, Hitler prepared Germany for war, rebuilding the military, persecuting his enemies and regaining territory and seizing their resources. In March 1936, German forces invaded the Rhineland, on the border of France. In March 1938, Germany annexed Austria. In October 1938, German troops occupied Sudetenland (the German-speaking areas of Czechoslovakia), which the Allies agreed to in signing the Munich Agreement. In March 1939, the German Army invaded and occupied Czechoslovakia. Time and again, the League of Nations failed to act on these aggressions, a direct contravention of the Treaty of Versailles.

As Germany's growing militarization worried the world, **Canadian Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King** journeyed overseas to meet with German Chancellor Adolf Hitler in late June 1937 to assess the situation himself. King was in Berlin for four days, in which he met and talked with Hitler, Hermann Goring, Konstantin von Neurath, and a host of minor Nazi officials. Hitler emphasized to King that *"you need have no fear of war at the instance of Germany... We know what a terrible thing war is, and not one of us want to see another war"* (this was at a time when Germany was actively preparing for war). King returned to Canada with a great fondness for the "eminently wise" Hitler, convinced he didn't pose a threat to the world. Overawed by his German visit, King wrote in his journal that Hitler *"is really one who truly loves his fellowmen, and his country, and would make any sacrifice for their good,"* and *"I believe that the world will yet come to see a very great man-mystic in Hitler."* King also wrote of Hitler, *"His face is much more prepossessing than his pictures would give the impression of. It is not that of a fiery over-strained nature, but of a calm, passive man, deeply and thoughtfully in earnest... his eyes impressed me most of all. There was a liquid quality about them which indicates keen perception and profound sympathy... One could see particularly how humble folk would come to have a profound love for the man."* King was not the only world leader who was charmed and impressed by Hitler. Soviet leader Joseph Stalin and U.K. Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain would both at some point accept the word of Hitler that the German dictator had no dreams of conquest.^{2N, 3F, 9V}

In mid-August 1939, Hitler signed a **Nonaggression Pact** with the communist Joseph Stalin, the Soviet Union's dictator, in which the two countries agreed to take no military action against each other for the next ten years. For Germany, this would allow them to invade Poland unopposed, and they would no longer risk having to mount a military campaign on two fronts. It was Adolf Hitler's desire for revenge against the World War I victors, his obsession to eradicate Jews and other "undesirables," and his vision to create a German Aryan society that would rule the world (his Thousand Year Reich) that made it a world war.

In **Canada**, despite all these world events, the general isolationism of Canadians made the prospect of war seem remote. The unprecedented slaughter of the Great War had convinced politicians and the public that war was unthinkable.

Yet in March 1939, veteran organizations across **Canada** were asking ex-soldier personnel to voluntarily register in the Federal Veteran's Survey in order to get full data on war veterans in case the country needed them. The Sarnia branch of the Royal Canadian Legion asked all local veterans to enroll at the Soldier's Service Club. Registering in the survey did not constitute enlistment: the men and women were just indicating their experience and willingness to serve Canada in some capacity should the need arise. In a portion of the manifesto issued by the Veteran's Organizations, they stated, *"Today, world conditions are confused and disturbing. Our own will for peace does not, unfortunately, guarantee peace to us. The events of tomorrow are wholly unpredictable. We would be unfaithful to ourselves, to the memory of our comrades, and to our country if we remained indifferent in the face of that uncertainty."*

• **THE KING AND QUEEN IN CANADA:** In mid-May 1939, less than four months before the start of World War II, King George VI and Queen Elizabeth (later the Queen Mother) embarked on a month long, cross-country tour by train of Canada and part of the United States. Their two princess daughters; thirteen-year old Elizabeth, who would later succeed her father becoming Queen Elizabeth II, and eight-year old daughter Margaret Rose remained in England during the tour. The Royal Tour marked the first time a reigning monarch visited Canada. Canada's Prime Minister William Lyon MacKenzie King travelled with the royal visitors for their entire tour. The royal couple visited every Canadian province and Newfoundland (with a sidetrip to Washington and New York), and the month-long tour was an enormous success, attracting huge enthusiastic crowds everywhere they went. Early in the tour, on May 21, 1939, King George VI officially unveiled the **National War Memorial** in Confederation Square, Ottawa (also known as *The Response*), a symbol of the sacrifices made by Canada's sons and daughters in the Great War.

On a warm morning on June 7, 1939 the Royal train with King George VI, Queen Elizabeth and Prime Minister MacKenzie King, as part of their 36 stops in Ontario, stopped in London, Ontario. With the planned exodus of local citizens to see the Royal couple in London, Sarnia's Mayor Norman Perry had decreed June 7th to be a civic holiday in Sarnia, and many offices and businesses closed for the day. While in London, the Royal procession passed more than 200,000 people through the downtown streets of London, including an estimated 60,000 school children cheering and waving flags. Thousands of Sarnia and Lambton County residents, including 3,600 school children, travelled to the city by automobile, bus and special trains to witness the historic occasion. Sarnia was officially recognized in that Mayor Norman Perry and his wife were presented to the Royal Majesties at a reception, along with other prominent citizens. Also taking part in the event were local militia, members of the Royal Canadian Legion, city constables, three Sarnia bands and members of the 26th Lambton Battery. In Europe, it was apparent that war was looming. Less than three months after the Royal visit in London, war was declared.

• **SARNIA PREPARES FOR WAR:** With the situation in Europe growing more tense, Sarnia was already preparing for the possibility of war. In late August of 1939, Mayor Norman Perry, local authorities and industry representatives had plans to place armed guards on the St. Clair Tunnel, the Canadian approach of the Blue Water bridge, the Sarnia Waterworks, the hydro sub-station, Imperial Oil Refinery, Mueller Limited, Dominion Salt Company, Holmes Foundry, the wireless station at Point Edward, the Lambton Garrison armory, the grain elevator and other industrial plants. Unarmed guards were already at these locations, on 24-hour duty, on lookout for saboteurs and spies. One week after the start of the war, many of these guards were then armed. Immigration officers were increasing their screening of persons entering the country from the United States. The militia was prepared for mobilization, including the reorganized **Lambton Regiment** made up of three Sarnia military units: the **26th Field Battery, Royal Canadian Artillery; the 11th Field Company, Royal Canadian Engineers; and the 1st Field Park Company, Royal Canadian Engineers**. In Watford, there was the 48th Howitzer Battery, Royal Canadian Artillery. In the event of war, efforts would be made to immediately bring all of these units to war strength.

By May of 1940, the Sarnia Legion was recruiting volunteers from their registry to form a Sarnia platoon of the **Veterans' Home Guard**, a uniformed and armed unit of men responsible for combating any "Fifth Column" or other subversive elements in Sarnia, Forest, Watford, Thedford, Petrolia, Moore Township and Point Edward. By June 1940, close to 100 men had volunteered for the Home Guard platoon, and another 300 men had signed up for active duty in the Veterans' Auxiliary Home Defence Force.

The first Sarnians to go to war went two days before the outbreak of war. On August 29, 1939, five artillerymen from the 26th Field Battery, R.C.A. (Non-Permanent Active Militia) enlisted for active service to man coastal batteries in Eastern Canada. Bombardiers B. Baker and W. Torpe and Gunners J. Bennett, H. Tinkham and L. Abbott were the first men to leave Sarnia for service in World War II.^N

• **THE WAR BEGINS:** The Second World War began on September 1, 1939, when German forces swept into Poland in a “blitzkrieg” (meaning lightning war) attack. German armoured (Panzer) divisions destroyed Polish defences, with Hitler urging his generals to “kill without mercy men, women and children of the Polish race or language.” At 11:00 a.m. on Sunday, September 3, 1939, Britain, Australia, New Zealand and France declared war on Germany, though it was too late for Poland.

The next day, the September 4, 1939 *Sarnia Canadian Observer* front page headlines read;
REPORT MAJORITY OF PASSENGERS, CREW OF TORPEDOED BRITISH LINER RESCUED.
MONTREAL-BOUND SHIP CARRYING 1,347 PERSONS, MOSTLY CANADIANS, REPORTED SUNK BY NAZI SUBMARINE

London, Sept. 4 – A rescue fleet guarded by guns of British destroyers, was officially reported today to have saved all but the few persons killed by the explosion which sank the Montreal-bound Donaldson liner Athenia, which British officials said was torpedoed by a German submarine in the North Atlantic... Presumably the Athenia was torpedoed around midnight, Greenwich time (8 p.m. Sunday E.D.T.) while running without lights in a smooth sea.

• **THE ATTACK ON THE ATHENIA:** After Britain declared war, Germany’s first target was this passenger ship bound for Canada. The 13,400-ton British passenger liner *SS Athenia* left Glasgow on September 1, 1939, picked up more people off Belfast that evening, and then went on to Liverpool to receive its final passengers. The international crisis in August—failed alliance talks between Britain, France and the Soviet Union followed by the Nazi-Soviet non-aggression pact of August 23—had resulted in a crush of people attempting to get home before hostilities broke out. On September 2 at 4:00 p.m., the unarmed *Athenia* with 1,418 aboard (1,102 passengers and 316 crew) headed through the North Channel around Ireland and into the Atlantic Ocean, unescorted bound for Montreal. The passengers included about 500 Jewish refugees, 469 Canadians, 311 Americans and 72 British. Normal shipboard routines—church services and seating assignments in the dining rooms—carried on, although some wartime precautions were taken: portholes were covered and lifeboats were readied for use.

On September 3, two days out of port and northwest of Ireland, at approximately 7:30 p.m. that evening as the evening meal was being served, German U-boat *U-30*, which had been tracking the *Athenia* for about three hours, surfaced and without warning, fired two torpedoes directly at the defenceless *Athenia*, and later a third. The first of the torpedoes struck the *Athenia* squarely and exploded, ripping open the bulkhead between the engine room and the boiler room (the second torpedo misfired).

The U-boat commander, having sighted the *Athenia* running without lights and sailing in a zig-zag anti-submarine pattern, had apparently mistaken the vessel for an armed merchant cruiser or troop ship. Germany was committed by treaty not to sink civilian passenger ships, and having realized his mistake, the commander neither rendered assistance nor reported the incident, but simply silently steamed away. The U-boat commander swore his crew to secrecy and ordered them to never speak of the attack. He also altered the ship’s official log to erase any connection with the attack. It was only in 1946 that the truth about the attack was finally revealed during the Nuremberg trials.

On that fateful night, all 26 lifeboats were launched, although there were some difficulties in getting many of the women and children into them. Fortunately, distress signals were received by ships reasonably close by. In the chaos, some families were separated while getting into the lifeboats. Adding to the confusion, survivors were taken to different ports: Glasgow, Scotland; Galway, Ireland or Halifax. Though the *Athenia* remained afloat after being torpedoed, she would eventually sink beneath the waves, stern first, approximately 14 hours later.

A total of 117 were killed (19 crew and 98 passengers) in the unprovoked attack. A number were killed in the initial torpedo explosion and others in the difficult circumstances in the lifeboats. Among the victims was Hannah Baird of Montreal, a stewardess on the ship and Canada’s first fatality of the Second World War.

Another young Canadian girl was among the casualties: ten-year old Margaret Janet Hayworth, of Hamilton, Ontario suffered head injuries from the flying debris and would die several days later at sea aboard a rescue vessel in her mother Georgina’s arms. Waiting at the pier for his wife Georgina to disembark from the rescue ship was her husband John Hayworth. Georgina met him, and sobbed, “*Dear God, John, she’s gone.*” A photograph in many of the newspapers of the hastily made coffin of young Margaret Hayworth being carried from the rescue ship stirred the nation and brought home the cruelty of war. A few weeks after the sinking, flags across Canada flew at half-mast in Margaret Hayworth’s honour. A public funeral was held for her in Hamilton where over one thousand mourners attended. The British and Canadian governments used the sinking of the *Athenia* as a propaganda tool to rally support

for war.^{2E, 5B, 7Q}

The sinking of the *SS Athenia* had a local connection. Following is a story from the September 4, 1939 *Sarnia Canadian Observer*;

Petrolia Mother and Daughter Had Booked On S.S. Athenia

A Petrolia husband and father was anxiously awaiting this morning, word of the safety of his wife and eight-year-old daughter who had booked passage to Canada on the S.S. Athenia, which sailed from Glasgow on Friday. Mrs. Mary (Blair) Clark and daughter Catherine were due to sail on the ill-fated liner after concluding a holiday in Britain and Dawson Clark, the husband and father this morning waited in great anxiety for word at the Petrolia telegraph office. Mr. Clark is a bricklayer at the Petrolia refinery.

Also anxious for news was Mary Clark's sister, Mrs. Peter Barclay of Sarnia. Mary Blair Clark and her daughter Catherine were sailing home from a trip to her Scottish homeland, travelling third-class right next to the engine room. On September 6th, three days after the attack, husband Dawson Clark and his two children in Petrolia, received a cablegram informing him that his wife and daughter were rescued and were now safe in Scotland. Following is Mary Clark's account of her harrowing experience on that fateful day:

My little girl had been seasick. I was in the cabin with her and had just told her to be good, as I was going to the ship's church that night. This was at approximately 7:30 o'clock, ship's time. I was dressing for church when the awful noise of the explosion came. You can imagine my feelings as the lights went out and I groped in the darkness for my daughter. Then, to my horror, I felt water around my legs.

Praying to God I clasped Catherine and ran from the cabin. I placed her on my back, pulled her arms around my neck and her legs around my body. Before I had gone more than a few yards along the corridor, the water was up to my waist and before I could reach where the stairway was supposed to be it was up to my neck. I had to swim with Catherine on my back to where the stairs were to find they had been torn away by the explosion. It was impossible to walk. How I managed to get onto the upper deck, I shall never know. Perhaps if it had been only for my own life I was frightened, I would have been overcome, but I was battling for my daughter's life. Wreckage was under our feet and over our heads.

On deck we found that lifeboats were already being filled and lowered away. The only trouble was with foreign passengers, who pushed their way into the lifeboats even ahead of the women and children. Only after one of the sailors grabbed a hatchet and threatened violence were the foreigners held back. The rule of the sea is children first, then women, male passengers and last of all, members of the crew and the officers. Children were being taken out of their mother's arms and placed in lifeboats. The lifeboat I was in was the last to leave. There were 80 of us cramped into a boat which normally would hold 50 persons. The only reason I can give for our escape was that we were quartered on the starboard side while the torpedo hit the port side. Many on the port side were either killed by the concussion or drowned as the water rushed in.

We were torpedoed at 7:30 o'clock, Sunday evening, September 3, and drifted on the ocean in our lifeboat from 8 o'clock that night until 9 or 10 o'clock Monday morning when two British destroyers, Electra and Escourt reached us.... Drifting all night in the open lifeboat under ordinary conditions would have been terrible enough, but to be burdened with the fear that we might again be fired upon added to our distress. Indeed we did hear one more torpedo, but whether it was directed at the lifeboats we could not tell. Later in the evening it started to rain to add to our discomfort.

After being picked up by the Electra, we were taken to Greenock and later to Glasgow... One pathetic incident which stands out clearly in my mind is that of a mother who was looking for her 10-months-old daughter. When the two destroyers met at Glasgow, she was anxiously scanning the passengers on the other boat and when she saw two 16-year-old girls holding up her daughter, she cried, "Thank God, my baby!"

When Mary Clarke climbed the railings of the remnants of the stairs in the dark and flooding ship during her escape, her legs were heavily lacerated as a result of rubbing against the twisted debris in the ship's hallways. When she and her daughter got on board the last lifeboat, they spotted an abandoned five-year old girl who was crying out for her mother. Mary Clarke helped to guide the young girl by the hand into the lifeboat, comforting the five-year old and her own daughter Catherine. They would spend all night in a crowded lifeboat during a dark and rainy night, and were rescued the next morning and brought back to Scotland. Aside from the damage to her legs, Mary Clarke also developed a bronchial infection as a result of her trials at sea. The five-year old girl who had been separated from her

mother, and who would be re-united with her again, was Jacqueline Hayworth, the younger sister of ten-year old Margaret Hayworth, daughter of Georgina Hayworth.

Another Sarnia connection in the sinking of the *Athenia*: a few weeks after the sinking, (Sarnia) Collegiate Institute and Technical received a letter from Thomas Nelson and Sons publishers, informing the school that a shipment of text books destined for the Collegiate had gone down with the ship.

- **CANADA ENTERS THE WAR:** Although Britain declared war on Germany on September 3, Canada was not automatically committed by that declaration as it was in 1914 – though there was little doubt that Canada would quickly follow. On Sunday, September 10, 1939, King George VI announced that, by a decision of Canadian Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King and the Canadian Parliament, Canada was at war with Germany.

On Monday, September 11, 1939, the *Sarnia Canadian Observer* front page headlines included;

POLISH ARMY STILL HOLDING WARSAW DEFENCE LINES

BRITAIN INTENSIFIES HER NAVAL & ECONOMIC WARFARE AGAINST GERMANY

CANADA'S PARLIAMENT TURNS TO BUDGET AFTER APPROVING WAR ENTRY

Proclamation Declaring State of War Exists Between the Dominion and Germany Little More Than Thirteen Hours After Commons and Senate Almost Unanimously Approved Government Decision-Provision of Sinews of War Next Step.

Ottawa, Sept 11 - Canada, exercising her rights and responsibilities as an independent nation, has cast her lot with the British and French against German aggression and has become a self-declared belligerent for the first time in the dominion's history... In a rapid sequence of events beginning at three p.m. EDT, Saturday (Sept 9), and ending at 1:10 p.m. Sunday (Sept 10), both the senate and house of commons approved the government's decision and a proclamation was issued declaring a state of war existed as from Sept. 10 between Canada and Germany. This was the first time Canada declared war herself...

For one local Sarnia family, there was both joy and sadness when the war began. John Koziol, the proprietor of New Service Shoe Repair on Christina Street, had arrived from his native Poland in 1928, leaving behind his family. On August 29, 1939, John's wife Nellie and their two sons, Fred, aged 18 and John aged 12, arrived in Sarnia from Poland. Three days later, Germany invaded Poland. The newly arrived Koziol's, who did not speak English, were glad to be reunited as a family in the safe haven of Sarnia, Canada, but were concerned about the family they had left behind. John's hometown in Poland, where his brothers and sisters were residing, had been bombed by the Nazi's.

Canada was unprepared and woefully under-equipped for war. The Permanent Force army of 4,200 men, augmented by 51,000 partly trained reservists, possessed virtually no modern equipment. The navy had only four minesweepers and six destroyers, the smallest class of ocean-going warships. The navy's complement at the outset was 1,850 ratings, 131 officers and approximately 1,500 reservists. The RCAF had only 195 aircraft, most of which were obsolete. Air force personnel numbered roughly 4,000 members. If ever a nation was unready for war, Canada was it.

Though war was declared on September 10th, in September alone, over 58,000 Canadian men and women volunteered to serve, including about 4,000 Great War veterans.^{D, E, 7P} As in the Great War, the vast majority of Canada's men and women in uniform were not professional soldiers, but ordinary civilians who left their schools, farms, factories, careers and families to serve their King and country. And as in the Great War, the Germans would come to both admire and fear Canadian soldiers for their resilience, tenacity, and courage.^{3Y}

- **SARNIA RECRUITS:** The qualifications posted in Sarnia for enlistment were: the individual had to be a British subject, between the ages of 18 and 45, of good character, and reported physically fit by a medical board. In uniform, a man received regular meals and shelter, clothing, \$1.30 a day for Privates and \$35 a month for his wife, plus another \$12 per child (to a maximum of two). Other enticements were free medical and dental service, including free spectacles and false teeth if they needed them.^{4H, 9V}

Following is a portion of a report from the September 11, 1939 *Sarnia Observer*, one day after Canada declared war on Germany:

*War Declaration Speeds Up Recruiting
Applicants Rush To Join The Colors*

Canada's declaration of war upon Germany today had the result of swamping the local recruiting depot with

applicants for enlistment. Following a lull on Friday and Saturday, when Canada's position did not appear clear to the man in the street, the events of the weekend completely changed the situation at recruiting headquarters today. Interview officers of all three units were kept busy and the medical board was working at top speed. Swelling the ranks of local men anxious to join up were a large number of the 48th Howitzer Battery of Watford which is not under mobilization orders. There were also many from Chatham and Kent County arriving by bus, car or by hitch-hiking on trucks to sign up...

If American citizens are accepted as they may be shortly, there will be no dearth of applicants from Michigan anxious to join Canadian units. Recruiting officers said today there has been a steady stream of inquiries from Americans anxious to join. None of them, however, wants to serve in a unit which will not be sent overseas. "We want to fight Hitler and we want to get to it as soon as we can," most of them are reported as saying. The air force is mentioned in most inquiries. "We expect that the battery will be at its full strength of 168 men by the end of this week," Major W.E. Harris, O.C., of the 26th Field Battery, Royal Canadian Artillery said.

In early September 1939, the military staffs at the armory on Christina Street and the recruiting station on Front Street were working at top speed enlisting men for service in the Canadian Active Service Force. Recruits were coming in from Inwood, Alvinston, Petrolia, Port Lambton, Wyoming, Forest, Camlachie, Walpole Island, Brigden and other surrounding communities such as Wallaceburg and a good many from Windsor. Military recruiters reported that the men who were enlisting were anxious for active service overseas, and did not care for any "home guard" assignments. In one case, a young Irish orphan enlisted in Sarnia who had lost both his mother and father in the Great War when he was just a baby. He was jobless and his only relative was an aunt in Ireland, for whom he had no address. At his enlistment, he made his will out to his former orphans home.

Among those turned down locally early in the enlistment process were a large number American men from Michigan; several Czecho-Slovakian men who had been in Canada for years but were never naturalized as a Canadian; a sturdy, young Polish-Canadian lad who had been accepted, but then rejected after his father came in and disclosed his true age of fifteen-years old; two husky-looking Native men who were described by the proud recruiting officer as "splendid types of manhood", but were rejected when physical examiners discovered that both volunteers were nearly blind; and several fathers and sons applied together, but in most cases, only the sons were accepted.

Following is a portion of a report in the *Canadian (Sarnia) Observer*, September 1939, describing the scene at the recruiting depot on North Front Street:

... Crowds of young men have been standing in front of the recruiting office ever since it opened. They chat with sergeants and privates stationed in front to answer questions. They then often retire to stand on the curbstone for hours in indecision. Unobtrusively then they slip into the depot and in practically no time, are in the army. Inside the recruiting office door are the recruiting officers for the various companies. The volunteer talks to them and states what branch of the army he would like to join and describes his qualifications. If he seems to fit the requirements here, he is sent upstairs to the medical board where he has to pass three separate doctors who examine him for different things.

If he passes the medical examination, and he has to be good to do so, he is passed along a long line of desks behind which are clerks who take down and record a great deal of information about the recruit. Then he is sworn in and told to go on parade the following morning at the armories where he is issued a uniform. He is signed up for the duration of the war....

Recruits in Sarnia took part in physical training, military drills, marching and weapons training at the armory and collegiate campus. In mid-September 1939, one of the issues military officials had to deal with was the shortage of clothing and shoes. Major McIntyre of the 11th Field Company stated, *"It would be a good time for some kind angel to organize a drive for funds so that we could buy enough boots to carry on with for the present. We have two cobblers in the unit who can repair any old shoes and they need not be high shoes either. We can take oxfords, just as long as we can get the men into sturdy enough footwear for drill purposes."* Men were being excused from marching exercises, because of the condition of their shoes. Within days, local citizens, downtown merchants and the Red Cross Society contributed more than enough shoes for the troops.

By the end of September 1939, all three units of the Lambton Garrison—the 26th Field Battery, Royal Canadian Artillery; the 11th Field Company, Royal Canadian Engineers; and the 1st Field Park Company, Royal Canadian Engineers, had their ranks filled to full strength. In late September, the recruits moved to a camp encompassing all of Bright's Grove and Lake Cabin Cottages for a six-week intensive training period, where Major Harris stated, *"We are going to make these men into soldiers."*

Recruiting did not stop with the three Lambton Garrison units. Sarnians were also recruited into the Royal Canadian Regiment, the 48th Highlanders, the Essex Scottish, the First Hussars, the Royal Canadian Ordnance Corps, the Royal Canadian Army Service Corps, the Royal Canadian Army Medical Corps, the Perth Regiment, the Elgin Regiment and the Kent Regiment to name a few.

In late September 1939, all German nationals in Lambton County over 16 years of age were obliged to report for registration at the R.C.M.P. office on Queen Street or the office detachment in Port Lambton. The chiefs of police in Petrolia, Forest and Watford were authorized to receive registrations there. German nationals, and those born in territories which were under sovereignty or control of the German Reich on September 3, 1939, were required to report weekly to their place of registration for the duration of the war, and they were issued permit cards, which they were required to carry with them, subject to arrest. In June of 1940, the order to register at the nearest R.C.M.P. headquarters had been expanded to include, "all aliens of German or Italian origin and all persons of German and Italian origin naturalized since September 1, 1929." Also in June 1940, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police ordered that all persons living in Canada who were not naturalized Canadians or of British birth, must surrender all their firearms or be prosecuted under the Defence of Canada Regulations.

In October 1939, the Sarnia city council pledged to hold soldiers' jobs for all city employees who enlisted in the Canadian forces. A number of local industries endorsed the plan and agreed to do likewise, including Imperial Oil Limited, Canadian National Railways, Doherty Manufacturing Company, and the John Goodison Thresher Company. The policy stated that permanent employees enlisting for military service would be assured of re-employment upon demobilization from His Majesty's service. John Goodison stated, *"It is one of the least things that is within our power, and we shall be only too pleased to extend such a little service to those who would be serving us and their country in these troubled times."*

Also in October 1939, for one Sarnia man, his time in the service was short. Louis Farkas was born in Karcag, Hungary and had served with a machine gun company in the Hungarian army. At age twenty-seven, he was boarding at 215 Water Street, Sarnia, when he enlisted in the army, a member of the 11th Field Company, Royal Canadian Engineers, with the rank of Sapper. After he entered the Canadian army, he discovered that his brothers, living in Czecho-Slovakia, had been conscripted into the German forces. While his mother was still living in Karcag, Hungary, his brothers were living in Czecho-Slovakia, when it was seized by the Germans. His brothers were then conscripted into Hitler's army. Louis Farkas applied for discharge because he did not want to run the risk of looking along a rifle barrel at his brothers in the trenches opposite.

On May 12th 1940, the grim realities of war were brought home to the people of Sarnia when the three local units of the Canadian Active Service said farewell. More than 5,000 citizens cheered the members of the 26th Field Battery of the Royal Canadian Artillery, the 11th Field Company and the 1st Field Park Company of the Royal Canadian Engineers as they marched from the city hall square along Christina Street toward the Athletic Park. Marching along with the well-precisioned, smartly dressed soldiers were four bands, two hundred veterans of the last war, and bringing up the rear of the parade were the blue-uniformed cadets from the Sarnia Collegiate Institute and Technical School. At the Athletic Park, there were speeches, hymns, prayers, the playing of the National Anthem and a final march-past the grandstand. On their return to city hall square, the men of the 26th Field Battery were dismissed for a brief hour and a half to be with their families and friends, before leaving from the Canadian National Depot at the Tunnel Station. There was a surging crowd of close to 2,000 at the train station, with many tearful farewells prior to the departure of the 26th Field Battery.

The Engineers had marched off from City Hall Park to the armory parade grounds for dismissal. They had a few extra days before they had to return to barracks in London, where they would move out soon after. Two weeks later, the rousing send-off for the three units mobilized in Sarnia was repeated in Guelph and London. The 26th Field Battery departed Guelph for Petawawa Camp, while the 11th Field Company and the 1st Field Park Company of the Royal Canadian Engineers departed London for Petawawa. Hundreds of citizens from Sarnia made the trip to both cities, joining thousands of others, as the troops marched through the city centers to the train stations. Along with the cheering crowds were many touching scenes as the men bade goodbye to their wives, mothers, sweethearts and friends.

• **CANADA'S SOLDIERS:** One of the myths about the Second World War was that most Canadians enlisted to escape unemployment; in fact, eight out of ten who enlisted in the first three years of the war left jobs or occupations to sign up. The remainder included students, those who just finished school and those not yet ready to seek full

employment.^{2B}

Proud Canadians: Unlike in the Great War, when about half of Canadian soldiers were British-born, in this war, the proportion was far smaller: the vast majority of Canadian service personnel now were Canadian-born. With their own uniforms, units, and symbols, Canadians took pride in their distinctive status. The flip side was often a yearning for home. They wrote of missing Canadian food, leisure activities, community and family. The first of the Canadian servicemen arrived in England in December 1939. The 20,000 1st Canadian Infantry Division included both professional and volunteer soldiers. The average rifleman was twenty-three years old (and thousands were teenagers), stood about five foot seven, and weighed less than 140 pounds, and more than half had left school before grade seven. As a result of the Depression years, many of these young Canadians were forced to abandon formal education in order to put food on the family table.^{4H} At Aldershot camp, the Canadians prepared for war, with much of the training based on what had been learned in the Great War; an emphasis on marching, bayonet work, and digging trenches, and rarely rifle firing due to small arms ammunition shortages.^{4H}

World War II has been referred to as a “**young man’s war**”. Approximately 700,000 Canadians under the age of 21 served in uniform during the Second World War. In World War I, the average Canadian soldier age was 26, whereas in World War II, the average age of a rifleman was 23.^{D, 4H, 8M}

Sarnia’s fallen soldiers numbers reflect the claim that the Second World War was a “young man’s war”. Of the 185 World War II Sarnia fallen soldiers included in this Project, 70 of them enlisted as teenagers (age 19 or under). This equals 37.8% of Sarnia’s WWII fallen enlisted as teenagers. Of the World War II fallen soldiers included in this Project, 113 of them enlisted at age 21 or under, representing over 61%. The median enlistment age of Sarnia’s WWII fallen was 21 years old.

Of the 185 World War II Sarnia fallen soldiers included in this Project, 59 of them were between the ages of 17 and 21 when they were killed, representing almost one third of Sarnia’s WW II fallen. Of the World War II fallen soldiers included in this Project, 129 of them, or almost seventy percent of Sarnia’s fallen soldiers were age 25 or under when they were killed. The median age of Sarnia’s WW II fallen soldiers is 23 years old (vs. the median age of Sarnia’s World War I fallen soldiers is 26 years-old).

Old Enough to Fight II: In the First World War, an estimated 15,000 to 20,000 underage Canadian youths (under the age of 18, later changed to 19), some as young as ten, volunteered to serve. By the Great War’s end, an estimated 2,300 underage soldiers were killed in action.^{2J} This includes two of Sarnia’s WWI fallen; Robert Batey who was killed at age fifteen, and Norman Brearley who was killed at age seventeen.

At the outbreak of the Second World War, teenage boys again flocked to the recruiting centres to enlist. Requirements for volunteers were that they had to be between eighteen and forty-five years of age. Boys under eighteen were legitimately welcomed in with the rank of “boy soldier” or “boy sailor”. The minimum age for overseas service was nineteen, and recruits had to have a minimum height of five-feet-four, be in good health and be British subjects “of good character.” Sometimes boys as young as 13 would lie about their age, or use falsified written consent letters from a parent, or went with the blessing of a parent in an attempt to enlist in the military.

The creation of a National Registration Certificate during the Second World War, which all Canadians sixteen years of age and older were legally required to carry at all times, made it more difficult for underage youth to join. At recruiting centres though, birth and baptismal certificates were not required—those in line were simply asked to state their age. Underage applicants were rejected in larger numbers at the recruiting centers than in WWI. Despite this, many of underage volunteers who looked old enough were often accepted, while many of those who were rejected by one service would simply apply to another, and many underage men and women ended up serving in the Merchant Navy.

In World War II, an estimated 30,000 underage soldiers from across the country fought for Canada. The exact number is unknown because the majority got in by fudging their birthdate by as much as two to three years. Some went beyond that and passed themselves off as an older brother. For those who joined before they were legally allowed to enlist or proceed overseas, they were usually no longer underage by the time the Second World War was over. For example, sixteen and seventeen year-old boys who joined in 1939 or 1940 and survived the war, were twenty-one to twenty-three years old by the time the war ended in 1945.^{D, 8M}

The youngest Canadian soldier killed in the Second World War was fourteen-year old Claude Brooks, a reservist, who was killed along with two others in an armoured vehicle accident in Prince Edward Island in

September 1944. Two of the youngest Canadian soldiers killed while overseas during the Second World War were Gerard Dore and Edward “Teddy” James Wright, both of whom lied about their age when they enlisted. Private Gerard Dore was from Quebec, and enrolled when he was fifteen years old. He became a member of the Les Fusiliers Mont-Royal, R.C.I.C., arrived in France on D-Day + 2, and two weeks later, was killed in action on July 23, 1944 during the Battle of Normandy, at age sixteen. Flight Sergeant Teddy Wright was from Winnipeg, and also enrolled when he was fifteen years old. He became an Air Gunner with Bomber Command, RCAF No. 428 (Ghost) Squadron, and while on a cross-country training flight in England in late April 1945, the Lancaster bomber that he was in broke up in the air, spiralled into the ground, resulting in the death of all seven aboard, including sixteen year-old Teddy Wright. He had served in 428 Squadron for eight days.

Possibly the youngest airman in Bomber Command killed in action during the war was Winnipeg-born Leonard Jonasson. He joined the RCAF when he was sixteen years old. After air gunnery training in Canada, he arrived in Britain five days before his seventeenth birthday. He would soon be posted to 76 Squadron RAF, taking part in the Battle of the Ruhr. Less than three weeks after he joined 76 Squadron, on only his third trip over occupied Europe, mid-upper gunner Sergeant Len Jonasson was killed. On April 16, 1943, aboard a twin-engine Halifax bomber returning from a raid in occupied Czechoslovakia, the bomber was shot down by a German night fighter over France. All seven on board were killed including Len Jonasson, who was killed three months to the day after his seventeenth birthday.^{8M}

Like their predecessors a generation before, the underage young men who enlisted in the Second World War had many of the same reasons for joining as those in the First World War. Reasons included: an opportunity for adventure; there was a ruthless enemy to defeat; for excitement and to see the world; patriotism; to follow the example of a family member who fought in the Great War; their friends were signing up; a chance to “be somebody”; to wear a uniform and impress the girls; and the desire to avenge the death of a brother, father or close friend killed overseas. For some it was the appeal of regular pay after the poverty of the Depression.^{D, 8M}

In World War II, a number of Sarnia’s young men who enlisted for service were underage. They either lied about their age and/or required a parent’s permission to enlist. Some of these boys made the supreme sacrifice. Of Sarnia’s fallen WWII soldiers, the youngest enlistees include sixteen year-old’s John Dowding and Ross Stevens, and seventeen year-old’s James Banks, Paul Brown, Robert Dionne, Robert Lochhead, John McKernan, Stephen Powell, Geoffrey Stone and Stanley Teskey. Among Sarnia’s WWII fallen is one seventeen year-old (John Dowding), three eighteen year-olds (Gilbert McFadyen, Stephen Powell, Ross Stevens) and thirteen nineteen year-olds.

What they wore at the front: Even in England, the lack of preparation for war was apparent. George Orwell described it in *England Your England: After 1934 it was known that Germany was rearming. After 1936 everyone with eyes in his head knew that war was coming. After Munich it was merely a question of how soon the war would begin. In September 1939 war broke out. Eight months later it was discovered that, so far as equipment went, the British army was barely beyond the standard of 1918. We saw our soldiers fighting their way desperately to the coast, with one aeroplane against three, with rifles against tanks, with bayonets against tommy-guns.*^{11D}

In Canada, just as in 1914, there were too few uniforms for the first units readying to go overseas. Boots were in short supply and some units had only Great War uniforms on hand. But beginning in late 1939, soldiers began to wear a Canadian-produced higher quality version of the British-designed **battle dress** uniform. Soon all soldiers had it. The blouse, made of khaki wool serge, was a waist-length garment with two breast pockets and a collar buttoned at the neck. The matching loose-fitting wool trousers had belt loops, buttons for braces and pockets to hold maps and a field dressing. Although the battle dress was of good quality, it was hot in the summer and not warm enough in cold weather. In action, the uniforms absorbed dirt and mud and became sodden in wet weather.

From 1943 on, men in the field wore a beret, khaki for most, black for armoured units and maroon for airborne. In action, soldiers wore a heavy steel Mark II or III helmet with a chinstrap and camouflage net. Soldiers in training, those in armoured units and those working with vehicles and machinery wore khaki or denim overalls. Summer dress ordinarily consisted of a khaki shirt and shorts. In winter in the field, they might be covered with a greatcoat or parka, occasionally even with leather jerkins, sheepskin jackets or white ski pants and jacket.

Every soldier had the 1937 Pattern Web Equipment—an interconnected harness system of belts and braces worn across the shoulders and fastened at the waist—for carrying their “kit”. Waterproofed and dyed to a khaki colour, and maintained with regular applications of “blanco” cleaning compound, the web equipment was

uncomfortable and awkward when fully loaded. Components included: a variety of pouches for ammunition; a respirator case; utility pouches for extra ammunition; a bayonet hanger for their bayonet; an entrenching tool carrier (for spade or pick); and a small pack for necessities that included aluminum mess tins, a water bottle, spare socks, rations, a shaving kit and toothbrush, shoe polish, a sewing kit, a folding knife/spoon/fork, a pay book, mail from home, cigarettes, and a ground sheet. The soldiers' large pack, designed to be carried on the back, was usually left behind with the unit transport, and held sleeping gear, blankets, the greatcoat and other equipment considered unnecessary in action. Officers had a binoculars case, a compass case and a pistol holster.

In battle, soldiers adapted their equipment to what worked best. Each carried a heavy load of some 20 kilograms. A Private carried a Lee-Enfield No. 4 Mk I .303 rifle and one or two bandoliers holding 50 rounds each. He usually carried one or two 30-round magazines for his platoon's three or four Bren light machine guns, at least two No. 36 or No. 69 hand grenades, and likely 2-pound bombs for the 2-inch mortar or 3-pound projectiles for the company PIAT (projector, infantry, anti-tank) weapon (weighing 14.5 kg). Bren gunners had to lug the gun, weighing some 10 kilograms, and wireless operators carried the bulky radio with its telltale aerial sticking up high. Another weapon used by infantrymen was the Vickers .303 machine gun (15 kg without water) that was normally fired from a tripod (weighing 23 kg). Most non-commissioned officers had Sten machine guns (weighing 3 kg), and officers had a Sten and a revolver. In Italy, Tommy guns were used.^{2E, 3F, 4A}

What they ate at the front: The army fed the troops well, but there was no pretense of fine dining. For many who grew up in the Depression, army grub suited them just fine. If rations could not be brought forward in the field by company cooks, soldiers lived on the Composite Ration Pack, a crate with enough food for 14 men for 24 hours. Put together in Britain, 'compo' rations included hardtack biscuits, waxy margarine, tins of meat and vegetables, cheese, tea, jam and hard candies. One of the most sought-after cans was that of a sweet molasses-soaked pudding. There was also matches, seven cigarettes for each man, canned heat, and six sheets of toilet paper per soldier.

On the other hand, a good company cook could feed his soldiers well. Cooks scrounged for food, supplementing issued rations. The Company Quartermaster-Sergeant (CQMS) had the food carried forward in 'dixies' (large iron cooking pots) that kept the contents hot. The men ordinarily received a diet heavy on bread, potatoes, beans and meat that aimed to provide at least 3,000 calories a day. Individual soldiers also foraged, liberating what food they could from civilian homes and farms. Parcels from home were prized, especially those with chocolates, biscuits, and Canadian cigarettes (which also functioned as hard currency in the Netherlands and in occupied Germany).

For water—the civilian water supply often had been destroyed and there was the rational fear of poisoned reservoirs. In the field, rivers and streams too often were full of dead humans and animals. Using purification tablets, a two-step, 30-minute process, made the water foul-tasting. The only truly potable supply of water came from the Army Service Corps' tanker trucks, although it invariably tasted of chlorine.^{2E, 4A}

• **THE BATTLE OF THE ATLANTIC**, September 3, 1939 – May 8, 1945: It was the longest continuous battle of the Second World War and one in which Canada played a central role. It began on the opening day of the war, and ended almost six years later with Germany's surrender. It was the struggle between the Allied and German forces for control of the Atlantic Ocean.

As country after country fell in Europe before the Nazi onslaught, Britain's very survival depended on what it could receive by sea. Germany was determined to starve the British people into submission by destroying their sea communications and seaports, and cutting them off from overseas supplies. The Allies needed to keep the vital flow of men, machinery, arms, fuel and basic resources going between North America and Europe.

The Canadian ports of Sydney and Halifax, Nova Scotia, along with St. John's, Newfoundland (known affectionately as "Newfy John" or the "Hole in the Rock") were the crucial bases from which the merchant ships under Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) protection, left for the frightful trip across the inhospitable and dangerous North Atlantic. The war was also brought to Canada's doorstep as German U-boats looked for, and successfully torpedoed ships off the Canadian port cities, and even in the St. Lawrence River. The Battle of the Atlantic was the only campaign actually fought in Canadian territory, as aircraft and warships left from Canadian bases to fight the enemy within sight of the Canadian coast.

Canada's Merchant Navy, along with the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) and the Royal Canadian Air Force

(RCAF) played a vital role in the Battle of the Atlantic. The Royal Canadian Navy's fleet included destroyers, cruisers, corvettes, frigates, minesweepers and landing craft along with the Canadian Merchant Navy cargo vessels. All of these different types of vessels were turned out from Canada's shipyards in astonishing numbers during the war, approximately 344 warships alone produced between 1939 and 1945. The Canadian Navy made major contributions in the Atlantic (as far north as Greenland and Iceland, and as far south as the Azores), as well as in the Caribbean, the Mediterranean, the Indian Ocean, the Pacific, the Arctic (eg. Murmansk Run to northern Russia), and in European waters.^{D, 4H, 5B}

The Royal Canadian Navy: The Royal Canadian Navy consisted of three organizations that were frequently lumped together with little distinction under the title of Royal Canadian Navy: the professional force, the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN), were sailors that had made naval warfare their profession and had been trained at the naval college and on Royal Navy ships; the Royal Canadian Naval Reserve (RCNR), drew upon the merchant navy and the pool of men who made their living as fishers; and the Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve (RCNVR), the ordinary sailors from across the country who would form the bulk of the navy, eventually making up 84 percent of the force.

The three categories of sailor were distinguished by the distinctive stripes on the cuffs of their uniforms: the RCN had broad straight stripes; the RCNR had criss-crossed stripes; and the RCNVR had wavy stripes, which led them to calling themselves the "Wavy Navy."^{4H}

At the beginning of the Second World War, the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) had only seven ocean-going destroyers, five small minesweepers, two training vessels and 3,500 personnel. By the end of the war, the Royal Canadian Navy had 434 commissioned vessels and 110,000 men and women in uniform (all volunteers). The Royal Canadian Navy had become the third largest navy in the world.

Like the other branches of Canada's military, the men who volunteered to serve in the Navy "for the duration of the war", were mostly untrained for war. They were young men from the Maritimes and British Columbia, from Quebec and the prairies, from the villages, towns and cities of Ontario like Sarnia. Many of them had never seen the sea until they came to it in the dark and perilous days of war. They boarded ships and sailed out to face and fight whatever odds might be against them.

Royal Canadian Navy sacrifices: The Canadian sacrifices in the triumph of the Battle of the Atlantic were high: 24 RCN vessels were sunk, and approximately 2,000 Royal Canadian Navy members and 752 RCAF members lost their lives during the Atlantic campaign.^{D, E, T, 2N, 4H, 4I, 5B, 6Z, 9G} At least twenty young men from Sarnia gave their lives while in service with the Navy. Fifteen of those were killed during the Battle of the Atlantic, including William Anderson, William Andrew, Joseph Bell, Paul Brown, Roy Grainger, Wallace Horley, Rowland Jamieson, Alfred Kettle, Hector Le Gare, William Lucas, Ralph Martindale, Michael Paithowski, Stephen Powell, Robert Rigby and Arnold Schildknecht.

During World War II, the Royal Canadian Navy was **reluctant to disclose information** to the public after an attack. The family of any sailor lost at sea usually received a telegram within days. Most of them were a few lines stating the name of the sailor, his service number and whether he was missing or dead. Specific details on where and how a ship was sunk – even if they were known to naval authorities – were not released until the navy deemed it safe. The military feared that any information about the location of attack, the identification of ship, the number of men killed, etc., would be helpful to the enemy. As the old saying went: "Loose lips sink ships." So in the interest of national security, family members of lost seaman were given very little information about the loss of their loved one.

The Royal Canadian Navy's "Fourth Arm of Service" was the **Canadian Merchant Navy**, the fleet of transport ships that carried desperately needed equipment, fuel, foodstuffs, clothing, steel, lumber, tanks, trucks, guns, munitions and personnel to Europe and around the world. In late August 1939, two weeks before the war began, Canada conscripted all merchant ships so the Royal Canadian Navy took control of all shipping. When the war began, Canada had only thirty-eight ocean-going merchant ships, including 10 tankers of Imperial Oil Limited, and about 1,500 sailors. By war's end, Canadian shipyards had manufactured 403 merchant ships (10,000 and 4,700 ton cargo ships), and added captured vessels to the registry. Also, in the desperate wartime situation, even Canadian Great Lakes fleet vessels were transferred from inland waterways to ocean convoy duties.

One of the major challenges facing the Merchant Navy was finding enough sailors to crew the ships. Virtually all seamen with sailing experience had already been recruited by the RCN, while most of the able-bodied men without sea experience were in the army and air force. The Merchant Navy turned to shipping companies that

operated on inland or coastal waterways, but also accepted men rejected by the navy or other services for being under- or overage or not meeting medical standards. Canadian mariners served in the Canadian merchant fleet and in all manner of vessels from other nations, and by the end of the war, an estimated 12,000 Canadian and Newfoundland men and women served in the merchant navy.^{D, T, 2E, 3F, 4H, 8M}

The Canadian Government fortified many merchant ships with armour, and equipped them with anti-aircraft guns on the stern, mounted machine guns, and other equipment for defence against surfaced U-boats and aircraft. Later they were given naval gunners or navy/army-trained merchant crews to man the weapons (these merchant ships were referred to as DEMS – Defensively Equipped Merchant Ships). Early in the war, many merchant ships were lost because escorting aircraft reached the limits of their flight capacity and had to turn back before the ships reached their destinations. The navy helped solve the problem by creating DEMS ships, building improvised flight decks on some merchant ships (referred to as “baby flattops”), and even creating Merchant Aircraft Carriers (MACs)—tankers or grain carriers equipped with a deck and three or four aircraft. Two RN commissioned merchant vessels were converted to World War II Canadian aircraft carriers, and were manned by largely Canadian crews—the *HMS Nabob* and the *HMS Puncher*. Severe damage from a German torpedo would prematurely end *Nabob's* career, but *Puncher* served until the end of the war.^{D, T, 2E, 2I, 4H, 6Z}

Outward-bound merchant ships sat deep in the water due to their hulls being crammed with food, fuel, munitions, and supplies, nor could they manoeuvre quickly. When the empty ships returned west, bad weather was particularly worrisome, as the boats were light, rode high and were unstable. The merchant mariners knew that their ships were prime targets for enemy action. The ships had to manoeuvre in crowded ranks, without lights, wireless or navigational aids. They knew the risks included the constant threat of fierce attacks by German submarines or air attack, the risk of collision, underwater mines, many of the ships were old and unsuitable for open ocean travel, and the hazardous weather, fog, gales, and ice conditions in the North Atlantic. Crossings were often an uncomfortable, nerve-racking experience, especially for those on board a ship loaded with munitions or fuel.

Though the merchant navy and its supplies were one of the essential keys to victory, the mariners rarely received the same respect as the sailors of the RCN. Many believed that they were overpaid; in fact, they earned only slightly more than ordinary seamen in the RCN – with the war bonus, a Merchant able seaman received \$119.12 per month, compared to \$90 for an RCN sailor on board a corvette. Officers on the other hand were better paid in the RCN and their income was tax-free. Even for decades after the war, Canadian merchant seamen were denied veteran status and most forms of government compensation, including pensions. It was not until 1992 that merchant mariners were granted official status as veterans, eligible to receive pensions, allowances and benefits accorded to veterans of the three armed services. In 2003, Canadian Parliament declared September 3 to be **Merchant Navy Veterans’ Day** annually.^{D, 4H}

Canadian Merchant Navy sacrifices: From 1940 to 1945, over 25,000 merchant ships left Canadian ports to Britain, carrying approximately 180 million tons of cargo, and thousands of other voyages occurred elsewhere. The majority of merchant vessels that were sunk during the war were torpedoed by U-boats. Vessels were also lost due to collisions and mines, Axis aircraft attacks and German surface ships. The costs of the Battle of the Atlantic were high: approximately 72 Canadian merchant ships were lost, and more than 1,600 Canadian and Newfoundland Merchant Navy men, women and boys gave their lives. Canada's merchant navy suffered proportionately higher casualty rates than the Army, Navy or Air Force. Their names are commemorated in the *Merchant Navy Book of Remembrance* along with the other Books of Remembrance located in the Peace Tower on Parliament Hill, Ottawa. One out of every seven Merchant Navy sailors who served was killed or wounded.^{D, T, 2E, 3F, 4I, 5B, 8M}

In Veterans Memorial Park in Point Edward, there is a large black stone monument honouring the Merchant Navy sacrifices in World War I, World War II and the Korean War. The Point Edward Canadian Merchant Navy Memorial reads, “In memory of the Canadian Merchant Seaman and the Canadian vessels lost by enemy action and those who served in the cause of freedom.” The Point Edward memorial has eleven names inscribed on it. At least two young men from Sarnia lost their lives while serving with the Merchant Navy during World War II; Arnold Schildknecht and Ross Stevens—their stories are included in this Project.

Along the waterfront in Centennial Park is **Sarnia’s Naval and Merchant Navy Memorial**, a large anchor dedicated to the Naval and Merchant Marines of the Second World War. Sarnia resident Laird Nixon discovered the anchor in the early 1970’s in the Lampel and Zierler junkyard on south Christina Street. He paid \$200, and had the over one ton anchor moved to the front lawn of his family home on Lakeshore Road. It is believed that the anchor

came from a “saltie,” one of the ocean-going vessels that occasionally haul cargo on the Great Lakes. In 1997, Laird and Doris Nixon donated the artifact to the City of Sarnia. The City moved it with a front-end loader, painted it grey and chose to display it at Centennial Park overlooking Sarnia Bay. As the Nixon family were water enthusiasts, and because Laird had a brother who served in the navy, the Nixon family dedicated the anchor with a plaque. The plaque on the anchor reads; “DEDICATED IN MEMORY OF THE MEN AND WOMEN WHO SERVED THEIR COUNTRY IN THE NAVY AND MERCHANT NAVY. DONATED BY LAIRD AND DORIS NIXON AND FAMILY SARNIA 1997”^{2m}

Convoys: The sinking of the British passenger liner *SS Athenia* on September 3, 1939 prompted the Royal Navy to order that merchant ships would be grouped in “convoys”. To protect merchant ships from being picked off by U-boats one at a time, the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) supplied air escorts (Eastern Air Command – primarily flying Lockheed Hudsons, Liberators and the Consolidated Canso flying boats) and the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) organized merchant ships into convoys that were accompanied by armed naval escorts. The RAF Coastal Command and RCAF Eastern Air Command were also able to provide air cover for the convoys. However, even when bad weather and thick cloud cover didn’t curtail air cover missions, the planes could stay in the air only for so long.

Enormous tracts of ocean remained where U-boats could hide. In the early years of the war, much of the mid-Atlantic could not be reached by supporting aircraft, and became known as **the Black Pit** or the Air Gap. To avoid the worst of this area, the convoys were soon routed further north, where the weather was harsher, icebergs loomed, and the storms wilder, but the break in air coverage was less pronounced.^{D, 4H}

The **Newfoundland Escort Force** (NEF), created in May 1941, consisting of Royal Canadian Navy destroyers and corvettes, assumed the responsibility for protecting convoys in the western zone, from St. John’s, Newfoundland to Iceland. There, they would hand over the convoy to Royal Naval escorts, which would accompany it into British home waters. The NEF ships would then proceed north to Hvalfjörður, resupply, replenish, and refuel, and then sail south to pick up westbound convoys returning to North America.

By early 1942, with the Royal Canadian Navy taking on an expanded role in escorting North Atlantic convoys, the NEF was re-organized as the **Mid-Ocean Escort Force** (MOEF). The revised convoy scheme had the MOEF escort the convoys on a shorter track away from Iceland, and across the entire ocean to meet UK-based escorts near Northern Ireland. The MOEF’s new eastern terminus was Londonderry, Northern Ireland, and from there, they would return to sea to meet a westbound convoy. Entering Londonderry, or “Derry”, as it became known, after a storm-tossed crossing of the dangerous North Atlantic brought great warmth and joy to the weary sailors. As the little rust-streaked corvettes entered the mouth of the River Foyle, the deep green of the Irish countryside engulfed them, each kilometer upriver offering respite from the brutal war at sea. A Canadian sailor said, “*To arrive at Derry after a hard east-bound crossing was a little like approaching the pearly gates.*”^{6Z}

The Risks: Both prey and hunters often huddled together, ships in convoys with armed escorts for protection, marauding U-boats in wolf-packs. Seamen whose vessels were hit hard had only a 50 per cent chance of survival. Death by explosion or fire or scalding steam, or by drowning in the malevolent, cold grey waters as a ship was sucked under—all were horrific enough. Harshest of all, floundering men from fatally hit vessels frequently had to be left behind, as the ships were ordered to steam ahead rather than break convoy ranks, and becoming sitting ducks for the enemy. Drowning sailors had to be abandoned to the frigid Atlantic waters so that the greater number would survive. Many sailors died from exposure or dehydration.

While the convoy could not stop, generally a rescue boat would be dropped out of line and, after the warships chased off the U-boats, would begin to search for survivors. A seventeen year-old Canadian merchant navy man who had been on a rescue ship described how he was shaken by the state of the survivors, many of whom, “*were injured, some quite horribly. After picking up the living, or near living, we then picked up body parts which might be identified so that next-of-kin could be informed.*”^{D, 2E, 4H, 8M}

In response to provide better protection for the merchant ships, two of the easy-to-build and effective **anti-submarine warships** manufactured in Canada (for the RN and RCN) were Bangor-class minesweepers and corvettes. By late summer 1940, sixty-four corvettes and twenty-four minesweepers were under construction in Great Lakes, St. Lawrence River and British Columbia shipyards. With such an aggressive building program, there was a desperate need for new crews but little time to train them—they would learn the hard way: on the ships, at sea, and against the U-boats in battle.^{2I, 4H}



Convoy in Bedford Basin, Halifax



RCN Corvette – Backbone of the Canadian Navy

The Corvettes: Corvettes were considered the backbone of the Canadian navy by many. They had a relatively simple design, based on that of a whaling vessel. Wrote one Rear Admiral, *“They were thrown into the battle because it was thought that catching whales and killing U-boats had something in common”*.

Windflower and *Mayflower* were the first corvettes commissioned in Canada, and because the navy was short of suitable weapons, both were fitted with dummy guns made of wood for their maiden voyages to England. Corvettes could be manufactured at a modest cost, had the ability to out-maneuvre a submarine as well as long endurance, and bobbed on the sea like a cork. Corvettes were roughly 60 metres long and had a top speed of 16 knots (slower than a U-boat at the surface); were made to be sailed close to land and never intended for the wide-open Atlantic Ocean crossings; were surprisingly tough and nimble with a tight turning circle; were equipped with a 4-inch gun that fired 31-pound shells; and carried depth charges filled with high explosives to blow submarines out of the water. An ever-present danger when an escort vessel went down was that its depth charges would explode as they sank below the surface, resulting in higher death tolls.

Corvette crew size varied from between sixty and a hundred men, so they were intolerably crowded with less than ideal living conditions. Corvettes, who some joked would “roll even on wet grass”, were known as “wet ships”, as the seas broke over them, salty water seeped through seams, hatches and ventilators. American officers marveled at the Canadian corvettes awash in the towering North Atlantic swells and joked that their crews should get submarine pay.^{D, 4H, 5B, 6F}

Life on board a corvette in the harsh North Atlantic was mentally and physically exhausting. Howling winds and massive frigid waves—the “*Green Ones*”, in sailor’s slang—battered the ships, sweeping over them from bow to stern, tearing away lifeboats from their moorings, and knocking about 420-pound depth charges like marbles. In heavy seas, the corvettes climbed the crests of waves, only to plunge into the troughs before battling up to the crest again. The violent rolling, pitching and pounding shuddered the whole of the ship, making for a rough and wet ride for the crew, seasickness was common. RCNVR Bill Fittell, serving aboard a destroyer, recalled, *“If seasick pills failed, one antidote was to do ‘funnel watch’ on the breezy upper deck, which meant we’d sit with our backs to the warm funnels or smokestacks and try to still our stomachs. It helped us avoid, as some wags quipped, ‘travelling the Atlantic by rail,’ that is, grabbing on to the railing of the ship and upchucking.”*

The corvette was crowded, and included a mess deck that was the space for living, sleeping, eating, and relaxing off duty. Canvas hammocks hung from every conceivable spot of the deckhead, and men slept at all times because of the four-hour watch schedule. Good weather or bad, sailors were instructed to wear their deflated rubber life jacket, nicknamed a “Mae West”, around their waists. Many found them bulky and kept them in their lockers, observing that if a man fell into the Atlantic in winter, it did not matter if he was wearing a life vest or not, because the cold water would kill him in minutes. Inside, clothes and duffle bags were constantly wet; foul-smelling water sloshed on the floor; cockroaches were ever-present; fresh water was sparse; and there were always shortages of fresh food.

Food staples included oatmeal porridge, real then powdered eggs and toast, “red lead and bacon” (tomatoes with fatty bacon), bangers and mash, powdered milk, Coca-Cola, tea, the beloved “kye” (a viscous hot drink made from a block of coarse chocolate, scoops of sugar, and canned milk) and “grog” (a 2.5-ounce tot of rum mixed with

water or Coca-Cola served daily at 11 a.m. to all crew members over the age of twenty-one). For the few who were of age that chose not to partake in the rum, they were given an extra seven cents a day.

The winter months brought the added danger of a ship icing up, as the heaving water sprayed the vessel and froze to anything made of metal, thickening to block ice, and adding enormous weight that could keel the boat over. All crew members, as part of their “turn to” (meaning to get to work), had the duty of using hammers, axes, crowbars and even fists to chip away the ice as waves pummelled them again and again.

Despite the hardship, the weather, the rough crossings, and the terror of being hunted, morale and comradeship was kept up through activities such as singing songs, limericks or parodies of songs; poker games that ran day and night; telling of stories, tall tales and jokes; playing pranks on crew members; and receiving letters from loved ones at home.^{4H, 8M, 9G, 9K, x} At least four young men from Sarnia lost their lives while serving aboard a corvette during World War II; William Anderson, Wallace Horley, Alfred Kettle and Michael Paithowski.

Destroyers: In September 1940, the neutral Americans completed a deal with Britain that saw the Americans acquire naval access to British bases in exchange for its provision of fifty Great War-era destroyers. Though the American destroyers were outdated and ill-suited for crossing the Atlantic, they were better than nothing and were almost immediately pressed into service. Canada initially received six of these destroyers, all of which took their names from rivers near the Canada-United States border (*Annapolis, Columbia, Niagara, St. Francis, St. Croix and St. Clair*). Known as “four-stackers” (because of their four funnels), the destroyers were built for speed, but lacked stability, so were tossed about in the rough Atlantic seas.^{x, 4H, 5B} At least seven young men from Sarnia lost their lives while serving aboard RCN destroyers during World War II; Joseph Bell, Paul Brown, Roy Grainger, Hector Le Gare, John Love, Stephen Powell and Robert Rigby.

One of the six “over-age” U.S. destroyers to be used as a war vessel was renamed the *HMCS St. Clair* (formerly the *USS Williams*). The honour was greatly appreciated by the residents of Sarnia and other communities along the shores of the St. Clair River. The suggestion to the government that the name *St. Clair* be considered, when naming additional naval craft, had been submitted by Homer Lockhart, secretary-treasurer of the Sarnia Chamber of Commerce. Adding to local interest was the fact that a Sarnia resident was named chief quartermaster of the destroyer. Lloyd Jennings of 173 Parker Street had given up his position as first mate on a Great Lakes freighter to join the R.C.N.V.R. He underwent a period of training in the Canadian navy at an eastern port before being assigned to the *St. Clair*. Lloyd had a wife and daughter residing in Sarnia; his brother Charles was a local fireman; and his other brother Harry was in England as a member of the 11th Field Company, Royal Canadian Engineers.



Town Class Destroyer *HMCS St. Clair* I65

Convoy organization: The first transatlantic convoy – HX1 - sailed out of Halifax for the United Kingdom on September 16, 1939, closely guarded by the Canadian destroyers *St. Laurent* and *Saguenay* and British cruisers. The convoy was escorted out to sea for about 400 miles and then the escort departed. The convoy picked up its inbound escort of British ships south of Iceland.

In organizing the convoys, ships would arrive from all over, and then wait in the safety of the maritime ports, behind submarine nets and long-range coastal guns, for their proper pairing with the corvettes, frigates, and destroyers, and a sufficient number of other merchant ships that steamed at similar speed. The final convoy could be as few as two dozen ships or a multinational grouping of more than 100 vessels, plus escorts, though a typical convoy was made up of 40 ships.

When ordered to sail, the ships steamed out of the harbour, taking several hours to find their place in the convoy. The merchant ships were tightly packed in rows and columns, with only about 600 metres separating the vessels in front and back, and about 1,000 metres separated the columns. The convoy commander would be at the head of the formation, generally in a destroyer, while corvettes took positions on the flanks, and if there were enough, also at the rear. The most vulnerable and valuable ships – those with ammunition or oil – were placed in the centre of the convoy.

The ships would change course every fifteen or twenty minutes, travelling in a zig-zag pattern to elude the U-boats. Maintaining formation was difficult, made more so in the dark, in rough waters, and with the use of haphazard communication, so collisions were a frequent occurrence. With so many steamships pressed into service, it was necessary to separate them into slow and fast convoys. Fast or regular convoys could make the voyage across the Atlantic in ten to twelve days, but the slower convoys could take fourteen to sixteen, and even longer if streaming into winter storms.^{D, 2E, 2I, 4H, 5B, 8M}

Canada's first troop convoy sailed in late 1939. Half of Canada's First Division of soldiers began their journey overseas from Halifax harbour on December 10, 1939. Approximately 7,500 men, including their new commander Major-General Andrew McNaughton, would travel aboard five large luxury liners in convoy TC1 on their way to Scotland. The other half would follow in a second convoy one week later.

For most of the recruits, their equipment was shoddy, worn out and obsolete. The Lee-Enfield rifles had seen service in the last war; the old Lewis light machine-gun had yet to be replaced by the more efficient Bren; and some wore First War uniforms or their trousers. There was no crowd on hand to see them off as the convoy left under a blanket of wartime secrecy. The big liners steamed out of the harbour at half-hour intervals into the calm Atlantic, and were encircled by their escorts: four Canadian destroyers—*Ottawa*, *Restigouche*, *Fraser* and *St. Laurent* (two-thirds of the country's fleet of six) and later four British warships—the battleship *Resolution*, aircraft carrier *Furious*, battle cruiser *Repulse*, and cruiser *Emerald*. After a week's long voyage, as the ships were in sight of Scotland, and the Canadian destroyer escort had long since returned to Halifax, a welcoming fleet of twelve British warships greeted them, including the *Hood* and *Warspite*.^{9V}

German U-boats: British Prime Minister Winston Churchill would say that "*The only thing that ever really frightened me during the war was the U-boat peril.*" The first Canadian warship to be torpedoed in the war was the *HMCS Saguenay* in December 1940, with a cost of twenty-one lives, including two Sarnians, Paul Brown and Hector Le Gare.

The German submarines, U-boats, were sleek killing machines that prowled the Atlantic looking to sink Allied ships. The term U-boat is from the German word for submarines, *Unterseebooten* (undersea boats). Often hunting in "**wolfpacks**"—concentrations that hunted and killed together, the U-boats would shadow the convoy and attack from the rear, or penetrate to the centre of the convoy under cover of darkness before attacking, aiming to catch a vessel broadside. Though they could fire their torpedoes underwater, German command pushed the U-boats to fire their torpedoes while running low on the surface of the water. After striking, experienced U-boat captains would submerge and slip away, then emerging from the wake of the convoy before surfacing and steaming ahead to catch the convoy for another run several hours later. Other U-boats would not shoot and run, but prowl within the spread out convoy, stalking and picking off their victims.

While the U-boats had all the advantages in battle, RCN crews would defend by firing their deck guns, dropping (or throwing) depth charges or ramming the U-boat, but only after finding the enemy. Through much of the critical years of the war, the Canadians fought nearly blind because of obsolete equipment and technology, as they lacked the most advanced radar and navigation equipment as that of the British. On the whole, the submarines had things their way in the winter of 1940-41. Working in patrol lines across the usual convoy routes and directed by excellent intelligence, the U-boats hunted in packs, swarming the convoys, attacking on the surface at night, like motor-torpedo boats. German submariners called the winter of 1940-41 the "Happy Time".^{D, 4H, 5B, 6Z}

Increased demands on the RCN: By early 1942, the demands being made on the RCN ships and crews were pushing them to the limit. Many of the crews were inexperienced and their ships had equipment that was at least a generation behind that of the Royal Navy. RCN vessels had SW1C radar that could almost never detect a surfaced U-boat; and they lacked the latest in gyrocompasses, asdic equipment, and shipborne anti-aircraft and anti-submarine weapons. After the attack on Pearl Harbour, more American warships were ordered to the Pacific leaving the Canadian Navy to pick up the slack in the Atlantic. The RCN were ordered to protect the convoys along a more

southward Atlantic route from Newfoundland to Londonderry, Ireland, right through the German U-boat concentrations. German U-boats were being manufactured at a high rate; the size of the wolf packs increased; they had improved technology that could detect long-wave radio emissions from Canadian warships making it easier to attack while avoiding being killed; and they shifted the additional U-boats from the Mediterranean to North American waters.

To protect American ships, the RCN added the **Triangle Run**, with corvettes and minesweepers escorting vessels from Boston, and later New York, to Halifax and St. John's. As U-boats pushed southward into the Caribbean, the RCN added the **Halifax to Trinidad Run**, escorting tankers carrying crude oil. U-boats slipped into Canadian waters including the St. Lawrence River, which further diluted navy escort strength. Adding to the demands, the RCN sent sixteen corvettes to assist in the protection of troops for *Operation Torch*, the amphibious invasion of North Africa. The RCN escort system reorganization meant shorter layovers in ports for repair and maintenance of battered ships, and quicker turnaround times for overworked and exhausted crews.^{D, 4H, 6Z}

The Battle of the St. Lawrence was an extension of the larger Battle of the Atlantic. It began on May 12, 1942 when after entering the Gulf of St. Lawrence, German U-boat *U-553* sank the steamers *Nicoya* and *Leto* south of Anticosti Island, shocking Canadians. Between May 1942 and late 1944, German U-boats repeatedly penetrated the waters of the St. Lawrence River and the Gulf of St. Lawrence, sinking 23 ships in the Gulf of St. Lawrence waters, destroying valuable cargo and costing hundreds of lives. It was the first and only time since the War of 1812 that naval battles were waged in Canada's inland waters.

Anti-submarine operations were made more difficult in these shallower waters. The mixing of the cold fresh water from the St. Lawrence with the warmer salt water of the Gulf, combined with the tricky tides and currents, layered the water into different zones of temperature and salinity that bent asdic beams. Submarine captains quickly learned to take advantage of these water conditions to hide both before and after attacks. Several U-boats made their way into the Gulf for other reasons; in one case to drop off a German spy near the town of New Carlisle, Quebec (the spy was quickly discovered and arrested); and on two occasions, in attempts to rescue German prisoners of war, first POW's near Fredericton, New Brunswick, the other, POW's from a camp in Bowmanville, Ontario.^{D, 2N, 3F, 6Z}

Following are three stories of German submarine attacks that took place in Canadian waters:

In late August 1942, two submarines, *U-517* and *U-165*, slipped into Canadian waters, and torpedoed four ships over the course of a week. On the night of September 6-7, 1942, a convoy of eight merchant vessels and five escorts was attacked by the two submarines shortly after it left Ile du Bic, Quebec bound for Sydney, Nova Scotia. Two vessels were sunk by *U-165*, including the armed yacht *HMCS Raccoon*, which was on escort duty. All 37 naval crew on board the *Raccoon* were killed, including twenty-year old Ordinary Seaman Ralph Martindale of Sarnia. The next day, submarine *U-517*, struck the convoy, sinking three more freighters and killing ten. A week later, the two submarines sank four more ships and damaged another before making for the Atlantic.

In the early morning hours of October 14, 1942, *U-69* was in the Cabot Strait when it spotted the passenger ferry *SS Caribou* on a night crossing from Sydney to Port aux Basques, Newfoundland. The moonless night was clear and cold with a brisk breeze. On board the darkened ferry were 237 passengers, most of whom were asleep, and crew. When the *U-69* torpedo struck the *Caribou* at approximately 2:20 a.m., the ferry's lone escort, *HMCS Grandmere*, following navy protocol, gave chase after the submarine for 90 minutes. The decision to delay the search for survivors was a heart-wrenching one for the *Grandmere's* captain. "*Oh my God. I felt the full complement of things you feel at a time like that. Things you had to live with. You are torn. Demoralized. Terribly alone,*" he later said. "*I should have gone on looking for the submarine, but I couldn't. Not with women and children out there somewhere. I couldn't do it any more than I could have dropped depth charges among them.*" In less than five minutes, the *Caribou* was sucked under. On that night, 136 passengers and crew of the *Caribou* perished in the cold waters, including at least five mothers and ten children.

On the evening of November 24, 1944, *U-1228* spotted the Canadian warship *HMCS Shawinigan* sitting off Port aux Basques, waiting to escort the ferry *Burgeo*, from Port aux Basques to Sydney the next morning. The U-boat fired a torpedo that caused catastrophic damage. *HMCS Shawinigan* sunk within four minutes, and was unable to send a distress signal. All 91 naval crew of the *Shawinigan* were killed, including two young Sarnians: Leading Coder William Anderson and Petty Officer-Stoker Michael Paithowski. The sinking of the *Shawinigan* was the last major encounter of the Battle of the St. Lawrence.

The Boarding of U-94: In late August 1942, Canadian corvettes *HMCS Oakville*, *HMCS Snowberry* and *HMCS Halifax*, were part of an escort group with convoy TAW-15. That convoy, nine escorts and twenty-nine heavily laden oil tankers, had departed Curacao in the Caribbean on August 25 on its way to the east coast of the U.S.. Wallowing toward a North Atlantic rendezvous at an agonizing eight knots, with the three Canadian corvettes were the Dutch *Jan Van Brakel*, three small U.S. patrol vessels and the powerful U.S. destroyer *Lea*.

The Battle of the Caribbean, not as well-known as the Battle of the Atlantic, was almost as crucial in strategic importance and in the bitterness with which it was fought. By the summer of 1942 the Allies' only important source of oil, the lifeblood of war, was the Caribbean area—Trinidad, Curacao, Aruba and Maracaibo. Submarines swarmed the southern sea lanes; in the first eight months of 1942 they had sunk four hundred ships between Trinidad and Halifax.

Around noon on August 27, 1942, lookouts on German U-boat *U-94* spotted TAW-15 in the warm waters of the Windward Passage between Cuba and Haiti, and shadowed it for the rest of the day. Not long after midnight, after *U-94* had penetrated the escort screen and was preparing to fire torpedoes, it was spotted by a USN Catalina flying bomber that dropped four 650-pound depth charges that exploded around her. The well-placed bombs blew off both of the U-boat's bow hydroplanes, making the sub impossible to control underwater.

Aboard the *HMCS Oakville* (K178), action-station bells rang out as the ship headed for the area, dropping five depth charges as they passed over the spot. The damaged U-boat emerged out of the water barely 100 yards from the *Oakville*. On board the *Oakville*, Harold Lawrence recalled, *"A black snout reared out of the water; the conning tower burst through a swell; she surfaced completely. From her decks water cascaded foaming white in the moonlight."* The Captain of the *Oakville* ordered her crew to ram the sub. The corvette, with a comparatively fragile single-plated hull, just scrapped down the side of *U-94*. As the range opened, she fired her guns striking the sub's deck guns and the men scrambling to fire them. The *Oakville* manoeuvred frantically and attempted to ram the sub a second time, and again was only able to deliver a glancing blow.

The *Oakville* slipped by so close that her guns could not depress enough to fire. In the lull, German sailors poured on deck once more. On the *Oakville* deck were six stokers who had already loaded the depth charge throwers. With German sailors on the bridge of a U-boat just a few feet away, the stokers reached for what was handy, and threw empty Coke bottles at the conning tower of *U-94*, and screamed taunts. Harold Lawrence recalled, *"I have never seen more astonished faces than those of the German submariners when they came under a barrage of empty pop bottles at twenty-foot range..."*¹⁰⁷

Before the enemy could recover from this attack, the submarine and corvette were apart. The *Oakville* dropped more depth charges and at least one exploded directly under the U-boat. With *U-94* now nearly stationary, the *Oakville* swung around and charged the submarine a third time. The *Oakville* was finally able to ram it squarely aft of the conning tower, the bow reared up and rolled over the submarine. On the *Oakville*, a 12-man boarding party prepared for that duty as the ship pulled alongside the crippled sub. *"Away boarding party!"* the captain cried. *"Never mind lowering the boat,"* he bellowed from the bridge above. *"I'll put you alongside."*¹⁰⁷

In the chaos that ensued, two of the boarding party, twenty-two year-old **Lieutenant Harold "Hal" Lawrence** and twenty-three year-old **Petty Officer Arthur Powell**, leapt from the *Oakville*'s gunwale onto the deck of the submarine eight feet below. The rest of the boarding party remained stranded on the *Oakville* as the corvette lost power and drifted away. Harold Lawrence recalled, *"We slid alongside and I jumped eight feet to the deck of the submarine. The belt of my tropical shorts broke from the severe thump of my landing. My pants slid down to my ankles. I stumbled, kicked them off, and clad only in a pistol, two grenades, a gas mask, a length of chain, a flashlight and a life belt, I lurched up the deck."*

Each armed with a .45 revolver, Lawrence and Powell moved along the slippery, rolling sub deck towards the conning tower, knocking one already-dead German over the side. A half-mile away, the aftergun of the *Oakville* opened up, luckily starting at the other end of *U-94*'s hull and methodically working its fire to where Lawrence and Powell were. With bullets ricocheting off the hull, the two Canadians jumped over the side into the water. With the next big wave, they swam back on board and moved forward. Reaching the forward gun, a tangled mess of steel, a German slid from behind it whom they knocked over the side. Around the conning tower, they encountered two German crewmen, who they directed aft and then just jumped overboard. As they reached the top of the conning tower ladder two German crewmen were already out and a third was half out. The two Germans lunged forward, Lawrence shot one and Powell shot the next one, the third man hobbled down.

While Powell stood over the hatch with his pistol to keep the rest of the crew below, Lawrence went aft to another open hatch and found it's compartment fully flooded. The prisoners below were shouting. *"Better let them out if we're to salvage this bucket,"* Powell said. Lawrence put the pistol on the deck, shone the flashlight on his face and spoke with what he hoped was a reassuring voice, *"Come on up. It's all right. See – no gun."* The German sailors emerged one by one from the tower, and soon Lawrence and Powell were milling around in a mob of enemy sailors. Powell ordered the submariners to the stern of the boat.

While Powell watched the POW's, Lawrence dropped down into the tower looking for anything of interest. Wading through chest-deep water in the pitch-black, he was unable to find any signal equipment or code-books, or shut any of the valves in the control room. Finally Powell yelled down through the open hatch, *"Come up sir, she's sinking!"* Once up top, they ordered the POW's over the side into the sea, and Lawrence and Powell followed. Lawrence recalled, *"Off to the north the dark bulk of the convoy receded. Two 'whumps' of torpedoes striking home told me that other submarines were attacking... Oakville was a black silhouette a mile away. We hadn't abandoned U-94 a moment too soon. She lifted her bow, lifted it more, and slid under."*

There in the bloodied water, an area where sharks and barracuda were known to be active, they waited for rescue. Approximately half an hour later, a whaler from the US destroyer *Lea* picked up Lawrence, Powell and twenty-six prisoners. On the deck of the *Lea*, Lawrence and Powell were grabbed and hustled aft along with the prisoners. After an obscenity-laced tirade, Lawrence was able to convince the USN officers that they were indeed the captors.

About one hour later, at one o'clock in the morning, both Lawrence and Powell were back on board the *Oakville*, where they were reminded that they were still at action stations. That afternoon, the *Oakville* arrived in Guantanamo, Cuba. Art Powell was with some of the crew to see the prisoners sent ashore. In Art Powell's words, *"The U-boat Captain looked at me and saluted. I returned the salute."* The *Oakville* had no casualties, or only one: Harold Lawrence said, *"I had been wounded--when I wiggled down U-94's hatch I cut my elbow on a broken Coke bottle."*¹⁰⁷



Sub-Lieutenant Harold Lawrence (L) and Stoker Petty Officer Arthur J. Powell (R)

Nineteen Germans were killed in the incident and the twenty-six POW's were detained at Guantanamo in Cuba. The event inspired the making of a propaganda poster depicting the action. Petty Officer Arthur Joseph Powell was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal and Lieutenant Harold Ernest Thomas Lawrence was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross. The citation reads, "Lieutenant Lawrence was in charge of a boarding party of two which attempted to prevent the scuttling of a U-boat. With complete disregard for his own safety, the Officer, accompanied by a Petty Officer, boarded the U-boat and, having subdued the enemy crew, he took action in an endeavor to prevent the scuttling of the U-boat, notwithstanding the fact that it was sinking. His spirited and determined conduct was worthy of the highest traditions of the Royal Canadian Navy."

Harold Lawrence was born in Kent, England in August 1920, and moved at a young age with his family to Halifax, Nova Scotia. He joined the Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve in 1939. After the war he earned a Master's degree from the University of Ottawa before retiring from the Navy in 1965. He taught at the University of Ottawa and the University of Victoria and wrote three books concerning World War II: *A Bloody War*, in 1979; *Tales*

of the *North Atlantic*, in 1985; and *Victory at Sea*, in 1989. Harold Lawrence passed away at the age of 73 in Victoria, British Columbia in April 1994.

Arthur Powell was born in Sudbury, Ontario on July 8, 1917, the son of a railroader. Arthur spent much of his youth in Timmins, and would work in the mines there and on freighters, before joining the Navy in April 1940. After the war, Art Powell returned to Point Edward where his parents and siblings had moved in 1941. In the early 1950's, Art moved to Sarnia where he resided for the next decade until his work took him to London, Ontario. As a civil engineer, Art surveyed waterways throughout the Great Lakes. He never entirely left Sarnia, however. He returned here to train Sea Cadets and marched with Sarnians on Remembrance Day. Arthur Powell passed away at the age of 80 in London in January 1997.^{2E, 3m, 10T}

The **Murmansk Run** was one of the lesser-known places that Canadian sailors served. This dangerous convoy route, referred to as “down North” by those who sailed her, saw Royal Canadian Navy and Canadian Merchant Navy seamen sail into the Arctic Ocean to deliver war materials to the Soviet Union. Beginning in the late summer of 1941, Canadian merchant sailors served on Allied ships making the runs, departing North American ports such as Halifax and sailing to the northern Soviet Union, usually via Iceland or Great Britain. The Germans threw the full weight of their air force and navy against the convoys as they neared the coast of occupied Norway. Attacks by more than a dozen enemy submarines and hundreds of planes simultaneously were common. Harsh weather and the Arctic ice pack took a toll as well. Many of the runs took place in the winter to take advantage of the almost constant darkness in the northern seas. The temperatures were frigid, the winds strong, the waves sometimes 25 metres high and it was nearly instant death for anyone who went into the icy waters.

Beginning in October 1943, Royal Canadian Navy destroyers and frigates also became involved in the Murmansk Run as convoy escorts. They participated in about 75 percent of the subsequent convoys until the end of the war a year and a half later. Remarkably, no Royal Canadian Navy ships were lost.^{b, 9G}

Enigma and the Codebreakers: To generate secret codes in the Second World War, Germany used a machine called Enigma (Greek for riddle). Each branch of the German military developed its own Enigma version, with constant tweaks to make messages even harder to decipher. The heart of the typewriter-like encoder/decoder was a set of five to eight interchangeable rotors, aligned in a row of three or four. The rotors moved to new positions with each keystroke, ensuring a different letter was substituted for each letter typed. Additional security came from changing the starting position of the rotors with each message and changing the order of the rotors every day.

Throughout the war, the German military relied on Enigma's coded messages to convey battle plans; deliver orders for deployment of troops, tanks, submarines and aircraft; record ships' cargo; and report fuel and equipment shortages. The Germans thought Enigma's codes were unbreakable. They were wrong.

Britain set up a sophisticated system for capturing and decrypting enemy messages at **Bletchley Park** in Buckinghamshire, England—the home of the Codebreakers. Among the 10,000 employees at Bletchley Park, seventy-five percent of the staff were women. Thousands of wireless operators around the world, including in Canada, trolled radio frequencies ceaselessly, recorded and sent coded enemy messages to Bletchley Park to be deciphered and analyzed.

In early 1941, with the use of a captured German “Enigma” machine and code books from a U-boat, codebreakers at Bletchley Park were able to decipher the German Enigma naval codes used between German U-boat land headquarters and the U-boats at sea. This incredible achievement allowed the British to read German messages, albeit after a delay. This information was known as ULTRA, for “ultra secret”, and it was limited severely in its distribution, as the British were fearful of alerting the Germans to the breakthrough.

In February 1942, the German Navy shifted to a more complex four-rotor Enigma code system, known to the Germans as “Triton”, and to the British as “Shark”. Allied losses in the Atlantic again increased alarmingly until early 1943, when British codebreakers were able to crack this cipher code. An incalculable number of ships were saved as convoys were steered away from danger zones and the massacre that awaited them, but because it was used sparingly, some units and lives had to be sacrificed. Intelligence from ULTRA has been credited with shortening the war by at least two years—and sparking the computer age.^{2E, 4H, 5B, 6Z, 9M}

The Tide Turns: Along with British Intelligence's breaking of the top secret German code, the tide finally began to turn in favour of the Allies in the Battle of the Atlantic in April and May 1943. There were now more escort ships, including second generation River Class destroyers and frigates, with better-trained and more experienced

crews. Additional defences for the convoys included: escort ships fitted with improved equipment including new radar, asdic, anti-submarine weapons such as Hedgehog, homing torpedoes, and gyrocompasses to replace their old magnetic compasses; aircraft carriers and small flight decks on merchant ships, equipped with a few aircraft that flew off as needed; and the addition of four-engine VLR Liberator bombers that provided long-range aerial surveillance that closed the Black Pit; and improved sharing of intelligence with the Royal Navy and the US Navy.

Still, the Battle of the Atlantic continued for two more years, and Allied losses continued. The Germans continued to produce new and improved U-boats that were sleeker and faster, had additional anti-aircraft guns, new radar detection equipment, and the snorkel device, which allowed the U-boat to use its diesel engines while travelling just under the surface, thus attaining higher speeds and giving it the ability to recirculate stale air, recharge batteries, and stay under water for much longer periods than previously.

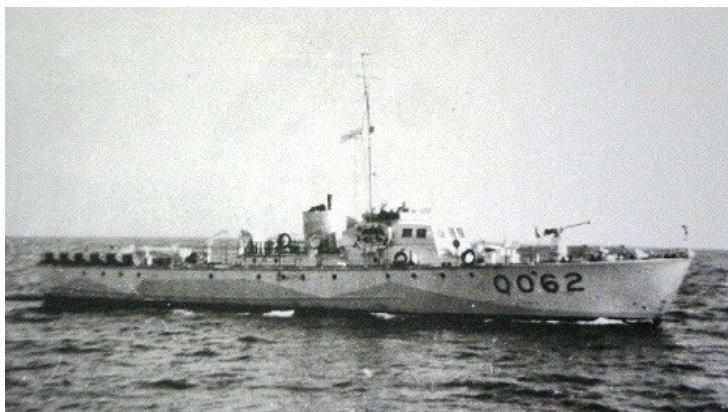
For much of the war, the Canadian warships were involved in almost half of the convoy protection in the North Atlantic – and then, from mid-1944 onward, they assumed even greater responsibility for the protection of all convoys across the Atlantic. Between September 1942 and May 1945, 99.4 percent of merchant ships reached their destinations intact. For the RCN and its Allies, improved tactics and equipment, increased escort ships, and overwhelming air cover would result in the fact that – four of every five U-boat crew members who left European ports on war patrol never returned.^{D, 4H, 4I, 6Z}

Canada's Commander Leonard Murray: By the spring of 1943, nearly half of all the escorts operating between New York and the U.K. were Canadian. Canada's operational role was so critical that, in April 1943, a separate theatre of war, the **Canadian Northwest Atlantic Command** was established to control Canadian and Newfoundland waters. Nova Scotia born Rear-Admiral Leonard W. Murray was appointed its Commander-in-Chief, making him the only Canadian to command an Allied theatre of war.

A graduate of the first class of the Royal Naval College of Canada in Halifax in 1912, and a veteran of the Great War, he would hold highly important commands throughout World War II including being put in charge of the Newfoundland Escort Force when it was formed in May 1941. In 1943, as Commander-in-Chief of the Canadian Northwest Atlantic, commanding all Canadian and Allied air and naval forces involved in convoy protection in that area, Admiral Murray would become the most important operational commander in RCN history.^{3F, 5B, 6Z} More information on Commander Leonard Murray is on page 529.

Sarnia's Mac-Craft Corporation Limited was a boat building plant that was formerly situated in Wallaceburg. In March 1940, it acquired property in Sarnia that had been a distillery ten or twelve years earlier. By February 1941, the new Mac-Craft plant in Sarnia was in operation. On November 27th 1941, the first war vessel built in this city was launched in Sarnia. Work on the wooden vessel had begun in the early summer of 1940. The small warship, a **Fairmile Motor Launch (ML)**, named *HMC ML Q062*, was launched at the Sarnia Mac-Craft Corporation.

Canadian shipyards, including Sarnia's Mac-Craft Corporation, would build approximately eighty Fairmile motor launches for the Royal Canadian Navy. The motor launches were 112 foot wooden vessels based on the design by the Fairmile Marine Company in England, thus they became known as Fairmiles. The Canadian B Type design vessels were intended as **submarine chasers**—to protect coastal convoys, port approaches and coastal waters against submarines.



Fairmile Motor Launch *Q062*

On November 27, 1941, Mrs. J.T. Barnes, the wife of Sarnia's mayor, christened the *Fairmile Q062* as it slid down the marine railway, by smashing a bottle of champagne on the bow. One week earlier, a large number of invited Sarnians had gathered at the plant to witness the launching. Arrangements had been made for a special ceremony, and the ship was prepared to slide into the water, but at the last minute, because of an unforeseen delay in dredging a channel from the boat works to the harbour, the event had to be postponed. Workmen then had to remove a water main from the boat works to the water's edge, and pull out rows of spiling from the former site of the Cleveland-Sarnia Saw Mills property.

A week later, following the brief christening ceremony, the vessel slid smoothly down the railway until the stern touched water. Suddenly the boat stopped and became stuck in the track. After 15 minutes of pulling on cables and ropes, the vessel glided free into the St. Clair River. There was only a small crowd present at the launching, which came as a surprise to most Sarnians, as there were rumours circulating that the ship would be kept in the plant until the next spring. The launching of the *Fairmile* brought back memories for local citizens of the last large ship to be constructed and launched in Sarnia. It had been over fifty years prior, that the *SS Monarch*, which had been built at Dyble shipyards in Sarnia, was launched in September of 1890. The passenger ship *Monarch* would meet its fate in 1906, wrecked after striking a rock near Isle Royal in Lake Superior.

A few days later, the last weekend of November 1941, the *Fairmile Q062* was officially given her first trial, a run on the St. Clair River with forty-seven persons aboard. The little ship backed away from its dock at the Sarnia elevator slip and turned around gracefully heading down the river to the Imperial Oil Limited dock where she took on a cargo of fuel. Then she went through her two-hour test run down the river, where at times, the ship appeared to be racing automobiles on highway 40. Officials of the Royal Canadian Navy and Department of National Defence gave its performance high praise.

The patrol boat, officially described as a submarine chaser, was a credit to the boat builders and contractors of Sarnia who built the sleek, speedy vessel based on designs sent from England. With sandbags sitting in her depth-charge cradles, the deck was finished in the dull gray of the navy, and the interior fittings were of highly varnished reddish wood. A description of the gadgets and fittings within the small, comfortable pilot house was not allowed to be disclosed at that time. The details of the powerful Hall-Scott twin marine motors, such as the size, the revolutions per minute and the speed of the craft, were also a navy secret. The men's and officer's quarters were neatly finished with galleys, ward rooms, soft leather covered mattresses, and neat little natural-finished mess tables suitable for two persons.

One week after the launch of *Q062*, a second *Fairmile* subchaser, *HMC Q063* was launched by Mac-Craft Corporation in Sarnia, one month ahead of schedule. At the time, it was believed to be a new record for quick construction in Canada. Both ships were completed within six months. The two Sarnia ships along with a sister ship from Midland would winter in Sarnia until the spring of 1942.

Both *Q062*, in April 1942 and *Q063*, in January 1943, would be loaned to the free French Navy during the war. Both would serve off the south coast of Newfoundland until the end of the war. The Commanding Officers of *Q062* were Lt. William Lyle Moore, RCNVR (April 18, 1942-April 30, 1942), and then Lt. Howard David Pepper, RCNVR (May 1, 1942-January 16, 1943); and the Commanding Officer of *Q063* was Sub/Lt. Norman MacDougall Simpson, RCNVR (April 1, 1942-January 15, 1943). Mac-Craft Limited of Sarnia completed five more *Fairmile* subchasers between October 1942 and September 1943, numbers *Q101* to *Q105*. One more *Fairmile* was completed in November 1943, the *Q115*. At the end of the war, the *Q062* would be re-acquired by the Royal Canadian Navy and renamed the *HMCS Wolf*, while the *Q063* would be sold.

After being decommissioned, *Fairmile Q105* would be loaned to McGill University for research in the St. Lawrence River. After that, it was sold to a tour company in Quebec, christened the *Duc d'Orleans*, where it took tourists around the Ile d'Orleans (an island near Quebec City). In the late 1970's, it would be purchased by a couple of Sarnia businessmen with the goal to use it as a passenger cruise ship in the community. It was refurbished and the new *Duc d'Orleans*, would serve as a charter boat based in Sarnia for St. Clair river cruises from 1978 until 2005. The Sombra Museum is now the home of a number of artifacts from the *Q105*, including the original blueprints, compass, parts of the hull and the ships' original propellers. The Commanding Officer of *Q105* was Lt. J.D. Addison, RCNVR (September 5, 1943-August 29, 1944), then Lt. William Peter Tennent McGhee, RCNVR (August 30, 1944-September 16, 1945).^{x, 2A}



Fairmile Motor Launch *Q105* (later the *Duc d'Orleans*)

Naming Ships: Each Canadian warship had its own personality. The naming of ships was important, and unlike the United States and Britain, Canada avoided naming ships after military, national, or political figures (exceptions were destroyers *Champlain* and *Vancouver*). Destroyers were named according to their class: River-class destroyers for Canadian rivers (eg. *Saguenay*, *Micmac*, *Athabaskan*); Town-class for Canadian cities (eg. *Ottawa*, *Annapolis*, *Hamilton*); and Tribal-class destroyers for First Nations (eg. *Haida*, *Iroquois*, *Huron*). Other Canadian vessels were also linked to cities, which reinforced the notion that this was a citizen navy. Cities adopted their namesake ships, and patriotic groups sent the sailors presents and care packages. Strong links developed between the fighting ships and the communities that supported them.^{4H, 5B}

For the men on the sailing vessels, they always used the female pronoun “she” when affectionately referring to their ship. This was a maritime tradition historically embedded in nautical language for centuries. During the war, men from across the country came together as one within the ship. In her they would live and in her they would fight. She would be their home, for some the last home on earth they would ever know. A member of the Royal Canadian Navy Volunteer Reserve who rose to the level of commander during the course of the war, wrote of sailors and ships and the tremendous loss felt by the men for their vessels: “*Those who have never beheld the dread moment of the death of a ship can hardly imagine the enormous drama of such an occasion, doubled of course for those who served in her... I never witnessed such a spectacle without deep emotion... Few non-seagoing men will ever understand the strange bond of love for a ship on the part of men who served in her or even a ship in which they have not served.*”^{4I, 9G}

The *HMCS Sarnia* (J309): In July 1942, Lieutenant Commander C.H. Mott, the commanding officer of a minesweeper, wrote a letter to Sarnia Mayor John T. Barnes expressing his desire to visit with the mayor and some of the city’s leaders. The minesweeper that he was the commander of was the *H.M.C.S. Sarnia*, named in honour of this city. It was one of more than 300 ships that were named for Canadian communities during the Second World War.

The *H.M.C.S. Sarnia* (J309), was a 165-foot, steel-hulled **Bangor-class minesweeper**, launched in January of 1942, and later commissioned for service at the Toronto Shipbuilding Yards on August 13, 1942. Present for the ceremony were Sarnia Mayor John T. Barnes, Mrs. Barnes and a small group of Sarnia civic officials. Also present were representatives from a number of Sarnia organizations who had provided comforts and gifts for the crew of the *HMCS Sarnia* not supplied by official naval sources. In a telegram to the Mayor Barnes from the Minister of National Defence for Naval Affairs, he stated, “The interest that the people of Sarnia have shown in the ship and crew is greatly appreciated.”

Upon the mayor’s return to Sarnia, city council made plans to donate a crest of the city (to be hung in the commanders cabin) and a large washing machine (for the crew), as the city’s gift to *HMCS Sarnia*. The *HMCS Sarnia* was never able to visit the port of its namesake. Not long after being commissioned, the *HMCS Sarnia* would escort a Quebec-Sydney convoy arriving in Halifax in mid-September 1942, subsequently being assigned to the Newfoundland Escort Force. In February 1944, the commanding officer, Lieutenant Commander R.C. Chenoweth and crew forwarded two photographs of the *HMCS Sarnia* along with expressions of thanks from the officers and ratings to the city for the interest shown in their welfare. The commander also suggested that certain electrical equipment which would benefit the whole ship’s company might be of more value than personal comforts, owing to

the fact that the personnel changed frequently. It was suggested that additional loudspeaker equipment together with record playing attachments be purchased for the ship, along with hot plates and electric irons for use in the various messes. City Clerk Miss M.D. Stewart, chairman of the *HMCS Sarnia* committee said that her committee would endeavor to secure the required articles.

In mid-September 1944, Sub. Lieut. Douglas Whalen and three members of the *HMCS Sarnia* arrived in the city for a visit. They were met at the train station by a welcoming committee and taken to city hall and then to a hotel. During their two-day stay, they were given a tour of the city and entertained by local dignitaries. Their sight-seeing tour included Canatara Park, the harbour at Point Edward and the Polymer Corporation plant. Entertainment included a dinner in the Sarnia Golf Club; a civic dance at *H.M.C.S. Repulse*, headquarters of the local Sea Cadet Corps, that included Ollie Case's orchestra; a semi-formal reception at city hall; and a supper-party put on by the women staff of city hall at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Basil Williamson, 366 Cameron Street. During their visit, the *HMCS Sarnia* was in port undergoing a major refit, after participating in minesweeping and short convoys out of Halifax. It would eventually be assigned to the Halifax Local Defence Force until June 1945.

The record of Commanding Officers of *HMCS Sarnia* were: Lt. Charles Atkins Mott, RCNR (August 13, 1942-February 10, 1943); Lt. David Ireland McGill, RCNVR (February 11, 1943-July 17, 1943); Lt. Richard Cassels Chenoweth, RCNVR (July 18, 1943-March 12, 1944); Lt. Herbert Allan Plow, RCNVR (March 13, 1944-June 24, 1944); Lt. Roland Douglas Hurst, RCNVR (June 25, 1944-October 9, 1944); Lt. Robert Percy Joel Douty, RCNVR (October 10, 1944-September 21, 1945) and Lt. D.M. Mossop, RCNVR (September 22, 1945-October 28, 1945).^{X, 2A}



Bangor Class Minesweeper *HMCS Sarnia J309*



Crew of *HMCS Sarnia*

Late in March 1945, *HMCS Sarnia* was taken off the Triangle Run (see page 431) and joined the Local Halifax Defence Force. The assignment was to patrol outside the gates of Halifax Harbour, four days out, three days in. In mid-April 1945, the *HMCS Sarnia* would be involved in a **life saving rescue**. On the evening of April 15, 1945, with the war drawing to a close, the RCN Bangor Class minesweeper *HMCS Esquimalt* set out from Halifax on a routine anti-submarine patrol around the harbour approaches. The *HMCS Sarnia* was also patrolling the area, in another sector. The two minesweepers were scheduled to rendezvous at "C" buoy at 8:00 a.m. on April 16 to perform a radar sweep for a convoy leaving Halifax at 8:00 p.m. that evening. Lurking in those same cold northwest Atlantic waters was German submarine *U-190*. In the early morning hours of April 16th at 6:35 a.m., *U-190* idling in the Halifax harbour fired a single acoustic torpedo that struck the starboard hull of the *Esquimalt*. The *Esquimalt* had radioed her last report to Halifax Command only minutes earlier. With the explosion, the ship lurched out of the water and sank in four minutes, too fast to send out a distress signal.

Twenty-eight men went down with the ship, the remaining forty-three scrambled from the bone-chilling water into four Carley floats (life rafts). There was not enough room for all, so some clung desperately to the sides in the frigid waters. The *Sarnia* had been waiting at a rendezvous point for the *Esquimalt*, and when it failed to appear, the commander of the *Sarnia* feared the worst, as a German sub had been spotted in the area just weeks prior. The attempt to initiate a search was delayed twice as *Sarnia* detected the presence of U-boats and responded with depth charges. It was nearly four hours after the *Esquimalt* went down that search action was finally initiated. The survivors were left in the freezing waters for almost six hours.

When the *HMCS Sarnia* arrived, men were clinging to the Carley floats, some barely alive, others already dead having succumbed to hypothermia, floated nearby. The *Sarnia* performed its rescue duty admirably, with engines at full stop and defenceless, hauling the survivors and dead aboard up scramble nets, while the threat of being attacked loomed. The *Sarnia* picked up 27 survivors and 13 corpses. The *Sarnia* then ran a zigzag course back to the safety of Halifax harbour. In total, twenty-eight men went down with the *Esquimalt*; the remaining forty-three had scrambled to Carley floats, but sixteen of those sailors died of exposure before the *HMCS Sarnia* arrived. Only twenty-seven of the *Esquimalt*'s crew of seventy-one survived the sinking. With the war in Europe ending a mere three weeks later, the *HMCS Esquimalt* was the last Royal Canadian Navy vessel to be lost during the Second World War.

In October 1945, two months after the war had ended, Sarnia city council received the following letter from Lieutenant D.F. Mossop, O.C., the Commanding Officer of the *H.M.C.S. Sarnia* with news of the fate of the ship;

Perhaps it would be easier for me to look into the future and let you know just what we expect to happen to the ship. As you no doubt have read in the dailies, many in fact most ships of the Canadian fleet have been declared surplus by the authorities and are to be turned over to the War Assets Corporation for disposal. That I am afraid is the fate of H.M.C.S. "SARNIA" in the very near future. We expect within the next month to have the ship turned over to the War Assets and fully out of commission.

It seems a hard fate for a ship which has accumulated an envious record among not only the Canadian Navy but all Allied Navies for a series of brilliant feats which frustrated the enemy on a number of occasions and brought succor and life on one occasion to some of our own lads. However, 'c'est la guerre' and at least it is comforting to realize the "SARNIA" is retiring from service after completing her job in a manner which brought credit to her officers and men and I trust honor to the city whose name she carries and the good people of the city who were so thoughtful during the ship's wartime commission.

When the ship is finally through, in approximately a month, I personally expect to be proceeding home for discharge, at which time I hope to be able to spend a day or so in Sarnia and personally relate some of the tales of the "SARNIA'S" feats to you and express our profoundest thanks for all your citizens have done for the crew in the days when every comfort meant so very, very much during the monotonous patrols.

Lieutenant Mossop would visit the city in early November 1945, the guest of honour at a banquet by Mayor Hipple and city council at the Sarnia Golf Club. The dinner was also attended by Bell Telephone employees, Delta Phi Sigma Sorority and the Public School Teachers' Association, groups that had been active in supplying the crew of the *H.M.C.S. Sarnia* with comforts during the war. Lieut. Mossop presented to Mayor Hipple as a gift to the city, the name-plate removed from the deck of the vessel, along with the ship's ensign, the one she had been flying at the time of the *Esquimalt* rescue. In speaking about some of the ship's history, Mossop said that the minesweeper *Sarnia* had cleared more mines from waters of the eastern seaboard than any other ship, Canadian or American. In describing the *Sarnia*'s role in rescuing the *Esquimalt* survivors, he said the lives of several of the men had been saved by artificial respiration applied by the minesweeper's crew. Others had been supported in the water by crewmen of the *Sarnia* who had jumped over the side to their rescue. In thanking the people of Sarnia for past gifts, Lieut. Mossop said, "I was only on the ship for a few months but she upheld Sarnia traditions to the highest."

The *H.M.C.S. Sarnia* was decommissioned October 28, 1945 in Sydney, Nova Scotia. Years later, in March 1958, she was transferred to the Turkish Navy to serve as a patrol boat, the *Buyukdere*, until 1972. Beginning in 1995, fifty years after *Sarnia*'s dramatic rescue of the *Esquimalt* survivors, there were a number of *H.M.C.S. Sarnia* reunions held to honour her impressive war record. Aside from former crew members of the *Sarnia*, also attending some of the reunions were a number of survivors of the *Esquimalt* sinking and the Engineering Officer of the German submarine *U-190*.^{N, X, u}

In 2010, on the 100th Anniversary of the Canadian Navy, the City of Sarnia was presented with a plaque honouring the *HMCS Sarnia*. The plaque, which includes a photograph of the ship, hangs in Sarnia City Hall today. The plaque includes the following words;

His Majesty's Canadian Ship
Sarnia

Presented to the City of Sarnia, Ontario by the
Chief of the Maritime Staff on the occasion of the Canadian Naval Centennial 1910-2010

There has been only one vessel named *Sarnia* in the Canadian Navy – *HMCS Sarnia* (J309/190)

continued over...

The *Sarnia* was a Bangor Class minesweeper. The Bangor Class ships were built in order to replace the old Basset Class minesweepers, as they were larger, faster, had greater endurance, and burned oil as opposed to coal. As enemy mines were laid only once in 1943 in Canadian waters, the Bangors were used primarily as escorts to coastal shipping or as local escorts to ocean convoys. Sixteen of them, however, assisted in sweeping the approaches to Normandy before D-Day and stayed to help clear German and Allied minefields in the English Channel for some months afterward.

Commissioned at Toronto, Ontario, on 13 August 1942 *Sarnia* arrived at Halifax, Nova Scotia, on 22 September, having escorted a Quebec-Sydney convoy en route. She was assigned to Newfoundland Escort Force and in September 1944 underwent a major refit at Lunenburg, Nova Scotia, after which she went to Bermuda for a workup. On her return to Canada, she was assigned to Halifax Force and, later, to Halifax Local Defence Force until June 1945.

On 15 April 1945 she rescued survivors of the minesweeper HMCS *Esquimalt*, torpedoed outside Halifax. She then performed miscellaneous duties until being paid off on 28 October 1945 at Sydney, Nova Scotia, and laid up at Shelburne, Nova Scotia. In 1946, she was placed in strategic reserve at Sorel, Quebec, and in 1951 reacquired by the Royal Canadian Navy and extensively refitted. She did not re-commission, however, and on 29 March 1958 was transferred to the Turkish Navy. She served until 1972 as *Buyukdere*.

Builder: Davie Shipbuilding and Repairing Co. Ltd., Lauzon, Quebec.

Laid Down: 18 September 1941

Launched: 21 January 1942

Date Commissioned: 13 August 1942

Date Paid Off: 28 October 1945

Displacement: 672 tons

Dimensions: 54.9 m X 8.7 m X 2.5 m

Speed: 16 knots

Crew: 83

Armament: one 3-inch (76-mm) gun, two 20-mm guns (2 X 1) and depth charges.

Canadian Battle Honours: Gulf of St. Lawrence 1942, Atlantic 1942-1943

Note: The bell from the *HMCS Sarnia* has been maintained in trust by the Royal Canadian Sea Cadet Corps Repulse in Sarnia.

HMCS Petrolia: Another Lambton County community had the honour of having a Canadian Navy ship named in her honour. The *H.M.C.S. Petrolia* (K 498) was named in honour of the "Hard Oil Town" in April 1944. The *H.M.C.S. Petrolia* was one of a dozen Castle-Class corvettes assigned to the Royal Canadian Navy. The ship was built in Belfast, Northern Ireland, launched as the *HMS Sherborne Castle* in February 1944 and transferred to the RCN and commissioned on June 29, 1944. Hundreds of local residents of Petrolia packed Victoria Hall on the evening of April 26, 1944 for the official adoption ceremony of this latest ship of the Royal Canadian Navy. A model of the corvette was christened on the Hall stage flanked on each side by naval men and Sarnia Sea Cadets. The *H.M.C.S. Petrolia* was used for Atlantic convoy service for the duration of the war.^{N, P, and X}

• **THE THREAT OF SABOTAGE IN SARNIA:** The paranoia of sabotage locally was a legitimate concern. During World War I, in December 1917, a group of German conspirators in the United States were convicted in Detroit federal court on charges of having conspired to dynamite the St. Clair River tunnel, among other charges. The scheme involved sending a load of dynamite with a time fuse attached into the tunnel on a small platform attached to roller skates, which would ride the rails from the Port Huron side. Fortunately, the conspirators were arrested before they had the opportunity to carry out their plan.

During World War II, in June of 1940, an attempt of sabotage was made on a freight train as it travelled through the tunnel from Port Huron to Sarnia. Holes had been drilled through the floor beneath one of the freight cars containing four valuable airplane motors, and strips of blankets saturated with flammable linseed oil had been shoved into the car under the motors, and ignited. As the freight train arrived in Sarnia, officials noticed that one of the crates on a car was afire. The flames were extinguished by railway employees and the Sarnia Fire Department. Only four hours earlier, a special train of eight cars loaded with extremely explosive demolition bombs had passed through the tunnel.

• **NATIONAL RESOURCES MOBILIZATION ACT:** On June 21, 1940 after the fall of France, Canadian Prime Minister William Lyon MacKenzie King introduced the National Resources Mobilization Act (NRMA), which gave the federal government sweeping powers to take whatever measures it deemed necessary to mobilize men and women, factories, farms, and other resources for the purposes of fighting the war. One of the measures proposed by the NRMA was a national registration of eligible men between the ages of 21 and 45 for conscription for home defence duties only. The bill was introduced in response from English Canada for total mobilization of manpower.

In August of 1942, the Bill was amended to allow conscription for overseas service (though initially, it was never implemented). Prime Minister King declared his August 1942 change in policy as “not necessarily conscription, but conscription if necessary.” As the war dragged on, the NRMA conscripts at home were known as “**zombies**” – the living dead, with a lack of soul – due to their status as neither civilians nor general-service soldiers. Increasingly, there was pressure on the “zombies” to volunteer for overseas service.

The Minister of National Defence J.L. Ralston, a World War I veteran, visited the Italian front in October 1944. He interviewed soldiers about the crashing of the Gothic Line (Aug-Sept 1944) and the chronic shortages of supplies and reinforcements. He was badly shaken, as every infantry battalion he visited was under-strength. Then he flew to Northwest Europe to interview soldiers about the Normandy campaign (Jun-Aug 1944). He learned that the situation was dire – that Canadians were dying for want of comrades in the line. He was told how ill-trained reinforcements were put in the line and often wounded or killed before the end of the first day at the front.

The problem was not an overall shortage of reinforcements in the army as a whole, just too few spare trained infantrymen available. One reason for this was that the Canadian Army had too many in other types of military occupations – when new recruits entered the army, most were taken up by the artillery, the engineers, the pay corps, the military police, and so on. Only a relatively small number were sent to become infantrymen. A second important reason was that the army had utilized British combat-loss projections based on the fighting in the North Africa desert to forecast how many casualties (“wastage”) it would need to replace once the fighting in Italy and northwest Europe began. Those figures were far too low for the intense ground combat in Italy and Normandy, which produced far more infantry casualties than the fighting in the desert.^{6Z}

J.L. Ralston returned to Ottawa and informed Prime Minister Mackenzie King that now was the time for **conscription**. Not long after, King fired Ralston, however media pressure was relentless. The National Resources Mobilization Act was amended on November 22, 1944 allowing the government to send conscripts overseas. In early 1945, 12 908 conscripts were sent overseas. Only 2 463 of these conscripted men reached units on the front lines, and out of these, 313 were wounded and 69 lost their lives.^{2I, 3F, 4I, 6F, 6Z, 7P}

Five of Sarnia’s World War II fallen had enrolled under the National Resources Mobilization Act. One of them, Harold Green, lost his life in British Columbia in May 1944. The four others lost their lives in action overseas; Joseph Aubin (embarked November 1944), Norman Ellis (embarked May 1944), John Esselment (embarked August 1944) and John Lychowich (embarked March 1944).

• **CANADIAN INTERNMENT CAMPS:** From the outset of the Second World War, the Canadian government had procedures for establishing internment camps across the country to house military prisoners of war, merchant seamen, potential insurgents, refugees, and other civilian detainees deemed “enemy aliens.” The men responsible for guarding the internment camps were pulled from the ranks of the Veterans Guard of Canada (VGC), the renamed Veteran’s Home Guard. By taking over guard duties, the VGC helped free up younger Canadians for overseas service.

The front page headline of the June 10, 1940 *Sarnia Canadian Observer* read, “Italy Declares War on the Allies – Premier Mussolini Announces that Fascist Nation will fight at side of Germany”. When Italy declared war against the Allies in June 1940, residents of Italian descent suspected of being sympathetic to the Fascist cause, were subject to internment. In December 1941, when Japan entered the war, many Japanese in Canada (over 21,000 were residing in British Columbia) were interned and their assets seized and sold, without receiving any compensation. Many of the Jews fleeing persecution and violence of war, seeking refuge in Canada, were from enemy countries so they also faced internment. In accordance with the Geneva Convention, internment camps for civilians and refugees were separate from camps for prisoners of war. With the exception of the Japanese, the majority of refugees and civilians were released before the end of 1943 and no Italian or Japanese military personnel were ever imprisoned in Canada.^{F, 2E, 2N, 6Z}

An internment camp close to Sarnia was the former Eatonville Roadhouse, in Morpeth, Ontario (about 23 miles east of Chatham). Operating as a hotel in the 1930's, in 1942, the federal government used the building as an internment camp for Canadians of Japanese descent from British Columbia. The men were paid to work at Rondeau Provincial Park clearing timber and brush. The camp was closed in 1943.

- **CANADIAN PRISONER OF WAR CAMPS:** The first German prisoners of war arrived in Canada in the early fall of 1939 and prisoners of war continued to arrive from overseas throughout the war. In May of 1945, approximately 35,000 prisoners of war were held in Canada in 26 POW camps, the majority German. Many of the camps were located in remote areas of Northern Ontario, Quebec and the Rocky Mountains. Conditions and amenities varied among the camps but there was no doubt that they were far superior than those camps in Europe and the Far East where Canadian soldiers were being held captive. In Canadian POW camps, prisoners enjoyed games, sports, and entertainment, and in many of the camps, prisoners freely mingled with the guards and local townspeople. In 1943, the government authorized prisoner employment, where by 1945, over 11,000 POW's were working, primarily on farms and in logging camps, and were paid for their work.

The nearest POW camp to Sarnia was Camp No. 10, in Chatham and Fingal, Ontario. It was a tented camp housing enemy merchant seamen and enemy officers. It was in use periodically from May 1944 to November 1946. Many of the POWs there were employed in farming projects in southwestern Ontario. Other camps in this part of Ontario were located in Ingersoll, Kitchener, Toronto, Bowmanville, Gravenhurst and Algonquin Park. When the war ended, approximately 6,000 German POW's asked to remain in Canada. By December 1946, all prisoners were repatriated back to Germany, though many would return and settle in Canada.^{F, 2E, 2N}

- **THE PHONEY WAR:** Following the collapse of Poland in September 1939, a strange lull set in on the western front. This period of apparent "inactivity" from October 1939 to April 1940 became known as the "Phoney War" (also referred to as the "Twilight War" by Churchill and as "Sitzkrieg" by the Germans). During this stretch, although the great powers of Europe had declared war on one another, there were no major bombing or land battles between Germany and the Western Allies. Both sides utilized the lull.

Britain built up her defences, prepared her air forces, and dispatched an expeditionary force to the Continent. Winston Churchill joined British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain's cabinet and became First Lord of the Admiralty. A few days later, Britain implemented merchant ship convoys. Over a million and a half women and children were evacuated from major British cities, being billeted in villages and farms. French troops took up positions on the Maginot Line—the fortified defence line on their eastern border. The Germans, too, manned their great Rhineland fortifications, known as the West Wall or the Siegfried Line—and they engaged in intense preparation for attack.

In Canada recruiting was stepped up to bolster the armed forces. On August 24, the Liberal government had ordered the precautionary mobilization of some 100,000 Canadian militia. Their mission was to provide port defence on both coasts and to guard "vulnerable points" inland. On September 3, the government invoked the War Measures Act, placed the regular forces on active service and authorized the call-up of reserves. The prime minister made the government's first priority clear – it was to be the defence of Canada.

The Phony War came to a sudden end when, in April 1940, German troops without warning seized Denmark and launched an invasion of Norway.^{D, 7Q}

- **THE GERMAN BLITZKRIEG:** In April 1940, Germany launched their quick surprise "**blitzkrieg**" strikes, with troops, tanks and air support moving rapidly west invading Denmark and then Norway. Beginning on May 10, the German blitzkreig continued through Luxembourg, then the Netherlands and then Belgium on their way to France. On the same day, British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain resigned. Three days later, Winston Churchill became the new Prime Minister of Britain. For years prior, he had warned Britains about the threat posed to the world by Hitler's Germany. In his first speech he declared, "*I have nothing to offer but blood, toil, tears, and sweat.*"

Entering France on May 12, the German forces infiltrated through the Ardennes Forest, outflanking France's Maginot Line, splitting the Allied forces, and caused the virtual collapse of the French armies. By late May, the British Expeditionary Force (BEF), including some Canadians, accompanied by a number of French, Belgian and Polish troops, had been pushed back to the English Channel port of Dunkirk by the advancing German army.

- **MIRACLE OF DUNKIRK:** Trapped, with their backs up against the French coast, outflanked and cut off from their supplies, almost 340,000 Allied troops had to evacuate or face certain capture or death. Churchill activated a

plan to evacuate the soldiers in a daring rescue mission by the Royal Navy, *Operation Dynamo*, though with hundreds of thousands of soldiers trapped, they only expected to have time to lift off up to 45,000 troops.

Beginning on May 26, 1940, British supply ships, ferries, destroyers, minesweepers and passenger vessels began the process of evacuating troops who were surrounded by German forces including Panzer divisions and artillery, and while being attacked from above by Luftwaffe Stuka dive-bombers (when weather allowed). It was then that the “Miracle of Dunkirk” occurred – between May 26 and June 4, when the trapped soldiers would be taken off the beaches of Dunkirk across the English Channel to safety. RAF Spitfire and Hurricane aircraft provided important air cover for the operation, while the ships braved mines, bombs and torpedoes. Over 200 British naval ships, including four Royal Canadian Naval destroyers, and an armada of as many as 800 civilian craft, every kind of boat that could float, including private yachts, motor launches, lifeboats, paddle steamers, fishing boats and barges, “the Little Ships of Dunkirk”, made the heroic rescue.

Of the over 860 ships deployed, 243 would be lost during the operation. Many of the troops boarded rescue ships from the harbour’s protective mole (1.3 km long breakwater), while others were ferried directly from the beaches by the smaller craft to larger ships waiting offshore. Approximately 340,000 British, French and Allied troops would be safely evacuated from France.^{D, 3G, 6Z} The British Army were so rushed in their evacuation that most of their equipment was abandoned. Approximately 11,000 British were killed during the operation, and at least 40,000 were captured and imprisoned. Forty thousand French troops who had been holding the perimeter, were captured when Dunkirk eventually fell. During his June 4 speech to Parliament on the success of the *Operation Dynamo*, Winston Churchill cautioned, “*We must be very careful not to assign to this deliverance the attributes of a victory. Wars are not won by evacuations.*” By mid-June 1940, Paris had fallen and France was in German hands. Only the English Channel now separated Britain from a seemingly unstoppable German military.

One of the heroes at Dunkirk, who remains largely unknown in Canada is **James Campbell Clouston**. James Clouston grew up in Pointe-Claire, Montreal, Quebec. He was the older of two boys born to a Canadian naval officer and his British wife. He was an avid hockey player who attended Selwyn House School and Lower Canada College before enrolling in engineering at McGill University. At the age of 17, he enlisted to join Britain’s Royal Navy in 1917 as an officer cadet, hoping to serve in World War I. He spent the next 23 years with the navy, rising through the ranks as a gunnery officer and instructor, to the rank of commander. In 1935, he married Gwyneth Lilian Vanderpump, and in 1937, he took command of his own ship, the destroyer *HMS Isis*. Following the outbreak of war, the ship saw action in anti-submarine patrol and convoy defence.

In May 1940, Clouston was among eight officers chosen to oversee the evacuation at Dunkirk. He arrived on May 27, 1940 to find hundreds of thousands of hungry, exhausted troops and only 50 men an hour being evacuated. Clouston was given the responsibility of the eastern mole, a narrow wooden walkway mounted on a concrete breakwater that extended one-kilometre out into the English Channel. It was not designed to be used by ships, but was the only part of the port that had not been heavily bombed by the Luftwaffe and it would prove pivotal to the evacuation. Through organizational brilliance and force of will, pier-master Clouston was able to increase the rate to 2,000 an hour, shuttling the men along the 10-foot wide pier. He regulated the flow of men along the mole into waiting ships for five days and nights with barely a break, while Stuka dive-bombers terrorized the sky above them.

On June 1, Commander Clouston returned to Dover for a planning meeting. He could have stayed in England, but chose to return because close to 100,000 French troops remained, and Clouston spoke French because of his Montreal upbringing. On the afternoon of June 2, Clouston and a party of 30 men left Dover on two RAF rescue motorboats for the final night of the evacuation. Off the coast of France, the two boats were strafed and bombed by eight Stuka aircraft. Clouston’s boat was sunk, leaving the crew clinging to the wreckage. As senior officer, Clouston refused to leave his men and ordered the other boat to continue to Dunkirk. Clinging with them on the upturned hull of the boat, he attempted to keep spirits up by telling white lies about the nearness of the rescue. But no rescue came and one by one, he and his men eventually succumbed to exhaustion and hypothermia. Only two men survived. After the perilous Dunkirk evacuation, Captain William G. Tennant (the senior naval officer ashore at Dunkirk and a future admiral), would cite the “magnificent work” of the pier party, and “of those, no one is more deserving of praise than Commander Clouston.”^{8R}

In Sarnia, local citizens were kept abreast of the situation in France through the end of May and into June by reading the *Sarnia Canadian Observer*. On May 30, 1940, the front page headline read, “*ALLIED TROOPS SLOWLY WITHDRAWING FROM POCKET DESPITE TERRIFIC NAZI ONSLAUGHT,*” with the subheading, “*Air*

Forces Protect Retiring Armies While Navy Keeps Port Open As Embarkation Point.” The Canadian Press story began with, *“Balking the German drive to turn the Flanders pocket into a sieve, Allied troops slowly retreated northwestward today under the protection of their air forces toward Dunkerque, where British and French warships were helping keep the battered port open as an embarkation point. London dispatches indicated the withdrawal of troops through Dunkerque is in full swing. Several divisions were reliably reported to have reached a port in Southeastern England...*

On May 31, the front page headline read, *“ALLIED WARSHIPS RUSH EVACUATION OF WEARY, WAR TORN UNITS FROM FRANCE,”* with the subheading, *“French Continue Fight At Southern End Of The Corridor.”* A second front page story headline read, *“Soldiers Speedily Removed.”* Following is a portion of that Canadian Press story; *“Every hour, in craft of all shapes and sizes, tens of thousands of men of the British Expeditionary Force with their French comrades are being landed safely at ports on the south coast of England in one of the quickest movements in British military history... Grimy and exhausted Tommies said that when they arrived at the coast, fishermen-many of them old salts of 70-volunteered to a man to take their tiny unarmed boats across the Channel... As more blood-stained and tattered troops landed, private motorboat owners hurried to ‘help out.’ Officially nothing was done about them. Unofficially they went. At one period of the day seven ships docked at a south coast port in less than two hours. The men clambered into trains and were whipped away to bases in various parts of England within half an hour of landing... Many of the evacuation craft had been bombed and machine-gunned for hours. But backwards and forwards they ferry... And as the undaunted khaki-clad boys come ashore, housewives gladly handed over food from their cupboards when official supplies ran short. On one platform stood a bride-to-be carving up her wedding cake to hand to the hungry troops.*

On June 1, the front page headline read, *“FRENCH MAKE GAINS ALONG THE SOMME; BATTLE CONTINUES IN DUNKERQUE REGION.”* On June 3, Sarnians learned that the city of Paris has been bombed by German aircraft, along with further details on the evacuation with headlines that included, *“New Assaults Fail To Halt Withdrawal Of Allied Troops”* and *“Evacuation Dwindles To A Trickle.”* The June 4 front page headline read, *“PRIME MINISTER SAYS BRITAIN WILL NEVER GIVE UP STRUGGLE AGAINST NAZI TYRANNY,”* with the subheading, *“Churchill Reveals 335,000 Men Taken Out Of Dunkerque.”*

The report included a portion of **Churchill’s June 4th “we shall fight” speech** in the House of Commons, one described as the finest of his career: *“We shall go on to the end, we shall fight in France, we shall fight on the seas and oceans, we shall fight with growing confidence and growing strength in the air, we shall defend our Island, whatever the cost may be. We shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills. We shall never surrender, and even if, which I do not for a moment believe, this Island or a large part of it were subjugated and starving, then our Empire beyond the seas, armed and guarded by the British Fleet, would carry on the struggle until, in God’s good time, the New World, with all its power and might, steps forth to the rescue and the liberation of the old.”*

• **McNAUGHTON’S TRAVELLING CIRCUS:** By early June 1940, German forces had overrun western Europe in less than three months. Only the English Channel now separated Britain from the unstoppable German military. Yet after Dunkirk, it was the 1st Canadian Division, the only whole and reasonably well-equipped infantry division in England, and a handful of other formations, including the soon-to-arrive 2nd Infantry Division that prepared to defend southern England behind anti-tank ditches, machine-gun nests, and barbed wire obstacles against the expected coming invasion.

Throughout the month of July, the 1st Canadian Division conducted a series of marches and countermarches across the length of southern England with the goal to mislead German aerial reconnaissance as to exact strength of the Allied forces available to defend England. The exhausted troops of the 1st Canadian Division referred to themselves as “McNaughton’s Travelling Circus,” after their commander Major-General Andrew McNaughton.^{4H}

• **THE BATTLE OF BRITAIN,** July 10 – October 31, 1940: In the summer of 1940, after advancing through Poland, Denmark, Norway, Belgium, Netherlands and France, German forces prepared to launch a full-scale invasion of Great Britain called *Operation Sea Lion*, originally scheduled to take place in mid-September 1940. Prior to the cross-Channel land attack, the German plan was to first destroy the Royal Navy by gaining command of the air, which meant destroying Britain’s Royal Air Force (RAF). The battle began in mid-July 1940 with the German Air Force, the Luftwaffe, attacking convoys in the English Channel, along with some ports and coastal defences. In mid-August, there was more intense fighting as the Luftwaffe bombers and fighters attacked radar positions, airfields,

command stations, individual industrial targets and engaged British fighters. In late August into early September, the Luftwaffe launched a massive campaign to destroy the RAF on the ground and in the air. The English sky was painted with whispery white contrails that disguised the brutality of the combat overhead. The countryside was littered with the wreckage of fire-blackened aircraft and the bodies of young men.

In September 1940, the Germans switched strategies and began their **Blitz** campaign—the Luftwaffe moved to bombing industrial, military and transportation targets around large urban centres in British cities in massive bomber raids day and night. The Luftwaffe's bomber force was unleashed on a massive scale on September 7, 1940—the beginning of the systematic bombing of the eight-million strong capital of the British Empire, London. The bombers destructive loads included large incendiaries filled with oil, high explosives and delayed action high explosives (to hinder fire fighting efforts).

It was left to the Royal Air Force—approximately 2,900 fighter pilots—to defend Britain, against a German Luftwaffe that vastly outnumbered them in aircraft by at least two to one.^{D, 4H} RAF fighter pilots included British, along with Canadian, New Zealand, Australian, Polish and French airmen among others, flying mostly Hawker Hurricane and Spitfire fighter aircraft. The Luftwaffe's main fighters were the Messerschmitt Bf109 and Bf110's, which protected the medium-distance bombers and fighter-bombers.

A key to Britain's defence was a complex system of detection (Dowding System radar stations) linked to a central command that allowed the RAF to efficiently intercept incoming aircraft. A climatic turning point in the battle occurred on September 15, 1940, which became known as “**Battle of Britain Day**”, the juncture at which the aerial contest for control of the skies was won by the RAF. On that day, the Luftwaffe launched its largest and most concentrated attack of 123 bombers and 650 fighters against London. RAF fighter command successfully repulsed the attack scattering the bombers and causing heavy German losses, which led to Hitler's decision two days later to suspend *Operation Sea Lion* until further notice. Though enemy raids continued, by the end of October, Germany had given up its hope of establishing air superiority and invading England.

It is estimated that approximately 1,000 British planes were shot down during the battle, while over 1,800 German planes were destroyed. Five hundred and forty-four RAF pilots and aircrew died during the events spanning these three-and-a-half months. The Battle of Britain marked the first time that Hitler's advance had been stopped. It was also the first battle in history to be fought exclusively in the air. It was during this time that Prime Minister Churchill made his famous speech about the RAF crews fighting the Battle of Britain, “*The gratitude of every home in our island, in our Empire and indeed throughout the world, except in the abodes of the guilty, goes out to the British airmen who, undaunted by odds, unwearied in their constant challenge and mortal danger, are turning the tide of the world by their prowess and their devotion. Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few...*”

Canadians at the Battle of Britain: It is estimated that between 88 and 112 Canadian fighter pilots would participate in the Battle of Britain (based on the RAF Roll of Honour and the Battle of Britain London Monument, while 105 Canadians qualified for the coveted Battle of Britain clasp). The vast majority of them flew with RAF fighter squadrons—including the RAF No. 242 (Canadian) Squadron*, with the Royal Navy Fleet Air Arm, and with the only Canadian unit, RCAF No. 1 Fighter Squadron (later re-numbered as No. 401 Squadron). Hundreds of other Canadians served as ground crew and support personnel who, although aren't given the same level of recognition, made vital contributions to the victory. Three members of RCAF No. 1 Squadron received the Distinguished Flying Cross for their efforts during the Battle of Britain and two Canadian groundcrew were recognized for their contribution to the Battle. Twenty-three Canadian fighter pilots lost their lives during the Battle of Britain.^{D, 2N, 2S, 3G, 4H, 6H, 6Z, 8Q}

*With so many Canadians in the RAF Fighter Command, an independent Canadian fighter formation was reformed in October 1939—the **RAF No. 242 “All-Canadian” Squadron**. In June 1940, its commander was British ace Douglas Bader, who in 1931, had lost both his legs in a flying accident and had been fitted with artificial limbs. When war came, he'd badgered his way back into the RAF, proved he could fly as well as any pilot, and was determined to make RAF 242 “Canadian” Squadron the best in the RAF. The squadron was involved early in operations over France, before taking part in the Battle of Britain, and then fought support in battles in North Africa, Sicily and Italy. Over time, the grind of combat killed or wounded so many Canadian flyers, most of whom were replaced by Brits, that No. 242 lost its distinctly Canadian character.^{2N, 4H, 10B}

• **THE BLITZ** (September 1940-May 1941): After the Luftwaffe's failure in the Battle of Britain, and with

Germany's invasion plans wrecked, Germany changed their strategy to a mass air offensive against Britain. The daylight attack against London on September 7, 1940, had marked the opening phase of the German bomber offensive. Known as the "Blitz", daylight attacks gave way to night raids as the Luftwaffe bombers, night after night, pounded British industrial targets, ports and civilian centers such as London, Liverpool, Plymouth, Sheffield, Southampton, Cardiff, Glasgow, Birmingham, Bristol and Coventry. From September 7, 1940, London was bombed for fifty-seven nights in a row, with 'disturbance attacks' during the day. The infamous bombing of Coventry on November 14, 1940, by five hundred German bombers obliterated the city and killed five thousand people.

Throughout the Blitz campaign, the Luftwaffe dropped high explosive bombs; some of the especially dangerous delayed action variety; parachute mines; flares; oil bombs and lethal incendiary bombs. This carpet bombing of factories and civilians continued for nearly nine months, until May 1941 (when Hitler decided to invade the Soviet Union). Approximately 44,000 British civilians would be killed (including over 5,600 children), 139,000 were wounded and 1.4 million had been made homeless during this sustained aerial bombing campaign.^{3G, 4H, 6Z, 8Q, 9N}

One of the casualties of the German Blitz was Sarnia's Lieutenant John David Wright. He was in a London restaurant that was struck by a bomb during a raid. He lost his life while shielding a nurse, saving her life. His story is included in this Project.

A Canadian's Blitz Experience: A Canadian serviceman described his impressions of England while there during the Blitz in a letter home to his parents. Following are portions of that letter;

Dear Family,

... The first experience that must be faced by the newcomers is, of course, the black-out. It is almost impossible to describe the agony of picking one's way around the streets with a flashlight whose aperture is about the size of a dime... The second thing that they must be taught is the bombing... The order of appearance would be something like this. First, Wailing Willie... the local air raid siren, screaming away, tearing the blackness of the night with its shrieking. Second, the sound of engines "upstairs". The Jerry planes have a sound all their own and there's no mistaking them. Third, the searchlights stabbing round like the Northern Lights... Fourth, the ack-acks – anti-aircraft guns, little ones with a bark like a terrier, big ones with a throaty growl; flashes on the ground from the guns; fire-flies in the sky from bursting shells. Sometimes, a patter on the roof like hail – shrapnel and shell splinters coming down. Fifth, the bombs; big ones, little ones, incendiaries, flares, screams, whines, bangs, crumps, bumps, swish, whoosh... Windows rattling, flashes from the explosions, a blast of air down the street... Sirens of the A.F.S (Auxiliary Fire Service) wagons... whistles of the policemen standing on point duty... Sixth, the silence. Cats creeping around seem to be stamping their feet. Cigarettes are lit behind carefully-cupped hands. Seventh, Wailing Willie blowing the All Clear. Police toot their whistles again, Traffic starts to flow, diverted here and there. People ooze towards the nearest pub, for an Englishman must have his beer. They talk football, cricket, Winston Churchill's latest speech... It's just another night in the front line for them...^{7A}

• **BRITISH GUEST CHILDREN:** The British government had begun slowly planning for war with Nazi Germany soon after Adolf Hitler was appointed chancellor in 1933. The fears of an invasion and occupation by the German army were widespread and raised concerns about the safety of British children. By 1935, a plan had been developed to evacuate youngsters from large cities to the countryside. After Britain declared war on Germany in September 1939, the danger of invasion seemed imminent. In the first few days of that September, almost three million children were evacuated from large cities to rural areas as authorities predicted massive civilian casualties from the bombing of British cities.

After the initial lull in military action—known as the "Phoney War"—ended in April 1940, overseas evacuation began in earnest. By then, the triumphant German war machine was sweeping through western Europe, toppling one government after another. In that summer of rising hysteria, a new wave of internal evacuations from London and eastern England got underway. And some parents sought safety for their children farther afield, and in the summer of 1940, a stream of children sailed for North America.

Initially, the evacuations were done privately. Parents arranged for their children to stay with relatives or friends in Canada and the United States. In some cases, entire schools were transferred to a host facility. Universities and churches as well as British companies with branch offices in Canada also set up evacuation programs. However, since many of these youngsters came from well-off families, there were complaints in the British Parliament and press that the affluent were looking out for their own while children from poor families were being overlooked. The British government initially resisted sponsoring overseas evacuations, one of the strongest opponents being Prime

Minister Winston Churchill who regarded it as defeatist and a waste of invaluable shipping.

In response to a flood of offers from the Empire, an embarrassed British government announced plans in June 1940 to evacuate children to Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and Canada. The scheme would be operated by the **Children's Overseas Reception Board** (CORB), which would pay the children's transportation costs. To be eligible for overseas evacuation by CORB, children had to come from areas likely to be attacked, be in good health, and have a satisfactory school record. When CORB opened its doors in June 1940, it was inundated with applications, with more than 250,000 children registered before the application period closed after only two weeks.

The response by volunteer families in host countries was overwhelming, and there was no shortage of homes for children. The Canadian government, learning from the abuse and hardship suffered by relocated children of the British Home Children migration scheme that started in 1869 (see page 90), insisted that no child would be sent to a family on relief or to one where children had to work for their keep. After debarking at a Canadian port, the children were received by immigration officials, who then arranged for their transportation under supervision to provincial clearing centres, where provincial authorities took charge. Through the Children's Aid or other Child Welfare organizations, the children were placed in carefully selected homes.

The first ships carrying CORB children left Britain in June 1940, and continued over the course of the summer. The government insisted that ships travel as part of a convoy. Tragedy struck on September 17, 1940, when the *SS City of Benares*, carrying 90 CORB children, was sunk by the German submarine *U-48* in the North Atlantic Ocean after naval escorts had left the convoy, believing it was in safe waters. In total, 265 lives were lost. Only 13 of the children were rescued, after being found huddled in lifeboats and suffering from hypothermia. In the wake of this attack, the British government suspended and then terminated the CORB evacuation plan. The agency sent no children to Canada and the other dominions in 1941. Death at home among family was deemed preferable to death at sea. Moreover, by the spring of 1941, the demand for overseas evacuation of children had ended as the threat of a German invasion of Britain was fading. Obtaining warships for convoy duty was also proving difficult.

About 7,500 British children, known officially as "British Guest Children", were evacuated to Canada between 1939 and 1941. Of these, 1,532 arrived under the British government scheme. Most of the British Guest Children adjusted well in Canada where, even in wartime, life was comparatively luxurious and where there were no air raids or blackouts and food was abundant. Most of the children did not return to their families until the end of the war. Many Guest Children eventually returned to Canada as immigrants.^{2E, 11B}

British Guest Children in Sarnia: By June 1940, at least fifty families in Sarnia and surrounding district had registered, offering to open their homes for the voluntary care of refugee children expected to arrive from Britain. The local Children's Aid Society embarked on the task of finding temporary homes for children torn from their own homes by the scourge of war, and ensuring that the children would be properly cared for. Sarnia families offered to provide these children homes, food, clothing, medical attention and other care free of charge. Despite the Ontario Department of Public Welfare stipulating that not more than two children could be placed in any one home, except in special instances, some Sarnia families offered to take care of as many as six children.

In early July 1940, the first group of children from Great Britain arrived in Ontario. It was expected that 2,000 would be in the first group. The first British Guest Children to arrive in Sarnia in early July were two brothers and their sister, the children of Major and Mrs. Alfred Tozer of Potters' Bar, north of London, England. They were Olivia Mary, aged 15, Edward Timothy, aged 12 and John Robert, aged 11. They were to stay with Mr. and Mrs. Charles Weir of 133 James Street, who upon the children's arrival were residing at their summer home at Lake Huron beach. Mr. Charles Weir of Sarnia was a veteran of the Great War, and had billeted at the Tozer home while he was serving as a lieutenant with a mobile anti-aircraft unit. Major Alfred Tozer was in France with the British army at the time Charles Weir was boarding there. The two did not meet until after the armistice, but then became great friends. On June 22, 1940, Charles Weir cabled the Tozers and offered to take care of the children during the war. Major Tozer, who was once more in the army, and among those who escaped Dunkerque (Dunkirk), was only too glad to place his children in Canada. One week later, the children sailed to Canada. Within five minutes of arriving at the lake in Sarnia, the three Tozer children were playing on the beach and in swimming, along with the two Weir children, Catherine and Jane.

In early September 1940, six more "British Child Guests" arrived in Sarnia. Five of the children were from Glasgow, Scotland: sisters Isobel (age 8), Jessie (age 10), and Marjorie McIntosh (age 12); and brothers Gordon (age 12) and David Hope (age 14). Eric Yare (age 14) of Kent, England was the other child. The children had first arrived

in Toronto where they were under the care of the Children's Aid Society there. When the six young children arrived in Sarnia at the Tunnel station, about 200 Sarnians were present to greet them. Following is a portion of the *Sarnia Observer* report on their arrival:

The children showed signs of fatigue when they first came off the train to be surrounded by young and old eager to get a glimpse of them. One little Scottish lassie flashed a ready smile at the bystanders. And it proved to be an infectious smile, for all three of the comely girls were soon, when free of the crowd and excitement, smiling readily. Someone had provided them with some Canadian pears and they were enjoying them contentedly... All the children nodded when asked if they were going to go to school here, and some of them even seemed to be looking forward to it.

Isobel McIntosh would reside with Mr. and Mrs. Norman Perry of 340 Davis Street; her sisters Jessie and Marjory would stay with Mr. and Mrs. Duncan Ferguson of 430 George Street; Gordon and David Hope would stay with Alex Rose of 359 Cromwell Street, later Mr. and Mrs. C.F. Schnarr of 265 South Brock Street; and Eric Yare would stay with Mr. and Mrs. John Cowan at their lakeshore residence, later 262 North Vidal Street.

By December 1940, four more British Child Guests were residing in Sarnia: Roger Butler (age 12) was with Major and Mrs. Gordon McIntyre at 354 London Road; Isabel Miller (age 10) was with Mr. and Mrs. Laurie at 153 North College Avenue; Barbara Scott (age 6) was with Mr. and Mrs. S.B. Scott, and Joan John (age 14) was with Dr. and Mrs. R.K. Stratford in Corunna.

In late May 1942, over three thousand Sarnians came out to welcome two **British "Blitz" Boy Scouts** who were on a coast-to-coast tour of Canada. Hugh Bright, aged 17 and Roy Davis, aged 18, told of their experiences during air raids in England. Their visit to Sarnia began with a luncheon at the Windsor Hotel, attended by local Boy Scouts, Girl Guides, Brownies and their leaders, representatives from local service clubs and civic officials including Mayor J.T. Barnes. It was followed by a parade beginning at City Hall that moved along Christina Street to Victoria Park. At the park, thousands of local citizens gathered to listen to the boys' experiences. Following are the words of seventeen year-old Hugh Bright of Scotland:

Canada is fine and dandy. The first thing that struck us when we arrived in Canada was the number of lights. We stayed up at night just looking at them. I remember my first meal I had. I couldn't believe it. The steak I had would have been a week's ration in Britain. The scenery in this country is marvelous.

The first thing you hear in an air raid is the siren. We have become so used to it that we are out of bed, dressed, and to our post by the time the siren ends. It blows for one minute. 'Jerry' first drops incendiary bombs to start fires and mark his target. All the men between 18 and 60 years of age are in the fire guard. Their job is to put out the incendiaries. After the incendiaries fall, the heavy bombs come, after which 'Jerry' drops more incendiaries to set on fire what he had destroyed. We, as Boy Scouts, are organized to put out incendiaries, dig out people who are trapped in buildings, and be as useful as we can whenever asked to do a job.

Eighteen year-old Roy Davis of Southampton, told the large Sarnia crowd of the food the British were getting at the time:

We only get two eggs a month in England now and everyone looks forward to the meal with eggs in it. There is no white bread, it is all brown. The government says brown is best for us. We have two ounces of butter each week to spread on the bread. When the butter is gone, we have two ounces of cheese to put on the bread.

In the bombing raids, it isn't the soldiers who suffer, but rather it is the civilians. In one raid 40,000 incendiary bombs dropped on the residential and business section of Southampton in one half hour. It certainly kept us busy putting them out.

The two "Blitz" Boy Scouts had been chosen for the Canada tour from Boy Scouts across Britain who had given noteworthy service during air raids. Roy Davis did outstanding work during all the air raids at Southampton. Hugh Bright had rendered exceptional and courageous service as a stretcher-bearer throughout heavy air raids on the Clyde, Glasgow.

In July 1943, Sarnia "British Child Guest" Eric Yare, after being the guest of Mr. and Mrs. John Cowan for three years, returned home to England to join the Royal Air Force. He was eager to contribute his effort to help destroy the Luftwaffe that had driven him from his homeland. He expressed that he had many pleasant memories of Canada and Sarnia, and that the people and scenes made a vivid impression on him. Although England would always be home to him, he hoped to return to Sarnia to visit his many friends here. He said that he was struck by many things on his arrival in Sarnia. He remembered clearly that separately-built wooden houses with verandahs were quite

a novelty to him. His chief objection to Canada had been the smallness and dinginess of its railway stations and the difficulty of access to them. He did like the size and speed of the passenger and freight trains.

On entering school in Sarnia, Eric was somewhat surprised by its co-educational character and by the presence of female teachers. He was impressed also by the freer teacher-student relationship and the relative rarity of corporal punishment. He was also somewhat shocked at first by the informal attire of his classmates. He said that he found Canadians friendly, almost embarrassingly so at first. He took part in many sports while in Sarnia, chiefly boxing, but also enjoyed swimming and diving in Lake Huron, which was much more preferable than the North Sea. Cricket was the sport dearest to him, which he successfully attempted to teach to his Sarnia friends, who had proved quite enthusiastic about the sport. For Eric, it seemed that the Canadians' chief topic of conversation was the weather, finding ample justification for this in its' extreme unpredictability. "In England" Eric said, "there is no need to talk of the weather. You can be sure that it will rain."

In March 1944, another Sarnia "British Child Guest" would return home. After spending more than three years in Sarnia, David Hope, now aged 17 returned to Glasgow, Scotland where he planned to join the R.C.A.F. His younger brother Gordon would remain in Sarnia. David had attended Sarnia Collegiate Institute and was a member of the 7th Sarnia Boy Scouts. He was looking forward to seeing his parents again, Mr. and Mrs. J.N. Hope, and an older brother who was in the British Army. David hoped to return to Canada after the war.

In July of 1944, four more "British Child Guests" would return home to England after spending four years in Sarnia: Olivia Mary (Bindle) Tozer (who had completed one year at McGill University to her credit); and her younger brothers Edward Timothy and John Robert (who attended Sarnia Collegiate Institute); and Roger Butler (who completed his final year at Sarnia Collegiate). When asked their opinion of Sarnia and Canada comments included: Olivia regretted leaving her friends in Canada but would be glad to see her mother and English friends again; and she felt individuals grew up faster in Canada since they were allowed more liberties, such as girls going to dances at the age of 15 or 16 versus England's private schools where girls would only get to social functions at age 19. Olivia and Roger both felt schools in Canada had less discipline; and Roger said when he first arrived in Sarnia he was impressed with wooden houses, since in England, they were either brick or stone. The children had been spending their summers at the lakeshore and said they enjoyed this, especially swimming in Lake Huron; Roger came to like watermelon and corn-on-the-cob which they had never seen before; and John Robert became an ardent baseball and hockey fan.

• **SARNIA PREPARES FOR ATTACK:** On a mid-February night in 1941, thousands of local and district residents turned out in downtown Sarnia for a mock "blackout and bombing raid" event and parade. It was organized by the committee in charge of the War Savings Certificates campaign, as a way to demonstrate what might happen should the community be attacked, as the English people were enduring with nightly German bombing raids. The *Sarnia Observer* reported that, "It was an event the like of which had never been seen in Sarnia and the parade was considered the best since the Armistice celebration in 1918."

Sarnia's downtown was jammed with people when the air raid warning sounded, and within seconds, the fire department raced down Front, Wellington and Christina streets with sirens wailing and bells ringing. At the same time, fireworks, to represent bursting bombs and shells, exploded along the waterfront, and flares were fired from rooftops. The parade included numerous floats, the Lambton Garrison Band, local military units, the Sarnia Volunteer Guards, the Sarnia Township Guard, the Pressey Boys' Band, the Petrolia White Rose Band, the Imperial Pipe Band, the Salvation Army Band, the Hydro employees wash-board band, several hundred Boy Scouts and the St. John Ambulance Brigade.

In late December 1941, Sarnia Mayor John Barnes, as chairman of the local Civilian Defence Committee, offered advice to Sarnia citizens, stating that it was urgent that they become acquainted with measures to be taken in the event of an air raid attack. Instructions included: if at home or work during an emergency, stay there, seek cover at once; keep streets clear for movement of emergency vehicles; do not use the telephone; keep on hand a supply of water; be prepared for incendiary bombs by keeping on buckets of sand; and keep on hand a moderate supply of first aid equipment.

On the first day of summer, June 21, 1942, Sarnia, along with Point Edward and Port Huron, held their first test "black-out". The united 15-minute drill was a test of the Civilian Defence and Air Raid Precautions (A.R.P.) Committees emergency preparedness in the event of enemy air attack. Warning sirens across the area sounded to start the drill, then within seconds, street lights, homes, cars, downtown businesses and industry lights like those at

Imperial Oil Limited were extinguished. The only lights visible for miles were those of passing lake freighters, navigation signals on the bridge and ironically, a spotlight that illuminated the war memorial in Victoria Park which had been mistakenly left on. A few minutes later, fire engines, ambulances and utility vehicles were dispatched and raced through the downtown streets of Sarnia and Port Huron in response to simulated emergencies. Afterwards, Mayor John T. Barnes congratulated the citizens of the city for the manner in which they cooperated and stated, "It was a good test and will probably make the people of Sarnia conscious of what they may have to go through if Sarnia is ever raided." A number of these "black-out" drills would be held in Sarnia during the course of the war, organized by the Civilian Defence Committee.

• **CORPS OF CANADIAN CIVILIAN FIREFIGHTERS:** Not all who put their lives on the line to serve Canada during the war did so in a military uniform. A little known organization that did this was the Corps of (Civilian) Canadian Firefighters. During a visit to the United Kingdom in 1941, Prime Minister McKenzie King was asked by Winston Churchill to provide a contingent of firefighters to assist British firefighters in combating the fires caused by persistent air raids. By March 1942, recruitment began for the Corps of Canadian Firefighters. A total of 422 Canadian men volunteered for the Corps, leaving behind their homes and families to answer the call of duty overseas.

Arriving overseas beginning in May 1942, only half of Corps volunteers were professional firefighters; the other half had no experience. After completing a four-week familiarization course, they were posted to fire stations in Southampton, Portsmouth, Plymouth and Bristol. During their time in England, the Corps of Canadian Firefighters responded to all fires both domestic and those caused by the German air raids. They worked often in perilous conditions to effect rescues and battle fires usually started by bombing. There were a total of 11 Canadian casualties, including three deaths, in the Corps of Canadian Firefighters overseas between May 1942 and May 1945.^{D, E and 3A}

At least five men from Sarnia-Lambton were part of the Corps, including Sarnians Charles F. Jennings (214 Napier Street), William Boulton (214 Cotterbury Street), Clarence Taylor (Murphy Sideroad), H. Smith (Watford) and A.O. McFarlane (Forest). Charles Jennings and William Boulton were members of the Sarnia Fire Department.

• **THE NORTH AFRICAN CAMPAIGN,** June 1940 – May 1943: In June 1940, Italy declared war on the United Kingdom and France. In September 1940, Italian leader Benito Mussolini moved to enlarge his Italian empire in Northern Africa, which already included Libya and Ethiopia, by invading Egypt (then part of the British Empire). In December 1940, British and Commonwealth forces counterattacked and captured some 130,000 Italians. Hitler's response to this loss was to send in the newly formed German "Afrika Korps" to western Libya in February 1941. Led by General Erwin Rommel (the 'Desert Fox'), the German forces pushed eastward into Egypt, sending the British forces into retreat.

Over the next couple of years, Allied and Axis forces pushed back and forth across Libya and Egypt that included key battles at Benghazi, Tobruk and El Alamein. A turning point came in the Second Battle of El Alamein in late 1942, when Lieutenant-General Bernard Montgomery's British Eighth Army broke out and drove Axis forces all the way from Egypt to Tunisia. In November 1942, thousands of British and American forces invaded French North Africa (Morocco and Algeria) in **Operation Torch**. Joining the attack and overwhelming the Vichy French defenders, they eventually helped force the surrender of all remaining Axis troops in Tunisia in mid-May of 1943 and ending the campaign for North Africa. North Africa was a large-scale conflict and it had forced Hitler to divert considerable resources, severely weakening German efforts elsewhere, especially relieving pressure on the Soviet Eastern Front. Ultimately, the North Africa Campaign was a serious defeat for the Axis powers.

Though Canada did not send any Canadian Army units to fight in North Africa, there were approximately 350 Canadian army officers and non-commissioned officers dispatched there, fighting as part of British units that had suffered serious casualties. There they gained valuable experience before returning to Canadian units, while twenty-five became casualties, eight of them fatal. Canadian airmen, members of the RAF or the Royal Canadian Air Force, including Squadron No. 417, flew fighters above the armies from Egypt to Tunisia. Canadian airmen also performed meteorological flying, anti-submarine assignments and bomber duties. Royal Canadian Navy sailors manned landing craft supporting the Algerian and Moroccan landings, as did sixteen Royal Canadian Navy corvettes. The corvettes sank three submarines in the North African theatre, but HMCS *Louisburg* and *Weyburn* were lost.^{2E, 2I, 4A, 7B}

Sometime in 1943, the *Sarnia Observer* included a story on Flight-Lieutenant Harry B. Turnbull of Sarnia, who had returned to the city on leave. Before joining the Royal Canadian Air Force, he was employed by Imperial Oil in Sarnia. Turnbull had arrived overseas in the fall of 1941, was transferred to the RAF and posted to the Middle East in Cairo. He was attached to a bomber squadron, flew in a Wellington, and was assigned to night operations

against Bengazi, Tobruk and Crete. Following is a portion of that story;

Veteran Of Forty-Three Bomber Attacks Over The Axis In Africa Back Home

To have been through some of the thickest fighting in Egypt and Lybia, to have seen the British pushed back when Rommel had his eyes on Cairo, and to have been part of the regained offensive when the British forces in the Middle East began their drive and kept on and on with unrelenting determination and vigor is the experience of Flt.-Lieutenant Harry B. Turnbull of Sarnia, who returned to the city yesterday for a well-earned leave.

It was with considerable reluctance that Flt.-Lieut. Turnbull was persuaded to talk at all of his experiences. "There is nothing much to tell," was his first explanation, "and if there was, it would have to be authorized; otherwise I might easily get into trouble."

... The bombers take off light and proceed to an advanced base where they are "bombed up", then continue to their objective. Crete is so heavily fortified by the enemy that it was their job to get there, release the bombs on the target and get away quickly out of range of anti-aircraft fire... In the bombing attacks against Bengazi and Tobruk they encountered comparatively little opposition from enemy aircraft. "But there was one 'sticky do'," he ventured. "Our objective was Tobruk. We went in at about 8,000 feet and got caught in flak and searchlight. We did a dive to get out of that, dropped the bombs on the target and came out at about 4,000 feet. We found one bomb had not been released. We had to go round again, this time at about 5,000 feet. On into our position we went and then ran into more trouble with flak and searchlight. We did another dive and this time came out at 300 feet. That was mighty close."

... In the desert living was a hardship. Water was the great problem and a man might go six weeks without a bath. They were pestered with flies. It was too hot to sleep in the daytime and a man was expected to be out every second night. In some areas there were no prepared landing fields... The crews had to make runways on the sand by clearing away stones... Life on the ground was spent almost entirely in tents. The flies were inconceivably numerous and sand, borne by the desert winds penetrated everything, even the food...

"Flt.-Sgt. Dave Miller of Sarnia was a member of my squadron in Africa. He was reported missing last fall. There also was a boy, PO. Ray Vaupel, with us. He also was lost on an operation. He was from the Goderich district."

In early April 1944, Flt.-Lt. Harry B. Turnbull, then an air bomber instructor at No. 4 Air Observer School in London, Ontario, was presented with the Distinguished Flying Cross medal. He had been awarded the decoration in May 1943 for "courage and devotion to duty worthy of high praise" while on operational sorties around Malta and during the North African Campaign. His citation recorded that during a large number of sorties his navigation had been of a high standard. The citation also stated, "A meticulous and determined officer he has obtained many successful hits on enemy land targets and amongst shipping. On one occasion he started three fires one night."^N

At least four young men from Sarnia, all members of the Royal Canadian Air Force, gave their lives in the North Africa Campaign, including David Miller, Alexander Smith, Howard Thompson and Frederick Wise. Howard Thompson is buried in a war cemetery in Egypt, the other three have their names inscribed on the Alamein War Memorial in Egypt.

• **SARNIA'S FIRST MEMORIAL CROSSES:** In May 1941, the first Memorial War Crosses began to arrive in Sarnia, with notification that others were to be expected. The memorial crosses were issued by the Canadian Government to the mothers and widows of members of the Canadian navy, army, air force, and Canadian merchant seamen who lost their lives while in service to the country. The crosses were of sterling silver with a wreath of laurel leaves entwined between the arms and maple leaf superimposed. The crosses are suspended from a purple ribbon. On the reverse side was engraved the name and regimental number of the deceased. Accompanying the memorial crosses were engraved cards bearing the inscription, "*This memorial cross is forwarded to you by the minister of national defence on behalf of the government of Canada in memory of one who died in the service of his country.*"

Among those in Sarnia that received memorial crosses in May 1941 were Mrs. M.G. Harris (mother) and Mrs. J.M. Harris (widow) of RCAF Sergeant-Pilot John M. Harris; Mrs. E.J. Powell (mother) of RCN Ordinary Seaman Stephen B. Powell; and Mrs. H.O. Le Gare (mother) of RCNVR Able Seaman Hector Le Gare. Their stories are included in this Project.

• **THE SARNIA AMBULANCE:** In November 1941, the *Sarnia Observer* published a letter that had been received by the Sarnia Rotary Club. The local Rotary Club had donated an ambulance through the Canadian Red Cross to the British Red Cross Society in June 1940. The letter had been sent from Miss Jean Dixon in England, the driver of the

Sarnia Rotary ambulance. Miss Dixon was a member of the F.A.N.Y.'s, the First Aid Nursing Yeomanry. In her letter, she expressed her deep appreciation for the gift of the ambulance and provided some insight into the life of an ambulance driver during the hectic times of constant German air raids. Following are portions of her letter:

Dear Members,

... Your ambulance has had many adventures since it left you... It arrived at Liverpool where it was unloaded and was taken to an old and romantic castle the seat of one of the previous dukes, a wonderful place with courtyards, little windows and ancient doorways. It reminded me of Walt Disney's drawings and fairy stories.

At this time I was stationed in London and from there we used to take convoys of six to ten ambulances twice a week to London to have stretchers, blankets, water bottles and other equipment put in before they went out to the commands. It now has a number GGP512 and early one morning we set out from London to the British Red Cross Society headquarters, southern command, where it was cleaned and polished by the girls who were on a fortnight's course. After a last check-over it was posted to Plymouth where it was to stay for several months. Miss Dixon was then transferred to Plymouth.

Here I met your ambulance again but this time we were not to be parted. The first thing to do was christen him. He always reminded me of a penguin so thinking of Pip and Squeak's nephew I called him Stanley. I expect you have heard of the terrible blitzes on Plymouth so perhaps you can imagine some of the exciting and terrible things that happened there...

How we all came out alive I still cannot understand. On three occasions was the actual building in which we were in hit and the last time we crawled out of the ruins of our billets after a land mine had knocked it to the ground. We had many tense moments. Once an incendiary bomb hit the back of Stanley and I jumped out expecting to find my co-driver hurt but to find her underneath with only a small burn on her hand. Our nights were spent collecting the wounded – the days collecting the dead and cleaning the ambulances. After the last blitz Stanley was the only ambulance left out of the original 10, and five or six very tired F.A.N.Y.'s clanked into the battered Stanley with their salvaged belongings for the journey back to H.Q., leaving the burnt and battered Plymouth a memory they will never forget.

In Bath, the first thing I did was to take Stanley to the nearest workshops where he stayed for nearly a week. His bonnet and cab roof were badly damaged and several large shrapnel marks all had to be repaired. The windows had to be ordered so I drove him for some time with a badly cracked windscreen and no side windows. Now he is himself again and I spent some time polishing the new paint and patching the roof with a puncture outfit. The affection which I have for him is really amazing. I never realized it was possible to be so fond of a machine even in his grumpiest of moods. He has never let me down and although I took handfuls of glass from his tires, not one puncture did he have.

We have quite a lot of work here driving about 400 miles a week... I am sending you some photographs which may interest you. One, as you will see is Stanley before he was sent to the workshops. Before I finish I should like to thank you all again for your kind gift and also for the ambulance and the many other things which you and your countrymen have sent to help us win this war...

- **AIRGRAPH SERVICE:** Also in November 1941, Sarnians were taking advantage of the new "airgraph" service started at the post office. It was a means to send correspondence to members of the armed services overseas by air with a minimum of cost and delay. Messages were written on a letter-sized form obtained from the post office. The form was then sent immediately to Toronto where it was photographed on miniature film. A small negative was then made, sent overseas, and upon reaching the U.K., developed. A print five inches by four was made, placed in an envelope and then delivered. The cost of sending a message of about 15 lines was 10 cents, and it was delivered in four or five days.

- **A MAN CALLED INTREPID and CANADA'S SPY SCHOOL:** Approximately a four hour drive from Sarnia, was a top-secret training school for spies—commonly known as Camp X. To the British it was known as STS (Special Training School) No. 103; the Canadian military called it Project J; and the RCMP called it S25-1-1. It was born after British Prime Minister Winston Churchill instructed the British Security Co-ordination chief—Canadian William Samuel Stephenson—to create "the clenched fist that would provide the knockout blow" to the Axis powers.

William Stephenson was born William Samuel Clouston Stanger on January 11, 1896 in Winnipeg. He was the son of William Hunter Stanger, an immigrant from Orkney Islands, and Sarah Johnston of Winnipeg. In 1901, on William's fifth birthday, he learned that his father William Sr., had been killed during fighting in the South African (Boer) War. In an odd twist, Winston Churchill, who was on the North American lecture circuit retelling stories of

his own experiences in the Boer War, happened to be in Winnipeg at this time. Years later, Stephenson's two partners at a critical moment in history were Winston Churchill, prime minister of Britain; and Franklin Delano Roosevelt, president of the United States.

When William Sr. died, Sarah was left to bring up three children and there was no way she could support them. William was adopted by Vigfus and Kristin Stephenson, and he took the name of his adopted parents. Growing up in the prairies, William was a self-reliant boy who devoured books and loved boxing, and worked at a lumber mill where his adopted father worked. In his early teens, he experimented with electricity, steam engines, kites and crude airplanes. In January 1916, one day after his twentieth birthday, William enlisted in the 101st Overseas Battalion, CEF, in Winnipeg. He stood five feet five inches tall, was single, and recorded his occupation as telegrapher. He arrived in England in July 1916 and later that month arrived at the Western Front trenches with the Royal Canadian Engineers. He suffered the trauma of a couple of poison-gas attacks and was sent back to England as "disabled for life".

But William was eager to get back to the front so, fudging his medical history, he wangled a transfer to the Royal Flying Corps. After five hours' instruction, he was a fully-fledged fighter pilot. As a member of what was widely regarded as the "Suicide Service", Stephenson won the Distinguished Flying Cross "for conspicuous gallantry and skill" and was awarded the Military Cross for his actions against the enemy. He had a record of twenty-six enemy aircraft shot down; was wounded when he was shot down and captured; and later organized his own elaborate escape. He had the French Legion of Honor and Croix de Guerre with Palm to add to his other medals. On surviving the Great War Stephenson recalled, "I had a guilt feeling that I should have died with the others. Being still alive, I had an obligation to justify my survival."

He was hired by the University of Manitoba to teach math and science while he studied experiments in public broadcasting. While there he invented several devices in communication technology, including the wirephoto and then a radio facsimile method of transmitting pictures without need of telephone or telegraph wires. He moved to Britain in 1921 to develop and market this invention to newspapers and rapidly earned a fortune. He pursued various business ventures and inventions and launched himself on a career as an industrialist, manufacturing such diverse products as radios, phonographs, automobiles, and airplanes. He also moved into construction, real estate and steel.

At the beginning of WWII, Stephenson was placed in charge of **British Security Co-ordination** (counterespionage) in the Western Hemisphere, with headquarters in New York. There he acted as the liaison between Churchill and Roosevelt, and was instrumental in the formation of the forerunner to the US Central Intelligence Agency. His organization's activities ranged from censoring transatlantic mail, breaking letter codes and forging diplomatic documents, obtaining Vichy French and Italian military codes, protecting against sabotage of American factories producing munitions for Britain, and training (at Camp X) allied agents for surreptitious entry into Nazi-occupied Europe.

Businessman, inventor, fighter pilot and master spy best known by his wartime code-name "Intrepid" (given to him by Churchill), Sir William Stephenson was knighted by King George VI (for his services to the British Empire); was awarded the Companion of the Order of Canada (our country's highest civilian award); and awarded the US Medal for Merit (the first non-American to receive the highest US civilian honour). He is commemorated by a statue in Memorial Park in Winnipeg. Ian Fleming, best-selling author of the James Bond novels said, "James Bond is a highly romanticized version of a true spy. The real thing is William Stephenson." ^{2N, 11D}

Canada's Spy School: Located on the northwestern shore of Lake Ontario, between Whitby and Oshawa, **Camp X** was the first official site for British, Canadian and American intelligence officers during the war, and would be the only such school in North America. Opened on December 6, 1941 (one day before Pearl Harbour was bombed), this paramilitary training installation was one of several dozen around the world that was commanded by Britain's Special Operations Executive (SOE), a branch of the British MI-6. Camp X had two main objectives: to train Allied agents in espionage activities such as sabotage, subversion, deception, intelligence and other 'special means'; and to serve as a major radio communication link between North and South America and European operations of SOE (the vital and highly sophisticated radio and telegraph communications network between Britain, the U.S. and Canada, with its high-speed transmitter known as Hydra).

Subjects taught to the secret agents training at Camp X included; how to interrogate prisoners, safe blowing, information gathering, lock picking, explosives training, encoding/decoding, Morse Code, recruiting techniques for partisans, unarmed combat and the art of silent killing with the thrust of a knife.

An arm of the Camp X organization was Station M (for magic), that operated from the basement of Toronto's Casa Loma museum, where scientists and seamstresses worked secretly manufacturing items secret agents needed once behind enemy lines, including; compasses concealed in combs, silk scarves printed with detailed maps, clothes made with cloth and buttons from enemy countries, forged visas, passports and currency created on typewriters smuggled out of enemy countries, cameras that shoot bullets, swords disguised as canes, suitcase radios and lipstick tubes that concealed a dagger.

Many of those trained at Camp X were sent behind enemy lines in Europe and Asia to cause damage and disruption, and/or spread disinformation, while also gathering information useful to the Allied war effort. It is believed at least 500 (some estimates up to 2000) Allied agents trained at Camp X, with many notable figures known to have been there in various capacities, including: William Stephenson, Ian Fleming (author of 12 James Bond novels), Paul Dehn (British film critic and screenplay writer – *Goldfinger*, *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold*, *Planet of the Apes* and *Murder on the Orient Express*), Roald Dahl (British author – *James and the Giant Peach*, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* and *Fantastic Mr. Fox*) and Stirling Hayden (American film actor). During the Second World War and decades after, those connected with Camp X were sworn to secrecy. Today, the former site of Camp X is a park, appropriately named “Intrepid Park”.^{2E, 2N, 8P, 11D}

• **THE BATTLE OF HONG KONG**, December 8 – 25, 1941: Since the early 1930's, Japan had been invading territories—China it's primary target—as it expanded it's empire. Victorious on the battlefield, brutal atrocities by the Japanese army followed in the aftermath, including raping, torturing, and murdering 200,000 civilians in Nanjing, and the use of biological and chemical weapons on civilians.

Hong Kong was a British Crown colony, but in the 1930's, Britain concluded that it was a mere “outpost” of the Empire, worth defending, but refusing to reinforce it. After Japan launched their major offensives into China in 1937, Britain decided Hong Kong could be a strategically important island on the south coast of mainland China. Britain believed that reinforcing Hong Kong might even deter war. After all, the United States had moved its Pacific Fleet from California to Pearl Harbour, Hawaii. With two British and two Indian infantry units already in Hong Kong, Britain asked Canada to provide more troops for it's defence. The British had already decided not to commit more of their own forces to the colony, based on various studies that showed it would be extremely difficult to defend – a conclusion never communicated to Canadian authorities. In September 1941, Canada agreed to Britain's request to reinforce Hong Kong, as many of its leaders were anxious for the army to increase its role in the war. It would be the Canadian army's first engagement of the Second World War, and it would be a disaster.

On October 27, 1941, a force of 1,975 Canadian soldiers, which included two Canadian army Nursing Sisters, two medical officers, two dentists and three chaplains, were sent to Hong Kong (the destination was unknown to most of those on board until after leaving port), with the task of defending the island against any Japanese Empire attack. The forces core was two infantry battalions, both classified by army headquarters as, “in need of refresher training or insufficiently trained and not recommended for operations.” The Canadian battalions comprised of the Royal Rifles of Canada (of Quebec) and the Winnipeg Grenadiers had no battle experience, some had barely fired their rifles. It was felt that they would have some time there to get more training as there was little chance of an attack. It was hoped the Canadians would see only garrison duty, but the directives to their commanding officer also said they would “participate to the limit of your strength in the defense of the colony should the occasion arise.” British intelligence assured the Canadians that if the Japanese did attack, it would be of little consequence, because according to the racist stereotype of the day, they were small, nearsighted and unable to fight at night. Arriving in Hong Kong on November 16 aboard the cargo ship *Awatea*, (escorted by *HMCS Prince Robert*) the Canadians landed ahead of their 212 trucks, universal carriers, and motorcycles which would never arrive—they were diverted to United States forces in the Philippines.

The British colony of Hong Kong consisted of Hong Kong Island and the adjacent mainland areas of Kowloon and the New Territories. Upon arrival, the Canadians were soon to discover that the military garrison's defensive positions were poorly maintained, with outdated guns, no radar equipment, no significant air or naval defence, and a slew of other deficiencies. A total of 14,000 soldiers made up the defence force, consisting of British, Canadian and Indian regiments and Hong Kong Volunteer Defence Corps. The plan to defend the colony was to divide the force into two brigades, one to defend the mainland, and the other to be stationed on the island to guard against an invasion from the sea. The majority of the two inexperienced Canadian battalions were positioned on the island.^{D, 4H, 6F, 6Z, 8M}

In early December 1941, the Japanese launched a series of surprise attacks almost simultaneously on Pearl Harbour, Northern Malaya, the Philippines, Guam, Wake Island and Hong Kong. At 0755 on December 7, 1941, hundreds of Japanese fighter planes, bombers and torpedo planes attacked the American Pacific Fleet in **Pearl Harbor**, Hawaii. It was over by 1000 hours. The surprise strike killed more than 2,400 American service people and civilians and wounded nearly 1,200 more while destroying 188 planes and demolishing or damaging eight battleships. The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour, not preceded by a declaration of war and without warning, was referred to by United States President as the “date which will live in infamy.” The United States declared war on Japan the following day. The Canadian government asked King George VI to declare war on Japan on behalf of Canada immediately after the attack, and Canada became the earliest Allied government to do so.

The attack on the Hong Kong mainland began on December 8th morning (December 7 in Canada), less than 8 hours after the attack on Pearl Harbor. The Japanese plan of attack was simple: force the defenders back, clear the mainland, then assault the island itself. They enjoyed the advantages of air and artillery superiority, and their troops, numbering 52,000, were tough, well-trained, highly motivated, and had seen combat in China. Through intense fighting, often at night, and behind destructive air raids and heavy artillery bombardment, the Japanese successfully advanced through to the mainland coast. By the morning of December 13, the defences were overrun, and the last Allied soldiers, including some Canadians, left the mainland. The Canadians were reorganized into an East Brigade (containing the Royal Rifles) and a West Brigade (containing the Winnipeg Grenadiers). On December 13, and again on December 17, the Japanese demanded the surrender of the garrison. Both times, the demand was refused, and though the defenders were in a hopeless position, they were determined to delay the Japanese as much as possible.

On the night of December 18, under cover of heavy shellfire, the Japanese in large numbers, crossed the one kilometer narrow passage from the mainland to the island of Hong Kong. By the next day, they had pushed to the centre of the island, swarming across it, occupying a number of high points on the island, and using them to rain down fire on the Canadian defenders. The Canadian brigades, now cut in two, were forced back towards the island’s western and southern shores through rugged, steep hill country. The Canadians fought valiantly against overwhelming odds, against battle-toughened troops that far outnumbered them in strength, and who were backed with a heavy arsenal of artillery and air support. One corporal said, *“I taught one fellow how to load and discharge his rifle behind battalion headquarters in the hills. He was killed before he even got to fire it.”* A lieutenant said, *“Some of these soldiers were just too damn young. I remember one who was wounded – I suddenly realized that he was only a child of 16 or 17.”*

By the fifth day of the battle, the island was split, the water reserves were lost, ammunition was running low, and the defenders had endured much of that time with little food, water, or sleep.^{4H} The Canadians had no significant air or naval defence and had no hope of being relieved or resupplied. The Canadians continued to hold out with uncounted acts of heroism and sacrifice. On Christmas Day, 1941, after 17 ½ days of fighting against overwhelming odds, Hong Kong was surrendered. Although all the fighting ended, the killing did not stop. In various parts of the island, Japanese soldiers embarked on a killing frenzy; subjecting the captives to sadistic acts of horror that included horrendous beatings, beheadings, assaulting and murdering nurses, bayoneting wounded soldiers in hospital beds, and rampant murder.^{D, 4H, 6F, 6Z, 8M}

When the barbaric behaviour subsided, the remaining gallant Canadian, British and Indian combatants, and British civilians, were marched into captivity. Canadian prisoners were put in camps in Hong Kong, and later, a group was sent to Japan as slave labour. What lay ahead was a period of grim imprisonment, a living hell, for almost four years. A Canadian Signaller who would survive the camps later said, *“I thought I had gone through hell, but (after the battle) found that I had only entered the gates. I was subjected to starvation, disease... (and) slow torture. At one point I was down to 108 pounds. I was just a bag of walking bones.”* The treatment of the Canadians in Japanese hands was far worse than it was for those Canadians who fell into the clutches of the Nazi’s.^{D, 4H} The Japanese were ruthless, sadistic captors and the Canadian prisoners endured the hardships of starvation, malnourishment, diseases, savage beatings, torture, insect and vermin infestations, slave labour and execution. Few Red Cross parcels ever reached Hong Kong POWs, and those that did the captors usually sold on the black market or kept them for their own use.

Hong Kong would not be liberated by the Allies until August of 1945. The Hong Kong veterans would finally return to Canadian soil in October 1945. The auxiliary cruiser *HMCS Prince Robert*, which had helped transport Canada’s troops to the ill-fated defence of Hong Kong in 1941, returned to the Pacific theatre and had the satisfaction of assisting in the liberation of the prisoners of war in Hong Kong. Many of those who did return were so

broken in body and spirit that they died premature deaths in the years that followed. The Hong Kong campaign, the Canadian Army's first combat action in the Second World War, was the only significant action in Canadian military history in which 100 percent losses were inflicted. Not a man escaped either capture or a grave.^{D, 4H, 6F, 6Z}

One of the Canadians killed defending Hong Kong was British-born Sergeant-Major (Warrant Officer Class II) **John Robert Osborn** of the Winnipeg Grenadiers. Osborn had served in the Great War, emigrated to Canada in 1920, soon married and had children, settled in Winnipeg and worked on the railway. He joined the Winnipeg Grenadiers in 1933. During the Battle of Hong Kong, on the morning of December 19, 1941, John Osborn had led his company of Winnipeg Grenadiers up the steep Mount Butler and recaptured the hill at bayonet point before being forced to fall back. Osborn and a small group covered the withdrawal and when their turn came to fall back he single-handedly engaged the enemy, exposing himself to heavy enemy fire to cover their retreat. That afternoon his small company was surrounded by Japanese soldiers tossing grenades. Osborn caught several and threw them back. When one landed out of his reach, he yelled a warning to his mates and flung himself on the grenade which exploded killing him instantly. His bravery and self-sacrifice undoubtedly saved the lives of many of his comrades. John Osborn was the first Canadian to receive the Victoria Cross in this war. He left behind his wife Margaret and five children.^{D, 2N, 7A}

Of the 1,975 Canadians who went to the indefensible and isolated colony of Hong Kong; 290 were killed in battle (among the dead were several who had been wounded, but after surrender, were bayoneted or machine-gunned by blood-lust Japanese), 493 were wounded and 1,685 were marched off to endure for another forty-four months the subhuman conditions of Japanese prisoner of war camps. Beginning in January 1943, the first Canadian POW's were sent to Japan as slave labour. Over 15 months, 1,184 Canadian POW's were sent there to work in mines, factories and at the docks. Of the 1,685 Canadians that were captured, 264 of the POW's died in captivity through neglect, abuse, disease, torture, systemic malnutrition, and outright murder (128 in Hong Kong and 136 in Japan). With 1,047 killed or wounded, the casualty rate was more than 50%, one of the highest of any Canadian theatre in the Second World War. For those that survived their cruel imprisonment and returned to Canada, almost every one was plagued by physical and psychological problems for the rest of their lives.^{D, E, 2E, 2N, 3A, 4H, 4I, 8M} One young man from Sarnia, Max Berger, gave his life in the Battle of Hong Kong. His story is included in this Project on page 579.

In mid-October 1945, twenty-five year old **Private George Francis Robinson**, a member of the Winnipeg Grenadiers, made a surprise visit to his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Frank Robinson, Bluewater, Sarnia. He had spent almost four years in a Japanese prison camp. He told his story to the *Sarnia Observer*. He had been a member of the garrison at Hong Kong when it fell on Christmas Day, 1941. He wasn't captured until the following day. He had been with an outpost in the mountains when a British officer broke through the Japanese lines and said they were to surrender. They had plenty of heavy and light machine guns, but ammunition was running short and the water supply was exhausted. They would smash their guns and the Japanese moved in immediately.

Robinson described how inside the prison camp, the Japanese guards were always trying to cause trouble; for instance, one guard would offer a prisoner a cigarette. As soon as the prisoner lit up, the guard would give the nod to another guard who would step up and smash the cigarette against the prisoner's teeth. Food was always short and consisted mainly of steamed rice three times a day with occasional treats of mule or horse meat, tripe or grasshoppers in soy sauce. His starvation diet reduced him from 162 pounds to 107 at the end of the war. While he was in Hong Kong, an epidemic of diphtheria broke out in the camp and killed a number of fellows. George himself got the disease but, fortunately, recovered.

In the spring of 1943, Robinson was moved to Nagata, several hundred miles north of Tokyo. The move was made in the stinking hold of a salvaged Chinese steamship into which 305 prisoners were jammed so that there was no room to lie down. At Nagata, he was employed with other prisoners as a stevedore unloading ships. There were no regular hours. If a ship came in, the prisoners worked until they had unloaded her, sometimes laboring from 5 a.m. until midnight. He was inclined to pity the Japanese girls who also worked as stevedores, carrying 200-pound bags. On his return to Sarnia, he planned to spend two weeks with his parents and then return to Winnipeg to enter high school in preparation for a course on diesel engineering. He said, after the blackout in Japan, that the bright lights of Canada are what appealed to him now and, although the food was sumptuous in Canadian restaurants, he frequently could eat only part of a regular portion.

• **THE DIEPPE RAID**, France, August 19, 1942: By the spring of 1942, the Soviets were pressuring the Allies to open up a second front against the Nazi's, in order to relieve some of the pressure of the fighting on the Eastern Front. The Americans were insisting on a full-scale cross-channel attack into France by the end of the year. At the

same time, Canadian Army divisions and armoured brigades were growing stronger by the day, but for the most part, sat in Britain and trained month after month, and trained some more. The men grew bored and angry as war raged elsewhere—they were eager to get into the action. The Allied Command came up with a plan to placate the Soviets, and to appease the Americans, and the Canadians wanted to take the lead.

The Allied plan, headed by Vice-Admiral Louis Mountbatten of Combined Operations, was for a cross-channel raid, targeting the small French resort town of Dieppe. Code-named *Operation Rutter*, training for the raid began in England in May 1942, with the invasion scheduled for July 4. The weeks of training involved navigating obstacle courses, bayonet fighting, unarmed combat, climbing cliffs, firing weapons from the hip, embarking and disembarking from landing craft, demolition training and river crossings. On July 2 and 3 the troops embarked on landing ships for another training exercise, and once they were all aboard, were fully briefed that in fact, this was the actual operation against the enemy. But the weather deteriorated on the night of July 3, thwarting the plans, delaying the operation. The sailing was postponed repeatedly until it was decided to launch the attack on July 8. On the morning of July 7, due to a number of factors including unfavourable weather, the raid was cancelled again. Many of the Canadians were disappointed to hear the operation had been scrubbed—one Canadian journalist reported that some of the men cried openly. Many involved in the planning wanted to abandon the raid as it was obvious that the Germans knew something was up because of the concentration of shipping. Yet despite the debate, the operation was revived not long afterward, and renamed *Operation Jubilee*.

The code name for the operation came out of a discussion with Canadian William Stephenson (British Security Co-ordination chief), refugee scientist Chaim Weizmann and other Jewish leaders. Stephenson recalled, “Somehow we got talking about Jewish biblical traditions. If ever Hitler were destroyed and Europe liberated, it would be like that biblical period when slaves are freed and the land restored to its rightful owners—the period that Jews traditionally call Jubilee.”^{11D}

The new operation would be streamlined from the original plan: the use of capital ships (heavy warships) was discounted; the cutting of anti-aircraft ships; and the scrubbing of heavy bombers to soften the target (instead, suppressive strafing runs by fighter-bombers would be used).^{D, E, 2N, 4H, 6Z, 11D}

The raiding force on Dieppe would involve approximately 6,100 troops, made up of close to 5,000 Canadians of the Second Canadian Infantry Division, 1,000 British commandos and 50 American Rangers. It was the first major Canadian engagement in the war (after Hong Kong), and would become one of the darkest chapters in Canada’s military history.

The **revised plan** would involve troops coming ashore at five different points along a 16 kilometre-long stretch of heavily defended coastline, and without the heavy air bombardment in the original plan. Puy and Pourville, two minor beaches on the flanks, were to be captured at 4:50 a.m. Half an hour later, two Canadian infantry battalions, the Essex Scottish Regiment and the Royal Hamilton Light Infantry, supported by the tanks of the Calgary Regiment, were to raid the main objective, Dieppe. Both the Essex Scottish and Royal Hamilton units drew their recruits from southwestern Ontario, including Sarnia.

Dieppe was the fifth in a series of “pinch raids” that followed the successful raids on the islands of Lofoten and Vagsoy in Norway and the unsuccessful ones at Saint-Nazaire and Bayonne in western France. Many reasons for the purpose of the Dieppe raid were given, including; to destroy radar and other military installations, damage enemy shipping and port facilities, to seize a neighbouring airfield, to capture a German divisional naval headquarters in order to acquire intelligence documents, gather information from prisoners, and it would serve as a test run for the future invasion of Europe.

Recently declassified documents have shown that at its heart, the raid was a “**pinch**” (British slang for “steal”) operation designed to capture cryptographic material for code breakers in Bletchley Park in England. Cryptography, the ability to break into and read the enemy’s enciphered communications, was becoming a major weapon. In mid-March 1942, confirmation came that vessels frequenting Dieppe carried the four-rotor Enigma machine. The goal of the raid was to capture German documents, code-books and a four-rotor Enigma encryption machine (the Germans had been transitioning from a three-rotor to a four-rotor machine, a major concern for the Allies, especially in the Battle of the Atlantic). A Royal Marine Commando unit was to follow the Canadians on the main beach to seize and extract the encryption material, then take it to Lieutenant Commander Ian Fleming of James Bond fame, who was waiting on a command ship offshore. The keys for the operation to be successful were speed, surprise and shock.^{D, E, 2N, 3O, 4H, 6Z}

The Germans had spent months fortifying the port of Dieppe with dense coils of barbed wire entanglements and concrete barriers. They demolished anything along the beaches that could be used for cover. They had multiple machine guns, light mortars, and medium artillery all situated to saturate the beaches with intense fire. Many of the German guns were in positions along cliff walls overlooking the beach. German command had even issued warnings to the garrisons to be prepared for an amphibious landing, especially when the tides were low, singling out August 19.

The Raid: On August 18, Canadian and Allied troops boarded approximately 250 landing ships and slipped into the English Channel as the dusk melted into a beautiful clear night, and made for the French coast across the English Channel. As they approached the coast in the early morning hours of August 19, things started to go wrong, as part of the landing force encountered a small German convoy. A sharp, violent sea battle ensued and the German coastal defenses on the shores of Dieppe were alerted.^{D, E, 2N, 3O, 4H}

West of the main Dieppe beach, British Commandoes came ashore (near Varengeville) and the South Saskatchewan Regiment came ashore at Pourville at 4:50 a.m. (code named Green Beach) on time and in the dark. The Canadians initially encountered less resistance than on the other parts of the beach, and were able to make some inroads. As enemy reinforcements rushed forward, resistance intensified, and the Germans were able to push back the Saskatchewans. The Cameron Highlanders of Canada landed at Pourville around 5:50 a.m., taking heavy fire yet they pushed forward. With the Germans still holding much of the high ground and Canadian casualties mounting, both regiments were soon forced to halt and begin their methodical retreat. Both the Saskatchewans and the Camerons suffered heavy losses during the withdrawal.

East of Dieppe, British Commandoes came ashore scattered (near Petit Berneval) and the Royal Regiment of Canada and the Black Watch (Royal Highland Regiment) of Canada came ashore on the narrow beach at Puys at 5:10 a.m. (code named Blue Beach). They were behind schedule and had lost the advantages of surprise and darkness. The Canadians encountered much more resistance from the fully-alerted Germans beginning when the landing craft ramps dropped. Men were bowled over by machine-gun and mortar fire, those that survived pushed through a pile of bodies and waded through the red, cold water toward the beach to the seawall for some cover. Landing craft continued to arrive, despite dozens of slain Canadians floating in the water, crumpled on the beaches and lying motionless along the seawall. There were some minor successes at Puys, but the butchery would continue for several hours. The Canadians were pinned on the beach, unable to advance, and those who were not killed were taken prisoner.^{D, E, 2N, 4H}

On the main beach at Dieppe, the Essex Scottish Regiment and the Royal Hamilton Light Infantry arrived ashore at 5:20 a.m. (code named Red Beach and White Beach), as daylight was breaking instead of under the cover of darkness, to the already alerted German defences. The landing craft first had to negotiate through the mortar and machine-gun fire, and underwater mines that blew a number of them out of the water. The well-entrenched enemy in concealed gun positions sitting atop 75 foot-high cliff tops, as well as from their pillboxes, concrete bunkers, and hidden sniper posts cut down the fully visible Canadians as the landing craft ramps opened. The men waded into the surf, pushing through the firestorm trying to cross the cobblestone beaches to the protection of the concrete seawall. Mortar fire proved the most deadly weapon, crashing down on the beach, sending steel fragments and stone fragments in all directions. The battle broke down into a series of isolated engagements as the front-line formations lost all coherence. A small number of Canadians were able to make it through the German defenses to the town of Dieppe, though the vast majority simply endured the crippling fire on the beach.

About 5:35 a.m. on the main beach, the 14th Canadian Army Tank Battalion (known as the Calgary Regiment) landed at Dieppe to provide close support for the infantry. A number of the Churchill tanks were damaged or sunk before they made it to the beach. The remaining tanks moved up and down the beach, enduring heavy machine-gun and mortar fire, and for some, the shingle beach (consisting of large pebbles, known as “chert”) broke their treads disabling them. Tanks were unable to get off the beach because the exits were blocked by concrete barriers. The immobilized tanks would continue to fight, supporting the infantry and contributing greatly to the withdrawal of many of the soldiers. The tank crews themselves became prisoners of war or died in battle.

At 7:00 a.m., after receiving inaccurate messages about the success on the main beach, the Les Fusilliers Mont-Royal Reserve Battalion were sent in, landing on the Dieppe main beach, arriving headfirst into the maelstrom of fire, wading into knee-deep water already filled with the bodies of dead Canadians. They suffered heavy casualties. One of the officers of the battalion described his experience of taking two or three steps on the beach

before being hit by a piece of shrapnel; *“You say a bullet or a piece of shrapnel hits you but the word isn’t right. They slam you the way a sledgehammer slams you. There’s no sharp pain at first. It jars you so much you’re not sure exactly where you’ve been hit-or what with. This piece of shrapnel hit me in the right shoulder and knocked me down. I felt confused and shaken up, the same feeling you get on the football field after getting tackled from behind. Stunned, surprised, frustrated.”* The officer managed to get to his feet and started to bandage himself up but was soon hit again, this time in the cheek. He continued to move forward, watched a close friend get killed right beside him, and was soon hit a third time, this time by a bullet through his right arm. Yet he kept on, trying to reach higher ground to direct his battalion, when he was hit again by shrapnel in the right leg. After passing out, his men carried him to the beach for evacuation.

One of the members of the Les Fusilliers taking part in the Dieppe Raid was seventeen year-old Private Robert Boulanger of Grand-Mere, Quebec (he had enrolled at age 15, lying about his age at his enlistment). Following is a portion of a letter he wrote to his mother and father over a three-day period as he waited on land and sea with his fellow Fusiliers to cross the English Channel to Dieppe;

17-18-19 August 1942

Dear Dad and Mum,

A few minutes ago, we were gathered together to learn that we’ll finally be embarking to go and fight the enemy in the next 24 hours. Even though I shouted “hurray” like all the others in the platoon, I don’t feel very brave, but rest assured that I’ll never dishonor the family name.

We’ve been training hard for this day. I have a lot of confidence that we’ll be victorious in our first engagement and that you’ll be proud that I was one of the participants...

Where we are right now, our Colonel, Dollard Menard, just confirmed the news and, in secret, told us the place where we’ll be attacking the enemy. I’m sorry, but I can’t reveal either the name, or the location. We know exactly the situation we’ll be fighting in, and we’ll attack with confidence.

Our chaplain, Padre Sabourin, gathered together everyone who wanted to receive general absolution, as well as Holy Communion. Almost everyone answered the call...

... I am continuing my letter on board our assault craft, which is taking us to our target. We’re lucky, because the sea is very calm, the temperature and the weather are good. They told us that our engagement with the enemy will take place around 5:30. In the meantime, I’m using the time to check my rifle once more and my equipment, for a third time, all the while listening to my comrades talking about different things. Some are telling jokes, but listening to them I can feel their tension, which I feel myself too.

... The moon is bright enough so I can continue. We’ve been sailing for two and a half hours, and I have to be quick before it gets too dark. I’m taking advantage of the time to ask for forgiveness for all my faults and the pain that I’ve caused you, especially during my enlistment... I hope that if I come home alive from this adventure, and if I return home at the end of the war, I’ll do everything that I can to dry your tears, Mum; I’ll do everything in my power to help you forget all the anxieties I’ve caused... But when you learn how bravely I fought, you’ll forgive me for all the pain I have caused you.

Dawn is just starting on the horizon, but during the night I’ve recited all the prayers that you taught me, and with more fervor than usual. A few minutes ago, I thought that we were already in action with the Germans. Over there, on our left, the roar of cannons and the lit-up sky made us think so...

It’s much brighter now, and I can see much better to write, I hope that you can read my writing. They’ve told us that we’re very near the French coast. I think so, as we can hear the gunfire as well as the noise of explosions, even the whistling of shells passing overhead... A landing craft right beside us just got hit, and it disintegrated along with all on board. We didn’t have time to see much, because in the space of a minute or two, there was nothing left.

O my God! Protect us from a similar fate. So many comrades and friends who were there a couple of minutes ago gone forever. It’s horrible. Other boats in our group and other groups have been hit, and have suffered the same fate... I love you a lot, and tell my brothers and sisters that I love them with all my heart.

Robert Boulanger

This was Robert Boulanger’s last letter home—he would be killed during the Dieppe Raid and is buried at Dieppe Canadian War Cemetery. On January 21, 2014, the city of Dieppe inaugurated seven streets in a new development, each named after an individual connected in some way to the raid. One of them, not far from Dieppe Cemetery, is “Rue du Soldat Robert Boulanger.”^{8M}

Above the Dieppe battlefield, the RAF and RCAF fought in the largest air battle that had been seen to that point in Western Europe. The raid was supported by 1,000 aircraft from 74 Allied air squadrons, eight belonging to

the Royal Canadian Air Force. Allied air squadrons included fighters, fighter-bombers, tactical reconnaissance and smoke screen layers. Throughout the day, Spitfires, Hurricanes, and P-51 Mustangs engaged Luftwaffe Fw 190 and Messerschmitt 109 fighters, and Ju 88 bombers. The Allied air forces provided protection for the ships and chased off enemy fighters that raked the infantry pinned on the beaches, but the cost was high. The Royal Air Force lost 106 aircraft, the highest single-day total of the war. The Royal Canadian Air Force lost 13 aircraft.^{D, E, 2I, 2N, 4H, 6D, 6Z}

One of four Army co-operation squadrons detailed to reconnoiter at Dieppe on August 19 was *RCAF No. 414 Squadron*, later to be known as the *City of Sarnia Squadron*. One of the squadron members flying on that day, on his first mission, was twenty-five-year-old Pilot Officer Charles Herbert “Smokey” Stover of Sarnia. More information on the *City of Sarnia Squadron* and Charles Stover is on page 508.

The Dieppe retreat: By 11:00 a.m., with the main beach a ruin of blood, tangled metal and bodies, it was clear that the raid could not continue, and the retreat began. Landing craft pushed through enemy fire, mortars and mines, struggling to get to shore, and as they opened their doors, the craft and men running to them were easy targets for the German gunners, snipers, mortar teams and enemy fighter pilots. On the beach, brave Canadians rushed back and forth between the seawall to the beaches to pull injured comrades to safety. Some of the badly wounded men drowned as Dieppe’s 22-foot tide swept in. Through great courage, many men were taken off the beaches under heavy fire, and by mid-afternoon, the last boat had departed. The remaining Canadians were forced to surrender, and with hands up and heads bowed, they were led from the corpse-strewn beaches and through Dieppe.^{D, E, 2N, 4H, 6Z}

The Cost at Dieppe: Of the 4,963 Canadians that took part in the battle that lasted only nine hours, only 2,210 returned to England (over 590 of those were wounded but survived, while approximately 30 would die as a result of their wounds). Another 1,946 Canadians were taken as POW’s (over 570 of them were wounded and over 70 would die in captivity). In the Dieppe Raid, 907 Canadians lost their lives – the single most costly day for the Canadian Army during the Second World War.^{D, E, 2N, 4H, 6Z} At least 36 young men from Sarnia took part in the Dieppe Raid, a number of whom were wounded and/or captured, and one Sarnian, Glyn Jones, gave his life at Dieppe. His story is included in this Project on page 776.

Dieppe news in Sarnia: In the first few days after the Dieppe Raid, relatives and friends of Sarnia and Lambton troops overseas waited anxiously for news of their loved ones who were members of the fighting units that had stormed the beaches. In Sarnia, like the rest of Canada, initial reports were that the Dieppe Raid was a success. The August 19 headline in the *Sarnia Observer* stated, “Canadian Troops Lead Allies In the Largest Commando Raid of the War” with subheadings “Wage Ferocious Battle With Nazis Around Dieppe, France; Use Tanks, Heavy Weapons” and “Canadian, British and U.S. Air Forces Maintain Constant Umbrella Over the Commandos – More Than Thousand Planes Believed Participating-Blasts Heard Across Channel”. The following are portions of reports from the *Sarnia Observer* in the first days after Dieppe;

Canadian army forces, supported by British, American and Fighting French Commandos, stormed the French coast on the broad beaches around Dieppe at dawn today, and with tanks and the greatest aerial umbrella ever spread aloft fought on throughout the day against the German defenders... Despite the unprecedented scope of the attack by the Commandos, the BBC repeatedly announced that the action was not an invasion intended to create a front in Western Europe but was only a raid. This was supported by the return to Britain this afternoon of some of the forces who had accomplished their mission speedily... While fighting is still continuing on the French coast, it is known that Canadians flying fighter planes already have caused damage among the Nazi air opposition...

Another Sarnia headline read; “Every Goal Achieved in Nine-Hour Battle – Dieppe Flaming and Shell-Torn After Engagement – Strength of Land Force and Air-Naval Units Still a Secret”;

New assaults on Nazi-occupied Europe, attacks to make ruined Dieppe a mere sample of what full-blown invasion will be, were being predicted today with the forces of four nations barely ashore after the fiercest smash against the Nazis’ gun-studded coast, Canadian troops spearheaded the nine-hour assault... Power-driven barges and other vessels arrived along the home coast throughout the night bringing the tired troops back... The Allied raiders brought back a number of German prisoners, including officers... That Dieppe, once a bastion of German anti-aircraft defence and a sally port for Nazi submarines, lay flaming and shell-torn was of secondary interest. What mattered was that Canadian, British, American and Fighting French Commandos – had stormed that formidable coast and had achieved every goal in a nine-hour battle engineered with such precision that it wound up within six minutes of schedule. What mattered was that the Germans had been dealt a jolting blow where they had boasted they were invulnerable... In Ottawa, Defence Minister J.L. Ralston said in a statement last night that

“casualties were severe” but added that “our men battled their way forward, reaching objectives which included the destruction of many of the enemy’s defence works.” ... Many of the Commandos came back with wounds, the majority minor ... Although ambulances and hospital trains carried off some of the men from the waterfront, and the floor of a former dance hall soon was filled with the slightly wounded, many of the others stepped ashore from their power-driven sea-going barges elated and singing despite their fatigue and the grime of battle on their torn uniforms.

Another *Observer* story, written by a Canadian Press War Correspondent, began with the headline; “Ontario Troops Led Main Attack On Dieppe Proper”;

Units of two infantry regiments-the Royal Hamilton Light Infantry and the Essex Scottish of Windsor, Ont.- with the Calgary Tank Regiment carried the main attack on the Dieppe raid yesterday right into the town itself and battled Germans in the streets to capture the main portions of the town ... After a tremendous naval bombardment and aerial bombing of the promenade area by the sea, these units landed on the beach in front of the town and stormed Nazi-held buildings, barricades and strong points ... By this operation, the Canadians carried out the underlying objective of the raid which was to test German defences on the coast and obtain information about them.

Dieppe was left with many parts of the town wrecked and burning and, as the raid-fleet sailed for England, I could see from the boat I occupied with an attack force a pall of smoke hanging over the port. Several strong gun positions and batteries of coastal artillery were destroyed and a radio direction-finding station was smashed. Hundreds of Germans were killed. The Nazis themselves admitted 400 killed and wounded. The Canadians brought back a number of German prisoners ... Canadian shock troops had a rough time of it at several points and losses probably will not be small.

One other *Observer* headline read; “Sarnia Boys in Raid On Dieppe”;

A dispatch from London, England, to the effect that units of two infantry regiments – the Royal Hamilton Light Infantry and the Essex Scottish of Windsor – with the Calgary Tank Regiment carried the main attack of the Dieppe raid yesterday is an indication that officers and men from Sarnia and Lambton County participated ... Among Sarnia and Lambton county soldiers who are attached to the fighting units are the following: With the Essex Scottish Regiment: Capt. Alex Hayes, Lieut. Maurice J. Chilton, Lieut. Arthur Hueston, Lieut. Neal M. Watson, Sgt. William Graham, Pte. J. Crockett, Pte. Jack Graham, Bandsman Robert Lothead, and Piper A.C. Wighton, all of Sarnia; also Pte. Thomas Donnelly, Pte. Howard Hilborn, Pte. Lorne Johnson, Pte. Mac Moloy, Pte. Douglas Rinker, Pte. Ernest Rinker, Pte. Walter Smith, Pte. Edward Welten, Pte. Jack Welten, Pte. Edward Schram, and Pte. Walter Smith, all of Thedford; and Pte. C.L. Morley, Pte. Ralph Storey, and Pte. Carman Young, all of Petrolia; along with Eugene Warwick of Forest (a member of the Royal Hamilton Light Infantry).

The *Sarnia Observer* also included German reports from Berlin that contradicted the Allied success reports;

The German high command claimed today that the Allied forces which attacked Dieppe yesterday lost 1,500 men in prisoners alone, along with many dead and wounded, against 400 German casualties. (These and other of the Berlin claims of Allied shipping and aerial losses in the Commando raid were far out of proportion with the Allied announcements.) ... The attack was repulsed, the war bulletin claimed, without bolstering the coast defence forces with reserves. “All strong points, battery emplacements and railway stations on the French coast were kept intact by their crews,” the communiqué said.

In the first few days after the Dieppe Raid, lists of names of wounded and missing soldiers were released and printed in the newspapers that included a number of local men – many of them Sarnia engineers who had transferred to the Commandos just months prior and who had been rated as particularly adept exponents of this type of warfare. A number of local men, once they returned to England, were able to wire home to their parents that they were on the raid and now safe. In the days following, the casualty lists from Ottawa were printed with an ever increasing number of names, with more and more Canadian soldiers listed as killed in action, missing in action, seriously wounded or wounded. One headline in the *Sarnia Observer* read, “Canadian Casualty List Grows”. It became apparent that the Dieppe Raid was anything but a success.

Sarnian’s Dieppe Experiences: In the weeks and months following, stories of some of the Sarnia men’s experiences at Dieppe were printed in the *Sarnia Observer*. Following are portions of several of these stories:

> **Arthur Hueston**, the son of Mr. and Mrs. H.M. Hueston of North Christina Street:

Soldiers recalled the gallant heroism of Lieutenant Arthur Hueston (Essex Scottish Regiment) of Sarnia, Ontario. He and his platoon were on a tank landing craft and as the ramp was lowered at the beach machine-gun fire and shells

crashed around them, streams of bullets pouring into the boat. A corporal was hit in the mouth and Hueston crouched to help him. Then some kind of high explosive landed inside the craft, setting the tank on fire. The other tanks clanked ashore and the boat started to drift off the beach. It was 20 yards from land when Hueston and his men jumped into the water and started to swim in. They were all wearing "Mae Wests" but the weight of their arms and ammunition made swimming difficult. Hueston reached the beach which was laced with fire. He didn't give a thought to his own safety but in the true officer tradition thought only of his men. He threw off his equipment, said a soldier who was there with him, and went back into the water trying to rescue men who were still floundering in the sea. He finally had to give up and it is believed he crossed the beach to the seawall. His parents in Sarnia would receive the news in mid-September 1942 that their son Arthur was reported missing in the Dieppe Raid. A portion of Arthur Hueston's description of his experiences as a POW are on page 517.

> **Lieutenant William ("Bill") Alexander Ewener** was born in April 1905 in Battersea, London, England. He came to Canada with his parents in 1908. He had played football for the Sarnia Collegiate junior and senior teams, the intermediate Wanderers, the Sarnia Imperials (as a lineman) and the University of Western Ontario Mustangs (a center), before the war. He was an employee of Imperial Oil Limited for five years (in Peru), and returned to commence his studies at the University of Western Ontario for his Bachelor of Arts Degree. He then studied medicine for four years prior to enlisting in April 1940 with the 11th Field Company, later attached to the 7th Field Company, Royal Canadian Engineers. He was the son of Mr. and Mrs. W.G. Ewener of 494 Wellington Street: *Shortly after Ewener leaped ashore at the head of a group of Royal Hamilton Light Infantry men, the unit that bore the brunt of the assault with the Essex Scottish he was struck in the chest by a machine gun bullet. Despite the insistence of others that he withdraw from the action, Ewener refused to do so. He picked up the equipment of another wounded man and then continued with the attack. Some time later he was seen dressing the wounds of wounded comrades. "He refused to withdraw until the last cat was hung," one of his comrades told Fred Griffin, noted war correspondent of the Toronto Daily Star.*

During William's recovery in England from the serious chest wounds and shrapnel wounds in the legs that he received, he wrote to his parents in Sarnia. He made no reference to the action, to how he was wounded, nor to the extent of his wounds. He assured his parents that he was well on the way to recovery. In expressing thanks to his Sarnia, London and Toronto friends, he wrote, *"The tears were very close to my eyes when the cables started to arrive from so many friends back home. It hardly seemed possible that so many would act spontaneously at such a time... It was certainly a grand way to cheer me up when things looked blackest."* In writing about his recovery in hospital, *"The first week we spent here was marvelous despite the pains of our wounds and the sharpness of our tempers as all of us were incensed we had to leave good friends in unfriendly territory. Every one is impatient to get back in harness and help avenge those we left behind."*

Lieutenant William Ewener was awarded the Military Cross for his actions at Dieppe. He was the first Sarnian to win the Military Cross in World War II. The official citation is written as follows: *Landing with the first wave of attackers from the Royal Hamilton Light Infantry, Ewener suffered chest wounds almost immediately on reaching White Beach. In spite of his wounds he organized his demolition party and attempted to cross the beach and esplanade, although exposed to extremely heavy machine gun fire, in order to reach a road block objective. When more of his men were wounded he carried a 75-pound charge of explosives as far as the Casino. Lieut. Ewener continued to show great determination throughout the entire operation and refused to leave until the last groups were taken from the beach.*

There were further reports from some of Ewener's men that William Ewener calmly dressed the wounds of others on the beach while awaiting evacuation. He was also reported to have carried a wounded sergeant and later a wounded corporal to safety in the face of heavy shell fire. One of those rescued in this fashion was believed to have been Ronnie Taylor of Sarnia. It was not until months later, in October 1942, that William disclosed to his parents how dangerously wounded he was, and that he was near death for some weeks after he returned to England from Dieppe. Modestly he wrote of his exploits that gained him the M.C., *"I must have carried on in a sort of semi-conscious daze."* Shortly after he landed on the beach, he was hit in the left chest just above the heart by a heavy machine gun slug or a light anti-tank gun bullet. The lead hit a rib and was deflected toward the breastbone and came out of the right chest. The concussion collapsed the upper part of his left lung. On the barge which returned him to England, he collapsed in the bottom of the boat which was, *"two-thirds full of water and blood, and I was yanked to safety."* He would remain in an English hospital from August 1942 until February of 1943. In August 1943, he would be promoted to Acting Captain, attached to the 30th Field Company, Royal Canadian Engineers.

> **Lance Corporal John Molyneax ("Red") Fisher**, along with his brother Bill, enlisted at the Sarnia recruiting office on the first morning it was opened on September 4, 1939 with the First Field Park Company. Prior to enlisting, John was employed as a tinsmith by Howard and Mundy for six years. After Dieppe, John wrote to his mother, Mrs. Frank Grant of 151 Proctor Street, only days later. Following is a re-cap of his experience: *He summarized his injuries as a piece of shrapnel in his right foot and possibly a piece of bone chipped off where he was struck by a shell fragment. He never mentioned his exploit of storming and knocking out a German machine gun nest that was cutting swaths in the ranks of the Canadians on the beach at Dieppe. Lance Corporal Fisher's only concern in the letter were fear that his mother would worry, sorrow at the number of pals he lost that day, a fountain pen he left behind at Dieppe and the sore foot he was nursing.*

For his actions on that day, Corporal Jack Fisher was awarded the Military Medal. The official citation is written as follows: *Immediately upon landing with L.-Sgt George Hickson (Kitchener, Ontario), Fisher was wounded in the foot and ordered out of action, but later took a sapper and tried to get into Dieppe. With high explosive charges he destroyed a machine gun position, killing the personnel. Unable to proceed because of heavy enemy fire he was returning to the machine gun position when he met an infantry officer with a large number of sticky bombs. These were carried forward and placed against a wall of a building in the esplanade. Fisher detonated them all, setting the partly-ruined building on fire. Returning to the Casino he organized the returning Royal Canadian Engineers personally for evacuation, and destroyed the remaining demolition packs in the building. During the whole operation, L.-Cpl. Fisher was an inspiration to all by his display of personal bravery and initiative, although wounded.*

Lance Corporal John Fisher received his medal from King George at an investiture ceremony in Buckingham Palace in October 1942. In 1943, he married a British woman, Mary Teresa O'Shea, who would arrive in Sarnia in August 1944, one of a number of "war brides". See Mary Teresa Fisher, page 544.

> **Sapper John (Jack) Stevens:** In mid-January 1943, the *Canadian (Sarnia) Observer* printed the story of the first Sarnia man to return home after participating in the Dieppe Raid. Following is a portion that story:

Two Boats Sink Under Sarnia Boy

Bearing scars of battle sustained in the historic Dieppe raid of August 19, 1942, Sapper John Stevens, 23, modest former drug clerk, is home with his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Charles Stevens, 260 Maxwell Street. Sapper Stevens arrived last night and was welcomed as he stepped from the train by his parents, two younger brothers, Jim, 15 and Bill 7... and a small group of relatives and friends.

Sapper Stevens was under fire for the full eight hours, a section of his unit of the Royal Canadian Engineers was in action on the beach. It was not until he had debarked on a tank landing craft that he was struck by mortar fire and machine gun shells from a dive bomber. As the tank carrier sank, a destroyer raced up and rescued the group of Canadians clinging to it. Aboard the destroyer Sapper Stevens was given sedatives, but a short time later a dive bomber scored a direct hit and the destroyer sank. Despite his wounds the Sarnia lad managed to swim until he was again picked up by a submarine chaser. Fifty Canadians, some wounded, were aboard when it tied up at a dock in an English port. The greater part of Sapper Stevens left ankle was shot away and part of the calf of his leg. He was also struck on the right elbow. Despite the nature of his wounds, he is able to walk with the aid of a cane. "We wanted action and we got it," he said. "The one thought of the boys over there is to get another chance to avenge those who fell."...

"We landed on the beach in front of the tobacco factory at 5:20 in the morning," Sapper Stevens said. "They knew we were coming. They had massed two divisions of approximately 40,000 to meet us." The Canadians who comprised at least 80 percent of the raiding party numbered no more than 5,000 to 6,000. The electric light plant was the particular objective of the Stevens party, consisting of 26 men under the command of Lieut. L. Watt, Toronto. Each man was heavily armed and carried explosives on his back. They had been instructed to blow up the plant, but didn't reach it.

A group of the Royal Regiment of Canada (Toronto) was assigned to protect the engineers as they pressed forward to their objective, but the Royals were practically wiped out by the heavily concentrated fire of the German defenders. For some time, Sapper Stevens assisted in the unloading of many Churchill tanks. It was the first time the Churchills had been in action. "We proved we could land 'em," he observed...

The young Sarnian paid tribute to the work of the R.A.F. and the R.C.A.F. "Nazi planes were falling all around us," he said. "We had mastery of the air." He also had words of praise for the Royal Navy and the doctors

and nurses. "When we returned to Britain we were met by a fully equipped hospital train," he said.

...Sapper Stevens said that men who never swam before, swam when precipitated into the water, after landing or rescuing craft had been sunk... The losses would have been heavier had it not been for the gallantry of the wounded, who lying on the beach fought a rear-guard covering action as the others were evacuated, the soldier said. He declined to mention the part he had played in this phase of the battle. "You can't beat the spirit of the British people, their morale is high. They couldn't do enough for us," he said.

John (Jack) Stevens later married and settled in Sarnia. Years later, his daughter Dee, married Thane Hughes, whose father (Private Lloyd George Harvey Hughes) had landed at Juno Beach on D-Day.

Sarnians at Dieppe: One year after the Dieppe raid, in mid-August of 1943, the *Canadian (Sarnia) Observer* wrote a feature listing some of the men from Sarnia who took part in the Dieppe Raid – at least 36 of them. Many of them were part of the Essex Scottish Regiment, which had many men from Sarnia and district. The Sarnians who took part in the raid included Capt. William A. Ewener (wounded, received Military Cross); John Fisher (won Military Medal); Privates John J. Hawkins, Roy Huggett, Harvey Huggett, Jack Stevens (wounded), Ronnie Taylor (wounded), William Black, John Crockett, and Charles Crockett; Corporal R.D. Taylor; Sappers John J. Stevens, Milton D. Sinasac, and Robert O. Soucie; Sgt. Cecil Charles Clarke and his two sons, Lance-Sgt. Jack Clarke and Corporal Reg Clarke; and Bombardier Michel Pruliere. Among the prisoners of war were Lieutenants Arthur M. Hueston, Neal M. Watson, and Thomas Doherty (did excellent work getting heavy tanks ashore); Corp. Grenville Ward; Gnr. N. Demeray; Pte. L. Date; and Malcom Moloy (Thedford). Reported missing were Corporals Jack Graham and Lyle H. Robertson; Sappers Glyn Jones, C.M. Blondin, Alvin J. Archer, D.A. Dunn, Frank R. Scriver, Russell P. Johns, "Chick" Hewitt, and Albert W.T. Brown; Sgt. C.J. Towler and others.

More information on Prisoners of War and Sarnia POW experiences, including descriptions by Lt. Neal Watson and Lt. Arthur Hueston, is on pages 513-517. Information on Sergeant John "Jack" Clarke, Corporal Jack Graham and Glyn Jones is in the biography section.

In October 1943, as part of a Victory Loan campaign, the *Canadian (Sarnia) Observer* printed a poem written by a young London, Ontario girl, Mona Gould. The youthful author wrote this moving tribute in memory of her older brother, Lt.-Col. Howard McTavish of London, Ontario. He had been killed on active service with the Royal Canadian Engineers in August of 1942 at Dieppe.

*This was my brother
At Dieppe,
Quietly a hero
Who gave his life
Like a gift,
Withholding nothing
His youth...his love...
His enjoyment of being alive...
His future, like a book
With half the pages still uncut
This was my brother
at Dieppe
The one who built me a dollhouse
When I was seven,
Complete to the last small picture frame,
Nothing forgotten
He was awfully good at fixing things,
At stepping into the breach when he was needed.
That's what he did at Dieppe
He was needed,
And even death must have been a little shamed
At his eagerness!*

In the days and months following the Dieppe raid, many of the planners, commanders and participants offered their assessments. Lord Mountbatten of Combined Operations said, *"It is impossible to overestimate the value of Dieppe. It was the turning point in the technique of invasion. Many vital lessons were learned. The men who died at Dieppe gave to the Allies the priceless secret of victory. For every man who died at Dieppe, at least ten or more must have been spared in the invasion of Normandy."*

Among the men who survived Dieppe, many insist they were shortchanged. One Canadian survivor said, *"Every man knew his job and was eager to get a crack at the enemy. We wanted to give a damn good show, to the world, to Canada and to the Germans. We were not afraid despite the odds, and we would do our jobs whatever we ran into when we landed. You can imagine our feelings when we were spotted and knew we were sitting ducks at the mercy of God and the Germans... Everything seemed to go wrong. I'll always remember the faces of the survivors, after the surrender, officers and men sitting on the beach among our dead, crying. We felt robbed of the chance to fight and show what we could do... On the beach where we landed, it was a massacre, a bloody mess."*^{6F}

Canadians return to Dieppe: September 3, 1944 was a solemn day for the men of the 2nd Canadian Infantry Division. A little over two years after assaulting Dieppe, the division returned to the place of its greatest single-day loss of the war. Very few of those soldiers were veterans of the original raid two years earlier. Every unit that had landed in 1942 had been virtually wiped out. Every regiment had to be painstakingly rebuilt, so on their return, each of the nine regiments included merely 25 or so survivors of the 1942 raid.

After a long and almost uneventful drive from Rouen, a halt was ordered outside city limits on the eve of August 31, 1944. The next morning, the division's lead elements entered Dieppe from the south receiving a tumultuous greeting from overjoyed citizens. Though it was feared that the Germans might put up a ferocious struggle for Dieppe, the Canadians encountered no Germans; the port town had been taken without a shot being fired.

On the morning of September 3 the survivors of the Dieppe attack attended religious services at the Canadian war cemetery on the southern outskirts of the town. On the day of the disastrous Dieppe Raid, and without being ordered by the Germans, the locals removed the hundreds of dead raiders, burying them in a cemetery they built that overlooked the beach. The people of Dieppe planned and recorded every plot with each deceased ID, and maintained the cemetery during the many long months of German occupation since the Canadian raid. In the cemetery, lay more than 700 of the Canadians killed on August 19, 1942. On that afternoon of September 3rd, 1944, the citizens of Dieppe officially welcomed their liberators as the entire division paraded through the main part of the town, led by the massed pipe bands of its Highland Regiment.^{6Z}

On September 27, 1944, the *Sarnia Observer* included a story about a local boy revisiting Dieppe, under the headline *Dieppe Raid Vet Returns*. **Sapper Dennis Mills**, the son of Mrs. Charles Mills (and the late Mr. Mills) of Victoria Avenue in Point Edward, was a member of the Canadian forces in the unsuccessful Dieppe raid, and was with the army that recaptured it. Dennis Mills was originally with the Lambton 11th Field Park Company, enlisting only five or six days after the war began. He would go overseas in the summer of 1940. As a member of a Field Company of the Royal Canadian Engineers, he would take part in the Dieppe Raid, and later, in the D-Day landing in June 1944. Following is a portion of Sapper Dennis Mill's letter to his mother about his revisit to Dieppe;

"The following day we were back in Dieppe. It seemed funny to walk around those streets that two years ago were so hostile; I went down to the beach almost to the very spot where we landed two years ago. Jerry had it well fortified, it was no wonder it was such a slaughter getting in there from the water. I am beginning to realize how lucky I was to get back from that raid... Yesterday morning all the Dieppe raid men held a memorial service at the cemetery for our dead comrades. The French people buried our boys and have kept up the graves very nicely. It is a pretty little cemetery not far from the water, and it is now all green grass with quantities of flowers. They say one French lady has visited it and placed fresh flowers on some of the graves almost every day for the past two years. There are about 800 of our boys buried there. The Germans must have guessed we would wish to visit the place because they had mines in the cemetery but it didn't do them any good."

Dieppe Commemoration: The Dieppe Canadian War Cemetery is located approximately five kilometres south of Dieppe, in the town of Hautôt-sur-Mer. The hillside cemetery is unique in that its headstones have been placed back to back in long double rows. The Germans buried these war dead, the same way they buried their own. After they liberated the region, the Allies chose not to disturb the graves. Today, the cemetery is maintained by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. Of the 944 members of the British and Allied Armed Forces interred at Dieppe, 707 are Canadians, most of them victims of the Dieppe Raid. One of those buried at Hautôt-sur-Mer is Sarnia's twenty-one year old Glyn Jones who was killed in the Dieppe raid.

Following the war, the town of Dieppe created a small park at the western end of the esplanade in which it has erected a memorial of its own. Standing in the centre of the *Square du Canada* (Canada Square), the Dieppe-Canada Monument is a testimony to the long and warm association between Canadians and the people of the region, the Normans, which has existed since Samuel de Champlain sailed to found New France. The names of people and events which have linked Canada and Normandy over the centuries have been recorded on the monument. Mounted on the wall behind it is a plaque that commemorates the Raid on Dieppe. Following is a translation of its inscription: ON THE 19TH OF AUGUST 1942 ON THE BEACHES OF DIEPPE OUR CANADIAN COUSINS MARKED WITH THEIR BLOOD THE ROAD TO OUR FINAL LIBERATION FORETELLING THUS THEIR VICTORIOUS RETURN ON SEPTEMBER 1, 1944.^{D, 8M}

Dieppe Veterans Remember in Sarnia: In mid-August 1973, more than 400 veterans from World War II gathered together in Sarnia for an annual three-day convention. The Dieppe Veterans and National POW's Association was held at the Canterbury Inn, Sarnia, where members shared stories and life experiences. Two men recalled some of their thoughts of the ill-fated Raid;

- Al Brown: *"Anyone says he wasn't scared during the raid just isn't human."* He added that after about one hour the constant fear numbs the body's nerve system. *"That certainly doesn't mean we got careless."*

- John Hewitt (of Sarnia): *"We could hear machine gun bullets splattering against the steel side of our landing barge. It's a feeling of overwhelming and absolute fear. But it had to be done and we were there."*

• **SARNIA INDUSTRY CONTRIBUTES TO THE WAR EFFORT:** By the spring of 1940, war production in Canada was expanding rapidly. By the end of the war, Canada had produced millions of shells, thousands of airplanes, hundreds of warships, and hundreds of trucks – more than Germany, Italy, and Japan combined. Nearly thirty Crown corporations were established to manufacture everything from war-related polymers to weapons of war, and to streamline the extraction and production of raw materials.^{4H} Sarnia, as an innovator in industry, made very significant contributions to the ultimate success of the Allies.

When the Japanese entered World War II, they captured the majority of the Allies' natural latex and natural rubber supplies from Southeast Asia, cutting off the western world's supply. Just how serious the situation was can be summed up by a report to the American Congress which said, "of all the critical and strategic materials, rubber is the one that presents the greatest threat to the safety of our nation and the success of the Allied cause... if we fail to secure quickly a large new rubber supply, our war effort and our democratic economy will both collapse."^N Canada and its allies scrambled to create a synthetic rubber plant to fuel war needs, a top priority for the success of the war effort. Canadian Prime Minister Mackenzie King went to Washington for a summit meeting with U.S. President Franklin Roosevelt. The leaders decided to launch a crash program aimed at building several synthetic rubber plants. Sarnia, described in a 1939 letter to the editor of the *Observer* as a "quiet little market town", was one of those selected as the site to spearhead development of synthetic petroleum-based rubbers for war materials.

Polymer Corporation Limited: Sarnia was chosen as a site because its Imperial Oil refinery (established in Sarnia in 1897) would be a primary source for some of the chemicals needed; and the transportation network, with access to rail and the St. Clair River, allowed for efficient transportation of other raw materials as well as the finished product. Polymer Corporation Limited was built at the request of the Government of Canada in February of 1942 as a Crown Corporation, at a cost of \$50 million. In an incredible, almost impossible industrial and chemical engineering achievement, Polymer Corporation began production of rubber in the summer of 1943, just 13 months after plant construction began.

It was the beginning of Sarnia's **Chemical Valley**. The Polymer plant site covered eight city blocks and produced 5000 tons of artificial rubber from oil every month. The product was used in everything from the tires of vehicles and warplanes, inflatable boats, piping, gaskets, electrical cable insulation, and shock absorbers to airplane parts. Much of it was sold to the U.S. as part of the common war effort. The establishment of Polymer Corporation and **Dow Chemical** (which produced styrene) to manufacture synthetic rubber during the war was a great success and began Sarnia's rise as a major petrochemical industry. Over the years ownership of the plant passed from Polymer to Polysar, to Bayer and Lanxess.

A whole new suburb would develop across from the gates of Polymer, to provide housing for the thousands of construction workers and tradesmen who were employed in excavating, carpentering and pipe-fitting, and for the workers in the synthetic rubber plant and their families. Known as the village of **Blue Water**, it began as barracks and bunkhouses, and grew to a sprawling collection of over 500 homes, 26 businesses including a hotel, grocery

store, clothing store, barber and beauty shops, two schools (Bluewater Public and St. Thomas Aquinas) and two churches. The name Blue Water was adopted in 1944 with the establishment of a post office. The village was annexed to the City of Sarnia in 1951. The village flourished even after the war, having a population of over 2,300 in 1956, many of them French-Canadians, along with scores from Italy, Greece, Portugal and other countries. As heavy industry expanded in the years after, and with resident's health and safety concerns, the Blue Water residents were eventually all relocated by 1966 and the village was demolished.^{N, z}

Clarence Decatur Howe was born in Waltham, Massachusetts in 1886. Prior to World War II, **C.D. Howe** made his mark in Canada first as a teacher of civil engineering at Dalhousie University in Halifax (1908-13), then with his own engineering firm in Port Arthur (Thunder Bay), specializing in designing and building grain elevators across Canada's west and across the world. Entering politics in 1935, he was elected as a Liberal MP in 1936 where he would go on to reorganize the Canadian harbour system, restructure the Canadian National Railway (CNR), help create the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), and help launch Trans-Canada Airlines (which would become Air Canada).

In 1940, Prime Minister William Mackenzie King appointed Howe to head the Department of Munitions and Supplies, tasked with running Canada's war-production program, leading Canadian industry in retooling for the war effort. Assisted by a team of leading industrialists and top businesspersons (known as Howe's "dollar-a-year-men", because they were paid a token government salary of \$1 a year), his department created dozens of Crown corporations, uniquely Canadian government-owned businesses. He led Canadian industry's effort to manufacture vast amounts of supplies of every kind—ships, heavy bombers, anti-submarine vessels, motor vehicles, weapons, ammunition, radar and radio equipment—for the Canadian armed forces and for Britain and the Allies as well. C.D. Howe played a central role in establishing Polymer Corporation Limited in Sarnia, having "the guts, the strength to go ahead when it needs to be done," according to author Matthew Bellamy, who wrote *Profiting the Crown*, about Polymer Corporation.^N When the war ended, it was Howe who decided to keep Polymer operating as a Crown corporation, with the aim of making Sarnia the centre of a new Canadian chemical industry.

In 1944, C.D. Howe was put in charge of a new portfolio, the Department of Reconstruction. He was tasked with reorganizing Canadian industry back into a peacetime free-enterprise economy (avoiding widespread unemployment and inflation), and ensuring employment for demobilized soldiers. In 1948, he was appointed Minister of Trade and Commerce, in charge of armament production programmes during the Korean War and in the early stages of the Cold War. Over his years of service, he had developed the reputation as the most successful businessman-politician of his day, becoming known as the "Minister of Everything".^{N, 2I, 2N, 3F, 6Z} More information on C.D. Howe is on page 536.

Imperial Oil Company: The Petroleum industry was established in the Sarnia area in 1858, with the discovery of crude oil at Oil Springs. In 1897, Imperial Oil Company moved to Sarnia from Petrolia and built a refinery, and a pipeline that linked it to the Petrolia oil fields. Sarnia was an ideal location for Imperial Oil's relocation with a five-year tax break from Sarnia's town council; crude oil arriving by pipeline from Petrolia and Oil Springs; and easy access to shipping in the port.

When Imperial Oil moved to Sarnia from Petrolia, it became a major employer in the city. During wartime, not only did many of its employees take leaves to serve their country, the company also produced materials for war. Paul Spearman, a 40-year Sarnia employee who had a keen interest in researching the role that Imperial's Sarnia site played in Canada's history said, "During World War I, this site supplied wax, grease and lube oil to the war effort. Then during World War II, we manufactured approximately three million steel barrels in our drum plant. These drums, filled with product, were used on the beaches of Normandy and islands in the Pacific. Not many people know that."

The Imperial Oil Review was a magazine published in Toronto to inform shareholders and employees about the petroleum industry in Canada, and was a medium to exchange their opinions, suggestions and experiences; and to acquaint them with interesting and useful information about the Company's business. The first volume was published in May 1917, and continued every year (either monthly, every second month or quarterly) until 2014. In December 1918, the *Imperial Oil Review* printed an Honour Roll with the names of 545 "Employees of Imperial Oil who served with the Allied Forces". Among the names were 24 who made the supreme sacrifice. Of those fallen soldiers, six were from Sarnia—Charles Barnes, William G.H. Bendall, Edward F. Causley, Peter J. Ford, William N. Hanna, and Alfred Weston. Their bios are included in the World War I section of this Project.

During World War II, for those employees who joined the armed services, Imperial had one of the most generous policies of any Canadian company to support its employees. Employees who enlisted received one month's salary as a bonus. Leaves of absence were granted with full accrual of service credits and "top-up" pay was provided to cover the difference between the lower military pay and what the employee had received from the company. There was also a guarantee of re-employment at the end of hostilities.^{3x}

In April 1949, the President of Imperial Oil Company unveiled a Memorial Plaque at the Sarnia refinery. The bronze Sarnia Refinery Plaque lists the names of twenty-four Imperial Oil employees who made the ultimate sacrifice in World War II. Of those twenty-four names, 21 of them are inscribed on the Sarnia cenotaph (Frederick H. Irwin, W. John Rogers, and Jack Thurlow are not on the Sarnia cenotaph). The bios of all twenty-four are included in this Project. The transcribed "Sarnia Refinery Plaque" is included in this Project on page 1164.

Over time, the location of the plaque became a mystery. It was not until 2019 that Kristina Zimmer, the Public and Government Affairs Manager at Imperial in Sarnia, located the plaque. "It's mounted on a wall outside a set of rarely used exit doors that face Clifford St," Zimmer explained. "I can understand why people wouldn't notice it." Kristina made a second discovery in November 2019 – a second identical plaque. In November 2020, Imperial donated this second plaque to Royal Canadian Legion, Sarnia Branch 62.



Electric Auto-Lite Limited: Established in 1929, Electric Auto-Lite in Sarnia made a major contribution to the war effort. Throughout the war, the company manufactured millions of vitally important war products for the motorized sections of the Canadian First Army. Principal products included generators, starting motors, electric distributors, ignition coils, circuit breakers, voltage regulators, spark plugs, battery cables, and miscellaneous items such as dashlamps, filters, aerial bases, fuse blocks and fan extensions. These products were used in military vehicles, self-propelled gun mounts, gun tractors, tanks and heavy-duty trucks. During the war, more than 50 percent of the workers in the Auto-Lite plant were women, each one individually trained to handle high precision jobs. Electric Auto-Lite was later renamed Prestolite and functioned until 1978.

Holmes Foundry was opened in 1918 at Exmouth and Christina Streets, originally owned by Michigan industrialists Sen. Lyman Holmes and Louis G. Blunt, and was called Holmes Blunt Limited. In the early days, Ford Motor Company contracted the plant for a steady supply of engine block castings. In March 1937, workers participated in one of the rare sit-down strikes in Canadian history. It ended 48 hours later in a riot, when workers were beaten and driven from the Holmes Plant by an armed mob of local goons. During World War II, Holmes Foundry made engine blocks for Ford-built army trucks. John Blunt of Sarnia, the son of the original owner who later took over the foundry, served with the U.S. Navy during the war.

American Motors (AMC) acquired twenty-five percent interest in the plant in January 1966. At that time, the plant had supplied AMC with motor castings (blocks) since 1962. In July 1970, American Motors acquired 100% of Holmes Foundry. At one time, there were three separate operations in Sarnia at the Holmes facility: the Caposite Insulation Plant (closed in 1974); the Holmes Insulation Plant (moved to Scott Road around 1974); and the Holmes Foundry. It was not until October of 1981 that Holmes Foundry finally became a Division of American Motors, Canada. With the acquisition of AMC, Chrysler Corporation took ownership of the Holmes Foundry facility and its manufacturing business in 1987. Chrysler scheduled the operation for closure on September 16, 1988. Unfortunately, Holmes Foundry left a dark legacy in Sarnia due to the poor working conditions and violations of provincial health and safety laws. As early as 1952, Ministry of Health inspections conducted at Holmes Foundry raised concerns

about “silica, noise and smoke”. Many of the workers and family members would suffer an array of illnesses including respiratory diseases, leukemia, various cancers and mesothelioma.

- **CAMP IPPERWASH:** In September 1942, Camp Ipperwash opened, the latest and most up-to-date military training centre, located between Forest and Thedford. Originally it was planned as the A-29 Advanced Infantry Training Centre, but it would become the home of No. 10 Basic Training Centre, which had been transferred from Kitchener. It was a basic training centre for infantry troops. Approximately 48 buildings were to be erected on the 2,200+-acre site at an expense of \$1.2 million, with plans to accommodate 2,000 men for basic training. Structures were to include sleeping quarters, mess halls, a dental clinic, a 150-bed hospital, a nurses’ residence, officers’ buildings, a fire hall, quartermaster stores, a supply depot, a salvage storehouse, an engineers’ workshop, N.C.O.’s quarters, Canadian Women’s Army Corps buildings, lecture halls, a large drill hall, a recreational building, a guard house, a sewage disposal plant, and a water pumping and purification plant.

The first troops from Listowel and Kitchener moved into the camp over the Thanksgiving Day weekend in mid-October 1942. Work had begun on Camp Ipperwash on April 27, 1942, and in late November of 1942, Camp Ipperwash was formally opened by the Honourable Colonel J.L. Ralston, Minister of National Defence. One of the comments made by Colonel Ralston to the troops was, “The Canadian Army cannot be the biggest army in the world, but it can be the world’s best, and above all, remember that the citizens of Canada are not only standing behind you, they are standing beside you all the way.”

Camp Ipperwash had been on a parcel of land comprising the Stoney Point Reserve, controlled by the Chippewas Stoney Point First Nation. In a contentious decision, the Department of National Defence used the War Measures Act to expropriate the land from the Department of Indian Affairs, against the wishes of the Chippewas. The government then moved some 15 families who had previously resided in the area further west to the Kettle Point Reserve. The Kettle Point band, which supported itself by fishing, acting as guides, and cutting wood in the winter, swelled to approximately 400 members, making it larger than the Sarnia Reserve. The 1941 expropriation agreement indicated that the property would be returned to the First Nations when it was no longer needed for a military purpose. Although the First Nations rejected the offer, the government moved forward with the expropriation.

After the war, the government did not return the land to the First Nations as promised, and continued to use it as a training facility for several decades. It was not until approximately 15 years after the Ipperwash Crisis of the mid-1990s that the government finally relented and offered to return the land to the Chippewas of Kettle and Stoney Point. In 2015, the federal government finally reached a formal agreement to return the land that was ratified by the First Nations community in September of that year. The final settlement returning the Camp Ipperwash lands to the Chippewas of Kettle and Stony Point First Nation, along with \$95 million compensation was officially signed in mid-April 2016. The federal government finally returned Ipperwash Provincial Park to the First Nations in 2020.

- **THE ROYAL CANADIAN AIR FORCE:** At the start of the Second World War, the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF), which had been established on April 1, 1924, had only 4,000 personnel and fifteen squadrons up to strength for mobilization (twelve for home defence and three for overseas service), totaling 230 aircraft. By the early part of 1944, the RCAF had reached its peak strength, equipped with seventy-eight squadrons in service (43 for home service and 35 for overseas), becoming the fourth largest allied air force in the world. Approximately 249,000 Canadian men and women would serve around the globe with the RCAF in World War II, with a significant number of them as part of British RAF units (Sarnians would serve in RCAF, RAF and RNZAF squadrons).

At the start of the war, there was no shortage of Canadian volunteers for the air force, both to serve in the established RAF and the growing RCAF, in fact, more Canadians would serve in the RAF than in Canadian squadrons.^{4H} Memories of family members who had survived the horrors of the trenches of the Great War kept many from enlisting in the infantry. Tales of Sopwith Camels, Fokkers and other First World War aircraft, and the daring feats of Canadian aces like William Barker, Roy Brown and Billy Bishop, made tens of thousands of Canadians enamoured with the romance of flight. Thousands of eager Canadians joined the woefully underequipped Royal Canadian Air Force. With so few openings, many went overseas and joined Britain’s Royal Air Force, many eager to be fighter pilots (though most would end up in Bomber Command).^{2S, 3G, 4H, 6Z}

Canadian airmen that perished in the Second World War included: approximately 10,000 in Bomber Command; another 4,000 in all the other RCAF commands or lost as prisoners of war; and close to an equal number died in training accidents; for a total of 17,101 killed. Only 1,555 airmen were wounded, which was a far lower number than the army casualty figures. The comparatively small number of wounded attests to the all-or-nothing

nature of the air war, in which most crews died together in fiery crashes.^{D, E, 2I, 2S, 4H, 4I, 6Z}

RCAF Organization: During the war, the RCAF comprised three main parts: the Home War Establishment (Western and Eastern Air Commands); Overseas War Establishment; and the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan. Each part of the RCAF provided a different service. **Home War Establishment** was responsible for protecting Canada's coasts from enemy attack and for protecting allied shipping. **Overseas War Establishment** involved operational duties in Britain, northwest Europe, the Mediterranean, North Africa, and Southeast Asia, with squadrons participating in most roles, including fighters, bombing, reconnaissance, coastal defence, anti-submarine, transport, army co-operation and others. RCAF squadrons were also involved in operations in Egypt, Sicily, Italy, Malta, Ceylon, India and Burma.

British Commonwealth Air Training Plan (BCATP): Under a deal signed on December 17, 1939—in the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan (BCATP)—Canada agreed to provide facilities and training for airmen from every part of the Commonwealth, including Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and Canada. Canada was chosen as the training country because of its abundance of wide-open spaces, good flying conditions, and the fact it was far from the dangers of enemy activity. Canada had to recruit instructors, build air bases, acquire aircraft, and develop training schools for different specialties.

Training facilities throughout Canada turned out a steady stream of pilots and aircrew for overseas operational service. BCATP facilities included training schools, elementary and service flying training schools, flying instructor's schools, general reconnaissance schools, air navigation schools, air observer schools, wireless schools, bombing and gunnery schools, flight engineers' schools, and radar schools among others. In its five-and-a-half-year lifespan—from December 1939 to March 1945—the BCATP would cost the Canadian government nearly \$2 billion and employ 104,000 Canadians at 230 training sites from coast to coast and in every province.

The first BCATP graduates went overseas in November 1940, and ultimately, over 131,500 airmen—pilots, navigators, bomb aimers, wireless operators, air gunners, air observers, and flight engineers—graduated from the BCATP, more than half of them—over 70,000, were Canadian. BCATP trained and supplied air and ground crew personnel to Commonwealth Bomber Command, Fighter Command and Ferry Command. Because the Plan also attracted American aviators before the U.S. entered the war in 1941, it trained nearly 2,000 aircrew who, after Pearl Harbor, would return to the U.S. and form the nucleus of the U.S. Army Air Force. Winston Churchill would say of the BCATP, it was “one of the major factors, and possibly the decisive factor of the war.”

The training site at Brandon, Manitoba, is now the **Commonwealth Air Training Plan Museum**, a National Historic Site. Located on the grounds of the Museum, is the “They Grew Not Old” Memorial, unveiled on September 10, 2014, a 300 foot long black granite wall etched with the names of over 19,000 fallen members of the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) and fallen Canadians who served in any Commonwealth air force, including the Royal Air Force (RAF), Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) and Royal New Zealand Air Force (RNZAF).^{E, 2I, 2S, 4H, 4Q, 6Z, 9W}

Aircrews in Commonwealth squadrons were normally of several nationalities. In fact, there were more Canadians serving in the Royal Air Force (RAF) than there were in the RCAF. Conversely, no RCAF squadron overseas was composed entirely of Canadians. Most of them had a number of Britons, Australians, New Zealanders, South Africans and other Commonwealth nationalities, as well as a few Americans, Poles, French or others.^{8M}

RCAF Training: The RCAF prided itself on maintaining the highest educational standards of the three services, as air war required intense training. The majority of Canadian airmen that graduated from the air training program in Canada (BCATP), would serve in bombers, and Canadians contributed the second highest numbers to Bomber Command, forming a third of the force by the end of the war.

There were 94 BCATP training schools at 231 sites across Canada. At these specialist schools for pilots, air observers, bombers, gunners, wireless operators, and navigators, flight training was carried out in older, undersized planes such as Harvards, Tiger Moths and Avro Ansons. For example, Elementary Flying Training Schools commonly used Tiger Moth, Fleet Finch and Fairchild Cornell aircraft. The more advanced Service Flying Training Schools used single-engine North American Harvards (fighter pilot trainees) or twin-engine Avro Ansons, Cessna Cranes or Airspeed Oxfords (for bomber, coastal and transport trainees).

Inexperienced pilots and Canadian weather resulted in accidents of all kinds, and approximately 3,000 training deaths (including Sarnians) occurred in the BCATP schools. The pilot training was the longest and most difficult. For those who were successful in their Elementary Flying Training and their Service Flying Training (a

minimum of 25 weeks at the start of the war), they would receive their “wings,” usually pinned on by a senior RCAF official or a Great War ace.

They would then cross the Atlantic to Britain, and be sent to the RCAF Personnel Receiving Centre (PRC) in Bournemouth, England, and separated into fighter and bomber pilots. From there, the flyers would be sent off to Advanced Flying Units (AFU) for further training, and be introduced to two- and four-engine bombers. Instructors tried to put crews into the air for eighty hours of flying, with much of this being, “circuits and bumps” (takeoffs and landings) and “stooging” around England. The combination of using outdated, battle-scarred two-engine bombers that were prone to mechanical failure, along with pilot error, resulted in hundreds of crews killed during training. One type of out-dated aircraft used for training was the Whitley bomber—it was responsible for the loss of a number of airmen—aircrew referred to it as the “flying coffin”.

The next step was to form into flying crews, which was done at the RAF Operational Training Units (OTU) in a rather unique and “unmilitary-like” fashion. Navigators, wireless operators, gunners, bomb aimers, flight engineers, and pilots were herded into a hanger, loosened up with a bit of beer, then the men were left to decide their own crews in a rather haphazard way that somewhat resembled a high school dance. New close-knit families were born, a crew of seven in the big, four-engine planes that were further welded together over time by their sharing of danger and reliance upon one another for survival. After crewing up, the finishing school was the Heavy Conversion Unit (HCU), where the crews were allowed to fly the precious four-engine Short Stirlings, Handley Page Halifax and Avro Lancaster bombers. The Lancaster was by far the better of the aircraft – it could fly faster, higher, and carry a heavier bombload in its massive bomb bay. There was no easy way to learn how to fly the heavy bombers, and again, training crews suffered a litany of disasters, crashes and deaths. By the end of the war, Bomber Command lost over 8,000 Allied airmen who were killed in training or by accidents alone. At least nine of Sarnia’s fallen bombers’ deaths occurred during training.^{D, 4H, 6Z}

RAF Ferry Command: This was formed in July 1941 to “ferry” aircraft from American and Canadian factories to the front line squadrons overseas. Aircraft were first transported to Dorval, Quebec and then flown to RCAF Station Gander in Newfoundland for the trans-Atlantic flight to the United Kingdom. The Command’s operational area was the North Atlantic, tasked with bringing the larger planes, the twin-engine and four-engine aircraft that had the range to do the trip over the ocean. This was pioneering work in 1940: the distance, inadequate navigation instruments and frequent bad weather over the Atlantic were considered too much of a risk. The programme became so successful that in 1941 a second route was created for smaller-range aircraft, which called for re-fueling at bases in Labrador, Greenland and Iceland. A third route, the South Route, would link the U.S. to Egypt.

In March 1943, Ferry Command was reorganized when all ferrying functions were grouped under a single command, so Ferry Command became No. 45 (Atlantic Transport) Group of the RAF’s Transport Command, still headquartered in Dorval. Once the planes were delivered overseas, the crews were flown back to Canada for the next run. Trans-Canada Airlines (TCA), bought a few Lancasters and modified them to carry passengers and freight. This was the forerunner of Air Canada and the company’s first transatlantic flights. During the war, over 9,000 aircraft were ferried across the Atlantic to Allied fighter, bomber, maritime patrol and transportation squadrons.^{3F} At least one Sarnian lost his life as part of Ferry Command, F/O Melvin Ramsay.

BOMBER COMMAND: When the Second World War began, the RCAF had one bomber squadron. It had been formed at Halifax on September 5, 1939, four days after Germany’s invasion of Poland and five days before Canada declared war on Germany. No. 10 Squadron was equipped with obsolete, two-man, open-cockpit Westland Wapiti biplanes, which could carry a 260-kilogram bomb load 850 kilometres.^{8M}

During the course of the war, one of this country’s most significant contributions was the approximately 50,000 Canadians who served with RCAF and RAF Bomber Command operations overseas. Next to Britain, Canada was the largest contributor to Bomber Command, making up more than a third of all of Bomber Command personnel (approximately 125,000 Commonwealth personnel would serve in Bomber Command).

Under pressure from the Canadian Government, who wanted their own identifiable presence in Allied air operations, an all-Canadian group was formed. **No. 6 (RCAF) Bomber Group** was activated in early January 1943, predominantly manned by Canadian officers and crew. Initially, three of the earlier-formed squadrons flew two-engine Handley Page Hampdens. With time, most of the No. 6 Group squadrons were flying twin-engine Vickers Wellingtons, and some the four-engine Halifax heavy bombers. With time, all the Canadian squadrons began to convert over to the “heavies”, four-engine Handley Page Halifax (Mark II and Mark V) and Avro Lancaster heavy

bombers. The Lancaster could carry an 8,165-kilogram bomb load four thousand kilometres. The Halifax's were inferior aircraft to the Lancaster in just about every category save one: they had larger and better-placed escape hatches. Poorly assembled, with a lower operational ceiling than the Lancaster, slower, and with an inferior bomb-carrying capacity, they were cold and uncomfortable. Worse, they could be highly dangerous to their crews. Their exhaust flames were easily seen at night, they offered poor downward vision, their tail assemblies were badly designed, and their controls were too sensitive for the sort of violent manoeuvres required to evade night fighters. Loss rates of Halifax aircraft were consistently higher than the Lancasters.



Halifax Bomber



Wellington Bomber



Lancaster Bomber

The No. 6 (RCAF) Bomber Group headquarters was at Allerton Hall (known to airmen as “Castle Dismal”), a rambling, seventy-five-room mansion near Knaresborough. The 6 Group squadrons were spread out over a number of airfields in the Yorkshire area in the north of England. Consequently, the Canadians had to fly at least half an hour longer than RAF squadrons stationed further south in order to reach their objectives. Between the Canadian bases and the North Sea, was a range of hills with a few peaks as high as 450 metres. Fully loaded bombers taking off for a night's mission had to clear these hills, sometimes in fog or low cloud, while bombers returning from long and grueling night flights had to avoid them while searching for their home fields. The extra distance put considerable strain on crews who were already in the air for six or seven hours, especially if returning after being shot up and sustaining damage. The No. 6 Group grew to contribute 15 RCAF heavy bomber squadrons to RAF Bomber Command.

No. 6 Bomber Group would launch more than 40,800 sorties over enemy territory (including Germany, North Africa, Sicily and Italy); drop a total of over 126,000 tons of bombs; and lose 814 aircraft. During the course of the war, approximately 8,000 decorations for bravery were awarded to No. 6 Group aircrew. At least 28 of Sarnia's fallen airmen served with No. 6 Group squadrons including six from No. 419 Squadron, five from No. 426 Squadron, four from No. 431 Squadron, three from No. 425 Squadron, two from No. 429 Squadron and one from 405 Squadron (a Pathfinder Squadron).

The **Pathfinder Force** was made up of experienced, hand-picked crews from bomber squadrons with elite navigational abilities. These aerial rangers, equipped with the latest target-finding technologies, were the spearhead of the bomber stream, arriving first over the target and dropping coloured flares to pinpoint and highlight the area to be bombed by the follow-on force. At least three of Sarnia's fallen served in Pathfinder Squadrons – Gordon Fordyce (RAF 156 Sq.), Curtis Goring (RCAF 405 Sq.), and Charles Nash (RAF 83 Sq.).^{D, 2S, 3F, 4B, 4H, 4I, 6Z}

The men who served in Bomber Command faced some of **the most dangerous conditions** of anyone fighting in the war. The odds of survival were slim, especially early in the war. As casualties rose, it meant that more and more inexperienced green aircrews were thrust into the front lines. A veteran sergeant noted that, *“Novice crews didn’t get the good kites. They were reserved for the ‘old-timers’ who had developed the habit of returning them.”* A large proportion of aircrews were shot down in their first couple of sorties; after some eighteen months of training and tens of thousands of dollars expended. A Canadian airman observed the frantic pace, *“New crews arrived and went missing before you had the chance to know them.”* It took time to learn how to survive in the air. Experience saved lives, but luck eventually had to run out.

The bomber crews went “over the top” two or three times a week in a relentless battle of attrition. The risks were so high that almost half of all aircrew never made it to the end of their tour. For the first three years of the war, the service career of an airman was to be 200 operational hours, after which he was pulled from the front lines and made a trainer or staff officer. In August 1942 it was changed, the regular duration for a “tour” of duty became 30 combat sorties. Reaching that plateau merely entitled an airman to a six-month rest from operations (often instructing at a training station in Britain, or even sent back to Canada) and then a return to combat for a second tour of 20 operations. When an airman completed his first tour, he received his gold-plated Operational Wings—they were worn with pride; they had been earned the hard way. By mid-1943, airmen in bomber command had a 17 percent chance of completing a thirty-operation tour, while only 2.5 percent saw a second tour to the end. The chances of surviving a tour of 45 sortie operations in the winter of 1943/44 was about 15%, lower than that in the trenches of the First World War. By the wars end, almost half of all aircrew never made it to the end of their tour.^{D, 2S, 3F, 4B, 4H, 4I, 6D}

The night-bomber war was both a highly technical and a physically and emotionally demanding business. It continued to grow more complex as airmen began to rely more and more heavily on electronic measures to find targets, and countermeasures to avoid radar-equipped German night-fighters. The Germans, well aware of Bomber Commands efforts to hide their aircraft or to hit their targets more effectively, tried to neutralize every new device and technique that the British came up with. Thus the night-bomber war became a highly technical war of measure and countermeasure. Night-fighter detection devices, bomber-borne radar devices, jamming, radar detection, electronic countermeasures, spoof raids, ghost raids, broadcasting fake ground-controller instructions were some of the highly technical tasks carried out in aid of the bombers. It was not surprising then that the novice “sprog” crews, who had not even honed basic skills, were disadvantaged in the night-bomber war. Statistics showed that sprog crews were far more likely to be lost on operations than those who served at least half of their normal thirty-mission tour of duty.^{6Z}

The seven-man bomber crews in Halifaxes and Lancasters worked together under great pressure on their night sorties. Take-offs were often tense, with a roaring aircraft loaded with tons of bombs and more than 6,000 litres of highly-flammable aviation gasoline racing down the runway. The winter weather over northern Europe was usually bad; high winds, cloud, and icing of aircraft control surfaces made navigation a nightmare. At high altitudes, the aircrew shivered in sub-zero temperatures, their oxygen masks sometimes freezing up. Flying in pitch darkness, without lights, there was always the danger of bombers colliding in mid-air. As they flew toward their target, they faced anti-aircraft batteries over coastal areas and over major urban centres. German radar stations tracked the incoming bombers and directed German night fighters (Messerschmitt Bf 110 and 109’s, Junkers Ju 88’s and Focke-Wulf Fw 190’s) who waited for them in the night skies over Europe. After the bombers passed through the fighter screen, they encountered the defences over their target areas, which were protected by additional fighters, and anti-aircraft guns that turned the skies into a hail of shrapnel. Powerful searchlights could illuminate the bombers for the flak guns, and “coning” (when multiple searchlights caught a bomber) could blind the airmen. Planes that were “coned” had at most a few seconds to go into a deep dive before the flak guns took aim. The dive itself was no guarantee of salvation. The searchlights sometimes followed the plane down. Other times, pilots shook the searchlights only to be trapped in the dive. Unable to pull up, they crashed into the ground, and some crashed into another bomber. Evading the enemy defenses made for challenging flying that sometimes caused aircraft to go into a spin, while the pilot fought for control. Escape from a damaged plane was difficult and many of the Canadians who survived being shot down over enemy territory would become prisoners of war.^D

Of those who were flying Bomber Command at the beginning of the war, only ten percent survived to the end of the war. Nearly 10,000 Canadian airmen perished in the Bomber Command offensive against Germany and occupied Europe.^{D, 2S, 3F, 4B, 4H, 6Z, 9N} At least sixty young men from Sarnia lost their lives while serving in Bomber Command, representing approximately 66% of Sarnia’s RCAF fallen.

A Bomber Sortie: The flight by a combat aircraft on a mission against the enemy was referred to as a “sortie.” A typical heavy bomber sortie began with a call from air force group headquarters to the squadron usually in the early morning. An operational board would be updated with the list of crews scheduled to fly that night, but no target would be announced. Usually in the early afternoon if it was a night operation, the aircrews would meet in the briefing room. There, lead briefers would describe the target and its importance, and reveal a large map on which pins and coloured strings were arranged to indicate the path leading to the target. A meteorological officer would provide a weather briefing that included expected cloud cover, potential icing situations and wind speeds. An armament officer discussed their bomb loads. When the briefing was over, the aircrews would have several hours to kill. In these anxious hours, some tried to sleep but rest was difficult. Some sat and listened to the radio in the mess or played billiards. Many would write letters for mothers, fathers, and children, searching for phrases and sentiments that would convey comfort should they fall.

Later in the day, most of the aircrews were driven out to check their “birds,” which were being readied and “bombed up,” by the dedicated ground crews. Along with loading the bombers with “Cookies” and incendiaries, ground crews pumped thousands of gallons of petrol into the fuel tanks, loaded oxygen cylinders for the breathing apparatus, and aero-mechanics scoured engine, instrument, and hydraulic systems for faults, and completed repairs.

Since the airmen slept by day and flew by night, the scheduled flying crews were given a solid breakfast at dinner time, around 7:00 p.m., usually real eggs and bacon. After eating, they donned their gear and waited to be transported to the planes. Crew members handed over their wallets and personal effects to the intelligence section for safekeeping, in case they were shot down and captured by the enemy. Along with their flying suits, airmen were outfitted with warm flying boots, a heavy white turtleneck sweater, white silk gloves, a Mae West life jacket, a leather helmet with earphones built in, an oxygen mask with intercom system built in, escape kits (with foreign currency, maps, matches, razors, food, gum, and a compass), and a parachute. When the sun went down, the aircrews would convene at their aircraft and wait for a sign that the operation was either a go or cancelled due to bad weather. As tensions rose, airmen would check out their aircraft. Most were superstitious so they ensured that they had their lucky charms or lucky clothing items, and they would talk or daydream while under the wings, and most men chain-smoked while they waited. Then, the control tower would fire a green flare to indicate that the operation was on. They each urinated on the tailwheel for good luck and then the seven-man crew would climb into the belly hatches of their aircraft for start-up.^{4B, 4H, 6Z, 9K, 9W}

The Halifax and Lancaster bomber engines rumbled and roared as each one taxied out of their dispersal area. As each bomber reached the takeoff point, the pilot stood on the brakes and ran up the throttle. After receiving the thumbs-up signal from their ground crews, brakes were released, and each heavily loaded bomber would build up its speed down the runway. One pilot said about takeoff, *“It’s funny how you take a last look around at the sun and trees, things you don’t ordinarily notice. And you think some. About your first day at school or the first time you went skating. You also think about the folks at home and how they’re going to feel if you go missing.”* When a bomber was at its maximum bomb load and fuel, and without hydraulic controls, the airmen worked hard to get the bomber off the ground. As one flying officer described the difficulty, *“you had to lift off the ground by brute force, and by the time you were airborne you had worked up a real sweat.”* If all went well, the bomber would pull away from the runway and into the darkening sky over southern or eastern England.

The first bombers circled the airfield waiting for the rest of the squadron, then all the planes flew together along the coast to the crossing point, before turning east. The bombers were not pressurized and only poorly heated, and it was incredibly loud inside, so it was a miserable and frigid flight for the seven crew members who sat for hours on end, with little chance to stretch or move. When the bomber reached 10,000 feet, all were ordered to put on their oxygen masks. If deprived of oxygen over 10,000 feet, they would quickly lose consciousness and possibly die. Squadrons of bombers from bases across Britain formed up into the **bomber stream**, a dense formation of planes flying through the night that could stretch back dozens of kilometres. The first ever “thousand-bomber raid” took place on the night of May 30/31, 1942, when more than 1,000 RAF aircraft flew together in formation, a “bomber stream” to attack the German city of Cologne. At least one Sarnian, Warrant Officer James Quinn (included in this Project), would take part in this raid.

As engines droned away, each man performed his assigned task. The wireless air gunner (WAG) monitored the radio and peered out into the dark to try to spot German night fighters. The navigator watched his Gee set or his Oboe or his H2S (navigational devices) or took star shots. Gunners peered into the darkness, hoping to get a glimpse of an approaching night fighter in time to warn the pilot. The pilot would try to keep the aircraft flying straight and

true in the night air, usually made turbulent by the passage of hundreds of other bombers. If there was moonlight, the crew could sometimes see other bombers and there was less chance of collision, but there was also a better chance of being spotted by night fighters. If there was no moon, or if the bomber was flying in thick cloud, it was as if they were blindfolded, never knowing when they might contact another bomber, or be blasted away with cannon fire from a night fighter from below. The night fighters common mode of attack was to sidle underneath an unsuspecting bomber, open fire at wing tanks or bomb bays, and blow bomber and crew to eternity with no warning at all.

On their way to the target, bombers had to evade anti-aircraft batteries and enemy night fighters. The standard defensive armament of all the RAF/RCAF heavy bombers was the .303 machine gun, usually located in a rear turret, a mid-upper turret, and a nose turret. The lack of a belly turret of any sort left a dangerous blind spot underneath the aircraft. The small calibre and limited range of the guns they did have severely handicapped the bomber crews ability to defend themselves. In fact, Bomber Command air gunners were instructed to hold their fire unless they had a very good chance of hitting an enemy fighter, otherwise, they might attract the attention of the enemy.

Following is RCAF Flying Officer Noel Shank's description of his experience of being in the rear turret of a Lancaster Bomber; *"As the tail gunner, all I did was sit in that little cupola at the back end of the Lanc and stare out into the darkness for five or six hours. The turret was beyond the tail of the aircraft, and I could look back, up, and sideways, and I had a pretty good view forward too. Sometimes I removed the clear Plexiglas shield in the rear of my turret – it made it very cold inside, but I could spot planes better... I was the only one with that kind of view. I was the eyes of the crew, helping us avoid any encounters with German fighter planes. I knew that as a tail gunner I was a target for the Germans. My chances of surviving were about 15 percent, but it's funny, once we were airborne, I never thought I would be shot down."* (Note: F/O Noel Shanks would fly thirty missions and survive the war).^{9K}

One low-tech defence system employed by the RAF/RCAF (introduced July 1943)–code-named **"Window"** –was the dropping of tens of thousands of strips of foil as they approached the target, each about ten inches long and three-quarters of an inch wide, silver on one side and black on the other. The foil effectively blinded the German radar-controlled anti-aircraft guns. The Germans developed a similar radar counter-measure, called Duppel.

During the final bomb run over the target, it was difficult for pilots not to flinch as they flew through the bursting bombs, tracer bullets, flares, and black puffs of flak exploding above, below, and in front of them, buffeting the bomber, even sending pieces of jagged steel through the wings or fuselage. As one pilot later remembered, *"Gun flashes, photoflashes, bomb bursts, streams of tracer of all colours, and everywhere searchlights. Our target runs were like the weavings of a demented bird."* After releasing its bombs, the pilot could begin to gain altitude, with the greatest danger being that the bombers would drift into one another or be struck by another plane's bombs. After leaving the target area, crews would scan the skies, manning their guns, as enemy night fighters pursued and picked off bombers on the outside, below or above the stream, especially the wounded ones, those trailing smoke or limping back on three engines. Some German stalkers would trail the stream for hours before attacking, others would work their way into the stream, following them back to their bases before attacking. In addition, the bombers had to deal with other perils, such as harsh weather, lightning, ice forming on the wings, fuel shortages and mechanical failure.^{D, 4B, 4H, 6F, 6Z, 9N}

Coming home, the bombers occasionally arrived to clear skies in a breaking dawn; often they came back to fog-shrouded runways. Crippled aircraft had priority to land, while the rest circled and tried not to collide in the clouds before the control tower called them down. Shot-up bombers often landed hard, on one wheel or on their belly, skidding along, veering off the runway, crashing through bushes and buildings, or bursting into flames on impact. Many of the planes carried wounded or dead airmen. Ground crews would pick up the flyers to drive them to the official debriefing, despite the fact that most of the crews had gone eighteen to twenty hours without sleep, and they were dehydrated from heavy sweating, lack of water, and reliance on oxygen. At the debriefing room, airmen received a stiff tot of rum, which could be taken straight or mixed with coffee. When debriefing was concluded, the airmen returned their equipment and parachutes, went to the mess for a meal, and then to bed. Noting the empty beds around them, they wondered if their chums had landed at another base, bailed out over Europe, or been killed in a fiery crash. Said one airman, *"You never saw your friends actually die. They were just missing from the station the next day."* After a sortie, lockers were emptied, names came off the roster board, and the war went on.^{4H, 4I, 6Z}

Almost every operation saw bombers disintegrate in fiery explosions, or torn apart by night fighter cannons or ground-based flak. A doomed aircraft that did not immediately disintegrate in mid-air, lost power and would begin its downward freefall. If control could not be regained, the order went out to "abandon the bird", often in a cheery

quip, “Lads, time to hit the silk.” After the pilot gave the order to abandon the crippled bomber, he stayed in the cockpit, keeping the plane steady to provide his crew with extra minutes to escape. Crew members, some wounded and burned, would have to battle the G forces in the plummeting aircraft, with the wind howling through the gaping holes in the fuselage, and fire sweeping down the plane, in their attempt to move toward the narrow escape hatches. Very few airmen had ever jumped with a parachute, some of which malfunctioned or caught fire. The challenge for anyone to escape can be attested to by the fact that only 11 percent of Lancaster crews survived being shot down, while 29 percent survived in the Halifax. Statistics indicated that pilots and rear gunners had the lowest chance of escaping a plane in flight. Those parachuters lucky enough to not land in water and drown, or get caught up in a tree or some other structure, faced new challenges on land in enemy territory. Even German civilians, seeking retribution against the *terrorflieger*s – terror flyers – could exact revenge on the Allied airmen.⁴¹

For airmen that went “missing”, the notification of the next of kin in Canada was often mired in bureaucratic tangles. Multiple official letters were sent to anxious family members to update them about their missing son, husband or father. No one knew if the airmen was dead, on the run, or in a prisoner-of-war camp. Most were killed by enemy fire, or when their planes exploded, but some parachuted safely and were captured on the run. Those at home agonized over the lack of information. As the months stretched out, hope faded. Possessions were usually sent back to Canada, along with a letter from the commanding officer, the padre, and maybe a few squadron comrades. Grieving families prayed for a miracle – that they had been protected by the French or Dutch resistance, or they were POW’s, or they had evaded capture. For downed airmen that were able to evade capture and return to England with the help of European resistance fighters, they were not allowed to return to active service again. There was the possibility that they might be shot down again and captured, with the risk that they could reveal the identities of the underground contacts or give away their escape route.^{9w}

More often, the missing were gone: atomized into vapour, burned beyond recognition, lost in the sea, or buried in graves by the German military or French civilians. It was not until after the war, when investigators could examine crash sites, talk to locals, exhume bodies, and exhaust all avenues that they could declare an airman killed.⁴¹

Airmen fought a stop-and-start war—almost daily flying into danger for a few hours then returning to the relative luxury of a safe bed and a warm meal. They did not endure the extended misery experienced by soldiers in the field, nor did they suffer through long, monotonous periods of waiting, broken by brief bouts of terror, as sailors did. At their base, the mess was the flyers’ retreat from the outside world. There they could read quietly, write letters home, smoke cigarettes and talk about their operations, their near misses, and those who never returned. The parties, which were frequent, were often wakes for crews who had been lost the night before. Airmen nonchalantly observed that former comrades had “gotten the chop” or “gone for a Burton” – a phrase whose origins apparently revolved around a type of beer, Burton Ale, and meant that the airman had gone for an extended drink and would not be returning. As one Canadian airmen stated, “*We followed the old dictum: ‘Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we may die.’*”

Playing music, cards or darts, singing songs, and playing pranks on each other were used by the airmen as a means to relax, forget, build camaraderie and escape the tensions of their situations. Crews did things together to build morale knowing that they relied on each other to survive. According to one Canadian airman, “*In a strange country the crew took the place of the family and friends left behind in Canada.*” Nearly all the air bases were close to villages or cities to which the flyers could escape, so they were a part of the home front, and were in daily contact with the British people. The airmen invaded the streets, shops, dance halls and the pubs that were filled with good cheer and boisterous folk. The British people rarely complained about the Canadian interlopers, knowing that the young warriors may be in the skies overhead the next day, risking everything for them.^{4H, 4I}

During the first seven months of the Bomber War—until May 1940—Bomber Command limited itself to leaflet campaigns (dropping Allied propaganda over Germany) and largely ineffective raids on naval targets. In a shift in strategy during the first years of the war, RAF bombers carried out daytime precision bombing targeting German industry and command centres. The results had limited impact on German wartime production, as the visible bombers were blown out of the skies by anti-aircraft guns and German fighters, which led to unacceptable losses.

In January 1943, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and American President Franklin Roosevelt, along with their advisors, met at the Casablanca Conference in North Africa to discuss strategies, allocation of resources and diplomatic policy. One of the directives agreed upon was the “**Pointblank Directive**”, which would set the strategic direction for the bombing campaign that would continue for the last two years of the war. The

Combined Bomber Offensive, would be conducted from the United Kingdom whereby the British and Commonwealth forces (RAF and RCAF) and the United States Army Air Force (USAAF) would strike the Germans with around-the-clock bombing. The Pointblank Directive began with the words: “The primary objective of Bomber Command will be the progressive destruction and dislocation of the German military, industrial and economic system aimed at undermining the morale of the German people to the point where their capacity for armed resistance is fatally weakened.”^{9N}

Americans (USAAF – the Eighth Air Force in the European Theater) flying their B-17 Flying Fortresses would strike by day, and the British and Commonwealth forces (RAF and RCAF) flying their Halifax and Lancaster bombers would strike at night, especially targeting the industrial heartland of Germany, the Ruhr—home to some of Europe’s most important producers of oil, steel, and chemicals. The USAAF daylight bombing campaign was based on the strategy of “precision bombing”, whereas the RAF/RCAF night campaign was based on the strategy of “area bombing”. By the second half of 1943, German industrial production had slowed, and military resources were stretched as Hitler scrambled to protect his cities, thereby undermining the German war effort.

By late fall 1944, after liberating France, the Allied air forces became more effective – the Luftwaffe fighter threat was all but gone, airfields were built, navigational systems improved, more aircraft were available, and the number of tons of dropped bombs increased significantly. In this new environment, from August 1944 to the end of the war, the RAF and RCAF carried out more daylight raids. These raids brought new challenges as targets could be better located, but ground flak guns could also see the planes without radar. The relentless Allied aerial assault of high explosive bombs (often dropped by the first wave planes) and incendiary bombs (dropped by the second wave) largely reduced portions of the German cities to rubble, including Cologne, Hamburg, Hanover, Duisburg, Stuttgart, Chemnitz, Leipzig, Dusseldorf and Berlin.

The opening raid of **Battle of Berlin** was launched in August 1943, a concerted air campaign by RAF Bomber Command against the German capital. The Commander-in-Chief of Bomber Command, Air Marshal Arthur Travers Harris, believed that continual air attacks on Berlin would break the German will to wage war. The raids became more intense beginning in November 1943. The distant and well-defended target was not popular choice with bomber crews. The series of raids on the “Big City” continued until March 1944. Over the seven months, Bomber Command attacked the capital nineteen times, and although the bombs did much damage, Berlin was not “wrecked”.

One of the most infamous Bomber Command missions came late on the night of February 13, 1945, against the city of **Dresdan**. Dresdan had been bombed before but had never been subjected to a sustained attack. Seven hundred and ninety-six bombers, including sixty-seven Lancasters from RCAF’s No. 6 Group targeted the city that night, which erupted into a firestorm. The blaze could be seen by approaching bombers at least 200 kilometres away.

The Allied bombing campaign would continue until late April 1945. Almost two million tons of bombs had been dropped on Germany; more than sixty cities had been destroyed; and hardly a town or village had escaped the bombs. Wartime surveys revealed that the bombing campaign showed the German people that they were losing the war (in spite of propagandists that were claiming otherwise), and the disruption and fear precipitated by the bombers was the most trying and morale damaging aspect of the war. In the last two years of the war, the bombing campaign had certainly been effective in wearing Germany down: the Luftwaffe had been systematically destroyed; the German synthetic oil industry had been destroyed; havoc had been wrecked on the German rail and canal transportation systems; it diverted personnel and material resources from the rest of Germany’s war efforts; German war industry had been halted; and it no doubt saved the lives of Allied soldiers as they moved into the towns and cities hit by bomber command.

In post-war years, some questioned the value of the final bombing campaign against Germany, suggesting it was more punitive. It was not. Though the Nazi war machine was only months away from collapsing, Hitler and his band of criminals were unwilling to surrender. Nazi leaders demanded that the German soldiers, and civilians who supported them, fight to the end. When Dresdan was hit, the First Canadian Army, for example, was battling in the Rhineland, and it would endure two and a half gruelling months of combat, often against fanatical resistance and at the cost of 5,000 more Canadian dead. Beyond the fighting armies, V-2 rocket attacks continued against British civilians, the Jews continued to be gassed to death in sickening numbers, the Dutch continued to starve, and the horrible list of atrocities and madness went on and on.^{4H, 4I, 6Z, 9N}

The Dambusters Raid: On the night of May 16-17, 1943, Bomber Command was involved in an operation that has been the subject of feature films, documentaries, novels, non-fiction books, magazine articles and dramatic

paintings. “**Operation Chastise**” was a stunning attack deep inside Germany on targets long thought to be unassailable. On that dark May 16-17 night, lit only by the moon, 133 young hand-picked and specially trained airmen of No. 617 Squadron took off in 19 specially-modified Avro Lancaster bombers, formed up and flew extremely low over the English Channel across the Dutch coast. Each of the 19 Lancaster bombers could only carry one of the specially-designed “wacky” bombs.

Having trained for months to deliver a very special weapon, the aircraft were to fly low, beneath radar coverage, navigate deep into Germany, locate and attack a series of massive dams on tributaries of the Ruhr River Valley. The dams were fiercely protected—torpedo nets in the water stopped underwater attacks, and anti-aircraft guns defended them against enemy bombers. Behind each of these dams—the Möhne, the Sorpe, the Eder and the Ennepe—were massive reservoirs of water that, it was hoped, would flood factory sites downstream and bring much of Germany's industrial production to a standstill. The attacks would be carried out using a special spinning explosive device which, when released from a Lancaster bomber at exactly 60 feet AGL (above ground level), at exactly 230 miles per hour and at a specific distance from the reservoir-side face of the dam, would fall to the water and then bounce like a skipping stone, in decreasing bounces, until it fell exactly at the face of the dam. The barrel-shaped bombs would then roll down the face of the dam to a specific depth where a hydrostatic sensor would detonate the bomb like a depth charge, weakening the dam's structure, causing the stored water to breach the dam, flooding the industrial complexes downstream.^{3G, 4B, 6H}

The 133 members of the “DamBuster” squadron was made up of hand-picked and specially trained crews from the Royal Air Force, Royal Australian Air Force, Royal New Zealand Air Force and 31 members from the Royal Canadian Air Force (including one American). The crews took off in three waves and found their targets and, facing walls of searchlights, night-fighters, heavy flak and cannon fire from the dams' batteries of anti-aircraft guns, they pressed home their attack, with only the moon to guide them. The steel and concrete Möhne and Eder Dams were breached causing extensive flooding below the Möhne, and 25 bridges were swept away below the Eder. The Sorpe Dam (made of earth) sustained only minor damage, and the attack against the Ennepe Dam was unsuccessful.

The flooding required a huge effort to rebuild the dams, rebuild bridges, railways, and roads, dredge new channels for river traffic, and replace and repair factories. Seventy thousand people were diverted from their regular wartime duties just to repair roads, railways and bridges. Water and power supplies were significantly disrupted as well. The attack deep into Nazi German was also a huge morale boost for the Allied forces and on the home front. The DamBuster's success came at a cost. Of the 19 aircraft from No. 617 Squadron that participated, eight were shot down. Of the 133 men involved, 53 were killed and three became prisoners of war (including one Canadian). Of those killed, 14 were Canadian. Seven of the sixteen Canadians who did return received military decorations.^{3G, 4B, 6H, 9N, 9W}

Bomber Command Sacrifices: Of the 125,000 Commonwealth personnel who served in Bomber Command, a total of 55,573 died in action. This includes over 10,000 Canadians. The death rate in Bomber Command was more than 44 percent, and nearly 10,000 crew members were taken as prisoners of war, and another 8,400 were wounded. Most who flew were very young and the vast majority were still in their late teens—the average age of those serving was 23.

Bomber Command Honoured: The **Bomber Command Museum of Canada** in Nanton, Alberta reports that of every 100 airmen who joined the Command, “45 were killed, six were seriously wounded, eight became prisoners of war and only 41 escaped unscathed (at least physically)... It is a loss rate comparable only to the worst slaughter of the First World War trenches.”^{4B, 9W}

One of the tributes at the Bomber Command Museum of Canada (formerly the Nanton Lancaster Society Air Museum) is **Canada's Bomber Command Memorial**. The wall, consisting of five panels of polished granite, displays almost 10,700 engraved names of Canadians killed in the Second World War while serving in Bomber Command. Also inscribed on the Memorial Wall are the words of Father J.P. Lardie (Chaplain 419, 428 Squadron RCAF):

Three thousand miles across a hunted ocean they came, wearing on the shoulder of their tunics the treasured name, 'Canada', telling the world their origin. Young men and women they were, some still in their teens, fashioned by their Maker to love, not to kill, but proud and earnest in their mission to stand, and if it had to be, to die, for their country and for freedom.

One day, when the history of the 20th century is finally written, it will be recorded that when human society stood at the crossroads and civilization itself was under siege, the Royal Canadian Air Force was there to fill the

breach and help give humanity the victory. And all those who had a part in it will have left to posterity a legacy of honour, of courage, and of valour that time can never despoil.

At the end of the war, medals and bars were awarded to veterans, but no special recognition was given to those involved in the perilous missions of Bomber Command, at least in part due to the controversy over the morality and value of the bombing campaign. Nearly seven decades after the end of the Second World War, the service and sacrifice of Bomber Command, including that of tens of thousands of Canadians, was finally recognized. In June 2012, the Canadian government announced that Bomber Command veterans would receive a special **Bomber Command bar** to be worn on the ribbon of their Canadian Volunteer Service Medal, which all service personnel had been issued at war's end.

In the same month, Queen Elizabeth II unveiled a new **Bomber Command Memorial** in Green Park, London, England. The centerpiece of the stone memorial is a bronze sculpture of a seven-man aircrew, protected by a roof made of metal recovered from an RCAF Halifax III bomber, 426 Squadron, shot down over Belgium in May 1944. The Halifax had been recovered from a swamp in 1997 with three members of the crew still at their stations. The base of the memorial is inscribed with the following words by the ancient Greek statesman Pericles, "Freedom is the sure possession of those alone who have the courage to defend it."^{D, 2E, 2I, 4I, 9W, 10U}

In April 2018, the **International Bomber Command Centre** on Canwick Hill near Lincoln, England was officially opened as part of the 100th anniversary celebrations of the RAF. One of the features at the centre is the UK's tallest war memorial, a spire 102 feet in height, which is the same height as the wingspan of a Lancaster bomber. The spire is encircled by walls with the engraved names of 57,821 young men and women who gave their lives while serving in or supporting Second World War Bomber Command.^{D, 2E, 2I, 4I, 9W, 10U}

Both the Bomber Command Memorial in London and the International Bomber Command Centre in Lincoln honour the more than 55,000 members of Bomber Command, including approximately 10,000 Canadians, including Sarnians, who died in missions over Europe, as prisoners of war or in training accidents.

Located in Hamilton, Ontario, the **Canadian Warplane Heritage Museum** has one of only two remaining Lancaster bombers in the world that still flies today. After World War II, most of the Lancasters ended up as scrap metal. When the Royal Canadian Air Force decided to decommission its last three remaining Lancasters, the town of Goderich, home of Elementary Flight Training School #12 during the war, expressed an interest in obtaining one as a memorial. Through the efforts of the Goderich Branch of the Royal Canadian Legion, the town was chosen to be the final resting place of an Avro Mark X Lancaster heavy bomber, arriving in June 1964. The aircraft never saw service in the Second World War, but did serve in RCAF Maritime patrols on the east coast. In Goderich, the Lancaster was mounted on cement pillars at the Sky Harbour aerodrome, and dedicated as an official war memorial in a September 1968 ceremony. In the years following, it suffered from vandalism and exposure to the elements.

In 1977 the aircraft was donated to the Canadian Warplane Heritage Museum with the goal to restore it to flight condition. A small army of volunteers and staff with the museum carried out the restoration over the next decade until, at last, in September 1988, the Lancaster flew again. The Lancaster bears the insignia of RCAF #419 'Moose' Squadron. It is dedicated to the memory of Pilot Officer Andrew Mynarski of Winnipeg, the son of Polish immigrants, who sacrificed his life trying to rescue his tail gunner when their Lancaster was hit by enemy fire in June 1944. As the crew bailed out of their burning craft, Mynarski fought through flames to free his trapped rear gunner who was jammed in the rear turret. Mynarski was last seen engulfed in flames as he stood to attention, saluted the gunner and said "Good night, Sir." Mynarski died of severe burns, but all of the other crewmen survived. P/O Andrew Mynarski was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross for his bravery. The Lancaster bomber is on display in the Hamilton museum, and is a mobile memorial in the summer, flying in air shows across the continent.^{6K, 6L}

Sarnia's Air Force Sacrifices: Sarnia contributed more than its share to the Royal Canadian Air Force and Royal Air Force. Of the 185 Sarnia World War II fallen soldiers included in this Project, 91 of them lost their lives while serving with the RCAF and RAF, representing close to 50% of Sarnia's World War II deaths. Sarnia airmen participated in many roles and in all theatres of war; serving in bomber command, in fighter squadrons, in coastal command protecting allied shipping, in ferry command, in transport command, in army co-operation and in reconnaissance.^{D, E, 2I and 2S}

Of the 91 Sarnia RCAF/RAF fallen, approximately 60 of them lost their lives while serving in Bomber Command, representing 66% of Sarnia's airmen. This includes Sarnians lost in the two-engine medium/light bombers Wellingtons (12), Hudsons (4), Hampdens (2) and Blenheims (2); and the four-engine heavy bombers

Halifaxes (23) and Lancasters (20), Liberators (2) and Stirlings (2).

At least nineteen Sarnia airmen lost their lives during training; nine in Bomber Command, seven in training aircraft, two in Fighter Command, and one while aboard an RCAF supply ship.

Note: Information on RAF Fighter Command, RCAF Fighter Squadrons and Sarnia contributions is on page 508.

Following is the official poem of the Royal Canadian Air Force and Britain's Royal Air Force, written in 1941 by 19-year-old RCAF Pilot Officer John Gillespie Magee Jr.:

High Flight

*Oh! I have slipped the surly bonds of Earth
And danced the skies on laughter-silvered wings;
Sunward I've climbed, – and joined the tumbling mirth
of sun-split clouds, and done a hundred things
You have not dreamed of – wheeled and soared and swung
High in the sunlit silence. Hov'ring there,
I've chased the shouting wind along, and flung
My eager craft through footless halls of air...

Up, up the long, delirious, burning blue
I've topped the wind-swept heights with easy grace.
Where never lark, or even eagle flew –
And, while with silent lifting mind I've trod
The high untrespassed sanctity of space,
– Put out my hand, and touched the face of God.*

• **THE BATTLE OF SICILY**, July 10 – August 6, 1943: After the Russian victory over German forces at Stalingrad in January 1943, and the combined British and American victory over Axis forces in North Africa in May 1943, the Allies had to decide where to strike next. While the battles for North Africa had raged back and forth, the Canadian Army remained in the United Kingdom. They trained and trained and trained some more, their main purpose—to provide defense for the UK in case of an attack. From the start of the war, Canadian commanders had held to the ideal that First Canadian Army should fight together, as the Canadian Corps had done in the First World War. Allied commanders felt that the major difficulties posed by trying to move the entire Canadian Army by sea to some fighting front, and then insert them into an ongoing campaign somewhere were not worth it. It was felt it was best to keep them in the UK until the time came to assault France, and they could be used all at once.

It was Winston Churchill who convinced Franklin Roosevelt that the Allies should attack the “soft underbelly” of Europe next, opening up the Mediterranean. This would be the Italian Campaign, which would begin with the invasion of Sicily. In Canada, there were demands from the public for the country to play more of a role in the ground war. The Canadian government pushed the Allied commanders for their forces to be included in this campaign, and prevailed. However, the First Canadian Army would be split, with one-sixth of the Canadian Army being sent to this theatre (they would not reunite with the rest of the Canadian Army until the spring of 1945). Canadian commanders chose to send the 1st Canadian Infantry Division and the 1st Canadian Army Tank Brigade to Sicily. Sicily would be the first sustained Canadian Army land operation of the Second World War.^{4H, 6Z}

One reason that the landings on Sicily would be successful was the result of an elaborate deception carried out by British Intelligence (MI5). In April 1943, the Allies' plan, known as ***Operation Mincemeat***, involved transporting then releasing a corpse (a dead tramp) disguised as a British officer to be found by enemy forces adrift in the Atlantic Ocean off the coast of Spain. Handcuffed to his wrist was a briefcase containing forged documents that supposedly revealed the Allies' plans to invade Greece and Sardinia, and not Sicily. The body was found by a fisherman who gave it to his government authorities who, in turn, passed it to the Nazis. German intelligence accepted the authenticity of the documents (they even made it to the desk of Hitler himself) and they diverted much of their defensive effort from Sicily to Greece. The bizarre covert operation saved thousands of British, Canadian and American lives, and helped change the course of the war. The extraordinary tale of deception has been the subject of a number of books and films.^{4T}

Voyage to Sicily: After years of battle training in England, the Canadians were issued new weapons before departing for Algiers in mid-June 1943. One Bren gun, the primary light machine gun, was issued for each section of

ten men. They were also issued Thompson .45 submachine guns, similar to the ones used by American gangsters like Al Capone. Most infantrymen remained riflemen, equipped with the .303 Lee-Enfield rifle with its skewer-type bayonet, and most soldiers stuffed their pockets with hand grenades when they went into battle. The rifle companies were the core of a battalion's fighting strength and were expected to take the highest casualties. Support companies included mortar platoons, universal carriers (all-purpose, lightly armoured tracked vehicles), anti-tank platoons and pioneer platoons (to clear mines and maintain positions).^{4H}

Even getting to Sicily was no easy task for the Canadians. Ninety-two ships left Britain in two convoys, one fast, one slow. On June 19 the first (slow) transports carrying the Canadians from the UK directly to Sicily left Scotland; a second group of transports (fast) sailed five days later. The men did not know where they were going, but the fact that they had traded their Canadian-built Ram tanks for American Sherman tanks (the standard battle tanks used by both the British and Americans in North Africa) must have given them a clue. The fast convoy reached Sicilian waters unharmed; the slow one lost three ships to U-boats over a two-day period, killing 58 Canadian soldiers, along with the loss of thirty artillery pieces and more than 500 vehicles.^{D, 4H, 6Z}

Sicily is a mountainous island, extending about 250 kilometres from east to west, located about 90 kilometres north of the island of Malta. For the Italian and German forces in Sicily, the interior of the island was a defensive planner's dream. It featured steep cliffs, the 3,000-metre-high snow-capped Mount Etna in the northeast, poor interior roads, and countless sharp grades leading to hilltop towns and villages.^{4H}

Code-named **Operation Husky**, the multinational invasion force was made up of British, American, Canadian and French personnel, commanded by General Dwight D. Eisenhower. It was the largest armada ever assembled to date, some 100 kilometres long, and included 160,000 troops, 3,000 ships, 4,000 aircraft, 14,000 vehicles, 600 tanks and 1,800 artillery pieces. Waves of bombers had preceded the invading force in the days before, smashing enemy fortifications. In the early morning hours of July 10, 1943, the Allied forces, comprised of seven divisions, came ashore on twenty-six beaches, along a 70-kilometre stretch of the southern tip of Sicily. The 25,000 Canadians landed in the south on the Pachino Peninsula, on a beach code-named "Bark West," the Americans in the southwest (General George Patton's U.S. Seventh Army), and the British in the southeast (General Bernard Montgomery's British Eighth Army). Commanding the 1st Canadian Infantry Division was General Guy Simonds, who would rise to become one of Canada's best generals. Some of the Canadian troops were quickly ashore with no opposition, but for others, there were delays due to the late arrival of landing craft, and some grounded on a sandbar about a hundred metres from the beach. Platoon commander **Farley Mowat** (later a Canadian author) was there: *"This was the moment toward which all my years of army training had been building... Revolver in hand, Tommy gun slung over my shoulder, web equipment bulging with grenades and ammo, tin hat pulled firmly down around my ears, I sprinted to the end of the ramp shouting 'follow me men!' ... and leaped off into eight feet of water."*

All along the beachheads, the Italian defenders offered little or no resistance, most surrendered at first sight of the invading force. The lead assault groups drove hard and captured their initial objectives. On moving forward, since most of the Canadian vehicles had been lost at sea, the men would have to walk. Makeshift mule teams were organized to carry the heavier equipment, the animals "requisitioned" or hired from the locals. That first day set the pattern for most of those that followed: the men walking up steep roads or making their way over rocky hillsides under a broiling sun in unbearable heat, with water rationed and clouds of mosquitos and flies to torment them every time they stopped to rest. For the first five days, as the Canadians marched northward through the hills into the interior, they encountered virtually no opposition, and took hundreds of Italian prisoners.^{D, 2N, 4H, 6Z}

Fighting in Sicily: As the Canadians continued to march up Sicily islands dusty mountainous winding roads, in scorching temperatures above 40 degrees Celsius, their designated route had them fated to run into major concentrations of German troops offering stiff resistance. The Germans rearguards were not ready to give up, and planned a measured retreat from the island to Italy, while holding the high ground in a series of lines. With better machine guns and mortars, and all the advantages the terrain provided that channelled the Allies into chokepoints and ambushes, the dug-in Germans made a stand on every mountain and ridge, in every village and town. Most of the time, the Germans would put up stiff resistance for several hours, then use the cover of darkness to withdraw to their next defensive position.

The fierce fighting in Sicily would last more than four weeks until August 6, 1943, during which Canadians battled through approximately two hundred fifty kilometres of difficult mountainous country, over mine-filled roads, across ravines, over blown up bridges and culverts, over cliffs, and in some cases house to house fighting and hand-

to-hand combat. The unflagging tenacity of the 1st Canadian Infantry Division as they fought through stiffening German resistance prompted the Germans to nickname them the “Red Patch Devils” after their divisional shoulder patches. The Canadians advanced northward liberating such towns and villages as Grammichele, Piazza Armerina, Valguarnera, Assoro, Leonforte, Nissoria, Agira, Regalbuto and Adrano. By August 17, the Germans had evacuated the island to the Italian mainland, with all their men and masses of armour, artillery and transport vehicles, while Sicily had been conquered by the Allies in 38 days.^{4H, 6Z}

Agira was one of a number of Sicilian towns taken by the Canadians as they advanced northward across the mountains and over the island's hot, barren terrain toward the Strait of Messina. The campaign to capture Agira, perched on a high peak and reachable only by narrow roads that twist and climb, was supposed to be over in two days or less. It was not. It would take five days against fierce German and Italian resistance before Agira was taken. Lt-Col GWL Nicholson described the entrance of the Canadians;

“...about noon an officer of the 1st Canadian Field Regiment, whose eagerness to select a good vantage point for his task of observing fire for the Patricias had carried him right into Agira, found no sign of enemy activity, but streets crowded with people who gave him an enthusiastic welcome. The bombardment was cancelled, and at 2:30 two PPCLI companies entered the town. They received an ovation from the populace on the outskirts; but as they climbed the steep streets into the heart of Agira they met a different kind of welcome from enemy pockets of resistance. It required two hours of fairly stiff house-to-house fighting and the employment of a third rifle company, as well as assistance from a squadron of tanks to clear the town.”

The town fell on July 28—three days after the resignation of Mussolini—and following five days of hard fighting in what proved to be the Canadians' biggest battle of the Sicilian campaign.^{D, 6Z}

Canadian sacrifices in Sicily: The taking of Sicily helped secure the Mediterranean Sea for Allied shipping, and contributed to the downfall of Italian dictator Benito Mussolini. On September 3, the new Italian government accepted an armistice with the Allies, and the unconditional surrender was announced on September 8. The Battle of Sicily saw 565 Canadians die, with another approximately 1,800 Canadians wounded or taken prisoners of war. One in eight Canadians was killed or wounded in Sicily, and the casualty rate was much higher among the infantry.^{D, E, 2N, 4A, 4H} At least three young men from Sarnia gave their lives in the Battle of Sicily, including Private Carl Burke, WO1-Pilot James Lowry (RCAF) and Trooper Donald McClure. Burke and McClure are both buried in Agira Canadian War Cemetery, the largest in Sicily.

A Sarnian in Sicily: Sergeant Jesse Euston Harold Jr. was one of many Sarnians who took part in the Battle of Sicily. Jesse Euston Harold Jr. was the son of Jesse Euston Harold Sr. (born February 18, 1878 in Fleetwood, Lancashire, England) and Florence (nee Cameron) Harold (also born in England). Jesse Harold Sr. had served in the Boer War, with the British Army, King's Own Royal Lancaster Regiment, and also served in World War I. In 1913, Jesse Sr. and Florence Harold, along with their three children at the time; Gladys, Kenneth and Cyril, immigrated to Canada, departing from Liverpool aboard the *SS Canada*, arriving in Quebec on June 11, 1913. He recorded his past occupation as soldier; his intended destination as Montreal; and intended occupation as farm labourer. On January 18, 1915, at the age of 36, Jesse Harold Sr. enlisted with the 33rd Overseas Battalion in London, Ontario. Five months later, he was discharged from the 1st Battalion, Canadian Garrison Regiment in London. Approximately eight months later, on March 1, 1916, he enlisted again in London, Ontario with the 142nd Battalion. He arrived in England on November 11, 1916, and four months later, on March 15, 1917, he arrived in Havre, France as a member of the 4th Canadian Labour Battalion. One week later, he was transferred to the 11th Battalion, Canadian Railway Troops. Jesse Harold Sr. rose to the rank of Corporal, and served in England, France and Belgium. He survived the Great War, being discharged on demobilization in March 1919. After the war, the Harold family resided at 526 Oxford Street, London, Ontario.

Jesse Harold Sr. and Florence Harold had seven children together: Gladys Ellen Elizabeth (born 1909), Kenneth Victor (born 1911), Cyril Bertram (born 1912) (these three were born in England); and Ruby (born 1916), **Jesse Euston Jr.** (born 1917), Harley (born 1921) and Ernest (born 1923) (the latter four were born in Ontario). Matriarch of the family Florence Harold passed away at the age of forty on March 2, 1928 in London, Ontario. At some point, Jesse Harold Sr., and his sons Harley and Ernest moved to 148 South Front Street in Sarnia.

Jesse Euston Harold Jr., following in his father's footsteps, would serve in the Second World War. In early September 1943, Jesse Harold Sr. in Sarnia received a letter that his son Jesse Jr. had written from an army hospital base in North Africa. Jesse Harold Jr.'s wife and daughter were residing in Toronto at the time. In the letter to his father, Sgt. Jesse Harold Jr. told of his escape from enemy territory in Sicily after being seriously wounded.

Lying flat on his back in a cast on a hospital cot, Jesse Jr. couldn't write the letter himself, so he recited his words to Lieut. H.P. Carson, who sat by Jesse's bed and wrote the words Jesse wanted his father in Sarnia to read. The following are excerpts of that letter, from the September 2, 1943 *Sarnia Observer* story under the headline; "Sarnia Soldier, Cut Down By Axis Machine-Gunner, Pens Graphic Story Home":

Dear Dad,

Just a few lines to let you know I am in hospital, and that everything is alright now... while I was in Sicily, they thought I might lose both my legs... I have been flown to hospital here and now the story has changed... myself and an officer had gone about two miles into the enemy area when they knocked us off our motorcycle with a mortar... while we were standing in the middle of the road, he started to chop us down with a machine gun... Neither one of us stood a chance... The Transport Officer got it with one bullet, clean through the head. I started moving about so he chopped me across the legs and feet, a bullet in the chest, and one in the left shoulder. I made it to the wall at the side of the road before I fell down. When I fell down, I couldn't move, perhaps just as well, because every time I moved, a sniper on the rooftop went to work. But he wasn't very good.

Sgt. Harold then described returning to his comrades. He said he was very still for a few hours, and then he started to drag himself back.

I could feel myself a bit weaker, because I was pouring blood, and could only step up one pace at a time. It took me half a day to drag myself a quarter mile. I didn't break any speed records.

He then described how he fell into a culvert, and stayed there for two days.

I still can't realize how I managed to get my right boot off, because my foot was just hanging on... two bullets in the same ankle.

He described how he had been more afraid of being taken prisoner than anything else and that he had lost his tommy-gun. His only weapon was a pistol, and as he lay in the culvert for two days, German patrols passed along the road at night. He wrote that he had nearly called out when he heard their voices. After he was rescued, he learned that a patrol from his own base had gone out to try to locate him, but they had travelled on the opposite side of the road from the culvert, *because they had been dropping mortar and shells on my particular side... I knew that only too well... one of them dropped within five feet of my hole.*

After two days in the culvert, he was picked up by his comrades. He wrote in his letter that authorities in Sicily thought he would have to lose his legs, but when he was flown to Africa, doctors determined no amputation was necessary. Besides the extent of his leg injuries, Sgt. Harold suffered bullet wounds in the chest and shoulder, but, *the mortar didn't do much harm... broke my nose and a piece went through my cheek...*

He finished the letter saying that he would be up and be able to go back to the front in a few months.^N



Sgt. Jesse Euston Harold Jr.

Notes: Jesse Euston Harold Sr. passed away at the age of seventy-eight on January 30, 1957 in London, Ontario. Jesse Jr.'s brother Ernest Harold also served in the war, a Sapper with the Royal Canadian Engineers. Ernest Harold passed away at the age of thirty-three in 1956 and is buried in Lakeview Cemetery in Sarnia. On June 21, 1934, Jesse Jr.'s brother Cyril Bertram (residing at R.R. #2 Devine Street, Sarnia) married Lucy Grosvenor Abram (born in England) in Point Edward. Jesse Jr.'s sister Gladys Ellen Elizabeth Harold married Arthur Abram in 1934 in London, Ontario. Arthur Abram, the brother of Lucy Grosvenor Abram, was a tinsmith at the time.

Gladys and Arthur Abram resided at 1606 London Road in Sarnia, and are connected to the longtime business in Sarnia—Abram's Heating and Cooling. Gladys Abram (1909-1984) and Arthur Abram (1899-1970), and his sister Lucy G. Harold (1905-1965), are all buried together in Blackwell Cemetery in Sarnia.

- **THE ITALIAN CAMPAIGN** continues, September 3, 1943 – February 25, 1945: In the early morning hours of September 3, 1943, on the fourth anniversary of Britain's declaration of war, the British Eighth Army along with the 1st Canadian Infantry Division crossed the Strait of Messina under the cover of a massive artillery bombardment and came ashore on mainland Italy at Reggio Calabria. They were met with little enemy resistance—the Germans, anticipating a punishing naval bombardment, had pulled back from the beaches, while the Italians had been secretly discussing terms of surrender after Mussolini's removal from power on July 25, 1943. The Germans caught wind of the Italians' overture and acted quickly; disarming more than a million Italian combatants, murdering some 12,000 officers, and eventually imprisoning 650,000 soldiers, some of which were conscripted as forced labour. Massive German reinforcements were also rushed into Italy.

On September 8, 1943, Italy surrendered, though the occupying Germans made it clear their fight was not over, and they would fight for every metre of mountainous terrain. The Italians had hoped to avoid large campaigns on their home soil, but the Germans refused to relinquish the ground, and easily transitioned from scornful ally to cruel occupier. On September 9, the American Fifth Army, with two British divisions, landed at Salerno about 450 kilometres north of the British/Canadian force. They were met by a stiff German resistance, and fierce battles would continue for a week with more than 8,600 Allied casualties before the Germans were driven back.

Liberating Italy would be a painstaking northward crawl up the mainland, lasting 20 months, over narrow twisting roads, over mountainous peaks and steep gorges, across swift rivers often having to rebuild collapsed bridges, through challenging weather ranging from extreme heat to bitter cold and snow, against a series of well-protected defences held by some of the German army's best troops.^{D, E, 3F, 4K, 4H, 4I, 6Z}

The Allied strategy in Italy, as it was in Sicily, was to push northward—with the British Eighth Army (including the Canadians) fighting up the eastern side of Italy, while the American Fifth Army would take the west. The Canadians marched northward snaking along winding roads leading up and over fortified hills, moving from gravel and dirt roads to narrow animal paths. Whether using trucks, jeeps, Universal Carriers, mules or foot-slogging, travel was always slow and dangerous. At every step, they encountered evidence of the Germans' scorched earth policy. Bridges and culverts were blown up, overhanging cliffs were dynamited, houses and barns were stripped, food stocks and animals were seized, wells were fouled, and **mines** were an ever-present danger. As one Canadian soldier wrote, "*There was nothing more terrifying to men than mines... You just never knew when your next step would be your last.*" The Germans used about thirty types of mines and many were encased in wood, making them difficult to locate. One of the variations, the Bouncing Betty, jumped out of the ground when stepped on, exploding at waist height scattering lethal fragments of metal into the victim.

The Canadians remained on the leading edge of the Eighth Army advance, always pushing ahead, and despite ambushes, shellings, sniper fire, traps, and mines, there were few major stand-up battles. In early October, after trekking some 700 kilometres, the weather turned, bringing rain and cold temperatures, and soon malaria and jaundice took down hundreds of Canadians. In late October 1943, the Canadians were pulled out of the line, to the mountaintop town of **Campobasso**, a small city of some 17,000 people. The town became an Allied rest centre that provided food, shelter, drink, local culture and entertainment for the troops. The Canadians overran the place and soon it became known as "Canada Town" and "Maple Leaf City", its streets renamed after Canadian landmarks.

The Canadians—the 1st Canadian Infantry Division and the 1st Canadian Armoured Brigade—were put back into the line on December 1, and given the objective to cross the Moro River and capture the Adriatic port of **Ortona**. Ortona was a small town built on a rocky outcrop poking into the Adriatic, with a small port below it, that had been rocked by shellfire and half destroyed by German engineers. Some Canadian officers thought the Germans might evacuate the town, rather than engage in a costly urban fight for a place that had little military significance. The Germans however, were determined to make a stand both in the town and south of it along several defensive positions, their "Winter Line", to stop the Allied advance. The Germans had many advantages there—they were dug in, and were fighting on the defensive and employing the natural barriers formed by the terrain, including rolling hills, rivers, and broken ground. Vile winter weather and heavy rains had also turned the countryside into a gluey quagmire. Ortona would become one of the defining Canadian battles of the war.^{D, E, 3F, 4H, 6Z}

Crossing the Moro River and the Battle of Ortona, December 6 – December 28, 1943: The first obstacle that faced the Canadian troops to their Ortona objective was the Moro River. Winter rains had turned the stream into a swollen river, and its soft bottom and high, muddy banks made it a serious obstacle. The battles to the south of Ortona saw both sides rely heavily on massed mortar and shellfire, and the bombardments were the most intense faced by Canadians to that point in the war. Devastated farmhouses were fought over in see-saw battles, vineyards became sites of mass killing, irrigation ditches were held with brutal tenacity. The battlefield soon resembled the shell-blasted, muddy wasteland of the Great War's No Man's Land. Attacks and counterattacks continued as the Canadians slowly advanced, with heavy casualties on both sides in what Canadian war correspondent Matthew Halton described as "*little Passchendaeles of mud and blood.*"

On December 8, working under fire, Canadian combat engineers were able to establish bridges over the Moro River for the Sherman tanks (that would engage the German Panzer Mk III and Mk IV tanks) and troops to cross. After crossing the Moro, the Canadians came to the next formidable position, known as "The Gully," a deep trench 5 kilometres long and measuring about 60 metres deep. Ranging from 60 to 200 metres wide, it was filled with thorny acacias, olive trees lined its slopes, and the Germans were dug-in all around it, with established camouflaged machine-gun positions, anti-tank mines and heavy artillery gun support. The Gully required a frontal assault by the Canadians against a deeply fortified position. Behind a creeping barrage and as both sides ground down over a period of days, Canadian battalions one after another continued to press forward. By December 19, the Germans evacuated "The Gully" and fell back into Ortona. With the support of British, Indian and New Zealand divisions, crossing the Moro, attacking the Gully and reaching the edge of Ortona cost 1,000 Canadian casualties.^{D, E, 2N, 3F, 4A, 4K, 4H, 7Q}

Ortona was perched on a high ridge and was impregnable from 3 sides—flanked by sea cliffs on the north and east, and by a deep ravine on the west. The town, a mere 450 metres across, was cut through with steep, narrow streets commanded by four-storey stone houses that stood shoulder-to-shoulder, often with shared walls, deep cellars and underground passages that linked them to other structures. At nightfall on December 20, as Christmas neared, led by the Loyal Edmonton Regiment and the Seaforth Highlanders of Canada, the Canadians began their slow advance into the western outskirts of Ortona. The Germans had turned the town into a fortress, and were determined to fight for every metre of ground. Most of the streets were choked with rubble from demolished buildings, leaving only a few open to draw the Canadians into kill zones; machine guns swept the streets with overlapping fire; snipers attacked from ingeniously camouflaged positions; buried mines were scattered everywhere; chicken wire attached over windows and other openings to keep out grenades; hidden flame-throwers, concealed anti-tank rocket-launchers and tanks lying half buried in the rubble were a constant threat; and booby traps were everywhere—entire houses were laced with explosives, ground-level doors, staircases, even toilet chains, bottles of wine and bibles were triggered to explode. The Canadians were forced into savage house-to-house fighting in small actions involving platoons, sections, even half-sections. With the streets a death trap, one of the techniques perfected by the Canadians was known as "**mouse-holing**", which involved using "beehive" high explosives to blow holes in the granite walls of adjoining buildings, lobbing grenades through gaps to the floors below, to advance from room to room, from house to house.

Ortona was the first episode of urban combat-city fighting in the Italian theatre, and although the Canadian Army was unprepared for combat in a built-up area, it was forced to learn quickly. In a few short days, the Canadians were able to adapt to this most difficult form of warfare and share its lessons with Allies far and wide. The Canadians became masters of **urban warfare**, steadily advancing in the gritty battles that raged back and forth in the ruins. The losses were significant on both sides; Ortona became a labyrinth of death, earning the nickname "Little Stalingrad." Canadian war correspondents broadcast from the town, providing hour-by-hour progress to Canadians at home, also picked up by the BBC and American radio networks, making Ortona an important symbol.

On December 25, the Canadians "celebrated" Christmas in Ortona with soldiers going in shifts to a bombed-out church courtyard for Christmas dinner with the sounds of machine-gun fire and exploding shells close by. A Canadian Army veteran witnessed the spectacle and described it: "*Over the crash and din of the surrounding battle came the skirl of bagpipes and the raised voices of men singing Christmas carols. Through a smokey haze I saw men seated at tables covered with white napery. Three hundred yards away the enemy had active machine-gun posts, mortar bombs and shells creating a hellish dissonance, as cool young subalterns (in true Christmas tradition) served Canadian turkey with dressing and vegetables.*"^{6Z}

Matthew Halton, a war correspondent for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation during the Second World War, was known as "the voice of Canada at war". His gripping, passionate broadcasts chronicled the action of

Canadian soldiers at the front lines in Italy and Northwest Europe. Following is a portion of Matthew Halton's grim experience at Ortona on Christmas Day 1943;

With CBC sound engineer Art Holmes, Matthew took the recording van to a field hospital behind the lines where an accordionist was playing carols for the wounded. He strung the microphone cable from the van into a ward for "life cases" – those who might or might not live. He recorded several carols and interviewed an English nurse who said, "It's been grand looking after the Canadian soldiers." The ward then began to empty, and Matt was about to roll up the cable and leave when a wounded man appeared to come out of a coma. He said to the accordionist, "Corporal, I've been dreaming of home. Would you play something for me? Play 'I'm Dreaming of a White Christmas'." Matt immediately whispered into the microphone to sound engineer Holmes outside, "Art, start recording at once." The corporal sat on the edge of the bed and played and sang. Matt let the sound come full up in the last thirty seconds of his broadcast of the event, adding no words except his signoff. Matt wrote to his wife the next day about what he felt he couldn't tell his listeners: the soldier died shortly after the carol. "All the horror that had been hardening and callousing in my soul in the last six weeks seemed to dissolve in pity and I stood in the shadows as weak as a child."^{7Q}

After a week of fierce fighting, the German position in Ortona was untenable—they had suffered heavy casualties, and their escape routes were virtually cut off. On the 27th, the remaining survivors began to filter away from the town, leaving their unburied dead in the streets. Ortona was in Canadian hands on December 28. The Battle of Ortona was over at a cost of over 2,330 Canadian casualties including 1,372 killed. In the month of December, all of the infantry battalion's rifle companies had been reduced by more than 50 percent. Worn down by combat, along with lack of sleep, poor food, and exposure to harsh weather led to almost 600 Canadians diagnosed with battle exhaustion. Located five kilometres from Ortona is Moro River Canadian War Cemetery, which contains 1,376 Canadian graves. One of those graves contains the remains of Private William Buchner, age 20, of Sarnia, who was killed Christmas Eve 1943.^{D, E, 2N, 3F, 4A, 4K, 4H, 6Z}

In the **early months of 1944** in Italy, the Canadians were about 2 kilometres north of Ortona, which was then an important winter headquarters and seaport for supply. They faced the Germans who were dug in along a series of ridges. There was an empty and blasted No Man's Land between the two sides, abandoned by day yet active at night. The bleak slush and mud landscape resembled that of the battlefields of World War I, with slit trenches, more permanent trenches, weapon pits and concentrations of barbed wire, where sniper fire back and forth was a constant.

During April and May, the Eighth British Army, including the 1st Canadian Corps, were secretly moved to the western side of Italy to join the Fifth U.S. Army in the struggle toward Rome. It was up to the British, with the Canadians as one of the key formations in the line, to probe and harass enemy positions, gather information, raid and patrol aggressively. Key commanders such as General Bernard Montgomery and Supreme Commander Dwight Eisenhower had departed Italy for Britain to lead the planned upcoming assault on Europe, so it was evident to all that Italy was becoming less significant to the military planners. Now the role of the Allies was to hold down the German forces there in battle so they could not be transferred to shore up the Western or Eastern fronts.

The strength on the ground between the two forces in Italy was about equal, but the Allies had colossal advantages in the air since most of the German air force had been pulled back to defend the homeland against the Allied bombing campaign. However offsetting the Allied airpower, the Germans had all the benefits of fighting on land of their choosing, employing high ground and choking off narrow road networks. The static trench warfare continued through the cold winter months in Italy, operations met with successes and failures, and casualties mounted. Soldiers looked out for one another. A Canadian infantryman remembered, *"Those men were your real true friends. The friendships you make in battle are different from any other kind of friendships... Perhaps it's just that you both faced death together and during that time a special bond was welded."*^{E, 3F, 4I}

In March 1944, messages of thanks to the city of Sarnia for cigarettes sent overseas at Christmas were received by city officials. One of the letters was from **Major J.M. Colling**, padre with the Canadian Army unit of the Central Mediterranean Force in Italy and former minister at Devine Street United Church in Sarnia. The following are portions of that letter:

The 14,000 cigarettes from the City of Sarnia arrived in this busy Italian town. Please convey to His Worship the Mayor and the council my deep appreciation of these gifts. Cigarettes are welcome at any time, but in this battle zone they are indeed highly prized and appreciated. When I return, I hope to have the privilege of stating verbally what these gifts mean to troops in an area like this.

As perhaps you know, I have been in this area since November. I have seen a great deal. Death and life are

words full of meaning here. I cannot, of course, give any information, but you can gather a good picture of our activities here from the radio and the news dispatches. I am still with the casualty clearing station, where I have been attached for the past two years. We have been very busy lately.

The Canadians have displayed the utmost bravery here. This country is one of the most difficult to wage war in. It requires a good man just to walk from one place to another. To carry on a defensive war, as we are doing, calls for the utmost in stamina and courage. Our Canadian lads have shown their breeding. We meet many British, Indian, New Zealand and American troops. A fine fellowship exists among all the forces here... Each fighting force respects the others here, for we are all together in the common aim to end the European war as soon as possible. Germany appears to be reeling but, in her desperation, she can still strike hard blows... Great sacrifices are ahead but our victory is certain.

I met two Sarnia lads in our station lately – Privates Waltham and Gray. We had a good chat and talked about the good people of Sarnia. All the lads are longing for the day when we can return. Some, like myself, are going on their fifth year away from home, but all the lads here are proud of the fact that they are here in this sad hour to hasten the victory of free men over the tyrants who would enslave humanity. As you know, we are attached now to the famous 8th Army. It has a glorious record, with still greater victories to come. I hope matters are going well in the city. Give my kind regards to Miss Stewart, Alderman Crompton and the others. With kindest personal regards to you and yours.

Yours gratefully, J.M. Colling

The Battle of Anzio (Operation Shingle), January 22 – June 4, 1944: After the capture of Ortona, the next big prize in the Allied commanders plans in their drive northward was the capital city **Rome**. Blocking the way, the Germans had two formidable lines of reinforced fortifications: the Gustav (Winter) Line, stretching from the Adriatic to the Mediterranean; and behind it the Adolf Hitler Line; both daunting defensive positions. In an attempt to bypass these defensive lines, and enable an attack on Rome, Allied forces launched a large amphibious landing north of these lines, in the boggy, undulating area of Anzio and Nettuno on Italy's west coast.

On January 22, 1944, some 36,000 Allied troops were part of the initial landings, composed of American and British forces, and a small contingent of Canadians, members of the First Special Service Force (FSSF)–the “**Devil's Brigade**”. The German defenders were caught by surprise, and the landings were initially a resounding success. Before long however, German defenders rallied, and with reinforcements, added artillery and a harassing Luftwaffe, they prevented a breakout from the beachhead. In just days, Anzio became a killing zone. Conditions remained difficult for the Allied forces, and for several months they were unable to mount the desired breakout. A succession of attacks resulted in heavy casualties on both sides in what would bog down into a four-month stalemate. The Allies finally broke out in late May, ending the siege at Anzio, at a cost of 7,000 British and Americans killed, and 36,000 wounded and missing. The Canadians of the FSSF served a key factor on the front line of the Anzio perimeter and played an important role in the eventual breakout from Anzio and the pursuit to Rome. It was at Anzio where the unit was dubbed “the Devil's Brigade”. Sarnia's Joe Glass, a member of the FSSF, was wounded at Anzio. Information on “Sarnia's Black Devil” Joe Glass is on page 491.

After the breakout from Anzio, American commanders were eager to be the first into Rome, so instead of making an attempt to trap the retreating German Army, they turned their forces north-west towards the city. As a result however, the forces of the German Tenth Army, with all their weapons and equipment, were able to withdraw and rejoin the forces north of Rome, and regroup to man strong defensive positions, such as the Gothic Line. This meant the Allies, including the Canadians, would have to continue to slog north through difficult terrain fighting a well-armed and determined enemy.^{E, 6Z}

The Battle of Monte Cassino, January 17 – May 18, 1944: On the western side of the Gustav Line, German positions generally ran along the valleys created by the Rapido River, Liri River and the Garigliano River. The entrance to the Liri valley, which had a highway that led to Rome, was dominated by the huge hill Monte Cassino, which was crowned by an ancient Benedictine monastery. In front of the hill stood the little town of Cassino. The Allied mission to dislodge the well-entrenched German forces from this mountain, to capture Cassino, and to clear the path to Rome began in mid-January 1944. It would turn into a bitter struggle consisting of four separate battles with firefights in the hills, tank attacks in the valleys, river crossings, street fighting, and the controversial bombing of the hilltop abbey and the town of Cassino. It would stretch over four months and involve forces from many nations, including British, American, French, Australian, New Zealand, Indian, South African, Polish and Canadian (tanks of the 1st Canadian Armoured Brigade). The battle ended on May 18 when a British Division captured the city of

Cassino, and Polish troops captured the battered abbey at the summit of Monte Cassino. The following day, a CBC war correspondent who climbed the hill described the carnage; *"I have never seen such a grisly sight. There were dead that had stormed and taken the fortress only yesterday. And there were the dead that had tried to take it months ago. I almost stumbled over a head that had almost mummified. The horrible thing about these battlefields above Cassino was that the men who fought there lived with the dead around them."* The Battle of Monte Cassino came at a cost of 55,000 Allied casualties.^{D, 3F, 4A, 6Z}

The Battle of Liri Valley, May 11 – early June 1944: Also referred to as *Operation Diadem*, this was the breaking the Gustav and Hitler Lines. In the spring of 1944, the Germans still held a line of defence north of Ortona, and held the Monte Cassino fortification that blocked the Liri Valley corridor to the Italian capital of Rome. Determined to maintain their hold on Rome, the Germans had constructed two formidable lines of fortifications: the **Gustav Line (Winter Line)**, that straddled the valley of the Liri River; and ten kilometres behind it was the kilometer-deep **Adolf Hitler Line**. Both Lines were daunting defensive positions bristled with pillboxes, tank turrets mounted on concrete emplacements, reinforced redoubts, anti-tank guns, and vast concentrations of barbed wire and mine fields.

The British Eighth Army, including the 1st Canadian Corps, were moved to join the Fifth U.S. Army, and the French Expeditionary Force in the battle through these lines on the western side of Italy. The main attacks went forward on May 11, with one of the most intense artillery barrages ever used by the Allies. The 1st Canadian Armoured Brigade assisting the 8th Indian Division, and the French Corps were both successful in penetrating the Gustav Line defences in several places. Those Germans not killed, wounded, or captured withdrew to the Hitler Line.

The assault on the Adolf Hitler Line was launched by the Eighth Army, with soldiers from ten national forces, on the hazy morning of May 23. *Operation Chesterfield* was the assault by the 1st Canadian Division on the Hitler Line, where two brigades of three infantry regiments advanced behind a complicated creeping barrage against strong enemy opposition. Through a crossfire of bullets, shells and mortar fire, and past barriers of barbed wire 6 metres deep in places, minefields that blew off feet and legs, and a string of craters 5 to 9 metres wide, and as tanks were being blown away, the Canadians pressed on. Within the devastation, it was advance, find cover, shoot, and advance again. The strain was tremendous—one Canadian Lieutenant-Colonel, who was ordered to the rear for a rest, his eyes reddened with tears, clutching dozens of identity discs from killed soldiers was heard saying, *"Those were fine boys. They're gone. I haven't anybody left. They are all gone."* The Canadians were able to breach the Hitler Line, one of the most formidable enemy positions in Italy—the cost to the Canadians on the 23rd, and in repelling counterattacks in the early hours of the 24th, was 879 killed and wounded.

Having broken the Hitler Line, the tanks of the 5th Canadian Armoured Division and infantry groups poured through toward the next obstacle, the Melfa River on May 24. Desperate fighting took place in the forming of a bridgehead across the Melfa. Once the Canadians were over the river, however, the major fighting for the Liri Valley was over by the end of May. The Allies marched towards Florence on their way to Rome, while the I Canadian Corps moved along a line parallel to the Liri River, through Ceprano to Frosinone on May 31.

On June 4, 1944, **Rome fell** to the Americans as the Germans had evacuated the city to avoid being surrounded. The Canadians did not take part in that triumphant entry into Rome as I Canadian Corps had been put in reserve a few days earlier (a snub that incensed the Canadian troops). The only Canadians in Rome on that historic day were those of the Canadian-American First Special Service Force (FSSF), who entered Rome as the spearhead of the U.S. 2nd Corps. Less than 48 hours after Rome was captured, the D-Day invasion of Northwest Europe began on the Normandy beaches.^{D, E, 3F, 4I, 6F}

Most of the Canadians who fell in the Liri Valley are buried in two cemeteries in the area south of Rome, Caserta War Cemetery and Cassino War Cemetery. Cassino War Cemetery is the largest Second World War cemetery in Italy, with over 4,200 Commonwealth headstones that includes 855 Canadians who died during the battles of the Gustav and Hitler Lines and the advance toward Rome. Two Sarnians are buried at the Cassino Cemetery; Private Garnet Core, age 21, and Corporal William P. Williams, age 24—both were killed in May 1944.

The D-Day Dodgers: With the invasion of Normandy, France on June 6, 1944 and the advance thereafter through Northwest Europe, the Italian Campaign was overshadowed and became a largely forgotten theatre. But the "D-Day Dodgers," as they were nicknamed by some, continued marching and fighting in the bitter, costly Italian Campaign until the spring of 1945. The rank-and-file soldiers fighting in Italy transformed the "D-Day Dodgers" epithet into a mark of pride.^E

Summer in Italy, 1944: In June and July 1944, Canadian soldiers in Italy had a period of rest and reorganization, in order to prepare for their resumption of fighting in early August. Many of the Canadians spent much of summer out of the line in a valley of the Volturno River, and increased leave to a number of cities including rest camps at Bari and Salerno. Here soldiers had time to relax, and enjoy the wine and beaches. Travelling entertainment companies featuring dancers, singers, and musicians; and their own in-house productions that involved the ever-popular cross-dressing, lewd humour, ridiculous songs, topical jokes and outrageous skits, always lifted the boys spirits. Sports offered leisure breaks with soldiers banding together to play soccer and baseball games. Another pleasant distraction was the army newspaper, *The Maple Leaf*, which had published its first issue on January 14, 1944. It was filled with stories from Canada about politics, war-related work, and, most popular with the men, sports. The paper highlighted Allied victories and Canadian deeds of valour, and it became a mainstay with the troops. But it also offered frank accounts of combat, interviewed survivors who spoke of their near-death experiences, and even addressed the challenge of battle exhaustion. So popular was *The Maple Leaf* in Italy, that by war's end, editions appeared in other theatres, including England, France, Belgium, Germany, and the Netherlands.⁴¹

The Gothic Line (the Green Line): Stretching like an armour-toothed belt across Italy's upper thigh, the Gothic Line was the last major German defensive line in Italy, and the most fortified position the German army had yet thrown into the Allied Forces' path, even more daunting than the Hitler Line. The line ran roughly between Pisa on the west coast and Pesaro on the Adriatic coast, through the Apennine Mountains, and separated the Allies from the Po Valley and the Lombardy Plain in northern Italy. Since many factories producing vital supplies were located in the north, the Germans would fight hard to prevent a breakthrough. Despite being needed in the eastern and western theatres, Hitler rushed a dozen additional divisions to the Italian front during the summer of 1944, including new panzer divisions. There were few replacements coming into the system for the Allies, and though they had an enormous advantage in the air, the ground forces were approaching parity. The Gothic Line was meant to be impregnable, a series of strong-points, exploiting the natural terrain features, composed of machine-gun posts, anti-tank guns, mortar- and assault-gun positions and tank turrets set in concrete, as well as anti-tank mines, anti-personnel mine fields, bunkers, barbed wire obstacles, snipers, and anti-tank ditches, all arranged in depth. Many of the German defenses had been built using thousands of slave-labourers.

In August 1944, the Canadian Corps were moved back on the Adriatic coast of eastern Italy. In late August, the Gothic Line assault was spearheaded by I Canadian Corps within the Eighth Army, in a battle that would be referred to as "**Canada's Month of Hell.**" The Canadians were flanked to the right by II Polish Corps and to the left by V British Corps.

Breaking the Gothic Line and the Road to Rimini, August 25 - September 21, 1944: On August 25, the entire Canadian Corps began its attack on the Gothic Line (*Operation Olive*), first by crossing the Metauro River, the first of six rivers lying across their path, with their final objective of capturing Rimini. For twenty-eight days, the 1st Canadian Infantry Division and 5th Canadian Armoured Division relentlessly battered their way forward through a rugged killing ground, in a maze of fortified ridges and towns, hills and deep valleys, over blown-out bridges and roads blocked with debris from toppled buildings, and across rivers. The road to Rimini was fraught with dangers, and Canadian soldiers were constantly channelled into open killing grounds exposed to enemy crossfire, and into large **mine fields**. Anti-personnel *Schumines* were tremendously frightening—in miniature wooden boxes, they carried a seven-ounce explosive that was powerful enough to blow off a man's feet, fracture legs, hips, and pelvis bones, and drive bones and metal fragments up into the groin. *S-mines* (Schrappnellminen) sprang several feet into the air before spraying ball-bearings in all directions like a shot-gun blast. A chaplain close enough to witness an advance into a mine field described the carnage; "*As soon as the mines started going off, the enemy opened up with machine-gun fire from the adjoining hills on both flanks, accompanied by a barrage of shells and mortars... It was agonizing to hear the cries of the wounded.*"⁴¹

There were fierce engagements all along the front, with some Canadian units thrown back, while others held their ground, while others breached the line. Bitter fighting resulted in gruesome losses on both sides, but despite the confusion at the front and enemy counter-attacks, the Canadians kept grinding forward in step-by-step progress, often engaging in close-quarters and hand-to-hand combat, taking targets such as, Coriano, San Fortunato, San Martino, and Montecchio. On September 21, the Allies entered a deserted Rimini – the city ruined by fire missions, aerial bombs, and demolitions, with 75 percent of its buildings destroyed. The breaking of the Gothic Line was one of the most important offensives won by Canadian forces in the Second World War, and the most difficult in the entire Italian campaign. It was the Canadian Army's crowning achievement of the Italian campaign, but also its most

costly, with 4,511 casualties including 1,016 killed.^{D, E, 2N, 3F, 4K, 4I} Two of the cemeteries that contain the graves of Commonwealth soldiers who were killed in the advance to Rimini are Gradara War Cemetery—contains 1,192 Commonwealth headstones, including those of 369 Canadians; and Coriano Ridge War Cemetery—contains 1,940 graves including 427 Canadians. Sarnia's Lieutenant Edward Stokes, age 23 is buried at Gradara; and Sarnia's Private Leslie Kirk, age 23 is buried at Coriano Ridge.

Italy Winter 1944-45: Throughout the late fall/winter of 1944 and January 1945, the Allies continued their advance northward on the Germans, with the terrain and weather being the enemy's best defence. Incessant rain turned the ground into a quagmire of mud, as they trekked northward in the cold, criss-crossing rivers, irrigation canals, and dykes, with all bridges blown and most positions covered by mortar fire. The constant shelling accounted for hundreds of lives lost on both sides, depleting all of the units, and along with sickness, the front was all but stalemated.

In mid-October 1944, the Allies entered the town of **Cesena**, which had been abandoned by the Germans. Steady pressure against the enemy was the order of the day after that, and the Allies continued their advance. At the end of November, with the British Eighth Army, they continued what was called the "advance across the rivers" to **Ravenna**. Along with German defences and counterattacks, one bridgeless, swollen river, stream and canal after another presented itself as an obstacle on the way from Rimini to Ravenna. The Canadians would participate in the liberation of Ravenna in early December, as well as four other towns, 30 villages, almost 1000 smaller communities, and three well-defended water lines within a nine-mile area. North of Ravenna, the Allies were challenged by two main rivers: the Lamone and Senio, which would be left behind despite bitter counterattacks. The Canadians would continue to press on. They reached the Senio River by year's end and this would be the farthest advance they would make in Italy as they subsequently settled into a defensive campaign.^{D, 3F}

Following are four of the cemeteries in Italy that contain the graves of Commonwealth soldiers who died during the northward push in Italy in the winter of 1944-45: Cesena War Cemetery—contains 775 Commonwealth graves, including 307 Canadians—three are from Sarnia, Private Charles Krohn, Private Thomas Mills and Private Donald Neal; Ravenna War Cemetery—contains 937 Commonwealth soldiers, including 438 Canadians—four are from Sarnia, Private Joseph Aubin, Private George Humble, Corporal Paul Larson and Private John Wilson; Villanova Canadian War Cemetery, located along the Lamone River just outside the village of Villanova—contains 206 Canadian graves—three are from Sarnia, Private Melvin Fisher, Private James McClure and Private Floyd Williams; and Argenta Gap War Cemetery which marks the final stages of the hard fighting in Italy in the spring of 1945—contains 625 Commonwealth burials, including Sarnian Private Robert Wade.^D

At this time in France, the Normandy campaign had been won, and the Germans in Western Europe were on the verge of collapse. In northern Italy, the fighting season closed down in early January because of the harsh weather, and both sides knew that the war would never be decided in Italy.^{4I}

Canadians Remembered in Villanova: Donna Maxwell is a Canadian researcher/writer who, taking an interest in her family's military history, has journeyed to France, Holland, Germany and Italy. During one of her "tours" in Italy, she met Italian citizens near Cassino and in Villanova who were knowledgeable about the fighting in the area during WWII. Following is a portion of a story she wrote for the *Battlefords News-Optimist*;

In the village of Villanova lives Rosalia Fantoni. As a small child she lived in fear and hunger as war raged on around her. Her father and uncle (partisans) were hung by the SS in front of their home just two weeks before the Canadians liberated Villanova. Villanova was liberated on December 11, 1944 by the Cape Breton Highlanders. For many years Rosalia has remembered their sacrifice and wanted to know all she could about Canadians. She read books, travelled to Canada in her dreams, remembering the kindness and peace brought to her by these men. She wanted to know about them to "understand the generosity that drove their actions." She has written a book called *Casa lontano da casa* (Home Away From Home). It is a collection of stories, poems, some military history and all the Canadian War dead resting in Villanova are listed in the back of the book. She feels strongly that these men should not be forgotten. An excerpt from Rosalia's book is as follows:

"For many soldiers, time stopped on the soil of Romagna, in the town of Villanova, on the river Senio. Their homes were far away in Canada, where the rays of the moon lay gently on the faces of children falling asleep in a young and healthy fatigue. Their 'home away from home' was the war-torn country of Italy, the towns of Villanova and Bagnacavallo. Here, a place where fear kept people indoors, holding their breath while the distant noise of bombs loomed everywhere. By night, only the voice of the fountains sounded through the streets of towns frightened into

submission by the spectre of death, where only the innocent victims of unannounced aerial bombardments remained, their bodies strewn amid shards of glass and rubble. The liberators, caked in mud and dust, made their way through villages of destroyed houses, schools full of evacuees and refugees, unusable railways; and in the background, the constant rumble of bombs, the grenades that wrought havoc on so much human life, artillery fire that made the walls shake and the air tremble. The memory of these days survives in its telling; and suffering, in its telling is like a great thaw - the thaw that turned the snow of Auschwitz to tears. It is vitally important that we keep these memories alive!"

Rosalia's dream came true and she and her son Alessandro visited Canada in 2010. Every December 11, a ceremony is held at the Villanova cemetery and each grave glows with a small candle. The research group of Villanova/Bagnacavallo want to publish another book. They want to know more about the men buried in Villanova. They would like to place a face to the name of these men, know something about them. They consider these boys as their own sons, exact words spoken to me by an Italian gentleman who was there to greet us at the cemetery. As he spoke to me he cried as he told me he had two boys. Clearly these men have not been forgotten.^{9P}

Operation Penknife: After engaging in vicious fighting for 20 months, the Canadians would not participate in the final victory in Italy, which would last into early May 1945. In February 1945, the 1st Canadian Corps began the move into northern Italy to be re-united with the First Canadian Army in northwest Europe. The Allied commanders had decided to move the British and Canadian troops from Italy to fight in Europe, driving into Holland and Germany. In *Operation Penknife*, 60,000 Canadians and thousands of vehicles assembled from widely scattered locations to be funneled out of Italy. The speed and deceptions involved in the operation were so successful that the Germans did not realize the Canadians had left until one month later.

Canada's Italian Campaign Sacrifices: More than 92,700 Canadian soldiers took part in the 20-month Italian Campaign. Canadians fought in Sicily and Italy until February 25, 1945, playing a vital role in victories in battles such as Agira and Adrano in Sicily, and Motta, Campobasso, the Moro River, Ortona, Anzio, Cassino, the Gustav Line, the Hitler Line in the Liri Valley, the Melfa River Crossing, Cerrone, the Gothic Line, Coriano, Rimini and Ravenna in Italy. During the Italian Campaign, the longest-running land campaign the Allies undertook during the war, nearly 6,000 Canadians would lose their lives, almost 19,500 were wounded, and 1,004 were taken prisoner. In all, there were over 26,000 casualties, more than one in four of those who served. One Canadian lieutenant recalled, *"Many times during the fighting in Italy, I considered my life as lost. You knew absolutely that you could not continue to go into battle engagements where you were constantly exposed to artillery fire, machine guns, snipers, mortars, schu-mines, tanks, or booby traps, without eventually catching a packet. And death had become a familiar occurrence, among your serving comrades, and in the forward areas where German soldiers lay stiff and cold after every battle. You knew it was only a matter of time until your own number came up."* D, E, 2I, 2N, 3F, 4A, 4K, 4I

Many young men from Sarnia took part in the Battle of Sicily and the Italian Campaign. Along with three young Sarnians who gave their lives in the Battle of Sicily; Carl Burke, James Lowry (RCAF) and Donald McClure, at least sixteen more young Sarnians gave their lives in Italy including; Joseph Aubin, William Buchner, Garnet Core, Melvin Fisher, George Humble, Leslie Kirk, Charles Krohn, Paul Larson, James McClure, Thomas Mills, Donald Neal, Edward Stokes, John Wade, Floyd Williams, William Patrick Williams, and John Wilson. Most remain there either buried in Commonwealth War cemeteries or are remembered with their names etched on memorials in Sicily and Italy, including Agira, Moro River, Cassino, Gradara, Coriano, Ravenna, Cesena, Argenta Gap and Villanova.

• **SARNIA'S BLACK DEVIL:** One of the more storied units that took part in the Battle of Italy was the **First Special Service Force (FSSF)**, formed in July 1942, nicknamed *die schwarzen Teufeln* (The Black Devil's) by the Germans. It was a joint United States and Canadian elite commando unit—their legendary accomplishments were the inspiration for a 1968 Hollywood movie, *The Devil's Brigade*.

One of members of the Black Devil's was Sarnia-born **Joseph (Joe) Millard Glass**. He was born on March 14, 1920, the son of John Wesley and Harriet Millard Glass. He had two brothers; Charles and John (Jack), and one sister, Ellen. Joe grew up on Water Street in Sarnia and later Point Edward. He attended local elementary schools and Sarnia Collegiate, until he left school at age 16 to help support his family. He became a boat deckhand on the Great Lakes. When the war began, colour-blindness kept Glass out of the navy so he joined the army in Chatham in 1940. He was serving as a bayonet instructor in Ottawa when he volunteered for the designated 2nd Canadian Parachute Battalion in 1942, later changed to the 1st Canadian Special Service Battalion. This battalion would be a part of a newly formed special force of United States and Canadian troops, known as the First Special Service Force (FSSF),

which was activated in early July 1942. "It was supposed to be a suicide outfit," Glass told *The Sarnia Observer* in 2004. He added he didn't really believe that claim and joined because it was a chance to get into combat. He and the other select rugged volunteers of the force travelled to Helena, Montana for intensive training that included stealth tactics, hand-to-hand combat, parachute jumping, mountain climbing, ski training, weapons training and handling explosives for demolition. From the outset, the FSSF was armed with a variety of non-standard or limited-issue weapons, such as the Johnson light machine gun and the sleek, double-edged V-42 combat knife. Helena, Montana is also where Joe would meet his future wife, Dorothy Frances Strainer. They married on March 6, 1943.^{N, 4J, 11H}

Following its initial training in Montana, the FSSF moved to Norfolk, Virginia in April 1943 to undertake amphibious training. After successful completion of this training, the force was relocated to Fort Ethan Allen, Vermont in May 1943. In early July, it arrived in San Francisco, its port of embarkation for its first operational mission: to assist in the recapture of Alaska's Aleutian Islands. On August 15, 1943, FSSF spearheaded the invasion force of the island of Kiska. Joe was scheduled to jump from the sky to join the battle, but never got the chance--the Japanese had evacuated the island. FSSF was then ordered back to San Francisco.

The next mission assigned to First Special Service Force was a tougher one—to assist the Allies in the conquest of Italy. After landing in North Africa in early November, the FSSF, including Joe Glass, disembarked at Naples, Italy on November 19, 1943. The FSSF brigade was sent to Italy to be used like infantry, but against objectives that were considered too tough for ordinary soldiers. In early-December 1943, the brigade was tasked with assaulting two enemy-held peaks that had halted the Allied advance: Monte la Difensa and Monte la Remetanea behind it, both were more than 900 metres high. The two-day operation involved a grueling seven-hour climb up the sheer rocky face of Monte la Difensa, with all supplies—including water—carried by the soldiers, followed by a lay-up during daylight. On the second night, the assault force scaled the few remaining metres to the top and attacked at dawn on December 3, taking the Germans completely by surprise. On December 5, they pushed forward along a narrow ridge that led to Monte la Remetanea, coming under machine-gun and mortar fire, but pressed on, taking their objective. The Force had captured the first peak in hours, wiping out a strategic enemy position, where previous American and British forces tried and failed, suffering many casualties in futile attempts to capture this pair of mountain peaks. This incident was the basis of the film *The Devils Brigade*. Over seven days – all the while exposed to howling winds, freezing rains, and with little shelter – the FSSF brigade captured the two mountains, suffering 511 casualties.

Mountain fighting continued at places like Monte Sammucro, Radicosa, Monte Majo, and Monte Vischiataro. After a brief period of rest, the special force was sent to the Anzio Beachhead, south of Rome. It was at Anzio that the unit was dubbed the "Devil's Brigade" after the discovery of a personal diary of a German officer containing a passage that said, "*The black devils are all around us every time we come into the line. We never hear them come.*" The officer was referring to them as "black" because the brigade's members would smear their faces with black boot polish for their covert operations at night, often overwhelming German defenders without firing a shot, and then disappearing into the night.

It was at Anzio in May 1944 where Joseph Glass was severely wounded when hit by artillery shrapnel while part of a morning operation near the German trenches. "*A big piece of shrapnel from an '88' went through my chest and out my back. My lung collapsed, it broke all my ribs connected to the backbone and I was paralyzed from the waist down. When I started coughing up blood, I told a friend of mine, 'Say goodbye to my wife and kid.' They picked me up and dragged me out of there, and then another shell hit me in the arm.*" Glass was transported to the beachhead hospital in a Jeep, and there, the doctors wired his ribs onto his backbone and removed one rib to repair his lungs. Joseph Glass was recovering in hospital when the unit led the breakout at Anzio two days later. Less than two weeks later, the FSSF were one of the first Allied units to enter Rome.^{N, 2E, 4J, 4I, 11H}

The Devil's Brigade continued fighting the war in Italy, then southern France to the Franco-Italian border. In just two years, the Devil's Brigade liberated towns in Italy and France, and accounted for some 12,000 German casualties and captured some 7,000 prisoners. While an operational success, the unit was plagued by bureaucratic issues and was disbanded suddenly in December 1944. It would be the basis of future special force elite units such as the American Green Berets, Delta Force and Navy SEALs, and Canada's Joint Task Force 2 (JTF2) military unit.

After recovering in Naples, Joe was eager to return to his unit but his wounds were too serious. He was shipped to France and later England before coming home to Sarnia to be reunited with Dorothy and his young son. They stayed in Sarnia for a short time, and then moved to Helena in 1946 where they settled and raised four children:

Charles, Robert, Dottie and Victoria. Joe Glass worked hard to support his family, sometimes working as many as three jobs at one time. His jobs included driving a cab, truck driving, delivering milk, selling insurance, manager of the Moose Club, selling cars, working at a bakery and finally operating a family fish and chip business with his wife and son. Joe and Dorothy always attended the annual First Special Service Force reunions. Dorothy was the love of his life and they were married for over 67 years, and along with their four children, they had 10 grandchildren and 14 great-grandchildren. Joe was preceded in death by his wife Dorothy in December 2010, and he would live to the age of 92, dying on April 1, 2012 in Helena. He was buried with military honours in Montana State Veterans Cemetery.

In September 1999, the main highway between Lethbridge, Alberta and Helena, Montana was renamed the “First Special Service Force Memorial Highway.” This highway was chosen because it was the route taken in 1942 by the Canadian volunteers to join their American counterparts for training. In February 2015, the United States Congress awarded the FSSF the Congressional Gold Medal, the highest civilian award.^{N, 4J, 11H}

• **THE TEA BOWL:** One cold, wet winter evening in 1944, Major Dennis Whitaker of the Royal Hamilton Light Infantry—a former quarterback with the CFL Hamilton Tigers and one of the few officers to survive the ill-fated raid on Dieppe—found himself sitting in a London pub next to a lieutenant in the American Special Services. The conversation turned to football and the lieutenant told Whitaker that he had recently received enough equipment from the States to field six teams. Several rounds later, the idea of an international match as a morale booster had taken hold, a challenge issued and a toast proposed before each went his separate way into the London black out. Plans were made, equipment was loaned to the Canadians and an order was placed with a London silversmith for a trophy—an eight-inch high sterling silver teapot—to be awarded to the winner of the now dubbed “Tea Bowl”, a nod to their British hosts.

Whitaker scoured the ranks for players and formed his Canadian Army team, named the “Mustangs”, who were even relieved of regular duties and allowed six weeks of hard training. The all-soldier Mustangs included a number of CFL players and three Sarnians; Ken Withers, Charles Living and Nick Paithouski (brother of Michael Paithowski who is included in this Project on page 915). The game was to be a hybrid, with the first half played under American rules, and the second under Canadian rules. The U.S. Army Central Base Station team was named the “Pirates”.

The Tea Bowl was played on February 13, 1944 before over 30,000 servicemen and bemused civilians, wrapped in scarves and fortified with rum to ward off the cold, in White City Stadium in London. Kickoff was at 2:45 p.m. The game was even broadcast on radio across the British Isles. With the threat of a German Luftwaffe attack, RAF Spitfires were deployed to cover the skies above the stadium during the game. After a scoreless first half, bands took to the field to dazzle the now boisterous fans. In the second half, the Canadian Army “Mustangs” took charge, and went on to defeat the U.S. Army Central Base Station “Pirates” team by a score of 16 to 6, to claim the Tea Bowl trophy.



Captains Frank Dombrowski (U.S.) and Dennis Whitaker (CAN)

Stung by the loss, the Americans called for a rematch. Their new team, the U.S. 29th Army team, named the “Blues”, was reinforced with a contingent from the University of Iowa Cornhuskers and former NFL Philadelphia Eagles all-star quarterback Sergeant Tommy Thompson. The rematch, played on March 19, 1944, again in White City Stadium, this time before a crowd of 50,000, was dubbed the “Coffee Bowl”. The U.S. “Blues” defeated the Canadian Army “Mustangs” team by a score of 18 to 0. The outcome of the two games were really irrelevant, what

counted was the camaraderie, the friendly competitiveness, and a sense of shared purpose. Less than three months later, the Allied forces joined together in something much larger – the D-Day landings in France. Some of the football game participants took part in the landings, including the U.S. 29th Division who landed on Omaha Beach, where many of the players in the Coffee Bowl were killed or wounded.

Sarnians Nick Paithouski would survive the war while Charles Living would lose his life in a Lancaster bomber over Germany (his story is included in this Project on page 815). Denis Whitaker would survive the war to become a Brigadier General and one of the country's foremost military historians. He passed away in 2001. At his home in Oakville, Ontario, among the souvenirs of a long and distinguished career displayed with pride, was a tiny silver teapot—a memento of a bright moment in a dark winter of war.^{8B, 8C, 8D, 8E, 8K}

• **D-DAY (JUNE 6, 1944) and OPERATION OVERLORD**, Normandy, France: The Allied invasion of France, code-named *Operation Overlord*, began on this date. It was the start of the Battle of Normandy and the “beginning of the end” of the war. This massive invasion into “Fortress Europe” involved Canadian, British and American forces crossing the English Channel to an 80-kilometre stretch of the heavily-defended coast in Normandy, France. The Germans had spent four years fortifying the French coast, their 4,500 kilometres of “**Atlantic Wall**”, with artillery encasements, machine gun nests, snipers, pillboxes, razor wire, concrete bunkers, over 4 million underwater and land mines, anti-tank walls (“hedgehogs”) and beach obstacles. The Germans’ first line of defence was supported by Panzer Divisions: made up of hundreds of tanks, armoured vehicles, and multiple battalions of battle-hardened infantry troops.

The mission required a full moon to help light the way for advance aircraft, among other things, and a low-ish tide, so landing craft could see the mines and detritus planted near the shore by the German army. The operation was delayed 24 hours from the original planned invasion date of June 5th due to bad weather (high winds and low clouds). D-Day, also referred to as the “longest day,” was the largest seaborne invasion in history. The Allied force comprised approximately 156,000 soldiers, 7,000 ships and landing craft, 50,000 vehicles, 1,500 tanks and 11,000 planes in total. There were five landing zones: Gold Beach (United Kingdom); Sword Beach (United Kingdom and France); Utah and Omaha Beaches (United States); and the middle beach, Juno Beach (Canada). The toughest landings were on Omaha and Juno. Eleven months after D-Day, Germany would surrender.^{D, E, 2N, 4I, 6Z}

Planning the Invasion: The planning for the invasion had begun seriously in March 1943, and with the appointment of American general Dwight Eisenhower as Supreme Allied Commander, the planning took on a new urgency. Eisenhower took over the bomber offensive, redirecting the bombers away from German cities to targeting German fortifications in France, and French railways, bridges, road networks, and canals, to degrade the enemy’s ability to strike back at the Allied invasion force. Along with USAAF B-17’s and B-24’s, RCAF Lancasters and Halifaxes of No. 6 Bomber Group dropped thousands of tons of explosives on German coastal defences. RCAF fighters and fighter bombers flew reconnaissance operations and attacked German airfields, radar sites, road and rail targets and bridges. The land armies would be commanded by the British general Bernard Montgomery, who would also command the 21st Army Group, consisting of British, Canadian, Polish, Free French and other national formations.

The Allied operation was a gamble and the odds against success were a continual concern of the planners. General Montgomery shared his dire predictions of high casualties with his staff. General Eisenhower was braced for disaster, and on the eve of the assault, he drafted a letter taking full responsibility for the operation’s failure. British army predictions for the Canadian and British landings on D-Day were 9,250 killed, wounded or missing—of these, 3,000 could drown.^{8M}

One reason for the success of the D-Day assault was due to the Allies elaborate web of deception, code-named *Operation Bodyguard*, that had begun a year in advance of the invasion. The plan, initiated by the British Security Services (such as MI5 and MI6), contained several operations in an elaborate global disinformation campaign, involving every branch of the secret war machines of Britain, the United States and Russia. The goal was “to induce the enemy to make faulty strategic dispositions in relation to operations by the United Nations against Germany.” The plan was intended to mislead the German high command as to the time and place of the invasion, and to keep German reinforcements in the wrong place for as long as possible after the landing.^{4S}

The plan specifically covering the actual cross-Channel invasion to Normandy was code-named *Operation Fortitude*. The *Fortitude North* deception involved creating a fictitious army (British Fourth Army) that was amassing in Scotland with plans to invade Norway, and the *Fortitude South* deception involved creating a fictitious

army (1st U.S. Army Group, led by General Patton), a force of 150,000 men, amassing in southeast England with plans to invade Pas de Calais. With the Germans focused on these two major landings, the real Allied army was massing in southwest England, preparing to attack the real target in Normandy.

The Allies successfully misled the German high command into thinking the Normandy beach invasion was only a diversionary ploy by using a variety of tactics including: fake troop camps; strategically placing dummy aircraft made of wood and canvas and decoy landing crafts (known as “wetbobs”) composed of canvas over steel frames; along with inflatable Sherman tanks and vehicles made of rubber and wood; creating bogus airfields and decoy lighting, all of which could be seen by German aerial reconnaissance; and “leaking” information through diplomatic channels, spies and double agents (the “Double Cross” system) and fake wireless signals; having an actor impersonate General Montgomery (the D-Day ground troops commander), to be seen days before the invasion far from the launch area; bombing campaigns on Pas de Calais in the days prior to D-Day; even infiltrating the German homing pigeon service with British “double-agent” second-rate carrier pigeons; and on D-Day, dropping dummy paratroopers away from Normandy. The First Canadian Army had been involved in the ruse since April 24, participating in **Operation Quicksilver**, which disseminated fictional messages by wireless to create a picture of the army preparing to attack at Pas de Calais.

On D-Day, since the Normandy attack was assumed to be a diversion, German command thought it was not necessary to wake Hitler and tell him it had started. He slept in until ten o’clock that morning. When finally told the invasion had begun, he was cheerful, convinced the attack would be repelled with ease. Even after the June 6th Normandy landings, Hitler was so convinced that the landings there were merely a diversionary ploy, he kept the entire Fifteenth Army of 150,000 men and much of their armour in reserve at Pas de Calais, where it waited for an attack that never came. A week after D-Day, only one German division had moved from Pas de Calais to Normandy, so the Allied bridgehead, so vulnerable in the first days and weeks, was firmly established. *Operation Fortitude* was one of the most successful strategic deceptions and creative intelligence operations of all time.^{3Y, 4S, 6Z}

The cross-Channel naval phase of this campaign was code-named **Operation Neptune**. The sea lanes had to be cleared or the Allied troop ships would be sunk before they ever reached land. *Neptune* would be the largest armada ever assembled in human history, with some 7,000 vessels, including over 1,200 warships ranging from battleships to torpedo boats. The Royal Canadian Navy supplied about 10,000 sailors in 126 Canadian destroyers, frigates, corvettes, motor torpedo boats, landing craft and minesweepers which assisted in pre-invasion Channel sweeps, transporting men and equipment, covering the invasion, providing anti-submarine escort, clearing mines, and bombing shore targets. On June 6, RCN destroyers such as *Algonquin* and *Sioux* supported the men going ashore by bombarding German fortifications; RCN corvettes protected the landing craft that ran the troops to the beaches; RCN minesweepers cleared the approach lanes; and RCN landing craft of various sorts ferried in infantry, tanks, trucks, artillery, and other equipment directly to the beaches.^{4I, 6Z}

Gearing Up: The vast majority of men with the Canadian Division had no battle experience, and had been training hard in Scotland and England for more than a year. The invading force was placed in quarantined camps in preparation for the assault, and the Canadians were issued new kit that included: 1937 British-type olive-green battledress; new Mark III assault helmets (nicknamed “tortoise”) which were covered in fishnet to hold wound dressing; live ammunition; grenades; canteens; mess kits; an entrenching tool; French francs; maps; chocolate bars; cigarettes; and small backpacks jammed with a personal hygiene and toilet kit, a camouflage/anti-gas cape, spare socks, and perhaps a few sheets of paper for writing home. Infantrymen carried a range of weapons that included Lee Enfield rifles and bayonets, Sten and Bren machine guns, PIATs (anti-tank weapons), along with anti-tank mines, wire cutters, wireless sets, and long cylindrical Bangalore torpedoes. As soldiers waited in their camps, they poured over maps, photographs and three-dimensional models of the invasion beaches, constructed from information meticulously collected over the previous months. The models and pictures showed the layout of the Normandy coastline and important landmarks—houses, church spires, headlands—so that every officer and soldier would know their objectives and what awaited them.^{2N, 4I}

A Letter Home: On their way across the English Channel on June 5, the soldiers were provided with pencils and paper and given instructions to write a letter home. One of the soldiers aboard one of the military ships was Lance Sergeant Edwin Worden, a member of the Regina Rifles. On this cold and stormy night, waiting for his first taste of combat, he wrote the following letter to his British war bride Lily:

To my darling wife:

How are you tonight? fine I hope. See darling I find it very hard to write this to you. I only wish I could have

seen you but I can say this, I am fine and feel a 100 per cent for I know I have someone waiting for me, who is very brave and knows how to smile.

We are going in to-morrow morning as I write this we are out on the water so the big day has come. I often had wondered how I would feel but I don't feel any difference, as I ever did before thanks to you. I know I can truthfully say if it was not for you I would feel different but it is the love and trust I have for you and that will help me over many a rough spot.

I am glad in away that it has come for it means you and I can be together sooner something I have always prayed for and I know you have to. So promise darling you will not worry for I'll be alright and home before you know it.

Just you and Mum look after each other and time will pass swiftly. Now before I close I want to say again that I love you very much and you mean the world to me. So now darling I'll say good-night and God bless you till we meet again soon.

Yours forever, Love Ted

P.S. Tell Mum that I am thinking of her too, and not to worry but look after you. I am enclosing a message they gave us. Good-night I'll write as soon as I get a chance.

L/Sgt. Edwin Worden would survive D-Day. In early-April 1945, the twenty-eight-year-old Edwin Worden was killed in action while fighting during the liberation of the Netherlands. He was never reunited with his wife Lily and he never saw his son Donald.^{D, 21, 7A}

Paratroopers: The first Canadians to land in Normandy were over 500 Canadian paratroopers of the 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion, who were dropped behind enemy lines by C-47 Dakota aircraft and glider-aircraft in the very early morning hours of June 6. As the aircraft crossed the French coast, German anti-aircraft fire had opened up. Some of the aircraft were shot out of the sky, others were damaged but not destroyed, flying as best they could. Weaving to avoid the ground fire, and battered by the windy weather, many were blown off course. The heavily-laden parachutists landed throughout the designated drop zone between the Orne and Dives Rivers (south of the British Sword Beach). Some were shot as they floated to earth; others were tangled in trees; some drowned in areas that had been flooded by the Germans, their eighty pounds of kit dragging them down.

Scattered “all over hell’s half acre,” as described by one of the survivors, they were outnumbered, and only lightly armed. Their first challenge was to find one another, then they had to organize to fulfill their assigned objectives. In the dark, they moved through the enemy rear area shooting up sentries and detonating bridges. After a night of skirmishing, the 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion had captured a German headquarters, destroyed a key bridge, and seized an important crossroads, all the while sowing confusion and disorder within enemy ranks. Of the 541 who jumped from the aircraft, 116 were killed, wounded or taken prisoner on that first day.^{3F, 41, 61, 6Z}

Juno Beach: The Canadian sector Juno Beach covered an area of approximately eight kilometers, stretching from the small (fortified) fishing port of Courseulles-sur-Mer on the right; the small village Bernieres-sur-Mer in the centre; and the small village Saint-Aubin-sur-Mer on the left. The Canadian assault on D-Day was divided into two sectors – “Mike” (on the right) and “Nan” (on the left). Approximately 14,000 Canadian soldiers, led by the **3rd Canadian Infantry Division** and the **2nd Canadian Armoured Brigade**, would storm Juno Beach on D-Day.

The 3rd Infantry Division was chosen because it was the only one of the three Canadian infantry divisions available for the job: 1st Division was in Italy; 2nd Division was still rebuilding after the disaster of Dieppe. The 3rd Canadian Infantry Division was composed of three brigades: the *7th Canadian Infantry Brigade* (the Canadian Scottish Regiment, the Royal Winnipeg Rifles, and the Royal Regina Rifles); the *8th Canadian Infantry Brigade* (the Queen’s Own Rifles, the North Shore Regiment, and the Le Regiment de la Chaudiere); and the *9th Canadian Infantry Brigade* (the Highland Light Infantry, the North Nova Scotia Highlanders, and the Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry Highlanders).

A shortage of landing craft constrained how many divisions could be put ashore in the first wave on D-Day. Around three thousand Canadians would be in the first landing group, led by four regiments: in the “Mike” sector were the Royal Winnipeg Rifles (known as the “Little Black Devils”) and the Regina Rifle Regiment, as well as an attached company of the Canadian Scottish Regiment, with the rest of The Canadian Scottish in reserve. Ten minutes later the “Nan” sector was to be tackled by the Queen’s Own Rifles of Canada and the North Shore (New Brunswick) Regiment, backed up by Le Régiment de la Chaudière.

D-Day Approach, First Wave: While crossing the English Channel on June 5 in violent weather, on board the rocking ships, officers briefed their men with aerial photographs, padres gave sermons to calm nerves, and several ships witnessed impromptu sing-alongs. One soldier recalled, *"I thought about the things that meant a lot to me - my home. The shroud of Dieppe crept into my idling thoughts once in a while."* Another recalled, *"We knew some of us were going to die but we didn't know who."* About 10 kilometres off shore, the assaulting infantry scrambled down the landing nets hanging on the sides of the large transports to their waiting LCAs (Landing Craft Assaults) with their motors running, which were tied loosely alongside the transports. Each LCA held anywhere from twenty-five and thirty-five men per craft. Trying to hold the wet, clammy ropes in the dark, with choppy waters rocking the boats, and while carrying more than sixty pounds of equipment, men knew that one wrong footstep could have fatal results. During the eighty to ninety minute run-in, the LCAs pitched wildly, dropping and rising repeatedly, as cold water sloshed over the steel sides drenching the men. One soldier recalled, *"There wasn't much talk... as we came closer, it was a strange silence that gripped us."* Above their heads were the ear-shattering sounds of the Allied naval guns bombarding the enemy in an attempt to neutralize them.

On final approach, vomit rolled in the pitching crafts, foam-flecked geysers erupted from the sea as enemy shelling crashed down, and bullets pinged off the steel hulls. The landing craft spread out as they neared the beaches. Some of the LCAs could not navigate past the welded iron pyramids of jutting steel (known as "tetrahydraz"), and the layers of wooden stakes (many were hung with mines that exploded on contact). As the ramps at the front of each boat dropped, men descended into a maelstrom of mortar and machine-gun fire. Eyewitnesses gave chilling accounts of landing craft blown out of the water, body parts floating in the red bilge. Many of the Armoured Fighting Vehicles (AFVs) designed to explode mines, act as flame-throwers, and bridge culverts and small gulleys, all in support of the infantry, were late, or didn't make it to shore at all. In some sectors, the DD (duplex drive) tanks went ashore ahead of the infantry as planned, but in most cases they arrived well after the infantry. Above the beaches, RCAF Typhoon fighter-bombers dove on enemy objectives, while RCAF Spitfires and Mustangs fought the few Luftwaffe in the air, and blasted away at targets with their machine guns and cannons. It would turn out that the aerial bombardment and rocket fire, combined with the naval bombardment, did little to destroy or even suppress the enemy defences. It was largely a matter of luck as to whether a man lived or died in the rush across the sand and in the attacks on the German fortifications above the high-tide line.^{D, E, 2N, 3F, 4A, 4I, 6Z}

D-Day Landing, Juno Beach "Mike" sector: The first wave of Canadians waded ashore at about 7:50 a.m., as two lead companies of the Royal Winnipeg Rifles, with a company of the Canadian Scottish Regiment ran up the packed sand of "Mike" sector. The 29-ton Sherman tanks of the 1st Hussars were delayed, having to "swim" into shore using their DD (duplex drive) flotation devices, landing about 20 minutes after. The German fortified concrete gun positions straddling the harbour hadn't been put out of action by naval gunfire, so the first wave faced at least fifteen MG-42 machine guns, firing more than five hundred bullets per minute, as well as riflemen, mortars, and anti-tank guns. The infantry were ordered to clear the beach as quickly as possible, but many never had a chance to set foot on dry soil. They were gunned down as the landing craft doors dropped, their bloodied bodies hurled backwards. Others only took a few strides onto the sand before a bullet found them. Storming into the face of sweeping machine-gun fire, some went to the ground and dug, others crawled through the sticky sand, most continued forward firing and throwing grenades, looking for gaps in the barbed wire that was up to 10 metres deep in places. Supported by Hussars tanks, the infantrymen surged forward, overcoming the German resistance, snuffing out the last of the enemy around 10:30 a.m.

To the left of the Little Black Devils, the Regina Rifles landed around 8 a.m. During their run-in, two of the LCAs carrying twenty-five men each struck mines and were blown apart. On the beach, they faced enemy machine guns in a concrete bunker, as well as rifle and mortar fire from the dunes. The Reginas scrambled forward over 350 metres of open ground, shooting and advancing, some sacrificing their lives to draw fire so that others could continue closing the distance with the enemy. One Major wrote after the battle, *"There were two kinds of people on the beach, the already dead and those that will be killed there. It was better to press on and get away from the predetermined gun, and mortar fire, also machine guns."* The Reginas, supported by the tanks of the 1st Hussars, made it off the beach after about thirty-five minutes of fierce fighting.⁴¹

D-Day Landing, Juno Beach "Nan" sector: The Queen's Own Rifles went in after a delay of thirty minutes, circling far from shore, in the hope that their tanks would catch up to them. The Sherman tanks of the Fort Garry Horse arrived late because of the rough water, so the Rifles faced the fire alone. They landed under fire at 8:12 a.m., facing 180 metres deep of beach swept by interlocking fields of machine-gun and shell fire, then a 4.5 metre

wall. Despite what looked like a slaughter, the Queen's Own charged forward. A Rifleman recounted, *"We were the best trained troops, but there was one thing they didn't teach us – it strikes me very strongly – they didn't teach us how to react when someone suddenly becomes a lot of pieces in front of you."* Uncut barbed wire and mine fields channelled the Canadians into a killing ground, where the bodies of soldiers accumulated. Running and firing, the infantrymen crossed the murder zone and cleared the enemy pillboxes by throwing grenades through aperatures and spraying the interiors with Sten and Bren gun fire.

To the left, the North Shore Regiment faced a vast concrete bunker housing a hundred-man garrison that had survived the naval and aerial bombardment. Exiting the landing craft, the men rushed forward in sprints before dropping to the coarse sand. A Chaplain described it as, *"Into the jaws of death. The beach was sprayed from all angles by the enemy machine guns and now their mortars and heavy guns began hitting us... The noise was deafening. You couldn't hear our huge tanks that had already landed and were crunching their way through the sand. Some men, unable to hear them, were run over and crushed to death... When a shell came over, you dug into the sand and held your breath... waited for the blast and shower of stones and debris that followed. Then, when it had cleared a little, right next to you, perhaps someone talking to you half an hour before, lay dead."* The North Shore soldiers pushed forward, aided by Sherman tanks of the Fort Garry Horse that overran several German positions. The North Shore Regiment also had to defeat hidden enemy snipers that were popping up from a network of underground tunnels.⁴¹

D-Day Continues: Guns of the Royal Canadian Artillery were quickly put ashore on the Juno beaches to lend additional support. The Royal Canadian Army Medical Corps treated the wounded. All the while, the sappers of the Royal Canadian Engineers blasted paths through enemy obstacles and the Royal Canadian Corps of Signals ensured smooth communications. Around 10:30 a.m., the Canadians exited the beaches, moving into the surrounding French towns that were occupied by the Germans. Reserve companies and more battalions spearheaded the attack inland, dealing with enemy snipers, mines and pockets of resistance in slow and vicious fighting. On the beaches, those injured soldiers who could, pulled themselves to the safety of the seawall to be treated by medical personnel. Some of the wounded smoked calmly, while others stared off with morphine-glazed eyes; many were slumped over, unconscious, bleeding out, or dead. A number of hurt Canadians lying along the water's edge were dragged out to sea, too weak to fight against the tide. Blood stained the water red, and Canadians floated lazily face down in the swill. The dead lay curled up and spread out. Some seemed to have died without a mark on them, while others were little more than eviscerated meat. A Canadian journalist reported, *"The German dead were littered over the dunes, by the gun positions. By them, lay Canadians in bloodstained battledress, in the sand and in the grass, on the wire and by the concrete forts. I saw friends I had known, men who had joined the army in the first months of the war - and now had died in their first action here on the Normandy beach. They had lived a few minutes of the victory they had made. That was all."*

Beach masters from the RCN directed traffic and tried to ease congestion, hurrying thousands of men and vehicles off the beaches that continued to be under shellfire. The French Canadians in Le Regiment de la Chaudiere greeted the civilians in their own language, one of the few delights for the French men, women, and children who witnessed their small villages become a battleground. A Captain remarked, *"It's rather amazing to see people whose homes you have just blasted to bits coming out with tears in their eyes to welcome you."* By the end of the day, the Canadians had advanced farther inland than any other Allied formation – to a depth of 11 kilometres. After the mad rush to get off the beach and pushing inland as far as possible, a member of the Queen's Own Rifles had time to think about the awful events of the day, *"It was on this evening that a moment came when some reality sank in about all the things that had happened during the day. It hurt. We had reached only the edges of Bernieres-sur-Mer when we learned that half of our original company – those I had joined up with in June of 1940 – had been killed or wounded. And we'd taken still more casualties as we'd gone on to Anguerny. The tears came. I went behind a wall. So many had been lost."*⁶²

D-Day numbers: Some 150,000 Allied soldiers had breached the Atlantic Wall and were ashore by the end of D-Day, along with 900 tanks and another 5,000 guns and vehicles. There were 7,500 Allied casualties on June 6, about 40 percent suffered by the Americans on Omaha Beach. At Juno Beach, the Canadians had clawed their way forward, sacrificing their lives on the beaches and fighting skillfully to overcome a fortified opposition that was stronger than that of any other beach save Omaha. Approximately 14,000 Canadians landed in Normandy on D-Day, the cost was high – 47 were captured, 715 were wounded and 359 lost their lives, although that was about half of what was predicted by the operation's planning officers.^{D, E, 2I, 2N, 3F, 3G, 4A, 4I}

D-Day news arrives in Sarnia: In the early morning hours of June 6, 1944, Canadians across the country awoke to the voice of Prime Minister Mackenzie King in Ottawa on the radio addressing the nation. Following are portions of that D-Day address:

At half past three o'clock this morning, the government received official word that the invasion of Western Europe had begun. Word was also received that the Canadian troops were among the Allied forces who landed this morning on the northern coast of France. Canada will be proud to learn that our troops are being supported by units of the Royal Canadian Navy and the Royal Canadian Air Force. The great landing in western Europe is the opening of what we hope and believe will be the decisive phase of the war against Germany. The fighting is certain to be heavy, bitter and costly... No one can say how long this phase of the war may last, but we have every reason for confidence in the final outcome... Let the hearts of all in Canada today be filled with silent prayer for the success of our own and Allied forces and for the early liberation of the peoples of Europe.

On D-Day, major newspapers ran early editions with oversized and dramatic headlines. However specific information on the attack, such as exact location, regiments involved and extent of success could not be released. In Sarnia, the *Canadian (Sarnia) Observer* headline read, "ALLIES GAIN BEACHHEADS: Armies Slash Into Normandy In Auspicious Start To The Assault On Hitler's Europe." Families and friends across Sarnia and Lambton County read the following details provided in the *Observer*:

- British, American and Canadian troops landed on the Normandy coast in tremendous strength.
- the initial landings ranged from 6:00 to 8:25 a.m. B.S.T. (midnight to 2:25 a.m. E.D.T.).
- Germans broadcasts said they were bringing reinforcements continuously up to the coast where "a battle for life or death is in progress."
- the German radio began broadcasting a constant stream of invasion flashes almost as soon as the first troops landed.
- Allied headquarters kept silent until 3:32 a.m. B.S.T. (9:32 E.D.T.) when the following communiqué was issued: "Under the command of General Eisenhower, Allied naval forces supported by strong air forces began landing Allied armies this morning on the northern coast of France."
- Part of the mammoth assault was all-Canadian. R.C.A.F. fighter pilots who flew the first sorties over the beachhead area, returned to base to refuel and continued throughout the day to provide cover for the Canadian assault force. R.C.A.F. Canadian bombers joined the R.A.F. aircraft in the previous nights hammering of the French coast. Royal Canadian Navy ships carried Canadian troops to the beaches, landing in the first assault waves, and continued to ferry reinforcements in and casualties out.

The 'local news' page of the *Sarnia Observer* on D-day carried the headline, "LOCALLY – BELLS ANNOUNCE INVASION – CLOSE SCHOOLS: City Hears News Early In Morning." Following are some of the local details carried in the *Observer*:

- D-Day has arrived... The formal Allied announcement came at 3:32 a.m. and, although people had waited for months for some word that the invasion was on, the "big news" was not generally known until around eight o'clock.
- In accordance with a pre-arranged plan, church bells were rung between 7:30 and 8:00 o'clock as a signal that the invasion had started.
- Many people caught the significance, but others called the *Canadian Observer* to enquire the meaning.
- The few people who heard the first announcements over the radio about four o'clock called their friends by telephone and many families ushered in the day gathered around their radios to follow the progress of the landings.
- Hundreds of copies of an extra edition of the *Canadian Observer* were bought by readers anxious for details. After Eisenhower's announcement of the landing, as quickly as special news stories were received over the teletype machines, *Observer* staff set it in type and by 7:30 o'clock, an extra edition was on the streets.
- Hundreds of Sarnians of all ages gathered in city churches to meditate and to offer prayers for the success of the Allied invasion. Inside the solemn and silent places of worship, many eyes were dimmed with tears as citizens thought of loved ones now facing the enemy and of those who had already laid down their lives in the cause of freedom. Services were held through the course of the day at Our Lady of Mercy and St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Churches, Canon Davis Memorial Church, St. George's Church, St. Paul's United Church, Central United Church and the Point Edward Presbyterian Church.
- Five years prior to D-Day, almost to the day, on June 7, 1939, Sarnia and Lambton residents by the thousands had flocked to London, Ontario to see Their Majesties King Edward VI and Queen Elizabeth on their cross-Canada tour. That day, many of the people who traveled to London and members of the local military units which formed part of the guard of honour were now serving in military units of the Canadian Army, Navy and Air Force, and likely some of them were pushing onto the beaches of France.

With limited information being released about D-Day, families in Sarnia couldn't know if their fathers, sons, husbands, relatives and friends were among the thousands of Canadians who took part in the invasion. It would be weeks before the *Canadian Press* could reveal the names of regiments and some of the details of the D-Day invasion.

Sarnians at D-Day: There were a number of Sarnians who landed on the beaches of Normandy that June 6 morning. There were no Sarnia fatal casualties that first day, but there would be in the days following. **Corporal George Caven**, the son of Mr. and Mrs. Hugh Caven of 334 Stuart Street, husband of Mrs. Thelma Caven of 266 Ontario Street, Sarnia and father of a two-year old son, Paul, was a member of the Canadian Scottish Regiment, and was scheduled to take part in the assault on D-Day. In late July of 1944, his wife Thelma received a number of letters he'd written over the previous two weeks, including one that he wrote to her on June 6, 1944 as he was waiting in a barge that was standing off the coast of France. He had been discharged two days previously from hospital. Following are portions of that letter:

I suppose that when you heard the news this morning of the greatest assault that has ever been made in any war, that you would be worried, and thousands of other people would be the same way... I am writing this from the ship and we are just pulling away from the French coast at Le Havre. I am still in the sick bay of the ship with a touch of pleurisy as the M.O. would not let me make the assault with the boys. He is sending me back to England for a few weeks rest.

You have no idea of the tremendous forces we have had and up to now the casualties are very small, and I pray to God they will remain so. Our company had a special job to do and, although some of the boys were dumped out of their craft by a mine, they all reached the beach and carried on with their work... All our boys were in the best of spirits and were confident that they would succeed in the job each had given him to do.

Cpl. Caven enclosed with his letter, a copy of the circular from General Dwight Eisenhower, which had been given to each man the night before the invasion. With this, he said, each man was given a carton of cigarettes and a certain amount of French money, so that he could buy anything he might need after landing. The circular from General Eisenhower read:

Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen of the Allied Expeditionary Force: You are about to embark upon the Great Crusade, toward which we have striven these many months. The eyes of the world are upon you. The hopes and prayers of liberty-loving people everywhere march with you. In company with our brave Allies and brothers-in-arms on other Fronts, you will bring about the destruction of the German war machine, the elimination of Nazi tyranny over the oppressed peoples of Europe, and security for ourselves in a free world.

Your task will not be an easy one. Your enemy is well-trained, well-equipped and battle hardened. He will fight savagely. But this is the year 1944! Much has happened since the Nazi triumphs of 1940-41. The United Nations have inflicted upon the Germans great defeats, in open battle, man-to-man. Our air offensive has seriously reduced their strength in the air and their capacity to wage war on the ground. Our Home Fronts have given us an overwhelming superiority in weapons and munitions of war, and placed at our disposal great reserves of trained fighting men. The tide has turned! The free men of the world are marching together to Victory!

I have full confidence in your courage, devotion to duty and skill in battle. We will accept nothing less than full Victory! Good luck! And let us all beseech the blessing of Almighty God upon this great and noble undertaking.

One well-known Sarnian who took part and survived the D-Day invasion was **James Doohan**, best remembered to a generation of television viewers for his role as Montgomery "Scotty" Scott, the chief engineer on the starship *Enterprise*, in the popular television and film series *Star Trek*. The youngest of four children of an Irish immigrant family, James was born March 3, 1920, in Vancouver, British Columbia. The Doohan family moved to Sarnia in 1926 and resided at 167 ½ Lochiel Street. James Doohan's father was a veteran of World War I, where he served as a major. James' brother, William Patrick Doohan attended St. Joseph's Separate School and Sarnia Collegiate Institute, joining the Lambton Regiment at the age 15 as a signaller. He would go overseas with the 97th Battery in November, 1941 with the rank of captain. He rose up the ranks to being a major in the Royal Canadian Artillery to lieutenant-colonel, in command of an artillery regiment in the First Canadian Division. He would serve in Tunisia, Italy and Holland. In May of 1945, William Doohan was awarded Mention in Dispatches in recognition of gallant and distinguished service overseas.

James Doohan attended Sarnia Collegiate where he excelled in math and sciences. His acting debut came at SCITS when he played Robin Hood in a school show. At age 19 he joined the Royal Canadian Army Cadet Corps and when WWII began, he joined the Royal Canadian Artillery, rising up the ranks becoming a lieutenant in the 13th Field Artillery Regiment. His first combat action was on D-Day, when the twenty-four-year-old James Doohan was in command of 120 men.

On the night of June 6, close to the front, the infantry regiments lay low in their slit trenches waiting to drive off probing enemy counterattacks. With the enemy lurking somewhere in the dark, infantrymen were edgy and trigger-happy. Lieutenant James Doohan had gone forward to find the guns of the 13th Field Regiment, and on his return to his command post, he was shot six times by an overzealous Canadian sentry. He sustained four wounds in the leg, one in his chest and one through his right middle finger. The shot to the chest likely would have been fatal had it not been for a silver cigarette case in his shirt pocket that deflected the bullet. The lucky case was a gift from his brother, given to James before he enlisted. Approximately one week later, Mr. and Mrs. W.P. Doohan in Sarnia received a telegram informing them that their son, *Lieutenant James Doohan was reported wounded in action*. His finger had to be amputated, something he would conceal during his acting career. After recovering from his injuries, he would become a qualified pilot, being posted to 666 (AOP) RCAF Squadron that was stationed at Apeldoorn, Holland. Though he never saw action again, James developed a reputation as being one of the craziest pilots in the Royal Canadian Air Force.

“Calamity” tank in Sarnia: Outside the Sarnia Royal Canadian Legion hall sits a tank that was donated to the City of Sarnia by the First Hussars and Sarnia Legion in 1970. The tank is model type M4A2 HVSS Sherman medium tank with a 76-mm gun. The tank was christened “Calamity” to honour First Hussars member Brandon (Brandy) Conron, who drove a tank named “Calamity” as the Canadians stormed ashore on D-Day, June 6, 1944. Note: More information on the Sarnia Royal Canadian Legion and “Calamity” is in the WWI section on page 202.

Alfred Brandon Conron was born November 29, 1919 in St. John’s, New Brunswick. When war was declared in 1939, Conron was a student at Western University, and he enlisted in London’s First Hussars. He left Western for the army in January 1940 and returned for his convocation in June in uniform from Camp Borden. He was with the First Hussars when they landed on Juno beach on D-Day.

As part of 2nd Canadian Armoured Brigade, the 6th Canadian Armoured Regiment (1st Hussars) assaulted the beach in support of the 7th Canadian Infantry Brigade of the 3rd Canadian Infantry Division. The First Hussars tanks went ashore on Juno Beach at Courseulles-sur-Mer and Bernieres-sur-Mer. The special tanks used were “duplex drive” (DD) amphibious tanks developed for the assault landing. These Sherman tanks were fitted with a collapsible canvas screen that inflated around the hull of the tank, displacing enough water to allow them to float. Two propellers were fitted at the rear of the tank for use in the water, allowing the tank to ‘swim’ to shore.

Brandon Conron was part of “C” Squadron, landing on the Mike sector of the beach, 45 minutes after the first wave. As traffic began to pile up on the beaches, isolated groups of Germans continued to rain down fire. Some of the tanks discovered a place to get off the beach through cutting in an embankment some 200 yards left of the specified exit. The following is the account of events taken from “A History of the First Hussars Regiment”:

The tanks paused momentarily at the top of the embankment to neutralize entrenched infantry there and then pressed on across 1000 yds. of heavily mined open ground to a canal. On reaching the bridge over this tank obstacle Battle Capt. “Brandy” Conron dismounted from his tank to remove the barbed wire obstacle and inspect the bridge while machine-gun fire clipped the ground all about him. Finding that it was not strong enough to carry tanks, he climbed up on the back deck of leading troop officer Lieut. McCormick’s tank to pass this information. While standing there Capt. Conron was wounded in both legs by a mortar bomb.^{5Z}

“C” Squadron would cross the Caen-Bayeux railway line that first day, becoming “the only unit of the allied invasion forces known to reach its final objective on D-Day,” but at a cost of at least 21 First Hussars killed in action on D-Day. Brandon Conron would be evacuated to England, and later returned to Normandy and his regiment. Not long after, he was promoted to Major, given command of a tank squadron, and in April 1945, was awarded the Distinguished Service Order (DSO), “for gallant and distinguished services in the field.” Following the Normandy Campaign, the regiment fought in Belgium, Holland and Germany. Brandon Conron returned to southwestern Ontario after the war: married Caroline Spencer in May 1949, the daughter of General Spencer of the 1st Hussars; returned to Western University as an English professor and administrator; and would write and publish a variety of works, including the revised edition of “A History of the First Hussars Regiment: 1856-1980” in 1981.^{2D, 3F, 5Z, 6A, z}

In Normandy, the Canadian M4A4 **Sherman medium tanks** were on par with the German Mk IV tanks, but were no match for the enemy’s Panthers and Tigers. The Panther and Tiger tanks were newer and much heavier, and better-gunned than the Shermans. When the German tanks were situated in a hull-down position (with their forward-sloping armour facing the enemy), they were nearly impervious to Canadian fire. The Shermans were able to destroy Panthers and Tigers from the flank or back when they gained a chance. The Shermans, with their higher profile and

lighter armour, and with high-octane fuel running through rear fuel cells, were dangerously vulnerable to all calibres of enemy anti-tank shells. Sixty percent of the Shermans in Normandy were wiped out by a single shot from a 75mm or 88mm shell. Moreover, two thirds of all the tanks “brewed up” when hit. Bursting into flames was so common that the Shermans earned the ironic nickname of “Ronsons,” after a brand of cigarette lighter with the memorable slogan “lights first every time.” Many crews burned alive before they could bail out of the tank. Before long, the modified Sherman Firefly tanks (with its tank-stopping 17-pound gun) and Sherman Crab tanks (mine-clearing tanks) joined the standard Sherman tanks. The Fireflies were equipped with a 17-pounder gun, which fired an armour-piercing Sabot shot, double the power of a standard 75mm Sherman gun.^{41, 62}

The First Hussars: In 1856 in London, Ontario, a group of settlers who had trained in cavalry skills formed an independent cavalry unit, the First London Volunteer Troop of Cavalry. It would amalgamate with several other troops including ones in St. Thomas, Courtright and Kingsville. It was deployed to meet the Fenian threat in 1866, and again in 1870, and would undergo several changes in title. In April 1892, the regiment was officially designated the 1st Hussars.

During the Boer War, the 1st Hussars sent a contingent of officers and men to South Africa, and earned the Regiment’s first Battle Honour. During World War I, the 1st Hussars served as part of the 7th Canadian Mounted Rifles. The soldiers fought with distinction, often seeing action dismounted as infantry, and were awarded thirteen additional Battle Honours including at the Somme, Hindenburg Line, Arras, Vimy, Cambrai and Amiens. One of the more famous members of the 1st Hussars in the Great War was Forest-born and Petrolia-raised George Stirrett. The Sarnia Armoury is named in his honour. His story is included in the WWI section of this Project on page 131.

Upon the outbreak of World War II, the 1st Hussars were the first Non-Permanent Militia to be mobilized, moving overseas in 1941 as part of the 5th Canadian Armoured Division. The 1st Hussars would be one of the armoured units to take part in the Normandy landings on D-Day.

In 1964, as part of the larger London-based regiment, the 1st Hussars “C” Squadron was formed in Sarnia. The local squadron was based out of the federal building in downtown Sarnia until moving to the armoury in 1983. In late September 2019, as part of the 1st Hussars C Squadron 55th Anniversary weekend, a plaque was unveiled at the George Stirrett Armoury. The plaque, located beside a Cougar AVGP (armoured vehicle general purpose), tells the story of the 1st Hussars “C” Squadron on D-Day and the story of the Cougar tank named “Cataraqui”. Following is the content on the plaque:

1st Hussars “C” Squadron

On the sixth of June, 1944, the First Huusars were one of three Canadian Armoured Regiments to lead the assault on Juno Beach. 2 Troop, C Squadron, of the 1st Hussars, led by Lt. Bill McCormack, supported the Winnipeg Rifles in taking the French town of Creully and then pushed on to their objective, Secqueville-en-Bessin. In doing so, they became the only element of the Allied Seaborne assault forces to reach their objective. Finding themselves isolated without infantry or anti-tank support, they retraced their steps and rejoined the Regiment.

Cataraqui “The Story of”

Lt. McCormack’s tank was named “Cataraqui” and thus to honour the actions of 2 Troop, on the 6th of June, we have named this Cougar “Cataraqui” and affixed the same Tactical signs that would have been on his original Sherman Tank. Cougar AVGP’s were originally issued to the 1st Hussars in 1983 and were intended to be used by Primary Reserve, Armoured Units as a tank trainer. However, the vehicles were deployed to Bosnia-Herzegovina on a Peacekeeping Mission. They served the 1st Hussars Regiment well until they were retired in the year 2005.

Following D-Day, the Regiment took part in the bitter battles in the Normandy bridgehead, the closing of Falaise Gap, and clearing of the cross channel guns at Calais. The 1st Hussars fought with distinction through Belgium and Holland, ending the war in Germany. During this period, the 1st Hussars won 72 Decorations, Certificates, or Mentioned in Dispatches, more than any other unit in the 1st Canadian Army, and were awarded 20 additional Battle Honours for outstanding Bravery, including at Normandy, Falaise, Caen, Calais, The Rhineland, Apeldoorn and North West Europe. Members of the Gallant Hussars have served and continue to serve in peacekeeping missions around the world including in the Middle East, Bosnia, Kosovo, and Afghanistan with NATO and the United Nations.^{3G, 5R}

• **CONDUCT UNBECOMING:** One of the worst war crimes in Canadian history occurred during the battle of Normandy, following the June 6, D-Day landings. As many as 156 Canadian soldiers, taken prisoner by German forces, were executed by their captors, the 12th SS Panzer Division (fanatical Hitler Youth known as “Hitlerjugend”)

in scattered groups in various pockets of the Normandy countryside from June 6 to 11. The 12th SS Panzer were young men that had been raised to believe in the German master race and were quite prepared to die for the Führer while led by experienced and—in most cases—bloodthirsty officers. Even German troops called the 12th SS the “Murder Division.” This was Hitler’s order as retribution for the invasion on France.

On June 7, dozens of members of the North Nova Scotia Highlanders and the 27th Canadian Armoured Regiment were taken prisoner around the village of Authie. The Germans took their prisoners to Abbaye d’Ardenne, an ancient stone church, where later that night, eleven of the Canadian prisoners were taken into the Abbaye’s garden and shot in the head. The next morning, seven more Canadian POW’s were taken outside and shot. On June 8, sixty-four Canadians, including several dozen members of the Royal Winnipeg Rifles, were taken prisoner near Putot-en-Bessin. The prisoners were marched to the Chateau d’Audrieu where later in the day, forty-five of the Canadians were murdered throughout the day. One of those murdered on June 8, 1944 was **John Lychowich**. He was originally from Manitoba and had moved to Sarnia to work at Polymer Corporation before enlisting in August of 1943. John Lychowich’s name is on the Sarnia cenotaph and his story is included in this Project on page 834.

The Canadian prisoner cold-blooded murders and the consequent search for justice is documented in the book *Conduct Unbecoming: The Story of the Murder of Canadian Prisoners of War in Normandy* by Howard Margolian. Adding to the savagery exhibited by the fanatical resistance, there were numerous accounts of Nazis pretending to surrender and then throwing a grenade; prisoners being deliberately struck by vehicles while being marched away; setting up an ambush with a white flag to draw out the Canadians and working with other comrades to gun them down in the open; and an incident when the bodies of two murdered prisoners were ground to pulp beneath a tank after they were deliberately pulled out into the street.^{D, 2N, 4I, 7P, 8M}

• **THE BREAKOUT FROM NORMANDY:** While the Allies had pride in their achievement of breaching the Atlantic Wall on June 6, no one was naive enough to believe that the war was over. It was critical to establish a secure bridgehead in order to bring in the constant supply of materials and men necessary, so that the armies could continue to expand east across France. Two **Mulberry harbours**—giant artificial harbours made up of roughly 6 miles (10 km) of flexible steel roadways that floated on steel and concrete pontoons—were towed across the English Channel and put together off the coast of Normandy (Omaha and Gold beaches). Though one was destroyed in a violent storm on June 19th, the artificial harbours did allow the Allies to unload 2.5 million men, a half million vehicles, and 4 million tons of goods to the front lines. Even into mid-July, Hitler continued to believe that the Normandy landings were a diversion, and that the major Allied thrust was still to come on Pas de Calais. Yet even with their focus on the north, the Germans had or were massing three of their best armoured divisions—the 21st Panzer Division, the 12th SS Panzer Division, and the Panzer Lehr Division—around the city Caen.

Because of Allied air superiority, the Germans had great difficulty moving reinforcements up by day, but they could and did move by night. German tenacity and defensive tactics, along with effective anti-tank weapons and superior tanks, neutralized the Allied air superiority. While the Allied leaders expected to have their armies advancing east across France within weeks, instead, it would take a whole summer of tenacious fighting against a skilled and fierce enemy, for them to break out of their narrow Normandy bridgehead. The Allied plan, **Operation Goodwood**, devised by the commander of all Allied land forces on the continent, British General Bernard Montgomery, was for the Canadians and British to tie down the main German armour and infantry units in the east by taking the strategic city of Caen (originally a D-Day objective). This constant pressure would free the Americans to break out west from their positions. It also meant that the Canadians and British would continually confront the best of the enemy’s troops.^{D, 3F, 3G, 4I, 6Z}

Lead elements of the 3rd Canadian Division marched forward from the Normandy bridgehead at first light on the day after D-Day, known as D+1. The plan was to spread out to the northwest of Caen (a town the Germans were determined to defend at all costs), advancing to contact with the enemy. The Canadians met the German armour the morning of D+1, when spearheads of the 12th SS Panzer Division counterattacked the North Novas and the 27th Canadian Armoured Regiment at the town of Authie. Each day, various regiments set new objectives and faced fierce battles and vicious counterattacks. The infantry backed by Sherman tanks and artillery attempted to push across fields, farms, battling past stone homes, mansions and villages. Every day and night, Canadian soldiers at the front dug their slit trenches to protect against bullets, and mortar splinters. There were successes in advancing and occupying a number of small villages, including Bretteville, Norrey, Putot, and Les Buissons, but there were also devastating defeats. Each day, casualties on both sides mounted.

The Canadian citizen soldiers bent but did not break against a force of fanatical Hitler Youth, and elite enemy soldiers who had fought on the Eastern Front. The Allies were able to carve out a foothold on the French mainland, slowly expanding the front, but had yet to achieve a decisive breakthrough. After six days of ferocious and continuous fighting, the 3rd Canadian Division and the 2nd Armoured Brigade suffered over 1,000 Canadians killed and nearly 2,000 wounded. In that first week after D-Day, at least four Canadians lost their lives in France; Russell Jolly and John Lychowich, both members of the Royal Winnipeg Rifles; and William Barr and Ross Pole, both members of RCAF Bomber Command.^{D, 41, 6Z}

In early July 1944, the Canadians were ordered to seize the village of **Carpiquet** (a small town outside of Caen), and the airfield that lay just to the south of the town. The terrain and defences favoured the Germans, and the Canadians predicted a “tough show”. Beginning on July 4, Canadian battalions moved across open farmers’ fields, behind a creeping barrage of artillery, air and naval gun support in a battle that resembled those of the Great War. From low concrete bunkers surrounding the control buildings and hangars, the SS made the airfield into a killing zone with interlocking fields of machine-gun fire backed by mortars and artillery. Against this fierce opposition, and enemy counterattacks, the Canadians were successful in capturing the airfield and clearing Carpiquet by July 8. However in the bitter fighting against the fearsome 12th SS, over 100 Canadians were killed and more than 250 were wounded. The North Shore Regiment suffered the heaviest losses, one of its’ survivor recalled, *“I am sure that at some time during the attack every man felt he could not go on. Men were being killed or wounded on all sides and the advance seemed pointless as well as hopeless. I never realized... how far discipline, pride of unit, and above all, pride in oneself and family, can carry a man, even when each step forward meant possible death.”* The next objective was the city of Caen.^{3F, 41, 6Z}

Caen, a city of 55,000, had been pounded by Allied fire for weeks. British forces would carry out the main assault, with the Canadians on the right flank, in what was called **Operation Charnwood**. On the night of July 7, Caen was struck again by a mammoth air bombardment designed to crush the enemy defences. The Germans remained an effective fighting force, as most of them were well dug-in on the outskirts of Caen in areas that had not been targeted, including the Canadian front that received few bombs, due to the Allies’ fear of their aircraft hitting the Canadian positions. In fact, the bombardment backfired since the tangled ruins it produced only enhanced the enemy's defensive capabilities.

Through two days of agonizing fighting against enemy fortified positions, barbed wire, anti-personnel mines, tanks, machine gun, rifle, artillery and mortar fire, Canadian and British regiments were able to capture Caen on July 9 (the Allies had originally hoped to capture Caen on June 6, D-Day). In the centre of the city, a Canadian flag was erected, and emerging from the rubble, the liberated French brought out flowers and wine for the grimy and dust-covered Canadians. The Canadian dead were gathered, their possessions sorted, dog tags collected, and last rites given by the padres. Bodies were wrapped in blankets, until there were no more blankets. The battle for Carpiquet and Caen cost the Canadians 330 men killed and 864 wounded—losses comparable to those on D-Day itself.^{D, E, 2N, 3F, 3G, 41, 6F, 6Z}

When CBC reporter **Matthew Halton** entered Caen with the Canadian troops, he reported that the city looked like the end of the world:

We came suddenly on to a little square, Place de la Lycee Malherbe. There, to our astonishment, we saw a great church and school that weren't damaged at all. The church was the famous Abbaye-aux-Hommes, a thousand years old... Not one bomb or shell touched this church.

If you could go there and see the rest of Caen, you would say this was a miracle. I went into the church and saw a tapestry of our times that I will never forget... There were two thousand people in there, mostly women and children. They lived and slept for several weeks there. Babies have been born at the foot of the Sanctuary, and wounded people had been tended above the tomb of William the Conqueror after being brought in from the shambles outside... Throughout all the shelling and bombing during those apocalyptic weeks, the mass was celebrated in the church three times a day... Outside, the world crashing and burning but the church never once hit by a bomb or shell...

As we moved slowly down the great nave, hundreds gathered around us to shake our hands... When these people saw our shoulder patches, they cried “Long Live Canada!” All were calm and dignified but their enthusiasm was deep and touching. There was a ceremony in the square outside. The flag of France was raised and they sang “La Marseillaise,” weeping, the broken and tortured voices of unbroken people.”^{6F, 7Q}

Digging all the time: One of the Canadians taking part in the breakout from Normandy was Saskatchewan-

born Denis Chisholm of the Regina Rifles. He had joined the Regina Rifles at age sixteen, and landed in Normandy shortly after D-Day at the age of twenty. Following is his description of some of the perils they faced moving beyond Caen:

Everybody tends to think the worst thing for an infantryman is machine guns or rifles, but the worst is mortars and shelling. You have no idea what it's like. You would come under some of those barrages and they'd be up to an hour you know, just constant, big 88-mm, some of those big shells coming in. Air bursts, they were a bugger; they would explode at just above roof-top level and they were timed to blow up and rain down on you. If you were lucky you would find cover in a slit trench. That's another thing. In Normandy we were digging all the time. It was hard work. The tough part in Normandy was the chalk. There would be about two feet of dirt and then you hit this damn chalk and digging into that wasn't easy. The first thing a soldier asked when he met up with soldiers who were holding a position was not 'How's the enemy?' or 'What's going on up there?' it was 'How's the digging?' You just wanted to get down below ground as quickly as possible. Whenever we were moving we were looking for depressions in the ground, some place to dive into.^{8M}

In October 1944, the *Canadian (Sarnia) Observer* featured a story on one Sarnian's act of bravery during the Battle of Normandy. **Private Keith Withers** was the son of Mrs. Stella Withers of 409 Lydia Street. The story was told by Lance Corporal Willard Smith of Ridgetown, who credited Private Withers and another soldier with risking their lives and saving Smith from certain death. In telling of his rescue, Lt-Cpl. Smith said that after attacking east of Caen, his unit came under heavy attack, with intense shell and mortar fire from German infantry and Tiger tanks on either flank. On this particular night, Lt-Cpl. Smith, Private Withers and a driver (name unknown) were riding in a carrier. According to Lt-Cpl. Smith, "*The carrier had to take a bumpy country road that the Germans had charted every inch of the way. They plastered us and all we had was the speed of the carrier, 25 or 30 miles an hour, against their accuracy. An 88 finally came through the carrier, and I was wounded and losing consciousness... The carrier was loaded with munitions and afire, but Withers and the driver, disregarding the danger got me clear and into a hole before the fire reached the grenades and the carrier went up in flames.*" Private Keith Withers would suffer serious burns in the incident and was sent to hospital in England.

For Home We Fight: Corporal Tom Quinn, a British Columbia soldier with the Canadian Army, wrote a letter to from France in July 1944 to a neighbor. He focused on the imagined life of one French family so like his family at home.

Mollie,

... This is being written in an empty shell scarred house in the suburbs of a French town. Perhaps empty is not a good word to describe it for although the people who once lived here are gone their spirits still remain. I felt their presence when I stepped into the room, their living room I guess it was, and looked at the tables and chairs, at the sideboard full of old china and glassware, and dozens of odd little ornaments that have been handed down from one generation to another.

I felt their presences even more keenly as I looked into cupboards full of clothes and clean linen, and bed clothes, into drawers full of all sorts of odds and ends, full of the story of their lives, school books, scribblers, pencils, all the things you'd find in your own drawer at home. And now I think perhaps that it is not the spirits of the occupants of this house but the spirit of my own home that is in this room.

I looked in the bedroom upstairs and the tears smarted my eyes as I looked at the tiny cradle with the doll tucked neatly away under the little quilt, as if small hands had done it only last night.

The long years rolled back and I saw my sisters tiny hands tucking the quilt around the silent occupant of that cradle and heard my sisters voice telling it to go to sleep, that she'd be there in the morning.

The ghosts of the past filled the room to overflowing so I left.

This house has taught me one reason why we fight, - to preserve the mainstay of civilization – the Home.

So Mollie please write to me even if you have nothing to say (that sounds very Irish) for your place has always been like a second home to me, and a letter from home renews our determination to get this war over and done with so that we can get back to the things we love.

Goodbye for awhile, Tom

Mollie wrote to Tom again and again, and he did come home.^{7A}

The Battles of Verrières Ridge and Falaise: The Canadian component of *Operation Goodwood*, known as *Operation Atlantic* was launched by the Canadians on July 18, 1944. This Canadian offensive had the objectives of capturing the eastern section of Caen and securing the western bank of the Orne River and Verrières Ridge, with the

goal of driving on to Falaise. Verrières Ridge, an 88 metre-high kidney-shaped hill overlooked the main road running south from Caen, and was providing the Germans with a commanding view over Canadian positions. The stone-walled village atop the Ridge provided excellent protection for German troops and armour, and the tall grain and many clumps of trees provided excellent cover. It had to be captured in order for the Canadians to advance to their next target, Falaise.

The Canadian push towards Falaise was completed in several phases; operations *Spring*, *Totalize* and *Tractable*. The German forces, that included a battalion of nearly invulnerable massive 55-ton Tiger tanks, had furiously built up their defences, incorporating anti-tank guns, machine-gun pits, and mortar teams into the elevated landscape. They had been ordered by Hitler not to give an inch of ground. Beginning on July 18, with heavy artillery support and tactical air power, Canadian and British forces began their push southward advancing across the Orne River, through a number of villages toward Verrières Ridge. During each phase of the operation, strong German defensive tactics, reinforcements and effective counterattacks by elite Panzer formations resulted in heavy Allied casualties.

Most notable was the attack, ***Operation Spring*** that began in the early morning hours of July 25, 1944. The well-entrenched, battle-hardened German troops knew that the attack was imminent, and had sent reinforcements there. One of the regiments involved in the assault was the Royal Highland Regiment of Canada (the Black Watch). As the Black Watch advanced up the slope, they were caught in a maelstrom of German tank, anti-tank, mortar, machine-gun, and sniper fire. Of the approximately 325 members of the Black Watch who ascended Verrières Ridge on that morning, 123 were killed, 83 were captured and 101 were wounded. By the time it was called off, with only limited gains, *Operation Spring* as a whole had produced huge losses: more than 1,500 Canadian casualties of whom about 450 had perished. Except for Dieppe, the July 25 attack was the bloodiest day of World War II for Canada.

Though *Operation Spring* was a failure, it did serve one valuable purpose. On July 25, the American forces farther west began their thrust out from the Normandy bridgehead in *Operation Cobra*. The Germans, believing the British/Canadian operation towards Falaise was the main Allied push, delayed transferring experienced SS forces to take on the Americans. *Operation Spring* was to the Americans advantage, providing an important few days for the success of *Operation Cobra*.^{D, E, 3F, 3G, 4A, 4I, 6F, 6Z}

The Falaise “Gap”: By early August 1944, the Allied armies had launched a huge pincer movement — with British, Canadian and Polish units moving out of Caen, south towards the town of Falaise, and American forces, having finally broken through enemy lines in the west, circling south and east around what remained of the German Army in Normandy. The goal was to encircle and destroy the German Seventh Army and Fifth Panzer Army in an area referred to as the Falaise Pocket (also known as the Chambois pocket—the area between the four cities of Trun-Argentan-Vimoutiers-Chambois near Falaise, France).

Operation Totalize began before midnight on August 7 with Allied heavy bombers pounding the German defences. Columns of Sherman tanks moved out into the night with supporting infantry behind a rolling artillery barrage. They were kept moving in the right direction by light beams, radio beacons, tracer fired parallel to their advance, and artificial moonlight (searchlights shone on low clouds). Improvised armoured troop carrier vehicles, known as “defrocked” Priests or “Holy Rollers”, and later as “Kangaroos”, proved effective in transporting Canadian infantrymen rapidly on their targets. It was the first time ever that armoured personnel carriers were used to carry infantry into battle. The attack achieved initial success, as the first defensive lines were overrun including the ridge at Verrières where Canadians had died in the July campaign. However, in spite of the heavy bombing, the German artillery, mortar, 88mm anti-tank guns, infantry and tanks (including the murderous 12th Panzer Division), put up a grim resistance during numerous counter-attacks. Errors in Allied bombing even inflicted casualties on their own troops. Fighting continued until August 10: the Canadians had advanced some 13 kilometres, had some 600 killed, but failed to break through the German “ring of steel” defence line.

Operation Tractable was launched on August 14. The Germans had learned of the attack the day before when a Canadian officer lost his way and drove into enemy lines. He was killed and his driver taken prisoner; in the jeep was a copy of the Allied plan. This time, the operation was launched in daylight, again with heavy Halifax and Lancaster air bombardment, tank columns, supporting infantry in their Kangaroos, Wasps (universal carriers with a mounted flame-thrower), a creeping artillery barrage and a smoke screen cover. As with *Totalize*, a number of bombers mistakenly dropped their bombs short of their targets, causing a number of Allied casualties. Pushing slowly forward against a fierce German resistance, that included savage house-to-house fighting in Falaise against enemy

fanatics that had been told to hold on until death, this time the assault succeeded. Falaise was taken on August 18.

Although the Falaise Gap had been narrowed, a series of fierce enemy assaults and defenses prevented the quick closing of the Gap. Intense fighting continued for the Canadians against desperate enemy forces fighting for their lives, through the towns such as Trun, St. Lambert and Chambois. The Falaise "Gap", through which the Germans were retreating was finally closed on August 21, with the linking up of American, Canadian and Polish forces. While thousands of Germans were able to slip out of the trap, close to 8,000 destroyed, damaged, or abandoned German tanks, trucks, and guns lay behind, and over 150,000 German prisoners were captured.

The Caen to Falaise drive had taken the Allies through rolling farmland, winding roads, and small villages, all protected by German guns and tanks. The closing of the Gap was the last episode of the Normandy campaign. After the Allied victory in Normandy, Germany could no longer hold France. On August 25, **Paris was liberated** by French and American troops, ending four years of German occupation. A German commander, Major General Dietrich von Choltitz, had defied Hitler's order to level the French capital rather than give it up.^{D, E, 2N, 3F, 3G, 4I, 6Z, 8M}

• **THE BATTLE OF NORMANDY ENDS:** The June 6th, 1944 landings in France marked the opening of the Battle of Normandy. From the D-Day landings through to the encirclement of the German army at Falaise on August 21, 1944, the Battle of Normandy was a brutal attrition campaign, one of the pivotal events of the Second World War and the scene of some of Canada's greatest feats of arms. Canadian sailors, soldiers and airmen played a critical role in the Allied invasion force that swept into France that summer. Pushing against fierce and ruthless German forces, including the fanatical 12th SS Panzer Division, Canadians encountered tense battles as troops moved forward. Canadians advanced at Carpiquet, Caen, Bourguebus Ridge, St. Andre-sur-Orne, Verrieres Ridge and the Falaise Gap. In the first few days after the landing, between June 7-12, Canadian casualties totalled 2,831 – of whom 1,017 died. Over the ten weeks between June 6 and the end of August 1944, there were over 18,400 Canadian casualties, including more than 5,300 Canadians killed during the Battle of Normandy.^{D, E, 2N, 4I}

Two principal military cemeteries contain the graves of Canadian soldiers killed in the Battle of Normandy: Beny-sur-Mer Cemetery—Canadian soldiers killed during the early stages of the battle; and Bretteville-sur-Laize—Canadian soldiers killed in the later stages of the battle. The Beny-sur-Mer cemetery contains 2,048 gravestones—all but five are Canadians.⁴¹ At least sixteen young men from Sarnia gave their lives during the Battle of Normandy including; Douglas Aiken, William Barr, Isaac Bell, Frederick Birkinshaw, Allan Campbell, Norman Ellis, Francis Goring, Russell Green, Thomas Hamilton, Russell Jolly, Thomas Lee, Joseph Legare, George Loney, John Lychowich, John McKernan, and Ross Pole. Ten of these Sarnia fallen soldiers are buried in the two principal Normandy cemeteries.

The Normandy campaign was won in seventy-seven days, twenty-three short of the pre-battle planners' estimates. Yet after the campaign, the Canadian forces were criticized by some, including by British General Bernard Montgomery, for being unaggressive, poorly led and slow in achieving their goals. Military experts have since pointed out that the Canadians, from D-Day onward, faced not only a formidable enemy with superior tanks and other weapons, but that the assault objectives, fortified on the best tactical ground, were exceptionally difficult targets to capture. Assessing the Canadian performance in the battle to close the Falaise Gap, a Canadian gunner said, *"Armchair strategists writing of those days – whether British, American, or Canadian – have all spent too much time wondering why we were so slow getting down past Falaise to meet up with the Americans. They should have spent more time wondering how men ever summoned up the necessary moral courage and physical stamina to get there at all."*⁴¹

RCAF support at Normandy: Throughout the battle in France, RCAF fighters and bombers flew in support of the Allied ground forces, and began their own offensive sorties against an ever-dwindling Luftwaffe. Spitfires, Mustangs and Hurricanes flew in search of their prey behind enemy lines. They were involved in reconnaissance, dogfights, flying bomber escort, train-busting and even suppressing German V-1 rockets. The first V-1 rocket was launched on June 13, 1944 from Pas-de-Calais. Known as "buzzbombs", these unmanned missiles contained a ton of high explosives and rained down on London and other areas. RCAF fighters shot down many of the rockets, and a few even used their wings to tip the rockets off course. Typhoon fighter-bombers (known as "Tiffies") swooped down on targets attacking vehicles, bridges, canals, railway yards, tanks, and artillery pieces, constantly harassing enemy movements of men and supplies. The Allied bombers continued to pound roads and rail lines, along with military and industrial areas in Belgium and France, profoundly damaging the Nazi war machine. Airpower did not win the battle in Normandy, but it eroded German combat effectiveness and demoralized the enemy. At sea and in

the English Channel, Coastal Command bombers and fighters, including RCAF Wellingtons, Sunderland flying boats, Canso flying boats and Liberators attacked enemy warships and German merchant ships, and were winning the war against the German U-boats.⁴¹ Six of Sarnia's Battle of Normandy losses were RCAF: Douglas Aiken, William Barr, Allan Campbell, Francis Goring, Thomas Lee and Ross Pole.

• **RCAF FIGHTER SQUADRONS:** After the Battle of Britain (July 10 – October 31, 1940), the Spitfires and Hurricanes of **Fighter Command** began patrolling across the English Channel to engage the enemy. Twelve RCAF fighter squadrons were deployed: eight were day fighters, three were night fighters, and one was an intruder unit (sought to harass enemy planes as they left or returned from their bases). Aggressive fighter sweeps varied in scale: from “rhubarbs,” in which a few pilots “stooged” across the Channel to shoot up targets of opportunity; to more organized mayhem, known as “rodeos,” in which larger numbers of fighters sought out the Luftwaffe; and “circuses,” which saw several squadrons and light bombers attacking predetermined sites.

RCAF pilots learned to fly in the “finger four” position, so named because it resembled the fingers on an outstretched hand. In combat, the four fingers broke off to the basic two-plane fighting unit, a leader and his wingman, one the “shooter” and the other the “eyeball.” The wingman defended the more experienced leader, and stuck close to him through twists and turns, watching for enemy fighters coming from behind, above or below.^{2S, 4H}

Among the Sarnians who flew as members of a fighter squadron, two of the more famous are Charles Stover (see below) and Harry Dowding, who shot down at least six enemy planes. Harry's younger brother, Pilot Officer-Air Gunner John Dowding, is included in this Project. At least six Sarnians lost their lives while serving with fighter squadrons, including; Allan Campbell (Typhoon), Francis Goring (Mustang), James Lowry (Spitfire), Rodolfo Mendizabal (Hurricane), Frederick Wise (Hurricane) and James Wright (Spitfire).

Each air squadron—whether part of Fighter Command, Bomber Command, Transport Command, Coastal Command or Army Co-operation Command—had its own separate identity. To avoid confusion with the (British) Royal Air Force, the Canadian squadrons were given numbers 400 to 449 to indicate that they were Canadian. Besides being numbered between 400 and 449 (save for a few oddities), each was also given a title or nickname, with many linked to Canadian animals, birds, or cities. For example, six of Sarnia's fallen airmen were part of No. 419 (Moose) Squadron, part of Bomber Command.^{2S, 3G, 4H, 6Z}

RCAF “City of Sarnia” Squadron: Under the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan, one of the new squadrons formed for service under RAF operational control was adopted by the City of Sarnia. The *R.C.A.F. No. 414 Army Co-operation Squadron* was formed in mid-August of 1941 at Croydon, England. Initially it was formed from a detachment of eight officers and 69 airmen provided by No. 400 Squadron and 200 ground crew personnel supplied by the Royal Air Force. Assigned to Army Co-operation Command, No. 414 Squadron was equipped with Lysander IIIA and Curtis Tomahawk I/II aircraft. Based at numerous airfields in England, the No. 414 Squadron initially occupied itself with exercises and training with the Army, and the air defence of Great Britain during the early period of its career. On June 28, 1943, assigned to the 2nd Tactical Air Force, its name was changed to *414 Fighter Reconnaissance Squadron*, and was based at numerous airfields in England. Flying Mustang and Spitfire aircraft, the squadron provided reconnaissance, intelligence and ground attacks.

The Wing Commander for RCAF Overseas Headquarters asked the people of Sarnia to support the 414 fighter/reconnaissance squadron as part of the war effort, as the squadron's commanding officer was a Sarnia native. In March of 1944, No. 414 Squadron was officially adopted by the City of Sarnia council in honour of **Commander Charles “Smokey” Stover** of Sarnia, who was the commanding officer of the unit at the time. The decision to adopt the unit resulted from a letter received by Sarnia Mayor W.C. Hipple from Wing Commander R. Irwin, Director of Public Relations at the overseas headquarters of the R.C.A.F. Commander Irwin pointed out that the squadron not only was commanded by a Sarnian but, from time to time included other residents of this city. People in Sarnia wrote letters to the members of the squadron so they felt a part of home. School children gathered pennies and nickels and lined them up along the curb on Christina Street. The unit was so beloved in Sarnia that residents not only dispatched occasional parcels of cigarettes and exchanged letters with members of the squadron, but also raised \$21,000 to buy a new plane for the squadron.^{N, 2S, 3G and 3H}

The *R.C.A.F. No. 414 “City of Sarnia” Squadron (Sarnia Imperials)* was unofficially known as the ‘Black Knight Squadron’. Its badge included a black knight atop a white horse with red trimmings above a cloud. The squadron's colours were black, red and white and its motto was, “Totis Viribis” (With all our Might).^{2S and 3H}

In early June 1942, the *No. 414 Squadron* began to re-equip with Mustang Mk I's. Not long after, the Squadron got its chance to take a more active role in the war. In August of 1942, the 414 Squadron was one of four Army co-operation squadrons detailed to reconnoiter at Dieppe. The *414 Squadron* employed the Mustangs over Dieppe on August 19th of 1942, where the first aerial victory ever claimed by a Mustang pilot was credited to the unit. After Dieppe, the squadron resumed training and exercises and soon flew various operations that included coastal patrol, tactical and photo-reconnaissance ("populars"), intelligence and offensive low level ground attacks ("rhubarbs"). They targeted railway locomotives, enemy ships, aircraft on the ground, enemy troops and vehicles on the road. In preparation for D-Day, the *414* pilots flew photographic and tactical reconnaissance along the French coast. On D-Day, it undertook spotting missions for naval gun fire.^{2S, 3G and 3H}



Dunsfold, 1943

Charles Stover is bottom row, second from right.

Charles Herbert "Smokey" Stover, the son of Mrs. Frances Stover of 191 ½ South Mitton Street, was born in Sarnia on September 8, 1915; grew up in Sombra; and was a former pupil of Sarnia Collegiate Institute. In his second year as a mechanical engineering student at Queen's University, he enlisted in March of 1941 in London, Ontario. Charles received his air training at No. 3 Initial Training School (graduating July 15, 1941); No. 4 Elementary Flying Training School (graduating September 1, 1941); and No. 13 Service Flying Training School, where he received his wings on November 21, 1941. He arrived in England in January 1942. He was posted to *Squadron 414* on March 3, 1942 as a Pilot Officer. The squadron was initially flying Tomahawks and would change over to Mustangs in June 1942. Charles' nickname "Smokey" came from a popular American comic strip created by cartoonist Bill Holman, about a wacky fireman named Smokey Stover.

Charles "Smokey" Stover's first mission was in a Mustang at the infamous Dieppe Raid, on August 19, 1942. On that day, the squadron was tasked with reporting on German concentrations and troop movements. During the Dieppe battle, Stover was able to evade a group of four attacking German Focke-Wulf 190's (FW-190's) which seemed to jump him from above. Another member of the squadron flying with Stover saw them coming and shouted, "Quick, get out of it," over the inter-communications phone. Stover got out of it by diving to "naught" feet. Stover said, "I went down so low I didn't notice a cement telephone pole which clipped off half my wing." He added, "There was a crash. The next thing I knew I'd left four feet of wing behind me. I sure wasted no time getting out of that place." He belly-landed safely back at the base, minus part of one wing and half of his aileron. The Dieppe invasion was a Canadian disaster and included 106 RAF aircraft lost, including two from *414 Squadron*.



Charles Stover shows off what's left of his wing

In December 1942, Charles Stover was promoted to Flying Officer. In November 1943 he was appointed as Squadron Leader of *414 Squadron*, replacing the previous S/L who was listed as missing on a mission. From January to June in 1944, the squadron was very active flying missions into France to photograph various enemy positions and airfields in preparation for D-Day. In January 1944, Squadron Leader Stover led the R.C.A.F. "*City of Sarnia*" Mustang squadron on a daylight raid in which four enemy planes were destroyed over the French city of Chartres, southwest of Paris. The enemy planes were downed so quickly that the Nazis did not fire a single shot in reply.

On May 12, 1944, Charles Stover was one of four members of the R.C.A.F. to receive the Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC). The recommendation for Stover to receive this award was made in March 1944, when Stover had flown 55 sorties (79 operational hours). The DFC citation reads, *Squadron Leader Stover has been engaged on operations since August 1942. He has completed a large number of flights with outstanding courage and resolution, the first of his sorties being during the Dieppe operation. In August 1943, he led a mission to the Paris area where he destroyed Junkers 88 and damaged enemy locomotives and a tug. During another operation in November 1943, he shared in the destruction of a Junkers 52. Many of the sorties completed by this officer have involved deep penetrations into enemy territory, while others have been on reconnaissance and photographic duties. At all times Squadron Leader Stover has shown outstanding skill and devotion to duty on operations and by so doing has provided a great inspiration to those under him.*

A portion of the recommendation written by Group Captain E.H. Moncrieff read, "This officer has proved himself to be a most competent and outstanding Squadron Commander, displaying at all times the greatest determination in the execution of his duties, and his outstanding skill as a reconnaissance pilot and unswerving devotion to duty are an example to all those who serve under his command."



Charles "Smokey" Stover with his dog *Blackie*

On June 6, 1944, D-Day, the *414 Squadron* served as reconnaissance spotters for the navy, directing naval bombardment, with Squadron Leader Charles Stover directing the fire of the 15" guns of the U.S.S. *Nevada*. "*At times it made your hair stand on end to see the melee of planes of every description over the bridgehead... I personally have never seen and have never imagined such a scene of concentrated air action. It was a roof not an umbrella of fighters, intruders and bomber aircraft. It prevailed all the way from Cherbourg to Le Havre, and I imagine the Canadians on the ground, making their record-breaking dash for Caen, will have been as impressed by it as we were in the air.*" As reconnaissance spotters for the navy that day, *414 Squadron* carried out two flights, one immediately after the other, returning to the nearest point of England to refuel at half-time. Their first flight took them in just at daybreak. Each of their planes was in touch by a special wireless band with a certain battleship or cruiser in the coastal bombardment. On arriving over the beach, as the landing barges drew near, the pilots called up their ship and immediately the ship opened with sighting shots on the prearranged target, most of them German shore batteries and rocket mountings. After pasting these first targets and coming home to a temporary refueling point in England, the *Sarnia 414 Squadron* pilots raced right back into the fight with a free hand to locate targets inland for the battleships.

In the days following D-Day, *414 Squadron* pilots went out daily to take aerial photographs of occupied territory and to spot enemy movements from the air, often flying at tree-top level over their target, disregarding flak or other opposition. They also had their share of combat in the air and conducted fighter sweeps with outstanding success.

On June 23, 1944, Charles Stover was wounded when his Mustang was shot up by a group of German FW-190's east of Caen, forcing him to bail out, landing 500 feet inside Allied lines and wrenching his back. He would recover at a mobile field hospital in France before being evacuated to England. His logbook entry of the event reads, *"Flight Lieutenant Norm Rettie as #2 – bounced by 7-8 FW190's East of Caen – Norm was shot up – landed safely – I was shot down, bailing out at Birville at approx. 500-750' landing 500 feet inside British lines injuring back. Air evacuated from France to England."*

In mid-August 1944, Charles Stover returned to Sarnia on leave. In late August, Stover and his English-born wife Edna (nee Dismore) received tokens of friendship and esteem at a civic reception in the council chamber at Sarnia city hall. At the ceremony, he revealed that the *City of Sarnia Squadron* which he commanded was one of six R.A.F. and R.C.A.F. reconnaissance formations whose photographs made possible the successful invasion of France. Since January 1944, thousands of pictures of the Normandy coast had been taken by the three Canadian units participating in the prelude to the invasion. In presenting Charles Stover with a gift and welcoming Mrs. Stover to the city, Alderman W.C. Nelson stressed that the reception was a gesture of appreciation to all Sarnians on active service. As Alderman Nelson stated, *"Our little gathering is to welcome back to their home city, Squadron Leader Stover, D.F.C., and Mrs. Stover and their family, and to express to Squadron Leader Stover the appreciation of our citizens in the signal honor he has achieved. Our city values deeply, though perhaps silently, the achievement and the sacrifices of every soldier. No words of ours can compensate for the sacrifice and the tragedy of war on the right to live that was theirs. We owe to you and to them all something that perhaps is deeper than can be expressed in words but will I hope, find expression in an unforgettable way in the lives of us all."* Charles Stover, in accepting his gift, remarked that he was proud to have been named leader of the *City of Sarnia Squadron* and added that other members were just as glad to serve in it because of this city's fame in the world of sport.

Charles Stover remained in the Air Force until May 1945, and continued to serve post-war in the RCAF Reserve between 1949-1952. He returned to Sarnia and was employed at Shell Oil until his retirement in 1977. He was a beloved husband of Edna for 60 years and they had three children together: Ronald, Murray and Gail. He was appointed Honorary Colonel of 414 Squadron in 1993. Charles Stover passed away in November 2002, and is buried in Riverside Cemetery, Sombra, Ontario. His aircraft was recovered in an archeological dig near Caens in 2003, just six months after Charles Stover passed away. ^{N, 2S, 3H, 3I and 3J}



RCAF No. 414 Squadron 'Mustang' aircraft



No. 414 Vickers-Submarine 'Spitfire' XIV

In August 1944 until the end of the war, *414 Squadron* flew Spitfire IXs and Spitfire XIVs and, operating from bases in France and later Germany, continued to support the Allied armies as they advanced towards Germany. The *414*, despite not being a fighter squadron, accounted for 29 enemy aircraft destroyed and 11 damaged, 76 locomotives and 13 naval vessels destroyed. Their primary function—reconnaissance—cannot be summed up statistically, but the squadron won repeated tributes from the Army units with which the squadron operated. The impressive record came with a heavy price. In all, the *City of Sarnia Squadron* lost 22 pilots.

At the end of the war, the squadron was disbanded at Luneburg, Germany on August 7, 1945. The *'Sarnia Imperials'* *414 Squadron* Second World War battle honours included the Defence of Britain, 1942-43; Fortress Europe, 1942-44; Dieppe, France and Germany, 1944-45; Normandy, 1944; and Arnhem, Rhine, and Biscay, 1943. Over the years, the *414 Squadron* has been disbanded (1945, 1950) and re-activated (1947) numerous times. In November of 1952, during the Korean War, it was re-activated in Quebec, as a fighter squadron equipped with F-86 Sabres, similar to the one in Germain Park. Today it exists as No. 414 Electronic Warfare Support Squadron based in Ottawa, providing electronic warfare support to the combat training of the Canadian Forces. ^{2S, 3G and 3I}

- **COMBAT MEDICINE:** During the Second World War, the **Royal Canadian Army Medical Corps (RCAMC)** was based on a structure similar to that established during the Great War. The medical element of the division was intimately tied to the fighting forces, with each 18,500-strong division served by three field ambulances, an advanced dressing station, a field dressing station, and casualty clearing stations. Closer to the front, each battalion had a regimental medical officer (a trained doctor) and a team of stretcher-bearers. Further to the rear were hospitals.

At Normandy, as in other theatres, medical personnel dealt with the horror and destruction of combat, where shrapnel, bullets, mortar bombs, and shell splinters shattered bone and tore through flesh. A Canadian battlefield surgeon recalled the mayhem at Normandy, under the fall of shells while in tents close to the front, *"We saw the tragic sights from which we were never to be free for ten long months. Men with heads shattered and grey, dirty brains oozing out from the jagged margins of skull bones. Youngsters with holes in their chests fighting for air and breathing with a ghastly sucking noise. Soldiers with intestines draining feces into their belly walls and with their guts churned into a mess by high explosives. Legs that were dead and stinking – but still wore a muddy shoe... Boys who came to you with a smile and died on the operating table. Boys who lived long enough for you to learn their name and then were carried away in trucks piled high with the dead."*

During every action, day or night, **stretcher-bearers** would race across the battlefield, often exposing themselves to enemy fire, to offer front-line care. Patching up the wounded, tying off severed arteries and splinting fractures – they sought to stabilize the wounded, offer some pain relief, and organize parties to carry the injured to the rear. The evacuated would be gathered at an **advanced dressing station** (or Regimental Aid Posts) which were set up in haste to deal with the wounded as quickly as possible. It was here that triage, that is, rapid diagnosis, essential first aid, sorting and labeling of cases in order of priority for further evacuation was carried out.

Evacuating the injured farther to the rear to the battalion's medical officer, usually involved **field ambulance units**—jeeps, trucks or universal carriers that travelled along pitted and shell-pocked roads that left patients in agony from the constant jarring of broken bones and internal injuries. At the **field dressing stations**, doctors, orderlies, and nurses studied the casualties where they were ranked according to priority of treatment, and performed immediate surgery on those who required it. Official reports noted that most patients required an immediate two to three pints of blood to keep from slipping into shock.

A Canadian nurse described the flood of patients; *"It was so tragic, all these boys with arms and legs blown off. You can't explain what it's like to try and deal with all these casualties. They were filled with shrapnel and had every imaginable injury."* Screams, moans, and cries rose and fell in make-shift medical collection areas, that were often overwhelmed. It was common, remarked a member of the Royal Winnipeg Rifles, for men to wail for their mothers. Harsh choices had to be made in managing the avalanche of bloodied men. As one young Canadian Private was taken into a tent to be operated on, he wondered why some of the more grievously injured were not cared for first. A stretcher-bearer replied, *"They're set aside because the doctor reckons they're past saving. They'll probably all be dead by morning."*

The next step was the transfer to a **Casualty Clearing Station**, a temporary hospital for surgery and short-term convalescence of the sick and wounded, until they could be evacuated. For patients on the operating table, lacerated openly or bleeding internally, plasma and blood transfusions were essential and saved countless lives. **Penicillin**, which was first introduced on the battlefield in Italy in January 1944, was a new super-drug that was a significant step in combatting the spread of infection. As in previous wars, many soldiers hemorrhaged to death before reaching medical care, but if they made it to the operating table, they had a high chance of survival. The RCAMC treated 84,000 patients, achieving a 93 percent survival rate for wounds and 99.91 percent for victims of disease.

Doctors and nurses also treated psychologically traumatized patients. By this time, it was recognized that even the most ardent warriors could break down under the unnatural strain of harsh living, constant stress, poor food, lack of sleep, concussions from the blast of high explosives, and appalling carnage. While "shell shock," "battle stress," and "battle fatigue," were terms for the conditions of succumbing to the stress of sustained combat, the military and medical command settled on **"battle exhaustion"** as the official term. Sleep, therapeutic talks, and keeping the patients close to the front – within earshot of the explosions, were the methods used to treat the worn-out soldiers, so that they could regain strength and return to full duty with their units. There are no records available on how many soldiers were returned to their units, only to break down again.

Men with severe wounds were sent back to Britain by air lift or by hospital ship to stationary hospitals or

long-term convalescent homes across England. Soldiers with trauma to their bodies often required multiple surgeries, needed time for bones to heal, and ran the risk of secondary infections. The goal of the military was to return the men to health, and then to their units. Some, of course, would never fight again, and would face a new battle in rehabilitation. A young man from London, Ontario, nineteen years old when he was wounded in Normandy, reflected on his time in hospital: *“A young lad was in the bed beside me. He was seventeen. He had his right leg off. The fellow on my other side had both hands off. Those were the kind of things you ran into in the hospital. The young lads with shock in their eyes.”* A Canadian Nursing Sister, shaken by the broken boys she cared for, described many as *“like young children.”* She hated *“that even with surgery some wounds were too horrific to ever heal. It was hard to accept what war can do.”*

An organization of which no one wished to be a member was the **Guinea Pig Club**. It consisted of burned servicemen of the Commonwealth air forces and some tank crews, and the name came from the multiple operations that members underwent to graft new skin over their burns. In the Great War, burned soldiers often succumbed to infection and gangrene. Now, new treatment and drugs kept many alive, and the challenge was to remake faces and bodies out of the melted-wax-like skin and fire-scorched extremities. Advances in medicine, care and reconstructive surgery (including skin grafts and plastic surgery) ensured that many men survived ghastly disfigurements and catastrophic burns that before the war, would likely have been fatal. The Guinea Pig Club grew to 590 members, including 170 Canadians.^{3F, 4I}

• **PRISONERS OF WAR:** Approximately 9,500 Canadians became prisoners of the Germans, Italians and Japanese, the majority held by the Germans. Estimated Canadian POWs include about 7,000 Canadian army, 2,500 air force and 100 navy members. International laws had been beefed up in response to inhumane practices of the Great War – the 1929 Geneva Convention set rules and standards meant to protect POWs. But not all countries signed the agreement, and some that did, flouted it. German POWs in Canada and England fared best of all—so much so that some emigrated to Canada after the war. Many of the Allied POWs in German camps, including about 8,000 Canadians, were abused, some were brutalized, and all went hungry. Prisoners of Japan, which considered surrender to be shameful, were used as slave labour, starved, denied medical treatment, beaten, tortured and murdered. Prisoners in Japan died at seven times the rate of those in Germany and Italy.^{2E}

For captured allied prisoners, their war was not over. A new war had to be fought: one in bleak conditions, in camps that were surrounded by a high double fence with barbed wire in the gap between them, under the watchful eyes of armed guards in elevated towers; with attack dogs patrolling perimeters; crammed into barracks infested with fleas, lice and rats; and dealing with interrogations, strict rules, multiple daily roll calls, control over mail, boredom, and food that was meagre and always in short supply. During the long months and years of incarceration, the half-starved prisoners faced what they called “barbed wire disease,” a malaise of restlessness and depression. An RCAF prisoner described the mental shock of life as a POW, *“The complete loss of freedom, anxiety about the future, thoughts about family and loved ones so far away, inadequate food and sheer boredom, all ate at the prisoner.”* Canadian organizations such as the Red Cross and YMCA sent life-saving parcels. The packages contained treats and sweets (dried fruit, chocolate, tea); canned foods like Klim milk powder, butter, cheese, tinned meat; and cigarettes; along with reading material, sporting equipment, art supplies and even musical instruments. Few Red Cross relief parcels were distributed to the POWs in Japan; storehouses full of them were discovered after the war.^{2E, 4A, 4I}

Nearly everything about prisoner camp life in Japan contravened the Geneva Conventions. Along with the brutal inhumane treatment by their captors mentioned above, exchanges of sick and wounded were refused, and names of captives were reluctantly supplied after 18 months. Camps teemed with insects; prisoners were exposed to the elements; malnutrition, starvation and open latrines spawned disease; doctors were not given equipment or medicine to treat the sick, but were punished for deaths; many prisoners were unable to communicate with their families for years—stacks of letters to and from prisoners were recovered after the war; and inspectors were routinely denied permission to visit and prisoners were beaten for complaining to the few who were allowed in. After the war, the Canadian former prisoners of the Japanese were united in a decades-long fight for compensation and veterans’ benefits. They waited until December 8, 2011, for an apology from Japan; by then, most who had suffered at their hands had died.^{2E}

For the POWs in German camps, in January 1945, Germany decided to concentrate POWs inside its borders before the Soviet Army’s advance. Thus began “The March”, in which prisoners, weakened by years of starvation, were forced to walk westward up to 30 kilometres a day, some for as long as six weeks, often in bitter cold. Many of the POWs died from exposure and exhaustion.

The Great Escape: Prisoners of war felt it was their duty to disrupt work activities or to escape. The Germans accepted this attitude in the first half of the war, treating escape attempts almost like a game. A daring escape from the Stalag Luft III prisoner-of-war camp (a Luftwaffe-run POW camp near Sagan, Poland) was made famous in a 1963 Hollywood movie starring Steve McQueen as a U.S. Air Force officer, in *"The Great Escape"*. The Hollywood account, a blend of fact and fiction, overstated the American involvement, in fact, it was a British and Canadian story. The real escape, more than a year in the making, involved as many as 2,000 POWs, extraordinary coordination, secrecy, vigilance, ingenuity, bravery and a battle of wits inconceivable for the time. Officers involved were air force members from Britain, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Greece, Norway, Netherlands, Poland and others nations. Canadians played a prominent role in the escape—from a camp designed to be "escape-proof"—ranging from digging, carrying out key roles such as forging documents, intelligence activities, tunnel security, organizing diversions and teaching conversational German to soon-to-be escapers.

One of the most highly valued planners was **Wally Floody**, an RCAF Spitfire pilot born in Chatham, Ontario, who grew up mostly in Toronto. As a teenager, he worked in the mines near Timmins and Kirkland Lake. As a member of No. 401 Squadron, he was shot down on his first operation on October 27, 1941, over Saint-Omer, France. Not long after arriving in his first POW camp, British escape planners approached him, and according to Floody, *"I had worked in the gold mines in northern Ontario, but if you had [an air force] commission and had worked in a mine, the Englishmen figured you had to be an engineer, and if you had worked in a mine you knew a lot about tunneling in sand. But there was absolutely no similarity between the two."*^{6D} Floody became responsible for designing and constructing the escape tunnels, earning him the nickname the "Tunnel King".

Beginning around January 1943, hundreds of men laboured to build three escape tunnels simultaneously, nicknamed "Tom", "Dick" and "Harry". A fourth tunnel, "George" was also created—it was used to store equipment for an after-Soviet occupation. The POW's excavated, hauled, hid and disguised the dispersal of several hundred tons of sand. To avoid microphones, the tunnels were more than nine metres down. Every night, diggers with home-made tools went down into the tunnels through secret hatches in their huts that were covered by cement slabs in a kitchen, washroom and under a stove. The tunneling work was dangerous and difficult, and the structures were extremely complex with sophisticated electrical, rail system and ventilation systems. Prisoners scrounged for and reused materials, others forged false identity papers, or tailored uniforms and blankets into civilian clothing, or stood watch as the work went on, or constructed compasses and maps, and more were "penguins"—distributing excavated sand throughout the camp. The "penquins" had specially constructed bladders sewn into their wide pants, and would move with a stiff-legged, waddling walk, releasing the dirt, scuffing it into the existing soil and sand to ensure the colour of the excavated dirt would not be noticed by the guards.

The tunnel named "Dick" had to be abandoned due to camp expansion, and "Tom" was discovered in November 1943, the 98th tunnel uncovered in the camp. The tunnel "Harry" was plagued with problems: a frozen escape door, collapsing walls, an air-raid blackout, and the tunnel exit emerged 28 metres short of the woods.

On the cold, moonless night of March 24, 1944, the breakout began with a plan for 200 designated Commonwealth air officers to escape through the 336-foot-long tunnel code-named "Harry". As dawn broke on March 25, however, German guards outside the compound spotted prisoners emerging from the exit hole that came up just shy of the woods, and set off the alarm. Only 80 of the airmen (including 9 Canadians) managed to get out of the tunnel, and of those, 76 managed to escape into the darkness of the surrounding pine forest. Over the next few days, all but three of the escapees were captured. In a rage over the incident, Hitler called for the execution of all the escapers. After the POWs recapture, imprisonment, and interrogation, many of the officers were taken out and shot in twos and threes by Gestapo death squads. In total, the Gestapo covertly and illegally murdered fifty Commonwealth air officers (the perpetrators claiming the prisoners were shot while attempting to escape custody). Their bodies were cremated and buried in a remote corner of the Stalag grounds to hide the truth. Six of the dead were Canadians. Twenty-three of the escapers were returned to the prison camp. Only three escapers were successful in getting away and returning to their home countries. Although the escape did not succeed, it did divert tens of thousands of Germans away from the war effort as armed troops, SS forces, police, Hitler Youth, and Home Guard defences were mobilized in searching for the escapees.^{E, 3G, 4I, 6D}

A twist of fate would save Wally Floody, the "Tunnel King". Several weeks before the big breakout, Floody, along with several other "top suspects" were transferred by the suspicious Germans to another camp. Floody would survive the war, though he was not liberated until several weeks after VE Day, when the Soviets exchanged him for Russian POWs the Americans had liberated. After the war Wally Floody was awarded the Order of the British

Empire; gave evidence at the Nuremberg Trials; founded the RCAF Prisoners of War Association; and later became a technical advisor on the film set of *"The Great Escape"*.

Sarnia's POW's: In late October 1944, as part of a drive to encourage citizens to purchase Victory Bonds, the *Canadian (Sarnia) Observer* carried a full page advertisement with the headline, "HELP BRING THESE BOYS HOME." The advertisement contained the photos and names of, "Some of the Lambton Boys who are in POW camps." The Sarnia/Lambton POWs included were Pte. Malcolm Moloy (taken prisoner in the Dieppe Raid, August 19, 1942); Sapper Charles M. Blondin (taken prisoner in the Dieppe Raid, August 19, 1942); Flying Officer Gene Atyeo, R.C.A.F. (taken prisoner between August and September, 1944); Cpl. Robert A. Zink (taken prisoner between July and September, 1944); Sapper Alvin James Archer (taken prisoner in the Dieppe Raid, August 19, 1942); Sgt. Robert H. Hammett, R.C.A.F. (taken prisoner about August 1943); Flight Sgt. John D. (Bunt) Murray, R.C.A.F. (shot down over Norway in April 1942); Lance Bombardier Norris A. Demeray (taken prisoner after the Dieppe Raid, August 1942); Lieut. Arthur M. Hueston (taken prisoner following the Dieppe Raid, August 1942); Sapper Jack L. Date (prisoner of war since the Dieppe Raid, August 1942); Lieut. Neal Watson (taken prisoner during the Dieppe Raid, August 1942); Flight Sergeant Joseph J. Barr, R.C.A.F. (taken prisoner between April and May, 1944); Leslie Harris, Merchant Marine (taken prisoner from Imperial Oil Tanker, March 1941); and Flight Lt. George Wm. Gardiner of Petrolia (taken prisoner between July and August, 1944).

Letter to a POW: For the families at home, having spouses, siblings, or children behind barbed wire in a prisoner of war camp caused a perpetual state of worry and stress. The following is a letter written in January 1942 by a Vancouver mother to her son, Jack Rose, a prisoner, who had been captured in the Battle of Hong Kong. At the insistence of the Japanese censors, she wrote in block letters;

MY DARLING SON JACK,

SO FAR WE HAVE RECEIVED NO LETTER FROM YOU. I DO HOPE THAT YOU ARE RECEIVING OUR LETTERS. DARLING I HOPE YOU ARE WELL AND IN GOOD SPIRITS. I PRAY FOR YOU EVERY NIGHT, MY DARLING YOU ARE NEVER OUT OF MY THOUGHTS. I SOMETIMES FEEL THAT I CAN'T GO ON ANY MORE BUT I AM GOING TO CARRY ON & HAVE ONLY ONE THOUGHT IN MIND TO SEE YOU AGAIN. DARLING HOW I WILL TAKE CARE OF YOU WHEN YOU COME HOME. FOR MY SAKE KEEP YOUR CHIN UP. SAY YOUR PRAYERS EVERY NIGHT. DARLING I AM GOING THROUGH IT WITH YOU. EVERY ONE KEEPS ASKING ABOUT YOU. MAY GOD BLESS YOU & TAKE CARE OF YOU. I AM SURE HE WILL HEAR MY PRAYERS. I AM PRAYING FOR A LETTER SOON. DARLING I LOVE YOU SO MUCH THAT IT HURTS.

MOTHER

Jack Rose would endure almost four years of severe maltreatment during his captivity as a prisoner of war under the Japanese military. He would survive the war and return to Canada. Though the maltreatment by the Japanese soldiers made him experience nightmares for decades and Post Traumatic Syndrome Depression, he would marry and have three children. He would go on to be an earnest supporter of the Japanese Canadian Redress movement – working to rectify wartime human rights injustices inflicted on Japanese Canadians by the Canadian government. Though his support broke ranks from other surviving POW's, he was committed to fight racism in order to make Canada a better country.^{7A}

Prisoners at the end: The Canadians who became POWs in Asia faced an extremely harsh ordeal. The vast majority of them were captured in the Battle of Hong Kong in late 1941, so would suffer as POWs for nearly four years. The Japanese camps were often run with great brutality, with prisoners enduring abuse, torture and execution at the hands of the cruel Japanese prison guards. The food rations provided for the prisoners were particularly meagre, resulting in malnourishment and starvation. Many Canadian POWs would be forced to toil in mines and shipyards in Japan, where working conditions were terrible. Medical studies conducted years after the war ended, proved that most of the Hong Kong veterans endured lifelong illnesses, went blind at an early age, and died prematurely young, their malnourished and disease-ridden bodies never able to fully recover from the wartime ordeal.⁴¹

In Germany, the conditions in these POW camps were difficult but, for the most part, many prisoners of the German camps had adequate food and were treated relatively humanely, in accordance with the Geneva Convention. There was one group of Canadian prisoners who had a very different experience than most. These were the 26 Canadian airmen who, along with 142 other British, American, Australian and New Zealand airmen, spent several months in Buchenwald Concentration Camp in eastern Germany in the summer and fall of 1944. While in Buchenwald, they experienced inhuman conditions, including starvation, disease and the constant threatening

presence of cruel guards. Buchenwald was a "death camp," used by the Nazis to systematically murder those they wanted eliminated. The Allied airmen imprisoned there would often see the piles of corpses stacked up, awaiting the crematorium. More than 250,000 people were held captive in the camp between 1937 and 1945, with more than 50,000 of them losing their lives there. In October 1944, the Allied airmen would be transferred to a regular German POW camp for downed airmen.

For the rest of the Canadian POWs in German camps, as the war continued and Nazi Germany began to collapse under the Allied onslaught, prisoners behind barbed wire were in a desperate situation. By the last full year of the war, almost all the prisoners were suffering from systemic malnutrition. The Germany economy was crippled and Allied bombing of transportation lines disrupted Red Cross package deliveries. Prisoners' rations were cut significantly, usually to less than 750 calories a day, about one quarter of the requirement for adult males. By early 1945, the German POW system collapsed—the hundreds of thousands of prisoners became a tremendous burden. With the Russians advancing in the east, the order went out from Berlin to begin a **forced march** of prisoners to the west.^{D, 2N, 4A, 4I}

Wasted prisoners, almost all of them inadequately dressed, were hounded under the threat of execution through the snow drifts and freezing conditions, allowed to stop only at night in barns. Often not fed for days on end, the long parade of starving prisoners shared the road with thousands of refugees and starving civilians. A Canadian airman recounted a memory from his march; *"One day in a severe snowstorm, ... we passed a convoy of German soldiers moving westward. Their personal equipment was being hauled in larger wooden wagons pulled by Hungarian and Russian women. We tried to share with them some of the food we had, but one of the guards smashed his rifle into the face of one of the women who accepted a piece of bread. That stopped our philanthropy... One woman, wearing sacking on her feet and wrapped in a ragged blanket, shouted to us as she passed – 'Courage, Englander.'"* During the Canadian airman's fifty-one days of marching some 650 kilometres with little food, he often thought of that brave woman who had offered him solace. He was determined *"to be no less courageous."*^{4I}

The "death march" pushed the already battered prisoners to the brink of survival. They were lice-ridden and diseased, with bloodied and blistered feet, malnourished with gnawing hunger, and frostbite ate into their extremities. The Canadians banded together to aid the helpless. Those who could no longer walk were carried by mates or put on makeshift sleighs. There was little sympathy for the prisoners at the highest levels of the Nazi command. After the unyielding bombardment of German cities in early 1945, a raging Hitler considered executing thousands of Allied prisoners in retaliation. He was talked out of it. In the last weeks of April 1945, the German guards overseeing the prisoners disappeared. They did not want to be around when the prisoners gained access to guns. Most of the Canadians were liberated in late April or early May 1945. Had the war gone on a few more weeks, it is likely that large numbers of prisoners would have succumbed to starvation or disease.

In all theatres, 9,724 Canadians became prisoners of war (including 1,685 captured at Hong Kong, and 1,946 who were captured at Dieppe). Airmen made up 2,475 of the prisoners (25%), the navy claimed 98 (1%), and the rest were from the army (74%). Some men spent more of the war behind barbed wire than in combat, and hundreds of Canadian POWs lost their lives while in captivity. The experiences of Canadian POWs were difficult, and, sometimes deadly – but all were left with the lasting emotional impact of their harsh experiences. Once home, their experiences as a prisoner were very difficult for civilians to understand, which further made the transition to "normal" life difficult for many. The efforts of all these Canadians helped ensure that victory in the Second World War was achieved.^{D, 4A, 4I}

Two Sarnia POW stories: In mid-February 1945, the *Canadian (Sarnia) Observer* featured the story of **Lieutenant Neal Watson**, the first local man captured at Dieppe to return to Sarnia. After four years away from Sarnia, including two and one-half years in a German prison camp, Neal was first greeted by his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Harry J. Watson, 339 ½ North Christina Street at the Brantford train station. When Neal and his parents arrived at the Sarnia train station, they were greeted by family members, a crowd of welcomers, and the skirl of the bagpipes, as played by Pipe-Major James Stewart, an 80-year-old veteran of the Boer War and the First World War. Once home, despite the ever-present worry about censorship regulations, Neal Watson spoke of his experiences.

He had enlisted in July 1940 and had gone overseas in February 1941 with the rank of lieutenant with the Essex Scottish Regiment of Windsor. Then in December 1941 he had started special battle training in England in preparation for the Dieppe raid. Leaving Britain before midnight on August 18, 1942 and assaulting the beach at Dieppe about 5:20 a.m. the next day, Neal Watson was among the first ashore, crossing the barbed wire and reaching

the seawall before the Nazi defenders opened devastating fire upon those who followed. After hiding below the seawall and being under fire for eight hours, he was taken prisoner about noon on August 19. Watson would spend most of his imprisonment at Oflag VIIB, an officers' camp near Munich, Germany. Eventually, Neal would be repatriated in an exchange of Allied and German prisoners of war in Switzerland. Neal Watson also brought good news of other Sarnians who were still prisoners of war in Germany, specifically, Lieut. Arthur M. Hueston and Lieut. Thomas B. Doherty. He described life in the prison camp as "not ideal"; however, the strictly curtailed food rations were adequate and the German doctors were among the few Nazis he had a good word for. Neal added that the Red Cross parcels, the cigarettes from Sarnia, and the gifts from various churches made life easier for him and all the prisoners.

In late May 1945, **Lieut. Arthur Hueston** had returned to Sarnia. Hueston was a platoon commander in the Essex Scottish Regiment, who was also taken prisoner at Dieppe in August, 1942. Hueston was released in late April of 1945 when the 47th Tank Battalion of the United States Army overran Moosburg prison camp where he was held. Hueston had been in Oflag VIIB, where most of the Canadian officers from Dieppe were imprisoned, but was moved to Moosburg late in the war. Around 2,000 Allied prisoners were marched from Oflag VIIB to Moosburg after American forces advanced across the Rhine. More information on Lt. Arthur Hueston is on page 461. The following are portions of Lieut. Hueston's description of his experiences:

Our column was scarcely out of the compound when it was strafed by Allied fighter bombers. Twelve soldiers were killed and 39 were wounded... The march was continued under cover of darkness to Moosburg, the distance was 80 miles... Moosburg was a frightful camp with about 110,000 prisoners of all nationalities packed into a small area. Some lived in tents, others in lousy barrack huts with one tap to 250 men. It was almost impossible to wash or shave. Most prisoners lived in their clothes all the time. German rations consisted largely of rotten potatoes, mouldy black bread and turnips fit for cattle. One man could carry on his shoulder the weekly issue for 2,000 prisoners. Minute quantities of margarine and sugar were provided, along with turnip-pulp jam usually so full of maggots even hungry prisoners could not stomach it. In summer we had one blanket as thin as a handkerchief, in winter, we were promised another but it didn't arrive until mid-winter. Fuel was always so scarce that we spent most of the day breaking up furniture for the fire. In winter, we were given enough coal to boil five cups of tea per man a day, but in summer, there was no coal. Most of the books we received from Canada ultimately found their way into the smokeless heaters.

The prisoners at Moosburg watched the three-hour battle that liberated their camp until they had to take cover; *We watched the whole show until we noticed bullet holes in the tents. Then we decided it was time to get out of the way.*

Note: Another Sarnian, **Corporal Jack Graham**, was captured at Dieppe. His story is in this Project on page 724.

• **THE LONG LEFT FLANK**, northern France/Belgium, late August – early October, 1944: After their breakout from Normandy in late August 1944, Allied forces advanced rapidly across France and into Belgium, and soon were nearing Germany. The Canadians were given the less glamorous but vital tasks of clearing coastal areas in the north of France and Belgium, opening the English Channel ports for supplies essential to the Allied advance; and capturing the launching sites of German V-1 rockets to put an end to their attacks on southern England.

British Army Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery and Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force General Dwight D. Eisenhower wanted the French ports opened, but they could not fully supply First Canadian Army while providing sufficient materiel for the upcoming Operation Market Garden. So First Canadian Army was put on a strict ammunition and fuel diet. As a result, the Canadians nicknamed themselves the **Cinderella Army**—not only undersupplied but given the dangerous siege warfare and unglamorous port-clearing task while British and American troops swanned in the limelight toward Germany. The First Canadian Army (that included two Canadian infantry divisions, a Canadian armoured division, a British Corps and a Polish armoured division) would also play a leading role in opening the Scheldt estuary (tidal river), gateway to the Belgian port of Antwerp.

The First Canadian Army, fighting on the left flank of the Allied forces, pushed rapidly eastward through France towards Belgium. Despite moving forward, the Canadians were reminded on August 25 that they were far from the campaign's centre of gravity, as Paris was liberated by French and American troops to worldwide celebration. In late August the Canadians surged forward in a series of stop-and-start advances, including three days of fierce fighting cleaning up a pocket of stiff resistance in the forest of the Londe, crossing the Seine and reaching **Rouen** on August 30th. The skirmishes and shoot-outs resulted in hundreds of casualties due to enemy mines, shells, and bullets. The Germans were determined to hold the Channel ports at all costs. These coastal fortresses were built

around hardened positions of concrete steel and defended by seaward naval guns as part of Hitler's Atlantic Wall. They had been heavily fortified with concrete gun bunkers, minefields and anti-tank defences; artillery, mortars and machine guns were well-sited; and the German defenders had resolved not to surrender. In order to achieve their objectives, Canadian divisions were split up and spread over a battlefield that ranged for more than 100 kilometres.

On September 1, 1944, the 2nd Canadian Infantry Division were welcomed into **Dieppe**, where hundreds of Canadians had been killed two years earlier. Regiments that fought in the disastrous raid in 1942 were now given the privilege of liberating it. Only three hundred survivors of the Dieppe attack were there; most of the five thousand Canadians who took part in the raid had been killed, wounded, or taken prisoner.^{7Q} The liberators were greeted with wild cheering, waving flags, singing of songs including "The Maple Leaf Forever," bottles of wine and flowers. A Canadian Major wrote, "*Mothers held their children high to catch a glimpse of the heroes from Canada.*" Following is a portion of a letter written by a Canadian officer to his family on September 2; "*I cannot possibly convey the cumulative effect of passing for hours through a liberated countryside... the population, free once more, welcoming the oncoming troops with smiles and flowers and the V-sign... The scene in a liberated town is quite extraordinary. The place, of course, is festooned with flags... Everyone seems to be in the street, and no one ever seems to tire of waving to the troops passing in their vehicles, who likewise never tire of waving back (particularly at the female population). The young people wave and laugh and shout; the children yell and wave flags; the mothers hold up their babies to see the troops, and wave their little paws too; the old people stand by the roadside and look happy; and the Army rolls through...*" On September 3, the Canadians held a ceremony to honour the memory of their fallen comrades from August 19, 1942. By September 7, 1944, the port installations had been restored and the first supply vessel docked.

Canadian forces were involved in a miserable siege from September 6-14, against the heavily fortified port city of **Dunkirk**. To make matters worse, it seemed to rain constantly throughout the first weeks of September, making the ground sodden and muddy. The 10,000 German defenders blasted the outnumbered and outgunned Canadians, forcing them to dig into the muck. When the front was handed over to British troops on the 14th, Allied Command decided to simply starve out the garrison. This meant that the Dunkirk port facilities were denied to the Allies, with the Germans occupying them until May 9, 1945, one day after Germany surrendered.

After the fall of the port of **Le Havre** led by British Corps on September 12, the Canadians began their assault on the port city of **Boulogne**, a 10,000-man garrison bristling with gun emplacements, pillboxes, bunkers and minefields, and sheltered by thick concrete and steel. After days of intensive artillery bombardment and air raids, the Canadian infantry launched their advance on September 17, hugging an artillery barrage, facing a dug-in enemy that outnumbered them. One Canadian officer commented, almost in tears, "*It was inspiring and awe-inspiring to watch the attacking companies, like ants, moving up the slope under heavy fire and over mines. With every puff of smoke and dirt you wondered what fellow had got it.*" The battle would rage for six days until the remaining German soldiers surrendered on September 22nd. The six-day battle ended with 9,517 prisoners taken. Allied casualties numbered 634, including 462 Canadians killed or wounded.

The Canadians continued to move onward in a series of battles against coastal batteries until reaching the fortress of **Calais**. Behind low-lying marsh barriers, the German defensive network bristled with concrete pillboxes, minefields, wire obstacles, anti-tank guns and infantry posts. The German guns there had spent much of the war hurling 2,000-pound shells across the English Channel. After eight days, the Canadians finally overwhelmed the garrison of 7,520 who defended the town, with combined air bombardments, artillery fire and the infantry fighting their way forward metre by metre, falling on October 1. Some 20,000 civilians were safely evacuated, about 7,500 Germans were taken prisoner, and Canadian casualties were less than 300.^{D, E, 3F, 4I}

The taking of Dieppe, Le Havre, Boulogne and Calais did virtually nothing to ease the Allied supply problems. The ports were too small or too damaged to make any difference. Operations continued up the coast, past the French-Belgian border, through Belgium and towards the Netherlands.

As the Canadian and British troops pressed north, they overran flying-bomb sites housing the feared **V-1 Flying Bombs** (the first cruise missiles). The Germans launched the first V-1 ("Vengeance weapon") at London on June 13, 1944, one week after the Allied landings in Europe. These pilotless flying bombs packed with explosives were designed to fly above targets in Britain, run out of fuel, fall from the sky, and detonate on impact. The Germans would fire over 9,500 V-1's (referred to as 'Buzz bombs' or 'Doodlebugs' by Londoners), and over 5,000 of the later **V-2 Rockets** at England. The bombs rained terror down on London and southern England for months, killing over

8,000 civilians and injuring another 22,000 in the rocket bombardments. As the launch sites were overrun by Allied forces, the V-1s were directed at the port of Antwerp and other targets in Belgium. Destroying the V-1's was another Allied strategic objective success.

At least six Sarnians, all army, lost their lives while fighting along the "long left flank" in northern France and Belgium during September of 1944, including: James Banks, Charles Berry, Joseph Fisher, Jens Carlo Jensen, Robert Ramsay and Ernest Russell.

Operation Market Garden, September 17 – 25, 1944: The Second British Army had captured the port of Antwerp, Holland with all its facilities virtually intact on September 4, 1944. Unfortunately, the Scheldt Estuary—45 miles of waterways leading to Antwerp—remained in German hands. *Operation Market Garden* mission's objective was to capture the eight bridges that spanned the network of canals and rivers on the Dutch/German border. The plan, devised by British Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery, consisted of two operations: "Market" – airborne forces tasked with seizing bridges and other terrain; and "Garden" – British ground forces tasked with moving northward. *Operation Market Garden* would have allowed for a rapid advance of British Second Army troops and armoured units over the Lower Rhine and into Northern Germany, bypassing the fabled Siegfried defensive line. If all carried out as planned, it should have ended the war by Christmas 1944.

The Operation began on September 17, 1944, when three British and American airborne divisions descended from the sky by parachute drops and glider landings, along with a brigade of Polish parachute troops, landing behind enemy lines, in daylight, at Eindhoven, Nijmegen and Arnhem in Holland. It was the largest airborne operation up to that time. Several bridges between Eindhoven and Nijmegen were captured at the beginning of the operation. Allied paratroopers—naturally lightly armed and armoured—wound up going against crack German troops with tanks and machine gun support. The operation failed at a bridge over the Rhine River at Arnhem, '**a bridge too far**', where British forces encountered far stronger resistance than anticipated. By September 20, the bridge at Arnhem could no longer be defended, and the remaining British forces, with dwindling supplies, sought refuge within the town itself. Once German tanks and troops moved into the town, the British were taken prisoners or killed in house-to-house fighting. On September 25, small assault boats manned by British and Royal Canadian Engineers were used to evacuate whatever battered troops they could out of the area, across the Neder Rhine, running the gauntlet of mortar and shellfire. They saved hundreds of paratroopers from death or imprisonment.

Of a total force of 35,000 Allied soldiers involved in Operation Market Garden, 1,400+ were killed and more than 6,000 were taken prisoner. One of those killed during operation "Market" had a Sarnia connection and is included in this Project. Squadron Leader-Pilot Robert Alexander of RCAF #437 (Transport) Husky Squadron was aboard Dakota III aircraft KG387 dropping supplies to paratroopers at Arnhem when his aircraft was shot down on September 21, 1944.

Any hope for a speedy end to the war appeared to be dashed. Capturing a major port now became a top priority as establishing adequate supply lines for the winter now became of paramount importance. The confusion of *Operation Market Garden* had also resulted in tens of thousands of German troops moving into the Scheldt area. It would be here that the First Canadian Army would have to fight to capture the much-needed port.

Arnhem bridge, the 'bridge too far', was eventually destroyed by American bombers in a raid on October 7th, 1944, in an effort to deny German use of the route. In 1948, it was rebuilt and named the "John Frost Bridge" in honor of the British commander who unsuccessfully held it. ^{D, E, 4A, 4I, 11D}

• **THE BATTLE OF THE SCHELDT**, Northern Belgium and the Netherlands, October 1 – November 8, 1944: This battle was the beginning of the Liberation of the Netherlands. In early September 1944, British forces and the Belgian Resistance had captured the inland port of **Antwerp**, Belgium at the mouth of the Scheldt River. The Belgian resistance had prevented the Germans from destroying the massive protective locks before they pulled out, so Antwerp was taken virtually intact. Antwerp was the second greatest port in Europe – its 50 kilometres of docks, along with quays, warehouses, hydraulic and electric fixed and floating cranes, grain elevators, and established railway facilities was an ideal landing ground for supplies for the continuing war effort, nearly 1000 ships could berth at its docks. Access to this port was vitally important to supply Allied armies in their drive for victory in Western Europe following D-Day.

However, Germans occupiers, dug in on the outskirts of the city, still controlled the 45-mile-long **Scheldt Estuary** (tidal river) that connected the port of Antwerp to the North Sea. The Germans, under express orders from

Hitler to hold the Scheldt, reinforced their men, planted thousands of mines in the waterway, and prepared to defend every metre of the estuary. As long as the Germans held control of the sea approaches and the long winding estuary, Allied shipping to the port would be impossible. The mere occupation of Antwerp was not enough—all the lands surrounding the Scheldt would have to be cleared of German troops, and its waters cleared of mines. The task of liberating the Scheldt estuary was entrusted to the First Canadian Army.

The Scheldt estuary was made up of the interconnected areas of the South Beveland Peninsula, the Breskens Pocket as well as the island of Walcheren that commanded the river's mouth. Located in the Belgian-Dutch border area, this is a region of polders, low-lying fields conquered over the sea and bordered by a network of dykes and canals. The roads are built on top of the four- or five-metre high dykes. In this totally flat and wet countryside, no one could move without being spotted. The German forces, highly trained, well-fortified and heavily entrenched, had flooded the whole area by blowing up the dykes that held back the North Sea. On every battlefield, the Germans could wait for the attacking Canadians to come at them over open and often flooded ground that was heavily mined. The Canadians would spearhead the operation in four phases.

In the first phase, beginning on October 2, the objective was to clear the area north of Antwerp. The 2nd Canadian Infantry Division advanced through stiff and well-entrenched resistance that were on higher ground, to clear the area up to the access route of the South Beveland peninsula. Casualties were heavy as the Canadians attacked over open, flooded polder land—a quagmire made worse by driving rain, booby traps and mines. On October 13th, on what would come to be known as “**Black Friday**”, the Canadian 5th Infantry Brigade’s Black Watch Battalion was decimated for a second time within four months, losing 145 men and all its commanders in an especially violent and merciless engagement. On October 16, as the Allied artillery brought down a heavy concentration of fire within metres of the Canadian troops, the Germans fell back and the town of Woensdrecht—the first objective, was secured.

The 4th Canadian Armoured Division continued to push north clearing a number of Belgian towns, then into the Netherlands to liberate **Bergen-op-Zoom** on October 24. The high cost of these battles is starkly evident in two large Commonwealth War Graves cemeteries near the city, one of which, Bergen-op-Zoom Canadian War Cemetery, contains 1,087 dead, most of whom are Canadian, including three Sarnians; Robert Alexander, Robert Dionne and George Esser.

In the second phase, **Operation Switchback**, in a two-pronged assault, the 3rd Canadian Infantry Division and 4th Canadian Armoured Division battled a tenacious resistance along the Scheldt Estuary’s southern shore, in what was called the **Breskens Pocket**. Beginning on October 6, backed by extensive artillery support and “Wasps” (tanks equipped with flame-throwers), the Canadians crossed the Leopold Canal. Under constant small-arms and shell fire, the Canadians spent every day digging into the ground, their slit trenches filling up with water before they had dug even a metre into the mulch. With Spitfire and Typhoon fighter bombers support overhead, and the use of tracked amphibious troop carriers nicknamed “Terrapins” and “Buffaloes”, the infantry battled forward clearing the flooded farmland of the Breskens Pocket by November 3. A Canadian infantryman wrote, “*Heavy casualties were suffered by both sides... and the ground was littered with both German and Canadian dead.*”

In the third phase, **Operation Vitality**, the objective was to clear the area north of the Scheldt Estuary, known as **South Beveland**. Beginning on October 24, the 2nd Canadian Infantry Division advanced north to the village of Woensdrecht, then west across a narrow isthmus to take South Beveland Peninsula. Mud, mines, and strong enemy resistance dashed hopes of a quick advance, and the Beveland Canal—bisecting the peninsula—proved to be a major obstacle. The advance was another case of too few men asked to do too difficult a job against a well-dug-in enemy especially skilled at defence. An amphibious landing by British forces behind the canal defenses helped the Canadian advance. Once positions on the Beveland Canal were cleared, German resistance on South Beveland collapsed and remnants of the German forces there withdrew to Walcheren Island by November 2.

In the fourth phase, **Operation Infatuate**, the last objective was to clear **Walcheren Island** and its coastal batteries. It remained the one great obstacle to the use of the port of Antwerp. Its defences were extremely strong and the only land approach was a long narrow causeway that ran over saltmarshes and mud flats, 1.2-kilometres long and 40-metres wide, from South Beveland. Both ends of the causeway were blocked with concrete bunkers and barbed wire, and all of the German mortars and artillery guns were focused in on the narrow bridge. To make matters worse, the flats that surrounded the causeway were too saturated for movement on foot while at the same time there was not enough water for an assault in storm boats.

The attack on Walcheren Island included an initial heavy RAF bombing to breach the island's dykes, which submerged much of the island. Three different attacks would be launched on the island beginning in late October. The 2nd Canadian Infantry Division were tasked with advancing across the only land approach, the narrow causeway, in what was planned as a lightning move from the east. British forces planned amphibious operations from the south and west.

For the Canadians, beginning on October 31, it would take a grim 3-day struggle to establish a precarious foothold on the island. The futile frontal assault across the narrow causeway resulted in many casualties. It turned out to be only a diversion to attract the Germans from the amphibious operations by British forces taking place elsewhere on the island beginning on November 1.

By November 8, Walcheren Island fell to the Allied forces, and the Battle of the Scheldt came to a close. Allied minesweepers had already begun clearing the West Scheldt, and three weeks later, the first convoys carrying war supplies entered Antwerp. The first ship to arrive as part of a convoy on November 28, by chance, was the Canadian-built *Fort Catarqui*. In Antwerp, she was given a ceremonial greeting: there were bands, national anthems, representatives of both Eisenhower's and Montgomery's headquarters, the American and British port authorities and the Belgian government and army. There was one oversight—no one had thought to invite a representative of the First Canadian Army that had made it all possible.

Under Hellfire: Dr. Joseph Greenblatt, a Lieutenant from Ottawa, was part of a field ambulance unit serving an artillery regiment of the 3rd Canadian Division. His unit accompanied the Division as it advanced through France, Belgium and into the Netherlands, where his field ambulance unit faced heavy shellfire. Following is a portion of a letter he wrote to Fran, his fiancée:

Hello my Dearest,

... Remember in the second last letter I told you that I had some rather horrific experiences just lately. Well about three nights ago I had the climax of the whole show. For some reason or other Jerry decided my position was the most important target in this whole area & therefore from 9:30 p.m. to 6:30 a.m. every three to five minutes he dropped one in a radius of 50 yards from my position. He scored four direct hits on the house in which I was sleeping & shook me up no end & then dropped two on the barn I used for working in. Naturally he caused casualties amongst my boys – one killed and five wounded – but what was the worst thing is that in the middle of all this one had to stand up all the time & work in the middle of all this. I could hear the boom of the gun in the distance then you would wait for two seconds & then the shriek of the shell coming in your direction would freeze your blood. The inclination was of course to duck under cover & you would look at the patient lying so helpless & terrified on the stretcher seeking protection & fortitude from you & you knew you couldn't leave him. So you worked as quickly as you could & tried to pacify the poor defenceless bloke all the time those horrid missiles would come at you. I don't think I'll forget that night – it lasted for a year of time...

Dr. Greenblatt would take his field ambulance on to Germany, survive the war and return home to marry Fran.^{7A}

Sacrifices of the “Water Rats”: Led by the First Canadian Army, the Allies had pushed into northern Belgium and southwestern Netherlands beginning on October 1, 1944 continuing until November 8th, 1944. The Battle of the Scheldt was among the most difficult and grueling struggles in the war. For the Canadians, since D-Day, the infantry battalions had been gutted, with high casualty rates and a steady loss of experienced men, which were far beyond the projected rates. The bitter fighting took place in a bleak environment made worse by the wet and winter cold, in a flooded and freezing muddy quagmire. Yet the gritty Canadians continued to fight on, playing a crucial role in the coalition warfare, and delivering victory. The under-strength and less-experienced Canadians who participated in the battle earned the nickname “**water-rats**,” bestowed upon them by British Field Marshal Montgomery, since they were often in miserably wet conditions.

A Canadian infantryman described his memories of fighting in the Scheldt; “*There were days of bright sunshine during the Scheldt battles, usually after morning mist and fog, but these have been forgotten. The abiding memory is of grey skies, rain, fog, bone-chilling dampness, boots, battledress and blankets soaking wet, cold food, matches that wouldn't light, the soldier's weariness that is as much fear as lack of sleep, and everywhere, mud and water.*” British war correspondent R.W. Thompson described the scene as the 2nd Canadian Division drove toward the enemy, “*The wind-driven rain seemed to join the dark evil sky to the dark evil land, so that the small space they had won resembled the inside of a tureen squelching with mud and water like some foul stew. Even the dikes had been crushed and churned into the gray muck of the featureless wilderness. There were no fires. There was no rest. Men lived and died and slept always wet and caked with ooze. The Germans had mined and booby-trapped their*

dead. The bloated bodies in the mud of the polders and the dark waters of the dikes had proved as dangerous dead as alive. Bodies exploded at a touch to destroy men in their rare moments of compassion.” D, E, 2I, 3F, 4A, 4I, 6F, 6Z

The Battle for the Scheldt ended in Allied victory, but the cost was high. The Canadians suffered more than 6,300 casualties including more than 800 killed. At least twelve young men from Sarnia gave their lives in the Battle of the Scheldt including; Robert Alexander (RCAF, in *Operation Market Garden*), Robert Dionne, John Esselment, George Esser, Clifford Hebner, Francis Jarvo, Gerald Kelly, Charles McIsaac, Ernest Ottaway, Walter Totten, Wilford Walker (Battle of Kapelsche Veer in January 1945), and Richard Wilson. These Sarnians are buried in the Belgium cemeteries; Adegem Canadian War Cemetery – Esselment, Kelly, Ottaway, and Totten (and Jens Jensen, killed one month earlier during fighting along the long left flank); and Schoonselhof Cemetery, Antwerp – Hebner, Jarvo and McIsaac (and T. Elliott, killed April 1944, Bomber Command); the Dutch Bergen-op-Zoom Canadian War Cemetery - Alexander, Dionne and Esser; the Dutch Groesbeek Canadian War Cemetery – Walker (and 11 other Sarnians); and the Dutch Groesbeek Memorial – R. Wilson.

• **NIJMEGEN WINTER:** After the Battle of the Scheldt, the First Canadian Army was put into reserve. Over that winter of 1944-1945, most of the weary Canadians were given a rest, although the front was never quiet, with patrols and large-scale raids remaining constant. Canadian troops were stationed along the Nijmegen sector in the Netherlands, the area fought over during Operation Market Garden in September. The Canadians were to hold and defend the Nijmegen salient and a small piece of Allied-held territory north of the Maas River, across the Nijmegen bridge, known as “the island.” This bridgehead would be used as a starting point for crossing the Rhine, and they had to give the enemy the impression that an assault was imminent to force it to leave troops in that area.

The Germans did their best to push the Canadians out of “the island”, by flooding the area and constantly harassing them with mortar fire, artillery and aggressive patrols. Constantly vigilant, the Canadians dug deep slit trenches, covered them with whatever was handy, and tried to keep warm from the snow and cold, in one of the coldest winters on record in northern Europe. During this supposedly quiet period, as they experienced their sixth Christmas of the war, between November 9 and December 31, 1944, approximately 1,239 Canadians were killed or wounded.^{3F, 4I, 6Z}

In the five months after Normandy 1944, Canadian infantry units had been devastated in the constant fighting, and were at skeleton levels, with those shortages carrying over into 1945. Men had been killed in action, or evacuated after being wounded, others were made prisoners by the enemy, and others suffered battle exhaustion under the constant stress of ever-present death, facing mortars, shells and bullets every day. A Canadian Private described the composition of his ever-shifting battalion in the final four months of the war: “*In my platoon, which was always under strength – 18 or 20, instead of 33-35 – the most common age was 19 or 20... Our NCOs (corporals, sergeants, and company sergeant major) might have been 22-26 years old. Our officers were not much older – 23 and up. I recall how shocked I was to discover that one of my heroes, a captain, was only 23. I, at 19, always thought of him as a very senior adult.*” Of his comrades, he said, “*Many were farm boys, strong, tough, used to hard work and hardship, loyal to one another, with no high expectation of their life ahead.*” Impressed with his officers, he noted, “*They were involved in the front lines of battle as were we. They led, they fought, they endured the same shit, mud, lack of sleep, danger, irregular food and casualties of the men they commanded.*”^{4I}

The Battle of the Bulge (December 16, 1944 – January 25, 1945): In mid-December, Hitler ordered a last-ditch offensive in the Ardennes Forest region in Belgium, France and Luxembourg. He gambled that his troops could cut deep into Allied territory, retake Brussels and Antwerp and create a serious setback in the Allied cause. The Germans called the attack “Autumn Fog”; the Americans dubbed it the “Battle of the Bulge”. Hitler believed that his forces would be able to surround and cut off Canada’s First Army, America’s First and Ninth Armies and Britain’s Second Army. The massive surprise attack caught the Allied forces completely off guard, and the enemy achieved some initial successes. However, the German fuel and supply lines could not meet the demands at the front, and the weather cleared to allow for Allied air support. With United States forces bearing the brunt of the fighting, this last major offensive by the Germans was defeated, and they were pushed back to their initial positions. Approximately 55,000 troops of the British Army, including the 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion participated in the Ardennes battle. For the 600,000 American troops involved, it was one of the largest and bloodiest battles fought in the Second World War. The Germans were left severely depleted of men and equipment, as the survivors retreated to the defenses of the Siegfried Line.

- **THE BATTLE OF THE RHINELAND**, Germany, February 8 – March 10, 1945: In February 1945, the Allies launched a great offensive which was designed to drive the Germans eastward back over the Rhine River, the last significant natural barrier between Allied forces and Germany. There were to be two formidable thrusts: the First Canadian Army would leave the Nijmegen salient and drive southeast to clear the narrow strip of land between the Rhine River and the Maas River; while the Ninth U.S. Army, would drive northeast and converge with the Canadians on the Rhine in the town of Xanten. Xanten was the key to the Rhine crossings at Wesel.

The First Canadian Army, under the command of General Harry Crerar, was strengthened by the addition of Allied formations, including British, Dutch, Belgian and Polish units, making it the largest force ever commanded by a Canadian. Enemy defences were well prepared, with anti-tank ditches, minefields, networks of trenches and fortified positions, as they had four months to improve their defences to prevent the invasion into Germany. Winter rains and thaw had turned the ground into a thick muddy quagmire. Rain and grey skies covered the battlefield and this limited the air support that could be provided. For the first time, fighting was to take place on German soil and a fierce opposition was expected.

The first phase, known as **Operation Veritable**, was a two-prong attack launched by three British divisions and the 3rd Canadian Infantry Division on February 8, 1945. The attack was preceded by a crushing air and artillery attack on enemy positions, including a “pepper-pot” barrage—mortars, machine guns, tanks, anti-aircraft guns and rockets—supplementing the field guns.

The Canadians advanced from the Nijmegen salient through the flooded fields on the left flank known as the Waal Flats. Canadian divisions played a small but vital role in *Veritable*. Destroyed dykes flooded the area and hampered the advance and at times troops had to flounder through water three feet deep. The advance was slow; engagement ranges were short; and the few dry roads, which were mined, became natural killing grounds as troops were channelled along them. Engineers threw down Bailey bridges (portable, pre-fab truss bridges) to span impassable fields. The Canadian “water rats” were able to advance across flooded land in Buffalo amphibious vehicles and achieve significant gains.

For the most part, the British, on the right flank, bore the brunt of *Veritable*. They had to advance over muddy and congested roads, through bombed-out villages, and then through the Reichswald Forest Reserve—a thick stand of trees that made movement difficult, as did the snow, mud, and wet leaves and pine needles. Here also, the Germans had planted mines and booby traps everywhere, and had constructed low bunkers to protect their machine-gun and sniper emplacements. The British slogged through the Reichswald against a determined enemy, making it through the woods after three costly days of fighting.

A Canadian Lieutenant-Colonel said, “*The Germans fought like hell – like demons. This was their last stand for their homeland, and they were not giving an inch.*” Hard-line Nazi officers even executed their own soldiers—those who wanted to surrender—as a warning to other soldiers to not give up the fight. In a foot-by-foot advance through the pine forest of the Reichswald and the water-logged countryside, and against fierce enemy counter-attacks, the British and Canadian soldiers fought their way forward, through village after village, until on February 21, they had cracked the vaunted Siegfried Line. The enemy’s refusal to surrender angered Allied soldiers, who were frustrated by the prolonged war that was killing off their friends, keeping them from home, and requiring that they battle through cities and towns that were often ruined during liberation.

The second phase, **Operation Blockbuster**, launched February 26th, involved clearing the dense Hochwald Forest and the surrounding area, with the goal of eventually reaching Xanten, which lay on the Rhine. This time, the 2nd Canadian Corps would play the major role, with British forces guarding the right flank of the Canadians. The Hochwald, like the Reichswald, was densely forested and easily defended. In front of the Hochwald was the Schlieffen Position, a belt of strong defences backed up by nine German infantry divisions. The Canadian advance, involving the 2nd and 3rd Canadian Infantry Divisions and the 4th Canadian Armoured Division, was especially vicious and costly, another agonizing repetition of the Reichswald battle. Troops made and held slight gains measured in hundreds of yards, against fierce enemy counter-attacks and tanks, handicapped by the mud and rain, as they struggled forward. Every advance was met with German anti-tank and anti-personnel mines and unusually heavy concentrations of artillery and mortar fire. It took until March 3 to clear the enemy from Hochwald Forest, and March 10 to capture the town of Xanten.

The planned American assault from the southwest, *Operation Grenade*, was delayed, and not launched until February 23. So during the delay, the Germans were able to shift their reserves to the Canadian front. Even as the

American Ninth Army made rapid advances towards the Rhine on their front, the Germans continued to divert their reserves to block the Canadian advance. On March 7 came the electrifying news that the First US Army had captured a railway bridge across the Rhine at Remagen, and were pushing straight across the river. On March 8, the Canadians began the battle for Xanten. Resistance continued until March 10 when the Germans, after withdrawing to the east bank of the Rhine, blew up the last bridges.

Following the Battle of the Rhineland, the Allied Supreme Commander wrote to First Canadian Army Commander General Harry Crerar:

Dear Crerar,

I have previously sent out general messages of congratulations to the several parts of this Allied force, covering our most recent operations. The purpose of this note is to express to you personally my admiration for the way you conducted the attack, by your army, beginning February 8 and ending when the enemy had evacuated his last bridgehead at Wesel. Probably no assault in this war has been conducted under more appalling conditions of terrain than was that one. It speaks volumes for your skill and determination and the valor of your soldiers, that you carried it through to a successful conclusion. With warmest personal regard,

Sincerely,

DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER

Rhineland sacrifices: During this month of fighting in the battle for the Rhineland, the Canadian casualties were 5,304 killed, wounded, and captured – slightly more than during the attritional battles of the Normandy campaign.^{D, E, 2N, 3F, 3Z, 4A, 4I} At least six young men from Sarnia gave their lives in the Battle of the Rhineland, including; Lieutenant Jack Brunette, Private Wilfred Durocher, Trooper Arthur Everingham, Lieutenant William Graham, Private Patrick McLaughlin and Private Harley Williams. All six are buried in Groesbeek Canadian War Cemetery, Netherlands. In total, there are twelve Sarnians buried in Groesbeek Canadian War Cemetery, the most Sarnians in any World War I or World War II cemetery.

Crossing the Rhine: The final stage of the Rhineland Offensive was the crossing of the Rhine River itself. The actions started on March 23, 1945 with the crossing near Wesel (*Operation Plunder*), which was one of several coordinated Rhine crossings. In support of the crossing, 14,000 paratroopers were dropped behind enemy lines (*Operation Varsity*) in the largest airborne operation performed in a single day. Led by British and US divisions, a million soldiers from three countries participated in crossing the Rhine, including the 9th Canadian Infantry Brigade and the 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion. Though the Germans were vastly outnumbered and outgunned, they put up a fierce resistance, and both Canadian groups fought for their lives. The operations were a success, and with the Allies crossing the Rhine, the days of the Third Reich were numbered. After the crossing of the Rhine, the First Canadian Army was given two tasks: to liberate western Netherlands and to march through northeastern Netherlands and northern Germany up to the Weser River.^{3F, 4I}

“Don’t worry...”: As the final spring offensive began in 1945, civilians in France, Belgium and the Netherlands watched Allied soldiers pushing ever deeper into Germany. Canadians at home would receive news of the successes but knew little of what men at the front suffered. Canadian Lt. Jack Scott, who acted as a military censor, wrote the following about letters mailed home by soldiers, *“I found a kind of pattern in the letters I had to censor – soldiers are squawkers but there were few complaints in the letters. Soldiers talk endlessly among themselves about soldiering; the letters home hardly mention the war. You ran across sudden unrelated sentences: ‘Does Mrs. Hennessey still run the grocery store?’ or ‘Did you get the garage painted?’ And one line was almost the same in every letter: ‘Don’t worry about me. I’m okay.’”*^{6F}

A Sarnia letter home: In early March 1945, the *Canadian (Sarnia) Observer* printed an unnamed soldier’s letter that had been received by George A.C. Andrew, a former Sarnia mayor and harbourmaster. George Andrew had himself lost two sons in the war—William Charles Andrew (October of 1941) and George Varnum Andrew (December of 1943)—their stories are included in this Project. The young unnamed soldier from Sarnia was George Andrew’s acquaintance and was in the air force overseas. In the letter, the writer told of the misgivings, fears felt and dread of the process of rehabilitation by many soldiers concerning their return to civilian life. Written towards the end of World War II, the sentiment expressed in the letter is likely representative of many young soldiers in any war as their service nears an end. The following is a portion of that letter:

It is quite a problem to know what to do when the war is over. I have been in service since September 1939, and the thought of being a civilian again rather frightens me. As I haven’t a permanent job to go to, I’m afraid I shall be at a loss to know what to do for the first six months at least. One thing is certain-it will be a great deal more

difficult to change from soldier to civilian than it was to make the opposite transition. In the service one leads a sheltered existence in many ways and it will be a rude awakening for some young fellows, including myself, to have to get out and fight for a living in an entirely different way than that to which we have been accustomed. It will be difficult too, to give up at one fell swoop, rank, prestige and authority attained through conscientious effort and ability, and to exchange it all for a civilian suit, the bottom of the ladder again, and the knowledge that many years of one's life has been entirely wasted. I didn't mean to talk about these things but they have been on my mind for some time so I had to talk to someone. Please forgive me.

• **THE LIBERATION OF THE NETHERLANDS**, February 7 – May 5, 1945: In May of 1940, the Netherlands, despite its declaration of neutrality, was invaded by the German blitzkrieg and put under German control. This would lead to five years of suffering for the Dutch people. Most of the Jewish population would be wiped out; thousands of men were forcibly sent to Germany to work as slave labourers in factories, many never to return; resistance efforts were brutally crushed; transportation, fuel and power networks were destroyed; and much of the country's resources went to Germany, resulting in shortages of food, fuel, clothing and other basic goods for the Dutch. Records after the war would show that 104,000 Jews had been murdered and another 150,000 or so Dutch had died during the occupation. The suffering culminated in what the Dutch dubbed the *Hongerwinter* (Hunger Winter) of 1944-45, when fuel shortages, exhausted food supplies and the worst weather Europe had seen in half a century caused over twenty thousand Dutch men, women and children to perish from starvation, cold and disease, while hundreds of thousands more were desperately ill before the liberation.

Arriving in Northwest Europe over the span of March and April 1945, the 1st Canadian Corps who had been fighting in Italy since the summer of 1943, joined their comrades of Canadian Army Corps who had landed on D-Day and fought battles through France, Belgium, and Germany. For the first time in history, two Canadian army corps would fight together. The two Canadian Corps were to liberate the northern Netherlands and occupy parts of Germany, where about 100,000 enemy troops remained. The First Canadian Army was given two tasks: to liberate western Netherlands, and to clear the northeastern part of the Netherlands and northern Germany.

On the **northeastern front**, beginning on March 23, the 2nd Canadian Corps progressed rapidly, delayed primarily by blown bridges, flooded polders, and mined roads, as German resistance got weaker. The Canadians were supported in their fierce push by their Polish and Belgian allies and the Dutch resistance. In many locations, such as Zutphen, Groningen and Deventer, they endured several days of stiff fighting against a resilient enemy. Difficulties included; snipers on the roofs, machine-guns hidden in cellars, fanatical Dutch Nazi and Dutch SS fighters, and SS soldiers disguised in civilian clothing that fired at Canadian soldiers. Near Zutphen, Canadian soldiers came across a heartrending sight, Stalag VI C, a camp for prisoners captured on the Russian front. By April 25, Canadian troops had liberated the remainder of the Dutch territory and occupied the plains of northern Germany up to the Weser.

On the **western front**, beginning on April 2, the 1st Canadian Corps drove toward the major cities. Often fighting in house-by-house battles, village by village, Canadian and Allied forces were able to take control of the cities of Arnhem – or what was left of it, and Apeldoorn by mid-April. In some cases, the Germans surrendered with little bloodshed, but in other incidences, the Canadians experienced fanatical resistance and fierce clashes.

As they moved forward, Canadian troops observed increasing signs of malnutrition in the civilian population; there was indeed a major risk of famine in western Netherlands. Their meagre rations had been cut repeatedly in the last year of the war by the occupiers, and now most were wasting away on less than 500 calories a day. Many of the Dutch were forced to eat flower bulbs to survive. German troops in the area were surrounded and likely to flood the region if attacked. In mid-April 1945, for the Allies, saving Dutch lives now took priority over killing Germans. To avoid a humanitarian crisis, on April 22, Canadian offensive operations in Western Holland were halted. Truce negotiations were started with local German authorities, a temporary cease-fire was agreed on, and a section of the front was demilitarized to allow food to be brought in by trucks and aircraft.

On April 29, **Operation Manna** began with Royal Canadian Air Force and Royal Air Force bombers dropping bundles of vital relief supplies by air to many on the brink of misery and starvation, including to German-occupied Rotterdam, Amsterdam, and the Hague. The relief flights brought one Canadian pilot enormous satisfaction as Dutch families raced out of their farms, waving and cheering as the bomber bay doors opened to drop essential supplies; *"As the mission went on, we saw that every barn over which we flew had painted on its roof the words 'Thank-you, Canadians!'"* Beginning on May 2, the ground-based **Operation Faust** was launched, as Canadian and British truck convoys rolled into no-man's-land delivering tons of food and fuel to Dutch civilians. This delivery

system would continue daily through the narrow gap in the battlefield. Soldiers at the front chose to go hungry, giving away their food to the grateful civilians who greeted them not only as liberators but as saviours.⁴¹

A Canadian Major described the scene as the Canadian 1st Division marched into the Hague and Rotterdam, *“With the fields of tulips in full bloom, this was the Holland Canadians had always imagined. But the joyous reception was more than most veteran troops had dreamed of. There were flags flying on every building. In towns and cities the streets were full of singing, dancing people. Military vehicles were bombarded with flowers. Crowds closed in until military traffic could scarcely move. Happy men, women and children hung on the sides of jeeps, trucks, tanks and cars.”*

After the liberation celebrations, the Canadians set to work to help Holland get back on its feet. In addition to delivering thousands of tons of food a day to major cities, Canadian soldiers volunteered to work on farms. Others cleared rubble in war-damaged towns or sawed up trees felled by Germans in retreat. Canadian engineers helped drain flooded areas, cleared canals of broken bridges and built new ones. Canadian boys were taken into the Dutch homes, fêted and celebrated, nurtured, and shown kindness. Many of the Canadians reciprocated by adopting entire households, providing food, chocolate, and cigarettes, and handing over money, working around the house, and acting as adopted sons.^{41, 6F}

In May 1945, Mrs. Maynard Elliott of 134 North Russell Street in Sarnia received a letter from Miss Betty Schaapma, of Harlingen, Holland. Mrs. Elliott’s husband, Maynard, was a sergeant in the R.C.A.F., and their son was Eldon (Buddy) Elliot, a Private with the Highland Light Infantry of Canada, who had been wounded in Belgium in January of 1945. In Miss Betty Schaapma’s letter, she praised Private Eldon Elliott, and expressed the gratitude of the Dutch people for the prominent role that the Canadian forces played in the liberation of their country, including her town of Harlingen. Following is a portion of her letter:

Our town was liberated from German tyranny the night of April 16-17. How glad and grateful we are; we can’t say it with words. Five years we lived in anguish and fear and at last we can breathe again. Next to God we give thanks to the brave Canadian soldiers. Your countrymen were received with tumultuous cheering and the people opened their doors to them to show how grateful they were. In this way, we made your son’s acquaintance. It was a great pity that he had to move again but we hope that he soon may return, safe and well, to Canada. He is such a neat, calm boy. On a map, he showed us where you are living. I am sending you a clipping from the first newspaper since VE-Day.

The clipping was of a proclamation of “Our Liberators”, printed in both English and Dutch. “We welcome you, our liberators, as bringers of peace and goodwill. May the five years of brutal oppression and humiliation of our people, years of indescribable grief, disappear like a nightmare, out of which we may awake in the clearness of a new day.”

Netherlands sacrifices: The lives lost in the final days of the war were a testament to the continuing sacrifice required against an enemy who refused to surrender. In April 1945 alone, almost 1,200 Canadian soldiers died in the fight for Dutch freedom, a further 114 would fall in the early days of May, including 12 on May 7, the last day of battle in Europe.^{D, E, 2I, 2N, 3F, 3M, 3Z, 4I}

Over the nearly eight months of bitter and difficult fighting during the Scheldt Campaign and the Liberation of the Netherlands, more than 7,600 Canadian airmen, sailors and soldiers gave their lives while fighting in Holland.^{D, E, 2N, 3F, 3M, 3Z} Along with at least eighteen young men from Sarnia who lost their lives during the Battle of the Scheldt and the Battle of the Rhineland, at least five other young men from Sarnia gave their lives in the Liberation of the Netherlands including; Gunner Thomas Brydges, Bombardier Kenneth Burr, Corporal Adam Conway, Private John McLagan and Sergeant Charles Richards.

The three main Canadian War Cemeteries in the Netherlands are Holten, Bergen-op-Zoom and Groesbeek. At these three main cemeteries, there are two Sarnians buried at Holten Canadian War Cemetery; John McLagan and William Metcalfe; three at Bergen-op-Zoom Canadian War Cemetery: Robert Alexander, Robert Dionne and George Esser; and twelve Sarnians at Groesbeek Canadian War Cemetery; Jack Brunette, Thomas Brydges, Kenneth Burr, Adam Conway, Wilfred Durocher, Arthur Everingham, William Graham, Patrick McLaughlin, Howard McRae, Charles Richards, Wilford Walker and Harley Williams (and a 13th, Richard Wilson, is on the Groesbeek Memorial). There are also five Sarnians buried in other Dutch cemeteries; Hugo Borchardt, Maurice Church, Arthur Parsons*, Thomas Powell, and Leslie Sutherland.

*Information on A. Parsons and the Halifax JB803 Monument in Muiden is included in this Project on page 921.

In the Netherlands, May 4 became the national **Remembrance Day** (“Dodenherdenking”), a solemn occasion and one the Dutch mark with ceremonies at the Canadian War Cemeteries at Holten, Groesbeek and Bergen op Zoom among others. On that day, people all over the country observe two minutes of silence at 8:00 p.m. At Holten, children from the area lay yellow tulips before each of the 1,393 headstones. In Groesbeek, thousands of Dutch citizens walk in silence at sundown to the cemetery to pay their respects to more than 2,300 Canadians buried there. Because Bergen op Zoom was liberated during the Scheldt fighting on October 27, 1944, commemorations at the cemetery there are held on that date. A highlight is the Wageningen parade and festival in the town where the Germans surrendered. Crowds of more than 120,000 people attend – reaffirming the strong memory of the events of war that forever bind Canada and the Netherlands together.

Dutch Liberation Day (“Bevrijdingsdag”) is celebrated on May 5, the date in 1945 on which Canadian General Charles Foulkes accepted German surrender in the Netherlands and the occupation of the Netherlands officially ended. It is a national holiday marked by celebration – a happy day, a day for fun and picnics and laughter and parties. Everyone gets the day off work and there are music festivals throughout the country. The people celebrate their freedom, democracy and joy. But for the Dutch, the rule has always been, “First commemorate, then celebrate.” So before all the fun and festivals, May 4 is the day to remember.

Dutch schoolchildren are steeped in war and liberation history. The schoolchildren lay yellow tulips before the headstones and tend to the thousands of gravesites of Canadians who died fighting in their country. They place wreaths at the ceremonies at Holten and Groesbeek, and every Christmas Eve, children are at the centre of a candlelight ceremony at Holten Canadian War Cemetery and other Commonwealth War Graves in Holland, placing candles on the graves of the fallen, forever remembering their sacrifices.^{2N, 30}

Canada’s Dutch Princess: When Germany invaded Holland, they intended to capture Dutch Queen Wilhelmina. However, the Royal Family escaped in time to Britain, along with the Dutch government. With Britain under siege, the Dutch Crown Princess Juliana and her two young children were sent to greater safety in Ottawa in June 1940. Another daughter, Princess Margriet, was born in exile while living in Ottawa (the only royal ever to be born in North America). In fact, Canada ceded the one Ottawa hospital maternity room temporarily to the Netherlands so that the royal child could be delivered on Dutch territory, thus she would have full Dutch citizenship.

Their wartime stay would have a lasting impact on Canada’s relationship with the Netherlands. In the spring of 1945, in appreciation for Canada’s sacrifice and for providing safe harbor to the Dutch Royal Family, Princess Juliana sent Ottawa 100,000 tulip bulbs. That tradition has continued over the years, with 10,000 bulbs gifted annually to Ottawa, culminating in the Canadian Tulip Festival. After the war, peaking in the early 1950’s with more than 20,000 arrivals a year, a large wave of Dutch people immigrated to Canada seeking a better life, including to the Sarnia-Lambton area.

In 1995, fifty years after they liberated the Netherlands, some 15,000 strong Canadian veterans were honoured in that country with celebrations and parades. With cheering crowds, signs, banners and Canadian flags everywhere, Canadian historian J.L. Granatstein described the moving scenes at Apeldoorn, Netherlands: *“I shall never forget the sight of young mothers in their twenties, weeping and cheering simultaneously while holding their babies up to get a sobbing veteran’s kiss. Nor will I forget the Dutch mothers telling astonished and typically blasé Canadian reporters that they were doing this because they wanted their children to be able to say that they had been touched by one of the men who liberated the Netherlands a half-century before.”*⁴¹

• **THE WAR ENDS IN EUROPE:** On April 25, 1945, the American and Russian troops met on the Elbe River. A few days later, Hitler committed suicide in a Berlin bunker to avoid capture by the Soviet armies that were swarming through the city (a day after Mussolini was executed by Communist forces in Italy). On May 2, the German armies in Italy surrendered. On May 5, 1945, Germany surrendered the 120,000-strong Twenty-Fifth Army to the 1st Canadian Corps commander General Charles Foulkes at Wageningen in the Netherlands. Almost simultaneously, Germany surrendered about 93,000 troops in northwest Germany to the 2nd Canadian Corps commander General Simonds. Total surrender of Germany came in the early hours of May 7, with celebrations around the world set for the next day, May 8, 1945 - V-E Day.^{D, E, 3F, 3M, 3Z, 4I, 6F}

In the spring of 1945, on two separate occasions, reports surfaced that the Germans had surrendered. The first, on April 28, was erroneous; the second on the morning of May 7, was merely premature.^{2N}

The following is a portion of CBC war correspondent **Matthew Halton’s** report that was broadcast across the nation from the now silent front lines;

The German war is over – five little words that one hardly dares to speak... Young men have grown old in a morning. Gentle men have grown callous at slaughter... And then someone tells you it's over and your first thought is, "No more Canadians will die."...

Not again in this war will Canadians huddle against the wet earth of Europe in shuddering dawns and then rise to their feet and move out into the storm of steel. Not again shall we see brave men who can stand no more. No more mounds of earth beside the road... The anger of the guns has died away...

Today the sun rises as it hasn't risen for nearly six years and soldiers I've talked to don't quite know what to do about it. They shave and have breakfast. They clean their guns. They try to brush the mud off their clothes. They ask if there is any mail. After all, they've lived strange, dangerous lives. It's hard to believe that if they stand up in the open, nobody will shoot at them. Death has walked at their side. It's hard to believe for a day or two that the nightmare is over...^{7Q}

The headline on the May 7, 1945 *Sarnia (Canadian) Observer* newspaper read:

*Complete Surrender of Germany to Allies is Reported Unofficially Today
Formal Announcement Of Cessation Of Hostilities Is Scheduled For Tomorrow*

The front page story described that a number foreign Associated Press correspondents, along with broadcast statements from German and Danish radio, were reporting that Germany had surrendered. The German broadcast statement was attributed to the German Foreign Minister in which he stated that Grand Admiral Karl Donitz, whom Hitler had appointed as his successor in late April 1945, had ordered "unconditional surrender of all fighting German troops. After almost six years of struggle we have succumbed." Allied Supreme Headquarters in Paris were not denying the truth of the reports, instead merely saying that no story of German capitulation "is authorized." Parliamentary correspondents were reporting that telephone conversations were taking place between Winston Churchill in London, Joseph Stalin in Moscow and Harry Truman in Washington who were undoubtedly trying to synchronize simultaneous release of the news.

• **V-E DAY:** On May 7, 1945 in Rheims, France, at 2:41 am local time, Germany signed the Instrument of Surrender document, which brought World War II in Europe to an end. Official confirmation of the German unconditional surrender came the following day on May 8th at 9 am EDT. "Victory in Europe Day" or VE Day was celebrated on May 8, 1945. Across the Dominion, wild celebrations broke out in the streets. Not everyone embraced the wild festivities, as families who had lost a loved one, as well as countless additional others related to the fallen, must have been unsure of how to mark the end of a six-year nightmare. The war was not yet over – the war with Japan was still underway – but the major threat of Nazi Germany had ended.

Sarnia celebrates V-E Day: In Sarnia, May 8, 1945 VE Day was observed with restraint. Mayor W.C. Hipple gave his permission for a parade that started a tour of downtown streets at 4 o'clock in the afternoon. The procession included the Lambton Garrison band (assembled on short notice), marchers, the big ladder truck of the fire department, children and numerous decorated automobiles. Union Jacks, Stars and Stripes and assorted flags of other Allied nations were flown throughout the day from stores, business blocks and many private homes. Paper streamers hung from upstairs windows of hotels and other buildings.

During the evening between 3,000 and 4,000 participated in street dancing to the music provided by Ken Williamson's orchestra. Though some were critical of the belated and unimpressive nature of the city's observance, Mayor Hipple defended the celebration. "Personally, I am very happy over the restrained way in which the people of Sarnia observed the occasion. I sincerely believe that those who clamored for a more extensive celebration were persons who have not been bereaved in this war or who do not have any relatives still overseas. Those with reasons for sorrow or worry are fully as well satisfied with our quiet observance as I am."

Lieutenant Col. S.G. Stokes, M.C., V.C., officer commanding the 11th Field Company, R.C.E., upheld Mayor Hipple's attitude on the celebration. Stokes asserted that Sarnia's observance of VE-Day was quite in keeping with its standing in the Dominion as regards its' contributions to the armed forces. He pointed out that Sarnia's percentage of volunteers for the various services was relatively high compared with that of other cities and he thought this was a sound reason for the restrained celebration. Such restraint reflected credit on their relatives at home. Local citizens were also well aware of the news of the Halifax celebrations that had occurred the previous evening.

In Halifax, the poorly co-ordinated VE-Day celebrations that began on May 7, rapidly declined into a rampage of looting and vandalism that lasted for two days. The joyous gatherings degenerated into out-of-control

riots and chaos that resulted in community leaders closing the bars and liquor stores. In the aftermath, the navy was blamed for losing control of its sailors, although civilians and other service members had taken part in the destruction and the city officials had been extraordinarily inept in planning for the war's end. **Admiral Leonard Murray**, Canada's only theatre commander of the war, became the scapegoat. It was an inglorious end to Murray's career as Canada's most distinguished flag officer, and after having spent the war fighting the U-boats, he was unceremoniously removed from command a few days after the riot. Murray lived out his remaining days exiled in England, almost entirely forgotten by Canadians at the time of his death in 1971.⁴¹ More information on Commander Murray is on page 435.

The front page of the May 9, 1945 *Sarnia Canadian Observer* carried reports on a number of the major events that were occurring at the time. Headlines of the stories on the front page included GOERING AND KESSELRING ARE CAPTURED; Halifax "Peace" Riot To Be Investigated; Joy Reigns In Moscow; Victory Is Celebrated In Most European Capitals; and Final Act Of Surrender Takes Place In Berlin.

On Sunday, May 13, 1945, a national day of prayer and thanksgiving for the Allied victory in Europe was observed in cities across Canada, including Sarnia. The Sarnia observance included a parade that began at city hall and moved to the cenotaph in Victoria Park for a special memorial service. It was estimated that more than six thousand local citizens assembled in the park or witnessed the parade. The mile-long procession included bands representing the Sarnia Garrison; the Air Cadet band and Sea Cadet band; drummers and buglers of the 11th (Reserve) Field Company; R.C.E. marchers of the Canadian Corps and Canadian Legion; members of the city council; scores of veterans of the two World Wars; the 26th (reserve) L.A.A. (Light Anti-Aircraft) Battery army unit under the command of Lieut.-Col. S.G. Stokes and Major J. Newton; Sea Cadets and Air Cadets; two Red Cross nursing units; Imperial Oil nurses; and the St. John Ambulance Brigade and its nursing division.

Before the paraders reached Victoria Park, the spectators there heard Prime Minister Winston Churchill start his radio broadcast that was amplified to the crowd from London, England. Major F.G. Hardy, chaplain of the 7th Regiment, R.C.A., and rector of St. George's Anglican Church, conducted the religious segment of the memorial service that included hymns, prayers and a sermon. Parents and relatives of those who died overseas had the honor of placing the first wreaths at the base of the cenotaph. Wreaths were also laid on the cenotaph on behalf of the city, (by Mayor W.C. Hipple), the Canadian Corps, the Canadian Legion and the Legion's Ladies Auxiliary. The ceremony came to an impressive end with the sounding of "The Last Post" and "Reveille" and the playing of "God Save the King."

• **OPERATION EXODUS:** By May of 1945, prisoner of war camps were being liberated throughout occupied Europe. Though the ex-POWs had been cut loose, they were holed up in former prisons, fenced compounds, hospital wards, warehouses and makeshift tent cities, with many suffering from illness, fatigue and starvation. Learning of their plight, Prime Minister Winston Churchill gave their repatriation the highest priority. "Operation Exodus" involved RAF Bomber Command, including RCAF 6 Group, making nearly five hundred round trips in Lancasters, Halifaxes, and other heavy bombers tasked with flying the POWs home. Many of the POWs had been three, four and five years in enemy stalags, mostly cut off from the Allied war effort, and all of them entirely reliant on their own resourcefulness to survive the war. According to one "Exodus" RAF pilot, as he witnessed the physically weakened and emotionally drained ex-POWs arrive back home on the airfield tarmac, *"Some got down on their hands and knees and kissed the concrete. Others simply burst into tears where they stood, while others lay on the grass and sobbed. I was thunderstruck..."*

By the end of the 23-day operation, Allied Bombers had brought over 75,000 ex-prisoners home. Pilot-Officer-Air Gunner Orval Clare Evers of Sarnia was part of Operation Exodus. On May 9, 1945, one day after VE Day, Orval Evers was part of a 5-man crew aboard a Lancaster aircraft transporting ex-POWs from Belgium back to England. Tragically, the aircraft crashed in France, killing all 24 ex-prisoners on board, along with the entire Lancaster crew including Orval Evers. His story is included in this Project on page 679.^{3F, 6D}

• **DEMOBILIZATION:** With the war in Europe over, the impatient, angry, and lonely soldiers, sailors and airmen wanted to get home, to their wives, lovers, children (some they had never seen), and families. But the Allies needed their units in the field to ensure the German nation would abide by the surrender agreement and, even more worrisome, to ensure that the Soviet forces did not keep pushing westward to occupy all of Germany. Shortages of transport and shipping also ensured that the demobilization of several million men would not be timely.

Almost from the start of the war, the Canadian government had planned for its finish. A demobilization

system which took into account length of service and prioritized men, attempted to ensure that there was a “first in, first out” policy tempered by suitable exigencies for men with families. A complicated point system awarded two points for each month of service in Canada, three for each month of service overseas and a 20% bonus if they were married. The higher the score, the better the chance for a quick return home. Soldiers who volunteered for duty in the Pacific War were given top priority for going home. This meant however, that as individual service personnel were sent home and welcomed in their communities, the regiments, squadrons, or ships, could not be celebrated or feted as a whole.

During the demobilization delays, the commanders were urged to keep their officers and men mentally and physically active. There was military training, organized recreation, education courses and trade instruction were offered, and there was generous leave. Canadians converged on London, and many also visited relatives throughout England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland.^{D, 41}

By early July 1945, Sarnia soldiers began returning home. Through the co-operation of the Sarnia Canadian Legion, Branch 62, the Red Cross and civic authorities, soldiers returning from overseas were being royally welcomed at the Canadian National tunnel depot. A loud-speaker for each train bringing veterans to the city, provided martial music before each arrived and then announced the names of those aboard. Jimmy Stewart, a World War I veteran, played the bagpipes as the servicemen stepped off the train. A reception booth set up in the waiting room provided them with information. Each man also received two packages of cigarettes from the Canadian Legion, bearing a sticker with the Legion crest and a message of welcome.

• **THE HOLOCAUST:** The Holocaust was Nazi Germany’s state-sponsored, step-by-step persecution and mass killing of Jews and other targeted groups between 1933 and 1945. When Canadian and Allied troops swept into Germany and its conquered territories, they confronted the horrific atrocities taking place in the Nazi concentration camps. On April 12, 1945, Canadian forces liberated the Westerbork Transit Camp in the Netherlands, including 900 Dutch Jews who were still interned there. Anne Frank was among the over 100,000 Jews, Gypsies and resistance members that had been taken to Westerbork during the war. Also in April 1945, Canadian and British forces liberated Bergen-Belson concentration camp in northwest Germany, where Anne Frank had been killed (more on Anne Frank is on the next page). At “Belson”, the liberating soldiers discovered approximately 60,000 prisoners inside, most of them half-starved and seriously ill, and another 13,000 corpses lying around the camp unburied. Approximately 100,000 Russian prisoners of war and civilians, mostly Jews, had died in this camp during the war.

A Canadian who had survived flying in a RCAF Halifax bomber during the war, was part of a crew that flew dignitaries to the Belson death camp, to witness the sickening sights, *“As my eyes surveyed this devastation – and as my mind came to realize the full scope of the wickedness explicit here – I wondered how this had been allowed to happen by a literate people, people who could build bridges and compose beautiful music, who loved their children, and who could pray to a God they recognized. The horror of seeing the victims, their nondescript bodies – or what was left of their bodies – entwined in lime pits with the bones of their friends, their parents, their children; of those dead eyes – if they had not yet rotted from the sockets – without a fire left in them; the horror of that remains with me to this day.”*⁴¹

When Canadian and other Allied soldiers liberated more death camps, such as Auschwitz (in Poland) and Buchenwald (in Germany), and witnessed first-hand the enormous evil that had taken place, their lives were changed forever. The camps revealed a genocidal war of unimaginable scope and savagery. Hitler had sought to create a "master race" through the systematic destruction of all Jews and other so-called racial and ethnic inferiors that included political dissidents, the physically and mentally disabled, Gypsies, and homosexuals. In particular, however, the Jews were the intended victims of his "Final Solution." As many as 6 million Jews, including 1.5 million children, perished at the hands of Nazi executioners during the Holocaust. The atrocities of the Holocaust revealed for many the evil of Hitler’s Third Reich and confirmed the justness of the war.^{41, 51}

On November 1, 2005, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution to designate January 27 as **International Holocaust Remembrance Day**. The date marks the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration/extermination camp. The first commemoration ceremony was held on January 27, 2006, at the UN Headquarters in New York City.

Canada’s **National Holocaust Monument** was unveiled in Ottawa on September 27, 2017. It serves as a memorial to the six million innocent Jewish men, women and children who perished, and to recognize the incredible contributions Holocaust survivors have made to Canada. The drive to build a national Holocaust monument was

spearheaded in 2007 by Laura Grosman, then an 18-year-old University of Ottawa student, who learned that Canada was one of the few Allied nations lacking such a memorial. Titled *Landscape of Loss, Memory and Survival*, it is an open-air pavilion made up of six triangular slanting concrete walls that seen from above, takes the shape of the 6-pointed Jewish Star of David – like the cloth stars Jews and other persecuted victims were forced to wear. The six triangular spaces represent the badges that marked the six different classes of prisoners in the concentration camps. Photographs (by Canadian photographer Edward Burtynsky) have been enlarged and applied to the concrete walls of the monument, depicting scenes from six Holocaust sites: Treblinka, Auschwitz, Berlin, Mauthausen, Theresienstadt and Warsaw. The upper level of the monument provides a direct view of the Peace Tower on Parliament Hill.

Anne Frank was one of the thousands of Jews throughout Holland that went into hiding during the Holocaust. Born in Frankfurt, Germany on June 12, 1929, she was the daughter of Edith and Otto Frank, a German businessman. Anne had one sister, Margot Frank, who was three and a half years older. Fleeing Nazi persecution of Jews in Germany, the Frank family moved to Amsterdam in the fall of 1933. On May 10, 1940, the German army invaded the Netherlands. The Dutch surrendered on May 15, 1940, marking the beginning of the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands. By October 1940, the Nazi occupiers began imposing anti-Jewish measures in the Netherlands. On July 5, 1942, sister Margot Frank received an official summons to report to a Nazi work camp in Germany. The very next day, the Frank family went into hiding in makeshift quarters in an empty space at the back of a building in Amsterdam, which they referred to as the Secret Annex.

Anne, her sister Margot, and their parents Edith and Otto Frank, along with another Jewish family of three, and an eighth person, would remain sheltered in the Secret Annex for more than two years. The group lived in constant fear of being discovered and could never go outside. Shortly before going into hiding, Anne had received a diary as a gift for her thirteenth birthday. During her time in hiding, never once stepping outside, Anne Frank wrote about her fears, experiences and wishes in her diary. In addition to her diary, Anne filled a notebook with original stories and collected quotations from other writers in her ‘book of beautiful sentences’. Anne Frank wrote in her diary that she wanted to become a writer or a journalist in the future, and that she wanted to publish her diary as a novel called ‘The Secret Annex’.

In a diary entry written in mid-July 1944, a few weeks before her family was captured, fifteen-year-old Anne Frank wrote, “*I hear the approaching thunder that, one day, will destroy us too. I feel the suffering of millions. And yet, when I look up at the sky, I somehow feel that everything will change for the better, that this cruelty too shall end, that peace and tranquility will return once more.*” The family was eventually betrayed, discovered by the Gestapo on August 4, 1944, and in early September 1944 were deported to Auschwitz concentration camp in Poland. Upon arriving at Auschwitz, the men and women were separated. This was the last time that Otto Frank ever saw his wife and daughters. After several months of slave labour, Anne and Margot were transferred in late fall to the Bergen-Belson concentration camp in Germany.

Anne’s father, Otto Frank, was the only one of the eight people that hid in the annex to survive the war. Edith Through the winter of 1944-45, Edith Frank in Auschwitz hid each scrap of food she would get, saving it for her daughters, refusing to eat herself. Edith Frank fell ill and died as a result of starvation at Auschwitz in early January 1945. Fifteen year-old Anne Frank and her sister Margot died only days apart, of disease (typhus) and deprivation in Bergen-Belsen in February or March 1945. Their bodies were thrown into a mass grave. Several weeks later, on April 15, 1945, British soldiers liberated the camp.

After the war, friends convinced Otto Frank that his daughter’s diary had great expressive power, and on June 25, 1947, *The Secret Annex* was published. It was translated from its original Dutch version and first published in English as *The Diary of a Young Girl* in 1952. Anne Frank and her *The Diary of a Young Girl*, became one of the most enduring, moving and widely read firsthand accounts of the Jewish experience during the Holocaust. The names Auschwitz, Sobibor, Dachau, Treblinka, and Bergen-Belson will forever haunt history – the concentration camps where millions of Jews and others deemed undesirable were systematically annihilated.^{41, 9L}

Remembering Sarnia’s Jewish soldiers: In late March 1945, a plaque honouring 14 Jewish members of the armed services from the City of Sarnia was unveiled during the regular Passover rites, in the Ahavas Isaac Synagogue, Davis Street, Sarnia. The plaque was unveiled by FO. Morris Skosov, D.F.C., following a brief service by Rabbi A. Roness. Rabbi Roness paid tribute to these Jewish warriors, and compared the deliverance of the ancient Hebrew peoples from the bondage of Egypt to the deliverance of all people from the scourge of Hitler’s war. Of the fourteen Jewish men on the plaque, seven had enlisted in the Air Force, six in the Army and one with the Navy. Nine

of these men had been overseas, and three of them made the supreme sacrifice. The men, all from Sarnia, honoured on the plaque were M. Berger, S. Bernard, R. Heller, I. Haber, M. Kirk, Dr. I. Mann, A. Rosen, G. Shabsove, M. Skosov, Mitchell Smith, Murray Smith, L. Swartz, I.B. Zierler, Isaac Zierler. At the time of the unveiling, 1.5 million Jewish enlisted with the Allied armies, 15 000 of them from Canada. The three men on the plaque who lost their lives while serving were Max Berger, Mitchell Smith and Isaac Buck Zierler—their stories are included in this Project.

The *MS St. Louis*: There have been dark moments in Canada's history when this nation was not so accepting of immigrants. Canadian immigration policy decisions have been made based on prejudice, racism, religious intolerance and anti-Semitism ideals that were common in Canadian society at the time. Two examples in times of war are: Canada denying entry of over 370 Sikh, Muslim and Hindu passengers aboard the *SS Komagata Maru* off the coast of Vancouver in May-July 1914; and Canada's rejection of over 900 Jewish refugees aboard the *MS St. Louis* off the coast of Nova Scotia in June 1939.

On May 13, 1939, four months before the war began, the ocean liner *MS St. Louis* carrying more than 930 European Jewish refugees (mostly German Jews who had lost everything at the hands of the Nazis) set out from Hamburg for a two-week transatlantic voyage to Havana, Cuba. The refugees, carrying entrance visas to that country, hoped to live there in peace. Many of them were the elite of European Society who had paid for Cuban visas at the embassy in Berlin. Some were officially "stateless" and many had lost their businesses and homes. Others had been freed from Dachau and Buchenwald on the condition they promptly leave Germany.

By the time the vessel reached Cuban shores, officials had revoked all but a handful of those visas. Increased anti-Semitism, the corrupt sale of landing certificates, and changes to immigration regulations in Cuba kept the ship and its passengers in port for days. So the Captain, unsuccessful in appealing to the Cuban authorities who ordered the ship out of Cuban waters, carried on towards Florida. But Americans dispatched the Coast Guard to make sure Jewish passengers would not swim to the United States. Despite many groups and prominent Americans writing to U.S. President Roosevelt on behalf of the refugees, American officials refused to accept them.

Word of the plight of those aboard the ship had reached Canada. A number of prominent Canadians petitioned the government to provide sanctuary for the refugees. But Canadian officials refused the opportunity to save them. According to one Canadian immigration official at the time, "*No country could open its doors wide enough to take in the hundreds of thousands of Jewish people who want to leave Europe: the line must be drawn somewhere.*" Though the ship was just two days from Halifax harbour, the refugees were turned away by Canadian authorities. The *MS St. Louis* returned to Europe, docking in Antwerp, Belgium on June 17, just over a month after it had first left for Cuba. Some passengers were taken in by Belgium, France, Holland and the U.K. (many of these countries fell under Nazi control over the course of the war). About 500 ended up back in Germany, in concentration camps where more than 250 of them perished. This event inspired a book and film titled, *Voyage of the Damned*. In January 2011, a memorial sculpture commemorating the *St. Louis* refugees was unveiled at the Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21, where the ship would probably have landed.

Between 1933 and 1945, Canada admitted fewer than 5,000 Jewish refugees, the lowest number of refugees among developed countries.^{21, 2N} After the war, Canada was profoundly shaped by approximately 40,000 Holocaust survivors, who resettled across the country after the war.

• **THE WAR IN THE PACIFIC AND SOUTH-EAST ASIA:** Canadian Forces, primarily the Royal Canadian Air Force, were involved in the war against Japan in South East Asia from the outset. Even before the initial Japanese attacks of December 1941, Canadian airmen trained as radar operators, mechanics and electrical engineers, had been loaned to the RAF and posted in the Far East. The Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) would be involved in the war in South East Asia for the duration, with transport squadrons in support of the British army, and with general reconnaissance squadrons, bomber escort groups and fighter squadrons. Canadian airmen, including some from Sarnia, were also assigned to RAF's Far East Command, serving in Malaya, Singapore, Java, Burma, India and Ceylon.

The Canadian contribution to the naval war in the Pacific was minimal. Although a few Canadians did serve in Royal Navy ships, no units of the Royal Canadian Navy served in this area. Canadian Merchant Seamen also served throughout the Far East on ships of both Canadian and Allied registry, carrying troops and cargo essential to fight the war in the Pacific. As the Battle of the Atlantic wound down in late 1944, plans were laid for a Canadian Pacific fleet of some sixty ships, which would include fleet carriers, cruisers, and a large number of escort vessels. The first of this contingent to sail for Pacific waters was the light cruiser *HMCS Uganda*, crewed by 700 officers and

men (more information on the *Uganda* is on page 534).

Two dozen Canadian Army officers were attached to the British 14th Army in Burma and South East Asia Command Headquarters as observers during the latter part of 1944. One of the most unusual Canadian contributions was their role as “mule skimmers”, escorting shipments of mules from North America to the jungles of India and Burma. The mules were essential for transporting needed supplies across the mountainous terrain to the Allied forces fighting there. A number of Canadians also served in support of the “Chindits” in Japanese-occupied Burma. The “Chindits” were members of the 77th Indian Infantry Brigade, part of the largest Special Services operation in the war, who undertook long-range operations behind enemy lines. Canadians were involved with the Chindits as the aircrew of some planes supplying the force, air force liaison officers, and radio communications personnel. Canadians were also involved in other special groups in the Far East, such as Canloan officers borrowed by the British; a “Sea Reconnaissance Unit” (frogmen spearheading British Army assaults); and a group of Japanese-Canadians and Chinese-Canadians who volunteered working as interpreters with intelligence units or with the secret “Force 136” – an elite commando team that operated behind enemy lines (involved in resistance movements, sabotage, espionage and providing information about the enemy).^{D, 21}

Hong Kong: The Canadian Army’s first combat action in the Second World War was in Hong Kong. In early December 1941, the Japanese launched a series of surprise attacks almost simultaneously on Pearl Harbor, Northern Malaya, the Philippines, Guam, Wake Island and the British Crown Colony of Hong Kong. Two Canadian infantry battalions, composed of approximately 2,000 inexperienced soldiers, were part of a total of 14,000 Allied soldiers charged with defending Hong Kong. After 17 days of fighting against overwhelming odds, Hong Kong was surrendered on December 25, 1941. Every single Canadian in the battle was either killed, wounded or captured. One Sarnian, Max Berger, was killed in the Battle of Hong Kong. More information on the Battle of Hong Kong is on page 454.

Singapore: In February 1942, Japanese forces invaded the British stronghold of Singapore, nicknamed “Gibraltar of the East”. The fall of Singapore to the Japanese Army on February 15, 1942, resulted in the surrender of over 70,000 British, Canadian, Australian and Indian troops. British Prime Minister Winston Churchill called it the “worst disaster” in British military history.

The Aleutians and Canada’s west coast: In the spring of 1942, the Japanese were also expanding their area towards North America. In June 1942, their forces landed on the islands of Attu and Kiska in the Aleutians off the coast of Alaska. In response, the Americans rushed reinforcements to Alaska. With no road link between that region and the rest of the continent, over the course of a year, thousands of construction troops laboured to cut the Alaska Highway. Also in June 1942, a Japanese submarine shelled Estevan Lighthouse on the west coast of Vancouver Island, causing minor damage. In response, Canada committed two army divisions and considerable air and naval forces to the defence of the West Coast.

The Burma Campaign: This campaign began in December 1941 when the Japanese moved through Thailand and invaded the British colony of Burma. The Japanese saw Burma as a stepping-stone to India as well as protection for their troops fighting in the Malayan peninsula and in Singapore. At little cost, by May 1942 they had driven the British Indian troops west into India. The campaign had a number of notable features that included dense jungles, mountainous terrain, lack of roads for transport, prevalent disease, and weather conditions that included severe heat and monsoon seasons. British attempts to get Burma back in 1942 and 1943 were unsuccessful. The Japanese gave some independence to Burma in 1943, but forced local workers, along with prisoners of war, to build the Burma-Thailand Railway. Over 100,000, a third of the labourers, died from overwork, malnutrition and disease.

In March 1944, the Japanese tried to invade India from Burma. British-led Indian Army troops held the Japanese for more than eighty days, until the monsoon rains started. One third of the Japanese force of nearly 85,000 died of disease, the greatest defeat of the Japanese army to that point of the war. Toward the end of 1944, the British 14th Army (many Canadians were part of it), American and Chinese Allied Forces began the offensive that led to the successful reoccupation of Burma in 1945.

Approximately 8,000 Canadians served in the Burma Campaign. Some Canadians served in the British 14th Army in its British and Indian units with infantry and armoured regiments. RCAF No. 413 Squadron was posted to Ceylon in March 1942, flying Catalina (or “Canso”) flying boats, carrying out reconnaissance, convoy-protection and anti-submarine duties over the Indian Ocean. RCAF Squadrons 435 and 436, based in India and Burma, flew Dakota medium-range transport aircraft (“Daks”) on supply-dropping missions for the British army beginning in December

1944. These planes would drop troops, ammunition and food supplies by parachute into small clearings to be collected by the Allied forces fighting in the area; or later, the planes would land on primitive airstrips built by military engineers. Canadians also flew with RAF squadrons aboard Liberator long-range aircraft on bombing, patrol and supply missions. Referring to themselves as the “Burma Bombers”, they attacked such targets as railways, ships, bridges and enemy troop concentrations. Canadians also served in fighter squadrons, as pilots in Mohawks, Hawker Hurricanes, Spitfires, Thunderbolts and other fighter planes in combat missions over Burma, eastern India and other areas in the region. Canadian fighter pilots shot down Japanese bombers and fighter planes, and undertook reconnaissance duties and pinpoint bombing and strafing efforts on enemy trains, pipelines, roads, ships and airfields.

The battles to defend India and Burma were called by the soldiers who fought them, “The Forgotten Campaign”, because of the low priority given to the forces there for equipment and supplies and the lack of publicity given the fighting. Of the estimated 8,000 Canadians who served in the region, approximately 500 men died and many others were wounded or captured.^{D, 2I, 8L}

After VE Day: After the Victory-in-Europe in May 1945, Canada and the Allied forces prepared to dedicate their efforts and resources in the struggle against Japan. Japan was already soundly beaten by late 1944, but the Japanese army and people vowed to never surrender. An American invasion of the Japanese homeland would be a costly affair, and casualty projections were in the hundreds of thousands for the Allies, in addition to the millions of civilians who would be cut down. Women and children were being trained to defend every foot of Japanese terrain, often armed with only sharpened sticks. Canadian military command wished to be in at the final fight, though the government was reluctant. The Canadian Government decided on a “Volunteers Only” policy, so any force that would go to the Pacific Theatre would be composed of only those who volunteered. Experienced service personnel in Britain and Europe were given the option of serving in the Pacific, and 20,000 had volunteered by mid-July 1945, many enticed to do so because they would first be allowed to return home to their families for a brief visit. Approximately 80,000 Canadians volunteered to join the Pacific Force that began concentrating at nine stations across Canada in July 1945, along with 60 Royal Canadian Navy ships, manned by 13,500 men.^{D, E, 4I, 6Z}

HMCS Uganda: One of the few Canadian warships in the Pacific Theatre following the defeat of Germany was the Royal Canadian Navy cruiser *HMCS Uganda*. The Crown Colony-class light cruiser had been transferred to the RCN in October 1944. It would be the only Canadian warship to fight against the Japanese. It engaged in hostilities against Japan beginning in early April 1945, during the **Battle of Okinawa**, the last and largest of the Pacific Island battles. The *Uganda* served to augment the British Pacific Fleet, and also joined the United States Third Fleet for operations against the Japanese. Participating in the Battle of Okinawa, it’s primary role was to help defend the Allied battleships and carriers against Japanese air attacks, including Kamikaze pilots determined to smash their bomb and fuel-laden planes into Allied ships. *Uganda* also bombarded Japanese shore positions, including airfields at Sukuma, Formosa (Taiwan), Sakishima Gunto Islands and the naval base at Truk, in the Caroline Islands. The 82-day Okinawa island battle began April 1, 1945 and ended on June 22, 1945, and was the Pacific War’s bloodiest, with an estimated 241,000 lives lost – including almost 150,000 Okinawan civilians. In July, *Uganda* supported carriers operating against Tokyo.

With the end of the war against Germany, the crew, in keeping with Canadian government policy announced in April 1945, were asked if they would volunteer to continue serving against Japan. For a variety of reasons the majority voted no, and despite threats and offered prizes, the ship left the Pacific Theatre in late July for its home port in Esquimalt, British Columbia. The ship became known ever after as “the ship that voted itself out of the war.”^{T, X, 2E, 2I, 5I, 6Z}

In August of 1945, the *Sarnia Observer* featured a story on a local sailor who had been on the ship, likely the only sailor of this city to take part in the Pacific War against the Japanese during this period. **Leading Steward Charles Taylor**, whose wife Mary and six children resided at 165 South Forsythe Street, Sarnia, had joined the Royal Canadian Navy 15 months prior. He had trained at Quebec, Cornwallis and Charleston, South Carolina where he boarded the *Uganda*, crossed the Atlantic to England, and then to the Pacific. Charles Taylor travelled over 63,000 miles aboard the *Uganda*, two thirds of it on active service in the Pacific theatre.^N

Japanese Balloon Bombs: In November 1944, Japan launched the first intercontinental weapon system – balloon bombs. In *Operation Fu-Go*, the balloons were launched from the Japanese mainland, hitching a ride on the jet stream at about 30,000 feet. These weapons could float silently across the Pacific Ocean taking between 30 and 60 hours, landing on North America’s west coast. The bark/paper balloons were filled with hydrogen gas; were unmanned; and carried an anti-personnel fragmentation bomb and incendiary devices. The intent was to spark vast

forest fires that would create havoc, dampen morale and disrupt the war effort. Between November 3, 1944 and mid-April 1945, more than 9,000 of these balloons were launched, with an estimated 1,000 reaching North America, from northern Mexico to Alaska, and as far inland as Manitoba and Michigan. Those that reached Canada, landing in British Columbia through to Manitoba, caused no notable damage.

Closer to Sarnia, one balloon was found 10 miles from Detroit and another one was found near Grand Rapids, Michigan. In both Canada and the U.S., governments pressured the media to suppress the stories of the balloon bombs, partly to avoid setting off a panic, but also to deprive Japan the details about the effectiveness of the weapons. The only casualties of this weapon occurred in May 1945, when a pregnant school teacher and five children (between the ages of 11 and 14) were killed instantly as they investigated a large paper balloon they'd found in the woods in Oregon. There were concerns in the military that the Japanese would use the balloons to deliver chemical and biological weapons. Lacking any evidence of success and with the destruction of their hydrogen factories, Japan shut down the Fu-Go campaign in April 1945. Many of the balloon bombs were unaccounted for, and the remains of some are still being found today throughout western North America.^{2E, 5H}

The Atomic Bomb: Through the summer of 1945, preparations continued for the Canadian contribution in the last phase of the War against Japan – **Operation Coronet** – the planned invasion of the Japanese Home Islands in the early spring of 1946. Included was the 24,000-strong Canadian Army Pacific Force (CAPF), which was organized on lines similar to the United States army; would use U.S. weapons; and was scheduled to train in the U.S..

All preparations stopped when the United States B-29 bomber *Enola Gay* dropped the first atomic bomb (nicknamed “Little Boy”) on **Hiroshima** on August 6, 1945. The three-metre-long device carried the explosive power of twenty thousand tonnes of TNT, and leveled ten square kilometres of the Japanese city.^{2E, 7A}

The Tuesday, August 7, 1945 *Sarnia Canadian Observer* front page headline read;

CITY OF HIROSHIMA & JAPANESE MORALE ARE BADLY SHAKEN BY NEW ATOMIC BOMB

Fear Of Latest Weapon Bared In Broadcasts – Tokyo Admits Extensive Destruction in Military Centre
San Francisco, Aug 7 – The new atomic bomb shook both the military city of Hiroshima and the Japanese morale, enemy propagandists indicated today in a broadcast lifting some of the secrecy on the devastating effect of the new “diabolic weapon.” The bomb was dropped by parachute yesterday morning, exploding in the air and spreading extensive destruction across the city...

Another story in the same issue described Winston Churchill’s response to the dropping of the atomic bomb;
Winston Churchill said last night that it was “by God’s mercy” that Allied and not German scientists discovered the secret of atomic power “long mercifully withheld from man.” The success of the historic achievement, he added, stood “to the everlasting honor” of the late President Roosevelt... Mr. Churchill said German efforts toward developing atomic power “were on a considerable scale, but were far behind, although the enemy had possessed some atomic secrets.”... The former Prime Minister praised as “most valuable” the contribution of the Canadian government which “provided both indispensable raw material for the project as a whole, and also the necessary facilities for work on one section of the project which has been carried out in Canada by the three governments in partnership.”

On August 9, 1945 three days after the first atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, the United States dropped a second atomic bomb (nicknamed “Fat Man”) from the B-29 bomber *Bockscar* on **Nagasaki**, devastating a third of the city. On that same day, 27-year-old RCAF **Lieutenant Robert Hampton Gray** of Trail, British Columbia, led eight Corsair fighter-bombers to target Japanese shipping in Honshu’s Onagawa Bay. Despite his plane being badly damaged by anti-aircraft fire, Lt. Gray continued his attack on a destroyer – sinking it with one 500-pound bomb. Almost at once, Gray’s aircraft exploded and then plunged into the sea. His body was never recovered. Robert Gray was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross, and was the last Canadian to die in Second World War combat.^{2E}

Five days later, the Tuesday, August 14, 1945 *Sarnia Canadian Observer* front page headline read;

JAPS SURRENDER

SECOND WORLD WAR OVER

Tokyo Accepts Terms Drafted at Potsdam

The atomic bombs caused thousands of deaths, the result of the initial blast, fireballs and radiation sickness. Nonetheless, the casualties from the two atomic bombs, despite their horror, were far fewer than if the Americans and

Allied forces, including Canadians, had fought their way through the Japanese towns and villages. A few hundred Canadians in Japanese prisoner-of-war camps witnessed the fireballs. Close to death from starvation and fearful that the camp guards would murder them after an American invasion, a Canadian who had survived four years of captivity believed, *"If it weren't for the use of the atomic bombs, as horrible as it was, I would not have survived."*⁴¹

Canada's Role in "The Manhattan Project": Much of the uranium used in the August 6, 1945 Hiroshima bomb came from Canada. It had been mined near Great Bear Lake, Northwest Territories and refined at a nuclear facility in the town of Port Hope, Ontario.

In May 1930, radium and uranium deposits were discovered by a Canadian prospector at Port Radium in the Northwest Territories. The Eldorado Mining Company was established to extract and refine the rich radium deposits. For much of the 1930s, uranium was simply a by-product of the refining process and the Company had little use for it. In the late 1930s, there were tons of uranium ore in storage at the Port Hope refinery. By late 1939, radium mining had ended at the Eldorado Gold Mining Company. In 1941, the private mine was reopened to supply the U.S. with the uranium needed to develop the nuclear bomb. The Canadian government bought the company one year later and nationalized Eldorado's uranium-related assets.

In early 1939, German scientists proved that uranium atoms could be split (fission), releasing energy, thus beginning the race for a bomb. By 1940, British scientists had figured out how to make an atomic bomb using enriched natural uranium. Following the attack on Pearl Harbor, the Americans became involved and initiated their own program code-named "The Manhattan Project". In 1942, a team of British and French scientists were moved to Montreal from war torn Europe to continue their research. In the meantime, the nuclear facilities at Port Hope were switched from refining radium to refining uranium. Uranium ore from a mine located near Great Bear Lake in the Northwest Territories and a mine in the Belgian Congo was used.

As the war continued and the Americans research and development of atomic weaponry advanced, so did the orders for uranium ore. During this time, Canadian government officials, including Prime Minister William Lyon MacKenzie King and Minister of Munitions and Supply **C.D. Howe**, were aware of uranium's potential as a bomb. In August 1943, secret agreements had been signed in Quebec City by the United States, Britain and Canada outlining the role of each country in the development of the bomb. The **Quebec Agreement** stipulated that the Bomb would not be used "against each other," or "against third parties without each other's consent". It also established a Combined Policy Committee of six to deal with the Bomb: three Americans, two Britains and Canadian C.D. Howe. British, French and Canadian scientists were at work in Montreal (and later at the nuclear reactor located at Chalk River, Ontario) focusing on the best ways to produce plutonium for bombs.

When C.D. Howe heard the news that the uranium bomb had destroyed the city of Hiroshima, he released a prepared statement to the press: "It is a distinct pleasure for me to announce that Canadian scientists have played an intimate part, and have been associated in an effective way with this great scientific development." For the first time, Canadians were told that uranium from Great Bear Lake, refined at Port Hope, and scientists working in a secret laboratory in Montreal, had played an important role in the British-Canadian-American Atomic Bomb Project. Three days later, a plutonium bomb was dropped on Nagasaki. The plutonium used for that bomb came from Canadian uranium irradiated in the world's first nuclear reactors in Hanford, Washington. More information on C.D. Howe is on page 467.

V-J DAY: The dropping of the two atomic bombs on August 6 and August 9, would lead to Japan's unconditional surrender on August 14, 1945. "Victory over Japan Day" or VJ DAY was celebrated on August 15, 1945 (August 15 in Japan, but because of the time zone difference, August 14 in North America). The term has also been used for September 2nd, 1945 when Japan's formal surrender took place aboard the *U.S.S. Missouri*, anchored in Tokyo Bay.^{D,E}

Petty Officer **George Kimball** of the United States Navy was aboard the *U.S.S. Missouri* and witnessed the signing of the Japanese surrender. George Kimball was from Brigden, having spent his boyhood days there and in Sarnia and the vicinity. His grandmother, father and uncle resided at the Kimball store. Petty Officer Kimball wrote to his father George Senior, to tell his impressions of the event. Following are portions of his letter:

It's hard to believe that it is all over. A short time ago we were at war without much prospect of finishing it very soon. Our boat was chosen for the signing of the surrender terms and from where I was stationed I had a good view. It was a solemn and impressive ceremony and there was no doubt that by the expressions on the faces of the Japanese delegation they sensed the gravity of the occasion. The Japs were a very dejected group of men. There were

tears in the eyes of many as they left the ship... The signing of the surrender terms was an awe-inspiring sight and one I will never forget. I was very proud to be a sailor on the mighty Missouri and in on the history making event. Yes, our chests were out, but all was serene. There was no hilarity and it seemed more of a solemn ritual. We are all proud that we have been able to win this war, and we hope it will be the last war that will have to be won. Many have died with this hope. Let us pray that it carries those charged with the forming and preserving of peace to a successful accomplishment of the task.

Sarnia Pacific-SE Asia Sacrifices: Max Berger of Sarnia was one of the 290 Canadian soldiers who lost their lives during the Battle of Hong Kong. At least two Sarnians, both members of the RCAF, lost their lives in the war against Japan during the Burma Campaign: Rodolfo Mendizabal in a Hurricane air crash in India; and Clare Thain when his Dakota aircraft crashed while dropping paratroopers behind Japanese lines in India. Another Sarnian, Wilfred Knight, lost his life in the South Asia theatre in a Liberator air crash in Ceylon one month after VE Day.

• **SARNIA CELEBRATES THE END OF THE WAR:** After almost six years of war, celebrations of the war's end began in Sarnia on the evening of Tuesday, August 14, 1945. Following are portions of the report of the impromptu V-J Day celebrations from the Thursday edition of the *Sarnia Observer*:

City Heard News Tuesday – Celebrated All Day Yesterday

Official word of the Japanese surrender was heralded in Sarnia by the blowing of factory whistles, the ringing of church bells, and a bedlam of horn blowing and cheering. A spontaneous wave of excitement swept up and down the streets. Within a few minutes after the official announcement was made at seven o'clock (Tuesday), people began to appear in the streets. Many headed for downtown. People shook hands. Paper fluttered from upper story windows. People ran around throwing confetti and motorists blew their automobile horns. Children got out their whistles, and noise makers. By eight o'clock, Front and Christina streets were jammed. Huge crowds drifted up and down the streets cheering and shouting, singing and laughing... also blowing paper horns. Motor traffic was heavy as hundreds of cars joined in the procession up Christina and down Front. The din was almost unbearable.

Members of the Sea Cadet Corps band were to have a practice, but news of victory changed the plan. As soon as the ratings heard the announcement of the war's end they tuned up their instruments and paraded up Christina Street. They were the first band on the scene and helped start off the spontaneous celebration. It was only a few minutes after seven o'clock that freighters in the river began saluting each other. All up and down the St. Clair, ships' whistles tooted and members of the crew waved and shouted to those on shore. While Sarnia celebrated the occasion, echoes of the Port Huron celebration kept drifting across the St. Clair River and rockets of various colours frequently brightened the sky. The downtown streets remained crowded until two o'clock after which time the diehard celebrants of iron constitution removed themselves to whatever restaurants were open and there drank coffee and held sing-songs until the early hours of the next morning.

The official victory celebrations in the city took place on Wednesday, August 15, with a parade through downtown. Following are portions of the report from the *Sarnia Observer* on the celebration:

Parade Tops Wednesday Celebration

Citizens, young and old, thronged the downtown area of the city yesterday afternoon and lined Christina Street to the gates of the Athletic Park to witness the largest and best parade ever organized in the history of the city. Determined that no matter what happened, the culmination of the war should be fittingly celebrated, men of the Branch No. 62 Canadian Legion got busy immediately following VE-Day and began to organize... Henry Brown and Eric Parsons on whom had fallen the bulk of the planning and organization headed the parade with other members of the Canadian Legion bearing the colours of the Allies, and for fully three quarters of an hour a stream of marching units and decorated floats and vehicles passed along the line of march from the city hall to Athletic Park.

Participants in the parade included; the Sarnia Garrison, veterans of the recent war and veterans of the war of 1914, Sarnia Garrison Band, Sea Cadet Band and cadet units, groups of new Canadians, a group of girls in native costume, Scouts, Cubs and Beavers, Sarnia and Port Huron Salvation Army Corps, beautifully-decorated bicycles, and floats entered by Imperial Oil, Polymer Corporation, Mac-Craft, and Knights of Pythias.

Other reported comments included;

- *Whatever was lacking in the VE-Day celebration was more than made up by the enthusiasm and vim with which people entered into VJ-Day.*

- *Many people said they hadn't seen as good a celebration in this city since the Old Home Week in 1925.*

Members of the Canadian Legion bearing the colours of the Allies headed the parade, with a stream of

marching units and decorated floats and vehicles moving from the city hall to Athletic Park. Participants included the Sarnia Garrison Bugle Band; veterans of World War I and World War II; the Sarnia Garrison Band; cadet units; the Sea Cadet Band; groups of new Canadians such as the Chinese community (restaurant and café owners, chefs and laundry proprietors); First Nations in costume; Scouts, Cubs and Brownies; Sarnia and Port Huron Salvation Army Corps Bands; a group of beautifully-decorated bicycles; fire trucks and floats entered by among others, Imperial Oil, Polymer Corporation, Mac-Craft, Praill Florist Shop and the Knights of Pythias.

At the park, after a reviewing stand and salute by Lt-Col. Eric Harris and Major William Ewener, there was a short religious service, a welcome given by Mayor W.C. Hipple, and a poignant one minute of silence was held in memory of the men who would not return. Lt-Col. Harris followed with a short speech in which he reminisced on the service and parade held on the same spot in the spring of 1940 before the men of the Sarnia units left for England. Following this was another heartfelt one minute of silence in memory of the men who would not return. Hymns and the singing of the National Anthem closed the event. The celebrating continued throughout the day and into the night, with the streets just as crowded and noisy as they were the night before. Crowds of people, old and young, gathered beside City Hall to watch the program of entertainment arranged by the Celebration Committee that included singers, dancers and artists. Jack Kennedy's orchestra provided the dance music following the program, when the street was taken up with dancers and the dancing continued until midnight.

Sarnia pays tribute: On August 19, 1945, hundreds of Sarnians formed a parade in which they paid tribute to those who died in the two World Wars and offered prayers of thanksgiving for the newly-won peace. This date also commemorated the third anniversary of the costly Dieppe Raid of August 19, 1942. The parade moved away from the Sarnia Legion headquarters, proceeded up George Street to Christina Street to the cenotaph at Victoria Park. Taking part in the parade was the Lambton Garrison band; the Sea Cadet band from *R.S.S.C. Repulse*; members of the Canadian Legion, the Red Cross, and the Canadian Corps; city officials; and a delegation of Port Huron Legion members and other organizations. At the cenotaph, persons who had lost loved ones in both World Wars laid wreaths in their memory. The service consisted of hymns and prayers, conducted by Rev. G.G. Stone of St. Paul's Anglican Church, Point Edward who was assisted by Rabbi A. Roness of the Ahavas Isaac Synagogue. The service concluded with a minute of silence in memory of the fallen, with the "Last Post" and "Reveille" being sounded.

The dying continues: Similar to the First World War, the signing of surrender documents at the end of the Second World War did not mean the end of soldiers dying. At least ten young men from Sarnia, included in this Project, lost their lives after VE Day and VJ Day. This includes: Orval Evers, John Duncan and Robert Wilcox (all three in May 1945); William Metcalfe and Wilfred Knight (both June 1945); Cecil Dawdy (in July 1945); Wallace Lang and Howard McRae (both November 1945); and Allan McLellan and Edward Shea (both 1947). Many more of Sarnia-Lambton veterans had their lives shortened, and died as a result of their war experiences.

- **SARNIANS POST-WAR PLANS:** In late August 1945, the *Sarnia Observer* interviewed and printed the responses of many of Sarnia's former fliers, soldiers and sailors on their postwar plans. Service men did not expect any assistance from the government other than the gratuities to which they were entitled. Many of them planned to enter fields of small business, where they could be their own boss; for example, owning service stations, fish and chip shops, bake shops, furniture markets and transport services. Farm boys' opinions varied—from wanting to return to their parents' farms to asking their dads to break up the farms so that they could continue on their own. Some had decided not to return to the farms at all—either because they had taken educational courses overseas and now wanted to do something different, or because their injuries of war made them physically unable to do the heavy work of farming. Other servicemen wanted to return to the universities and schools that they had left to continue their educational training. Others wished to return to their former places of employment, though for some, they were physically unable to do so. Quite a few of the men interviewed admitted that they were still mentally in what they called "a muddle".

- **SARNIANS COME HOME:** In late October 1945, the men of the **26th Field Battery, R.C.A.**, returned home to Sarnia, five and a half years after leaving the city and having been through England, France, Belgium, Holland and Germany. Though many did not return and the personnel of the unit had changed again and again over that time, it was still Sarnia's Battery. When it was mobilized in September of 1939, the unit was composed almost entirely of Sarnia and Lambton County men. On its return, only three original members of the 26th Battery were still with the unit: BSM Peter Oleniuk, 355 South Russell Street; BSM Douglas Urie, Watford; and Sgt. Charles McEwen of Wyoming. Sixteen other Lambton County men returned with the unit, from Sarnia, Petrolia, Forest, Watford, Arkona, Sombra, Alvinston, Courtright and Thedford.

The train had been met earlier in the morning in Toronto by Captain James Doohan, an original member of the unit back in 1939. As the special train pulled into the Cromwell Street station on a sunny Saturday morning, they were greeted by a tremendous ovation from crowd gathered along the Ferry Hill approach. A guard of honour of almost 50 former members of the Battery, the Garrison Bugle Band and the bands of the Sea Cadets and Air Cadets met them. The unit marched up the slope to Cromwell Street and, through the cheering crowds that included many relatives and friends, made its way up Christina Street to the city hall where Mayor W.C. Hipple and members of the city council were present to extend the official welcome. Mayor Hipple in his brief word of welcome said, "Sarnia is proud of you, we can only hope you will be able to enjoy some of the comforts for which you have so valiantly fought." He also paid a tribute to the members of the Battery who were left behind, assuring their loved ones of the city's pride in them and their sympathy for those left to mourn. When the unit broke off for half an hour, the men were immediately surrounded by groups of relatives and friends. Following is an excerpt from the *Sarnia Observer* eye-witness report of the scene:

Many affecting scenes were witnessed as wives, mothers, and sweethearts greeted their loved ones. Gunner J.A. Good of Watford was greeted by his wife and three year-old son Bobby who found it hard to understand the new daddy who hugged him so closely. One of the few Sarnia men to return with the unit was Gunner Jack Devereaux, son of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Devereaux, 518 Confederation Street, who, in addition to his parents, was greeted by his wife and a small son Jimmy whom he had never seen. 'It's just great, it's wonderful' was all that he could say, in the midst of being hugged almost to death by his relatives.

The square was then cleared for the final fall in and the brief march up Christina Street to the armory for final pay and documentation.

Two weeks later, army public relations headquarters released a historical sketch of the 26th Field Battery. Formed at Sarnia on September 3, 1939, it was in Guelph until May 25, 1940, when it was amalgamated with the 53rd Battery of Cobourg, to enter the Fourth Field Regiment. It embarked for England on August 22, 1940. The unit supplied two NCOs and ten gunners for the Dieppe raid in 1942, but all were either taken prisoner or killed. The unit arrived in Normandy on July 6, 1944. The Battery was among those that saw action in several battles; for the Falaise Gap (at Caen); the campaign to open the port of Antwerp, on Beveland Peninsula; the battle of the Rhine, the liberation of Holland; and the conquest of northwest Germany. The Battery casualties were listed as totaling 40 killed in action and 200 wounded.

Mid-November 1945 also marked the homecoming celebration of the **11th Field Company** and the **First Field Park Company**, two Royal Canadian Engineer units that were mobilized in Sarnia and trained and fought together on the battlefields. Both units commenced their training at Bright's Grove until December 1939, when they were transferred to Wolseley Barracks in London. Assigned to the Second Canadian Division, both companies proceeded overseas in 1940—the 11th Field Company arriving in England in September and the Field Park Company in December. The Second Canadian Division was concentrated in the Aldershot area in southern England, where they continued training and were tasked with the responsibility of defence against any possible German invasion.

In the summer of 1942, detachments from the 11th Field and First Field Park were secretly transported to the Isle of Wight to commence training for the raid on Dieppe. Of the 65 men who went from the 11th Field Company, five were killed, 42 were captured and only 18 returned to England. Of the 24 men who went from the First Field Park Company, four were captured, and 20 returned to England. Following Dieppe, the units were reorganized and began another long period of training. One month after D-Day, the Second Division landed on the coast of Normandy. Then the busy days for the sappers began as the 11th and First Field Companies, combined with other units of the Second Division, pursued the German army along the French coast. The engineers cleared roads of mines and built bridges, often done while under fire. Somehow they kept up with the infantry. They continued to Antwerp and the Scheldt Campaign in Belgium, into northwest Germany and Holland. After VE-Day, the engineers were involved in reconstruction efforts in Germany and Holland.

In the third week of November 1945, the men of Sarnia's own 11th Field Company, R.C.E. returned home aboard a special train. As the train pulled slowly into Cromwell Street on a rainy afternoon, over one thousand cheering citizens greeted it. Of the 160 men who arrived, only six were from Sarnia and Lambton County—the rest were from points all across Canada, but that did not matter—Sarnia was welcoming the "Triumphant Eleventh", its *own* unit back home.

Children from the public schools were dismissed an hour-and-a-half early to enable them to attend, along with many high school students. The soldiers then marched from the station along Christina Street to the City Hall

Square, every inch of the route lined with a cheering, admiring throng. After a short welcome by Mayor W.C. Hipple, the soldiers were moved into the market building, where they were handed packets of cigarettes and chocolate bars from Canadian Legion representatives and Sarnia Red Cross members. Each man then cashed their \$100 cheque which had been handed them in England before leaving; passes were checked; warrants exchanged to tickets and train connection times were provided. From the market, they were directed to the armories where a banquet was awaiting them. In many cases, families of the men had travelled long distances to be in Sarnia to greet them. The wives, mothers and children were made just as welcome at the banquet. Hours later, the men were transported to the evening train to move on to their next destinations, which was to be followed by 30 days leave before their discharge. The *Sarnia Observer* headline of the event the next day read, "Tumultuous Accord As Triumphant 11th Field Reach Home".

Also during the third week of November 1945, at the Canadian National Railways station in Windsor, thousands and thousands of next-of-kin, loved ones, wives and well-wishing neighbours welcomed home the **Essex Scottish Regiment**. Many from Sarnia journeyed to Windsor to join in the mass celebration. A number of Sarnia and Lambton County men had enlisted with the unit when it first mobilized in September 1939, and more joined the regiment as replacements. After training at Camp Borden, the Essex Scottish proceeded overseas in July 1940. On August 19, 1942, the Essex Scottish Regiment landed on the machine-gun swept beaches of Dieppe where the unit suffered 98 percent casualties.

Local Sarnia soldiers with the Essex Scottish who arrived on the train in Windsor included R.J. Campbell, T.C. Cote, G.R. Goddall, W.L. Guzi, J.P. Harvey, L.I. Lowrie, M.A. MacIntosh, S.D. McClymont, B.C. Tripp, J.F. Woodcock, F.J. Bulman, and L.A. Nahmabin (Sarnia Reserve). Other local arriving soldiers were F. Butler and N.R. Stephenson (Arkona); D.G. Gordon and C.H. Jolly (Petrolia); O.S. Hayes (Point Edward); and J.B. McGill (Corunna). Waiting relatives were overjoyed when the troop train pulled into the station. They broke through the cordon line of city policemen, while many hundreds looked down from the roof-tops of buildings on Sandwich Street across from the C.N.R. station. Led by the Essex Scottish pipe band, the regiment marched up Ouellette Street to Windsor armories where documentation and leave passes were issued.

On **November 11, 1945**, for the first time, Sarnia's veterans of World War II, along with veterans of the Great War, took part in the Remembrance Day memorial service held at the cenotaph in Victoria Park. Before the service, the veterans, along with members of the Canadian Corps Association, the Canadian Legion, the Lambton Garrison Band and the Sarnia Sea Cadets Band marched from the armory along Christina Street to the cenotaph. Mayor Hipple; representatives of the Canadian Legion and its Ladies Auxiliary; the Canadian Corps; the 26th Battery; the Sarnia Jewish Community; the I.O.D.E. and several private individuals laid wreaths on the cenotaph in memory of Pte. Melvin K. Fisher, Lieut. Ernest Ottaway, Sapper Charles E. Berry, W.O. Leslie Sutherland and Sgt. John C. Clarke. Following the laying of the wreaths, the two minutes of silence, and the playing of the "Last Post" and "Reveille", the veterans then marched to special services at St. John's and St. George's Anglican churches.

News home after the war: As in the First World War, many families, including some in Sarnia, did not receive news of the fate of their loved ones until after the war ended. This was particularly true for those who served with the RCN and RCAF. For those lost at sea or who failed to return from an air mission, their bodies were never recovered. During the war, next of kin were only notified by telegram that their loved ones were "listed as missing in action". Post-war, grieving families prayed for a miracle—that they had been rescued, were POW's or had been protected by Allied resistance.

It was not until after the war, when investigators—including those from the Ministry of National Defence, Commonwealth War Graves Commission and the Missing Research and Enquiry Unit—discovered or could examine crash sites, exhume bodies, identify discovered remains, and determine the fates of many of the lost. Often it wasn't until many weeks or many months after the war ended that parents and young widows were notified by telegram that their loved ones were "now for official purposes presumed dead" or "officially declared killed in action."

Mothers, fathers, and young widows, their lives shattered after receiving the news, and cruelly after the war had ended, were left to wonder where and how their sons and husbands had died, and about their last agonizing moments in a faraway land. They were not given the opportunity to say good-bye to their loved ones or to give them a proper funeral. It was very common for those mothers, fathers and wives, until they themselves passed, to always hold out hope that their son or husband would someday return home and walk through their front door.

• **RETURNING HOME:** The **Department of Veterans Affairs** was created in 1944 to handle the matter of helping the large number of veterans who had to make the transition from fighting a war to becoming productive members of society. By March 1946, close to 600,000 women and men were discharged from the Canadian forces. They arrived in Canada, mainly docking at Halifax, and then travelled on by rail to cities and towns across the Dominion. Even after returning home, all of the overseas service personnel remained members of the armed services, but were given thirty days leave during which time their papers were processed. Final medical and dental examinations were provided, along with opportunities to receive counseling, though few decided to talk to the psychologists for fear it would delay their return to civilian life.

Upon their discharge from the military, veterans' support included: \$100 to buy civilian clothing; a war service gratuity of \$7.50 for each thirty days of service, plus an additional 25 cents for each day overseas, and one week's pay for each six months service outside Canada (each veteran received an average of \$488); spouses of those who had died in the service received pensions, set at 75% of what a disabled veteran would have received, and the children received additional benefits; and the children of Canadians killed in service received financial support to pursue higher education. War-service buttons and release certificates were part of the final transition, and the demobilized were allowed to retain their uniforms but were to hand in all weapons.^{D, 41}

The Canadian government was determined to be more generous to its returning veterans than had been the case after the First World War. **The Veterans Charter**, passed in 1944, was a collection of legislation and benefits that provided important assistance to the returning service personnel. It provided \$1.2 billion for the re-establishment of Canada's veterans. The *Reinstatement in Civilian Employment Act* guaranteed the returning men and women their old jobs back, plus any promotions they might have received. The federal civil service was instructed to hire veterans – first, those who had war-related disabilities; second, those who had served overseas; and third, the widows of killed service personnel. Though the women's wartime formations were disbanded (Army-CWAC, Air Force-RCAF-WD and Navy-WRCNS), some of those who served took advantage of the Charter—many used their wartime experience as a springboard to enter the job market; others benefited from access to veterans' education programs.

To help veterans buy land for their homes or businesses (including farms) the *Veterans' Land Act* provided grants and loans of up to \$4,500 for land, plus \$1,200 for equipment. The *Veterans Rehabilitation Act* provided opportunity for service personnel to attend university for free, or to receive vocational training. Low-interest loans were available under the *Veterans Business and Professional Loans Act* to start-up businesses and new farms. For those who had trouble finding work, the government provided financial assistance—initial benefits were \$13 a week for married veterans and \$9 for unmarried veterans. While some veterans slipped through the new social security net, and others, such as First Nations, were treated unequally, or, like the merchant sailors, even denied veterans status, there was a sense that Canadians were repaying some of the debt owed to those who had made the sacrifices and had defended the country.^{D, 41, 51}

As part of Canada's post-war reconstruction, the government established the **Family Allowance** program in 1945. Generally referred to as the "baby bonus," it was a monthly allowance to families with children to help cover the costs of child maintenance. It was Canada's first universal welfare program for it was paid to Canadian families with children regardless of income. Payments varied according to age, ranging from \$5 per month for children under age five, to \$8 for children age 13-15. The idea for the program came in the waning years of the war, with the hope it would help ward off a postwar economic slump. It meant that when Canadian soldiers came home, they would receive an average of \$5.94 per month for every child they added to the "Baby Boom". Over the years, Family Allowance has undergone restructuring and modifications, to what it is today, the Canada Child Tax Benefit, which targets low-and-middle income families.^{2N}

Treated unfairly: Two groups were treated unjustly by the Canadian government's Veterans Charter after the war: the merchant seamen, the "fourth arm" of Canada's fighting services; and the First Nations soldiers. The merchant seamen had delivered the vital troops, munitions, food and fuel around the world, and suffered proportionately higher casualties than any other Canadian military arm. An estimated 12,000 Canadian men and women served in the merchant navy during the Second World War. All volunteers, the mariners received a marginally higher pay rate than Navy sailors, but had little opportunity for advancement or decoration, and received no benefits or pensions after the war. Yet because the mariners were not in uniform or organized as a fighting arm, and because of a series of government and later veterans groups' decisions, the merchant mariners were not recognized as veterans. It was not until 1992 that merchant mariners were granted official veteran status, and began receiving disability pensions, allowances and health care.^{41, 5N}

Despite the fact that status Aboriginals were not Canadian citizens, did not have the right to vote, and they had been exempt from military service since the First World War, approximately 4,300 First Nations and Metis voluntarily served during the Second World War. After the war, the Veterans Charter that applied to all veterans, also applied to the First Nations soldiers who served—so they were entitled to receive all the same benefits as their white comrades. However, this would not be how it actually took place. A number of factors combined with the result being that, the majority of First Nation warriors were denied benefits, educational opportunities, employment, access to hospitals and rehabilitation services. These inhibiting factors included: unequal access to information and counselling (as most returned to bands and reserves that were isolated); administrative differences (three federal bureaucracies with overlapping jurisdictions—Veterans Affairs, Indian Affairs, and National Defence); bureaucratic errors (Indian Affairs, who controlled much of the resources and finances, sometimes actively dissuaded them from following up with Veterans Affairs); a large amount of disinformation (reliance upon their local Indian Agent for accurate details and advice on programmes); and underlying prejudice. It was not until 2002, after decades of persistence from aging veterans and a series of Royal Commissions and Senate studies, the government finally agreed to provide compensation and full veterans benefits to First Nation veterans.^{D, 3G, 4I, 5N, 6M}

Treating the Wounded: Of the 55,000 Canadians wounded in World War II, more than 29,000 were listed as seriously disabled from their wounds, and most required years of care, surgery, treatment, and rehabilitation. Men who were once happy-go-lucky youths with full futures, returned battered and broken, facing a dark path ahead. By 1946, the Department of Veterans Affairs was running more than thirty hospitals, many of them recently constructed, the largest being Sunnybrook in Toronto. Four facilities offered specialized treatment for paraplegics; new prosthetic limbs were manufactured and distributed; and veterans had skin peeled off and grafted onto other parts of their bodies in the hope of healing burn wounds.^{4I}

Closer to Sarnia was Westminster Veterans Hospital in London, Ontario. Built in 1918 as a psychopathic hospital, as a military hospital, it was used primarily to treat and rehabilitate veterans with psychological injuries and shell shock suffered during World War I. Soon the need for medical and surgical treatment for veterans was established. The hospital expanded during World War II to treat the injured and sick from nearby training camps. Following World War II the focus returned to long-term and acute care for veterans with disabilities.

More difficult to treat were those who bore the psychological wounds of war. The unending stress of combat, the never-ending fear of death, and the savagery of what they witnessed and experienced took a tremendous psychological toll on soldiers. A Canadian tank officer who fought through Italy, and like countless veterans, was haunted by the war, believed that, *“There isn’t anybody who was in real battle who came out unmarked.”*^{4I}

In the First World War, it was called “shell shock”, and in the Second World War, it was known as **“battle exhaustion,”** “war neurosis,” “combat fatigue,” and “combat stress reaction.” Any soldier in any unit, of any rank, from infantry soldier to bomber command to navy sailor, could be stricken with battle exhaustion. Soldiers too long under fire, watching comrades being killed in horrific fashion, facing constant dangers, and enduring abnormal living conditions with poor weather, lack of sleep and poor nutrition could effect even the bravest of the brave. As with post-WWI, doctors knew little of what is now known as **Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)**, so there were few treatment programs after the war for returned veterans who suffered from it. For these sufferers, they experienced distressing memories, nightmares, flashbacks, sleep disturbances, mood swings, depression, and anxiety.^{D, 6Z}

Closed fraternity: Though many wives and children caught a glimpse of the war that continued to rage in the minds of veterans, most ex-servicemen would not talk about the internal struggle. They came from a generation that was not given to sharing their emotions, and many, even if they were so inclined, could not find the words to capture the swirling stories and hurtful images. Many, if not most, Second World War veterans were reluctant to recount their wartime experiences, choosing instead to suppress the horror of it all as they built new postwar lives back home. Who could understand their experiences and the horrors they witnessed? What was there to say about the battles, the chaos and the carnage? A wartime historian for the 5th Canadian Armoured Division observed, *“The war has been fought on an island, suspended in the time and space, that had little relation to the life we left or to the one which we were now returning. That, after all, is true of any war. Those who have taken part belong to a fraternity that is forever closed.”*

Hundreds of thousands of veterans took solace by turning to one another. Most veterans stayed in touch with at least a handful of their former comrades by joining the Canadian Legion or other military service clubs that

marked the communities across the country. As the years marched on, reunions were arranged for units, ships, or squadrons. Here, aging veterans would come together to recount stories and honour those who passed. An aging RCAF veteran described his relationship with his wartime companions: *"We remain friends despite the passage of forty years and despite following widely differing careers and living in different countries... But when we do meet, the decades contract to weeks and it's as though we are still comrades in arms."*⁴¹

• **WAR BRIDES:** The long garrison years for Canadians in England, and occasional periods of leave spent in Britain had allowed relationships to flourish. Chance encounters, local social events and dances ensured that Canadian servicemen met the young women in nearby cities, towns and villages all over the United Kingdom. Inevitably, many fell in love. Although some war brides describe whirlwind romances, others had known their Canadian servicemen fiancés for one, two, even three years before deciding to marry. The Canadian army officially discouraged such marriages, but nevertheless accepted the inevitable and assisted the newlyweds. Another difficulty for some—the women's parents were opposed to the marriage: they foresaw that a marriage to a Canadian serviceman would result in loss and separation from their daughters as most war brides would emigrate to Canada. Despite it all, love found a way. Family and friends helped the young couples organize simple weddings and receptions during a time of blackouts, rationing and an uncertain future.

By the end of World War II, nearly 48,000 marriages between Canadian servicemen and European women who met during the war produced approximately 22,000 children. Most of these brides were from Britain (about 94%), but also from other areas of Europe such as the Netherlands, Belgium, France, Italy, Denmark and Germany. After the war, thousands of Canadians decided to make their life in Britain, but given the depressed state of the nation's economy, most opted to move their new families home to Canada. Between 1942 and 1948, 43,454 "war brides" and 20,997 children were transported to Canada. Some came to Canada during the war years, crossing the U-boat infested waters of the North Atlantic in troop ships.

The Canadian government established the Canadian Wives' Bureau (on Regent Street in London, England) whose job it was to assist the wives of Canadian servicemen and their children. The government provided the war brides with free sea and rail passage (one way) from their original homes to their destinations in Canada, as well as daily food allowances and free access to medical care on boats and trains. Most of the women and children travelled separately from their husbands, who were still in uniform, and so English, French, Belgian, and Dutch war brides set off for the terrifying leap into the unknown. Many war brides describe receiving just a few days notice before it was time to sail for Canada. There were often heart-wrenching scenes as young women said goodbye to their families.

Some war brides described their voyage to Canada as a great and wonderful adventure. They made friends, feasted on the plentiful supply of food onboard ship, and did what they could to help out those with small children. Others described themselves as homesick, heartsick and seasick. Travelling, sometimes during the winter or with the threat of enemy U-boat attack, with crying children, enduring seasickness, and dealing with the shock of leaving home often did not make the trip an easy one—even on a converted luxury liner. Volunteer Aid Detachments (VADs) like the Canadian Red Cross and the Salvation Army provided thousands of hours of assistance in transporting the war brides to Canada.

First docking in Halifax and passing through Pier 21, they were met there by Red Cross and Salvation Army volunteers, who offered the new Canadians a warm welcome and gifts of food and clothes for the children (from 1928 until 1971, Pier 21 was Canada's front door to over a million immigrants, wartime evacuees, refugees, troops, war brides and their children). Most of the brides and their children would then board special war-bride trains bound for various points across Canada. Some of these women found themselves in large cities with all the modern amenities, others ended up in rural cities and towns like Sarnia, while others traveled for seemingly endless days across the Dominion to the prairie wheat fields or to the west coast. For the most part, war brides were met with warm receptions from new family members and welcoming communities. Many of these young brides had a difficult transition to married life in Canada, due to isolation, language issues, climate, unfriendly in-laws, different foods and customs, inflated expectations, and discrimination. These brave young women followed their hearts, said goodbye to their families and made their new homes in cities and towns like Sarnia, raising their families, building and enriching the communities in postwar Canada.^{D, 2F, 2N, 30, 41, 6Z}

An estimated 200 British war brides moved to Sarnia between 1942 and 1947 with their Canadian military husbands. The group met regularly at the local YMCA, then located on Mitton Street, a way to forge friendships and help ease the homesickness and loss of family and friends left behind. Over the years, war bride groups across the

country held annual national gatherings. In 1987, Sarnia hosted a reunion attended by 325 war brides and their husbands at the Holiday Inn in Point Edward.^{10P}

One British “war bride” who returned to Sarnia was featured in a *Canadian (Sarnia) Observer* article. Mrs. **Mary Teresa Fisher** (nee O’Shea), of London, England, wife of Lance Corporal John Molyneux (Red) Fisher (see page 463), arrived in Sarnia in 1944. She had experienced almost five years of war, and as a registered nurse, had plenty of work to do. She experienced the Battle of Britain; was in the dance hall at the time Lieutenant John “Jack” Wright of Sarnia was killed (see page 1062); experienced the early days of the German bombing blitz and the unmanned V-1 and V-2 rocket attacks. In 1942, she met Canadian Army Lance Corporal John Fisher of Sarnia, and they were married in October of 1943 in All Saint’s Church, London, England. One year prior, in October of 1942, Lance Corporal John Fisher had been awarded the Military Medal for bravery in the field during the raid on Dieppe.

Mary Fisher arrived in Sarnia in mid-August of 1944. She described her trip over as very uneventful with calm sea all the way but, “I was seasick the whole time I was on shipboard.” She was one of a party of 200 women and children who arrived in Canada. Those sailing to Canada were given one week’s notice and were not allowed either to bid anyone good-bye or to write to their families. They crossed the Atlantic without convoy. Upon arriving in Sarnia, she was impressed by all the lights, since she had not seen a city illuminated at night in almost five years. She was very surprised to see the abundance and variety of fruit and vegetables at the Sarnia market, so she didn’t think the rationing in Canada was anything compared to that in England. She found most things here—for example, trains, stations, and cars—were made on a larger scale. The houses here, however, were smaller than those in England, and not as high, but the grounds around the houses were larger with more grass, but fewer flowers. She stated two things that she will have to get used to are, “sleeping in a bed (my usual sleeping place in London was under the kitchen table), and your Canadian heat waves.”

• **WORLD WAR II NUMBERS:** The Second World War killed at least 60 million combatants and civilians. While battles were fought on continents and oceans around the world, the majority of dead were civilians rather than soldiers. The Soviet Union bore the brunt of fighting against Germany and paid the price with an estimated 27 million dead (only 4.7 million of these were combatants). The Chinese had more than 15 million killed as Japanese soldiers, famine, and disease swept over their communities. Germany lost over 6.9 million dead, of whom 5.3 million were combatants. The Holocaust resulted in six million murdered Jews and others deemed “undesirable.” Poland lost more than 5 million dead, the majority being civilians. Japan lost over 2.5 million. Italy was left with some 455,000 dead, Britain lost over 449,000 killed, and the United States lost approximately 419,000. It is unknown how many combatants and civilians were wounded during the Second World War, but the number is more than 100 million.^{4I}

At the start of World War II, in September of 1939 alone, more than 58,000 Canadian men and women had volunteered to serve in the Canadian Forces. Canada was the first Commonwealth country to send troops to Britain in 1939. Over the course of the War, approximately 1.1 million Canadians and Newfoundlanders would serve. This included approximately 100,000 in the Royal Canadian Navy; 12,000 in the Merchant Navy; 250,000 in the Royal Canadian Air Force; and 730,000 in the Canadian Army. During 1939-45, more than 40% of the male population between the ages of 18 and 45—and virtually all of them volunteers—enlisted.^{D, E, 7P}

Sarnia’s population in 1939 was recorded as 18,240. An estimated 3,000 Sarnia men and women served in the Second World War. The *Sarnia War Remembrance Project* records the names of 185 Sarnia World War II fallen soldiers. Of the 185 fallen soldiers—49 of them have no known graves—over 26% (vs. 36% in WWI). The median age of Sarnia’s World War II fallen soldiers is 23 (vs. 26 in WWI). In World War II, almost 70% of Sarnia’s fallen were age 25 and under, including almost one third of them between the ages of 17 and 21.

In World War II, the deadliest year for Sarnia’s sons was 1944. During that year, 71 Sarnia sons lost their lives in battle. The three months of August, September and October 1944 were particularly calamitous with 35 Sarnia lost lives. This compares to the three months of the Hundred Days Campaign of World War I where 33 Sarnians were killed. World War II Sarnia lives lost by year include; 0 in 1939, 3 in 1940, 11 in 1941, 23 in 1942, 40 in 1943, 71 in 1944, 35 in 1945 and 2 in 1947.

In World War II, technological advances changed the methods by which war was fought. Close to 45% of Canada’s World War II fallen lost their lives while in service with the Royal Canadian Air Force or the Royal Air Force. For Sarnia, close to 49% of its World War II fallen served in the RCAF/RAF. Six out of every ten Canadian airmen belonged to Bomber Command. Almost two thirds of Sarnia’s fallen airmen belonged to Bomber Command. In the generation prior, of the Canadians who lost their lives in World War I, less than three percent died in service with the air forces.^{2B}

The exact number of Canadian war deaths remains uncertain due to the use of different methods of accounting and the variety of sources. The most commonly accepted number for Canadian World War II war deaths is 47,000. Of the approximate 47,000 fallen Canadians of World War II, the casualties by branch were:

Royal Canadian Navy 2,200 + Merchant Navy 1,600 (8%);

Royal Canadian Air Force 18,000 (38%);

Canadian Army 25,000 (53%).^{D, E, 2N, 3F}

Sarnia's World War II fallen by branch is:

Navy – 20/185 (11%), Air Force 91/185 (49%) and Army 74/185 (40%).

• **WAR GRAVES:** Canada did not repatriate its dead, except in the rarest of circumstances. Tens of thousands of young Canadians were left overseas, buried near to where they fell in combat, and often alongside their comrades in arms from throughout the Commonwealth. When the battle moved on, and at the end of the war, the bodies were disinterred from graves and gathered together in permanent Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) cemeteries. Established in May 1917, the CWGC ensures that 1.7 million people who died in the two World Wars will never be forgotten. Originally called the Imperial War Graves Commission, all its Commonwealth members presented a common view opposed to repatriation of war dead. It was committed to the equal treatment of all war dead, and that these cemeteries “in foreign lands would be the symbol for future generations of the common purpose, the common devotion, the common sacrifice of all ranks.” After the Second World War, just like after the First World War, nations where fighting took place once again offered land for war cemeteries. The Commonwealth War Graves Commission cares for cemeteries and memorials at 23,000 locations in 153 countries.^{C, 3G}

Note: More information on the CWGC is in the WWI section of this Project on page 200.

Note: Canada changed its policy against the repatriation of war dead in July 1970. Canadian Armed Forces personnel killed overseas after 1970 have been repatriated to Canada. Canada continues to respect the previous non-repatriation policy for the remains of service members killed on operations before 1970.^{3G}

In these war cemeteries in foreign lands, Canadians lie buried side by side regardless of rank, religion, or colour. Every headstone contains the national emblem (eg. the Maple Leaf) or regimental badge; soldier rank; name; unit; date of death; and age of each casualty. Inscribed below these are an appropriate religious symbol and a more personal dedication (epitaph) chosen by relatives.^{2B, 4I} All epitaphs of Sarnia's fallen are on page 1205.

Of Sarnia's 185 Second World War fallen included in this Project, 136 have graves, and they lie buried in 64 cemeteries scattered around the world, including in Algeria, Azores, Barbados, Belgium, Egypt, France, Germany, Iceland, India, Italy, Netherlands, Portugal, Sicily, Sri Lanka, the United Kingdom and Canada.

• **THOSE WITHOUT A GRAVE:** In World War II, many of the fallen, particularly members of the Royal Canadian Navy, the Merchant Navy and the Royal Canadian Air Force do not have graves. Lost at sea or in crashes, their bodies were never found or recovered; however, they are remembered with their names inscribed on war memorials. One of these many memorials has the poignant inscription, “TO WHOM THE FORTUNES OF WAR DENIED A KNOWN AND HONOURED GRAVE.” It was one more sad reality of war, a tragic nightmare that family members back home had to cope with.

Of Sarnia's 185 Second World War fallen included in this project, 49 have no known graves. Their names are inscribed on memorials located around the world, including the Runnymede Memorial in England, the Alamein Memorial in Egypt, the Malta Memorial in Malta, the Groesbeek Memorial in the Netherlands, the Sai Wan Memorial in Hong Kong, the Singapore War Memorial in Singapore, the Arlington National Memorial in Virginia, USA, and the Halifax Memorial and Ottawa Memorials in Canada.

• **CASUALTY IDENTIFICATION PROGRAM:** During and in the immediate aftermath of both World Wars, the Imperial War Graves Commission (now the Commonwealth War Graves Commission) and Canada's Grave Registration Units attempted to identify and provide Canadian soldiers with proper burials. During the World Wars and the Korean War, more than 27,000 members of Canada's Navy, Army and Air Force went missing in action and have no known grave. Although active searches for the remains of Commonwealth soldiers were suspended after 1921, Commonwealth countries continue to attempt to identify the remains of missing service members. The bodies of missing Canadian Armed Forces members continue to be found to this day, disgorged from swamps, dug up from farmer's fields, or discovered in heavily wooded areas.^{4I}

The remains of war dead, often found with military artifacts, are discovered during construction projects, road works, archaeological digs, and farming activity, especially near known battlefields. In Canada, the Department

of National Defence–Casualty Identification Program attempts to identify newly discovered remains of military personnel who went missing during active service. Since being established in 2007, the Casualty Identification Program has successfully identified 28 Canadian soldiers. Identified human remains are buried with a name, by their unit and in the presence of their family. The Program arranges for a proper military funeral and headstone.^{3G, 3M, 5W}

A number of disciplines help the casualty identification process, including history, archaeology, anthropology, laboratory sciences, forensic odontology, genealogy and DNA testing. Typically, the found bone remains are sent to a lab for forensic analysis, historians work on narrowing down service members who went missing in the area the remains were found, artifacts (eg. unit identifiers, personal effects) are used to close in on the soldier's identity, and a genealogist searches for viable DNA donors to match with the bones.^{3G}

Sarah Lockyer, PhD, a forensic anthropologist, took over as coordinator of the Casualty Identification Program in 2015. In a November 2017 interview at the CWGC about her work she said, "For me personally it's important because it returns their identity to them. They are no longer faceless, no longer nameless. For my military colleagues, it gives a sense that the military will always take care of you. No matter what."^{3M}

One case investigated by the Casualty Identification Program were the possible remains of Sarnia's Private Ralph Louis Ackerman (included in the WW I section of this Project on page 213). Since 2010, the remains of 19 missing Canadian First World War soldiers were found in the area of the town of Vendin-le-Vieil, France.^{5W} One set of these remains were found in the same area that Private Ackerman was killed. He was killed in action on August 15, 1917 on the first day of the Battle of Hill 70 in France. In May 2018, the Casualty Identification Program contacted this author seeking information for their work on creating a lineage that would lead to a viable DNA donor in order to test against Pte. Ackerman's DNA, thereby either discluding him from candidacy or positively identifying the remains as Pte. Ackerman.^{3c} Dr. Sarah Lockyer was the keynote speaker at the Flanders Fields Dinner at the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 62 in Sarnia in November 2018.

• **WAR MEMORIALS:** Many of Canada's fallen are solemnly commemorated overseas, but grieving families also needed memorials closer to home. Almost every town, village, and hamlet across Canada has a memorial for the Great War, but the question raised in 1945 and after was whether new memorials should be erected. After the Second World War, Canadians across the country wanted to somehow mark the new war, but there was little appetite for building thousands of new stone monoliths. Canadians embraced functional memorials that would enrich the living and provide contemplative spaces where they could reflect upon those who gave their lives in the war. Across the country, gardens, libraries, wooded areas, hockey arenas, even beaches were created to honour the Second World War fallen. There was some controversy and debate with these "new memorials," particularly from the Legion, who felt these spaces would fail to "inspire remembrance and reverence." Ultimately in most communities, the Legion's insistence that existing Great War memorials in towns, villages, and cities across the Dominion could be adapted to include those killed during the Second World War won out.^{4I}

The original Sarnia cenotaph was unveiled in November 1921 with the names of 60 World War I fallen on it. One year later, another 42 World War I fallen names were added. As soon as the Second World War ended, discussions began in Sarnia on creating some kind of memorial to commemorate the local fallen. Debate followed on the proposals that included: a general purpose auditorium (with facilities for hockey, sports, music, and exhibitions); a memorial recreational centre (composed of a park, playing field area and a recreational building); a war memorial library building (with a library, small auditorium, art gallery, local history room, and a small chapel); a memorial park (which would include a formal garden and cenotaph, and buildings suitable for cultural education); and a Lambton County museum and small chapel (which would be added to the Sarnia Public Library).

In November 11, 1955, more than ten years after the conclusion of World War II, the "new" renovated Sarnia cenotaph was re-dedicated. Bronze tablets from the original cenotaph, that listed the names of over 1000 Sarnians who served in the Great War, and 102 fallen, had been removed and placed on the outside west wall of the Canadian Legion on Front Street. The original grey marble monument had been enlarged by the addition of two new "wings", on which were inscribed the names of Sarnia's fallen soldiers from World War I, World War II and the Korea War.

In November 2019, the Sarnia Legion Branch 62 and Sarnia Historical Society completed a refurbishing of the Sarnia cenotaph. Based on the research in *The Sarnia War Remembrance Project*, 26 new names were added to the cenotaph, including 10 more from WWI and 10 more from WWII. Names inscribed on the Sarnia Cenotaph include 112 from WWI, 169 from WWII, 4 from Korea, 1 from In Service to Canada and 2 from Afghanistan. More information on the Sarnia cenotaph is in this Project on page 11.

Many of Canada's Second World War Air Force and Navy fallen are memorialized on one of two War Memorials. The **Runnymede Memorial** in Surrey, England commemorates by name over 20,000 men and women of the Air Forces of the British Commonwealth who were lost in the Second World War during operations from bases in the United Kingdom and North and Western Europe. The Runnymede Memorial is inscribed with the names of 3,050 Canadian airmen, including at least twenty-three airmen from Sarnia.

The **Halifax Memorial** in Point Pleasant Park, Halifax, Nova Scotia, dedicated in November 1967, is inscribed with the names of over 3,200 Canadian men and women of the Navy, Army, and Merchant Navy who lost their lives at sea. Part of the memorial dedicatory inscription reads: *Their graves are unknown but their memory shall endure*. The Halifax Memorial includes 274 casualties from World War I and 2,847 from World War II. At least sixteen of the names are from Sarnia—2 from World War I and 14 from World War II.



Runnymede Memorial



Halifax Memorial

The **National War Memorial** in Ottawa, *The Response*, was unveiled in May 1939, and is clearly a Great War memorial, with its multiple sculptured figures in period uniforms. After the Second World War and the Korean War, some felt there was a need for a new national memorial to commemorate the sacrifices of the fallen from those wars. Though there were initial plans in 1963 to erect a national shrine of remembrance in Ottawa, to be unveiled in 1967, they fell through due to lack of public support. It was not until 1982 that the dates of the Second World War and Korean War were added to the existing national memorial.^{D, 2N, 41}

• **LOST BUT NOT FORGOTTEN:** The Second World War fallen were memorialized in other ways too, including formal and informal naming programs across the country. The most prominent was an official federal program started in 1947 to designate geographical features such as mountains and lakes after fallen servicemen. Thousands of geographical places across the country carry the names of service personnel, as a way to honour their sacrifice.⁴¹ One example is Squadron Leader-Pilot Robert Wilfred Alexander (included in this Project), who was killed when his Dakota aircraft was shot down over Arnhem, Netherlands in September 1944. A bay and a Point in the Northwest Territories is named in his honour.

Sarnia Street Names: The City of Sarnia has several streets named to honour a few of the city's fallen soldiers including; Barclay Drive, Berger Road, Eddy Drive, Quinn Drive and Wheatley Drive. Eddy and Wheatley are World War I fallen soldiers; Barclay, Berger and Quinn are World War II fallen soldiers. The stories of all five of these fallen are included in this Project. Information on all of Sarnia's street names is available in the *Streets of Sarnia Project*, written by Tom St. Amand and Randy Evans, published in 2016.

Sarnia Memorial Plaques and Honour Rolls: After both the First and Second World Wars, many of the local churches and several institutions in Sarnia created memorial plaques and honour rolls to commemorate their members who served and those who made the ultimate sacrifice. A complete record of all Sarnia war-related memorial plaques and honour rolls, including Aamjiwnaang First Nations, churches of various dominations, two high schools and even the Canadian Bank of Commerce, are included in this Project beginning on page 1154. Following are descriptions of two of these local plaques;

Imperial Oil Company – Sarnia Refinery Plaque: In April 1949, the President of Imperial Oil Company unveiled a Memorial Plaque at the Sarnia refinery. The bronze Sarnia Refinery Plaque lists the names of twenty-four Imperial Oil employees who made the ultimate sacrifice in World War II. Of those twenty-four names, 21 of them are inscribed on the Sarnia cenotaph. More information on the Sarnia Refinery Plaque is on page 467 and 1164.

Sarnia Collegiate Remembers: The original Sarnia Collegiate was built in 1891 and was located on London Road, at the end of Brock Street. In October 1922, Sarnia Collegiate Institute and Technical School officially opened at its new location, at the end of College Avenue on Wellington Street. During the Second World War, many Sarnia Collegiate students and graduates served in that war, some making the ultimate sacrifice.

On June 6th, 1951, a war memorial plaque to honour the memory of former students of Sarnia Collegiate Institute and Technical School who were killed during World War II was unveiled at a public ceremony held in the school auditorium. Sarnia Mayor W.C. Nelson, military and educational dignitaries, and relatives and friends of the men being honored were among the guests present. As strains of the “Last Post” and “Reveille” re-echoed throughout the auditorium and flags were lowered, then raised by representatives of the three branches of the armed service, the plaque was unveiled by Robert Dobbins, the oldest soldier in seniority on the staff. The bronze plaque, two feet by three feet, had the names of 111 former pupils who made the supreme sacrifice in the Second World War.

Lieut.-Col. W. Eric Harris, former commanding officer of the 26th Field Battery, Royal Canadian Artillery spoke to those gathered, “We come here today on the seventh anniversary of D-Day to publicly testify and proclaim that the memory of those who died in war will remain forever green, fresh and lively in our hearts. Let us hope and pray that in spite of threats and fears of another war current in the world today, there will be still not another call to graduates of this school, a call that they already have met twice in a generation. They did not die in vain. Today we have a free world, united in the face of potential aggression, because of their sacrifice.”^N

Sarnia Collegiate Institute and Technical School and St. Clair Secondary School were amalgamated by the Lambton Kent District School Board in 2016 to create Great Lakes Secondary School. The “Sarnia Collegiate Institute War Memorial Plaque” was one of the historical artifacts that made the move in 2019 to the renovated Great Lakes school site on Murphy Road. It is prominently displayed in the main hall. The transcribed “Sarnia Collegiate Institute & Technical School War Memorial Plaque” is included in this Project on page 1169.

Extensions of *The Sarnia War Remembrance Project*: It took approximately eight years for this author to complete *The Sarnia War Remembrance Project*—a way to forever commemorate and remember the sacrifices of the local fallen, the veterans and their families. Over the course of his research, the author, along with other volunteers and contributors including Lou Giancarlo and Tom St. Amand, completed a number of local projects derived from the SWRP. These projects further honoured those who served in the Boer War, in both World Wars, in Korea, in Afghanistan and In Service to Canada. Information on some of these SWRP extensions are included in this Project: returning the “Big Tom” cannon to Veterans Park (page 9); Veterans Park storyboards (pages 5 and 19-20); the Catholic Soldiers Honour Roll in St. Patrick’s High School (page 1139); the addition of 26 new names to the Sarnia cenotaph in November 2019 (page 17); special “Sarnia Remembers” issues of the *Sarnia Journal* each November; and the secondary designation of a 4 kilometre section of Highway 40 as “Veterans Parkway” (page 1140).

• **REMEMBERING:** A Canadian veteran wrote the following in *The Legionary* in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, shedding light on the place of memory in veterans: “*One minute he wants above all to forget what he has been through, the pals he has lost and all the miseries of war. The next moment he knows that he can never forget. He won’t ever forget, and something within him cries out that the people here at home must be made aware of the ghastly, bloody price paid by the ‘few’ for the freedom of the ‘many.’*”

A Canadian Major who had served in with the Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry Highlanders during World War II, wrote the following in the early 1990’s, “*Our ranks are thinning fast. The veterans will never forget, but at times we worry whether our children are taught the price for freedom they take for granted.*”⁴¹

“St. Crispin’s Day speech”, From *Henry V*, spoken by King Henry

*That he which hath no stomach to this fight,
Let him depart; his passport shall be made...*

*From this day to the ending of the world,
But we in it shall be remember’d;
We few, we happy few, we band of brothers;
For he to-day that sheds his blood with me
Shall be my brother...*

*William Shakespeare
circa 1600*

BIOGRAPHIES OF SARNIA'S WORLD WAR II FALLEN SOLDIERS

AIKEN, Douglas Earl (#J/85822)

Douglas Earl Aiken's life and death reflect his commitment to his family at home and his bravery in fighting for freedom abroad. His story also highlights the anguish his mother felt for years after her son passed away.

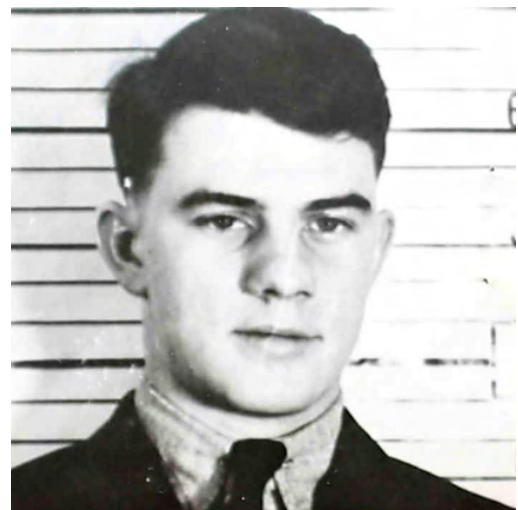
He was born in Sarnia on June 9, 1921, the son of Norman Russel and Loretta Mae (nee Hillier) Aiken, of 214 Proctor Street. His parents Norman and Loretta Aiken were both born in Sarnia Township and Douglas had one brother, Laverne Russell (born 1919), who would also serve in the war, a Lieutenant with the Royal Canadian Electrical and Mechanical Engineers (RCEME). Parents Norman and Loretta were married in February 1917 in Sarnia.

Norman Russel Aiken's job as a C.N.R. locomotive engineer in Sarnia cost him his life when he was killed in a train accident in April 1937. It was a difficult time for the family and for Douglas who was sixteen years old when he lost his father. His father saw him graduate from Johnston Memorial Public School (1927-1934, now Pauline McGibbon Public School) but not from Sarnia Collegiate (September 1934 to May 1940). Despite the family's tragedy, Douglas remained active in gymnastics, swimming, rugby, hockey, baseball and basketball.

To help support his mother "Retta", Douglas worked part-time as a paper carrier and wrapper for the *Canadian Observer* from 1937-1940 and part-time at Brown's Ice Company checking ice and caring for the books in 1939. Not one to shy away from work, Douglas also worked at the Sarnia Bridge Company, as a fitter and welders helper from July through October 1940.

Douglas Aiken also served in the Cadet Corps for five years. He had attempted to enlist in the RCAF in early November 1939, but was turned away because he was too young. On October 12, 1940, the same year he graduated from high school, Douglas Aiken, 19, successfully enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force in London, Ontario. One of Douglas' reference letters was from R.J. Knowles, Circulation Manager at the *Canadian (Sarnia) Observer*. In the letter, Mr. Knowles wrote of Douglas: *This is to give Douglas Aiken an unqualified recommendation. For three years previous to last January, he was a carrier salesman for the newspaper under the writer's personal supervision. In that time he performed all duties to our entire satisfaction. He displayed qualities of promptness, financial responsibility and shown a willingness to snap into any job assigned him. He is a hustler. Douglas Aiken is a fine type of young man.*

Douglas stood five foot seven inches tall, had blue eyes and brown hair, and was single. Although he had been residing with his mother before he enlisted, Douglas was now on the move: first to No. 1 Manning Pool, Toronto and then to Dunnville, Ontario where he began his air training at #6 Service Flying Training School (SFTS). The teenaged Aiken impressed at #6 SFTS. When the course ended, his Commanding Officer would write a report assessing Douglas as being, *Very conscientious and hard working. Has shown marked ability in all jobs he has handled... Highest possible recommendation and am sure will succeed in anything he undertakes... Recommended for Pilot.*



Pilot Officer Douglas Earl Aiken

Douglas would continue his training at #1 Initial Training School (ITS) in Toronto, #7 Elementary Flying Training School (EFTS) in Windsor and #9 SFTS in Centralia, Ontario. It was at Centralia on April 6, 1943, that Aiken was awarded his Pilot's Flying Badge. After spending a two-week furlough in Sarnia with his mother and friends, Douglas would return to duty in Halifax by late April 1943.

A few weeks later, on May 16, Aiken would embark overseas from Halifax for the United Kingdom, disembarking on May 24. He soon discovered that his training was not over. Initially posted to #3 Personnel Reception Centre (PRC), he would continue his training at #15 (Pilots) Advanced Flying Unit (AFU), and #18 (P) AFU, #82 Operational Training Unit (OTU), and 1657 Conversion Unit (CU). The Chief Instructor at No. 5 Lancaster Finishing School wrote of Pilot Douglas Aiken, *Slightly above average Pilot and Captain. Good crew. Drills O.K. Sound type of N.C.O. Will do well with experience.* During all his training, Douglas had flown many different types of aircraft: Anson, Moth, Oxford, Wellington, Stirling and Lancaster.

In March 1944, Douglas Aiken would become a member of RAF #44 Rhodesia Squadron "Fulmina Regis Iusta" (The King's Thunderbolts are Righteous), part of **Bomber Command**.

Loretta Aiken in Sarnia would receive the news that her son, Douglas Aiken, had been promoted to the rank of Pilot Officer-Pilot early in the month of June 1944. He had written to his mother the week before, mentioning that he had been engaged in missions over enemy-held territory in Europe.

During the course of the war, one of this country's most significant contributions was the approximately 50,000 Canadians who served with the RCAF and RAF in Bomber Command operations. Next to Britain, Canada was the largest contributor to Bomber Command, making up more than a third of all of Bomber Command personnel. The men who served in Bomber Command faced some of the most difficult odds of anyone fighting in the war.

At the outbreak of the war, #44 squadron was part of RAF No. 5 Group bomber unit, equipped with Handley Page Hampden aircraft. In 1941 the squadron was renamed No. 44 Rhodesia Squadron in honour of that colony's contribution to Britain's war effort. In December 1941, it became the first squadron receive the Avro Lancaster. The squadron spent the rest of the war as part of Bomber Command's main bombing force. It was based at RAF Waddington until May 1943, then relocated to RAF Dunholme Lodge and later to RAF Spilsby.

The **Battle of Normandy** would begin for the Canadians with the June 6, 1944 D-Day landings at Juno Beach. After breaching the "Atlantic Wall" of "Fortress Europe", Allied armies began their break out from the narrow Normandy bridgehead to carve out a foothold on the French mainland. It would take a whole summer of tenacious fighting, pushing against fierce and ruthless German forces to advance east across France. In a brutal campaign of attrition, the Canadian army, supported by the navy and air force, faced fierce battles and vicious counterattacks as they clawed their way forward liberating villages and towns.

On June 25, 1944, approximately one year after he arrived overseas, the Lancaster aircraft ND751 (markings KM-J) that Douglas Aiken was piloting on a bombing mission in France was lost during operations in the Battle of Normandy. A total of 730 aircraft had set off at 22:30 hrs. on June 24 to bomb various locations. No. 44 Squadron had embarked from RAF Dunholme Lodge to bomb its target: Pommereval V-1 site in France. Despite it being nearly midnight, the operation was carried out on a clear moonlit night. The consequences were fatal. With the help of effective searchlight units, German night fighters destroyed many aircraft. Twenty-two Lancasters were lost, including Lancaster ND751 piloted by Douglas Aiken that crashed at Criquetot-sur-Longueville. It was Aiken's 18th and final operational sortie.

In late June 1944, Loretta Aiken would receive a telegram in Sarnia from the R.C.A.F. Casualty Officer in Ottawa informing her that her son, PILOT OFFICER DOUGLAS AIKEN WAS REPORTED MISSING IN ACTION AFTER AIR OPERATIONS OVERSEAS ON JUNE 25. The missive provided no other specific details, but stated that further details would be forwarded when available.

In April 1945, Retta Aiken would write a letter to the Secretary, Department of National Defence for Air in Ottawa in response to a request from them. The letter, in part, reads as follows:
Dear Sir:

In conjunction with your recent request relevant to information concerning my son P/O Douglas Earl Aiken, it is with the deepest regret that I must inform you that no further news of him has been received...

A year passed after she had received the initial telegram and a frustrated and worried Loretta Aiken wrote the following letter to Lady Ellissen in England. The Sarnia mother was desperately looking for news about her son,

Douglas. The letter, sent in early June 1945, in part, reads as follows:

Dear Madam,

My son, P/O Douglas Earl Aiken, J85822, R.A.F. has been missing since June 24-25/44. I have never received any word whatever of him and in this length of time he hasn't been presumed dead. Could you possibly tell me something about him. I am so anxious and worried about him now that the war in Europe is over.

Would you please tell me about the mission he was on and what you think could possibly happen to him. I would be so grateful and it would relieve my mind so much if you could tell me all. Also could you do anything about having his personal belongings sent home, also any moneys.

It was not until late June 1945 that Loretta Aiken received the dreaded telegram from Ottawa about her missing son, informing her that, PILOT OFFICER DOUGLAS E. AIKEN IS NOW FOR OFFICIAL PURPOSES PRESUMED TO HAVE BEEN KILLED IN ACTION JUNE 25 1944. Douglas Aiken would later be officially recorded as, *Previously reported "missing" after air operations, now for official purpose, "presumed dead," overseas (France)*. Perishing with Douglas Aiken were WO. Robert Alexander Riddoch; P/O Alfred Montigue Simmons, Sgt. John Hare (RAF), Sgt. Horace Arnold Lewarne (RAF), and John Lewis (RAF); and FS. Frank Sidney Rawson (RAF). In June 1946, Douglas' mother Loretta Aiken would receive a War Service Gratuity of \$562.82 for the loss of her son.

In October 1946, the R.A.F. Missing Research and Enquiry Unit released a report to the Air Ministry in London, England, detailing their findings about Lancaster ND751. After visiting and investigating the area around the scene of the crash in Criquetot-Sur-Longueville, they compiled a report. It reads in part as follows:

... I visited M. ARSON, a witness named in the Gendarmerie Report, and obtained the following information: Six burnt bodies were removed from the crash by the Germans. A seventh body, fairly intact, was found in a field some distance away, and before it was removed, the French obtained the name SHEPHERD from the man's clothing.... The bodies were buried in the local cemetery, the intact one in a coffin by itself and the other six in three further coffins, two in each coffin.

... I visited the cemetery and found four graves fairly well kept with four wooden crosses, the inscriptions on which had been obliterated by the weather.

... To sum up, it would appear that the seven airmen interred at Criquetot are in fact the crew of the Lancaster that this enquiry concerns. It is possible that the name SHEPHERD may have been obtained from a piece of borrowed clothing worn by the victim... The only means of obtaining further information seems to be by exhumation.

In January 1947, the RAF exhumed the four graves at Criquetot-Sur-Longueville Communal Cemetery. In Grave No. 2, they determined that there were "definitely two bodies in the coffin, one at head and one at foot" and "both were badly burnt and decomposed." There were also a few scraps of clothing, flying suit and parachute harness inside. After exhuming the four graves, the R.A.F. No. 1 Missing Research and Enquiry Unit (MREU) released their findings to the Air Ministry in London, England. A portion of the Wing Commander's report is as follows:

... Grave No. 2 – This grave contained two bodies. Number one had a CANADA flash and Sgt stripes. It was impossible to see whether there had been a crown above the stripes, as the sleeve was badly burned. There was also a shirt of greenish hue, which I have since confirmed, is supplied to airmen of the R.C.A.F. From these facts, it seems probable that the body is that of J.89960 P/O. SIMMONS, A.M. (R.C.A.F.), who was at the time of the crash R.151533 F/S/ SIMMONS, A.M. In addition, he was the only Canadian in the crew who would have been wearing Sgt. stripes.

The second body is probably that of J.85822 P/O AIKEN, D.E., for, as will be seen after reading the summaries of GRAVES 3 and 4, he is the only one of the crew left unaccounted for.

... To sum up, all the members of the crew have now been accounted for. Their graves have also been identified, though on calculation, rather than positive facts...

Her son had been declared dead nearly four years ago, but in her Proctor Street home, Loretta Aiken was still searching for answers about her son's final resting place. Following is a portion of a letter she wrote to the Air Ministry in February 1948:

Dear Sir,

March 3 – 1947 I rec'd a letter from you stating that you had found my Son's grave at Criquetot Communal Cemetery, Seine, Inferieure, France, and exhumation would be carried out in an endeavor to effect individual identification. You haven't let me know yet whether you have done so and I would like to have his identification discs.

It is nearly a year and I feel I should have some proof that he is buried there by now. I would also like to know if the Gov't would return his body to Canada to be buried in our family plot. I cannot afford to do that myself. Please give me this information as soon as possible.

The Wing Commander, for Chief of the Air Staff in Ottawa responded to Douglas' mother in April 1948:
Dear Mrs. Aiken,

... The results of the exhumations carried out in Criquetot-Sur-Longueville Communal Cemetery have just been received. Grave 1 was found to contain Sergeant Lewis; your son and Pilot Officer Simmons were in Grave 2, Flight Sergeant Rawson and Warrant Officer Riddoch were in Grave 3, and Sergeant Lewarne and Sergeant Hare were in Grave 4.... I regret that your son's identification discs were not recovered. The above identifications were reached through the tracing of laundry marks, and regimental numbers on clothing, supplemented by rank and aircrew trade badges, and physical descriptions.... Following the cessation of hostilities with the German Reich, the Imperial War Graves Commission, which is comprised of representatives of all parts of the British Empire, seriously considered the possibility of returning the remains of deceased personnel who died while serving Overseas to their respective countries for re-internment. After careful and sympathetic consideration, it was unanimously agreed by the concerned that the remains of personnel who died while serving overseas should not be returned to their respective countries for burial either at the expense of the Government concerned or of the next-of-kin. Among the reasons for this decision was the fact that to allow the removal of a few individuals would be contrary to the principle of equality of treatment. The reverent and perpetual care of the burial places of all who served in the Royal Canadian Air Force is the task of the Imperial War Graves Commission (of which Canada is a member). The Commission will also erect a headstone at the grave. Unhappily, there are great numbers of these headstones to be erected, and it will quite naturally take considerable time. May I again offer you and the members of your family my deepest sympathy in the loss of your gallant son.

Twenty-three-year-old Douglas Aiken is buried in Criquetot-Sur-Longueville Churchyard, France British Plot, Joint grave 2. On his headstone are inscribed the words, REST IN PEACE.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, J, L, M, N, 2C, 2D, 2O, 3J, 6O, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10B, 10D, 10U, 10V

ALEXANDER, Robert Wilfred (#J/2833)

Robert Alexander's story defines the sacrifices that his young family and he made. The highly decorated pilot was admired for his aviation skills and was very popular with the members of his squadron.

He was born in Norwich, Ontario on August 20, 1920, the eldest son of Wilfred (a farmer, born in Langton, Ontario) and Isabel Johnstone (nee Hagan, born in Belfast, Ireland) Alexander. Parents Wilfred and Isabel Alexander were married on November 10, 1919 in Belfast, Ireland. When Robert enlisted, his parents were residing in Norwich, Ontario where father Wilfred was a farmer. Robert had two brothers, James William and Howard John, and one sister, Catherine May. Catherine would marry, becoming Catherine Daiken, and she would serve with the Y.M.C.A. Services overseas in England during the war.

Robert's education provided him with opportunities that would change his life. He attended Norwich Public School, 1926-1931 and Norwich High School, 1931-1937. While in school, he was active in rugby (WOSSA), hockey, basketball (Intercounty League), swimming and hunting. His activities weren't restricted only to athletics. During this time, Robert was a member of the Cadet Team and a member of the Dominion of Canada Rifle Association (DCRA) for three years. He also competed in the small-bore rifle competitions at Ottawa for three years and was an Officer in the High School Cadet Corps.

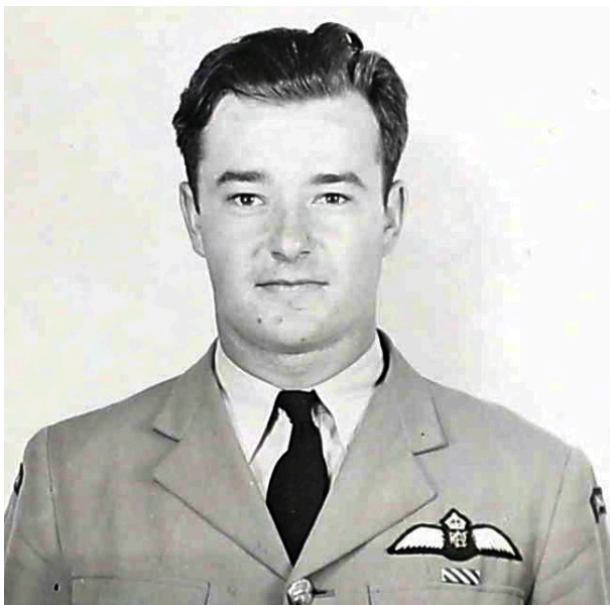
After completing high school, Robert attended London Normal School in 1937-1938, graduating as an elementary teacher. He attended University of Western Ontario summer school in 1939, taking courses in mathematics and geology. Prior to enlisting, Robert was as a public elementary school teacher from 1938 to 1940 at S.S. #14 Burford, New Durham, Ontario.

At age 19 and still single, Robert Alexander enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force in London, Ontario on October 21, 1939. He stood five feet eight inches tall, had brown eyes and dark brown hair and requesting flying duties at the time, he was accepted and sent home to await further notice. He was soon a member of the first classes in the Commonwealth Air Training Plan, reporting for duty on April 12, 1940. The Recruiting Officer would record of Robert, *A bright, intelligent, deliberate thinker type. Quite self reliant and efficient. Has had a little flying experience. Should be good material.* Robert would begin his air training at #1 Air Observers School (AOS) in Malton; continuing with Armament Training at #1 Bombing and Gunnery School (BGS) in Jarvis; and #1 Advanced

Air Observers Training in Trenton, Manitoba. He would be awarded his Air Observer's Badge and commission at Trenton on October 24, 1940.

In November 1940, Robert was transferred from Trenton to Rockcliffe, England with the RAF Trainees Pool, and went on active operational duty in Europe. Alexander was soon in the thick of fighting and distinguished himself. In March of 1941, he was stationed with Middle East Command in Egypt, and made more than 50 sorties from North African bases. In April of 1942, he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC) for heroic service in the Middle East. He was at the time with the R.A.F. Headquarters Staff in the Middle East and served there until he was posted home. In late August 1942, he would begin a three-and-a-half month Specialist "Navigator" course at #31 Air Navigation School (ANS) in Port Albert, Ontario.

His posting in Canada precipitated another change in Robert Alexander's life. On September 19, 1942, Robert married Milfred Florence Armstrong, the only daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Wellington Armstrong of Alvinston, Brooke Township. At the wedding ceremony in Alvinston, Muriel Craven, cousin of the bride, served as bridesmaid, and James Alexander, brother of the groom, served as the best man. After a brief wedding trip, the couple moved to Goderich. Robert and Mildred Alexander would have one child, born September 13, 1943, a son, James Robert, and the family resided in Alvinston, their address listed as R.R. #4, Norwich.



Squadron Leader-Pilot Robert Wilfred Alexander



Robert Alexander with his wife Milfred Florence

Married only four months, Robert answered the demands of the war and was on the move. Upon completing his air navigation course, in January 1943 he continued his training at #12 Elementary Flight Training School (EFTS) in Goderich and then #5 Service Flying Training School (SFTS) in Brantford, Ontario. The Squadron Leader at #12 EFTS wrote of Robert, *This student is an exceptional student in all his general flying... Airmanship and Airsense exceptional.* The Chief Instructor at #5 SFTS wrote of Robert, *Experienced, capable and conscientious. This officer has proved himself above average in all stages of his training.* He was then posted to the **R.A.F. Transport Command** at Dorval, Quebec where he was awarded his Pilot's Flying Badge on July 9, 1943.

Six months later Robert made one of the most fateful decisions of his young life. Now 24, he had been married for a mere year and a half and his son, James Alexander was only four months old. In December 1943, Robert completed his last Will and Testament in North Bay. In it, he bequeathed all of his real and personal estate "unto my beloved wife, Mildred Florence Alexander, absolutely forever." On January 28, 1944 Robert returned overseas for another tour of operations, flying in a Dakota from Dorval to the United Kingdom. He would never see Milfred and James again.

He was posted to #512 Transport Squadron until September 14, 1944 where he became a member of RCAF #437 (Transport) Husky Squadron "Omnia Passim" (Anything, Anywhere) with the rank of Squadron Leader-Pilot. He would be promoted to Squadron Leader only one week before his death.

No. 437 Squadron was formed in September 1944 at RAF Blakehill Farm, Wiltshire as a general transport

squadron, equipped with Douglas Dakota—a twin-engine military transport aircraft. It then had the distinction of being the only RCAF squadron in **Transport Command**. The squadron flew on towing and transportation operations in Great Britain, Norway, Belgium and Germany.

In early September 1944, Allied forces had captured the inland port of Antwerp, Belgium, the second greatest port in Europe at the mouth of the Scheldt River. However, German forces still controlled the 45-mile-long Scheldt estuary (the Belgian-Dutch border area) that connected the port of Antwerp to the North Sea. The Allied objective of *Operation Market Garden*, September 17-25, was to capture the eight bridges that spanned the network of canals and rivers on the Dutch/German border. The plan consisted of two operations: “Market” – airborne forces tasked with seizing bridges and other terrain, and “Garden” – British ground forces tasked with moving northward. After a week-long battle, the operation failed at a bridge over the Rhine River at Arnhem, ‘**a bridge too far**’, and resulted in 1,400+ Allied soldiers killed and more than 6,000 were taken prisoner. It was during this operation that Robert Alexander would lose his life. After the failed *Operation Market Garden*, it would be the First Canadian Army who were entrusted with liberating the estuary and capturing the much-needed port—the **Battle of the Scheldt** (October 1-November 8, 1944) would be among the most difficult and grueling struggles in the war.

RCAF #437 Squadron at first consisted of just fifteen Dakotas, and twelve of these were deployed during the “first lift” of Operation Market Garden on September 17. Each Dakota carried paratroops and towed a Horsa glider. One of the Dakotas had to abort the mission, but otherwise, the others released their loads and returned safely to base. A further four glider towing sorties were completed over the following days, thereafter the Squadron participated in resupply operations to the troops at Arnhem. On September 21, during the “fifth lift”, the air forces suffered their cruelest losses, due to intense anti-aircraft fire and a large number of Luftwaffe aircraft that caused havoc amongst the unescorted, slow and unarmed transports.

On the September 21 “fifth lift” of Operation Market Garden, sixty-four Stirling aircraft and fifty-three Dakotas would be responsible for delivering desperately needed supplies at Oosterbeek. They would fly over two hours in four well-separated waves. The weather that day was very poor with low cloud and haze, which would have a detrimental effect on the fighter escort aircraft (Spitfires, Mosquito’s and Mustangs). The first two waves were well protected, but the last two made their approach without any fighter protection at all, and added to this, the flak defences were very strong.

RCAF #437 Squadron had ten of its Dakotas in the air on that day. Robert Alexander was in one of them, part of a five-man crew aboard Dakota III aircraft KG387 that left its base at RAF Station Clifton, York at 1314 hours. The aircraft was one of 117 engaged on a risky pannier dropping mission to resupply airborne forces (paratroopers) north-west of Arnhem. A heavy volume of the German’s light calibre anti-aircraft fire and small arms fire in the vicinity of the dropping zone crippled Allied planes. Enemy fighters were also attacking along the route home from Arnhem to Eindhoven.

Between 16:30 and 17:00 hours, after dropping supplies at Arnhem and climbing to 7,000 feet above the haze that persisted in the area, enemy flak shot down Alexander’s aircraft. Robert Alexander maintained control of the aircraft long enough for two of his crew to bail out. Following is a portion of an account of the events from Alan Cooper’s “Air Battle for Arnhem”:

Flight Officer John Rechenuc, who was in the Astro Dome, was told by the pilot (Alexander) to go to the rear to see if there had been any damage, he reported back that there was no damage. He then went to his radio seat to record what he had done, then they were hit and Bob Alexander was wounded with his head and arm bleeding badly, he slumped over the controls and did not move again. The starboard controls were shot away and the engine ran away at a very high pitch. Then came a second hit, this time the navigator Flight Officer William McLintock, and the second pilot were hit and wounded, and Flight Sergeant Andrew McHugh, on hearing the metal striking, stood up, but as he did a bullet lodged in his back and he fell face downwards in the aisle. Then there came a succession of about seven bursts and the aircraft was on fire from stem to stern. Rechenuc then went over to McHugh to see how badly he was hit, McHugh stood up and gave the order to bail out... they put on their chutes and made their way to the back of the aircraft... (where) Lieutenant Corporal Jones was putting on his chute. By this time the tail of the aircraft was a mass of flames, John Rechenuc bailed out and McHugh pushed the air despatcher out. The Dakota did a half circle to the left and disappeared behind a clump of trees in a dive, all that could be seen after that was a great big puff of black smoke from where the aircraft disappeared...

RCAF #437 Squadron lost six out of the ten Dakotas that day. Both Robert Alexander and Flying Officer

W.S. McIntock went down with the aircraft and were killed on a farm near Son, Netherlands. Flying Officer J. Rechenuc and Flight Sergeant A. McHugh descended by parachute and returned safely to the United Kingdom. Interviewed on his return, F/S A. McHugh was unable to provide any definite details as to the location of the crash. McHugh came down in a canal and came to when American soldiers were lifting him out of the water. The soldiers had watched him and his burning aircraft come down, about 13 to 18 miles from Arnhem in the S.S.W. direction. The soldiers took him in a jeep to the dressing station in Kindenganden, Holland. F/O J. Rechenue, who succeeded in bailing out, stated that Squadron Leader Alexander and F/O McIntock, were unable to bail out. Squadron Leader Alexander's identity card was reportedly found by a civilian, but no other information was found.

Approximately one week after the crash, Milfred received a telegram in Alvington informing her that her husband, SQUADRON LEADER ROBERT ALEXANDER, R.C.A.F. IS MISSING IN ACTION OVERSEAS. A few days later in September, she received a letter from the Royal Air Force, Blakehill Farm, Swindon, Wilts. The letter in part read as follows:

Dear Mrs. Alexander,

... It is with deep regret that I write to you this date to convey to you and to Bob's family the feelings of my entire Squadron. Although Bob has only been in this Squadron for a short while I have known him for well over a year and I miss him greatly. In confidence Mrs. Alexander I should like to tell you as much as I know the circumstances surrounding the flight. Bob was detailed to take off at approximately 13.30 hours on the 21st of this month to carry out a resupply mission on some of our troops who were cut off by the enemy. There was a considerable amount of flak and fighter opposition and after Bob's machine was hit two of his crew jumped by parachute and landed safely behind our lines, it is not known however whether Bob jumped out or attempted to land his aircraft somewhere. At the present however no word has been heard from him. All we can do is hope and pray that he is safe somewhere.

We lost one of our best crews when this aircraft did not return. There had been a great future mapped out for Bob in this Squadron. He had done a great number of trips over enemy territory and had always shown himself as a fearless pilot and a great leader of men. Bob was extremely popular with the boys in this Squadron, of which a great number had been with him for a number of years.

There is always the possibility that Bob may be a prisoner of war, in which case you will either hear from him direct or through the Air Ministry, who will receive advice from the International Red Cross. Your husband's effects have been gathered together and forwarded to the Royal Air Force Central Depository, where they will be held until better news is received, or in any event for a period of at least six months before being forwarded to you through the Administration of Estates, Ottawa.

May I now express the great sympathy which all of us feel with you in your great anxiety, and I should like also to assure you how greatly we and his comrades in the Royal Air Force honour and admire the heroic sacrifice your husband has made so far from his home. The operation in which Bob participated that day will go down in the annals of Royal Canadian Air Force History as one of the epic air operations of the war. If there is anything further that I may do for you please do not hesitate to write and if I receive any further news I will communicate with you...



Squadron Leader-Pilot Robert Wilfred Alexander

In September 1945, R.A.F. Missing Research and Enquiry Unit in Holland released a report to the Air Ministry in London, England, detailing their findings about the missing members of Dakota KG387. After visiting and investigating the alleged area of the crash, they compiled a report. It reads in part as follows:

The police sergeant at SON was visited and states that he saw a four engine aircraft come down in the vicinity after an attack by enemy fighters on or about 22/23rd September, 1944. Six of the crew are buried in the local American Cemetery. The parachute of one of the crew who jumped, failed to open. The police sergeant is almost certain that no Dakota crashed at Son. I also confirmed that there was no trace of either of these Officers in the American Cemetery or at the U.S. Graves Registry in Son.

Robert Alexander was later officially recorded as, *Previously reported missing after air operations, now presumed dead, overseas (Holland)*. Robert left behind in Alvinston his wife Milfred and their one-year old son James. Twenty-four-year-old Robert Alexander is buried in Bergen-op-zoom Canadian War Cemetery, Netherlands, Grave 24 C.1-3. On his headstone are inscribed the words, OLDEST SON OF WILFRED & ISOBEL, NORWICH, CANADA HUSBAND OF MILDRED F. FATHER OF JAMES ROBERT. He also has a memorial headstone at Norwich Village Cemetery.

For his service and bravery, Robert was awarded the following citations: 1939-45 Star; Africa Star; France and Germany Star; General Service Medal; Canadian Volunteer Service Medal and Clasp; Air Observer Badge earned on October 24, 1940; Pilots Flying Badge earned on January 9, 1943; and Operational Wings awarded posthumously on January 28, 1947. Alexander Bay and Alexander Point, in the Northwest Territories were named after Robert Alexander.

SOURCES: C, D, E, F, L, M, N, 2C, 2D, 3J, 6O, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10A

ANDERSON, William John (#V/19542)

William ("Bill") Anderson served aboard one of the sturdy little "work horses" of the Royal Canadian Navy, one of Canada's busiest ships in the Battle of the Atlantic. Tragically, he lost his life off the east coast of Canada six months before the war ended to what British Prime Minister Winston Churchill said was "... the only thing that ever really frightened me during the war..."

He was born in Sarnia on May 20, 1921, the youngest son of Edward James and Mary R. Anderson of 111 Alfred Street, Sarnia. His parents were married in Sarnia on May 29, 1910 and in the next decade would have five children. One of their children, Kenneth Anderson, passed away in June 1914 at the age of 5 months. Surviving William after the war were his two brothers--Stanley C., serving as a patrolman in the R.C.N.V.R. in Halifax, and Edwin J., in St. Thomas, Ontario—as well as and sisters, Mrs. Margaret Olenuik of St. Catharines, and Eileen A. Anderson in Sarnia. William attended St. Patrick's High School and Sarnia Collegiate Institute and was a member of St. Joseph's Catholic Parish. Prior to enlisting, William had been a machine operator employed with Electric Auto-Lite Limited in Sarnia for approximately one year.

On August 28, 1941, the 20 year-old William Anderson enlisted in the Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve (RCNVR) in Windsor, Ontario. He stood six feet tall, had blue eyes and black hair, was single, and resided on Alfred Street with his parents at the time. After initially being posted to Windsor Division (*HMCS Hunter*) as an Ordinary Seaman, he was transferred to St. Hyacinthe, Quebec, where in May 1942, he would celebrate his 21st birthday while attending naval school. He would continue his naval training at several HMCS bases and ships including *Stadacona*, *Hochelaga*, *Kentville*, *Fort Ramsay*, and *HMCS Toronto*. In April of 1944, William would return to Sarnia on a nine-day leave to visit his family and friends, the first furlough he had in 20 months. On June 9, 1944 William Anderson of the RCNVR would become a member of the corvette *HMCS Shawinigan*, with the rank of Leading Coder.

Beginning on the opening day of the Second World War, the **Battle of the Atlantic** would be the longest continuous campaign of the war, and one in which Canada played a central role. The Royal Canadian Navy, along with the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) and Canada's Merchant Navy, played a vital role in defending the country's eastern coast and escorting convoys of ships carrying men and essential machinery, arms, fuel and basic resources between North America and Europe.

The *HMCS Shawinigan (K136)* was a Flower-class corvette, originally designed to accommodate a standard crew of less than fifty. Commissioned on September 19, 1941 at Quebec City, it was one of the sturdy little "work horses" of the RCN and was to become the 9th corvette and 19th Canadian warship lost in the war. She was in the navy's convoy escort and patrol fleet. Her sea miles totaled more than 150 000, and she had been one of the busiest

vessels of her class, escorting convoy runs in the Atlantic Ocean and off the east coast of Canada. Few ships of her class spent more time at sea during the period when German U-boats were most active in the North Atlantic. During the two years prior to her sinking, she did not lose a ship under her charge. Men who served aboard her had been acclaimed for fighting efficiency, for rescue work and attacks on enemy U-boats. She escorted hundreds of thousands of vital war supplies and shipping to Allied ports.



Flower Class Corvette *HMCS Shawinigan K136*

On November 24, 1944, the *HMCS Shawinigan* and a United States Coast Guard Cutter *Sassafrass* escorted the ferry *Burgeo* from Sydney, Nova Scotia to Port aux Basques, Newfoundland. Ferries on this route were always escorted after the tragic loss of the passenger ferry *SS Caribou* two years earlier. In mid-October of 1942, the *Caribou* had been torpedoed on the same route and 136 lives were lost, including ten children. In November 1944, the three ships made an uneventful crossing to Port aux Basques, at which time the *Shawinigan* detached to continue doing an independent anti-submarine patrol in the area. The *Shawinigan* was scheduled to rendezvous with the *Burgeo* the following morning for the return to Cape Breton. But the *Shawinigan* never made it.

On that fateful November 24 moonlit night, the *Shawinigan* maintained radio silence while performing anti-submarine patrol in the Cabot Strait between Newfoundland and Cape Breton Island. Nearby, German U-boat *U-1228* was trying to repair a faulty snorkel without success and had decided to return to Germany for repairs. It was now 9:30 p.m. As soon as *U-1228* started her return route into the Atlantic, she sighted the *Shawinigan*. In its first recorded attack on enemy shipping, *U-1228* fired a single T-5 Gnat torpedo that struck the corvette in the stern.

Four minutes after the attack, the *Shawinigan*, with its entire crew, disappeared in a plume of frigid Atlantic water and a shower of sparks. The ship had no time to transmit any messages and authorities later speculated that the *Shawinigan's* depth charges exploded as she sank, adding to the destruction. The next morning, the *Burgeo* left Port aux Basques on schedule in the fog but could not find the *Shawinigan*. They maintained radio silence and did not inform command of *Shawinigan's* failure to appear.

Unescorted, the *Burgeo* made for Sydney and arrived on November 25 at 6 pm. Suspecting something had happened to *Shawinigan*, naval officers in Sydney ordered an air and sea search for the missing corvette, but bad weather put a stop to much of that. A day or so later, searching ships came upon fragments of wreckage, an empty Carley float and six bodies, which were all that remained to indicate what had happened to the *Shawinigan*.

A third of *Shawinigan's* crew were twenty years old or younger and no crewmember survived the tragic sinking. Seven officers and 84 crew members, including William Anderson, were lost. It is impossible to record exactly what happened to *Shawinigan* during her final moments. Some sailors were probably killed instantly by the horrific explosion; others inevitably died in the icy water as the ship sank. Those fortunate enough to get into their life vests and survive the explosion would later die in the freezing North Atlantic.

The *Shawinigan* was one of only three RCN ships lost with all hands. Twenty-seven year old Petty Officer Stoker Michael Paithowski, another Sarnian, was also on board and perished in the sinking. His name is also inscribed on the Sarnia cenotaph and his story is included in this Project.

In late November of 1944, parents Edward and Mary Anderson in Sarnia would receive a telegram from the Department of National Defence informing them that their son, LEADING CODER WILLIAM J. ANDERSON HAS BEEN REPORTED MISSING AT SEA. The message contained no other information and intimated that a letter would follow. Mary had received a letter from her son William only one week prior, in which he had stated that

he was well and getting along O.K.

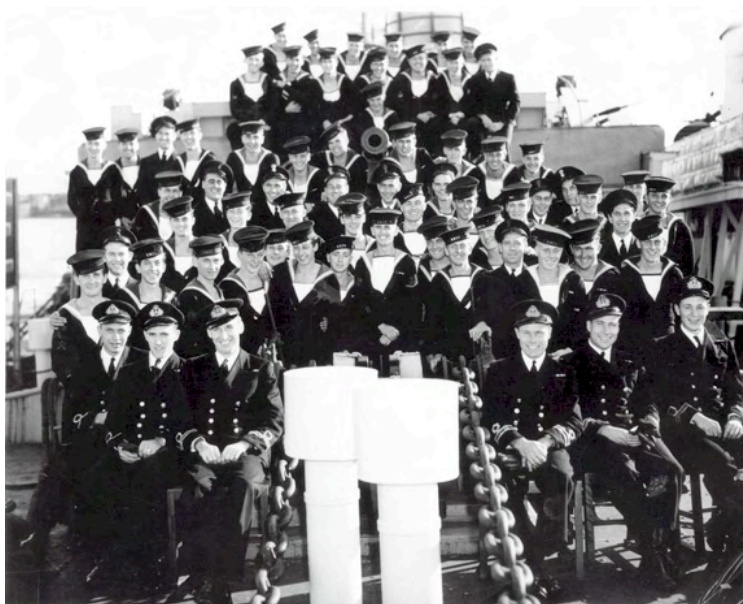
On December 7, 1944, in a dispatch from Ottawa, the Hon. Angus L. Macdonald, Minister of National Defence for Naval Services, announced the loss of the *H.M.C.S. Shawinigan*, while on operational duty in the North Atlantic. He gave no details but said the ship's complement had been lost and five bodies have been recovered and identified. It was announced locally that two Sarnia seamen, William Anderson and Michael Paithowski, were members of the crew of the *Shawinigan* and were reported missing. In December 1944, parents Edward and Mary Anderson received a letter from the Secretary of the Naval Board. A portion of it reads as follows:

Dear Mr. Anderson,

Further to my letter of the 29th of November, 1944, details of the disaster in which your son has been reported missing are now being released. H.M.C.S. "SHAWINIGAN", a Royal Canadian Navy corvette, was lost while on operational duty at sea. Seven officers, including her Captain, Lieutenant W.J. Jones, R.C.N.R., and seventy-eight ratings are missing. The bodies of five other ratings have been recovered and identified. There are no known survivors. It is requested that you will regard this information as confidential until an official announcement is made. May I again express sincere sympathy with you in your anxiety.



L/Coder William John Anderson



Crew of the *Shawinigan* 1944

In mid-February of 1945, parents Edward and Mary Anderson in Sarnia would receive a telegram from Ottawa informing them that their son, LEADING CODER WILLIAM J. ANDERSON WHO WAS REPORTED MISSING AT SEA LAST NOVEMBER IS OFFICIALLY PRESUMED LOST. Later, the Navy would inform the Anderson family that William Anderson was officially recorded as, *Missing, presumed dead, when the ship in which he was serving, H.M.C.S. 'Shawinigan' was lost while on operational duty at sea.* It was understood that William's mother, Mary, would receive the Memorial Cross in the near future.

In July 1945, parents Edward and Mary Anderson received a War Service Gratuity payment of \$442.73 for the loss of their son. In August 1945, they received another letter from the Secretary of the Naval Board.

Dear Mr. Anderson:

Further to my letter of the 15th of February, 1945, the Department is now able to release additional information regarding the loss of your son's ship and I am accordingly passing on the following particulars which will, no doubt, be of interest to you.

H.M.C.S. "SHAWINIGAN" sailed from Sydney, N.S., on the 24th of November, 1944, to escort a merchant ship to Port Aux Basques, Newfoundland, and arrived off Port Aux Basque that night. In accordance with orders she was then to carry out a patrol in the area for the duration of the night, after which she was to meet the same merchant ship the next morning and return with her to Sydney.

The merchant ship arrived in Sydney unescorted on the night of the 25th of November and after it was ascertained that "Shawinigan" had not appeared at the designated rendezvous to provide escort as instructed, searches were instituted and "Shawinigan" was discovered to be missing.

It was the opinion of the Department at the time that the ship had been torpedoed by an enemy submarine during the night of the 24th/25th of November, 1944, as submarines were known to be operating in the area; and this has since been confirmed from German evidence. Although no survivors were found, a few bodies were recovered by later searches, due to tidal movements, some distance from the area in which "Shawinigan" was known to be operating. As a result, the position of the sinking can not be exactly ascertained, although from German evidence and the Department's computation, it is estimated to be in the vicinity of the three mile limit off Channel Head, near Port Aux Basques, Newfoundland.

It was not until after the war ended and *U-1228* surrendered, that the details of what had happened to the *Shawinigan* that night were uncovered. When the U-boat commander was interrogated in May 1945, he stated the ship sank quickly, followed by two underwater explosions. He saw no survivors in the water. Fifty-three years after the sinking, on June 14, 1997, at Trois Rivieres, Quebec, the Prime Minister of Canada Jean Chretien and his wife would take part in a Royal Canadian Navy ceremony to officially commission the new *HMCS Shawinigan (704)*. A memorial monument dedicated to the 91 lost was also unveiled. Twenty-three-year-old William Anderson has no known grave. He is memorialized on the Halifax Memorial, Nova Scotia, Canada, Panel 12.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, J, L, N, P, T, U, X, 2A, 2C, 2D, 6O, 7C, 8M, 8X, 8Y

ANDREW, George Varnum (#J/19070)

George Varnum Andrew's wartime experiences in the RCAF were fraught with danger, but he was well aware that his next mission as a rear-gunner could be his last. He flew over 20 bombing sorties before his luck ran out.

He was born at 111 North College Avenue on January 11, 1923, the son of former Sarnia mayor and harbourmaster, George A.C. and Elizabeth Harriet (nee Varnum, born in Moore Township, Lambton) Andrew. Parents George A.C. and Elizabeth Andrew were married on October 24, 1906 in Moore Township, Lambton County. When he enlisted to fight in 1941, George was emulating his father.

George A.C. (or George Senior, born 1882 in Lambton County), a carpenter by trade, was a World War I veteran. At age 35 and married with two children, he had enlisted to serve with the Royal Flying Corps in October 1917 in Toronto. He stood five feet four and a half inches tall, and would be transferred to the Royal Air Force with the rank of Second Class Air Mechanic and served in Canada. After the Great War, he served as a City of Sarnia alderman on a couple of occasions and was elected Sarnia's 42nd mayor of Sarnia in 1924. When he did so, his second youngest son and namesake was a year old.

Typical of this time, the Andrew family was large and included six children besides George: Florence Evelyn (born March 24, 1909 in Brigen); twins George Edwin and Ralph Varnum (born 1912, but both died six months after birth in October 1912); Muriel Eileen (born June 1915 in Sarnia); William Charles (born 1921); and Robert Barrett (born 1926). Both of his sisters got married, becoming Mrs. John (Muriel) Little (of Sarnia), and Mrs. Stephen (Florence) Endico (of Detroit). George's younger brother, Robert, was a member of the Central Century Club and attended the University of Toronto. George's older brother, William, would lose his life while serving in World War II (see below).

George was an active youth. He was educated at George Street Public School from 1929-1936, and then Sarnia Collegiate from 1936-1940. During his high school days, George participated in rugby, hockey, basketball and baseball. Perhaps it was during this time that George incurred a serious injury to his knee. He was also on the Signalling Team and was an officer in the High School Cadets for two years. His church was very important to him. George was an active member of Central United Church and, even while serving in war, corresponded with Rev. E.W. Jewitt, pastor of the Church.

The next stage of George's young life determined his fate. When he left high school he was qualified to be an electrician but could not find work. Now 17, George applied to join the RCAF in London, Ontario in January 1940, but was turned away because he was too young. After not being accepted, still in January 1940, he then applied to enter the Royal Canadian Navy, as a Boy Seaman. He was accepted and was posted to *HMCS Naden*, in Esquimalt, British Columbia beginning in May 1940; however, the continual marching during training aggravated his bad knee. Two months after being posted in B.C., George was declared "medically unfit" due to a left knee joint issue and was discharged from the Navy.

George was determined to serve his country. A year later, on March 3, 1941, George enlisted again in the

Royal Canadian Air Force in London, Ontario. This time, the 18 year old was successful. He stood five feet eight and a half inches tall, had brown eyes and dark brown hair, was single and resided at home with his parents on College Street at the time. George also expressed an interest in making the Air Force a career after the war. The Recruiting Officer recorded that George Andrew was, *Well qualified and recommended-rugged type. Keen to learn and anxious to fly as fighter pilot. Best fitted for Pilot or Observer.*

He was constantly on the move in training, not unusual at the time. After being posted initially to #1 Manning Depot in Toronto, George would then receive air training at #6 Service Flying Training School (SFTS) in Dunnville, at #1 Initial Training School (ITS) in Toronto, and #21 Elementary Flying Training School (EFTS) in Chatham, New Brunswick.

George's personal life changed as well. In New Brunswick on September 13, 1941, the 18 year old married Esther Jones, the daughter of Mrs. Annie Jones of Sarnia. At the wedding ceremony at the United Church manse in Chatham, Miss Catherine Anne Richards of Newcastle, New Brunswick served as bridesmaid, and Leading Aircraftman Donald Allen of Toronto served as the best man. George's brother-in-law, Glyn Jones, would join the Canadian Army and would later be killed during the raid on Dieppe, on August 19, 1942 (see Glyn Jones in this project). While her husband George was overseas, Esther Andrew resided with her mother at 114 ½ North Christina Street, Sarnia.

After George's posting in Chatham, he would continue his air training at #9 SFTS in Summerside, Prince Edward Island, before returning to Sarnia on a leave in November 1941. On November 5, 1941, while at home with his family, George received news of the sinking of the *SS Vancouver Island*. The news was devastating--with reports of no survivors, including of his brother William Charles Andrew.

Despite the terrible news of William's death, George continued his intensive air training: at Composite Training School (KTS) in Trenton; #1 Wireless School (WS) in Montreal; #4 Bombing and Gunnery School (BGS) in Fingal, Ontario; and #34 Operational Training Unit (OTU) at Pennfield Ridge, New Brunswick. In August 1942, George Andrew graduated receiving his Air Gunners Badge and Sergeant stripes at Fingal Bombing and Gunnery School. The Commanding Officer at #4BGS wrote of Andrew, *Very keen about his job, hard working and reliable with a good knowledge of his work.*

On September 25, 1942, George Andrew embarked overseas from Halifax for the United Kingdom, disembarking on October 8. In Sarnia, Esther's fears were allayed when a cable from her husband in early October confirmed his safe arrival in England. Initially posted to #3 Personnel Reception Centre (PRC), he would be transferred to #22 Operational Training Unit (OTU) in late October 1942. In mid-February 1943, George Andrew would become a member of RCAF #426 Thunderbird Squadron "On Wings of Fire", part of **Bomber Command**, with the rank of Flying Officer Air Gunner.

During the course of the war, one of this country's most significant contributions was the approximately 50,000 Canadians who served with the RCAF and RAF in Bomber Command operations. Next to Britain, Canada was the largest contributor to Bomber Command, making up more than a third of all of Bomber Command personnel. The men who served in Bomber Command faced some of the most difficult odds of anyone fighting in the war.

No. 426 Squadron was established at RAF Dishforth, Yorkshire, on October 15, 1942, as part of No. 4 Group. In January 1943, it was transferred to No. 6 (RCAF) Group. The squadron was equipped with Vickers Wellington aircraft to deliver bombs and mines to the enemy. In June 1943, the squadron transferred to RAF Linton-on-Ouse and switched to Avro Lancaster bombers. Later in April of 1944, the squadron began to convert to Handley Page Halifax bombers that they used until the end of the war in Europe. The thunderbird crest used by the squadron originates from North American natives, and according to myth, signifies disaster and death to anyone on the ground who perceives it.

As part of #426 Squadron, George took part in many daring raids over enemy territory, including raids on Berlin, Leipzig and Frankfurt. Their crew had a very close call during a raid on Essen on May 27/28, 1943. Eight minutes after their bomb run, at 14,000 feet over Bochum, heavy flak hit their Wellington. Sharpnel made a flying sieve of their aircraft, holes appearing in the astrodome, the top and side of the rear turret, the bomb aimer's Perspex screen, the port propeller, the bottom of the port engine, the port and starboard tail plane, and the tail. Despite the damage, the aircraft got back to Dishforth with no one on board injured.

In September of 1943, while in England, George cabled Esther and informed her that he had been promoted

to Flight-Sergeant retroactive to February 3. What the 22 year old did was not for the faint of heart, however. On August 23 and again in early September of 1943, George was part of a group of Halifax and Lancaster squadrons of the R.C.A.F. that, along with scores of other Canadians flying big R.A.F. bombers, carried out massive night poundings known as “blitz raids” on Berlin. From his position as a rear gunner during the heavy bombing of Berlin, George saw German planes drop numerous flares in an attempt to light up the attacking bombers.



Flying Officer-AG George Varnum Andrew

In a letter to his parents George Sr. and Elizabeth Andrew in Sarnia in September 1943, twenty year-old George described being a rear-gunner of a Lancaster bomber in the Berlin raids. This excerpt could represent any air-gunner's typical experience.

Perhaps you'd like an idea of the feelings that run through us on a trip. First of all we are warned for operations. That is the signal for us to inspect our aircraft and equipment carefully. Then a lot of us write letters home. It helps a lot to build up courage. Next comes briefing, where we are told the target and given all the possible details on hazards, routes, etc., and are given take-off times. We usually spend the rest of our time playing cards, reading or writing more letters. Believe me, we are all thinking very much of home at that stage, for we have been told the target, and having probably been there before, we realize only too well the hell we must go through to reach it.

An hour or so before the take-off we go down to the hangers and start dressing for the job at hand. This entails a lot of work, for putting on all our gear is like harnessing a horse, only worse. Now the time for take-off is drawing near and we are watching our watches closely while we smoke a final cigarette and drink a cup of hot coffee. We look out and see the crash wagon and ambulance standing by. We call them “vultures.” And here comes Happy. He is our padre, a flight-lieutenant, and a swell guy. He comes down for every take-off, and is always the first one to greet us when we come back. I wouldn't feel right taking off without Happy around. Now the flight commander tells us to get cracking. We all hold our breath until we are safely off the deck, for we are carrying quite a load of cookies for Hitler.

Over the target, the crew finds itself in a heavy barrage of smoke and flak. The bomb-aimer has his sight on the target and is directing Freddy along an accurate course. We are all watching the sky closely for fighters who sometimes fly through their own hell to get to us. We are also watching the searchlights to see if they are probing for us or some other poor beggar. Once they get the lights on us, hell breaks loose, for then they pump the flak right at the intersection of the lights, where we are supposed to be. Freddy doesn't care for the stuff any more than we do, and makes sure that we don't park in that intersection for too long at a time.

All this time we are drawing near to our aiming point and the bomb-aimer is still giving directions to bring it up to the hair-line of the sight. Now he's got it, the bomb bays swing open and release their tons of explosive, the camera clicks and takes a picture of the target – the aiming point we hope, for it is an honor to bring back a picture showing the exact aiming point. He shouts, ‘Okay, Freddy, bombs gone. Let's get the hell out of here!’ Freddy sets a new course to get us out of the target area. I can see the target, for we are passing over it now, and it is exposed to

my view. The air-gunner gets the last view and is therefore relied upon for a good description of bombing results. The target is blazing brilliantly in many colours, and I can see explosions billowing up thousands of feet into the air.

Homeward bound, we cannot relax until we are circling over our base. Now we are down, and Happy is handing out the cigarettes while we talk it all over. We report to intelligence and give him the stuff you read in the papers as well as a lot you don't see there. Now a meal, then to bed to rest up in case we are on again tonight.

At no time were the dangers of flying over enemy territory more evident than on the night of October 20, 1943. On that night, George took part in a bombing raid by RCAF bombers of the Thunderbird and Goose Squadrons and a heavy force of R.A.F. bombers. Their mission was to flatten objectives in Leipzig, Germany. Take-off was scheduled for 17:15 hrs, the round trip being about seven hours. George was flying in Lancaster Bomber DS686, nicknamed "D for Donald", that was carrying one 4,000-pound bomb and 3,120 pounds of incendiaries. About halfway to the target, a single-engine night-fighter, a German Messerschmitt 109, attacked their bomber. The enemy aircraft attacked four times, hitting the tail plane and fuselage, disabling the mid-upper turret, and wounding the mid-upper gunner (Sgt. McGovern) with cannon shells. He suffered wounds in the arms, legs and chest, and was temporarily blinded in one eye.

The Lancaster flew corkscrews and diving turns while the gunners returned fire, in particular, Fl/Sgt. Andrew, the rear gunner, who warned his pilot of each attack. They shook off the fighter and could have turned and gone home then, their aircraft now being so badly holed; however, they kept going to Leipzig. Several minutes later, they were attacked three times by a German Junkers-88. The Lancaster was able to shake that attack and lost the enemy in the clouds. The damage to the bomber was extensive: the mid-upper turret disabled; two of the rear turret guns were inoperable; the pilot's windscreen was smashed; a hydraulic-system failed; the navigation and wireless equipment were riddled with bullets; the trailing aerial had been shot away; and many bullet holes were in the fuselage, the wing and near the inner fuel tank. Only the pilot's skillful flying and George Andrew's marksmanship saved it from certain destruction. During the seven attacks, Andrew had fired 2200 rounds.

Despite the damage, Lancaster DS686 continued on to its target. Since the release mechanism had been shot up, the bombs had to be released manually, the pilot (Frederick Stuart), in the words of other members of the crew, had "to perform superbly" with his damaged navigating instruments to bring them back to England. In a *Canadian Press* dispatch describing the raid, George Andrew had helped keep the Nazis at a distance, especially over the target where his plane was attacked seven times by enemy fighters. The returning fliers described it as one of the toughest nights the Canadians had ever experienced. Ice, rain and lightning all played havoc with the aircraft and heavy clouds sheltered the target. The Leipzig raid involved 358 Bomber Command Lancasters, of which seventeen were lost that night. It was George Andrew's 20th raid. When their aircraft arrived back at its base, more than one hundred cannon and machine gun holes were counted in the fuselage.



L – R: F/Sgt. **George Andrew**, F/O Dunphy and F/O Dodge inspect the damage sustained by their Lancaster from attack by German night fighters during a raid on Leipzig, October 20, 1943

George Andrew was promoted from Flight Sergeant to Pilot-Officer for exceptional work as rear gunner in the raid on Leipzig. Flying Officer Jimmy Dodge was on board the Lancaster aircraft on that fateful October 20th

bombing mission. In a letter to his mother in Spirit River Alberta, Dodge wrote that, *Too much praise cannot be given to Fred Stuart our RAF skipper and George (Andy) Andrew our rear-gunner. They were the ones mostly responsible for getting us out of the jam we were in, and of course Rod Dunphy (Winnipeg) our navigator, who did a marvellous piece of work.*

Sadly, Pilot-Officer George Andrew lost his life exactly two months later as part of a bombing mission involving 650 Bomber Command aircraft. On the night of December 20, 1943 and on his 22nd raid, Andrew's Lancaster Mark II aircraft LL630 (markings OW-D) took off from Linton on Ouse on a night operation against Frankfurt, Germany. The German controllers were able to accurately plot the route as soon as the main force left the English coast and were therefore able to deploy night-fighters at many points along its route. A diversionary raid on Mannheim failed to draw off many fighters until the main raid was over. The target was mainly cloud covered whereas the forecast had predicted clear conditions. Pathfinder marking did not, therefore, go to plan. The Germans used decoy fires and also decoy target indicator. By a twist of good fortune, considerable creepback resulted in the bombing coming back over the city. Pilot Officer George Andrew's Lancaster aircraft was shot down at 20:30 hrs. near Koblenz, Germany. German documents would later state that the aircraft crashed near Gulz, 13 km N.E. of Belgard, Germany. Of the 650 aircraft taking part in the operation, there were 41 losses, 10 of which were Canadian planes.

In late December of 1943, parents George Senior and Elizabeth Andrew would receive a telegram in Sarnia from the air force Casualty Officer at Ottawa informing them that their son, PILOT OFFICER GEORGE VARNUM ANDREW IS MISSING AFTER R.C.A.F. AIR OPERATIONS ON DECEMBER 21. No other details were contained in the message. The Andrews tragically had a second son reported missing in the war, the one previous being William Charles Andrew, who was reported missing in mid-October of 1941 (see below).

In early February of 1944, George's wife, Esther, now residing on North Christina Street, received a telegram from the RCAF Casualty Officer at Ottawa. It stated that REGRET TO ADVISE INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS QUOTING GERMAN INFORMATION STATES YOUR HUSBAND PO. GEORGE VARNUM ANDREW LOST HIS LIFE DECEMBER 20 BUT DOES NOT GIVE ADDITIONAL PARTICULARS. PENDING FURTHER CONFIRMATION YOUR HUSBAND IS TO BE CONSIDERED MISSING BELIEVED KILLED. PLEASE ACCEPT MY SINCERE SYMPATHY. LETTER FOLLOWS. Perishing with Pilot Officer-Air Gunner George Andrew were P/O Thomas Herbert Hastings (RAF); F/O.s Roderick James Dunphy, John William Flynn (RAF), Albert John Rudman (RAF), and Frederick John Stuart (RAF); and Sgt. Frank Richard Taylor (RAF).

In August 1944, Esther received from the Group Captain, RCAF Records Officer in Ottawa, an "RCAF Certificate of Presumption of Death" notice that read: *This is to certify that J19070 Pilot Officer George Varnum Andrew, RCAF, has been officially reported as missing since the 20th day of December, 1943, and that, full inquiries having been made, there appears to be conclusive proof that he is dead. For official purposes, therefore, he is presumed to have died on or since the above mentioned date.*

Also August 1944, Esther received a registered letter from the Air Marshal, Chief of the Air Staff:
Dear Mrs. Andrew,

I have learned with deep regret that your husband, Pilot Officer George Varnum Andrew, is now for official purposes presumed to have died on Active Service Overseas on December 20th, 1943. I wish to offer you and the members of your family my sincere and heartfelt sympathy. It is most lamentable that a promising career should be thus terminated and I would like you to know that his loss is greatly deplored by all those with whom your husband was serving.

George Andrew was later recorded as, *Previously reported "missing" after air operations, now for official purposes, "presumed dead," overseas (Germany).* For parents, George Senior and Elizabeth Andrew in Sarnia, this was their second son that they had lost in the War. George Senior would also lose a nephew in the war, Sarnia born Leonard Andrew, who was killed during the Dieppe Raid in August of 1942.

Early in 1945, Esther received a War Service Gratuity of \$508.99 for the loss of her husband. In October 1946, she would receive the following letter from the RCAF Records Officer in Ottawa:

Dear Mrs. Andrew:

It is a privilege to have the opportunity of sending you the Operational Wings and Certificate in recognition of the gallant services rendered by your husband, Pilot Officer G.V. Andrew. I realize there is little which may be said or done to lessen your sorrow, but it is my hope that these "Wings", indicative of operations against the enemy,

will be a treasured memento of a young life offered on the altar of freedom in defence of his Home and Country.

In September 1948, Ester Andrew would receive a letter from the Wing Commander, RCAF Casualties Officer in Ottawa informing her that, *the Graves Registration Service have advised that the Graves 9 to 13 in Plot 10, Row E in the Rheinburg British Military Cemetery have been registered collectively with the names of the five unidentified members of your husband's crew, including your husband. May I take this opportunity to again extend my sincere sympathy.*

Some time after the war, Esther re-married and resided in Sarnia as Esther Sygrove. Twenty year-old George Varnum Andrew is buried in Rheinberg War Cemetery, Germany, Coll.Grave 10.E.9-13.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, J, L, M, N, R, S, 2C, 2D, 3J, 4B, 6O, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10B, 10U

ANDREW, William Charles (Civilian)

William ("Bill") Andrew had an interest in technology and communication and in serving his country in war. Both interests cost the 20 year old his life in 1941.

He was born at 111 North College Avenue on March 7, 1921. He was the eldest son of ex-Sarnia mayor and harbourmaster George A. C. Andrew and Mrs. Elizabeth Harriet (nee Varnum, born in Moore Township, Lambton) Andrew. Parents George A.C. and Elizabeth Andrew were married on October 24, 1906 in Moore Township, Lambton County.

Serving in the military was a pattern with men of the Andrew family. William's father, George A.C. (or George Senior, born 1882 in Lambton County), a carpenter by trade, was a World War I veteran. At age 35 and married with two children, he had enlisted to serve with the Royal Flying Corps in October 1917 in Toronto. He stood five feet four and a half inches tall, and would be transferred to the Royal Air Force with the rank of Second Class Air Mechanic and served in Canada. After the Great War, he served as a City of Sarnia alderman on a couple of occasions and was elected Sarnia's 42nd mayor of Sarnia in 1924.

Typical of this time, the Andrew family was large and included six children besides William: Florence Evelyn (born March 24, 1909 in Brigden); twins George Edwin and Ralph Varnum (born 1912, but both died six months after birth in October 1912); Muriel Eileen (born June 1915 in Sarnia); George Varnum (born 1923); and Robert Barrett (born 1926). Both of his sisters got married, becoming Mrs. John (Muriel) Little (of Sarnia), and Mrs. Stephen (Florence) Endico (of Detroit). William's youngest brother, Robert B., was a member of the Central Century Club and attended the University of Toronto. William's other brother, George of the RCAF, would lose his life while serving in World War II (see above).

Growing up, William showed an interest in technology and communications. An active member of Central United Church, he attended Sarnia public elementary school and graduated in electricity from Sarnia Collegiate. He then took a Radio Operator course at the Canadian Electronic School in Toronto and, upon his return, spent his spare time experimenting with wireless equipment. In the winter of 1940, he applied for enlistment when the RCAF issued a call for radio technicians.

He was rejected because of a slight defect in his one knee but another opportunity arose six months later, in the summer of 1941. William answered the call for recruits put out by the British Civilian Technical Corps, headquartered in Washington, D.C. The **British Civilian Technical Corps** was recruited largely in the United States and Canada and comprised young men not likely for call for actual military service. The British CT Corps' purpose was to assist civilian technicians in Britain by repairing vital equipment used by the British Armed Forces. Salaries ranged from \$24-\$38 per week. Technicians included skilled radio and automobile mechanics, electrical wiremen, instrument repairers, metal workers and other technical trades.

William Andrew passed his Civil Service exam as a radio technician and wireless expert in Port Huron with marks of 100% on his examinations. He reported for duty as a radio technician with the British Civilian Technical Corps at Montreal on September 4, 1941. His family was to hear from him for the last time on October 5, 1941.

Beginning on the opening day of the Second World War, the **Battle of the Atlantic** would be the longest continuous campaign of the war, and one in which Canada played a central role. The Royal Canadian Navy, along with the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) and Canada's Merchant Navy, played a vital role in defending the country's eastern coast and escorting convoys of ships carrying men and essential machinery, arms, fuel and basic resources between North America and Europe.

In September 1940, the Royal Canadian Navy armed merchant cruiser *HMCS Prince Robert* was deployed from the British Columbia coast to South America to support Britain's blockade of ships. Britain hoped to prevent German merchant ships in neutral ports from returning to Germany or to be fitted as raiders. On September 25, 1940, the *Prince Robert* captured the 9,500-ton German merchant ship *Weser* off the coast of Mexico, one of the first important Canadian prizes of the war. The *Weser* was brought to the British Columbia coast and renamed the *SS Vancouver Island* for service in the Royal Canadian Navy. It would move to the east coast where it would make several trans-Atlantic crossings until it met its end from a German U-boat.



Civilian Tech Corps William Charles Andrew



SS Vancouver Island (under her former name *Weser*)

On October 1, 1941, William Andrew was aboard the *SS Vancouver Island* as it left Cape Breton Island as part of a fifty-two ship convoy on its way to Belfast and Cardiff. On October 15, 1941, the convoy was intercepted by thirteen U-boats that over the next three days sank eleven ships. On the first day of the attack, the *SS Vancouver Island* was sailing behind the main convoy as a straggler when it was spotted by one of the German U-boats. In the mid-Atlantic, at about 10:50 pm, the *SS Vancouver* was struck by two torpedoes fired by German U-boat *U-558*.

Back in Sarnia, word of the attack and possible loss of 19 men of the British Civilian Technical Corps was received by the *Canadian Observer* on November 4, 1941. The British Press Service announced the loss on behalf of the Royal Air Force delegation at Washington. The information released was that the boat was presumed to have been sunk in the Atlantic Ocean, but the date was uncertain and no information was available yet of any survivors. Despite the meager details available, relatives and friends of William Andrew were hopeful that he would be safe. William's parents had been worried about their son, because they hadn't heard from him for so long and they wanted to send Christmas presents to him.

On November 5, 1941, while William's brother, LAC George Andrew of the R.C.A.F. was home on leave from his Eastern Air Command post, the following official news arrived to his parents:

It is with most profound regret that I have to convey to you, the news that your son is among the list of missing passengers from a ship on which he was taking passage to the United Kingdom as a member of the British Civilian Technical Corps. The ship is missing and is presumed sunk, but the date is unknown and there is no news of any survivors. In expressing their deepest sympathy the Air Council gratefully acknowledges the generous motives which inspired your son to give his services in the defence of human liberty and progress.

W.C.G. Cribett, R.A.F. Delegation, Washington, D.C.

Later, it was disclosed that no one survived the attack on the *SS Vancouver Island*. William Andrew and eighteen other members of a detachment of the British Civilian Technical Corps were lost at sea. In total, the sinking of the *SS Vancouver Island* resulted in 102 deaths: sixty-four crew, six DEMS gunners, and thirty-two passengers. Two years later, George Sr. and Elizabeth Andrew would lose a second son in the War. George Sr. would also lose a nephew in the war, Sarnia born Leonard Andrew, who was killed during the Dieppe Raid in August of 1942. Twenty year-old William Charles Andrew is memorialized on the Ottawa Memorial, in Ottawa, Canada, Panel 1, Column 3. SOURCES: A, B, C, G, J, N, P, R, S, U, 2A, 2D, 8X

AUBIN, Joseph Leopold (#A/115076)

Joseph Leopold Aubin's life would end as a result of his bravery during the campaign in Italy, a bloody series of battles fought by the Allies to drive the Nazis back to Germany.

Joseph was born in Sarnia on September 22, 1923, the only son of Frederic Wilfred and Marie Stella (nee Thibault) Aubin, of Cemetery Road, Sarnia. Parents Wilfred (a labourer) and Stella Aubin would marry on January 31, 1921 in Sarnia, and tragically in December 1921, would give birth to a still-born baby. Joseph, their only son, would have one sister, Laurette Aubin, born in 1926. Joseph Aubin did not complete grade eight, finishing his schooling at age sixteen. Joseph was active in baseball, softball and bowling, and was a member of Our Lady of Mercy Catholic Parish. Joseph had several odd jobs after leaving school including washing cars and working in a factory, before obtaining work at Sarnia Bridge Company.

Nineteen year-old Joseph enrolled under the National Resources Mobilization Act (NRMA) on November 24, 1942 in London, Ontario. He was residing at home with his mother on Cemetery Road and working at Sarnia Bridge Company as a steelworker at the time. His plan was to become a motor-mechanic after the war. Joseph would receive his Basic Training in Chatham, and Advanced Training at Camp Ipperwash. In April 1943, Joseph was transferred to the 1st Battalion, Victoria Rifles of Canada in Sussex, New Brunswick, with the rank of Rifleman. In September 1943, he would continue his training at Niagara-on-the-Lake, and then Allanburg in March 1944.

In June 1944, twenty year-old Joseph Aubin completed his Canadian Army Attestation Papers, becoming a member of the Canadian Infantry Corps. He stood five feet eight inches tall, had blue eyes and brown hair, and was single at the time. On November 20, 1944, Joseph would embark overseas from Halifax for the United Kingdom, as a Rifleman with the Victoria Rifles. Once in England, he became a member of the Canadian Infantry Training Regiment (3 CITR). On January 23, 1945, he would embark from the U.K. to Italy, becoming a member of the Loyal Edmonton Regiment, Royal Canadian Infantry Corps (R.C.I.C.).

The **Italian Campaign**, the first sustained Canadian Army operation of the War, began with the invasion of Sicily in July 1943. The fierce fighting on the island would last more than four weeks, during which the Canadians would advance through difficult mountainous terrain, against an ever-stiffening German resistance. By August 17, the Germans had evacuated the island to the Italian mainland. In early September, Canadian and Allied forces would invade Italy. Though Italy surrendered shortly after, the occupying Germans made it clear their fight was not over. Liberating Italy would be a painstaking northward crawl, lasting 20 months, over a range of landscapes, through challenging weather, and against a series of well-protected defences held by some of the German army's best troops.

Approximately one month after arriving in Italy, Private Aubin would lose his life there on February 24, 1945, at the very end of the Italian Campaign. During fighting, Joseph was severely wounded by a mortar, and would die as a result of his wounds. His remains were buried on February 25, at a location recorded on the Army Field Service Card as "2 CIB Cem Bagnacavallo sh 89/III NW Fusignano MR 424395".

In early March 1945, Joseph's parents in Sarnia would receive a telegram from Ottawa informing them that their only son, PTE. JOSEPH LEOPOLD AUBIN HAS DIED IN ITALY OF WOUNDS RECEIVED IN ACTION. No other details were received. At the end of March 1945, Stella Aubin in Sarnia would receive the following letter from the Acting Director of Records, for Adjutant-General:

Dear Mrs. Aubin:

Further to this Headquarters' telegram of the 4th of March 1945, informing you of the regretted death of your son, A-115076 Private Joseph Leopold Aubin, in keeping with the policy of the Canadian Army of informing the next-of-kin of all details of battle casualties, the following paragraph informs you of the wounds sustained by Private Aubin.

According to information obtained by this Headquarters from the Canadian Army Medical Authorities, your late son died as a result of a bomb (mortar) fragment large wound to the left temporo-parietal region with cerebral laceration and a wound to the large left biceps (no fracture but) with dissolution of the main nerves and arteries. Please accept my sincere and heartfelt sympathy for the irreparable loss you have suffered.

Joseph Aubin was later officially recorded as, *Overseas casualty, Died of wounds received in action, in the field (Italy)*. In mid-March of 1945, a requiem high mass was celebrated in Our Lady of Mercy Church for the repose of the soul of Pte. Joseph Aubin. In October 1945, Stella Aubin would receive a War Service Gratuity of \$92.10 for the loss of her only son Joseph. In August 1946, Stella Aubin would receive a letter from the Colonel, Director of Records, for Adjutant-General. Following is a portion of that letter:

Dear Madam:

Information has just been received from overseas that the remains of your son, A115076 Private Joseph Leopold Aubin, have been carefully exhumed from the original place of internment and reverently reburied in grave 4, row G, plot 5, of Ravenna British Empire Cemetery, five miles West of Ravenna, Italy. Marked map is enclosed. This is a recognized military burial ground and will receive care and maintenance in perpetuity.

The grave will have been marked with a temporary cross which will be replaced in due course by a permanent headstone suitably inscribed. While it cannot now be stated when this work of permanent commemoration will begin, before any action is taken you will be communicated with and an opportunity will be given you to submit a short personal inscription of your own choice for engraving on the headstone...

Twenty-one-year-old Joseph Aubin is buried in Ravenna War Cemetery, Italy, Grave V.G.4. On his headstone are inscribed the words, HEAR MY UNWORTHY PRAYER. PRESERVE ME FROM ALL DANGER. GIVE MY IMMORTAL SOUL A PLACE AMONG THE CHOSEN.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, J, L, N, 2C, 2D, 6O, 7C, 8X, 8Y

BANKS, James Keith (#A/50059)

James Keith Banks was underage when he signed up to serve his country. As he fought in France and Belgium for his country, his thoughts were always with his family back home.

He was born on May 5, 1923, the son of Ambrose and Doris Lewella Banks (later Rumohr), of 221 Tecumseh Street, Sarnia. His parents were married in Sarnia on May 24, 1922. James Keith had one brother, William Lyle, one sister Hannah Betty, and a half brother Raymond Vern Rumohr. When James Keith Banks was eleven years old, he lost his father Ambrose who died on February 24, 1935. His mother would remarry, to Fredrick Nelson Rumohr. Growing up in Sarnia, Keith, as he was known, attended London Road and Devine Street public schools and Sarnia Collegiate for two years, completing grade ten. He participated in baseball, rugby, soccer and swimming and his hobbies included fishing, cooking, playing the guitar and the mouth organ, and collecting stamps and coins. Prior to enlisting, Keith had been employed as a pinsetter at a Sarnia bowling alley (August 1937-September 1938), and then a Sarnia lumber mill (December 1938-August 1940).

Seventeen year-old Keith Banks enlisted in the Canadian Army in Chatham, Ontario on August 11, 1940--his mother signed him up. He stood five feet eleven and a half inches tall, had blue eyes and light brown hair, was single, and resided with his mother at the time. Keith recorded that he joined the army in order to help his mother. His plan for after the war was to enter the field of carpentry. On his Occupational History Form, he recorded his date of birth as May 5, 1923. On his Attestation Paper he declared his birthdate as May 5, 1921, making himself two years older than he was. All of his subsequent military records (including his Registration of Death) therefore record his date of birth as May 5, 1921. When Keith enlisted, his brother Lyle was sixteen, his sister Betty was thirteen, and his half brother Vern was only a couple of months old.

Passing himself off as a nineteen year-old, seventeen year-old James Keith Banks was taken on strength into the Kent Regiment, and began his training in Chatham, Ontario. He would continue his training with the Kent Regiment in London, Ontario and New Westminster, British Columbia. He would embark overseas for the United Kingdom on December 29, 1942, becoming a member of the Canadian Infantry Reinforcement Unit (CIRU), where he would continue his training. On February 27, 1943, Keith was transferred, becoming a member of the Highland Light Infantry of Canada, R.C.I.C., with the rank of Private. By March 1944, he had advanced to the rank of Lance Corporal. Keith Banks, as a member of the Highland Light Infantry of Canada, would embark from the U.K. in early June 1944, arriving in France on June 6, 1944 – **D-Day**.

The Canadian landings on Juno Beach would mark their beginning of the **Battle of Normandy**. After breaching the “Atlantic Wall” of “Fortress Europe”, Allied armies began their break out from the narrow Normandy bridgehead to carve out a foothold on the French mainland. It would take a whole summer of tenacious fighting, pushing against fierce and ruthless German forces to advance east across France. In a brutal campaign of attrition, the Canadians faced fierce battles and vicious counterattacks as they clawed their way forward liberating villages and towns including Bretteville, Carpiquet, Caen and Falaise.

Once while on leave in London, England, Keith got to meet his grandfather and his uncle for the first time. Keith and his mother Doris exchanged letters often (though they were edited by the military). Doris told him of the coupon books for food, gas rations, and the things that the radio and newspaper were saying about the war in England. Keith was originally paid \$1.40 per day as a Private, and his first pay cheque sent home was used to pay for

his sister Betty's first two wheeled bicycle, where she became the envy of the neighbourhood. Keith's letter's told of the deaths he saw and the bad living conditions he endured. In his last letter home, one his mother received the day before Keith was to die, he described how, because his Major was killed, he became a Corporal.

After the Allied breakout from Normandy, Canadian forces were assigned the **"Long Left Flank"**, the less glamorous but vital tasks of clearing coastal areas in the north of France and Belgium of German occupiers; opening the English Channel ports for supplies essential to the Allied advance; and capturing the launching sites of German V-1 rockets. In a series of stop-and-start advances against stiff resistance in fortified positions, the Canadians liberated ports and villages including Rouen, Dieppe, Dunkirk, Boulogne and Calais. It was during the early stages of this operation, a series of stop-and-start advances against stiff resistance in fortified positions, that Corporal Keith Banks would lose his life.

On the morning of September 6, 1944, Keith Banks and his regiment were on first patrol, a reconnaissance toward the town of Isques, between two of the enemy-defended hills. While making their way toward the objective, the patrol came under heavy fire from the hills and was pinned down. Corporal Keith Banks and Major G.D. Sim were severely wounded at this time. While they were pinned down, a relief was assembled and sent out while the three-inch mortars of the battalion plastered the hills. The patrol was successful in extricating itself, but Cpl. Banks and Major Sim did not survive. Their bodies were not recovered until the following day. When soldiers recovered the bodies, 25 prisoners, badly shaken by the pounding they received, were also brought back. James Keith Banks remains were buried at a location recorded on the Army Field Service Card as "MR.696458 France Near Churchun Condette S of Boulogne".

Keith's stepfather Fred and mother Doris Rumohr in Sarnia would receive a telegram from the Director of Records in Ottawa during the third week of September 1944 informing them that their son, LANCE CORPORAL KEITH BANKS WAS REPORTED MISSING IN ACTION IN FRANCE. The next day, they received another telegram from the Director of Records, this one reading: MINISTER OF NATIONAL DEFENCE DEEPLY REGRETS TO INFORM YOU THAT A50059 LANCE CORPORAL JAMES KEITH BANKS PREVIOUSLY REPORTED MISSING IN ACTION HAS NOW BEEN OFFICIALLY REPORTED KILLED IN ACTION SIXTH SEPTEMBER 1944 STOP IF ANY FURTHER INFORMATION BECOMES AVAILABLE IT WILL BE FORWARDED AS SOON AS RECEIVED.

In October 1944, Doris Rumohr on Tecumseh Street in Sarnia, received the following letter from the Brigadier, Acting Adjutant-General:

Dear Mrs. Rumohr:

It was with deep regret that I learned of the death of your son, A50059 Lance Corporal James Keith Banks, who gave his life in the Service of his Country in the Western European Theatre of War, on the 6th day of September, 1944.

From official information we have received, your son was killed in action against the enemy. You may be assured that any additional information received will be communicated to you without delay.

The Minister of National Defence and the Members of the Army Council have asked me to express to you and your family their sincere sympathy in your bereavement. We pay tribute to the sacrifice he so bravely made.

James Keith Banks was later officially recorded as, *Overseas casualty, killed in action, in the field (France)*. In October 1945, Doris Rumohr received a War Service Gratuity of \$543.26 for the loss of her son James Keith Banks.

In January 1946, Doris Rumohr received a letter from the Colonel, Director of Records, for Adjutant-General. Following is a portion of that letter:

Dear Madam,

Information has just been received from overseas that the remains of your son, A50059 Lance Corporal James Keith Banks, have been carefully exhumed from the original place of internment and reverently reburied in grave 7, row B, plot 8, of Calais Canadian Military Cemetery, St. Inglevert, France. Marked map is enclosed. This is a recognized military burial ground and will receive care and maintenance in perpetuity.

The grave will have been marked with a temporary cross which will be replaced in due course by a permanent headstone suitably inscribed. While it cannot now be stated when this work of permanent commemoration will begin, before any action is taken you will be communicated with and an opportunity will be given you to submit a short personal inscription of your own choice for engraving on the headstone...

Twenty-one-year-old (though listed in records as twenty-three years old based on Attestation Papers) James Keith Banks is buried in Calais Canadian War Cemetery, Leubringhen, France, Grave 8.B.7. On his headstone are inscribed the words, SO EASILY REMEMBERED BUT HARD TO FORGET. MAY GOD GRANT YOU, KEITH ETERNAL REST.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, J, L, N, R, 2C, 2D, 6O, 7C, 8X, 8Y

BARCLAY, James (#A/9908)

James Barclay had plans to continue with his career at the CNR after the war. While stationed in England awaiting deployment, he would have a very special visit with a family member.

James was born July 5, 1923 in Aberdeenshire, Scotland, the youngest son of George (John) and Anne Barclay, who were married in Scotland on November 18, 1923. The Barclay family moved to Sarnia when James was two years old. George and Anne Barclay resided at 512 Campbell Street, Sarnia and later R.R. #2, Sarnia. James had one brother, Alexander, who would also serve in the army during the war. James attended Johnston Memorial and Russell Street Public elementary schools, leaving school at age fifteen. He worked on farms for a time, and then worked at the Canadian National Railway in Sarnia for three years, listing himself as a labourer.

Eighteen year-old James Barclay enlisted in the Canadian Army on November 7, 1941 in London, Ontario. He stood five feet seven inches tall, had hazel eyes and brown hair, was single, and resided at home with his parents at R.R. #2, Sarnia at the time. James had expressed his desire to return to the CNR after the war, as a mechanic, and the company had promised to give him employment. James would receive army training in Kitchener (#10 Basic Training Centre), Hamilton (Canadian Army Training School), and Red Deer, Alberta (Royal Canadian Army Service Corps-RCASC). He would embark overseas for the United Kingdom on December 29, 1942, becoming a member of the Canadian Army Service Corps Reinforcement Unit (CASCRU).

James' brother Alex Barclay, with the rank of Gunner, would arrive overseas in December of 1941, with the Royal Canadian Artillery. James Barclay would arrive overseas in early January of 1943. At one time the two brothers, both in the army, would be stationed only four miles apart for six months. On one occasion, they would spend two days together. James Barclay would attain the rank of Private with the Royal Canadian Army Service Corps (RCASC).

On September 26, 1943, Private James Barclay and a Private Mallette, were travelling together on two motorcycles on a road in Tadworth, Surrey, England. They were involved in a motorcycle accident where both motorcycles crashed into a 3-ton lorry. James injuries included a fractured skull and laceration of the brain; he would die one day later, at approximately 0955 hours, as a result of his injuries. Parents George and Anne Barclay of R.R. #2 in Sarnia would receive the following telegram from the Director of Records in Ottawa on September 27: REGRET DEEPLY A9908 PRIVATE JAMES BARCLAY NOW OFFICIALLY REPORTED DIED TWENTYSEVENTH SEPTEMBER 1943 STOP FURTHER INFORMATION FOLLOWS WHEN RECEIVED.

A few days later, his parents received another telegram from Ottawa informing them that their son, PTE JAMES BARCLAY, DIED IN AN ARMY HOSPITAL OVERSEAS, FROM INJURIES SUSTAINED IN A MOTORCYCLE ACCIDENT THE PREVIOUS DAY. The telegram stated that the cause of James' death was SEVERE CRANIAL CEREBRAL INJURY DUE TO MOTORCYCLE ACCIDENT ON DUTY SUNDAY. The parents were given no details as to how or where the accident that took the life of their son occurred, nor were they given any word as to the funeral. Parents George and Anne hoped that his brother Alex would be able to attend the funeral services in England.

In early October 1943, Anne Barclay received the following letter from the Major-General, Adjutant-General:

Dear Madam:

I deeply regret to inform you that your son, A.9908 Private James Barclay, gave his life in the Service of his Country in the United Kingdom on the 27th day of September, 1943.

You may be assured that any additional information received will be communicated to you without delay. The Minister of National Defence and the members of the Army Council have asked me to express to you and your family their sincere sympathy in your bereavement. We pay tribute to the sacrifice he so bravely made.

In the court inquiry held shortly after the accident, it was determined that Pte. Barclay and Pte. Mallette, both who were on motorcycles and on duty, were travelling at an excessive rate of speed. The two motorcyclists had

rounded a curve and then collided with the lorry that was turning on to the road. Pte. Barclay died in the accident and Pte. Mallette was seriously injured. Later, James Barclay's death certificate would record his cause of death as: *fractured skull, laceration of the brain, severe cranial cerebral injury due to motorcycle accident while on duty*. In July 1945, his parents received a War Service Gratuity of \$255.86 for the loss of their son.

In September 1946, Anne Barclay in Sarnia would receive from the Colonel, Director of Records, a photograph of the grave and marker over James' burial place in Surrey, England. Twenty year-old James Barclay is buried in Brookwood Military Cemetery, Surrey, United Kingdom, Grave 45.J.10. On his headstone are inscribed the words, AT PEACE IN JESUS' ARMS SAFE AND SECURE FROM ALL HARMS.

One year after James Barclay's death, the following In Memorium was printed in the *Sarnia Observer*:
In loving memory of our dear son and brother, Pte. James Barclay, who died in England one year ago today, September 27, 1943.

*Had he asked us, well we know
We should cry "O spare this blow."
Yes, with streaming tears should pray;
"Lord, we love him; let him stay."*

Sadly missed by Father, Mother and brother Alex (overseas).

Barclay Drive in Sarnia is named in his memory.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 6O, 7Y, 8X, 8Y

BARR, William John (#J/92196)

William John Barr had just turned eighteen when he decided to serve his country. He would lose his life in defence of freedom as a member of RAF Bomber Command in the early days of the advance at Normandy, as Allied forces liberated villages and towns in France.

He was born at Sarnia General Hospital on May 11, 1924, the son of Joseph William and Edith Isabella (nee Chester) Barr, of 260 Devine Street, Sarnia. Joseph and Edith Barr were married in Detroit, Michigan on January 7, 1906. William Barr had two sisters and one brother at the time of his death. His sisters were Leona Marie (born 1906, who became Mrs. Robert J. Weston), residing at 214 Confederation Street; and Pauline Jessie (born 1907), who became Second Lieutenant Pauline Jessie Barr serving with the U.S. Army as a nurse in Port Huron. His brother, Donald Alexander (born 1909) also resided at 214 Confederation Street, Sarnia, with his sister Leona.

William John Barr was educated at Devine Street and St. Joseph elementary schools, and was a member of St. Joseph's Catholic Parish, Sarnia. William would attend Sarnia Collegiate Institute, from September 1937 to 1942, graduating at age eighteen. He participated in basketball, swimming and handball, and was a member of the Lambton Garrison Band since 1940, where he played the French horn. At the age of sixteen, William would lose his father, a former railroad employee, who would die on December 22, 1940 at the age of 62.

William Barr enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force on May 14, 1942, in Sarnia, three days following his eighteenth birthday. He attended high school until mid-June 1942 and accepted odd jobs until he was called to serve in July 1942. He stood five feet eight and a half inches tall, had gray eyes and brown hair, was single, and resided at home on Devine Street with his mother at the time. His plan for after the war was to attend university. The RCAF officer that interviewed William at enlistment wrote of William, *Better than average material in every respect. Keen to become a Pilot and willing to work.*

Initially posted to #1 Manning Depot (Toronto), William Barr would receive air training at #6 Initial Training School (ITS Toronto), #4 Bombing and Gunnery School (BGS Fingal), #4 Air Observer's School (AOS London), #1 Air Gunner's Ground Training School (AGGTS Quebec) and #9 Bombing and Gunnery School (BGS Mont-Joli, Quebec). William was awarded his Air Gunner's Badge on September 3, 1943. Several months earlier, in June 1943, William spent a brief furlough at home with his widowed-mother Edith on Devine Street. It would be exactly one year after his last leave in Sarnia, that William would lose his life overseas. On October 8, 1943, William Barr would embark overseas from New York for the United Kingdom.

William would arrive at RAF Bournemouth, and was soon posted to No. 16 Operational Training Unit (OTU), and later to 1654 Heavy Conversion Unit (HCU). On May 25, 1944, William Barr would become a member of RAF #630 Squadron "Nocturna Mors" (Death by Night), part of **Bomber Command**, with the rank of Pilot Officer-Air Gunner. During his time in England, he wrote regularly to his widowed-mother, Edith, insisting that he wasn't flying combat missions, because she feared for his life.



Air Gunner's Course

BACK L to R: Gray (Sask), Barron B. (Guelph), Anderson (Man), Johnson (Man), Lough R. (Belleville), Beattie A.N. (Montreal)

FRONT L to R: Fisher J. (Ottawa), Reesor D. (Kitchener), Rodgers (Montreal, Missing 25-1-44), **William Barr**, Lunnnon (Sask), Stirling J. (Montreal)

During the course of the war, one of this country's most significant contributions was the approximately 50,000 Canadians who served with the RCAF and RAF in Bomber Command operations. Next to Britain, Canada was the largest contributor to Bomber Command, making up more than a third of all of Bomber Command personnel. The men who served in Bomber Command faced some of the most difficult odds of anyone fighting in the war.

The **Battle of Normandy** would begin for the Canadians with the June 6, 1944 D-Day landings at Juno Beach. After breaching the "Atlantic Wall" of "Fortress Europe", Allied armies with the support of the navy and air force, began their break out from the narrow Normandy bridgehead to carve out a foothold on the French mainland. It would take a whole summer of tenacious fighting, pushing against fierce and ruthless German forces to advance east across France.

No. 630 Squadron was formed in November 1943 based at RAF East Kirkby, Lincolnshire, and was equipped with Avro Lancaster aircraft, the British four-engine heavy bomber. Between November 18, 1943 and April 25, 1945, the squadron took part in many major raids, including each of the 16 big raids made by Bomber Command on the German capital during what became known as the "Battle of Berlin".

On June 9, 1944, only three days after the D-Day landings, William Barr was part of a seven-member crew aboard Lancaster aircraft PB121 (markings LE-F) that took off from its base at East Kirkby at 21.48 hours. The night operation's target was to bomb the rail junction at Etaples, France. Sometime during the night of June 9/10th, after a long-running battle with a night-fighter, the aircraft was hit, burst into flames and crashed over the Etaples target, near Omerville (Val d'Oise), which is about 34 miles northwest of Paris. Six of the crew members were killed and buried in a plot of ground approximately 100 yards behind the Mairie at Omerville, France, Grave No. 3. One member of the crew, F/O D.C. Percy was taken Prisoner of War. Perishing with Pilot Officer-Air Gunner William Barr were P/O Russell Edward Dennis; Claud Morley Houghton (RAF); and Sgt.s William James Bott (RAF), John Charles Cameron (RAF) and Horace Ison (RAF).

In mid-June 1944, Edith Barr in Sarnia received a telegram from the Director of Records in Ottawa advising her that her son, SERGEANT WILLIAM J. BARR HAS BEEN REPORTED MISSING AFTER AN OPERATIONAL FLIGHT ON JUNE 10. Also in mid-June 1944, Edith Barr received a letter from the Wing Commander of R.A.F. Station, East Kirkby. Following is a portion of that letter:

Dear Mrs. Barr,

Before you receive this letter you will have been notified by the Air Ministry that your Son, Sergeant William J. Barr, was a member of an aircraft of this Squadron which failed to return from an operational mission last night

and it is with deep regret that I have to write to confirm this.

The aircraft was detailed to take part in operations against the enemy but, as is usual, radio silence was maintained after take-off and therefore it is not possible to determine the cause of its failure to return.

Your son was a most capable Air Gunner and a member of an excellent crew who had carried out operations against the enemy successfully. I have every confidence in the Captain, Flight Sergeant Houghton, who would, I know do everything in his power to ensure the safety of his crew both in the air and on the ground in the event of a forced landing. There is, of course, the possibility that the crew were able to abandon the aircraft and land safely in enemy territory. If, as we all sincerely hope, this was the case, then news will reach you from the International Red Cross Committee. May I express the very sincere sympathy which I personally and all members of my Squadron feel for you during this most distressing and anxious time...



Pilot Officer-Air Gunner William John Barr

In mid-July 1944, Sgt. William Barr's name would appear on the Department of National Defense for Air casualty list as, *missing on active service after air operations overseas*.

In early February of 1945, his mother received notification from Ottawa informing her that her son, Sergeant William J. Barr, missing since June of 1944, *has been promoted to the rank of Pilot Officer by the R.C.A.F.* The promotion dated back to June 8. In mid-May 1945, three months after receiving the promotion notification, and one week after VE Day ending the war in Europe, Edith received a telegram from Ottawa informing her that her son, PO. WILLIAM BARR, R.C.A.F. WAS KILLED IN ACTION OVER OMERVILLE, FRANCE ON JUNE 10 LAST. Though reported missing shortly after June 10, 1944, this was the first official word of his death to reach his family.

William Barr was later officially recorded as; *Previously reported missing in action after air operations, now for official purposes, presumed dead, overseas (France)*. Twenty year-old William Barr is buried in Omerville Communal Cemetery, Seine-et-Oise, France, Coll. Grave 3. On his headstone are inscribed the words, ETERNAL REST GRANT UNTO HIM, O LORD; MAY HIS SOUL REST IN PEACE.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, J, L, M, N, R, 2C, 2D, 3J, 6O, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10B, 10U

BELL, Isaac George (#A/50270)

Isaac (Ike) Bell, as a teenager with plans to work at Imperial, enlisted in the army to serve his country. He would give his life in the advance at Normandy as Allied forces liberated villages and towns across France.

Isaac was born on December 28, 1920, the only son of George Issac (occupation Janitor) and Sylvia Gladys (nee Ellis) Bell, of 467 ½ Nelson Street, Sarnia. George and Sylvia Bell were married in Sarnia on August 1, 1912. Isaac was born on his father's farm in Dawn Township, and the family moved to Sarnia in 1929. Isaac was the youngest in the family and had three sisters: Rachael Daisy (born 1910), Alma Eva (born 1913) and Catherine (born 1914). Isaac attended public schools in Sarnia and prior to enlisting he was employed as a sailor for seven months, and then in the Sarnia Fish and Chip Shop and the Park Meat Market. At some point before Isaac enlisted, his mother

Sylvia would pass away.

Nineteen year-old Isaac Bell enlisted in the Canadian Army on August 14, 1940 in Chatham, Ontario, becoming a member of the Kent Regiment. He stood five feet five and a half inches tall, had blue eyes and red hair, was single, and he recorded his occupation as being a sailor for three years. His plan for after the war was to gain employment with Imperial Oil Limited in Sarnia. Isaac would receive his army training in Chatham, London, Halifax, Niagara-on-the-Lake and New Westminster, British Columbia. He would embark overseas for the United Kingdom on May 1, 1942, where he would be attached to the Canadian Division Infantry Reinforcement Unit (CDIRU). In July 1942, Isaac would become a member of the Highland Light Infantry, R.C.I.C., with the rank of Private.

Isaac Bell would continue his training in the U.K., and rise to the rank of Lance Corporal. He embarked, as a member of the Highland Light Infantry of Canada, from the U.K. in early June 1944, arriving in France on June 6, 1944 – **D-Day**. His father George Bell in Sarnia, would receive a letter from Isaac not long after the Normandy landings. George Bell said that in the last letter he received from Isaac, his son stated that he had not had his uniform off in 18 days.



Corporal Isaac George Bell

The **Battle of Normandy** would begin for the Canadians with the June 6, 1944 D-Day landings at Juno Beach. After breaching the “Atlantic Wall” of “Fortress Europe”, Allied armies began their break out from the narrow Normandy bridgehead to carve out a foothold on the French mainland. It would take a whole summer of tenacious fighting, pushing against fierce and ruthless German forces to advance east across France. In a brutal campaign of attrition, the Canadians faced fierce battles and vicious counterattacks as they clawed their way forward liberating villages and towns including Bretteville, Carpiquet, Caen and Falaise.

Corporal Isaac Bell would lose his life on July 8, 1944, killed in action during the Battle of Normandy. His remains were buried at a location recorded on the Army Field Service Card as “MR 987813 Beny-Sur-Mer, France”. On July 13, 1944, Isaac Bell’s name would appear in the *Canadian (Sarnia) Observer* as “is now with the D-Day invasion forces in France.” Approximately one week later, his widowed-father George would receive the following telegram from the Director of Records in Ottawa; MINISTER OF NATIONAL DEFENCE DEEPLY REGRETS TO INFORM YOU THAT A50270, ACTING LANCE CORPORAL ISAAC GEORGE BELL HAS BEEN OFFICIALLY REPORTED KILLED IN ACTION EIGHTH JULY 1944 STOP IF ANY FURTHER INFORMATION BECOMES AVAILABLE IT WILL BE FORWARDED AS SOON AS RECEIVED.

At the end of July 1944, George Bell received the following letter from the Major-General, Adjutant-General:

Dear Mr. Bell:

It is with deep regret that I learned of the death of your son A50270 Acting Lance Corporal Isaac George Bell who gave his life in the Service of his country in France on the 8th day of July, 1944. From official information we have received, your son was killed in action against the enemy. You may be assured that any additional

information received will be communicated to you without delay.

The Minister of National Defence and the members of the Army Council have asked me to express to you and your family their sincere sympathy in your bereavement. We pay tribute to the sacrifice he so bravely made.

Isaac Bell and another Sarnian, Private Frederick Birkinshaw (included in this project), both lost their lives on July 8, 1944 while fighting with their Canadian Army units in France, during the Battle of Normandy. Isaac Bell was later officially recorded as, *Overseas casualty, killed in action, in the field (France)*. At the time of his death, he was survived by his widowed-father George, an employee of Electric Auto-Lite Limited and his three sisters: Mrs. Perry (Catherine) Ferns of Cecil Street; Mrs. Edward (Alma) Cuthbert of South Mitton Street; and Mrs. Daisy Reynolds of Devine Street, Sarnia. In October 1945, George Bell would receive a War Service Gratuity of \$507.74 for the loss of his only son Isaac.

In January 1946, George Bell received a letter from the Colonel, Director of Records, for Adjutant-General. Following is a portion of that letter:

Dear Sir,

Information has just been received from overseas that the remains of your son, A50270 Lance Corporal Isaac George Bell, have been carefully exhumed from the original place of internment and reverently reburied in grave 1, row C, plot 15, Beny-sur-Mer Canadian Military Cemetery, Beny-sur-Mer, France. Marked map is enclosed. This is a recognized military burial ground and will receive care and maintenance in perpetuity.

The grave will have been marked with a temporary cross which will be replaced in due course by a permanent headstone suitably inscribed. While it cannot now be stated when this work of permanent commemoration will begin, before any action is taken you will be communicated with and an opportunity will be given you to submit a short personal inscription of your own choice for engraving on the headstone...

Twenty-three-year-old Isaac Bell is buried in Beny-Sur-Mer Canadian War Cemetery, Reviers, France, Grave XV.C.1. On his headstone are inscribed the words, I HAVE FOUGHT A GOOD FIGHT. I HAVE FINISHED MY COURSE. I HAVE KEPT THE FAITH.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, J, L, N, 2C, 2D, 6O, 7C, 8X, 8Y

BELL, Joseph Griffiths (#V/35750)

Joseph “Joe” Bell, athletic and young, twice risked his life to save others before he was later killed in action in 1943. The death of their only son left a void for parents Joseph and Edith in Sarnia.

He was born in Brantford, Ontario on February 18, 1922, the only child of Navy Lieutenant Joe “Griff” and Edith Laura Bell, who grew up at 144 Davis Street, Sarnia. His parents had been married in Woodstock on September 17, 1917, five years before Joe’s birth and, at some point, the family moved to Sarnia. Joe was a talented young man. He received his education at Brantford, at Sarnia public schools, and at Sarnia Collegiate. As well, he was a member of Central United Church and of the Central Century Club. With the latter, he played softball and basketball, but his athleticism shone at SCITS. At Sarnia Collegiate, he was an outstanding all-round athlete who starred in high school football, in WOSSAA basketball and rugby, and in boxing and wrestling. He was also on the school’s track, shooting and swimming teams, and was a member of the Boy’s Athletic Association at Sarnia Collegiate. His talents weren’t confined to sports. Joe wrote Sarnia Collegiate news for the *Canadian (Sarnia) Observer*. In October 1940, prior to enlisting, Joe became a banker employed with the Canadian Bank of Commerce in the Sarnia and Parkhill branches, as Senior Ledger Keeper. The bank granted him a leave of absence for him to enlist.

The men in the Bell family had much in common. They were, for instance, both eager to do their duty. In an unusual twist, Joe “Griff” Bell would follow his son by joining the navy in August of 1943. The navy was a natural fit for him, for “Griff” had been active in marine affairs for years; for example, at the Sarnia Yacht Club during its early history, his main hobby was building outboards, motorboats and sailboats. His shop was situated in the building known as the *H.M.C.S. Repulse*, the local Sea Cadet headquarters at the corner of Front and Johnston Streets. Like his son, “Griff” Bell was talented. Prior to coming to Sarnia, “Griff” was a member of the Brantford Symphony. In Sarnia, he was a drummer and xylophone soloist with the Lambton Garrison Band and a member of the Devine Street United Church Sunday School orchestra. To join the navy, he was granted leave of absence by the Ontario Hydro Electric Power Commission, where he had been employed for 31 years. “Griff” Bell would be a Lieutenant in the special branch of the Supervising Naval Engineers’ Department, Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve, stationed at Deep Brook, Nova Scotia.

Prior to joining the navy, Joe Bell had attempted to enlist in the air force, but was unsuccessful. Eager to serve, Joe, age 20, was successful in enlisting in the Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve on May 4, 1942, in Windsor, Ontario. He stood five feet ten inches tall, had blue eyes and brown hair, and was single. When he enlisted he was residing at his parents' Davis Street home. Joe's navy training was rather extensive. It included serving on a number of establishments and ships: the *HMCS Hunter* (Windsor); *HMCS St. Hyacinthe* (Quebec); *HMCS Stadacona* (Halifax); and the *HMCS Avalon* (St. John's, Nfld.). He was also posted on the Corvette *HMCS Morden (K170)* on the North Atlantic convoy for approximately one month in November-December 1942. Ironically, the *Morden* would later be involved in rescue operations involving the ship on which Joe Bell would lose his life.

Beginning on the opening day of the Second World War, the **Battle of the Atlantic** would be the longest continuous campaign of the war, and one in which Canada played a central role. The Royal Canadian Navy, along with the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) and Canada's Merchant Navy, played a vital role in defending the country's eastern coast and escorting convoys of ships carrying men and essential machinery, arms, fuel and basic resources between North America and Europe.

Joe's athleticism served him well in two situations that occurred within two months of each other. An article, dated December 14, 1942 in the *Canadian Observer*, provided details about an attack on a merchant ship that occurred on October 22nd. On that date, the German submarine *U-443* had torpedoed the Canadian Pacific Steamships cargo and passenger vessel *Winnipeg II* as it was en route from Liverpool to St. John, New Brunswick. Joe Bell was a member of the gallant crew of the Corvette *HMCS Morden* that rescued the approximately 200 crew members and passengers of the torpedoed merchant ship. Everyone aboard was rescued before the *Winnipeg II* sank--from the crew and the adult passengers to the children, including a 7-month old baby. Though the *Morden* had living quarters for only 60 persons, the crew somehow managed to find space for the 200 survivors before it docked in St. John's Atlantic port. Later, on December 12 when he was stationed in Newfoundland, Joe suffered second-degree burns when he helped rescue several people from a disastrous fire that swept the Knights of Columbus Hostel in St. John's.

Though Joe's parents in Sarnia were pleased to learn that their son participated in the rescue, they were still worried. They had been reading the dispatches from St. John's, Newfoundland that described the ravaging fire that had destroyed the K. of C. hostel. Reportedly, a large number of service men had lost their lives. Mr. and Mrs. Bell in Sarnia anxiously awaited further news about their son Joe, fervently hoping that their son's ship had not been docked in St. John's. Only days after the fire, Joe's mother Edith in Sarnia would receive the following registered letter from the Secretary of the Naval Board:

Dear Mrs. Bell,

I regret I must confirm the telegram of the 14th of December from the Minister of National Defence for Naval Services informing you that your son, Joseph Griffiths Bell, Ordinary Coder, O.N. V35750, Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve, has been admitted to hospital in St. John's, Newfoundland suffering from injuries.

According to reports received, your son was one of a large number of Service personnel who were being entertained in the Knights of Columbus Hostel in St. John's when that building was completely destroyed by fire late in the evening of Saturday, 12th December.

While the extent of his injuries is not known, you may rest assured that your son is receiving the best possible medical care and you will be notified immediately of any change in his condition.

The fire in the hostel was devastating for two reasons. Ninety-nine people died and many more were burned horribly, including Joe Bell who spent time convalescing in a St. John's hospital. Beyond the deaths and injuries, however, were the suspicious circumstances of the tragedy. The fire occurred on a Saturday night when the K. of C. hostel was crowded, for it was a gathering place for Newfoundland civilians and U.S. servicemen based on the island. Wartime blackout regulations meant that plywood shutters covered the windows, thus preventing light from escaping into the inky night. Those shutters became death traps for the hundreds of people scrambling to get out through the smoke and flames in the auditorium. Investigators concluded that the fire had been deliberately set, likely enemy sabotage orchestrated by agents of Nazi Germany. The hostel tragedy was one of many suspicious fires in St. John's that winter.

In early February 1943, nearly two months after the fire, Edith Bell had still not heard any more information about her sons' condition. She wrote the following letter to the Secretary of the Naval Board:

Dear Sir,

On December 14th we were advised by telegram from your office, that our son Joe Griffiths Bell... was

injured in the St. John's K. of C. fire and admitted to the Naval Hospital there. In a letter which followed two days later, you stated that you did not know the extent of his injuries. Now, with the exception of one letter written by our son about the Dec 22, we have not received any communication from Naval authorities, Naval Hospital, no, not even a chaplain. Naturally we are very much concerned. Civilian morale is of paramount importance at this time. The citizens of our country are entitled to the utmost consideration in cases such as this. We have tried to be patient but at a loss to know, why we are not further advised as to his condition. After seven (7) weeks we feel that we are perfectly within our rights in asking for full particulars as to our sons condition. Thanking you in anticipation of an early reply...

Following is a portion of the response from the Secretary of the Naval Board she received later that month:

... I am directed to inform you that the department has received no information concerning your son... The injuries which he sustained in the Knights of Columbus Hostel fire were not of a sufficiently serious nature to warrant his being placed on the seriously ill or dangerously ill lists and in the absence of further reports, it must be presumed that he is progressing satisfactorily.

Under the stress of wartime conditions it is not possible to render individual reports on Naval personnel confined to hospital and it is only cases of serious or dangerous illness that such reports are received...

Joe did not report for active duty for three months. He spent almost three weeks recuperating in hospital and even played basketball for the Naval Basketball Team. On April 16, 1943, he was posted on the Canadian destroyer *HMCS St. Croix* with the rank of Coder. In a letter to his mother not long after that, Joe told of being transferred to a destroyer, but did not name the boat. He also told of his enjoyable visit to Scotland, a country he spoke of in glowing terms and his expectation of being home on furlough shortly.



Navy Coder Joseph Griffiths Bell

The Canadian Town Class destroyer *HMCS St. Croix* (181) operated in the North Atlantic. Aboard the same ship was Ordinary Telegraphist Robert C. Rigby (included in this project), and Stoker Second Class William Norman Roder of Arkona. The *St. Croix* was one of the “four-stacker” destroyers acquired by Great Britain from the United States Navy in September 1940, in exchange for sites for air and naval bases on British territory in the Atlantic area (she was formerly the *U.S.S. McCook*). The *St. Croix* and six other destroyers, transferred to the Royal Canadian Navy at the time, were manned immediately by Canadian crews and performed invaluable service on Atlantic convoy duty. Of note, one of those transferred destroyers was the *St. Clair*. Despite repeated problems with minor equipment failures, the *HMCS St. Croix* had put to sea time and time again and distinguished herself in the early days of the Battle of the Atlantic. Guarding vital convoys and patrolling for German submarines, she was credited with two U-boat kills (*U-90* in late July 1942 and *U-87* in early March 1943) and picked up many survivors of German U-boat attacks on Allied ships. The *St. Croix* was to be the first of the destroyers to be lost.

In August 1943 *St. Croix* was transferred from the Mid-Ocean Escort Force (MOEF) to the Royal Navy's Western Approaches Command. Along with the RCN Town Class destroyer *St. Francis* and the RCN corvettes *Chambly*, *Morden* and *Sackville*, the *St. Croix* became part of Escort Group 9, a support group of North Atlantic

convoys. The support groups were designed to reinforce the close escort of endangered convoys or to hunt submarines in mid-ocean and kill them.

In mid-September, Escort Group 9 was ordered to reinforce Escort Groups B 3 and C 2, which were guarding the westbound convoys ONS-18 and ON-202, respectively. ONS-18, the slower convoy, had sailed from the United Kingdom on September 13; the faster ONS-202 had departed several days later on a similar track and was now approaching the south of Iceland, just behind the first convoy. At sea, a patrol line of U-boats awaited. On September 20, after the Admiralty picked up increasing signs of a German submarine concentration, they ordered the two convoys to merge, a combined assemblage of 63 merchant ships. As the convoys closed their gap, the escorts were picking up U-boat signals. Undoubtedly, the U-boats were gathering in large numbers and the wolf pack was maneuvering into position for a night attack. They were about to measure the success of their newest “secret weapon”, the Gnat acoustic torpedo. Fired in the direction of the intended victim, the Gnat was designed to circle until it picked up the appropriate propeller noise, then hone in on it.



Town Class Destroyer *HMCS St. Croix 181*

Escort Group 9 took up outer screening positions ahead and astern of the merchant ships, on the port (south) side of the convoy. Unfortunately, as the collection of escorts and merchant vessels headed west, fog and rain engulfed them. On the night of September 20, *St. Croix* was on station to the rear of the merging convoys when it was ordered to proceed farther astern to check out a possible U-boat sighting reported by an orbiting Coastal Command aircraft. In the gathering gloom, *St. Croix* turned eastward and headed back along the convoy track, zigzagging at 24 knots. As it approached the spot where the sighting was reported, her captain ordered the *St. Croix* to begin an asdic sweep.

At 9:51 pm, the German U-boat *U-305* struck the *HMCS St. Croix* with two Gnat torpedoes near her port propellers. With the two massive explosions, the ship glided to a stop and listed immediately and uncontrollably. To the British frigate *HMS Itchen*, a few miles away, she sent the cryptic message, “*Am leaving the office.*” It was the last word from *St. Croix*. Seconds later, a third electrically directed torpedo, the final blow, hit the stern of the *St. Croix*. A tremendous explosion occurred, flames shot into the air, and within three minutes, the *St. Croix* was gone. Eighty-one members of her crew remained on life rafts and Carley floats, clinging to whatever they could.

Two RN ships from the escort force, the *HMS Itchen* and the RN corvette *Polyanthus*, rushed to the area, to see what had taken place and what could be done. The frigate *HMS Itchen* signaled: “*St. Croix torpedoed and blown up. Forecastle still afloat. Survivors in rafts and boats. Torpedoes fired at me. Doing full speed in vicinity. Will not attempt to P.U. survivors until Polyanthus arrives.*” But the RN corvette *Polyanthus* was herself torpedoed by *U-952* just after midnight. It sank rapidly with the loss of all hands save one. *Itchen* then had to become involved in attempting to locate the attacking U-boat. Later, in the foggy daylight of September 21, the *Itchen* was eventually able to pick up one *Polyanthus* survivor and 81 *St. Croix* survivors, but only after they had been in the very cold water for thirteen hours. Most of those lost had perished in the sea after abandoning the ship.

The few hours of rescue came to an ironic and bitter end two days later. On September 23, 1943 at approximately 2:00 am, the German U-boat *U-666*, using a Gnat torpedo, struck the *HMS Itchen*. Apparently hit in its’ magazine, the *Itchen* exploded with an ear-splitting roar and a spectacular display of pyrotechnics and then

vanished into the sea. Only three men survived this time: two from the *Itchen* and one from the *St. Croix*, 23-year old Stoker William Allan Fisher of Black Diamond, Alberta. In total, 147 lives were lost from the *St. Croix*, including twenty-one year-old Joseph Bell.



Last known photograph of the *St. Croix* ship's company
St. John's, Newfoundland May 30, 1943



Toronto Daily Star October 1, 1943

In October 1943, the sole survivor of the *St. Croix*, Stoker William A. Fisher, told his story in a newspaper account. Following is a portion of his account:

We were part of an escort detailed to a large convoy. We received a signal that submarines were about. We stayed astern of the convoy, but on September 20, we had come up and take on oil from a tanker in the convoy. On our way back to our position we saw a Canadian four-motored Liberator signaling us. We were told that they spotted a submarine and dropped depth charges. We flashed two boilers and made for the spot at 24 knots. As we neared, we had to reduce speed. As we slowed up we were hit in the screws. Fisher said there was no panic and no one thought of abandoning ship. But in two minutes another torpedo struck, this time near the mess deck, and water began to pour in. The captain, Lieutenant Commander Dobson, then issued orders to abandon ship.

Some men were injured by the explosions which followed the torpedoes; some were burned and cut. They were put in the motor launch before it was lowered over the side. The motor boat pulled away. Meanwhile attempts were made to lower a 60-passenger oar-driven whaler... Carley floats were dumped over the side and the men began jumping into the water. *No one seemed worried then, many of the crew laughed that they would be due for 29 day survivors' leave.* The rowboat pulled away from the sinking destroyer, and picked men out of the water. *Even then I thought the ship would be saved. Then I saw the captain dive off the boat. I knew everyone was off then and that the captain had given up hope.*

Fisher was in charge of the motor boat. *No one in the boats died during the night. It was morning that everything happened. Men on the Carley floats insisted on getting into the rowboat. As the men got in, it settled lower in the water. Just before the rescue ship came along, it sank. The whaler did not have any injured men aboard. They were oil-grimed and cold. I saw men who were tough, big men. They hung out all night in the hope a boat would pick them up. Then when the boat did not come into view they died. I guess they couldn't hang out any longer. We dropped them into the sea.*

Sixty men were still alive on the whaler. The ship that headed to their rescue was the Royal Navy frigate *Itchen*, completed last September. As the frigate steamed through the lifting morning mist, the men in the whaler received the signal that the *Itchen* would come directly to their rescue. As the *Itchen* neared, a torpedo was seen to explode 30 yards to her stern. A message was flashed to the *Polyanthus*, a corvette of the Flower class, to come out of the convoy escort and circle the *Itchen* while the men were taken aboard. *The Polyanthus was just coming in and she was struck. I guess she went down in about 10 minutes. We rescued 10 men in our whaler. The Itchen headed for the convoy.... On September 2, two days after we were rescued, we were ordered to our action stations because submarines were around. We had three orders. The first started at 6 at night. There was another one at 7 and again at 9. At 9 o'clock I was standing beside the funnel when a torpedo struck. I was knocked 30 feet and landed against a gun platform. As I crawled toward the rail I kept yelling for my pal... He didn't answer and I jumped over the side. As I hit the water there was another explosion and I felt that my stomach was being squeezed through my ears. The water just cracked. When he reached down to tug off his boots, his left boot was missing. It had been blown off.*

Fisher grabbed a board and looked to see other men jumping from the ship. Most of them drowned. A Carley float drifted by and Fisher jumped on. During the night others jumped on, but most of them died.

In late September of 1943, Edith Bell in Sarnia would receive a cable from the Navy informing her that her son, JOE GRIFFITHS BELL, R.C.N., HAS BEEN REPORTED MISSING AT SEA. Father Lieut. J. Griff Bell, who was a member of the Royal Canadian Navy Volunteer Reserve, was away from home in Cornwallis when the news arrived in Sarnia. For parents Griff and Edith Bell, the last thing they knew was that Joe was aboard a destroyer. It was not until October 1, 1943 that the Honourable Angus L. MacDonald, the Minister of National Defence for Naval Services officially announced the sinking of the destroyer *St. Croix*. No details of the sinking were released, other than the list of names of 147 men who lost their lives. Included in the list were Surgeon-Lieutenant William Lyon MacKenzie King, nephew of the prime minister; Ordinary Telegraphist Robert Charles Rigby (a Sarnia-connection, and included in this Project); Stoker Second Class William Norman Roder of Arkona; and Sarnian Coder Joseph Griffiths Bell.

Joe's death was officially recorded as, *loss of H.M.C. ship, at sea*. The sinking of the *St. Croix* was the heaviest single loss suffered by the R.C.N. in the war. Within weeks of this incident, the Royal Navy and the Royal Canadian Navy began to equip their escorts with towed decoy devices to counter the homing torpedoes – the British used Foxer, and the Canadians utilized the simpler and lighter CAT gear – thus effectively neutralizing one of Germany's most important new innovations.

In early January of 1945, a morning service was held in Central United Church, Sarnia, to honour the memory of Coder Joseph Griffith Bell, lost at sea in September of 1943, and Private Melvin Fisher, killed in action in Italy in December of 1944 (included in this Project). Both men were members of the congregation. The Rev. E.W. Jewitt extended the sympathy of all the congregation to the bereaved parents, and voiced the hope for a just and enduring peace. In July 1945, parents Joe "Griff" and Edith Bell received a War Service Gratuity of \$189.85 for the loss of their only child in war.

Twenty-one-year-old Joseph Griffiths Bell has no known grave. His name is inscribed is on the Halifax Memorial, Nova Scotia, Canada, Panel 10. On the Sarnia cenotaph, his name is inscribed as J.C. Bell.
SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, J, L, N, P, S, T, U, X, Z, 2A, 2C, 2D, 6O, 6Z, 7C, 8X, 8Y

BERGER, Max (#A/56551)

Max Berger is one of five of Sarnia's fallen who has a street named for him. One of many Canadians killed in the vicious Battle of Hong Kong in 1941, Private Berger has no known grave.

He was born in Sarnia on November 6, 1919, the son of Morris and Regina Berger of 167 Davis St., Sarnia. The Bergers had two other children besides Max: a son, Joseph and a daughter, Laura. The patriarch, Morris, was born in Geszterid, Hungary around 1862 and he married Regina in Hungary in 1902.

The Bergers immigrated to New York in 1902 and then moved to Michigan. By 1914, they were residing at 167 Davis Street. Morris was a shoemaker by trade who operated out of his home. Max grew up in Sarnia and attended three years at Sarnia Collegiate and, as the Bergers were a Jewish family, was active in Canadian Young Judaea. After graduation, he worked for Maidment's Taxi, was later employed at St. Thomas as an electrician for six months, and worked as an assistant manager at a Toronto fish and chips shop for over two years. While serving as a Private with the Elgin Regiment Militia (from July 1940), Max, 21, decided to enlist. With the Elgins, he would receive training at #11 Militia Training Centre in Woodstock and then #1 District Depot in London, Ontario. Sadly, his mother, Regina, passed away before he enlisted in Windsor.

It was on March 26, 1941 that Berger enlisted in the Canadian Army. At that time, he stood five feet four inches tall, had brown eyes and dark brown hair, and was single. He recorded his occupation as an electrician who was residing at the family home on Davis Street. From the Army District Depot in Windsor, he would receive training at Canadian Army Training School (CATS) in Hamilton, where he was qualified as an electrician. In mid-October 1941, he was transferred to #2 District Depot in Toronto, becoming a member of the Royal Canadian Army Service Corps (RCASC), Headquarters "C" Force with the rank of Private.

Max's first overseas assignment was an important one. On October 27, 1941, he was part of a force of 1,975 Canadians who embarked from Vancouver, B.C. for Hong Kong to help defend the isolated Crown Colony. While on board the ship to Hong Kong, Max wrote a letter home in November 1941. It would be the last time the Bergers would hear from Max.



Private Max Berger

The size of the Canadian force signified the urgency of their mission. The Canadian Hong Kong force comprised two battalions: the Winnipeg Grenadiers and the Royal Rifles of Canada. It also included a brigade headquarters group and various specialist details (including a signal section, two medical officers, two nursing sisters and three chaplains). The Canadian force would be a part of 14,000 Allied troops (also from the United Kingdom, Hong Kong, China and India) who were tasked to defend the island of Hong Kong and the adjacent mainland areas.

It would be a difficult and almost impossible task for two reasons. First, the Canadian battalions had no battle experience when they arrived at Hong Kong on November 16, 1941. It was felt that the Canadian soldiers would have some time in Hong Kong to get more training. Instead, they became the first Canadian soldiers to fight as a unit in the Second World War when Japan attacked almost simultaneously Pearl Harbour, Northern Malaya, the Phillippines, Guam, Wake Island and Hong Kong.

The **Battle of Hong Kong** began when the Japanese attacked the Colony's mainland positions on December 8 (December 7 in North America), less than 8 hours after the attack on Pearl Harbour. The attack forced all Allied mainland troops to withdraw to the island. It was here that the first Canadian infantryman to die in World War II was killed. Private John Gray was captured and executed by the Japanese on December 13, 1941 in Hong Kong. On December 18, the Japanese crossed the one kilometer narrow passage from the mainland to the island of Hong Kong. The invasion force of battle-toughened troops was overwhelming in strength and backed with a heavy arsenal of artillery and air support. Heavily outnumbered, the Allied troops had no significant air or naval defence and had no hope of being relieved or resupplied. The Canadians performed valiantly and held out for as long as possible.

Max Berger spent the early part of the battle delivering supplies to frontline units with a dwindling pool of motor transport, including local taxis. When it became impossible to continue their supply activities, Max's unit became a part of an adhoc unit of Royal Canadian Army Service Corps. They then joined another scratch force comprising Royal Canadian Army Ordinance troops who were holding the north end of what was called the Ridge position. The Ridge position was the only link between the two main British positions and, if it were lost, the Allied formations would be split in two. The fighting for the position was fierce and, faced with overwhelming odds, the British forces tried to pull back on December 18th. It took them two tries and they succeeded the second time. Sometime between December 19th and 22nd, Private Max Berger and Corporal Albert Jackson of the Royal Canadian Army Service Corps were killed, along with Corporal G.G. Desroches, Staff Sergeant G. Jackman and Private F.C. McGuire of the Royal Canadian Army Ordinance troops.

On Christmas Day, 1941, after 17 ½ days of fighting, the British Colony was surrendered. Even before the battle had officially ended, Canadians would endure great hardships at the hands of their Japanese captors. On December 24, the Japanese overran a makeshift hospital in Hong Kong, assaulting and murdering nurses and bayoneting wounded Canadian soldiers in their beds. The fall of Hong Kong marked the end of the Canadian Army's first combat action in the Second World War, and was the only significant action in Canadian military history in which 100 percent losses were inflicted—not a man escaped either capture or a grave. The Canadian Army's

significant losses included: 290 dead and 493 wounded. Most of the Canadian survivors were held in prisoner of war camps either in Hong Kong or in Japan. Many of them died there; others endured almost four years of suffering until the end of the war. Of the 1,975 Canadians who sailed from Vancouver to Hong Kong, 557 were killed in battle or died in POW camps, and 493 were wounded, a casualty rate of more than 50%. Altogether, over 2000 men and women of the British Commonwealth died in the defence of Hong Kong.

Private Max Berger was not listed as *Missing in Action* until October 1942, and it was not until January 1943 that Max Berger was eventually recorded as, *Overseas casualty, killed in action, in the field (Hong Kong) between December 8th/25th, 1941*. The date of his death was later confirmed to have taken place and amended to December 19, 1941. His body was never recovered.

In mid-January 1943, Morris Berger on Davis Street in Sarnia, received the following letter from Army Lieutenant-Colonel F.W. Clarke, Department of National Defence in Ottawa:

Dear Mr Berger:

I wish to express to you my deep sympathy in the loss of your son A-56551 Pte. Max Berger who, as you have now been officially advised, has been killed in action. I know that you will derive some comfort from the fact that he laid down his life bravely for his country. You will already have received from National Defence Headquarters a pamphlet containing information regarding pension regulations, disposal of personal effects, and other matters. Please feel free to write to me if there is anything in connection with which you think I can be of any assistance to you.

In April 1946, widowed-father Morris Berger in Sarnia received a War Service Gratuity of \$124.91 for the loss of his son.

Twenty-two-year-old Max Berger is commemorated on the Sai Wan Memorial, Victoria, Hong Kong, China, Column 28. On this white granite memorial are inscribed the names of over 2,000 people, 228 of them Canadians, who died in Hong Kong and who have no known grave. Max Berger, one of the 290 Canadian soldiers killed during the defence of Hong Kong from December 8-December 25, 1941, has his name inscribed on this memorial. Max Berger's name is also inscribed on the Hong Kong Veterans Memorial Wall in Ottawa, Ontario. Unveiled in August 2009, the six-metre granite wall is etched with the names of the 1,975 Canadians who fought in the Battle of Hong Kong.

Max Berger and thirteen other local men had their names engraved on a plaque honouring fourteen Jewish members of the armed services from Sarnia. The plaque was unveiled in the Ahavas Isaac Synagogue, Davis Street, Sarnia on March 30, 1945. The men, all from Sarnia, honoured on the plaque were: M. Berger, S. Bernard, R. Heller, I. Haber, M. Kirk, Dr. I. Mann, A. Rosen, G. Shabsove, M. Skosov, Mitchell Smith, Murray Smith, L. Swartz, I.B. Zierler, Isaac Zierler. Three of the men--Max Berger, Mitchell Smith and Isaac Buck Zierler--made the supreme sacrifice. In 2008, the city honoured Max Berger further by naming Berger Drive in his memory.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, J, L, N, 2C, 2D, 6O, 7C, 7Y, 8X, 8Y, h

BERRY, Charles Edward (#A/20681)

Charles Berry did not have to serve, but he wanted to because of a sense of duty. His epitaph still epitomizes his bravery and patriotism: OUR DEAR SON & BROTHER. HE LIES AMONG THE BRAVE. AT HIS COUNTRY'S CALL HIS LIFE HE GAVE.

He was born in London, Ontario on January 1, 1923, the son of Edward Lee and Mary Philip Berry. The family would move a few years later to Sarnia, residing at of 142 North Brock Street and then at 234 Queen Street, Sarnia. Charles' upbringing was unsettling at times. It began in February 1932 when his father, Edward, passed away when Charles was only nine. Mary then remarried but her second husband, Mr. Bailey, would also die (before Charles enlisted). The new union, however, meant some half-siblings from the Bailey family for Charles' brother, Lorne Kenneth, and his sisters, Elaine and Mildred. Their new family included three half-brothers and two half-sisters. At the time of Charles' death, Milton and Harold Bailey were both on active service overseas, and Wilfred Bailey was stationed at a training camp in Halifax, Nova Scotia. Charles' two half-sisters were Edith (became Edith Riley, Sarnia) and Winnifred (became Winnifred Anderson, Windsor).

Charles completed his formal education after grade eight when he left school at the age of fourteen. He enjoyed swimming and playing football. He then put his athleticism to good use in the work field for the next four years. Prior to enlisting, Charles was employed as a truck driver from 1938 - 40, hauling coal and moving furniture, earning \$18.00 per week. For the summers of 1940 and 1941, he worked as a sailor and deckhand on lake freighters

with the Toronto and Sarnia Elevator Company, earning \$22.00 per week.

On December 15, 1941 in London, Ontario, Charles Berry, 18, enlisted in the Canadian Army. He stood five feet eight and a half inches tall, had grey eyes and brown hair, and was single. He recorded his address as 142 N. Brock Street, his occupation as truck driver, and his reasons for joining the army were “a sense of duty and my brothers are in the army”. Like other recruits, Charles was soon on the move. He started at No. 1 District Depot in London, received Basic Training in Kitchener, and was then transferred to Royal Canadian Engineers Training Centre (RCETC) in Petawawa. His biggest move came on September 26, 1942, when Charles Berry would embark overseas from Halifax for the United Kingdom. He was 19 years old.

In November of 1942, his mother Mary in Sarnia received a cable from Charles informing her that he had arrived safely and was posted somewhere in England. Charles received further training as a member of the Canadian Engineer Reinforcement Unit (CERU), attached to the 8 Canadian Field Squadron, Royal Canadian Engineers. In early June 1944, Charles would embark from the U.K., arriving in France on June 9, 1944.

The **Battle of Normandy** had begun for the Canadians with the June 6, 1944 D-Day landings at Juno Beach. After breaching the “Atlantic Wall” of “Fortress Europe”, Allied armies began their break out from the narrow Normandy bridgehead to carve out a foothold on the French mainland. It would take a whole summer of tenacious fighting, pushing against fierce and ruthless German forces to advance east across France. In a brutal campaign of attrition, the Canadians faced fierce battles and vicious counterattacks as they clawed their way forward liberating villages and towns including Bretteville, Carpiquet, Caen and Falaise.

In July 1944, a month into the Normandy Campaign, he would become a member of the Royal Canadian Engineers, 6 Field Coy, with the rank of Sapper. After the Allied breakout from Normandy, Canadian forces were assigned the “**Long Left Flank**”, the less glamorous but vital tasks of clearing coastal areas in the north of France and Belgium of German occupiers; opening the English Channel ports for supplies essential to the Allied advance; and capturing the launching sites of German V-1 rockets. In a series of stop-and-start advances against stiff resistance in fortified positions, the Canadians liberated ports and villages including Rouen, Dieppe, Dunkirk, Boulogne and Calais.

As a member of the Royal Canadian Engineers (RCE), he was part of the troops that enabled the army to move—they repaired and built roads, airfields and bridges; cleared mines and road blocks; and filled in craters and anti-tank ditches, all while working alongside combat troops at the front and often under fire.

On September 22, 1944, Charles Berry would lose his life while fighting along the “long left flank” in France. In early October 1944, Mary Berry in Sarnia would receive the following telegram from the Director of Records in Ottawa: MINISTER OF NATIONAL DEFENCE REGRETS TO INFORM YOU THAT A20681 SAPPER CHARLES EDWARD BERRY HAS BEEN OFFICIALLY REPORTED KILLED IN ACTION TWENTYSECOND SEPTEMBER 1944 STOP IF ANY FURTHER INFORMATION BECOMES AVAILABLE IT WILL BE FORWARDED AS SOON AS RECEIVED.

In late October 1944, Mary, now residing on Queen Street, received the following letter from an Army Major-General, Adjutant-General:

Dear Mrs. Berry,

It was with deep regret that I learned of the death of your son, A20681 Sapper Charles Edward Berry, who gave his life in the Service of his Country in the Western European Theatre of War, on the 22nd day of September, 1944. From official information we have received, your son was killed in action against the enemy. You may be assured that any additional information received will be communicated to you without delay. The Minister of National Defence and the Members of the Army Council have asked me to express to you and your family their sincere sympathy in your bereavement. We pay tribute to the sacrifice he so bravely made.

Charles Berry would later be officially recorded as, *Overseas casualty, killed in action, in the field (France)*. His remains were originally buried at a location recorded on the Army Field Service Card as “MR.672474 sheet 49 S.W. Buried in rear of Mde Duval-Grisette’s house on West side of road at Ecault France.” In December 1945, Mary would receive a letter from the Colonel, Director of Records, for Adjutant-General. Following is a portion of that letter:

Dear Madam,

Information has just been received from overseas that the remains of your son, A20681 Sapper Charles Edward Berry, have been carefully exhumed from the original place of internment and reverently reburied in grave

10, row D, plot 4, of Calais Canadian Military Cemetery, St. Inglevert, France. Marked map is enclosed. This is a recognized military burial ground and will receive care and maintenance in perpetuity.

The grave will have been marked with a temporary cross which will be replaced in due course by a permanent headstone suitably inscribed. While it cannot now be stated when this work of permanent commemoration will begin, before any action is taken you will be communicated with and an opportunity will be given you to submit a short personal inscription of your own choice for engraving on the headstone...

In July 1945, twice-widowed Mary Berry received a War Service Gratuity of \$475.83 for the loss of her son. Twenty year-old Charles Berry is buried in Calais Canadian War Cemetery, Leubringhen, France, Grave 4.D.10. On his headstone are inscribed the words, OUR DEAR SON & BROTHER. HE LIES AMONG THE BRAVE. AT HIS COUNTRY'S CALL HIS LIFE HE GAVE.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, J, L, N, 2C, 2D, 7C, 8X, 8Y

BIRKINSHAW, Frederick (#A/50051)

The easier choice for Frederick Birkinshaw would have been not to serve. At age 29, however, the father of three left his job, his wife and his young children to fight for the cause of freedom.

Frederick Birkinshaw was born in Nottingham, England on October 19, 1910, the only son of William and Lucy (nee Sands) Birkinshaw. William and Lucy, both born in Nottinghamshire, England, were married on February 2, 1907 at Holy Trinity Church in Nottinghamshire. At some point, William immigrated to Canada and came to reside in Sarnia where he was employed by Imperial Oil as a mason. He was one of the very first men to enlist--on August 15, 1914--eleven days after the United Kingdom including Canada declared war on Germany.

William Birkinshaw, born December 2, 1888 in Nottingham, England, enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force in Sarnia on September 14, 1914 becoming a member of the 1st Battalion. The twenty-five-year-old married father stood five feet three-and-a-half inches tall, and had brown eyes and brown hair (the recruiter recorded William's age as 28). William recorded his address as 213 Tecumseh St., Sarnia; his next of kin as his wife Lucy in Nottingham, England; his trade or calling as lace trade (later Imperial Oil); and his prior military service of "7 years Territorials and Nott. and Derby Regiment and several months with the 27th Regiment St. Clair Borderers".

Eight days later, he underwent his medical examine in Valcartier, and one week later, on September 30, 1914, he embarked overseas bound for the United Kingdom. After just over four months of training in England, Private William Birkinshaw arrived in France on February 10, 1915 as a member of 18th Infantry Battalion. He would serve in France for 10 months.



Private William Birkinshaw

In early April 1915, the 1st Division of Canadians arrived at the Ypres salient battlefield in Belgium, an area traditionally referred to as Flanders. It was here that the Canadians engaged in their first battle of the war, the Second Battle of Ypres, their baptism by fire. It was during this battle that William was buried while in action. He survived the incident and remained on duty, but did not feel right.

In June 1915, he received medical attention at Etaples suffering with lumbago and rheumatism, and later became troubled with back pains. In mid-July, he was hospitalized at No. 20 General Hospital in Etaples due to myalgia, and was hospitalized twice more with the same condition. William remained in Reserve in France until he

was transferred on December 22, 1915 to the 36th Reserve Battalion at West Sandling in England.

In February 1916 at Shorncliffe, William was recorded as “suffering with myalgia, pains in back and legs since June 1915, approved for light duty for 2 months”. From March 18 to April 12, 1916, he was in Moore Barracks Casualty Hospital in Shorncliffe due to myalgia before being returned to duty. He was hospitalized again in early June at West Sandling and again in mid-September at Folkestone with the “disability myalgia”.

In March 1917, William was transferred to the 4th Reserve Battalion at Bramshott, and in January 1918 was posted to Western Ontario Regimental Depot (W.O.R.D.), returning to Canada in February 1918. In late May he returned to England, posted to the 4th Reserve Battalion at Camp Witley. One year later, in May 1919, he returned to Canada, and was discharged on June 5, 1919 in Quebec on demobilization.

The rest of the Birkinshaw family immigrated to Canada in June 1919, arriving at a Quebec port aboard the *Metagama* passenger ship from Liverpool, England. Frederick was eight years old at the time. The family initially settled at 275 Rose Street in Sarnia.

Besides Frederick, the Birkinshaw family comprised his older sister, Mae, and his two younger sisters, Margaret and Irene. After Lucy, their mother, passed away, William remarried on July 14, 1927. Frederick would also have two half-brothers, Donald and Edward Phillips, who both served in the Canadian Army.

Frederick received his education in Sarnia and left school at the age of fourteen. Between leaving school and finding work, Frederick, now 21, married a young lady named Margaret Elizabeth in Port Huron, Michigan on October 19, 1931. Frederick and Margaret would have four sons: Bruce Fredrick (b. January 18, 1932); William Henry (b. July 7, 1934); Charles Edward (b. September 24, 1937); and Frederick Clarence (b. December 1, 1942). Their youngest son was born when Frederick was overseas and he never had a chance to see him. Sadly, their infant Frederick Clarence died when he was just three and a half month old, on March 25, 1943.

At wartime, the family resided at 279 Shamrock Street and both parents worked to support their family. Margaret was an employee of Sarnia Refinery and a female delegate on the Joint Industrial Council for Sarnia Refinery for 1945. Frederick worked at Imperial Oil Limited for two years as a clay filter worker and painter.

Their lives changed when Frederick, now 29 and a father of three, enlisted in the Canadian Army. Enlisting in Chatham on August 11, 1940, he stood five feet five inches tall, had brown eyes and black hair, and he and his family were residing on Shamrock Street at the time. His army training kept him busy and on the move. He was taken on strength into the Kent Regiment, and received training with that Regiment in London, New Westminster (B.C.) and Windsor, Ontario. In April 1942, he was transferred to the Highland Light Infantry (H.L.I.) of Canada, R.C.I.C., posted in Windsor. On May 1, 1942, Private Frederick Birkinshaw of the H.L.I. made the biggest move of his life when he embarked overseas for the United Kingdom.



Private Frederick Birkinshaw

Once in the U.K., he became a member of the Canadian Division Infantry Reinforcement Unit (CDIRU), remaining with his unit, the Highland Light Infantry. He would continue his training in the U.K., advancing to the rank of Lance Corporal in August 1943. In mid-September 1943, he reverted to the rank of Private, at his request. All of this training was in preparation for one of the most historic battles in history. Private Frederick Birkinshaw would arrive with the Highland Light Infantry in France on June 6, 1944: **D-Day**.

The **Battle of Normandy** would begin for the Canadians with the D-Day landings at Juno Beach. After breaching the “Atlantic Wall” of “Fortress Europe”, Allied armies began their break out from the narrow Normandy

bridgehead to carve out a foothold on the French mainland. It would take a whole summer of tenacious fighting, pushing against fierce and ruthless German forces to advance east across France. In a brutal campaign of attrition, the Canadians faced fierce battles and vicious counterattacks as they clawed their way forward liberating villages and towns including Bretteville, Carpiquet, Caen and Falaise.

One month after the D-Day landings, on July 8, 1944, the father of three would lose his life, while fighting at Caen during the Battle of Normandy. Frederick's remains were originally buried on August 7, 1944, at a location recorded on the Army Field Service Card as "Buron France 98857245".

Frederick Birkinshaw and another Sarnian, Corporal Isaac Bell (included in this project), would both lose their lives on July 8, 1944 in France. In mid-July of 1944, Margaret in Sarnia would receive a telegram from the Director of Records in Ottawa with information about her husband stating that, PTE. BIRKINSHAW WAS KILLED IN ACTION ON JULY 8. FURTHER INFORMATION WILL BE FORWARDED WHEN RECEIVED. The telegram did not state where Pte. Birkinshaw was killed, but Frederick's father William had several letters from his son recently in which he intimated he participated in the D-Day invasion of France, and had been at Caen. At the end of July 1944, Margaret received the following letter from an Army Major-General, Adjutant-General:

Dear Mrs. Birkinshaw,

It was with deep regret that I learned of the death of your husband A50051 Private Frederick Birkinshaw who gave his life in the Service of his Country in France, on the 8th day of July, 1944. From official information we have received, your husband was killed in action against the enemy. You may be assured that any additional information received will be communicated to you without delay.

The Minister of National Defence and the Members of the Army Council have asked me to express to you and your family their sincere sympathy in your bereavement. We pay tribute to the sacrifice he so bravely made.

Frederick Birkinshaw was later officially recorded as, *Overseas casualty, killed in action, in the field (France)*. He was survived by his father William, his wife Margaret and their three sons, Bruce (age 12), William (age 10) and Charles (age 7), along with his two half-brothers--Donald and Edward Phillips--and his three sisters: Mae (Mrs. Archie McDonald of Pontiac, Michigan), Margaret (Mrs. Margaret McDonald of Shamrock Street, Sarnia) and Irene (Mrs. Irene Cooper of Rose Street, Sarnia). William Birkinshaw, patriarch of the family and Great War veteran, passed away in February 1959 and is buried in Lakeview Cemetery in Sarnia.

In June 1945, Margaret Birkinshaw received a War Service Gratuity of \$676.67 for the loss of her husband Frederick. In August 1947, the Director of Records would send her a photograph of the grave and the marker over the burial place in Bretteville-Sur-Laize, France, of her late husband. Margaret would later reside at 524 South Christina Street, Sarnia. Thirty-three-year-old Frederick Birkinshaw is buried in Bretteville-Sur-Laize War Cemetery, Calvados, France, Grave XXVI.H.7. His name is also inscribed on the Sarnia Refinery Plaque. Unveiled in 1949, the plaque has the names of 24 Sarnia Imperial Oil employees who made the ultimate sacrifice in World War II. SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, J, K, L, N, O, 2C, 2D, 6O, 7C, 8X, 8Y

BORCHARDT, Hugo Hysert (#J/21171)

A young father to two children, Hugo Borchardt, 30, was killed in action two months before the war ended. The words on his headstone capture the essence of Flying Officer Borchardt: HE DID WHAT HE COULD.

He was born in Kitchener (then named Berlin) on September 25, 1913, the only son of Maximilian Paul and Mary (Mae) Almera (nee Hysert, born in Toronto) Borchardt. Max (born in New Stettin, Germany) immigrated to Canada in 1906 and four years later, on April 19, 1910, married Mae in Kitchener. In 1916, the Borchardts moved to Sarnia, and would reside at 257 Emma Street where Max supported the family by working as a stone carver and a cutter.

Max and Mae were blessed with four children: three daughters--Ruth Eleanor (born 1912), Clara Louise (born 1916) and Frieda Marie (born 1919)—and one son, Hugo. Hugo attended Central United Church and was educated at Devine Street Public elementary school from 1920-1927. Sarnia Collegiate provided him a high school education for four years and Hugo kept himself busy before he graduated in June 1931. He took technical courses in electrical, drafting, machine shop auto mechanics and woodworking, and was a member of the gymnastics team.

Hugo's hobbies were landscape oil painting and amateur radio, but work took much of his time. It seems as if he was always on the move, earning money in a variety of jobs. His work ran the gamut from being a deck hand with Canada Steamship Lines and Morse Steamship Company to being a mechanic with Electric Auto Lite and with

Collingwood Ship Yard. He was also hired as a painter with Kellogg Construction, with C.D. Shand and with H.A. Miller in Sarnia. If that weren't enough, he spent time as a steel rigger for six months with Superior Steel Products.

During these busy years, a young lady from Sarnia caught his fancy. Violet Constance Mary Shand was her name and on March 6, 1936, at age 23, Hugo married Violet (the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. William C.D. Shand of 203 North Vidal Street) at St. George's Church in Sarnia. Hugo and Violet Borchardt resided initially at Oakwood Corners (now the corner of Colborne Road and Lakeshore Road) and later 356 ½ Nelson Street. In the next few years, Violet gave birth to a daughter, Marilyn Dianne (born July 24, 1937) and a son, Hugo Sergei Junior (born January 1943).

On November 21, 1941 in London, Ontario, Hugo Borchardt, age 28, enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force. He stood five feet seven inches tall and had hazel eyes and dark brown hair. The married father of one (at the time) expressed his ambition to be a pilot. Like every other serviceman, Hugo was soon on the move, drawing farther and farther away from his family. From #2 Manning Depot in Brandon, Manitoba, he would first receive air training at Service Flying Training Schools (SFTS) in Penhold and Calgary. Next up was #2 Initial Training School (ITS) and Elementary Flying Training School (EFTS) in Regina before he attended Composite Training School (KTS) in Trenton, Ontario. He then trained at #4 Bombing and Gunnery School (BGS) in Fingal, close to St. Thomas, before he was transferred to Quebec. After attending #8 Air Observer School (AOS) in Ancienne, he was awarded his Air Observers Badge and commission as a Pilot Officer on November 20, 1942. Following his graduation and a seven-day leave, he instructed at Mountainview and Mossbank, Saskatchewan. In late January 1943, Hugo would spend a 10-day furlough with his wife and two young children on Nelson Street before returning to his duty as an instructor at Mossbank Bombing and Gunnery School.



F/O-BA Hugo Borchardt



Hugo Borchardt with his children Marilyn and Hugo Jr.

A significant change in Hugo's life included with moving to Sarnia, marrying Violet, and being a father to two young children, was going overseas to fight. On a Saturday evening in early August 1943, Bob Powers and his wife hosted a farewell party at their home in Sarnia to honour Hugo before he went overseas. Around 30 friends gathered to wish him good luck during an evening of dancing and singing. Bob Powers offered a toast to the guest of honour and Archie Reeves, after an appropriate speech, presented Hugo with a black leather Gladstone bag. The evening was brought to a close with the singing of "He's a Jolly Good Fellow," and "Auld Lang Syne."

Hugo Borchardt embarked overseas for the United Kingdom in late August 1943. He initially continued his operational training in England. He then went on operations with the RAF #90 Squadron. He was flying on Lancaster bombers from this squadron's base at Tuddenham, Bury-St.Edmunds, Suffolk, England. As a member of RAF #90 Squadron "Celer" (Swift), part of **Bomber Command**, he attained the rank of Flying Officer Bomb Aimer in December of 1943.

During the course of the war, one of this country's most significant contributions was the approximately

50,000 Canadians who served with the RCAF and RAF in Bomber Command operations. Next to Britain, Canada was the largest contributor to Bomber Command, making up more than a third of all of Bomber Command personnel. The men who served in Bomber Command faced some of the most difficult odds of anyone fighting in the war.

No. 90 Squadron was reformed from previous incarnations in May 1941 at RAF Watton, equipped with the American B-17 Flying Fortress tasked with carrying out daylight missions. The squadron was disbanded in February 1942. The squadron was reformed in November 1942, as a night bomber squadron, part of No. 3 Group at RAF Bottesford, equipped with Short Stirlings. By June 1944, the squadron was equipped with Avro Lancasters, the British four-engined heavy bomber.

Hugo had been in the U.K. less than a year when he was killed in action on his twelfth mission over enemy territory. On July 21, 1944, he was a member of the crew of Lancaster Mk. 1 aircraft LM183 (markings WP-L) that took off from Tuddenham on a night operation targeting the Meerbeck oil plant in Homburg, Germany. Hugo's Lancaster was part of a group of 149 Lancasters and eleven Mosquitoes taking part in the operation. German night fighters caught the Lancasters by surprise and twenty were lost in this raid, including two from #90 Squadron. Borchardts' LM183 aircraft crashed near Boxtel (Noord-Brabant), in the southern part of the Netherlands. Perishing with RCAF Flying Officer-Bomb Aimer Hugo Borchardt were RAF members Sgt.s Spencer Christopher Butcher, Jeremiah Francis Dineen, Harry Richard Hunnisett; WO. James William Butterworth; F/L Philip John Rossington and F/O Harold Francis Sargent Best (RCAF). The remains of the crew members were buried in Woensel Cemetery, Eindhoven.

In late July 1944, Violet received a telegram from Ottawa that informed her that her husband, FLYING OFFICER HUGO BORCHARDT HAS BEEN REPORTED MISSING WHILE ON OPERATIONAL DUTIES OVERSEAS. Days later Violet received this letter from the Wing Commander of No. 90 Squadron, RAF Station, Tuddenham, Suffolk.

Dear Mrs. Borchardt,

It is with the deepest regret that I have to confirm the notification that you will have already received that your husband, Flying Officer Hugo Hysert Borchardt, is missing from air operations on the night of 20/21st July, 1944. Your husband was detailed to carry out an important raid against the enemy, and his aircraft failed to return. No word has been received from the aircraft up to the time of writing, and any further information received will be immediately communicated to you.

I do not wish to raise false hopes, but there is every possibility that your husband is either a prisoner of war, or else is attempting to escape from enemy territory. The International Red Cross Society will immediately notify you in the event of any definite news from the enemy. Your husband will be a great loss to the Squadron, where he always carried out his duties in a conscientious and exemplary manner, and on behalf of myself and all members of the Squadron, I would like to offer you our sincere sympathy.

At a time like this words can be of little avail, but if there is anything I can do to help you, do not hesitate to write to me, for I will do anything within my power.

Approximately 7 months later, in late February 1945, Violet received another telegram informing her that her husband Hugo Borchardt was now officially presumed dead. Days later, she received a letter from the R.C.A.F. Casualty Officer, for Chief of the Air Staff in Ottawa.

Dear Mrs. Borchardt:

Confirming my telegram of recent date, I regret to inform you that advice has been received from the International Red Cross Committee at Geneva concerning your husband, Flying Officer Hugo Hysert Borchardt, previously reported missing on Active Service. The report quotes German information which states that your husband lost his life on July 21st, 1944, but does not contain any further particulars. The International Red Cross Committee is making every effort to obtain the location of your husband's grave. However, I feel sure you will appreciate the difficulties attendant upon securing additional details.

Since this information originates from enemy sources it is necessary for the present to consider your husband "missing believed killed" until confirmed by further evidence, and in the absence of such evidence his death may be presumed for official purposes when the lapse of time has shown that unhappily there is no reasonable doubt that your husband has lost his life. May I assure you and the members of your family of my deepest sympathy.

Approximately two months after Violet received the above letter, VE Day was declared, marking the end of war in Europe.

Two months after VE Day, in late July 1945, Violet received another letter from the R.C.A.F. Casualty Officer, for Chief of the Air Staff in Ottawa. Following is a portion of that letter:

Dear Mrs. Borchardt:

Further to my letter dated February 22nd, 1945, concerning your husband, Flying Officer Hugo Hysert Borchardt, a further report has now been received from Overseas. This report advises that the aircraft of which your husband was a member of the crew was shot down on July 21st, 1944, and that he was buried in the General Cemetery at Eindhoven-Woensel, Section KK, together with the remainder of his crew. Eindhoven-Woensel is located one mile north of Eindhoven, Holland.

Now that Air Ministry has presumed your husband's death for official purposes his personal effects, monies, etc. will shortly be forwarded to the Director of Estates... who will distribute them in accordance with his wishes as expressed in his Will. Please be assured that if at any time in the future further word concerning your husband is received you will be advised immediately.

I sincerely hope that you can find consolation in the fact that your husband risked his life willingly in the defense of freedom. What we all owe to him is beyond estimation. May you be fortified by the spirit of courage and hope which enabled him to discharge his duties whatever the cost.

Hugo Borchardt was later officially recorded as, *Previously reported missing after air operations, now for official purposes, presumed dead, overseas (Germany)*. He left behind his wife, Violet, and their two children, Marilyn, age 7, and Hugo Junior, age 1 1/2. In August 1945, Violet Borchardt received a War Service Gratuity of \$460.84 for the loss of her husband. Hugo was also survived by his three sisters who at the time were: Ruth Eleanor Windover, residing in Petrolia; Clara Louise Karr, residing on Kathleen Ave.; and Frieda Marie Powers, residing on Cromwell St. in Sarnia.

In January 1947, Hugo's mother Mae would receive her only son's Operational Wings from the Wing Commander for Chief of the Air Staff. Accompanying the Wings was this letter:

Dear Mrs. Borchardt:

It is a privilege to have the opportunity of sending you the Operational Wings and Certificate in recognition of the gallant services rendered by your son, Flying Officer H.H. Borchardt. I realize there is little which may be said or done to lessen your sorrow, but it is my hope that these "Wings", indicative of operations against the enemy, will be a treasured memento of a young life offered on the altar of freedom in defence of his Home and Country.

In October 1947, the RAF Missing Research and Enquiry Unit released their report on the investigation and findings of four of the graves they exhumed in Woensel Cemetery in May 1947 of the crew of Lancaster LM183. A portion of their findings included the following information: *Grave 102 – no means of identification; Grave 103 – In this grave were found Sergeant's Chevrons and an electrically heated flying glove... Since Engineers did not wear electrically heated flying gloves, this grave contains SGT. HUNNISETT; Grave 104 – An A/B Brevet showed that this grave holds F/O BORCHARDT; Grave 105 – No means of identification...*

Thirty year-old Hugo Borchardt is buried in Eindhoven (Woensel) Cemetery, Netherlands, Plot KK. Grave 103. On his headstone are inscribed the words, HE DID WHAT HE COULD.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, J, L, M, N, S, 2C, 2D, 3J, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10U, 4h

BRAKEMAN, Jesse Clemence (#R/68117)

Jesse ("Clem") Brakeman, an only child, would enlist right after graduating high school, leaving behind his widowed mother. He would lose his life serving as a proud member of one of Canada's greatest contributions to the Allied efforts.

Jesse was born in Toronto on August 7, 1920. He was the only child of the Jesse Clair and Rose Adelle Brakeman of 175 Penrose St., Sarnia. His father, born in Franklin, Pennsylvania, passed away when Jesse was only three years old. Jesse's mother Rose, born in Exmouth, Devon, England, immigrated to Canada in 1909. Rose was a secretary at the local yard office of the Canadian National Railways, where she was to work for 40 years. Jesse's grandmother, Mrs. Harriet A. Clemens, resided at 175 Penrose St., Sarnia.

Jesse received his education at Lochiel Street Public School, 1926-1933, and Sarnia Collegiate Institute beginning 1934 and graduating in 1940. He was active in football, baseball, hockey and lacrosse, and his hobbies included model aircraft building and music. He was a member of St. George's Church, Charlotte Street, Sarnia, and worked part time for five years for the Windsor Daily Star, Sarnia Bureau.

Nineteen year-old Jesse (Clem) Brakeman enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force on June 26, 1940 in London, Ontario. He stood five feet eight and a half inches tall, had blue eyes and red hair, and was single. He recorded his occupation as student, and lived at home with his mother on Penrose Street at the time of his enlistment. His request was to be an Air Gunner or Air Observer. After being posted to #1 Manning Depot in Toronto, Jesse would receive his air training at #1 Initial Training School (ITS) in Toronto, #1 Air Observer School (AOS) in Malton, and #1 Bombing and Gunnery School (BGS) in Jarvis. He was awarded his Air Gunner's Badge on December 15, 1940, before being posted to RCAF Station Rockliffe in Ottawa in late December 1940. In early February 1941, he was transferred to Eastern Air Command (EAC) in Halifax.



Sgt.-AG Jesse Clemence Brakeman

Jesse would embark overseas for the United Kingdom on February 15, 1941. Upon arrival, he cabled his mother Rose in Sarnia, telling her that he had arrived safely, and he was feeling fine. In the U.K., he was initially posted to #20 Operational Training Unit (OTU) for further training. On May 31, 1941, Jesse became a member of the RAF #214 (Federated Malay States) Squadron "Ultor In Umbris" (Avenging in the Shadows), part of **Bomber Command**, with the rank of Sergeant-Air Gunner. By July 1941, he had shot down his first German plane.

During the war, one of Canada's most significant contributions was the approximately 50,000 Canadians who served with the RCAF and RAF in Bomber Command operations. Next to Britain, Canada was the largest contributor to Bomber Command, making up more than a third of all of Bomber Command personnel. The men who served in Bomber Command faced some of the most difficult odds of anyone fighting in the war.

No. 214 Squadron disbanded after World War I and was resurrected in 1935. In April 1937 the squadron was based at RAF Feltwell, and in May 1939 began being equipped with Vickers Wellington Mark I's—a British twin-engined, long-range medium bomber. The squadron's first offensive operations were in June 1940, while based at RAF Stradishall. In September 1941 the squadron was adopted by the British Malay Federation and had their name incorporated into its title. Serving in No. 3 Group, the squadron flew many missions against naval and industrial targets in Fortress Europe, and took part in mine laying operations. Over the course of the war, the squadron moved to various bases and converted from Wellingtons to Short Stirling and B-17 Flying Fortress II bombers.

Just over a year after he enlisted, on September 3, 1941, Jesse Brakeman's Wellington Mark IC aircraft R1717 (markings BU-) was lost during a bombing operation over enemy territory. The Wellington took off from Stradishall on a night operation to Frankfurt, Germany. It was presumed to have crashed in the sea off the French coast. Perishing with Sergeant-Air Gunner Jesse Brakeman were FS. James Patrick McKay (RCAF); Sgt.s Lionel Black (RAF), Leslie Whitehouse Price (RAF), and Clifford Hambleton (RAF); and F/L. Reginald Hubert May (RAF).

On September 4th, widowed Rose Brakeman received a telegram from the R.C.A.F. Headquarters in Ottawa, informing her that her only son, SERGEANT-PILOT JESSE CLEMENS BRAKEMAN WAS REPORTED MISSING AS THE RESULT OF AN AIR OPERATION OVERSEAS RECENTLY. There were no further details

concerning the air operations, so the *Canadian Observer* reported that, “the fact that he was designated as missing held out some hope that he might have been forced down over Nazi-held countries in Western Europe or made an escape in some other manner.” The telegram from Ottawa was a severe shock to Rose, particularly because word that he had shot down his first German plane in July had just recently arrived home.

In late June 1942, a “Notification of Death” was issued by the Flight Lieutenant, for Director of Personal Services, Air Ministry, in London, England. It stated: *CERTIFIED that according to the records of this department CAN/R68117 Sergeant Clemence Jesse BRAKEMAN, Royal Canadian Air Force, was reported missing and for official purposes to have lost his life on the third day of September, 1941, as the result of air operations. Information received through the International Red Cross states that this airman is buried in the Municipal Cemetery, Dunkirk, France.* Twenty-one-year-old Jesse Brakeman was buried in the Dunkirk Town Cemetery, Nord, France, Plot 2 Row 2 Grave 20. On his headstone are inscribed the words, GOD BE MERCIFUL TO MY SON. REUNITE HIS SOUL WITH THOSE OF HIS DAD AND HIS PALS. MOTHER.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, J, L, M, N, R, 2B, 2C, 2D, 6O, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10B, 10C, 10U

BROWN, George William (#J/12195)

George William Brown and his mother had already endured enough tragedy in their lives when George enlisted as a teenager. He would end up giving his life for the Allied cause, serving in Bomber Command, as did many other Canadians.

He was born in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan on September 24, 1921, the son of George Morton and Bathia (nee Riddle) Brown, of Sarnia. Both of his parents were originally from Scotland, George from Edinburgh and Bathia from Aberdeenshire. They were married on June 8, 1914 in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan. Bathia gave birth to a baby boy in October 1915, but tragically, it died at only nine days old on October 13, 1915. Born in 1921, George William Brown would be their only child. More tragedy hit the Brown family on November 1, 1927 when father George Sr., a hotel clerk, died at the age of forty-six, in Moose Jaw. George William was only six years old at the time. George attended Alexandria elementary school, 1926-1935, and Central Collegiate, 1935-1937, both in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan. Mother Bathia and her only son would come to Sarnia when George William was approximately sixteen years old. They lived at 333 Wellington Street.

After George arrived in Sarnia, he attended Sarnia Collegiate from September 1937 until June 1940. He was active in swimming, hockey and baseball. After graduating, George was employed for a short time in 1940 with the Canadian National Railway Freight Office in Sarnia as a relief clerk. He then worked with T.E. Pressey Transport in Sarnia as a truck driver for nine months until he enlisted. In a reference letter written by the head of Pressey Transport (Christina Street) on behalf of George’s application for the Air Force, the transport head wrote: ... *We wish to advise that this man has been with us approximately one year, having come to us from the Sarnia Collegiate and Technical School. We find him to be an able worker, honest and morally above reproach. He is an experienced motor vehicle operator, and his education is of the best. We regret losing a man of his caliber but trust same will be temporary.*

Nineteen year-old George William Brown enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force on June 23, 1941 in London, Ontario. He stood five feet nine and a half inches tall, had blue eyes and brown hair, was single, and lived with his mother Bathia at 333 Wellington Street. He recorded his occupation as truck driver. His preference was to be a Pilot or Observer, and his ambition for after the war was to stay with the Air Force in commercial aviation. From #1 Manning Depot in Toronto, he would receive his air training at #6 Initial Training School (ITS) in Toronto, #20 Elementary Flying Training School (EFTS) in Oshawa and #6 Service Flying Training School (SFTS) in Dunnville. He was awarded his Pilot’s Flying Badge on June 19, 1942, then continued his training at Central Flying School in Trenton. He was transferred to #8 Service Flying Training School (SFTS) in Moncton, New Brunswick where he was a flying instructor, and then posted to #36 Operational Training Unit (OTU) in Greenwood, Nova Scotia.

In late April 1944, George Brown would embark overseas for the United Kingdom, where he would be attached to 13 Operational Training Unit (OTU), RAF Colerne. On August 21, 1944, George would become a member of R.N.Z.A.F #487 New Zealand Squadron “Ki Te Mutunga” (Through to the End), part of **Bomber Command**, with the rank of Flight Lieutenant, Flying Officer-Pilot.

During the course of the war, one of this country’s most significant contributions was the approximately 50,000 Canadians who served with the RCAF and RAF in Bomber Command operations. Next to Britain, Canada was the largest contributor to Bomber Command, making up more than a third of all of Bomber Command personnel.

The men who served in Bomber Command faced some of the most difficult odds of anyone fighting in the war.



F/L-Pilot George William Brown

RNZAF #487 was formed as a day bomber unit in August 1942 at RAF Feltwell, Norfolk. Initially equipped with the Lockheed Ventura, a twin-engine medium bomber, they were crewed by Royal New Zealand Air Force pilots. In August 1943, the squadron, based at RAF Sculthorpe, Norfolk, began to re-equip with de Havilland Mosquito aircraft—a twin-engine, shoulder-winged light bomber. With a crew of two, the Mosquito served a variety of roles: tactical and night bomber; day or night fighter; maritime strike aircraft; photo reconnaissance; and pathfinder operations. The Mosquito was unusual in that its frame was constructed almost entirely of wood, so was nicknamed “The Wooden Wonder” or “Mossie” to its crews.

On September 17, 1944, George’s Mosquito aircraft MS979 crashed after take-off from #487 base, then at RAF Thorney Island, en-route to Holland. Approximately one week later, Mrs. Bathia Brown in Sarnia would receive a telegram informing her that her son, FLIGHT-LIEUTENANT GEORGE WILLIAM BROWN HAS BEEN REPORTED MISSING AFTER AIR OPERATIONS OVERSEAS ON SEPTEMBER 16. One week after the incident, the Wing Commander of No. 487 Squadron, R.A.F. Station Thorney Island, wrote the following letter to Georges’ mother:

Dear Mrs. Brown,

It is with deep regret that I have to write to you on this sad occasion, about your son George. I am afraid I have very little I can tell you as we have no idea what happened to him or his aircraft. The Squadron was operating over Holland on the night of the 16th September. We never received anything from George on the wireless from the time he took off, nor did any of the other aircraft see him.

I have every hope that he was able to reach our lines and get out in his parachute, in which case it is doubtful if we would hear anything before about a fortnight. In case he came down in the water both he and his navigator Flying Officer Fuller, as well as the aircraft were equipped with rubber dinghies and rations for several days, so they might easily have been picked up and now be a prisoner of war. He may have landed on the enemy side of the line. I am afraid it will be quite a long time before the Red Cross will hear anything. However don’t give up all hope as a number of the people who are listed as missing turn up in the end.

The Service has lost an excellent Officer and Pilot in your son, and we have lost a good friend. The whole Squadron join me in sending you our very deepest sympathy for your great loss.

Approximately eleven months later, Bathia Brown still waited for information about the fate of her only child. In a letter to the Secretary, Department of National Defence for Air she wrote: *I will now confirm that I have had no news nor evidence concerning him since he was reported missing on Sept 16, 1944. I thank you for informing me that the Research & Inquiry Service are investigating into the fate of all missing Air force personnel & I will be glad to hear from you if any trace of my son is secured however small.*

In a Post Presumption Memorandum dated August 1946, the file information records: *LOST AT SEA – The body of the navigator of this crew was washed up from the sea. No news has been received of F/Lt. Brown so it is now assumed that he perished with the aircraft at sea.*

In early December 1946, Bathia was still searching for information about her son. In another letter to the Department of National Defence for Air she wrote: *I am writing you regarding my deceased son, F/L George William Brown J-12195 reported killed in action Sept 17, 1944. He went out his last flight in a light aircraft plane, along with him was his navigator Roy Fuller (RAF). Their mission being finding enemy movements by road and rail in Holland. It has come to my knowledge that when the British forces went into Holland, the inhabitants of South Beveland, an island off the Dutch coast, told them they had found Roy Fuller's body & had buried him in the church cemetery at Driewegan... & gave them his identity cards & discs. Other things found on his person were sent to his mother, who identified them as her son's who was flying with George that night. I'm sorry to trouble you after all this time but I'm asking you if you could find out if there was ever any trace of George found because where his navigator was, he would be. I hope to hear from you at your convenience.* Yours truly, Bathia Brown

In December 1946, Bathia received the following letter from the RCAF Casualty Officer, for Chief of the Air Staff in Ottawa:

Dear Mrs. Brown:

In reply to your letter I regret that although no further information has been received concerning your son, Flight Lieutenant George William Brown, it is felt that you would be desirous of knowing that investigations have been carried out by the Royal Air Force Missing Research and Inquiry Services on the Continent into the loss of you son and his aircraft.

The lack of news of your son after so long a period and the fact that his Navigator, Flying Officer Roy Allan Fuller, was recovered from the sea and buried in the Driewetan Baarland (Church Cemetery) South Beveland, Holland undoubtedly leaves no doubt that the aircraft crashed into the sea. The possibility, therefore, of obtaining further news seems very remote.

You may rest assured that should any further information come to hand you will be informed immediately. Please accept my sincere sympathy with you in your sad loss and in the anxiety you have suffered.

George Brown was later officially recorded as, *Previously reported missing after air operations, now for official purposes, presumed dead, overseas (England)*. In late January 1947, Bathia received the following letter from the Wing Commander for Chief of the Air Staff:

Dear Mrs. Brown:

It is a privilege to have the opportunity of sending you the Operational Wings and Certificate in recognition of the gallant services rendered by your son, Flight Lieutenant, G.W. Brown. I realize there is little which may be said or done to lessen your sorrow, but it is my hope that these "Wings", indicative of operations against the enemy, will be a treasured memento of a young life offered on the altar of freedom in defence of his Home and Country.

Twenty-three-year-old George Brown has no known grave. His name is inscribed on the Runnymede War Memorial, Panel 244.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, J, L, M, N, 2C, 2D, 7C, 8X, 8Y

BROWN, Paul Albert (#N3119)

Paul Albert Brown was eager to serve, enlisting as a seventeen year-old before war was declared. He would lose his life in what would turn out to be the longest and deadliest battles of the war and to what British Prime Minister Winston Churchill said was "... the only thing that ever really frightened me during the war..."

Paul was born in Domville, Ontario, near Prescott, on July 8, 1920. He was the son of Albert Glen (of Domville, Ontario) and Ada Helena (nee Anderson) Brown. Albert and Ada Brown were married in Ontario on November 15, 1916. Paul had one brother, Charles Russell (who would serve with the RCAF), and two sisters: Jean Anderson and Eleanor Louise. When Paul was eight years old, he would lose his father Albert who passed away on March 12, 1928 at the age of forty-one. Mother Ada Brown and family would move to Sarnia some time after Albert's death and live at 225 Maria Street. Paul would reside in Sarnia for approximately eleven years, and he attended Johnston Memorial Public School and Sarnia Collegiate. During his school days, he used to spend his spare time on farms. He was also active in Central United Church Century Young Men's Sunday school for many years. He would work on a farm only one summer before leaving high school in November 1937 to volunteer to serve in the navy.

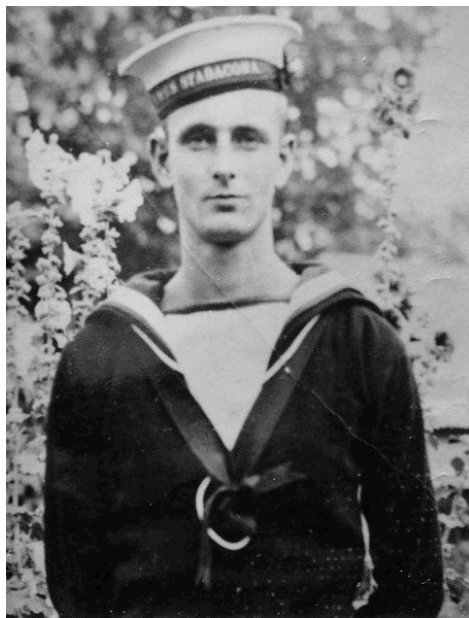
One of the reference letters obtained by Paul Brown for his application to enter the Navy was from Ross W. Gray, Member of Parliament for Lambton West. In his January 1938 letter to the Naval Secretary, Department of National Defence in Ottawa, Ross Gray wrote in a letter with House of Commons letterhead:

Dear Sir:

This is to certify that I have known Paul A. Brown for the past twelve years. He is anxious to join the Naval Service. His application will show his educational ability and I desire only to say that in my opinion he would make an excellent applicant as he is a good, clean young man of excellent habits and character.

Paul Brown would complete his formal "Application for Entry in the Royal Canadian Navy" on January 8, 1938. Because Paul was under the age of 18 when he enlisted, a Consent Paper was required with a parent's signature, which his widowed mother Ada provided, dated January 25, 1938 in Sarnia. Ada, a Sarnia school teacher, would pass away two and a half years later on August 14, 1940 in Sarnia General Hospital at the age of forty-six. Approximately four months after her death, Paul Brown would lose his life while serving in the Navy.

On April 7, 1938, at the age of seventeen years and nine months, Paul Brown would officially become a member of the Royal Canadian Navy. He stood six feet tall, had blue eyes and brown hair, and was single. He lived with his widowed mother Ada on Maria Street in Sarnia at the time. He was first stationed at *HMCS Stadacona* training barracks in Halifax, with the rank of Boy Seaman. He was guard of honour for our King George VI and Queen Elizabeth during their cross-Canada visit and happened to be on the same ship as Their Majesties. In October 1938, Ordinary Seaman Paul Brown received his elementary training on *HMCS Venture*, a training ship that was similar to the *Bluenose*. On February 11, 1939, he was posted on the *HMCS Skeena* where he advanced to the rank of Able Seaman. Seven months later, on September 10, 1939, Canada would declare war on Germany. Paul Brown would be posted to *HMCS Stadacona* in Halifax on October 21, 1939. On November 26, 1939, Able Seaman Paul Brown became a member of the *HMCS Saguenay*, serving as a pom-pom gunner. In letters received by his relatives, Paul had said that he had been "all over the world."



Able Seaman Paul Albert Brown



River Class Destroyer *HMCS Saguenay* D79

Beginning on the opening day of the Second World War, the **Battle of the Atlantic** would be the longest continuous campaign of the war, and one in which Canada played a central role. The Royal Canadian Navy, along with the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) and Canada's Merchant Navy, played a vital role in defending the country's eastern coast and escorting convoys of ships carrying men and essential machinery, arms, fuel and basic resources between North America and Europe.

The *HMCS Saguenay* (D 79) was an A-Class Destroyer commissioned for service in the Royal Canadian Navy in 1931. The *Saguenay* was the first warship ever to be custom built for the Royal Canadian Navy. In the early morning hours of December 1, 1940, the *HMCS Saguenay* was part of a group escorting a convoy about 300 nautical miles west of Ireland. Travelling at twelve knots and in a zigzagging pattern, she noticed a flare shot up from the dark sea that had been fired by a U-boat moving in to attack the rear of the convoy. The *Saguenay* increased her speed and made for the position of the flare. At approximately 3:50 am, the submarine was sighted half a mile distant. Almost simultaneously, a torpedo struck the *Saguenay*. The torpedo had been fired by the Italian submarine *Argo*. The *Saguenay* bow was blown off, and flames broke out and raced through the ship. The *Argo* surfaced again, circling to

get in a second shot. Able Seaman Clifford McNaught demonstrated the kind of courage indicative of the remaining crew. Clifford was suffering from painful burns to his face, and his hands were horribly mangled. He nevertheless dashed forward to assist the short-handed gun crew by passing shells to them. The *Saguenay* crew were able to fend off the *Argo*. The British destroyer *Highlander* arrived within an hour or so to find the *Saguenay* limping slowly forward. Ninety men were transferred to the *Highlander* to reduce casualties in case of another torpedo attack. Throughout the night and most of the next day, a skeleton crew remained on board the *Saguenay* continuing to fight the fires.

By noon of the next day, the *Saguenay*, “the ship that would not sink” had managed to limp to the British port Barrow-in-Furness on one engine. The ship would be out of service for six months. A total of 21 of the *HMCS Saguenay* crew lost their lives in the U-boat attack, and another 18 were wounded. Two of the lost crew members were from Sarnia. Paul Brown was reported missing and presumed killed in action in the damaging of the destroyer *Saguenay*. Paul Brown was later officially recorded as, *Death due to enemy action, at sea*. Also on board the ship was Able Seaman Hector Le Gare of Sarnia, who was also killed in the attack. His name is also inscribed on the Sarnia cenotaph and his story is included in this Project. Paul Brown and Hector Le Gare were the second and third casualties from Sarnia to lose their lives in the Second World War.

At the time of Paul’s death, his siblings were: Charles Russell Brown (with the RCAF, stationed at Moncton, N.B.); Jean Anderson (nee. Brown) Knight (a school teacher in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario); and Eleanor Louise Brown (later Eleanor Hutchinson, of 230 North Vidal St., Sarnia, and later Toronto, Ontario). Approximately one week prior to the attack, Paul’s sister, Miss Jean (Brown) Knight in Sault Ste. Marie, had received a letter from him, but it was so rigorously censored that she could not derive much information from it. Paul’s brother, Charles Russell Brown, had been corresponding with Paul, and the two brothers had hopes of spending Christmas together in Halifax. One week after the attack, Paul’s sister, Miss Eleanor Brown in Sarnia, would receive a telegram from the Minister of National Defence for Naval Affairs, informing her that Paul was missing. At an assembly at Sarnia Collegiate, principal F.C. Asbury announced the loss of the two former students, Hector Le Gare and Paul Brown, which was followed by a period of silence in respect to the memory of the two Canadian sailors.

Paul Brown’s brother, Corporal Charles Russell Brown of the R.C.A.F, who was posted in Moncton New Brunswick at the time, received the following letter from the Naval Secretary in mid-December 1940:

Dear Sir:

It is with very deep regret that I confirm the telegram of the 9th December from the Minister of National Defence for Naval Services that your brother, Paul A. Brown, Able Seaman, R.C.N., O.N. 3119, is reported to be missing from H.M.C.S. “SAGUENAY”, believed killed in action following damage to this vessel by a torpedo on the 1st December, 1940.

Please allow me, therefore, to express sincere sympathy with you in your sad loss on behalf of the Chief of the Naval Staff and the Officers and men of the Royal Canadian Navy, the high traditions of which your brother has helped to maintain.

Paul Brown was the first member of the Central Century Club to pay the Supreme Sacrifice. In mid-December 1940, he was honoured at a service at Central United Church. The pastor of the church, Rev. E.W. Jewitt paid tribute by saying, “These young men who are giving their lives are giving them to preserve the freedom and liberty of us all.” In August 1945, Paul’s siblings: Charles Russell, Jean and Eleanor would receive and share the War Service Gratuity of \$256.77 for the loss of their brother. Twenty year-old Paul Brown has no known grave. His name is inscribed on the Halifax Memorial, Nova Scotia, Panel 4.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, J, L, N, P, S, T, U, X, Z, 2A, 2C, 2D, 7C, 8X, 8Y

BRUNETTE, Jack

Jack (Junior) Brunette was an athletic, intelligent university student exhibiting leadership qualities when he enlisted to serve. He would lose his life in the largest single day parachute drop of the war.

Jack was born in Windsor, Ontario on November 20, 1922, the son of John (Jack) and Emma Mae (nee Payne) Brunette. Father John (Jack) Brunette (born Feb. 6, 1897 in Ottawa) married Emma Mae (born Oct. 12, 1902 in London, Ontario) in Windsor, Ontario on September 2, 1922. John (Jack) was an Army Captain with the Stormont Dundas and Glengarry Highlanders, stationed in Ottawa. The family lived at 112 Lisgar Street, Ottawa. Jack (Junior) was a graduate of Cornwall Collegiate Institute (1937-41), where he was active in football, hockey, lacrosse, baseball, hunting and fishing. After graduating high school, Jack attended Western University (studying Chemistry)

in London, Ontario. He had worked during summer holidays on farms, in a clothing store and driving truck. Prior to volunteering to serve overseas, Jack had been a member of the Reserve, the 2nd Battalion of the Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry Highlanders (August 15, 1940-May 1, 1942), and then the Western Canadian Officers Training Corps (May 1, 1942-December 21, 1942). The Commanding Officers comments about Jack Brunette included: *Excellent education, appearance and power of expression and personality... Energetic, sincere about his work, very good qualities of leadership, above average material.* After attending Western University for four months, Jack volunteered to serve.



Jack Brunette, Western University 1943

The twenty year-old student enlisted in the Canadian Army on January 15, 1943 in Kingston, Ontario. He stood five feet ten and a half inches tall, had grey eyes and light brown hair, and was single. He lived at 305 Cheapside Street, London, Ontario at the time. His plan for after the war was to return to his studies at Western University. Jack would receive his army training at Kingston (#3 District Depot); Brockville (Officers Training Corps, advancing to 2nd Lieutenant in April 1943); Camp Borden (Canadian Infantry Training Centre, advanced to 1st Lieutenant in May 1943); Winnipeg (#10 District Depot); Camp Shilo, Manitoba (Canadian Infantry Training Centre; and Canadian Parachute Training Centre, where he became qualified as a parachutist in November 1943); and Vernon, British Columbia (completing a Demolition Course at Canadian School of Infantry).

Lieutenant Jack Brunette would embark overseas for the United Kingdom on April 10, 1944, attached to the Canadian General Reinforcement Unit (CGRU), a member of the 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion, R.C.I.C.. He would continue training in the U.K. until December 1944, when he would embark from the U.K., arriving in Belgium on December 26, 1944. The Battle of the Scheldt had ended in mid-November 1944, so over the winter of 1944-1945, most of the weary Canadian troops were stationed along the **Nijmegen sector** in the Netherlands. They were given a rest, although the front was never quiet, with patrols and large-scale raids remaining constant, during one of the most frigid winters on record in northern Europe. The Germans did their best to push the Canadians out of “the island” by flooding the area and constantly harassing them with mortar fire, artillery and aggressive patrols. Jack Brunette would see action in the Dutch-Belgium area until late-February 1945, when he would return to the U.K..

In February 1945, the Allies launched a great offensive, the **Battle of the Rhineland** that was designed to drive the Germans eastward back over the Rhine River. There would be two formidable thrusts: one by the Ninth U.S Army; and one by the First Canadian Army, strengthened by the addition of Allied formations. The resilient Germans had spent months improving their defences; winter rains and thaw had turned the ground into a thick, muddy quagmire and the enemy would fight fiercely to defend their home soil. During one month of fighting, the Canadians would succeed in clearing the Reichswald Forest, in breaking the Siegfried Line and in clearing the Hochwald Forest. But victory came at a high cost.

The final stage of the Rhineland Offensive was the crossing of the Rhine River itself. The actions started on March 23, 1945 with the crossing near Wesel (*Operation Plunder*), which was one of several coordinated Rhine crossings. In support of the crossing, 14,000 paratroopers were dropped behind enemy lines (*Operation Varsity*) in the largest airborne operation performed in a single day. Led by British and US divisions, a million soldiers from

three countries participated in crossing the Rhine, including the 9th Canadian Infantry Brigade and the 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion. Though the Germans were vastly outnumbered and outgunned, they put up a fierce resistance. The operations were a success, and with the Allies crossing the Rhine, the days of the Third Reich were numbered.

On March 24, 1945, Lieutenant Jack Brunette would emplane in the U.K. and was parachuted into Germany, during *Operation Varsity* of the Battle of the Rhineland. He was part of the 14,000 paratroopers who were dropped behind enemy lines in support of the crossing of the Rhine. On the day he parachuted into Germany, Jack Brunette would lose his life during fighting there.

Only one and a half months after Jack's death, the war in Europe would end. He was later officially recorded as, *Overseas casualty, killed in action, in the field (Germany)*. At the time of Jack's death, his mother Emma's address was recorded as changed from Lisgar Street, Ottawa to 322 ½ Durand Street, Sarnia. Jack Brunette's remains were buried at a location recorded on the Army Field Service Card as "Temp Burial ground adjoining Communal Cem. sh Q1 1/100000 158,471 P1RC G6". His remains would later be carefully exhumed and reburied in Groesbeek Cemetery. Twenty-two-year-old Jack Brunette is buried in Groesbeek Canadian War Cemetery, Netherlands, Grave XXII.C.2. On his headstone are inscribed the words, I HAVE FOUGHT A GOOD FIGHT, I HAVE FINISHED MY COURSE, I HAVE KEPT THE FAITH. II TIM. IV.7.
SOURCES: C, D, E, F, L, 2C, 2D, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 3b

BRYDGES, Thomas Edwin (#A/28400)

Thomas Brydges, along with three of his brothers, would serve his country bravely in the liberation of France, Belgium and Holland. Thomas was described by his comrades as a "faithful diligent member of the crew" and "the best gunner in our troop".

Thomas Edwin Brydges was born in Sarnia on January 2, 1918, the eldest son of Thomas Bertie and Elizabeth (nee Beebe) Brydges, of Eureka Street, Petrolia. Parents Thomas Bertie (born in Camlachie) and Elizabeth were married in Sarnia on March 21, 1917. Thomas and Elizabeth were blessed with twelve children together: daughters Frances Dorothy (born 1919, died 1933); Kathleen Pearl (born 1922); and Blanche Elizabeth (born 1931); and nine sons: Thomas Edwin; Alvin Bertie (born 1921); Arthur Beebe (born 1924); Charles Vincent (born 1925); Allen Ross (born 1927); James Ralph (born 1928); Eldon Wesley (born 1933); John Dalton (born 1936); and Lorne Elmer (born 1939). Father, Thomas Bertie, supported his large family working at the Mueller Plant in Sarnia. Over a number of years, the Brydges family lived in Sarnia, Camlachie, Enniskillen Township and Petrolia.

Thomas did not attend high school, leaving school at the age of thirteen. This was common at the time, especially in large families where everyone did what they could to help support the family. Thomas was the first of the Brydges boys to enlist and when he did, he was working both as a farmer and as a driver, employed by Ernie Kells, Oil Producer.

Twenty-three-year-old Thomas Edwin Brydges enlisted in the Canadian Army in London, Ontario on January 7, 1941. He stood six feet one and a half inches tall, had brown eyes and brown hair, and was single. He lived in Petrolia with his parents at the time. His plan for after the war was to become an electrician. From #1 District Depot in London, Thomas received his army training at the Royal Canadian Artillery Training Centre in Woodstock, attaining the rank of Gunner, before returning to #1 District Depot, London in mid-March 1941. On April 8, 1941, he embarked overseas bound for the United Kingdom.

In the U.K., Thomas initially was attached to the Canadian Artillery Holding Unit (CAHU) where he continued his training. In mid-June 1941, he became a member of the Royal Canadian Artillery (RCA), 4th Field Regiment, with the rank of Gunner. He remained in the U.K. with the 4th Field Regiment for approximately three years, and in January 1943 he received a Good Conduct Badge.

In early July 1944, Thomas departed from the U.K., arriving in France on July 7, 1944, during the **Battle of Normandy**. The Battle had begun for the Canadians with the June 6, 1944 D-Day landings at Juno Beach. After breaching the "Atlantic Wall" of "Fortress Europe", Allied armies began their break out from the narrow Normandy bridgehead to carve out a foothold on the French mainland. It would take a whole summer of tenacious fighting, pushing against fierce and ruthless German forces to advance east across France. In a brutal campaign of attrition, the Canadians faced fierce battles and vicious counterattacks as they clawed their way forward liberating villages and towns including Bretteville, Carpiquet, Caen and Falaise.

After the Allied breakout from Normandy, Canadian forces were assigned the "**Long Left Flank**", the less

glamorous but vital tasks of clearing coastal areas in the north of France and Belgium of German occupiers; opening the English Channel ports for supplies essential to the Allied advance; and capturing the launching sites of German V-1 rockets. In a series of stop-and-start advances against stiff resistance in fortified positions, the Canadians liberated ports and villages including Rouen, Dieppe, Dunkirk, Boulogne and Calais.

In early September 1944, Allied forces had captured the inland port of Antwerp, Belgium, the second greatest port in Europe at the mouth of the Scheldt River. However, German forces still controlled the 45-mile-long Scheldt estuary (the Belgian-Dutch border area) that connected the port of Antwerp to the North Sea. The Canadians were entrusted with liberating the estuary. The **Battle of the Scheldt** was among the most difficult and grueling struggles in the war. The bitter fighting against a well-fortified and heavily entrenched enemy, took place in a bleak environment made worse by the winter cold in a flooded and freezing muddy quagmire.

Having arrived in France in July 1944, Thomas Brydges of the 4th Field Regiment, RCA, would be with the Canadian troops as they advanced across Normandy, the "Long Left Flank", and the Scheldt, through France and Belgium, toward the Netherlands. Years earlier, in May 1940, the Netherlands, despite its declaration of neutrality, had been invaded by the German blitzkrieg and put under Nazi control. It lead to five years of suffering for the Dutch people.



In March 1945, the 1st Canadian Corps (who had been fighting in Italy) joined their comrades of the 2nd Canadian Corps (who had fought through France, Belgium, and Germany). For the first time in history, two Canadian Army corps would fight together. The two Canadian Corps were tasked with the **Liberation of the Netherlands**, on two fronts— northeastern Holland and northern Germany, and Western Holland. Grateful residents greeted the Canadians as heroes as they liberated towns and cities. It was never easy. The freedom fighters faced destroyed roads, bridges and dykes; experienced days of fierce clashes against a resilient, sometimes fanatical enemy; and engaged in house-to-house fighting. Many Canadians were killed in the Liberation.

Three of Thomas' brothers also served with the Canadian Army, and all four of the Brydges boys would serve in Holland. After Thomas enlisted in January 1941, his brother Alvin Bertie was the next to enlist, followed by Arthur Beebe and then Charles Vincent. In early March 1945, Thomas' brothers were: Private Alvin Brydges, who had been overseas for about two years; Private Arthur Brydges, who had been overseas for one year (both Alvin and Arthur were with field ambulance units); and Private Charles Vincent Brydges, who had enlisted in April 1944, and arrived overseas early in 1945, serving in the infantry with the Lincoln and Welland Regiment at only eighteen years of age. In January 1944, Thomas would spend a short leave together with his brother Alvin in Scotland. In late February 1945, he and his brother Arthur met in Holland and were able to spend a short time together. Only weeks later, Thomas would lose his life. His three brothers were all serving overseas in Holland at the time of Thomas' death.

Gunner Thomas Edwin Brydges had been overseas for almost four years when, on March 12, 1945, he would lose his life while fighting in Holland, during the Liberation of the Netherlands. Thomas Brydges' remains were buried at a location recorded on the Army Field Service Card as "Nijmegen Holland Cdn Mil Temp Cem".

In late March 1945, Thomas and Elizabeth Brydges in Petrolia received a telegram from the Director of Records in Ottawa informing them that their son, GUNNER EDWIN BRYDGES WAS KILLED IN ACTION IN HOLLAND OR BELGIUM RECENTLY. In April 1945, his mother received the following letter from an Army Major-General, Adjutant-General:

Dear Mrs. Brydges:

It was with deep regret that I learned of the death of your son, A28400 Gunner Thomas Edwin Brydges, who gave his life in the Service of his Country in the Western European Theatre of War on the 12th day of March, 1945.

From official information we have received, your son was killed in action against the enemy. You may be assured that any additional information received will be communicated to you without delay.

The Minister of National Defence and the Members of the Army Council have asked me to express to you and your family their sincere sympathy in your bereavement. We pay tribute to the sacrifice he so bravely made.

In late May 1945, Elizabeth received the following letter from the Colonel, Director of Records, for Adjutant-General:

Dear Madam:

Information has now been received from the overseas military authorities that your son, A28400 Gunner Thomas Edwin Brydges, was buried with religious rites in a temporary grave located at a point approximately three miles South-West of Nijmegen, Holland.

The grave will have been temporarily marked with a wooden cross for identification purposes and in due course the remains will be reverently exhumed and removed to a recognized military burial ground when the concentration of graves in the area takes place. On this being completed the new location will be advised to you, but for obvious reasons it will likely take approximately one year before this information is received.

Thomas Brydges was later officially recorded as, *Overseas casualty, killed in action, in the field (Holland)*. In mid-April of 1945, his parents would receive high tributes to the worth of their son Thomas, both as a man and as a soldier in letters of sympathy from his padre, Capt. A. Marshall Laverty, 4th Field Regiment, RCA, and his friend, T.S.M. Urie, Watford, of the same battery. The padre's letter stated that Thomas was killed instantly on March 12th in the Reichwald Forest, Germany, when he encountered a mine. He was a "*faithful diligent member of the crew,*" the padre stated, and the funeral service was attended by the second in command, the acting battery Commander, and a great number of his friends. He added that the burial took place at Nejmegen, Holland, temporarily and it was expected that the Canadian dead would later be concentrated in a permanent cemetery. In expressing his great loss in the passing of Thomas Brydges, T.S.M. Urie stated he knew "Slim" better than anyone in the battery. "*He was on my gun crew for over three years and I can safely say he was the best gunner in our troop.*"

In late 1945, Elizabeth Brydges, who was then residing at 292 Confederation Street, Sarnia, received a War Service Gratuity of \$863.55 for the loss of her son. In November 1947, Elizabeth would receive from the Director, War Service Records, a photograph of the grave and marker over the burial place in Nijmegen Cemetery in Holland, of her late son Thomas Edwin Brydges. For the remainder of their lives, Thomas' parents and his siblings rarely spoke about their beloved Thomas Edwin—the pain of his loss was too difficult to reminisce.

Twenty-seven-year-old Thomas Edwin Brydges is buried in Groesbeek Canadian War Cemetery, Netherlands, Grave IV.A.2. On his headstone are inscribed the words, NOBLY HE FELL WHILE FIGHTING FOR LIBERTY. Thomas Brydges' name is also inscribed on the Petrolia cenotaph in the Town of Petrolia. In November 2019, his name along with 25 others was added to the Sarnia cenotaph, engraved in stone to be remembered always.



Thomas' brother Charles Vincent Brydges also served in the Canadian army, as a Private with the Lincoln and Welland Regiment. In the spring of 1945, twenty year-old Vincent Brydges was wounded in action at the front lines in Holland. He was taken prisoner of war but it was not for long. With the Allied forces pressing the retreating Germans, Vincent was released and left behind by the enemy as they fell back. A wounded Vincent was picked up by the advancing Allies and was returned to England with other repatriated prisoners before being shipped back home to Canada.

In mid-April 1945, approximately one month after Thomas' death, Thomas Sr. and Elizabeth in Petrolia received a telegram informing them that their 20-year old son, PRIVATE CHARLES VINCENT BRYDGES HAS BEEN LISTED AS MISSING IN ACTION IN WESTERN EUROPE. The same day that Thomas and Elizabeth received the telegram, Vincent walked in the front door of their home. About one month later, they received a telegram informing them that Charles Vincent was now safe in England. The war in Europe would end on May 8, 1945.

SOURCES: C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 4d, 4e

BUCHNER, William Hiram (#A/4526)

When William (Bill) Buchner enlisted at age 18, he hoped to make serving in the Canadian Army a lifelong career. He never got the chance. Within two years, he was killed on Christmas Eve in The Battle of Ortona.

He was born in Montrose Township, Ontario on May 4, 1923, the son of Warren Hiram (born Welland, Ontario) and Ruth Edith (nee Booth) Buchner. Parents Warren and Ruth Buchner were married in Chippewa, Ontario on September 17, 1923. In 1932, when Bill was only nine years old, his father Warren passed away. Ruth Buchner remarried a Mr. Smith and the family resided at 108 South Mitton Street and later 142 1/2 North Victoria Street. Bill's family expanded with his mother's second marriage. Already a brother to Robert Elmer, Harold (born 1930) and Virginia Lumley, Bill now had a half-brother, Peter Huffman, and a half-sister, Dorothy Kemp.

His education was brief, typical of the time. Growing up in Sarnia, Bill attended Wellington Street Public School and played softball in the school league. He would leave school after completing grade eight at age fifteen and, before enlisting, worked as a labourer on a farm, for a junk dealer, in a factory and as a rigger at a grain elevator.

From 1940 – 1942, he was a labourer at Canadian Carborundum in Niagara Falls.

Now 18, Buchner enlisted in the Canadian Army on January 10, 1942 in London, Ontario. He stood five feet ten inches tall, had grey eyes and brown hair, and was single. He resided at home with his mother at 225 Cromwell Street, at the time. For Bill, his enlisting was the first step to a permanent job. His ambition post-war was to remain in the Army.

Six months later he left Canada to fight. From #1 District Depot in London, in this half year, Bill received his army training at #10 Basic Training Centre in Kitchener and the Infantry Training Centre at Borden. On June 2, 1942, as a Private with the RCR reinforcements, he would embark overseas for the United Kingdom, where he would be attached to the Canadian Infantry Reinforcement Unit (CIRU).

After further training in the U.K., on June 13, 1943, Private Buchner would embark from the U.K., arriving in **Sicily** in early July 1943 with the Royal Canadian Regiment (RCR). The **Italian Campaign**, the first sustained Canadian Army operation of the War, began with the invasion of Sicily on July 10, 1943. The fierce fighting on the island would last more than four weeks, during which the Canadians would advance through difficult mountainous terrain, against an ever-stiffening German resistance. By August 17, the Germans had evacuated the island to the Italian mainland. In early September, Canadian and Allied forces would invade **Italy**. Though Italy surrendered shortly after, the occupying Germans made it clear their fight was not over. Liberating Italy would be a painstaking northward crawl, lasting 20 months, over a range of landscapes, through challenging weather, and against a series of well-protected defences held by some of the German army's best troops.

The Canadian Army smashed the Axis defences in the Battle of Sicily and then moved on to fight them on the road to Rome. In an October 1943 letter home to his mother, Bill had little to say about the engagements he had been through, but did describe the Italian country as “pretty” and that “the weather is sure hot over here”. Also in October 1943, Bill was hospitalized for just over a week dealing with a case of malaria.

Sadly, on Christmas Eve 1943, Bill Buchner was killed in action during the **Battle of Ortona**. The battle to capture the town of Ortona was a bitter and costly affair. Ortona was situated strategically on a high ridge that was impregnable from three sides. The battle to capture it was the first episode of urban combat (city fighting) in the Italian theatre. The Canadians were victorious but in that week of fierce fighting during the Christmas season, they incurred 2,330 casualties, including 1,372 killed. One of the fallen was Private Bill Buchner. His remains were buried five days later on December 29, 1943 at a location recorded on the Army Field Service Card as “Lanciano Sh 141/2 R. side of road MR316154 Gr 8”. His remains would later be exhumed and reburied in Moro River Canadian War Cemetery.

In early January 1944, Ruth in Sarnia would receive a telegram from the Director of Records in Ottawa, informing her that her son, PRIVATE WILLIAM HIRAM BUCHNER WAS KILLED IN ACTION ON DECEMBER 24 WHILE FIGHTING IN ITALY. The telegram said that further information would be forwarded when available. In February 1944, Ruth Edith Smith, then residing at Victoria Street, received the following letter from a Major-General, Adjutant-General:

Dear Mrs. Smith:

It was with deep regret that I learned of the passing of your son, A.4526 Private William Hiram Buchner, who gave his life in the Service of his Country in the Mediterranean Theatre of War on the 24th day of December 1943.

From official information we have received, your son was killed in action against the enemy. You may be assured that any additional information received will be communicated to you without delay. The Minister of National Defence and the members of the Army Council have asked me to express to you and your family their sincere sympathy in your bereavement. We pay tribute to the sacrifice he so bravely made.

William Buchner was later officially recorded as, *Overseas casualty, killed in action, in the field (Italy)*. In July 1945, Ruth Smith received a War Service Gratuity of \$331.37 for the loss of her son William. Twenty year-old William Buchner is buried in Moro River Canadian War Cemetery, Italy, Grave VII.D.15.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 7C, 8X, 8Y

BURKE, Carl Victor (#B/74572)

Married and the father of a five year old, Carl Burke was killed in the Invasion of Sicily. His family's grief is evident on his epitaph: IN LOVING MEMORY OF ONE WHO WILL NOT BE FORGOTTEN BY HIS WIFE AND DAUGHTER.

He was born in Cobalt in Nipissing County, Ontario on February 28, 1913, the only son of Clarence Herman and Margaret (nee Malloy) Burke, of Timmins, Ontario. Parents Clarence and Margaret Burke were married on November 21, 1912 in Haileybury, Ontario. The young couple knew tragedy after they were married. Two of their daughters died young: Dorothy May at age 15 in 1934; and Margaret Kathleen at age 11 in 1936. Carl had two sisters, Rita Adeline (Guidolin) and Thelma Irene (Worth), who resided in Timmins, but the loss of their two daughters must have been devastating to the parents.

Significant changes were occurring in Carl's life after completing grade 11 in Timmins. He met Rita Maria St. Jean of Sarnia, whom he married on March 8, 1935 in Timmins. Carl and Rita Burke would reside at 18 Southern Avenue and later 257 Birch South Street in Timmins. Carl began working as a dairyman for a while; however, like his father, he worked in the mines and from 1937 -1939, he was a miner-drill operator with Hollinger Mines in Timmins. Getting married and finding a steady job prepared Carl for perhaps the biggest change in his life to date: Rita gave birth to a daughter, Leda Dorothy. As it turns out, Leda was their only child.

Carl's life changed again when he enlisted in the Canadian Army in Timmins on June 28, 1940. The newest member of the Central Ontario Regiment, Canadian Active Service Force, Algonquin Regiment was twenty-seven years old, stood five feet nine inches tall, and had hazel eyes and brown hair. He recorded his occupations as dairyman and miner-drill operator, was residing on Birch Street in Timmins at the time.

After receiving his army training in Toronto and the Infantry Advanced Training Centre (IATC) at Camp Borden, Burke would embark overseas for the United Kingdom on October 5, 1941. He would continue his training as part of the Canadian Infantry Holding Unit (CIHU), then the Canadian Infantry Reinforcement Unit (CIRU). In late December 1941, he became a member of the 48th Highlanders of Canada, R.C.I.C., with the rank of Private.

After many months of battle training in England, on June 15, 1943, Private Burke was among the Canadians who were issued new weapons before departing the U.K. for Algiers. Ninety-two ships left Britain in two convoys, one fast, one slow. The men did not know where they were going, but the fact that they had traded their Canadian-built Ram tanks for American Sherman tanks (the standard battle tanks used by both the British and Americans in North Africa) must have given them a clue. On their voyage, three ships in the slow convoy were lost to U-boats. Carl Burke would arrive on the southern tip of **Sicily** as part of a huge Allied invasion force on July 10, 1943.

The **Italian Campaign**, the first sustained Canadian Army operation of the War, began with the invasion of Sicily on July 10. Code-named *Operation Husky*, the multinational invasion force was made up of British, American, Canadian and French personnel, commanded by General Dwight D. Eisenhower. It was the largest armada ever assembled to date. They would need it, for Sicily posed several challenges for the invaders.

Sicily was a mountainous island and, for the Italian and German forces there, the interior was a defensive planner's dream. For the Canadians, as they marched up Sicily island's dusty mountainous winding roads, in scorching temperatures above 40 degrees Celsius, their designated route had them fated to run into major concentrations of German troops offering stiff resistance, while holding the high ground in a series of lines. The fierce fighting on the island would last more than four weeks, and by August 17, the Germans had evacuated the island to the Italian mainland. In early September, Canadian and Allied forces would invade Italy. Though Italy surrendered shortly after, the occupying Germans made it clear their fight was not over. Liberating Italy would be a painstaking northward crawl lasting 20 months.

Carl Burke would not be alive long enough to see the taking of Sicily. As the Canadians trudged inland up the steep and twisting roads, the Germans were waiting for them. The married father of one would lose his life on July 23, 1943, only two weeks after arriving in Sicily. He died from gun shot wounds inflicted the previous day. Carl Burke's remains were buried on July 23 at a location recorded on the Army Service Field Card as "150 yds West of Scuoli Elementary School, near orchard, Valguarnera, Sicily Sh.55, MR 3577". His remains would later be exhumed and reburied in Agira War Cemetery in Sicily.

On August 10, 1943, Rita, now living at 228 Davis Street in Sarnia, would receive the following telegram from the Director of Records in Ottawa: REGRET DEEPLY B74572 PRIVATE CARL VICTOR BURKE NOW

OFFICIALLY REPORTED DIED TWENTYTHIRD JULY 1943 AS RESULT OF WOUNDS RECEIVED IN ACTION STOP FURTHER INFORMATION FOLLOWS WHEN RECEIVED.

Private Carl Burke was later officially recorded as, *Overseas casualty, died of wounds received in action, in the field (Sicily)*. At the time of his death, Carl left behind Rita and Leda, now five. At the time, Leda was living with her maternal grandmother, Eugene St. Jean, at 307 Exmouth Street as Rita was completing a business course and found it necessary to board her out temporarily.

In February 1945, Rita Burke received a War Service Gratuity of \$472.39 for the loss of her husband Carl. Later, Rita would remarry, becoming Rita Stewart, and residing at 286 St. Vincent Street in Sarnia.

In August 1948, five years after their only son's death, Clarence and Margaret Burke were still waiting to receive a photograph of Carl's grave. In a letter written to the Department of National Defence, Clarence Burke wrote:

Dear Sir's,

I wrote the Imperial War Graves Commission in England for a photograph of my sons grave CV Burke in Agira Canadian Cemetery Sicily. On July 23rd 1946 two photographs was taken of his grave and forwarded on to Canadian Headquarters to be forwarded to his next of kin and as I or his mother has not recd a photograph, I would like to know if there is a chance of ever getting one.

It is not known if the Burkes ever received a photograph. Thirty year-old Carl Burke is buried in Agira War Cemetery, Sicily, Grave D, B, 401. On his headstone are inscribed the words, IN LOVING MEMORY OF ONE WHO WILL NOT BE FORGOTTEN BY HIS WIFE AND DAUGHTER.

SOURCES: C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 7C, 8X, 8Y

BURKE, David Warnock (J/86415)

The Halifax Bomber that David Burke was flying on a bombing mission in 1944 has never been located. Nor have authorities found the remains of its seven crew members. Flying Officer Burke's name is inscribed on the Runnymede War Memorial in Surrey.

David Warnock Burke was born in Sarnia on October 12, 1918, the only son of Captain David Wilson Burke and his wife Ethel Ellen of 145 North Euphemia Street. Parents David Wilson and Ethel Burke were married in Penetanguishene, Ontario on December 31, 1912. The Burke family also included two daughters, Dora Warnock and Marion Wilson Burke, who were both residing in Hamilton at the time of David's death.

David was educated at a Sarnia public elementary school and then Sarnia Collegiate High School from September 1933 to June 1937. He was a member of the Central Century Club and had played hockey for the Club. While in high school, he played junior and senior WOSSA rugby and City League hockey. He was also fond of swimming and skating. His interests extended beyond athletics. After graduating from a technical program (electricity) at Sarnia Collegiate, he attended the Radio College of Canada in Toronto. Here, he took the Commercial Operating Course for six months. While at school in Toronto, David became very interested in amateur radio, and he also took some flying lessons. Following his studies, he received an Amateur Radio Certificate and was employed as a radio operator by Trans-Canada Air Lines in Winnipeg for seven months. When he decided to enlist in the second year of the war, it was a natural fit for Burke, 21, to eventually join the Air Force.

David Burke enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force in London, Ontario on February 21, 1940. He stood five feet nine and a half inches tall, had hazel eyes and dark brown hair, and was single. He recorded his occupation as wireless and electrical mechanic, and was living at the family home at 145 North Euphemia Street. His training, not surprisingly, was quite extensive. He received training in wireless and then served as an instructor at No. 1 Wireless School Montreal and No. 3 Wireless School in Winnipeg. In February 1942, he switched his focus and was successful in his application to re-muster as a pilot. He would receive air training at #2 Initial Training School (ITS) in Regina and #2 Elementary Flying Training School (EFTS) in Fort William (flying Tiger Moth's and Harvard's).

David made an excellent impression on his commanding officer at #2EFTS. In one report, he wrote of Burke: *A capable, dependable airman who has done well and who has cooperated well in assisting as instructor of signals. He is quiet, self-confident and determined to succeed. He has the bearing and ability along with the experience to make a good officer.* David would continue his training at #2 Service Flying Training School (SFTS) at Uplands, where he was awarded his Pilot Flying Badge on December 18, 1942.

Nearly a year after enlisting, Burke embarked overseas from Halifax for the United Kingdom on January 15,

1943. He would continue his training in England and Scotland at #9 Elementary Flight Training School (EFTS) and #14 Advanced Flying Unit (AFU). He would then serve with #20 Operational Training Unit (OTU) and #1658 Heavy Conversion Unit (HCU), making a number of trips over Germany in Halifax bombers. On February 12, 1944, David would become a member of RAF #640 Squadron, part of **Bomber Command**, with the rank of Pilot Officer-Pilot.

During the course of the war, one of this country's most significant contributions was the approximately 50,000 Canadians who served with the RCAF and RAF in Bomber Command operations. Next to Britain, Canada was the largest contributor to Bomber Command, making up more than a third of all of Bomber Command personnel. The men who served in Bomber Command faced some of the most difficult odds of anyone fighting in the war.

RAF #640 Squadron was formed at RAF Leconfield, Yorkshire on January 7, 1944. It was equipped with Handley Page Halifax Mk III bombers, and operated as part of No. 4 Group in Bomber Command. In March 1945, the squadron re-equipped with Halifax VI bombers.



P/O-Pilot David Warnock Burke

On August 7, 1943, David wrote a letter on Canadian Legion War Services letterhead to his older sister Dora who was residing in Toronto at the time. Following is that letter;

Dear Dora,

I hope you agree with the old saying "better late than never", because I'm afraid I'm late answering you this time. I've had a couple letters from you since I last wrote; from now on I'll keep up better because we are night flying now and it means hanging around all day sleeping and resting – no time to go out much.

If we fly at mid night, we are briefed at 5:30 pm and again at 9:30 and then start getting ready. It takes quite a bit of preparing, before you go out on a big trip in a big ship. We leave the crew room $\frac{3}{4}$ of an hour before take off and go to dispersal in a truck with all our equipment – parachutes, rations, oxygen gear, maps, gen sheets (general information sheets), sextant and a million other things. The bomb aimer checks his bombs and bombing circuits, sights, etc. The navigator checks his charts and gets his computer and all his instruments out on his table. The radio opr gets his equipment all tested etc. I run up the engines and double check them and all the fuel cocks and flying instruments radio aids. The tail gunner gets his guns all adjusted and stores the rations away etc. Finally when all this is done we roll out on the field and away we go.

Our trip run from 5 to 6 hours and we fly away up in the oxygen region. We made one trip of six hours without ever seeing the ground or the stars – we were in thick cloud flying instruments and dead reconning by the navigator. It sure is different than any flying we did before. It is quite interesting and I like it.

The whole crew all live together in one hut now and we are getting to know each other very well. The navigator and I hang around together more than anybody else – I mean we go together, to town, and usually one or two of the other guys.

Ted Paige the bomb aimer is next friendliest, I suppose the reason being that the Pilot Nav and Bomb Aimer work together more than the rest. The WOP, Bill Haden sort of keeps to himself (although he gets along with us fine) but there are some guys on this camp who he knew before and of course he goes out with them: besides he doesn't

work so close to the rest of us he is in his cubby hole, pretty well by himself listening out on the wireless. Don Buckler the rear A.G. doesn't say very much and doesn't go out with us very much, he is quite a lot younger than the rest of us and I think that sort of puts a line between us so far as social time goes. Of course as far as crew work goes, he is right there.

I expect to get a leave about August 21 or 31 at the very latest and after that we will go (I expect) on to four engine Halifax bombers. At present I'm flying a Wellington Bomber which is the biggest twin engine bomber in existence. Its an old name, but the new Marks are right up to date. I like them very much. There is a small chance we may stay in Wellington, but I doubt it.

Have you seen the pictures I sent Mom, the ones I took in London last winter? I suppose by now your holiday boat trip is gone for another year. What about the new job prospects? Any gen from the British Government people?

You asked me if the crew is all Canadian, no it isn't. Wally Mustoe (NAV) is English and Bill Haden is English as well, the rest are Canadian.

Well Dora, I guess I've about run out of gossip for now,

So long

Your little brother Dave

On March 31, 1944, Pilot Officer-Pilot David Burke was on his fourth operation, as part of a crew aboard Halifax bomber LW500 (markings C8-Z) that took off from Leconfield on a bombing raid targetting Nuremburg, Germany. Approximately 795 aircraft took part in the operation. High-cloud was expected to offer protection to the bomber stream but the target would be clear for the bombing run. A Mosquito meteorological flight had predicted that in fact that would not be the case, but the raid went ahead anyway. The German controller ignored the diversionary raids and had his fighters circling close to the route of the main force. Consequently, the fighters engaged the bombers before they reached the Belgian border. The clear conditions allowed the fighters to pick off bombers at will. Strong winds meant that some of the bombers went off the intended route and as a consequence many bombed Schweinfurt in error, some 50 miles from Nuremburg.

Burke's Halifax bomber LW500 made it to Nuremburg and unleashed their bombs, but they never made it back to base. As it returned from the raid, it was hit by German flak over the French coast near Dieppe. All seven crew members of LW500 were lost in the crash. Halifax LW500 was one of 108 Allied aircraft that would be lost on this night. The operation had one of the highest percent losses of any raid and little damage was caused to the target.

Days after the crash, Captain Burke in Hamilton would receive a telegram informing him that his only son was, REPORTED MISSING 31-MARCH-44 AFTER AIR OPERATIONS (OVERSEAS) OVER NUREMBURG GERMANY. Perishing with Sarnian David Burke were Sgts Weir Crory, Reginald Arthur Eastman, William Haden, Allan James N. Jamieson and Michael Martin Stilliard, and F/O Frederick Walter Woods. In early 1948, investigators believed that they had found the remains of Halifax LW500 at a crash site at Weimar Schmieden, Germany. After notifying the next of kin of the find, it was later determined that the crash site was in fact that of another Halifax (LW537) lost the same night.

Along with David Burke, one of the crew members lost in Halifax LW500 was F/Sgt. M.M. Stilliard (RAF). The father of M.M. Stilliard (in Surrey, England) would receive word in January 1948 that the crash site and graves of the crew had been located; however, in July 1949, the Casualty Branch in England wrote a letter to Mr. Stilliard informing him of the error that they had made. David Burke's father would receive a similar letter. Following is a portion of the letter sent to Mr. Stilliard:

Dear Mr. Stilliard,

I am very sorry to reopen a subject which I am sure must be most painful to you, but since this Department's letter of 7th January, 1948, the Missing Research Organisation in Germany has submitted a report of its investigations, and it is with reluctance that I have to convey to you details of a distressing nature.

You will recall that in the letter of the 26th November, 1947, reference was made to burial of unknown airmen in the local cemetery at Weimar Schmieden and to a search of records of aircraft crews known to have operated over enemy territory on the night of 30/31st March, 1944. Unfortunately, this search was confined only to aircraft crews of which no news had been received since time of "take off".

German documents have now come to light which leave no doubt that the acceptance of graves 9 to 11, Row H, Plot 4, in the British Military Cemetery at Hannover (Limmer) for your son and his six companions was an unfortunate error.

These documents show that a Halifax aircraft was shot down at 1 am. on the 31st March, 1944, near

Fladungen, East North-East of Frankfurt on Main and Midway between Eisenach and Schweinfurt, and that five members of the crew were taken prisoners, ... and two unknown dead who were buried in the local cemetery at Weimar Schmeiden.

The two unknown were later identified as 1452226 Flight Sergeant M.M. Stemberge (pilot of Halifax LW 537) and the rear gunner 1822442 Sergeant J.D. Goskirk. The evidence revealed at exhumation of the grave at Weimar Schmeiden, (chiefly "pilot's wings and a ring with initials M.M.S.") confirms the information contained in the German documents. In view of these circumstances, no doubt, you will wish to return the ring sent to you so that I may send it on to the next of kin of Flight Sergeant Stemberge.

I feel sure that you would wish to know that should the Royal Air Force Missing Research and Enquiry Service fail to locate the resting places of your son and his companions, their names will be perpetuated on the Memorial to the Missing which is to be erected in this Country to commemorate those gallant airmen who gave their lives and have no known graves. In conclusion, please accept my sincere regrets for the distress occasioned by the contents of this letter.

David Warnock Burke was later officially recorded as, *Previously reported missing after air operations, now for official purposes, presumed dead, overseas (Germany)*. In January 1951, his parents received a War Service Gratuity of \$624.09 as compensation for the loss of their only son. Twenty-five-year-old Pilot Officer-Pilot David Burke has no known grave. His name is inscribed on the Runnymede War Memorial, Surrey, United Kingdom, Panel 249.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, J, L, M, S, 2C, 2D, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10B, 10U, 4g

BURR, Kenneth Leslie (#A/104953)

Bombardier Kenneth Burr, 21, had his life planned when he returned from Europe after World War II. His desire to learn arc-welding and, eventually, to start his own trucking business ended when he was killed in action in late December 1944.

He was born in Sarnia Township on August 9, 1923, the son of Gordon Nelson and Harriet Isabel (nee Kemsley) Burr of Lakeshore Road, R.R. #3, Sarnia. Parents Gordon and Harriet Burr were married on March 28, 1918 in Sarnia. Gordon and Harriet would be blessed with nine children over the next two decades. Daughters Helen Matilda (born 1919), Mary Elizabeth (Scott) and Ruth Ann (Handy), and six sons: John Nelson (born 1921); Kenneth (born 1923); Gordon Jr. Howard (born 1925); James Robert (born 1927); Franklin Stuart (born 1933); and Gerald Norman (born 1938). Gordon supported his growing family by being a pipefitter with Imperial Oil. It must have been devastating for the entire Burr family to experience the loss of two family members so young. Helen Matilda died in February 1927 at age eight and Gordon Jr. at age 17 died in November 1942.

Kenneth received his early education at Clark's schoolhouse on Point Edward Road and then attended Sarnia Collegiate. He was enrolled in a technical course there from 1934 to 1936 and in his spare time he played rugby, hockey and baseball. After leaving high school at age thirteen, he worked as a fisherman and gravel truck driver for 2 years and then worked at Holmes Foundry as a blacksmith and core makers helper for 3 years. Immediately prior to enlisting, he was employed at Anglin-Norcross Limited at the Polymer Plant in Sarnia, working in construction as a blacksmith and a rigger. Kenneth was assured he would have a job with them on his return from war. He had much to look forward to in post-war Sarnia. He had a desire to learn arc-welding and wanted to start his own trucking business eventually.

At 19, Kenneth Burr enlisted in the Canadian Army on October 23, 1942 in London, Ontario. He stood five feet ten inches tall, had blue eyes and fair hair, and was single. He was living with his parents on Lakeshore Road at the time. From #1 District Depot in London, he would receive army Basic Training in Chatham, Advanced Training as a Medium gunner at the Canadian Army Training Centre in Petawawa, and Driver and Motor Mechanic's courses in Woodstock and London.

Burr embarked overseas on November 25, 1943, a bit more than a year after he enlisted. He became a member of the Canadian Army Reinforcement Unit (CARU) and a week later (December 3) became a member of the Royal Canadian Artillery, 2 Survey Regiment, with the rank of Gunner. In early December of 1943, parents Gordon and Harriet would receive a telegram from Kenneth informing them that he had arrived safely overseas in the U.K. Six months later, Kenneth Burr arrived in France on July 26, 1944.

The **Battle of Normandy** had begun for the Canadians with the June 6, 1944 D-Day landings at Juno Beach. After breaching the "Atlantic Wall" of "Fortress Europe", Allied armies began their break out from the narrow

Normandy bridgehead to carve out a foothold on the French mainland. It would take a whole summer of tenacious fighting, pushing against fierce and ruthless German forces to advance east across France. In a brutal campaign of attrition, the Canadians faced fierce battles and vicious counterattacks as they clawed their way forward liberating villages and towns including Bretteville, Carpiquet, Caen and Falaise. According to letters that his parents later received, Kenneth had gone to France only a short time after the June 1944 D-Day invasion, and he had most recently been in Germany with the Canadian Forces.

After the Allied breakout from Normandy in late August 1944, Canadian forces were assigned the “**Long Left Flank**”, the less glamorous but vital task of clearing coastal areas in the north of France and Belgium of German occupiers. In a series of stop-and-start advances against stiff resistance in fortified positions, the Canadians liberated ports and villages including Rouen, Dieppe, Dunkirk, Boulogne and Calais. In September 1944, Burr would advance to the rank of Bombardier, with the Royal Canadian Artillery, 2 Survey Regiment. In early October 1944, the Canadians were entrusted with liberating the 45-mile-long Scheldt estuary (the Belgian-Dutch border area). The **Battle of the Scheldt** was among the most difficult and grueling struggles in the war. The bitter fighting against a well-fortified and heavily entrenched enemy took place in a bleak environment made worse by the winter cold in a flooded and freezing muddy quagmire.

After the Battle of the Scheldt, over the winter of 1944-1945 most of the weary Canadians were given a rest, although the front was never quiet, with patrols and large-scale raids remaining constant. Canadian troops were stationed along the **Nijmegen sector** in the Netherlands. They were tasked to hold and defend the Nijmegen salient and a small piece of Allied-held territory north of the Maas River. This bridgehead would be used as a starting point for crossing the Rhine (in February 1945), and the Allies had to give the enemy the impression that an assault was imminent to force it to leave troops in that area. The Germans did their best to push the Canadians out of “the island” by flooding the area and constantly harassing them with mortar fire, artillery and aggressive patrols. Constantly vigilant, the men dug deep slit trenches, covered them with whatever was handy, and tried to keep warm from the snow and cold during one of the most frigid winters on record in northern Europe. During this supposedly quiet period, between November 9 and December 31, 1944, approximately 1,239 Canadians were killed or wounded.



Bombardier Kenneth Leslie Burr

Bombardier Kenneth Burr was one of them. On December 28, 1944, he would lose his life while fighting in the Nijmegen sector of Holland, during this early stage of the **Liberation of the Netherlands**. Kenneth remains were buried on December 29, 1944 at a location recorded on the Army Field Service Card as Canadian Cemetery Yonkerbosch E690595 Sh. 5. His remains would later be exhumed and reburied in Nijmegen Canadian Military Cemetery in Holland.

In early January of 1945, Gordon and Harriet Burr received a telegram from the Director of Records in Ottawa informing them that their son, BOMBARDIER KENNETH BURR HAS BEEN KILLED IN ACTION IN GERMANY. Kenneth Burr was later officially recorded as, *Overseas casualty, killed in action, in the field (Holland)*. In early February of 1945, a memorial service for Private Kenneth Burr was held in Trinity Anglican Church in Sarnia Township, conducted by the Rev. G.C. Stone.

Two years after her son died (in January 1946), his mother received a War Service Gratuity of \$342.90 for the loss of her son Kenneth. In November 1947, the Director, War Service Records, would send her a photograph of Kenneth's grave and marker over the burial place in Nijmegen, Holland. Twenty-one-year-old Kenneth Burr is buried in Groesbeek Canadian War Cemetery, Netherlands, Grave II.F.7. On his headstone are inscribed the words, AT REST.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, L, N, 2C, 2D, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 2w

CAMERON, William Donald Leslie (#R/116979)

Bill Cameron was only 22 when he died in a fiery crash on September 1, 1943. His legacy, however, lives on through his heroic actions that saved the lives of three fellow crew members that fateful night.

William "Bill" Cameron was born in Plympton Township on March 28, 1921, the only child of Donald Gordon and Ellen (nee Pollock) Cameron, of Thedford. Both of William's parents were born in Watford, Ontario. The Cameron family moved to Sarnia when Bill was young and resided at 206 Maria Street. Donald supported his family with his work as a Pipefitter in the Pumping Department at Sarnia Imperial Oil.

Bill was a well-rounded student and athlete. He attended London Road Public School from 1928-1935 and then was a student at Sarnia Collegiate from September 1935 until June 1941. In his youth, he participated extensively in hockey, softball and baseball. His academic standing and his character are best summarized in a reference letter the principal of Sarnia Collegiate wrote to the RCAF Commanding Officer in London, Ontario. The principal wrote that, *Cameron holds complete Pass Matriculation standing and Upper School or Honour Matriculation standing in English Literature, Trigonometry, Zoology, Chemistry and French Composition. He has shown himself to be a dependable and conscientious student and would, I believe, prove a very acceptable applicant for your Force.* After graduating, Bill worked as a labourer in the "asbestos gang" for several months with the Sarnia Imperial Oil Refinery.

At age 19, William Cameron enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force in London, Ontario on August 29, 1941. He stood five feet ten inches tall, had green eyes and brown hair, and was single. He was living at home with his parents on Maria Street at the time. Like many other young men, Bill knew what he wanted. He specifically requested flying duties and his plans for after the war were to return to school for engineering. His extensive year of training began at #1 Manning Depot in Toronto. From there, Bill received his air training at #6 Initial Training School (ITS) in Toronto; #20 Elementary Flying Training School (EFTS) in Oshawa; and #16 Service Flying Training School (SFTS) in Hagersville. On August 14, 1942, Cameron was awarded his Pilot's Flying Badge at Hagersville, and then had a two-week leave. Of his graduating class of 80 students, two graduates were chosen for immediate service overseas. One was William Cameron.

William would embark overseas from Halifax for the United Kingdom on October 27, 1942. After arriving, he was immediately transferred from #3 Personnel Reception Centre to #18 (Pilots) Advanced Flying Unit for further training. He would go on to serve with #23 Operational Training Unit, then #429 Squadron, and later #1659 Conversion Unit. On June 23, 1943, he became a member of RCAF #419 Moose Squadron "Moosa Aswayita" (written in Cree, not Latin, means Beware the moose-a ferocious fighter), part of **Bomber Command**, with the rank of Warrant Officer Class II-Pilot.

During the course of the war, one of this country's most significant contributions was the approximately 50,000 Canadians who served with the RCAF and RAF in Bomber Command operations. Next to Britain, Canada was the largest contributor to Bomber Command, making up more than a third of all of Bomber Command personnel. The men who served in Bomber Command faced some of the most difficult odds of anyone fighting in the war.

RCAF #419 Squadron was formed at RAF Mildenhall, England in December 1941, and named after its first commanding officer, Wing Commander John "Moose" Fulton. The unit moved to various bases throughout the war, including Leeming, Topcliffe, Croft and Middleton St. George. Initially operating Wellington bombers, in November 1942 the squadron converted to Handley Page Halifax bombers, and in March 1944 to Avro Lancasters.

In early August of 1943, the *Canadian (Sarnia) Observer* reported on an attack over Germany in which William Cameron was involved. In the heavy attacks made by the R.A.F. and the R.C.A.F. on Mannheim and Ludwigshafen on an August night, Cameron piloted a Halifax bomber with Sgt. Beverly Scharf, another Sarnian, a member of his crew. A month later Bill Cameron would be killed in action.



WOII-Pilot William Donald Leslie Cameron

On August 31, 1943, Cameron's Halifax II aircraft JD270 (markings VR-P) took off from Middleton St. George on a night operation targeting Berlin, one of 622 Halifax and Stirling bombers involved in the raid. Halifax bomber JD270 had completed its bombing run over their target Berlin and had escaped into the darkness past the ring of searchlights. It was in the early morning hours of September 1 that an enemy single-engine fighter aircraft, either on purpose or by accident, crashed into the port wing of Cameron's aircraft. The sequence of events in the next ten minutes came quickly and chaotically: the outer tip of the Halifax's port wing was sliced away, the port engine caught fire, and flight engineer J.T. 'Paddy' Mullany managed to extinguish it. Then the propeller refused to feather.

With the Halifax plummeting to 5,000 feet, WOII/Pilot Cameron gave the order to evacuate the aircraft. The plane was now completely out of control, vibrating badly with some of its sections falling off during the rapid descent. But Cameron tried to steady it to give his crew a chance to escape. Only a few of his crew would survive. The wireless operator Sgt. Les H. Duggan, who was dropping the radar jamming strips called "Window" when the crash occurred, was thrown off balance but still managed to make his way to the rear escape hatch. Sgt. R.E. 'Bert' Boos of Calgary and Sgt. Beverly W. Scharf of Sarnia followed him out. As they swung in their parachutes, they saw Halifax JD270 dive and crash. The other four crew members were not seen to leave the aircraft. Perishing with Warrant Officer II-Pilot William Donald Cameron, were FS. Victor Joseph August 'Windy' Wintzer, FS. George Ernest Percy Birtch, and Sgt. John Thomas Mullany (RAAF). Canadians Beverly Scharf and 'Bert' Boos, and Les H. Duggan (of the RAF) bailed out to safety and were taken as Prisoners of War--Sgt. Scharf and Sgt. Duggan were sent to Stalag Luft 6 Heydekrug; and Sgt. Boos was sent to Stalag Luft 3 Sagan and Belaria. Of the 47 aircraft lost in the operation, two other Halifaxes from Squadron 419 also failed to return that night.^{4Y, 6G, 10U}

Not long after, the Camerons on Maria Street would receive a telegram from the Director of Records in Ottawa, informing them that their son and only child, SERGEANT WILLIAM CAMERON WAS REPORTED MISSING IN ACTION AFTER HIS NINETEENTH OPERATIONAL FLIGHT OVER GERMANY. In February of 1944, Donald and Ellen would receive another telegram from Ottawa advising them that their son, SERGT WILLIAM CAMERON HAS BEEN PROMOTED TO FLIGHT-SERGEANT DATING FROM FEBRUARY 14. No further details were received by his parents. Mrs. Ellen Cameron hoped against hope that their only child would soon return. Her heart would leap every time she heard someone coming up her walk, only to sink when it was the postman or a visitor.

William Cameron was later officially recorded as, *Previously reported missing after air operations, now for official purposes, presumed dead, overseas (Germany)*. In October 1945, Ellen received a War Service Gratuity of \$323.62 for the loss of her only child William. Twenty-two-year-old William Cameron is buried in Berlin 1939-45 War Cemetery, Charlottenburg, Germany, Coll. grave 6.A.2-4. On his headstone are inscribed the words, PSALM XXIII.4. His name is also inscribed on the Sarnia Refinery Plaque. Unveiled in 1949, the plaque has the names of 24 Sarnia Imperial Oil employees who made the ultimate sacrifice in World War II.

Beverly Scharf's life took a different path from Donald Cameron's. He was born in 1925 in Wyoming, Ontario, the son of Mr. and Mrs. Tom Scharf. When Tom Scharf took a position with Imperial Oil, the family would move to 267 Cobden Street, Sarnia. At age sixteen, Beverly lied about his age in order to join the RCAF. The air force noticed his age and kept him in Canada until he could pass a high school equivalency exam.

On the fateful September night in 1943, the eighteen year-old, six-foot mid-upper gunner Beverly Scharf was able to bail out of the Halifax aircraft before it crashed. After parachuting from the doomed Halifax, Scharf landed safely. His problems were just beginning, however. Local villagers, who lived near where he landed, grabbed him, spat on him, threw things at him, and almost lynched him. The Sarnian was saved by the arrival of Luftwaffe soldiers who trained their machine guns on the crowd.

Scharf was brought to a German POW camp, the first of several, where he would remain a prisoner for the rest of the war. Life as a POW was difficult--the toughest part for him was the Death March of 1944-45. With the Russians advancing, the Nazi's marched stalag prisoners and concentration camp prisoners west during a bitterly cold winter. The SS soldiers were as brutal as the weather along the way. After the Germans surrendered in May 1945, Scharf and his fellow prisoners would remain in a POW camp, now held by the Russians. He was able to escape from the camp in August 1945, by jumping on a spare tire of an ambulance and riding it to the American lines. He would return to Sarnia in the fall of 1945.

Immediately after the war, Scharf, at the urging of his own mother, visited the Cameron family on Maria Street to give them some peace. He explained Bill's courageous attempt to keep the plane stable, thus allowing the three survivors to get out. He told them that as he was parachuting to the ground, he saw the Halifax dive and crash with Bill and three crew still aboard.

The following April 1946, Beverly Scharf got married and his wife, Marilyn, and he would have two children: Paul and Gregory. They resided on Cedar Crescent in a veteran's subdivision in Sarnia. Beverly would have a succession of jobs in Sarnia: on the railroad and as a bartender, a drycleaner, an ironworker, and an insurance salesman with Metropolitan Life. He would eventually move to Southern California to work in the aerospace business. Sometime in the 1960s, Beverly and Marilyn travelled to Berlin and visited the graves of his fallen airmen, including the grave of Bill Cameron. Beverly Scharf passed away in 2008, at the age of 84, leaving behind his wife, his two children and his four grandchildren.

The following is a portion of an article "Bill Cameron was a skilled pilot", written by Gregory Scharf and printed in the *Sarnia Observer* in November 2014. Each Remembrance Day, Gregory Scharf pays special honour to William Cameron because...

...without his courage or heroism, my family would not exist.

His name was Warrant Officer Bill Cameron. He was a pilot and my dad (a mid-upper gunner) flew with him from June '43 to when they were shot down two months later. They were members of the Moose Squadron, and flew missions as part of Bomber Command over targets like Cologne, Munich, Gelsenkirchen, Mannheim, Nuremburg, Milan, and ultimately Berlin, where they were shot down. Cameron was a skilled pilot. They were "coned" by searchlights on a raid over Pennemunde on Aug. 17 (usually a death sentence for aircrews), but he made their Halifax bomber bob and weave like a skilled boxer.

On the morning of Aug. 31, Cameron roused my dad from his bunk telling him they were going to Berlin that night. Dad protested, saying that they'd been told that they were going on leave. Cameron smiled and said, "Don't worry, Bev, it'll be our last one", knowing that my dad was about to be told that following the raid, Dad was slated to return to Canada to begin training as a pilot. His words were prophetic.

Dad said the flak was so thick it looked like you could walk across it. They dropped their bombs and as they left the target area, they were hit. Cameron tried to limp the shuddering warbird home, but after 10 minutes gave the order to bail out when they went into a shallow dive at around 3,000 feet. Cameron stayed at the helm; my dad (B. Scharf), F.S. Bert Boos, and Doug Duggan (RAF) made it out, and were taken prisoner. FS "Windy" Wintzer, Ernie Birtch (from Ontario), and Sgt. Paddy Mullaney (RAF) did not. While dad was under canopy, he saw the plane hit the ground and explode. There was an escape hatch in the cabin; I don't know why the others didn't make it out, but when dad bailed, Cameron was still fighting the controls to keep the craft stable enough for his crew to escape.

When dad came home, my grandmother insisted that Dad go over to Maria Street to talk to Bill's mother. She was still hoping against hope. Her son's civilian clothes were hanging up in the living room. His photos were

everywhere. And sadly she thought that the silhouette of the young man on her verandah was her son returning. She seemed almost relieved to hear the news. Over the next two years, she received reminders of her son from the RCAF, such as his medals, logbook, etc., and dad believes she ultimately died of a broken heart. He was her only child.

I don't know what Cameron's dreams were, his hopes, his aspirations. I don't know what happened to the two other surviving aircrew members. But the heroism of this man saved my father's life, and his story has been told over and over to my children and now my grandchildren. We are his legacy.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, J, L, M, N, O, 2C, 2D, 4B, 4R, 4Y, 6G, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10B, 10U, w

CAMPBELL, Allan William (#J/36786)

Allan Campbell, married less than two years and with a career, lost his life as a member of an RAF fighter squadron in support of the Allied advance on Normandy, which became a major turning point in the war.

Allan William Campbell was born in Strathroy, Ontario on July 12, 1918, the son of William Allan (a World War I veteran, who would become the Postmaster at Strathroy Post Office) and Christina ("Ena", nee MacNeill) Campbell, of Strathroy, Ontario. Parents William (born in London, Ontario) and Christina (born in Strathroy), were married in Strathroy, Ontario on January 12, 1915. Allan had one sister, Margaret Catherine (born 1933), and one brother, Kenneth Duncan Campbell (born 1923) who, at the time of Allan's death, was serving overseas as a Pilot Officer in the R.C.A.F.



Allan with his brother Ken (L)



With Ken (L) and their father William



Allan with his brother Ken (R)

Allan was educated at Strathroy Public School, 1924-1932, and then three years at Strathroy Collegiate Institute, graduating in 1935. His hobby was mechanics, and he was active in swimming, golf and tennis. In 1935, William began his employment with the Stratford branch of the Royal Bank of Canada, where he worked as a bank teller/accountant for six years until he enlisted. On November 22, 1940, Allan joined the Perth Regiment Militia, No. 10 N.P.A.M. in Kitchener, serving with them for thirty days.

Twenty-three-year-old Allan Campbell enlisted for service with the Royal Canadian Air Force on May 12, 1941 in London, Ontario. He stood five feet nine inches tall, had brown eyes and dark brown hair, was single, and requested flying duties, expressing his preference to be a pilot. His plan for after the war was to return to the Royal Bank, which had promised to employ him after his service. After being posted to #1 Manning Depot in Toronto, Allan would receive his air training at #1 Technical Training School (TTS) in St. Thomas; #1 Initial Training School (ITS) in Toronto; #7 Elementary Flying Training School (EFTS) in Windsor; and #14 Service Flying Training School (SFTS) in Aylmer.

His training was briefly interrupted when he was involved in a car accident that happened late on the night of November 29, 1941. Allan was a passenger in the back seat of a motor vehicle travelling on Highway #22 between London and Strathroy, when at approximately 23:59 hours, the car he was in struck a car that was parked partially on the highway without lights. William remained at home in Strathroy with a suspected twisted ankle for just over one week. After going to hospital, X-rays revealed he had broken his ankle. A cast was applied, and he remained out of

service until mid-December 1941. After recovering, he would continue his training, earning his Pilot's Flying Badge on April 10, 1942. Allan was then posted to 132 (F) Squadron in Rockcliffe, Ontario. He went with this squadron to British Columbia where he would spend over 1 ½ years on Pacific coastal duties, at locations such as Sea Island, Patricia Bay, Tofino and Boundary Bay.



Sept. 1942: Patricia Bay, B.C.. Allan and "Kitty"



F/O-Pilot Allan William Campbell

In May of 1942, Allan would marry Miss Hattie Viola Garside, a registered nurse and the daughter of George and Lilian Garside of Sarnia. George Garside (born Westminster, Middlesex County) and Lilian (born Walkerville, Ontario) resided in Sarnia, where George was employed at Imperial Oil. George and Lilian Garside had three children; oldest son Melvin (born London, Ontario) and two Sarnia-born daughters: Mildred Catherine and their youngest Hattie Viola, born December 2, 1916. It was on May 14, 1942, that twenty-three-year-old Allan Campbell and twenty-five-year-old Viola Garside were married. The wedding ceremony took place at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Sarnia. Allan returned to service in British Columbia while Viola resided at 257 Nelson Street, Sarnia. Before going overseas, Allan returned home in June 1943, to visit his wife, his parents, his brother Ken and sister Margaret, and his in-laws George and Lilian Garside. As well, he visited brother-in-law Melvin and sister-in-law Mildred (who had married Frank Burwell in Sarnia). During the war, Viola remained in Sarnia, working at Sarnia General Hospital.



Viola and Allan Campbell



F/O-Pilot Allan William Campbell

On November 8, 1943, Allan Campbell was at RCAF #1 Y Depot in Halifax, Nova Scotia where he sent a postcard to his brother and sister-in law Frank and Mildred Burwell at 386 ½ Savoy Street in Sarnia. Following is a portion of his message; ... *Don't know how long I'll be here but it's a week today since I arrived. This is a poor looking town. Hope you are all well. I'll write you a letter later. Best of everything.* On November 16, 1943, Allan Campbell embarked overseas from Halifax for the United Kingdom.

After arriving in the U.K. and being posted to #3 Personnel Reception Centre, he was transferred to #57 Operational Training Unit, and later #3 Tactical Exercise Unit, and at RAF Stations Acklington and Honiley. Following are portions of three air letters that Allan Campbell wrote while in England to his brother and sister-in law Frank and Mildred Burwell on Savoy Street:

February 9, 1944

I believe I owe you two letters as I have received two from you (air letters) one today and the other on Sat. Truly I was so pleased to get them... I also got a carton of Camels on Sat which had gone out to the coast and then over here – but they did get here – and with many thanks. Vi (Viola) was telling me Mr. Burwell is quite sick again. I certainly hope he is well again soon. Listen now, you guys and your parcels. I do wish you wouldn't go to the trouble at all – even tho' I appreciate it more than you know. However I assure you when I do come back on that CNR some day soon I surely will make up for your father being so good to me... I wish Frank, you could see these 'Spits' – there really something; none of you have ever seen. In fact this whole experience is without doubt something. Here I am again forced to stop scribbling so for now and do write soon I love letters. The best of everything and every happiness.

Love and luck

[Note: Allan's brother-in-law Frank was the owner of Burwell Brothers Variety store at 514 Confederation Street and Shepherd Street, Sarnia. In 1944, Burwell Variety also became a post office].

May 24, 1944

Here it is the 24th of May and no holiday! And too its hard to believe that so much of this year is gone already. In fact time has been going so quickly that I see I'm really indebted to you both for letters and parcels. In the past three weeks or so I've received about three letters I believe and also two shipments of cigs mailed in Feb. & Mar. I think it was. Gosh, thanks so very much... Your mail always seems to be held up for awhile just after you move.

I'm sorry to hear you are having so much trouble with your teeth. May your trouble soon be ended. How are you coming along with your post office? I would imagine it entails quite a bit of extra work for you.... I got a box from Vi a short time ago in which was included olives and peanuts which I really enjoyed. Did Vi ever tell you about the 1000 cigs I left on the train and recovered about two weeks later. It was quite amazing to say the least.

I expect Frank has heard of the Typhoon. Well that's how I spend my time now. Pretty soon I will have flown them all. As a matter of fact I was checking up the other day and I have flown 11 different types including civilian aircraft... Vi tells me Mel expects he may come over here (Mel is Melvin Garside, his brother-in-law). Surely that won't be necessary! I can quite believe that he wouldn't like the army. I didn't like the month I spent in it either. I met a chap at the station I hadn't seen for about two years so we have been having quite a good time reminiscing past times. Well here I am out of space and it seems I have said little. However it's a hello and to let you know I'm thinking of you and hoping you are well...

June 21, 1944

Well it's due time I wrote you a few lines. I've been moving around so much lately my letter writing has gone to the dogs. Since I last wrote I received a shipment of cigarettes... and I got your parcel... and today I got your letter so you see I am quite indebted to you people, and believe me I certainly appreciate the fact. How I can thank you people at the present I don't know – only in words I guess so thanks so very much for your parcels. I really found it most welcome and again I say you people are too good to me. I feel as if I don't deserve such kindness. I expect Vi has told you I am flying that colossal aircraft called a Typhoon. I hope later to be on Tempests but that remains to be seen.

... I had to reduce my baggage to sixty pounds if you can imagine that – due to the fact that soon I'll be living in a tent and will be strictly mobile. I think when this is all over civy street will look like heaven. I only hope people there now appreciate that fact. It sounds like I'm complaining but I'm not – far from it. My mail has been having a time catching up to me but it eventually arrives....

Good nite. Best of everything and love

On June 26, 1944, Allan Campbell would become a member of RAF #263 Squadron “Ex Ungue Leonem” (By his claws one knows the lion), with the rank of Flying Officer-Pilot. No. 263 Squadron was a **fighter squadron**, that at that time was based at RAF Bolt Head and were flying the single-engine Hawker Typhoon fighter bomber. During fighter sweeps, the squadron would: attack communications and V-1 launch sites, enemy shipping in the channel, and radar sites in France; and provide close support duties for Allied armies; as well as fly ground attack missions.

The **Battle of Normandy** would begin for the Canadians with the June 6, 1944 D-Day landings at Juno Beach. After breaching the “Atlantic Wall” of “Fortress Europe”, Allied armies began their break out from the narrow Normandy bridgehead to carve out a foothold on the French mainland. It would take a whole summer of tenacious fighting, pushing against fierce and ruthless German forces to advance east across France. Fighter squadrons such as RAF #263, would be an integral part of this campaign. In a brutal campaign of attrition, the Canadians faced fierce battles and vicious counterattacks as they clawed their way forward liberating villages and towns including Bretteville, Carpiquet, Caen and Falaise.

Following are portions of two more air letters that Allan wrote to his brother and sister-in law Frank and Mildred Burwell in Sarnia:

July 16, 1944

Guess I'm a bit confused – moving around, etc.. Here I thought I had written you last week but find the last time I wrote was on the 21st of last month. Please accept my apologies. First of all so many thanks for your very nice birthday present which arrived yesterday. It came in an envelope with CNR on the outside of it. I couldn't imagine what on earth I was getting. And too my thanks for your thoughtful birthday greetings which I got on the 26th of last month. It took but thirteen days to come over which is pretty good. The day before yesterday was the first time I had received mail for about three weeks. I guess it's been delayed chasing me around.

I've been with a squadron now for some time as Vi probably told you. It really is the life – at first we were in a wonderful place but things are a bit more difficult now. I use my raincoat for a pillow at present – but I surely don't mind a few hardships when you know your finally doing something worthwhile. We have to censor all our sqd's mail and I've been getting quite a kick out of the job when I'm on it.

I finally got a look at France about a week ago. Quite a thrilling experience the first time I can tell you. But that's not very interesting talk. Oh say, I almost forgot to thank you (it seems all I'm ever doing is thanking you for something) for 300 sweet caps which arrived a couple of days ago. Incidentally, they were the first I'd got for over a month....

Speaking about mail how are you getting along with your post office. I imagine it gives you enough extra work. Vi tells me she is kept quite busy at S.G.H. (Sarnia General Hospital). But then I guess we are all busy these days... Hope you are all well. I'll say so long for now and keep writing.

The best and love.

August 22, 1944

I'm afraid as usual I am owing you a letter – but recently I've been kept quite busy – so I guess that is my only excuse this time. Life over here is rather primitive but of course that is to be expected. I think perhaps our greatest complaint is the dust which is pretty bad – or I should say was pretty bad until yesterday when we had some rain – and too I might add a bit of a rest. I was rather lucky and had a forty eight last weekend (a 48 hour leave). I was about the first one to go to England on one of course. I went to London tho' I don't know why. While I was there I noted something which might interest you. Vendors on the street were selling peaches from 3/6 to 6/ for one peach and a shilling at 22 cents – well it's a rather high price.

I suppose from the papers you have been able to follow our activities over here. One can be almost optimistic now – in fact I should say you could be. I just heard in a recent letter from home, Ken (my bro.) was posted to the 'Y' depot so perhaps one of these days I shall see him over here – at least in Eng. perhaps....

But in any case I hope you are all well and your P.O. is not keeping too busy. As you say one advantage it has it attracts a certain amount of additional business – which of course is a good thing. I'd like to be walking in and buying some stamps from you right about now. But I'm sure there will come a day – not too far in the future either I do believe – at least hope. For now then good nite, good luck and best of everything always. Love

Three days after writing the above air letter, on the night of August 25, 1944, Allan Campbell was on a mission flying in his Typhoon aircraft MN883 during the Battle of Normandy. He was number 2 of the leading pair in a standing patrol being carried out by four aircraft over the River Seine in France, when his aircraft was hit by

enemy flak and crashed about 800 yards from the village of Theillement at about 4 a.m. on August 26, 1944. His body was recovered the next morning, brought into the village, put into a coffin and buried in the Theillement churchyard on August 28. The grave was marked with a wooden cross, with no name. Years after, the remains were exhumed, and re-interred in the Bretteville-Sur-Laize Canadian War Cemetery, Calvados, France.



Bretteville, France

Soon after the crash, Viola Campbell on Nelson Street received a telegram from Ottawa informing her that her husband, FLYING OFFICER ALLAN W CAMPBELL WAS REPORTED MISSING ON AUGUST 25 AFTER AIR OPERATIONS OVERSEAS. In late August 1944, Viola received the following letter from the Squadron Leader, Commanding No. 263 Squadron, R.A.F., informing her of some details of her husband's last flight:

Dear Mrs. Campbell,

You will, by the time this letter reaches you, have received a telegram informing you that your husband, Flying Officer A.W. Campbell is missing from an operation on 25th August, 1944.

You will want to know exactly what happened, and these are all the facts as we know them. Your husband was Number 2 of a pair of aircraft carrying out a patrol over the River Seine on the evening of 25th August. They were flying at 8,000 feet when he said he thought he had been hit by flak and was returning to base. His leader told him to head south and followed him. Further calls on the radio telephone received no reply. Clouds of smoke began to pour from the aircraft, and the engine appeared to be missing, but it continued a controlled descent until about 4,000 feet, when it went into a steep dive. The aircraft exploded on hitting the ground. It is possible that your husband managed to bale out, and that it was only afterwards that the dive steepened. He was not seen to do so, but the light was beginning to fail and he might have managed it unobserved. Let us hope that he did so.

You will appreciate that the above information is strictly confidential and must not be disclosed to the Press. I appreciate fully how anxious you will be, and you may be sure that any news will be passed on to you immediately. Please let me know if there is anything else I can do.

In early October 1944, Allan's father William in Strathroy wrote the following letter to the RCAF Casualty Officer, for Chief of the Air Staff in Ottawa seeking more information about his missing son:

Dear Sir,

Reference to your letter of Sept 7th, file No. J36786 (R04). Would like some information regarding my son F/O AW Campbell, who has been missing since Aug 25th/44. His machine apparently came down in occupied territory along the Seine River. Four or five days after he was reported missing this territory was occupied by the Allies. As in last war the Air Force had a salvage branch whose duty it was to locate all machines they could and salvage them. They may have something the same this time, and I can't understand why this machine would not be located. They would be able to tell if my son was in the machine, or he bailed out. His machine was hit by heavy anti aircraft fire, and apparently began to pour smoke immediately. As he was several thousand feet in the air, I cannot see why he couldn't bale out. Although he was not said to do so, but he might have done so unobserved. As no word has come to us at all, regarding he being a prisoner of war, it makes us just wonder if he did get out of the machine.

My other son P/O Kenneth D. Campbell has arrived overseas, and together with Allan missing their mother is mostly confined to bed. We sure would appreciate word of some kind regarding Allan. The suspense is terrible. Thanking you for any information you may be able to give us.

In late October 1944, William Campbell wrote a letter to the Air Vice-Marshal, R.C.A.F. in Ottawa, again seeking information about his missing son. Following is a portion of that letter:

Dear Sir,

Mrs. Campbell and myself wish to convey to you our sincere thanks for your kind expressions of sympathy expressed to us in your letter of Oct. 19th.

It would be a great comfort to me if you could advise me just what happened to my boy J 36786 F/O Allan W. Campbell. Was his body found in the plane or was he able to bale out of it. The 8th Can. Rec. Reg't who found his body would be able to tell you just what happened to him.

We would also like to have all his belongings sent home If these things could be sent home we would appreciate it very much. Would deeply appreciate any information you may be able to give us.

In late October 1944, Viola in Sarnia received the following letter from the Air Vice-Marshal, Air Member for Personnel in Ottawa:

Dear Mrs. Campbell:

It is with deep regret that I must confirm our recent telegram informing you that your husband, Flying Officer Allan William Campbell, previously reported missing, is now reported killed on Active Service.

Advice has been received from the Royal Canadian Air Force Casualties Officer, Overseas, through the 8th Canadian Reconnaissance Regiment, that your husband's body was recovered and buried on August 28th, 1944, in a cemetery at Theillement, which is approximately nine miles west of Elbeuf, Department of Eure, France.

You may be assured that any further information received will be communicated to you immediately. I realize that this news has been a great shock to you, and I offer you my deepest sympathy. May the same spirit which prompted your husband to offer his life give you courage.

In early November 1944, William Campbell in Strathroy received a letter from the R.C.A.F. Casualty Officer, for Chief of the Air Staff. Following is a portion of that letter:

Dear Mr. Campbell,

Air Vice-Marshal J.A. Sully has asked me to reply to your letter of recent date concerning your son, Flying Officer Allan William Campbell.

As no further details are available at these Headquarters concerning your son's death, other than those conveyed to you in Air Vice-Marshal Sully's letter, an enquiry has been despatched Overseas for all possible information. Immediately a reply is received I will again communicate with you.

... I know full well how weak and fruitless are any words of mine which would try to divert you from your overwhelming sense of loss, but it is my hope that the cherished memory of your gallant son who made the supreme sacrifice to maintain the freedom of his country will be a source of great pride to you and the members of your family and sustain you in your sorrow.

Also in November 1944, William Campbell wrote another letter, this to the Deputy Minister for Air in Ottawa. In it, he expressed a concern that many parents likely had after losing a son to war:

Dear Sir;

I wish to express my thanks for your prompt reply to my letter of 2nd of Dec., and also to thank you for your words of sympathy in the loss of our son Allan.

As you say and as I stated to you, it is a very delicate situation to handle. If my son Kenneth, ever knew that I wrote about him he would sure not like it. My both boys went through this up to now on their merits, both wanting to do their part in winning this war. Allan was one of the best fliers you could ask for and went where ever he was asked to go. Ken is the same way, and I am sure there are many things that he could do, that would be of great assistance, without actually going into combat. But I am sure that is what he wants to do, but for his mothers sake I don't think he should. If anything happened to him I am sure that she would never get over it.

If Kenneth could be approached without him knowing anything about me writing, they would be able to get him to do other things. However I am just leaving this to you and I thank you very much for your promptness in looking after this for me. I may say that I was a Pilot in the last war, receiving my R.F.C. wings before the R.A.F. was formed.

In March 1945, the Missing Research and Enquiry Service (MRES) released the findings of their investigation into the crash of Typhoon aircraft MN883 to the Air Ministry. In early March 1945, investigators interviewed an eyewitness of the crash, Melle. Aufray, a School Teacher and Secretary to the Mayor of the village of Theillement, and visited the scene of the crash. The wreckage was still there with the engines deeply buried in the earth. Investigators removed three plates bearing reference numbers from the wreckage, which were used to identify the aircraft as that of Allan Campbell's Typhoon MN883. The grave at Theillement was initially marked with a wooden cross with no name. Upon learning the identity of the airman, Melle. Aufray advised the Air Ministry that a cross "was being purchased by the local people and would be erected shortly bearing the name F/O A.W. CAMPBELL J36786".

In mid-June 1945, Viola received the following letter from the R.C.A.F. Casualty Officer, for Chief of the Air Staff:

Dear Mrs. Campbell,

A report has been received from Overseas giving further particulars concerning the death and burial of your husband, Flying Officer Allan William Campbell.

This report which was received from Melle. Aufray, a School Teacher and Secretary to the Mayor of the village of Theillement, states that your husband's aircraft crashed near the village of Theillement at 4 A.M. on August 26th, 1944. Your husband's body was found the next morning about 200 yards from his wrecked aircraft. He was brought to the village, placed in a coffin and buried on August 28th.

This particular day was the day of liberation of that district and honours were rendered by Canadian troops who were then advancing.

Your husband's grave is situated in the churchyard at Theillement, the second on the left hand side of the main entrance. Melle. Aufray advised that the school children were taking the grave under their care. Information concerning the location of your husband's grave has been passed to the Imperial War Graves Commission and you may rest assured that it will be suitably marked and will receive every care. May I again extend to you and the members of your family my most sincere sympathy in the loss of your gallant husband.

In August 1946, Viola received the following letter from the R.C.A.F. Casualty Officer, for the Chief of the Air Staff:

Dear Mrs. Campbell,

Advice has now been received from our Overseas Headquarters which states that your husband, Flying Officer Allan William Campbell, has now been re-interred in Grave No. 7, Row C, Plot 26 in the Canadian Permanent Cemetery, at Bretteville-sur-Laize, France. Bretteville-sur-Laize is located near Falaise, France.

The reverent care of the burial places of all who served in the Forces of the British Empire is the task of the Imperial War Graves Commission. Eminent architects are planning the construction of beautiful cemeteries and each individual grave will be supported and sustained by the nations of the Empire. I hope that it may be of some consolation to you to know that the grave of your gallant husband is in sacred care and keeping.

May I again offer you my deepest sympathy. I can only hope that in days to come you may see the fulfillment of those ideals for which your husband laid down his life.

Allan Campbell was later officially recorded as, *Killed during air operations, Overseas (France)*. In March 1945, Viola Campbell received a War Service Gratuity of \$802.88 for the loss of her husband Allan. Allan Campbell left behind his parents William and Christina Campbell; his brother Ken and sister Margaret; his wife of just over two years, Viola; his in-law parents George and Lilian Garside; and in-law siblings Melvin Garside, and Mildred and Frank Burwell. Brother Ken Campbell (RCAF) would serve overseas during the war, as did brother-in-law Melvin Garside (Army). After the war, Melvin Garside would reside in Sarnia, employed with Union Gas.

Viola Campbell remained in Sarnia until approximately 1949. She would remarry, to Harry Philips, and they would reside out west and then Philadelphia for a time. When Harry died, Viola returned to Sarnia around 1955. Viola worked as a Registered Nurse, employed in Strathroy, then Sarnia for a time, then returned to Strathroy where she continued nursing at a retirement home there. She later moved out west, and remarried again, to Donald McEachern, and they would reside in Vancouver. Viola had no children and would outlive her third husband. On April 30, 1999, at the age of 82, Viola would pass away in Vancouver.

On November 11, 1996, W.C Anderson of London, Ontario, wrote the following story that was printed in a London, Ontario newspaper:

Remembering the sacrifice

I remember when I was a boy growing up on a quiet street in a small town. Across from my home lived Donnie. Three doors away lived Allan. These two teenagers loved to build model airplanes and fly them off the pavement. I, being younger, would sit on the curb and watch them. Sometimes, the delicate balsa wood and crepe paper models they had in those days would fly a short distance on their rubber-band, wind-up motors. Other times, they would veer away and crash. Donnie and Allan would pick up the pieces and off they would go to make repairs. They always had three or four models on the go.

I didn't have any siblings – therefore, I had secretly adopted Donnie and Allan as my big brothers. I stood in silent reverence and worshipped both of them. I'm sure they were not aware of this. I would be that little neighbor kid sitting on the curb. However, they were always kind to me.

Then, along came the Second World War. Donnie was the first in our town to join the service. Allan signed up soon after - both in the Air Force. Approximately three years went by when that dark day came. I overheard the woman next door tell my mother that "word had come" that Donnie would not be coming home. Mom hugged me gently for quite some time. I was to learn later that while flying a Lancaster bomber in Italy, Donnie had sacrificed his own life to save his aircrew. A year or so passed and the war in Europe was almost over. Allied forces had Hitler's Nazis on the run. Allan, flying a Spitfire on a mission over Holland, didn't make it back (in fact, Allan was in a Typhoon over France). I recall seeing Allan's father in tears as he spoke with my dad. I was 14. I cried too. Donnie was 21. Allan was 23 (in fact, he was 26).

In the 1950s my work took me away from that town. Over the years, I've brought my three children back to the old street, pointing out the house where my now deceased parents raised me. They know the house Donnie lived in, the house Allan lived in and what those boys meant to me. Among other things, on our periodic visits, I took them to the local cenotaph where Donnie and Allan's names are engraved, along with the names of other young men I had known who gave their lives so long ago for the freedom we enjoy today.

Be assured, when my new grandson is old enough I'll take him back as well. I'll tell him about Donnie and Allan. My Big Brothers. My Heroes. Lest We Forget it says on cenotaphs in towns and cities across this land. My offspring will grow to understand the reasons the little kid who sat on the curb of that small town street so long ago will never forget. This true story is dedicated to the memory of Donald Leitch and Allan Campbell of Strathroy.

Twenty-six-year-old Allan Campbell is buried in the Bretteville-Sur-Laize Canadian War Cemetery, Calvados, France, Grave XXVI.C.7. On his headstone are inscribed the words, TO LIVE IN THE HEARTS OF THOSE WE LOVE IS NOT TO DIE. Allan Campbell's name is inscribed on the Strathroy cenotaph and the Sarnia cenotaph. On the Sarnia cenotaph, his name is inscribed as A.J. Campbell.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, J, L, M, N, 2C, 2D, 6O, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10B, 2p

CARLTON, William Frederick (#A/17216)

William Carlton enlisted only days after the declaration of war. Less than two weeks later, he married his fiancée. He would lose his life less than two years later in a tragic accident while he trained in England.

William Frederick Carlton was born in Sarnia on May 12, 1914, the eldest son of Major William Frederick Griffith Carlton and Edith Elizabeth Carlton of 250 Tecumseh Street, later 282 Confederation Street, Sarnia. His parents Major William and Edith Carlton were married on November 18, 1913 in Sarnia. William had one brother, Stanley Griffith (born 1920) and three sisters; Mary Rosa (later married becoming Mary Rosa Roberts, resided in Windsor), Dorothy Jean and Joy Edith (who died July 20, 1936 at age seven). William attended high school for only one year. He was a star catcher on several Sarnia baseball teams, as well as being active in most other sports, including hockey, football and softball. He not only played with local city baseball teams, but also graduated to intermediate teams and to the Strathroy seniors. Nicknamed "Farmer", William also played local hockey, city league football and softball. Prior to enlisting, William worked as a sailor, a wheelsman on a lake freighter.

On September 9th of 1939, William was the best man for his brother Stanley at his wedding. William's brother, Sgt. Stanley Griffith Carlton of the 26th Battery R.C.A., married Mary Isabel Curran, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. F.P. Curran, Campbell Street, at St. John's Anglican Church in Sarnia. The wedding took place one day before Canada officially declared war on Germany. The *Sarnia (Canadian) Observer* described it as the first military wedding held in Sarnia since the days of the Great War. Members of the 26th Battery provided an honour guard at the church steps.

On September 12, 1939, only days after his brother's wedding and Canada's declaration of war, William

Carlton enlisted in the Canadian Army in Sarnia. On September 23, 1939, only eleven days after enlisting and two weeks after his brother's marriage, William Carlton married Miss Mary Evelyn Willick, the eldest daughter of Mr. and Mrs. J.A. Willick of Richard Street, Sarnia at Devine Street United Church. At the ceremony, Miss Joan Willick, the sister of the bride, served as maid of honour, and Sergeant Stanley Carlton, brother of the groom, served as the best man. Following the autumn ceremony, forty guests attended a reception at the home of the bride's parents. After their wedding, William and Mary Carlton resided initially at 250 Tecumseh St.. Later, their home address changed to 166 Richard Street, then 290 Devine Street, Sarnia. After William's death, Mary Carlton lived at 534 Devine Street, Sarnia.

Twenty-five-year-old William stood five feet eight and a half inches tall, had hazel eyes and black hair, was single, and lived at home with his parents on Tecumseh Street when he enlisted in Sarnia. He became a member of the 26th Field Battery, Royal Canadian Artillery, with the rank of Gunner. He received "permission to marry" from the army on September 19, 1939, married on September 23, and then began his army training in Guelph and Camp Petawawa. He became a member of the 4th Field Battery Regiment, Royal Canadian Artillery, attaining the rank of Lance Bombardier. Eight months after enlisting, William would lose his father, Major William Frederick Griffith Carlton, who died at the age 57 on May 7, 1940. Three months later, in August 1940, William embarked overseas for the United Kingdom.

William left Halifax on August 21, 1940, disembarking in Glasgow, Scotland in early September. While training overseas, William was active in inter-unit sports and played baseball for his camp in the Canadian Army League. He progressed within the army, as a member of the 4th Field Regiment, Royal Canadian Artillery, and, having secured his two stripes as a Bombardier, was aspiring to become a Sergeant.

In mid-May of 1941 while in England, William Carlton was involved in a tragic accident that resulted in his death. William fell beneath a moving railway train and had both his legs crushed. The resulting shock caused his death in the early morning hours of May 19, 1941 at Cambridge Hospital, Aldershot. In Sarnia, William's young wife, Mary, was at the *Canadian Observer* the next day during the lunch hour, renewing her husband's subscription to the newspaper when a telegraph messenger was looking for her delivered the tragic news of her husband's death. A few days later, Mary Carlton of 290 Devine Street, received the following letter from the Lt.-Col., Officer i/c Records, for Adjutant-General:

Dear Madam:

It is my unhappy duty to inform you that an official report has been received by cable from overseas advising that your husband, the soldier marginally named, died on May 19th, 1941, from shock following crushing of legs by train. I am desired to express to you the sincere sympathy of the Minister and Members of Defence Council in your bereavement. Any further information which is received will be at once communicated to you.

In the days following, military investigators determined the following details about the accident:

William Carlton, on a pass at the time, had been in Reading with several friends during the afternoon of May 18. He left the people he was with in order to return to Aldershot by train. In order to reach Aldershot, it was necessary to change trains at Ash Junction. The station had no overhead or underground passageways for passengers, so they were forced to cross over two rail lines in order to reach the platform for the Aldershot train.

The accident occurred late in the evening, and while there was a blackout under effect. William was travelling alone at the time. It was while crossing these lines from one passenger train to another that an electric train struck William Carlton. Once the power was turned off, two or three soldiers were able to uncouple the train, move two cars away and extract him from the tracks. William was placed on the rail platform until a stretcher arrived.

Practically no medical treatment was given as none was available. Still conscious, an estimated three quarters of an hour passed before he was transported from the scene. A military vehicle took him to Cambridge Hospital, Aldershot, where he died shortly after admission, at approximately 0015 hours on May 19, 1941.

The cause of death was recorded as "Shock following crushing of legs by train". Military officials felt there might well be grounds for a damage action against the railway in this case on behalf of his wife.

An English newspaper, the *Aldershot News*, carried a story on the accident a few days later. Following is a portion of that story:

SOLDIER UNDER TRAIN

Sunday Night Tragedy At Ash

Difficulties experienced by a depleted railway staff in preventing large numbers of soldier passengers from

crossing the line at Ash Junction Station and rushing for seats in another train, when returning to Aldershot from leave late at night, were mentioned at an inquest held at Cambridge Hospital on Wednesday.

The Aldershot Coroner, Mr. H.M. Foster, was inquiring into the death of William Frederick Carlton (27), a Canadian soldier, who died at 12:55 a.m. on Monday from injuries received late on Sunday night. Apparently Carlton fell between the platform and an electric train, and was dragged some yards in the darkness before it was realized what had happened. The current had to be switched off before he could be extricated.

Lieutenant W.L. Lawson described the deceased as a quiet, well-behaved soldier, who was not in the habit of taking too much to drink. Gunner John Edmonds said that on Sunday night he was returning to Aldershot from Reading, where he caught the 10:35 train. On arrival at Ash Junction about 50 to 75 soldiers got out, and he followed the crowd across to the other platform. He did not see any railway employees before crossing the line. He said he heard the rattle of a steel helmet when the electric train came in, and described how the deceased was extricated after the current had been switched off...

A number of railway employees gave evidence, and it was stated that one man and a women porter were on platform duty at the time. Mr. C.G. Tanner, a traffic inspector, was asked by the Coroner if he thought this was sufficient staff in the circumstances. He replied that it was possible to keep ordinary passengers back, but not soldiers. They are the most difficult to control? – You cannot control them. My experience is that the only people who can control them are the Military Police... There were about 150 people on the platform.

In recording a verdict of accidental death the Coroner said there had been a good deal of contradictory evidence, which was not to be wondered at in the view of the crowds, confusion and darkness. He said he thought this station was a dangerous place, with people crossing in front of the engines of trains. He fully realized the Railway Company's difficulties in regard to shortage of staff, but felt it might be represented to them that one man and one girl were inadequate when crowds are expected... "I readily believe the Inspector when he says that soldiers are more difficult to control than ordinary passengers," said the Coroner, "and the idea of one man and one girl controlling a crowd like that is perfectly ridiculous."

Mr. J.H. Jones, who appeared for the Southern Railway Company, expressed their regret at the accident.

William Carlton was later officially recorded as, *Overseas casualty, death due to multiple injuries caused by being run over by a railway train in Aldershot, England*. He was survived by his wife Mary Evelyn Carlton, then residing at 534 Devine Street; his mother Edith; his two sisters Mary Rosa and Dorothy Jean; and his brother Sergeant Stanley Carlton, who was in the same military unit, the 4th Canadian Regiment as his brother.

In January 1945, Mary Carlton received a War Service Gratuity of \$251.92 for the loss of her husband. Twenty-seven-year-old William Carlton was buried in Brookwood Military Cemetery in Surrey, United Kingdom, Grave 31.E.10. On his headstone are inscribed the words, TILL THE DAY BREAK AND THE SHADOWS FLEE AWAY.



Original marker - Brookwood Cemetery

Bdr. William Frederick Carlton

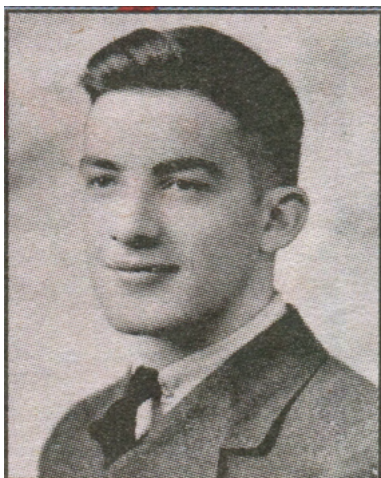
SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, J, L, N, 2C, 2D, 7C, 8X, 8Y

CARR, Stuart Allan (#R/209938)

Stuart Carr exhibited the qualities that the air force deemed would make him excellent at his job. He was still a teenager when, tragically, like many others, he lost his life while training for one of the most dangerous tasks of the war.

Stuart Allan Carr was born in Sarnia on January 18, 1925, the son of Norman McLeod and Florence May (nee Wellington) Carr, of R.R. #1 London Road, Sarnia. His parents Norman and Florence Carr were married in Camlachie on October 10, 1919. Norman Carr was a well-known Sarnia Township dairyman. Stuart had four brothers: James Cameron (born 1922, who was a Lieutenant with the Royal Canadian Artillery and overseas at the time of Stuart's death); David MacKinlay (born 1928); Donald Norman and Robert Douglas. The Carr family also included Stuart's four sisters: Catherine Mary (born 1920, died May 27, 1936); Dorothy May (born 1926); Myra Amelia and Barbara Jean (born 1933).

Stuart attended S.S. No. 5 Public School in Sarnia Township from 1931 to 1939. Since so many of the Carr family attended the school, it was known as the "Carr School" according to Myra. Stuart attended Sarnia Collegiate from September 1939 to 1943, specializing in woodworking in his final year. From the age of thirteen until he enlisted, Stuart was employed by his father doing dairy work and truck delivery, working mornings and nights after school. He was active in baseball, hockey, rugby and horseback riding, and his hobbies included woodworking and building model planes. He also joined the Young Usher's Club and the St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church Choir, where he also played and captained the hockey team.



Stuart Allan Carr

Eighteen year-old Stuart Carr enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force in London, Ontario on February 12, 1943. He stood six feet tall, had brown eyes and brown hair, was single, and stated that following the war his plan was to take up commercial flying. He was initially posted to No. 2 Manning Depot in Brandon, Manitoba, beginning his air training in Winnipeg, then at #23 Pre-Aircrew Education Detachment at the University of Toronto. He continued training at #2 Air Gunners Ground Training School in Trenton, and #3 Bombing and Gunnery School at MacDonald, Manitoba. His training involved flying in various aircraft including Battles, Ansons and Wellingtons, and using a variety of guns. One of his evaluations stated, "*Has shown great improvement, especially in the air, and has the qualities of an excellent air gunner.*" Stuart Carr was awarded his Air Gunner's Badge on September 17, 1943.

Stuart Carr left Halifax bound for the United Kingdom on October 8, 1943, only eight months after he enlisted. He was posted to RAF Bournemouth before being transferred to No. 23 Operational Training Unit (OTU), based at RAF Pershore, at the end of October 1943. In early November 1943, parents Norman and Florence would receive a telegram from Stuart, who let them know that he had arrived safely overseas. On assignment in Scotland, Stuart at one point became homesick. His officers did not know what to do with him, so he was sent to a family in Scotland on leave to get well.

In December 1943, Stuart Carr became a member of RAF #1666 Conversion Unit, later RAF #1679 Heavy Conversion Unit, part of **Bomber Command**, with the rank of Sergeant Air Gunner. With the introduction of new heavy bombers, the four-engine Stirling, Lancaster and Halifax, the Royal Air Force introduced heavy conversion units (HCU) in late 1941 to qualify crews trained on medium bombers to operate the heavy bombers before final

posting to operational squadrons. Along with training recruits, some of the heavy conversion units carried out roles that included planting mines, patrolling for submarines, and bombing operations.

During the course of the war, one of this country's most significant contributions was the approximately 50,000 Canadians who served with the RCAF and RAF in Bomber Command operations. Next to Britain, Canada was the largest contributor to Bomber Command, making up more than a third of all of Bomber Command personnel. The men who served in Bomber Command faced some of the most difficult odds of anyone fighting in the war. There was no easy way to learn how to fly the heavy bombers, and training crews suffered a litany of disasters, crashes and deaths. By the end of the war, Bomber Command lost over 8,000 Allied airmen who were killed in training or by accidents alone.



Sergeant-Air Gunner Stuart Allan Carr

RAF #1679 HCU was based at RAF Wombleton, North Yorkshire from December 13, 1943 to January 27, 1944, outfitted with Avro Lancasters, the British four-engined heavy bomber. Only three months after arriving overseas, on January 23, 1944, the Lancaster II aircraft DS839 of which Stuart Carr was a crew member, was engaged in a night cross country training exercise that took off from Wombleton. During the flight the aircraft crashed at Ridgemont, Bedfordshire, England. The crash occurred at approximately 20.00 hours, three miles from Cranfield Airfield, in the County of Bedfordshire, and all crew members were killed. Accident investigators could not establish the cause of the crash, mainly due to the level of destruction of the aircraft. Perishing with Stuart Carr were Nav. Fred Whitten MacDonald, W/O James Joseph Farrell, R/G Leonard Ignatius Hogan; B/A Roy William Grosser; F/E Leslie Thompson; and Pilot Robert M. Grove (U.S.A.A.C.).

In late January of 1944, Norman and Florence Carr of R.R. #1, Sarnia, received the following telegram from the R.C.A.F. Casualty Officer at Ottawa about their son: DEEPLY REGRET TO ADVISE THAT YOUR SON R209938 SERGT STUART ALLAN CARR WAS KILLED ON ACTIVE SERVICE OVERSEAS JANUARY 23. PLEASE ACCEPT MY PROFOUND SYMPATHY. LETTER FOLLOWS. They received a second telegram in late January from the R.C.A.F. Casualty Officer at Ottawa regarding the funeral of their son. The telegram read; FUNERAL OF SON SERGEANT STUART CARR TAKES PLACE AT 2:30 P.M. JANUARY 28 AT CAMBRIDGESHIRE ENGLAND. A LETTER WILL FOLLOW.

Also in late January 1944, his parents received the following letter from the Squadron Leader, RCAF Casualties Officer, for Chief of the Air Staff in Ottawa:

Dear Mr. Carr,

It is my painful duty to confirm the telegram recently received by you which informed you that your son, Sergeant Stuart Allan Carr, was killed on Active Service.

Advice has been received from the Royal Canadian Air Force Casualties Officer, Overseas, that your son, who was a member of the crew of an aircraft, lost his life at 8:00 P.M. on January 23rd, 1944, as a result of flying operations at Ridgemont, Bedfordshire, England. His funeral took place at 2:30 P.M. on January 28th at Cambridge Cemetery, Cambridgeshire, England.

You may be assured that any further information received will be communicated to you immediately. May I take this opportunity to offer you and the members of your family my deepest sympathy.

A second letter, dated January 29, 1944, came from the Air Marshall, Chief of the Air Staff:

Dear Mr. Carr,

I have learned with deep regret of the death of your son, Sergeant Stuart Allan Carr, on Active Service Overseas on January 23rd and I wish to offer you and the members of your family my sincere and heartfelt sympathy.

It is most lamentable that a promising career should be thus terminated and I would like you to know that his loss is greatly deplored by all those with whom your son was serving.

Losing his life only five days after his nineteenth birthday, Stuart Carr was later officially recorded as, *Killed in flying accident, overseas (England)*. Nineteen year-old Stuart Carr is buried in Cambridge City Cemetery, Cambridgeshire, United Kingdom, Grave 13551A. On his headstone are inscribed the words, HE DIED THAT OTHERS MIGHT LIVE.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, L, M, N, R, 2C, 2D, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10U, 3i

CHURCH, Maurice Gordon (#R/I14615)

Maurice Church was a western farm boy with plans to attend university after the war. He would lose his life while serving in one of the most dangerous postings of the war.

Maurice Gordon Church was born in Dilke, Saskatchewan on May 4, 1919, the son of George and Annie Isabel (nee Hill) Church, of Chamberlain, Saskatchewan. His father George was born in Sundridge, Ontario and was a farmer and carpenter in Saskatchewan. His mother Annie was born in Rosedale, North Yorkshire, England. Maurice had two sisters and one brother. Maurice was born and raised in the prairies, receiving his education at Prairie Island Elementary School No 1135, Bethune High School and Luther High School in Regina, completing his grade twelve in 1937. He was active in baseball, hockey and tennis. From 1937 until he enlisted in 1941, he was employed by his father as a farmer in Chamberlain, Saskatchewan. Maurice would serve in the militia, with the King's Own Rifles of Canada in Dundurn, with the rank of Private, from mid-November to mid-December of 1940.

Twenty-two-year-old Maurice Church enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force on July 14, 1941 in Regina, Saskatchewan. He stood five feet eleven inches tall, had blue eyes and blonde hair, and was single. He stated that his preference was to be a Pilot or Observer, and his ambition for after the war was to enroll in an engineering course at university. Sometime after Maurice enlisted, his parents George and Annie Church moved to Sarnia, first residing at 114 North Vidal Street, and later at 141 Euphemia Street.

Maurice was initially posted to No. 2 Manning Depot in Brandon, Manitoba. He received air training at #2 Initial Training School and #3 Air Observers School, both in Regina; #2 Bombing and Gunnery School in Mossbank, Saskatchewan (where he was awarded his Air Observer Badge on February 28, 1942); and #1 Air Navigation School in Rivers, Manitoba. Maurice Church embarked overseas for the United Kingdom on April 30, 1942. From #3 Personnel Reception Centre, he was posted to #2 Advanced Flying Unit (AFU), and then #23 Operational Training Unit (OTU) for further training. In mid-September 1942, he was posted to RCAF #425 Squadron, and on October 3, 1942, he became a member of RCAF #408 Goose Squadron "For Freedom", part of **Bomber Command**, with the rank of Warrant Officer Class II Navigator.

During the course of the war, one of this country's most significant contributions was the approximately 50,000 Canadians who served with the RCAF and RAF in Bomber Command operations. Next to Britain, Canada was the largest contributor to Bomber Command, making up more than a third of all of Bomber Command personnel. The men who served in Bomber Command faced some of the most difficult odds of anyone fighting in the war.

RCAF #408 Goose Squadron was formed in June 1941 at RAF Lindholme, originally flying Handley Page Hampden aircraft. In September 1942, based at RAF Leeming, they would convert to Handley Page Halifax bombers. In October 1943, these were replaced by Avro Lancasters with the squadron based at Linton-on-Ouse. No. 408 Squadron took part in the first 1000 bomber raid on Germany, participated in may operations against naval and industrial targets, and was a notable force in various mine-laying missions.

Maurice Church would serve with #408 Squadron for almost six months. Maurice was last heard from on March 31, 1943, when he volunteered to take the place of another navigator on a bombing expedition. One year after arriving overseas, on April 3, 1943, he was part of a crew aboard Halifax II aircraft JB866 (markings EQ-T) that went missing in action from a night trip to Essen, Germany. The aircraft took off from RAF Leeming on April 3 at

19:52 hours, one of 348 aircraft involved in the raid. The weather was uncertain so Pathfinder Force had a plan to mark the target either using sky or ground markers. In the event the conditions were clear, both kinds of markings were used, causing confusion amongst the main force. Nevertheless, bombing was accurate making it the most successful attack on Essen yet.



WOII/N Maurice Church

Of the 21 aircraft lost in the raid, one was Halifax bomber JB866. It was attacked by a German night fighter, crashing at 22:45 hrs at Opheusden (Gelderland), six kilometres South East of Rhenen, Holland. The entire crew were killed. Perishing with Warrant Officer II-Navigator Maurice Church were P/O.s Ebenezer Alfred Sirett and Grant Alexander Fletcher; F/O. John Dugald McBride; and Sgt.s Gilbert Davies Boyer, Franklin Roy Burke, and Kenneth Oliver Brice (RAF).

Following are portions of a story told to a Canadian newspaper in 2003: *According to eyewitnesses living in and around the village of Opheusden, the Halifax aircraft was circling above the southern edge of their village heading west. The bomber was heavily engulfed in flames and prior to turning north, jettisoned several bombs. The plane was descending very rapidly as it veered to the east. Several of the witness's felt the pilot was attempting an emergency landing in a farmer's field located adjacent to the Rhine River that flowed north of the village. The plane crashed with a tremendous force disintegrating as it landed. Several articles were found within a short distance from the crash sight, including the aircraft's tail wheel, a dinghy, an airman's jacket and a parachute lodged in a tree. The crew of seven were all killed. The airmen were buried near the crash site. The German occupational troops conducted the burials in the parish priest garden near the Roman Catholic church located in the Dutch village of Uden, April 4, 1943. The bodies were exhumed in September 1946 and reunited with 697 of their fallen comrades in the Uden War Cemetery in Holland.*

George and Annie Church in Sarnia initially received word from German sources that their son Maurice had been killed in action. R.C.A.F. Headquarters in Ottawa was more cautious, reporting him as, *Missing after air operations*. In September of 1943, Maurice Gordon Church's name would appear on the air force casualty list, and officially recorded as, *Previously reported missing in action overseas, now for official purposes is presumed killed during air operations*. In September 1946, his parents received a War Service Gratuity of \$303.36 for the loss of their son. Twenty-three-year-old Maurice Church is buried in Uden War Cemetery, Netherlands, Grave 4.G.13. On his headstone are inscribed the words, I HAVE FOUGHT A GOOD FIGHT, I HAVE FINISHED MY COURSE, I HAVE KEPT THE FAITH.

SOURCES: C, D, E, F, L, M, N, 2C, 2D, 3J, 4B, 6O, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10B, 10U

CLARK, Ross Edgerton (#J/14771)

Ross Clark enlisted soon after graduating high school, and had plans to attend university after the war. He would lose his life while flying for the Allied cause in North Africa.

Ross Edgerton Clark was born in Point Edward, Ontario on March 4, 1923, the son of William Ernest Edgerton (born in Stroud, Ontario) and Margaret Elizabeth Rhona (nee Gilbank, born in Cameron, Ontario) Clark, of

208 Arthur Street, Point Edward. Father William Clark was an engineer. Parents William and Margaret Clark were married on May 6, 1908 in Midland, Ontario. Ross Clark had three brothers: Wilbert Elmore (born 1910, served as a Corporal at Centralia, Ontario); William Kenneth (born 1916, served as a Trooper in the Canadian Army overseas); and Allan Ernest (born 1921, died at 5 months of age). Ross also had two sisters: Marjory Irene (born 1911); and Velma Clark (born 1914, became Mrs. Stanley Church). When Ross was eleven years old, he lost his father William Clark, who died in October 1934 at the age of forty-nine. Ross received his education at Point Edward Public School, 1929-1936, then at Sarnia Collegiate from 1936, graduating in 1941. He was active in hockey, swimming and tennis. Prior to enlisting, Ross was employed as a clerk at Loblaw Groceteria in Sarnia for one year (1940-1941), and then as an assistant time-keeper at Canadian Bridge Company, Windsor, Ontario, from September to December 1941.

Eighteen year-old Ross Clark enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force two days before Christmas, on December 23, 1941 in Windsor, Ontario. He lived at 1384 Bruce Avenue, Windsor at the time. He stood five feet six and a half inches tall, had brown eyes and dark brown hair, and was single. He requested flying duties. His ambition for after the war was to enter the field of chemical engineering. Initially posted to #5 Manning Depot in Lachine, Quebec, he would receive air training at RCAF Station Rockcliffe, #5 Initial Training School (ITS) in Belleville, Ontario, and #1 Air Observers School (AOS) in Malton, Ontario. He was awarded his Air Observers Badge in Malton on October 9, 1942, after which he visited his home in Sarnia on graduation 14-day furlough.

Ross Clark embarked overseas from Halifax for the United Kingdom on October 28, 1942. Soon after, his widowed mother Margaret in Point Edward received a cable from her son announcing his safe arrival overseas. Initially posted to #3 Personnel Reception Centre, he was transferred to #10 Advanced Flying Unit (AFU) and then to #6, and then #22 Operational Training Unit (OTU) for further training, before being transferred to RCAF #429 Squadron on June 1, 1943. At the end of June, he was reposted to #22 OTU, and in mid-July 1943, was posted to #311 Ferry Training Unit (FTU). On July 19, 1943, Ross embarked from the U.K. to North Africa, where he became a member of the reinforcement pool of the Northwest African Air Force (NAAF). On July 20, 1943, Ross Clark would become a member of RCAF #425 Alouette Squadron "Je Te Plumerai" (I shall pluck you), NAAF (Northwest African Air Force), part of **Bomber Command**, with the rank of Flying Officer-Pilot.

During the course of the war, one of this country's most significant contributions was the approximately 50,000 Canadians who served with the RCAF and RAF in Bomber Command operations. Next to Britain, Canada was the largest contributor to Bomber Command, making up more than a third of all of Bomber Command personnel. The men who served in Bomber Command faced some of the most difficult odds of anyone fighting in the war.

No. 425 Squadron formed in June 1942 at RAF Dishforth in Yorkshire, England. It was designated the "First French Canadian Squadron", equipped with Vickers Wellingtons. Bomber Command combed other squadrons for French speaking air and ground crews to fill its ranks. On January 1, 1943 the squadron was transferred to No. 6 (RCAF) Group. In May 1943, RCAF #425 Squadron had moved their base of operations from RAF Dishforth to Kairouan in Tunisia (North Africa). From there, still flying Wellingtons, it would conduct operations against **Sicily** and **Italy**. In November 1943, the squadron returned to Dishforth resuming operations from there, and the following month were re-equipped with Handley Page Halifaxes. In December 1943, the squadron was transferred to RAF Tholthorpe, Yorkshire.

Less than three weeks after arriving in North Africa, Ross Clark would lose his life. On August 6, 1943, he was part of a crew aboard Wellington aircraft HE261 that crashed into the sea off Cap Bon, near the harbour at Haquarhe, Tunisia. Perishing with Flying Officer-Pilot Ross Clark were Sgt. Charles Andrew Reist; FS. Thomas John Driscoll; P/O Duncan Andrew Wood; and Sgt. R.B. Perry (RAF). Approximately one week later, his widowed mother Margaret received a telegram informing her that her son, PILOT OFFICER ROSS E CLARK WAS MISSING AFTER ACTIVE SERVICE OVERSEAS. No further details were provided.

Some time later, Margaret Clark received a letter from the Minister of National Defence for Air stating: *I have learned with deep regret that Pilot Officer Ross Edgerton Clark, R.C.A.F. has been reported missing, presumed drowned. The Government and people of Canada join me in expressing the hope that more favourable news will be forthcoming in the near future.* Ross Clark was later officially recorded as, *Previously reported missing after air operations, now for official purposes, presumed dead, fell into the sea, presumed drowned (N. Africa).*

In September 1952, Margaret received a letter from the Wing Commander, R.C.A.F. Casualties Officer, for Chief of the Air Staff. Following is a portion of that letter:

Dear Mrs. Clark,

It is with reluctance that after so long an interval, I must refer to the loss of your son, Flying Officer Ross Edgerton Clark, but due to the lack of any information concerning him since he was reported missing, it must be regretfully accepted and officially recorded that he does not have a "known" grave.

Due to the extreme hazards attending air operations there are, unhappily, many thousands of British aircrew boys who do not have "known" graves and all will be commemorated on General memorials that will be erected at a number of locations by the Imperial War Graves Commission (of which Canada is a member), each Memorial representative of a theatre of operations. One of these Memorials will be erected at Malta, and the name of your son will appear on that Memorial...

I realize that this is an extremely distressing letter and that there is no manner of conveying such information to you that would not add to your heartaches. I am fully aware that nothing I may say will lessen your great sorrow, but I would like to express to you and the members of your family my deepest sympathy.

Twenty year-old Ross Clark has no known grave. His name is inscribed on the Malta Memorial, Malta, Panel 10, Column 1. His family also erected a memorial stone at Lakeview Cemetery, Sarnia, Section M. Ross Clark's name is also inscribed on the Bell monument in Veterans Memorial Park in the village of Point Edward.

SOURCES: C, D, E, F, G, L, M, N, 2C, 2D, 4B, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10B

CLARK, William Brown (#R/68182)

If anyone had reasons not to enlist, it was William "Bill" Clark III. Bill could have easily chosen not to go overseas. He was the only son to his widowed mother. He had a secure job in Sarnia. And Bill was getting married. But enlist he did because he wanted to serve his country.

He was born in Sarnia on June 20, 1912, the youngest child and only son of William Brown II (born in Sarnia) and Agnes Jane (nee Steed) Clark (born in San Francisco), of 425 North Christina Street, Sarnia. Parents William Clark II and Agnes were married in November 1896 in Sarnia. After their marriage, the couple saw their family swell to seven with the birth of Bill and his four sisters: Janie Elizabeth Clark (born 1907, who resided with their mother on Lakeshore Road, Sarnia at the time of William's death); Margaret Caverley (born 1902 who became Mrs. Roy M. Smith, resided in Sarnia); Catherine Cuthbert (born 1897 who became Mrs. Charles Weir, resided in Sarnia); and Emily Bradley (born 1899 who became Mrs. L. Woolley, of Toronto).

Bill attended Lochiel and London Road elementary schools, 1920-1926, and while he was in grade six tragedy struck the Clark household. His father, who'd been a dry goods merchant in Sarnia, passed away in December 1924 at age 57 from prostrate cancer. At a young age, Bill was now the only male in the household. He was, however, a mature young man who accomplished much before he enlisted in 1940.

He attended Sarnia Collegiate in September 1926 and graduated in the spring of 1933. In his last year there, he had an interest in Special Commercial courses. Bill was involved in playing sports—rugby, baseball, track and field—and was a keen builder of model airplanes. He was also an expert yachtsman with the Sarnia Yacht Club. Bill was interested in the military as well. At age sixteen, he joined the Lambton Regiment, with which he served for three years, and as a Private he gained two years experience as a Lewis Gunner. After leaving high school, Bill became a well-known downtown businessman. He worked for W.B. Clark Company Limited (Dry Goods Store) on North Front Street, with which his family had been associated for many years. Despite his young age, he was assistant store manager from 1934-1938, then manager from 1938-1940.



William Brown Clark

At age 28, Bill Clark enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force on July 17, 1940 in London, Ontario. He stood five feet eight inches tall, had brown eyes and black hair, and resided with his mother on North Christina Street at the time. His training was thorough and he was seemingly always on the move. Bill departed to #1 Manning Depot in Toronto, along with fellow Sarnians John Murray and John Hallam (Hallam is also included in this Project). Bill then received air training at #2 Initial Training School in Regina, #1 Air Observers School in Malton, #1 Bombing and Gunnery School in Jarvis and #1 Air Navigation School in Rivers, Manitoba. On February 15, 1941, Bill Clark was awarded his Air Observer's Badge.

In mid-March of 1941, on the evening before his scheduled wedding, the then Sergeant Observer William Clark of the R.C.A.F., was honoured by a number of his friends at a stag party at the Sarnia Yacht Club. Among those who attended were Logan Mackenzie, Lorne and Lyle Watcher, Gordon Link, David Wright, Charles Weir, Roy Smith, James Harris, Jack Lewis, Mel Garside, Dr. Jack Garrett, Reginald Ewener, Stewart Austin, Patrick Butler, Gordon Ferguson and Arthur Wilkinson. William was presented with a purse of money as a gift.

On March 21, 1941, Bill married Marian Emily Leach (born 1913), the second daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Norwood A. Leach of Toronto, formerly residents of Sarnia. At the ceremony at St. George's Anglican Church in Sarnia, Miss Leach's attendants were her sisters Mrs. Allan Warwick of Detroit and Miss Ilean Leach of Toronto. Serving as best man was Norwood F. Leach. Nearly three months later, the bride's sister, Miss Ilean Leach, would also get married at St. George's Anglican Church to Donald Fraser of St. Thomas. Following William and Marian's wedding ceremony, a reception was held at the Sarnia Riding Club. After the reception, the newlywed couple left for a wedding trip to the Maritimes. Their residence was 110 Oriole Parkway, Apt. 303, Toronto.

On April 5, 1941, two weeks after getting married, Bill Clark embarked overseas from Nova Scotia to the United Kingdom. He arrived in England along with three other Sarnia airmen: Sergeants Lloyd Gallaway (also included in this project), John Bennett and J.D. Murray. From #3 Personnel Reception Centre at Uxbridge, Bill was transferred to #11 Operational Training Unit at RAF Bassingbourn for further training. On July 7, 1941, he became a member of RAF #12 Squadron "Leads the Field", part of **Bomber Command**, as a Sergeant-Air Observer flying Wellington bombers.

During the course of the war, one of this country's most significant contributions was the approximately 50,000 Canadians who served with the RCAF and RAF in Bomber Command operations. Next to Britain, Canada was the largest contributor to Bomber Command, making up more than a third of all of Bomber Command personnel. The men who served in Bomber Command faced some of the most difficult odds of anyone fighting in the war.

At the outbreak of war, RAF #12 Squadron moved to France outfitted with Fairey Battle aircraft. By June 1940, the squadron was back in England stationed at RAF Finningley, then RAF Binbrook. By November 1940, still at RAF Binbrook, the squadron had been re-equipped with twin-engine Vickers Wellington medium bombers. In 1942 the squadron moved to RAF Wickenby and soon converted to Avro Lancaster four-engine heavy bombers.



Sergeant-Observer William Brown Clark

Less than two months after becoming a member of RAF #12 Squadron, Bill Clark was killed in action. His death occurred on the evening of August 31, 1941 when he was a crew member aboard Wellington II aircraft W5577 (markings PH-U). The Wellington had taken off at approximately 2120 hours from a station at Binbrook for a night bombing mission targeting Boulogne-sur-Mer in France. According to German documents, the following is what happened to the aircraft and crew: Off the Dieppe coast, the Wellington aircraft was caught in the beam of six searchlights, was shot, then turned and finally came down into the sea about 700 metres from the beach in the channel off Dieppe (near Berneval le Grand). A fire was visible for three minutes after the crash.

Nearly twenty-four hours later, at 2130 hours, the body of one of the airmen wearing an RAF uniform and life jacket was carried in the wreckage of a rotating gun turret towards the shore near Berneval. On September 2, searchers recovered the body 4-5 km east of Dieppe among rocks about 40 m from the beach. A parachute pack found near the scene was labelled Sergeant Russell. The body was buried in the French Cemetery at Berneval le Grand. On September 9, the body of an English airman was washed ashore between Berneval le Grand and Biville Sur Mer. His identity discs bore the words: CAN. R.68182 AIRMAN W.B. CLARK, PRESS R.C.A.F. His body was also buried at Berneval le Grand. On September 20, the body of R.N. Dastur Zoroastrian was washed up on the Channel coast below Berneval le Grand. His body was also buried at Berneval le Grand. According to RAF investigators, the only result that differs with the German account is that the aircraft crashed on the side of a cliff. The three crew members whose bodies were not recovered were assumed to have washed out to sea with the aircraft wreckage.

Perishing with twenty-nine-year-old Sergeant-Observers Bill Clark were Pilot-Officers Rusttom Nariman Dastur and Chandra Prakash Khosla, members of the Royal Indian Air Force, and Sgt.'s Ronald Benjamin Russell (RAF), James Fitzgerald Wolff (RCAF) and Paul James Lewis (RAF). The three crew members whose bodies were not recovered are commemorated on the Runnymede Memorial. The remains of Bill Clark were buried at Berneval Le Grand in France. They would later be exhumed and reburied in the Dieppe Canadian War Cemetery.

In early September of 1941, Bill's widowed mother, Agnes Clark, received a telegram from the Director of Records in Ottawa informing her that her only son, SERGEANT WILLIAM B CLARK WAS REPORTED MISSING AS THE RESULT OF AN AIR OPERATION OVERSEAS ON AUGUST 31. There were no further particulars, so according to the *Canadian Observer*, "the fact that the flyer was designated as missing held out some hope that he might be a prisoner or had made an escape in some other way." In early November 1941, Agnes received the following telegram from Ottawa; SGT CLARK WHO WAS PREVIOUSLY REPORTED MISSING IS STILL MISSING, NOW BELIEVED KILLED IN ACTION. Agnes and her four daughters regarded this message as a customary notice sent to the relatives of men who are reported as missing and about whom no reliable information has been received within two months. Bill's family and friends still hoped that he might be safe, a probable prisoner of war in Nazi-occupied Europe.

In mid-September 1942, the Flying Officer, for Director of Personal Services at the Air Ministry in London, England issued a "Notification of Death" that read: *CERTIFIED that according to the records of this department CAN/R68182 Sergeant William Brown Clark, Royal Canadian Air Force, was reported missing and is presumed, for official purposes, to have lost his life on the thirty-first day of August, 1941, as the result of air operations. According to a report received from the International Red Cross Committee, this airman is buried in the Cemetery, at Berneval-le-Grand, near Dieppe, France.*

Bill Clark was later officially recorded as, *Previously reported missing after air operations overseas, now for official purposes, presumed to have died.* Marian, Bill's wife of only five months, was residing on Oriole Parkway in Toronto at the time of his death. In early February 1945, she received a War Service Gratuity of \$163.04 for the loss of her husband. In late February 1946, she received the following letter from the R.C.A.F. Records Officer in Ottawa: *Dear Mrs. Clark:*

It is a privilege to have the opportunity of sending you the Operational Wings and Certificate in recognition of the gallant services rendered by your husband Sergeant W.B. Clark. I realize there is little which may be said or done to lessen your sorrow, but it is my hope that these "Wings", indicative of operations against the enemy, will be a treasured memento of a young life offered on the altar of freedom in defence of his Home and Country.

Marian re-married years later, becoming Mrs. Marian Simpson, residing on Oriole Parkway in Toronto. In Sarnia, Bill left behind his widowed mother Agnes Clark and his four sisters. Twenty-nine-year-old Sergeant Bill Clark is buried in the Dieppe Canadian War Cemetery, Hautot-Ser-mer, Seine-Maritime, France, Grave H.7. SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, J, L, M, N, 2C, 2D, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10U, 2g

CLARKE, John Charles (#A/20130)

It was indeed a family affair. John “Jack” Clarke was part of a family known as the “Fighting Clarkes” which saw Jack, two younger brothers, his sister, and his father all serve in the war.

Jack Clarke was born in Windsor, Ontario on July 17, 1920, the eldest son of Cecil Charles Clarke (born March 31, 1898) and Phyllis Ann Edith (nee Ewener, born December 1900) Clarke, of 121 South Forsythe Street, later 306 George Street, and later 208 Harkness Street, Sarnia. Jack’s parents were both born in England—father Cecil Charles Clarke in Rotherham, Yorkshire; and mother “Edith” Ewener in Southwark, Middlesex. Edith Ewener immigrated to Canada in 1908, and Cecil Clarke, a mason at the time, in 1913. Phyllis Edith Ewener’s father, Walter George Ewener, would serve in World War I, and one of her brothers would serve in World War II.

Parents Cecil Charles Clarke and Edith (Ewener) Clarke were married on February 10, 1920 at St. John’s Rectory in Sarnia. Cecil Clarke, the son of Charles William (born 1868, Lincolnshire, England) and Amelia Annie (nee Hannant) Clarke, was residing in Windsor at the time, employed as a bricklayer; while Edith Ewener, the daughter of Walter George and Phyllis Elizabeth (nee Riley) Ewener of Campbell Street, Sarnia, was residing in Sarnia.

Cecil and Edith Clarke were blessed with four children: Jack; Reginald C. (born 1921); Cecil William (born 1926) and Marguerite Phyllis (born 1923 who became Mrs. Marguerite Guthrie). In mid-1921, parents Cecil and Phyllis Edith Clarke, and their less than year-old son Jack, were residing in Windsor, renting a home at 1062 Lillian Street. In 1925, the Clarke family moved from Windsor to Sarnia. Jack was educated in Sarnia schools and at Sarnia Collegiate. Two years before WWII broke out, Jack joined the Militia in Sarnia in February 1937, and was a member of the 11th Field Company, Royal Canadian Engineers. When Canada went to war in 1939, Jack and his brother Reginald volunteered for service overseas.

Perhaps the commitment of two men who served in WWI influenced Jack’s decision to enlist. Jack’s (maternal) grandfather, **Walter George Ewener**, enlisted in Sarnia on January 18, 1915 when he was 35 years old. He left behind his wife Phyllis and family at 300 Campbell Street and his job as a construction engineer to become a member of the 34th Battalion. Private Walter Ewener would arrive in England on November 1, 1915. He would advance to the rank of Corporal, and was a musketry instructor in England from March to September 1916. In September 1916, he would revert to the rank of Private, at his request, in order to proceed to France. In late-September 1916, Private Walter Ewener would arrive in France as a member of the 43rd Battalion. Soon after arriving, he was gassed slightly at the Somme, and was later blown up by a shell explosion, fracturing his left ankle. After two months in France, he was returned to England to be treated for his injuries. Walter Ewener would continue his service in England, and would survive the war, being discharged on demobilization in March 1919, when he returned to Campbell Street in Sarnia. Walter and Phyllis Ewener would later reside at 494 Wellington Street, Sarnia. Note: A letter written by Walter Ewener to his wife Phyllis is included in this Project on page 130.

Jack’s father, **Cecil Charles Clarke**, also served in the Great War. Seventeen year-old Cecil Clarke enlisted in London, Ontario on February 2, 1916. He recorded his birthdate as March 31, 1897 (he was born on that date, but in 1898), thereby making himself 18-years-old. He recorded his occupation as mason, and his next-of-kin as his mother Annie Clarke, of 92 Howard Avenue, later 101 Lillian Street, Windsor. As a Private with the 71st Battalion, he would arrive in England aboard the *SS Olympic* on April 11, 1916. Two months later, on June 11, 1916, he would arrive in France, a member of the 4th Canadian Mounted Rifles. In mid-September 1916, he was wounded in action when while repairing a small dugout, he was buried under dirt and rubble when of an enemy shell exploded near him. He was returned to England, treated for burns, a back contusion and “shell shock”. After convalescing, he would return to France in early May 1917, as a member of the Canadian Railway Troops. Cecil Clarke would survive the war, being discharged on demobilization in March 1919, when he returned to Windsor.

Cecil Clarke had not given up the fight, however. When his two sons, Jack and Reginald, decided to join the active service forces in WWII, Cecil, now 41 years old, decided to go along just to look after them if they got into a tight spot. So Cecil enlisted again, becoming a Sapper with the 11th Field Company of the Royal Canadian Engineers, the same unit as his two sons.

Jack Clarke, age 19, enlisted in the Canadian Army on September 5, 1939 in Sarnia. He was residing on East Wellington Street at the time, and was doing concrete work and carpentry for contractor W. Passmore. He stood five feet eight inches tall, had brown eyes and brown hair, was single, and stated that his plan was to stay in the Army following the war. Jack received his army training with the Royal Canadian Engineers in London and Petawawa,

Ontario. He would embark overseas from Halifax for the United Kingdom on August 22, 1940, first stationed at Aldershot, and later Seaford, Sussex, England. He would continue his training in the U.K., a member of the 11th Field Company, Royal Canadian Engineers, and just like his father Cecil and his brother Reginald, Jack would attain the rank of Sergeant. The RCE troops enabled the army to move—they repaired and built roads, airfields and bridges; cleared mines and road blocks; and filled in craters and anti-tank ditches, all while working alongside combat troops at the front and often under fire.

Jack and Reginald would get their stripes first, however, and took keen delight in issuing instructions to “the old man.” As it turned out, however, Sergeant Cecil Clarke proved he could take it as well as his sons and it wasn’t long before he was sporting three stripes and remarking, “I told you so, boys.” Jack and Reginald would both serve overseas in the Canadian Army and, like their father, would become members of the Royal Canadian Engineers.

While training in England, Jack met the girl of his dreams and, after a nine-month courtship, he married Lucille (nee Baitup) in Hailsham, Sussex, England on February 12, 1942. At 23, Lucille, the daughter of a Private Chauffeur, was already a widow, employed as a Shop Assistant & NAAFI Manageress, and was residing at 18 Hindover Road, Seaford, Sussex. Ironically, the military did not grant Jack’s “permission to marry” until October 1942. Jack and Lucille had a baby daughter together, Ann Lucille, born September 13, 1942 in Brighton, England, and they resided at 78 Stafford Road, later 8 Vale Road, Seaford, Sussex, England.

Cecil, Jack and Reginald were stationed overseas, but they were not the only family members getting involved. Their younger brother, Cecil William, joined the army, becoming a member of the 30th Reconnaissance Battalion in London, Ontario with the rank of Trooper. Cecil would also serve overseas. The only Clarke daughter, Marguerite, became a Sergeant of the Canadian Women’s Army Corps and served in the Recruiting Depot in London, Ontario. It is little wonder the family was nicknamed, “The Fighting Clarks” (of the army).

The Clarks were busy on the home front as well. Anne Clarke (Mrs. Charles William Clarke in above photo), was Cecil Clarke’s mother and Jack Clarke’s paternal grandmother. In 1942, at the age of 81 and residing on Howard Avenue in Windsor, was recognized in a local newspaper for her efforts in supporting the war effort. She had been made an honorary member of the Alpha Sigma B branch of the Women’s Auxiliary of All Saints’ Church in appreciation of her efforts in knitting socks for servicemen. Referred to as the “Grand Old Lady of Knitting of Windsor”, she had knitted, since the beginning of that year, 92 pairs of socks for the Red Cross and 72 pairs of socks for the Salvation Army Red Shield.



(L to R) Corporal Reginald Clarke, Mrs. C.W. Clarke (the mother of Sgt. Cecil Clarke, Windsor), Sergeant Cecil Charles Clarke and Corporal John ‘Jack’ Charles Clarke

Since the war began, Anne had knitted a grand total of 328 socks. Making the task more impressive was that she knitted the most difficult type of sock. Not the more simple to do service sock for Anne. She knitted the seaman’s long stocking which was made with heavier wool, was ribbed and almost three feet long. Making her feat more amazing, incredible actually, was that Anne was totally blind in one eye and had only ten percent vision with the other. The Windsor newspaper article also mentioned the “fighting trio” in Sarnia--her son Sgt. Cecil Clarke, and her two grandson’s Lance-Sergeant “Jack” and Corporal Reginald Clarke, all with the Royal Canadian Engineers.

[Footnote: Incredibly, another Clarke family in Sarnia was known as, “The Fighting Clarks” (of the navy). Living on Lakeshore Road, Lieutenant Roy Clarke and his wife had four sons who would all serve in the Royal

Canadian Navy. A fifth son was a decker on the *Harmonic*, too young to enlist in the R.C.N. Members of the "Fighting Clarkes" of the navy included father Lieutenant Roy Clarke, who had been in the Navy prior to going into the Army; sons and Petty Officers (Gunner's Mates) Douglas and David Tait; Petty Officers Gordon Stewart and Thomas; and the youngest son, Bruce, who planned to join the navy as soon as he was of age.]

August 19, 1942 was one of the darkest days in Canadian military history. On that day, 4,963 Canadian soldiers landed on the beaches of **Dieppe**, a small town on the coast of France. Called *Operation Jubilee*, the plan had soldiers arriving early in the morning under the cover of darkness; however, they were delayed and had inadequate supporting fire. The Canadians waded ashore, trying to cross the cobblestone beaches but were fully visible to the well-entrenched Germans who were waiting for them sitting atop the 75-foot high cliffs. By mid-morning, it was clear that the raid could not continue, and the retreat began. The Operation was a disaster and, of the 4,963 Canadians who landed, 907 were killed, 2,460 were wounded and 1,946 were captured.

A number of Sarnia and Lambton men took part in the Dieppe Raid, and according to the *Sarnia Observer*, that included the three members of the Clarke family who were members of the Royal Canadian Engineers--father Cecil Clarke, a Sergeant and veteran of the Great War; Lance-Sergeant Jack Clarke; and Corporal Reginald Clarke. Cecil had promised to look after his boys if they got into a "tight spot" and the Dieppe Raid had plenty of them. Miraculously, all three Clarkes would not only survive the disaster, but would escape unharmed.

Edith Clarke received a cable a week after the raid from her husband Cecil, which informed her that he and their two sons all took part in the raid and were now all safe and well in England. She also received news that her brother, Lieutenant William A. Ewener, of the Royal Canadian Engineers, who also took part in the Dieppe Raid, was seriously wounded, but would survive.

A little over a year after improbably surviving the Dieppe Raid, Jack Clarke was killed in a fluky accident far from the battlefield. On November 23, 1943, while on duty as an instructor with a demolition unit in Frimley, Surrey, Jack died when a bomb accidentally detonated. He died from burns and multiple fractures. The blast killed one other soldier and wounded ten more.

The next day, Edith Clarke, now living at 208 Harkness Street, received a telegram from the Director of Records at Ottawa informing her of her son's death. No information as to whether the accident occurred in England or with the Canadian troops in Italy was provided. The message said that further information would be transmitted later. It must have been a horrible time for Edith as she had received a letter from Jack only two weeks prior. Jack Clarke's remains were buried on November 27, 1943 in Brookwood Cemetery in Woking, Surrey, England. His twice-widowed wife Lucille and baby daughter Ann were witness to it.

In Sarnia, Edith received the following letter from the Major-General, Adjutant-General, about her son in early December 1943:

Dear Madam:

I deeply regret to inform you that your son, A.20130 Sergeant John Charles Clarke, gave his life in the Service of his Country in the United Kingdom on the 23rd day of November, 1943. You may be assured that any additional information received will be communicated to you without delay. The Minister of National Defence and the Members of the Army Council have asked me to express to you and your family their sincere sympathy in your bereavement. We pay tribute to the sacrifice he so bravely made.

Two weeks later another letter arrived, this time from the Colonel, Director of Records, for Adjutant-General.

Dear Madam:

In confirmation of my telegram of the 23rd of November, I deeply regret to inform you that official information has been received from Canadian Military Headquarters, Overseas, advising that your son, A.20130 Sergeant John Charles Clarke, died on the 23rd day of November, 1943. The report is to the effect that he died as the result of accidental blast burns whilst on scheme in the line of duty.

You are further advised that at a Coroner's Inquest subsequently convened for the purpose of inquiring into the circumstances surrounding your son's death, the Coroner's Verdict was "death by misadventure". You may rest assured that any additional information received will be communicated to you without delay. May I express sincere sympathy in your bereavement.

Jack Clarke left behind his parents, his brothers and sister, his wife of less than two years, Lucille, and their fourteen month-old baby daughter, Ann Lucille. In February 1944, Lucille Clark wrote the following letter to the

Estates Officer, Canadian Military Headquarters. Following is a portion of that letter:

Dear Sir,

Re A.20130 Sgt Clarke J.C. (deceased). I received some of my husband's personal effects today, but I find you have not enclosed his wallet. It was handed to me at Aldershot on the day of my husband's funeral but my husband's father, Sgt CC Clarke A.20152 No 1 CERU came to me about a week after and said he had to take it back to Records Office and that I would receive it with his personal effects.

If you have not had it would you possibly trace it for me as it is of highly sentimental value to me. It contains photographs, a silver stamp case with one stamp, a horseshoe on a chain with my husband's name and number on it, also one ten shilling note, a florin and three threepenny pieces. It is not the value of the wallet, but it is the personal feeling attached to it. As I have already said, it has been in my possession once since his death so I know someone must have it...

Trusting you will be able to trace wallet for me.

Cecil Clarke thought he was given the wallet as a keepsake for Jack's mother and sister, so after learning that Lucille wanted it, he immediately forwarded it to her. In August 1944, Lucille received the following reply from the Captain for Officer i/c Estates, Canadian Military Headquarters:

Dear Madam,

With reference to your letter of 21st Feb 44 and this Headquarters letter of 30 Mar 44, it is regretted to inform you that the wallet of your late husband's, which was obtained from his father in Canada, was lost at sea as a result of enemy action, while being returned to England.

The details of the inquiry into the accident were released on December 29, 1943. Results included: *Sgt. Clarke and Sgt. Jodoin were carrying out a Course of Instruction and in charge of the party; the accident occurred in the course of training at the Demolition Area (Deer Rock Hill) at about 1315 hours 23 Nov 43; two soldiers - Sgt. J.C. Clarke and Sgt. G.E. Jodoin were killed in the accident, and ten other soldiers were injured; the evidence was that Sgt. Clarke and Sgt. Koenig were to blow up Mk. IV and Kv. V mines, to show the Sappers the effect from the explosion of a mine. Holes were augered and in the meantime, one of the instrs. proceeded to put the primers in the mines. They put one mine down in the hole and had a little difficulty in doing this. When they placed the second one in, the explosion occurred; evidence shows that a hole approx.. 7 feet deep was bored of similar size to the mine to be lowered into it. The first mine with little or no assistance was lowered to the bottom. The second mine became lodged and the manner of using the tamp stick either caused the second mine to explode or caused the second mine to drop onto the first mine which caused the explosion; it is believed from the evidence that one of the fuses was defective in that the shear wire damaged by a previous blow or pressure from previous use...*

The Court added these remarks: *1. From the evidence presented it would appear that these mines and fuses are used in trg of Sprs (training of Sappers) in laying and clearing mine fields. It is suggested that in the future all fuses which are taken out for demolition purposes should not have been used in any previous capacity. 2. It is further suggested that it be very carefully stressed to all Instrs whether Offrs or NCOs that where explosives or components thereof be known to be faulty or suspected to be faulty that these be reported and arrangement made for their destruction when a demonstration is not in progress.*

It was determined that the Sergeants improperly carried out an unauthorized demonstration, though improvisation was permissible. There was no evidence of any neglect, improper conduct or willful misconduct on their part. The Court, the Colonel in charge and the Major General in Command all felt that control and supervision of the Demolition Area was insufficient.

Jack Clarke's death was later officially recorded as, *Overseas casualty, misadventure, due to blast and burns (Scheme), multiple injuries and fracture of the skull (England)*. In mid-February 1944, a group of 94 area soldiers arrived from overseas duty at the London, Ontario train station into the arms of happy, laughing friends and relatives. According to the London media report, one of the happiest family groups at the station were the "Fighting Clarkes" of Sarnia. Sgt.-Major Cecil Charles Clarke, who had been overseas for almost four years, was greeted by his wife Edith, and their twenty-one-year-old daughter Cpl. Marguerite Guthrie of No. 6 Company, C.W.A.C.. Two of his sons, Lt-Cpl. Cecil Clarke and Sgt. Reginald Clarke, were both still serving overseas in the army. His son Jack never made it home.

In April 1945, Lucille Clarke of Vale Road in Sussex, England, received a War Service Gratuity of \$915.46 for the loss of her husband. In September 1946, the Colonel, Director of Records, for Adjutant-General, sent Edith Clarke a photograph of the grave and marker over the burial place in Surrey, England, of her late son. Twenty-three-

year-old John Charles "Jack" Clarke is buried in Brookwood Military Cemetery, Surrey, United Kingdom, Grave 47.H.2.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, G, J, L, N, 2C, 2D, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 3j

COLEMAN, Wesley Percival (#R/91480)

At 5'3", he was deemed too short to serve with the RCAF. Wesley Coleman, however, persevered and in 1941 enlisted successfully. When he died in action two years later, he left behind a young woman he was planning to marry.

Wesley Percival Coleman was born in Tisdale, Saskatchewan on March 3, 1922, the son of Rev. Stanley Harold (born in Plymouth, England) and Sophia Beatrice (nee Armstrong, born in Alice, Ontario) Coleman, of Midland, Ontario. Parents Stanley and Sophia Coleman were married in February 1919 in Caughnawana, Quebec. Wesley's siblings included brothers Kenneth Armstrong (served with the RCAF), Stanley Lynden, Harold R., and Lyman Russel Coleman; and sisters Winifred Frances and Joan Margaret.

Wesley resided in Saskatchewan until age four, after which the Colemans moved to Quebec for three years. When Wesley was seven, the family moved to Sarnia-Lambton. Wesley received a portion of his education at Courtright Public 1935-1937 and attended Sarnia Technical School 1937-1938. He was very active in gymnastics, hockey and baseball, and his hobby was collecting and drawing maps of the world. After graduating at age seventeen, Wesley was employed by Captain B.J. Zink in Toronto as a Seaman from 1938-1940, and then was employed at Canadian Scale Company Limited from 1940-1941 as a machinist apprentice.

Wesley Coleman, at age 18, enlisted for the second time with the Royal Canadian Air Force on February 4, 1941 in Toronto. Perhaps he was influenced to enlist by his father, an engineer by trade, but an Anglican minister by vocation. During WWII, Reverend Stanley Coleman served as a Navy Chaplain (R.C.E.) at the Royal Canadian Barracks in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

What distinguished young Wesley was his diminutive stature. Standing only 5'3", Wesley was turned down when he had previously applied to the RCAF in August 1940 in Toronto, because he was 1 and ½ inches too short to serve. He didn't give up and was accepted the following year. He was residing with his mother at the time, at 43 Mayfield Avenue, Toronto-Swansea. He had blue eyes and light brown hair, was single, and expressed a written preference for flying duties, specifically as an Air Gunner. The Recruiting Officer wrote of Wesley, *Very pleasant keen type; Obviously good home background; Should make good air-crew material*. The Recruiting Medical Officer wrote of him, *Minimum height but solidly built, alert & intelligent, and should be a very good man for observer or gunner*. A short time after enlisting, a Toronto newspaper featured this story on Wesley Coleman while he was stationed at Manning Depot in Toronto:

*SMALLEST MAN AT DEPOT ALSO NEATEST, BRIGHTEST
"Little Caesar," Air-Gunner Coleman, Comes of Fighting Family
FATHER IS IN NAVY*

"Little Caesar," smallest, shortest man in the R.C.A.F. at Manning depot, is proving that physical bulk is no yardstick to efficiency. The 18-year-old wireless air gunner, whose real name is Wesley Coleman, was chosen "stick" man of his squadron last week. That's air force lingo for the best-groomed, neatest man on parade, with the shiniest buttons and best conduct.

To the stick man, chosen weekly on the recommendation of the N.C.O.'s and men, go special privileges, including a weekend pass. His grandfather, now retired Lieutenant-Com. W.R. Coleman, was serving on a submarine when it was cut in two during the last war; his father, an Anglican clergyman, is now in the Canadian navy, and his brother Kenneth, 22, is in the R.C.A.F. Another brother, William is at the University of Toronto and planning enlistment in the R.C.A.F. A younger brother, Lynden, 17, has applied to the Royal Canadian Navy, and is awaiting call.

"Little Caesar" graduated from high school at the age of 17, was studying draughting as an apprentice to a west Toronto firm when he enlisted.

Wesley's training had him on the move. From #1 Manning Depot in Toronto, Wesley received air training at #1 Coast Artillery Co-operation (CAC) in St. John New Brunswick and #7 Bombing and Gunnery School (BGS) in Paulson, Manitoba. The BGS Chief Instructors comments on Wesley were, *Very capable. Intelligent and pleasing. Has made an exceptionally good class leader*. Wesley then continued his training at #1 Wireless School in Montreal, Quebec. He was awarded his Air Gunner's Badge on March 2, 1942 and embarked overseas from Halifax for the United Kingdom on April 1, 1942.



WAG Wesley Percival Coleman



Photos: Wesley, brother Ken & father Stanley

Much more training awaited him in England. From #3 Personnel Reception Centre in the U.K., Wesley received further training at #4 Signal School at RAF Madley; #9 and then #10 Advanced Flying Unit (AFU); and #3 Radio Direction Finding School. On September 10, 1942, he would be posted to #6 (Coastal) Operational Training Unit. In November 1942, he became part of the RAF #1402 (Meteorological) Flight Unit, No. 15 Group, **RAF Coastal Command**, based at RAF Aldergrove in Northern Ireland. Its role was to carry out daily flights into the North Atlantic to collect meteorological data. It also kept observations for U-boat activity. Wesley would attain the rank of Warrant Officer Class II, serving as a Wireless Operator-Air Gunner.

After all, or in spite of, his hours of intense training, Wesley was dead within a year. On September 8, 1943, Wesley Coleman was a crew member aboard Handley Page Hampden Mk. I aircraft P1265, a twin-engine medium bomber. The aircraft took off at 09.50 hours under favourable weather conditions on a day meteorological Sortie. The aircraft failed to return from its mission and the aircraft and crew were never located. All four crew members on board were lost: WOII Wesley Coleman, along with Sgt. H.K. Bartlett, F/O R. Woodford and Sgt. A.W. Bentley.

An enquiry was conducted into the flying accident afterwards by the Commanding Officers at R.A.F. Station Aldergrove. Concluding remarks in the report included: *Experienced crew took off under favourable weather conditions. Obtained M/F fix at 1.30 hrs after take off. Nothing further heard... Cause of accident unknown and no evidence. In consequence of this accident and engine trouble experienced on Hampdens recently, advised 15 Group to take Hampdens off long distance Met. Sorties, which has now been agreed by Higher Authority.*

Rev. Stanley Coleman, then residing in Ontario, soon after received a telegram informing him that his son was REPORTED MISSING AS THE RESULT OF AIR OPERATIONS ON SEPTEMBER 9TH 1943. On September 12, 1943, Rev. Coleman received the following letter from the RAF Commanding Officer of No. 1402 Flight, in Aldergrove, Belfast, Northern Ireland:

Dear Mr Coleman,

Before you receive this letter you will have had a telegram informing you that your son, Warrant Officer Wesley Percival Coleman has been reported missing as the result of air operations. It is therefore with very much regret that I write to you to express my sympathy with you in your bereavement.

Owing to service reasons I cannot give you full details of the flight that your son was undertaking at the time he was reported missing, but the following information may perhaps help somewhat.

Wesley took off at approximately 10.00 hours on the 8th September for a Meteorological flight over the Atlantic. He was due to return some seven hours later and, although equipped with wireless and other modern aids, no signals whatever were received from the aircraft.

On the non return at the expected time a search was begun, and is still being continued, in which Air Sea

Rescue and all modern life-saving devices are being employed, but unfortunately so far without success.

I would like personally to let you know that during the time Wesley has been with my Flight he has carried out his duties in a most efficient and outstanding manner, and his loss is sadly regretted by all members of the Flight. Please allow me to express on behalf of myself and his many friends here, the deepest sympathy we all feel with you in your loss.

In late September 1943, the grieving father was the recipient of another letter, this time from the Flight Lieutenant, R.C.A.F. Casualties Officer, for Chief of the Air Staff in Ottawa.

Dear Rev, Coleman:

It is my painful duty to confirm the telegram recently received by you which informed you that your son, Warrant Officer Second Class Wesley Percival Coleman, is reported missing on Active Service.

Advice has been received from the Royal Canadian Air Force Casualties Officer, Overseas, that the aircraft of which your son was a member of the crew failed to return to its base after air operations on September 8th, and not on September 9th as advised in my telegram.

This does not necessarily mean that your son has been killed or wounded. He may have landed in enemy territory and might be a Prisoner of War. Enquiries have been made through the International Red Cross Society and all other appropriate sources and you may be assured that any further information received will be communicated to you immediately.

Your son's name will not appear on the official casualty list for five weeks. You may, however, release to the Press or Radio the fact that he is reported missing, but not disclosing the date, place or his unit. May I join with you and Mrs. Coleman in the hope that better news will be forthcoming in the near future.

Later, Wesley Coleman's status was officially recorded as, *Previously reported missing after air operations, now for official purposes, presumed dead, overseas.*

Besides his grieving family, Wesley left behind a young woman he had planned to marry. While serving overseas, he met and fell in love with Ivy Jane McCann, a Sergeant in the Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF), stationed at RAF Aldergrove, Crumlin, Northern Ireland. They made plans to marry. Unfortunately, Wesley Coleman would be lost, presumed dead before the planned wedding. After Wesley's death, Ivy wrote a letter to the Director of Estate, renouncing any right or claim to the estate of Wesley Coleman, ensuring that it went to his parents. In October 1944, she wrote a letter to her father. Following is a portion of that letter:

Dear Dad,

I got your letters when I came back to camp last night. I'm sorry I wasn't able to answer it sooner but they kept all mail for me in camp. This morning I sent you a cable and I hope it will help in settling Wesley's will. Actually I had no knowledge at all that he made a will in my favour. He never said anything to me about it. He always intended that any money he had should help with Lyman's education (his younger brother) as he wanted him to go to Ridley (College in St. Catharines, Ontario). I have been in contact this morning with the legal advisor on the station as I thought it should be quicker than waiting until I went home and he worded the cable for me. I myself would certainly not think his last will was valid and F.O. Jackson said the same. I definitely would not think of claiming any part of Wesley's estate. I had his love and all the lovely memories we had together – with that I am content. If there are any documents for me to sign or any certificates that I have to make, will you let me have them and I will do so. I know how you all must feel about it as you said Dad – it seemed so final – but then I suppose the authorities must clear all these things up. Wesley is still alive to me – he will never die. I still feel him so near to me at all times and in all places.

Tell Mum I will write to her to-night. I had four letters from her last night too and one from Marion. Then this morning I had one from Frances. It's quite a long time now since I heard from Harold. I do hope I see him before he goes back to Canada.

At the moment I am thinking of volunteering for Western Europe. Whether it will help when demobilization comes along – I don't know, but you can be assured when I am demobilized – my efforts to proceed to Canada will not be of a small nature. Since my own Father and Mother passed home – I have somehow naturally regarded you and Mum as my parents and have said when asked what I was doing after the war – that I was going home to Canada... Well Dad I will close for now.

All my love "Ivy"

In September 1945, Wesley's parents received a War Service Gratuity of \$494.80 for the loss of their son. In June 1952, Rev. Stanley Coleman in Midland, Ontario would receive the following letter from the Wing Commander, R.C.A.F. Casualties Officer, for Chief of the Air Staff:

Dear Reverend Coleman:

It is with reluctance that after so long an interval, I must refer to the loss of your son, Warrant Officer Class I Wesley Percival Coleman, but due to the lack of any information concerning him since he was reported missing, it must be regretfully accepted and officially recorded that he does not have a "known" grave.

Due to the extreme hazards attending air operations there are, unhappily, many thousands of British aircrew boys who do not have "known" graves and all will be commemorated on General Memorials that will be erected at a number of locations by the Imperial War Graves Commission (of which Canada is a member), each Memorial representative of a theatre of operations. One of these Memorials will be erected at Runnymede, England, and the name of your son will appear on that Memorial.

I realize that this is an extremely distressing letter and that there is no manner of conveying such information to you that would not add to your heartaches. I am fully aware that nothing I may say will lessen your great sorrow, but I would like to express to you and the members of your family my deepest sympathy.

Wesley Coleman has no known grave. Twenty-one-year-old Wesley Coleman's name is inscribed on the Runnymede War Memorial, Surrey, United Kingdom, Panel 179. In November 2019, his name along with 25 others was added to the Sarnia cenotaph, engraved in stone to be remembered always.

SOURCES: C, D, E, F, G, L, M, 2C, 2D, 7C, 8X, 8Y

CONWAY, Adam Edward (#A/102217)

Less than three weeks after getting married, Sarnia's Adam Conway enlisted from a "sense of duty." He would die at 23 in the Liberation of Holland, a month and a half before the war ended officially in Europe.

Adam Edward Conway was born in Belfast, Ireland on April 25, 1921, the only child of Edward and Annie Brooks Conway, both of Northern Ireland. Parents Edward and Annie Conway were married in Belfast, Ireland on May 31, 1915. Adam was only 15 months old when his family immigrated to Canada, arriving aboard the *Metagama* at a port in Quebec on July 28, 1922. His family then travelled by train to Sarnia and would reside at 218 Confederation Street. They would later move to 342 Queen Street. When Adam was eight years old, he and his parents visited Ireland. They returned from Belfast aboard the passenger ship *Andania* to the port of Montreal on August 24, 1929. Edward Conway supported his family by working as a labourer at Imperial Oil while Annie managed the household duties.

Adam attended public school for eight years before he spent three years at Sarnia Collegiate. At high school, he specialized in auto mechanics and was active in swimming, bowling, and baseball. His hobbies were diverse: stamp collecting and playing harmonica. Prior to enlisting, Adam was employed at Imperial Oil Company in Sarnia for one year as labourer – doing all types of general work including electrical welding and corrosion testing; however two significant changes in Adam's life were about to happen.

The first was that he would no longer be single. On June 20, 1942, Adam married Gladys Margaret McKellar of London, the youngest daughter of the late Mr. and Mrs. Wesley McKellar. It was a smaller wedding, as most wartime ceremonies were. At the Devine Street United Church ceremony, Gladys' attendant was Miss Shirley Smith, while the bridegroom was attended by Arthur Fleck. Following the wedding, a reception was held at the Vendome Hotel. After a brief honeymoon to Toronto and points east, the newlyweds moved in with Edward and Annie at 342 Queen Street. The second event in Adam's life was as significant. In July 1942, less than three weeks after getting married, he would enlist to fight in the war, recording his reason for joining the army as "sense of duty."

Adam Conway, age 21, enlisted in the Canadian Army in Windsor, Ontario on July 9, 1942. He stood five feet eight inches tall, had blue eyes and brown auburn hair, and expressed his desire to be in the Royal Canadian Ordnance Corps (RCOC). His plan for after the war was to return to Imperial Oil for employment. He began his army training at #12 Basic Training Centre (#12 BTC) in Chatham, Ontario, completing it in August 1942. After training as a Non-Commissioned Officer (NCO), he stayed at #12 BTC to be an Assistant instructor. In late summer 1943, Adam received further training as an infantryman at #6 Basic Training Centre in Stratford before being transferred to #1 Transit Camp in Windsor, Nova Scotia waiting for embarkation.

Adam Conway may have seen Gladys and his parents during his army training in Chatham and Stratford, but when he left for the United Kingdom on September 13, 1943, he would never see them or Sarnia again. In early October 1943, Adam sent a cable to Gladys confirming that he had arrived safely with a detachment of the Canadian army after an "uneventful" crossing. He was initially posted to #3 Canadian Infantry Reinforcement Unit, with the rank of Private. He would continue his training in the U.K., and in October 1943, he became a member of the

Highland Light Infantry (HLI) of Canada, R.C.I.C., with the rank of Private. Adam's extra preparation in England finished in time for him to embark for France with the Highland Light Infantry. They would arrive in France on June 6, 1944 – **D-Day**.

The **Battle of Normandy** would begin for the Canadians with the June 6, 1944 D-Day landings at Juno Beach. After breaching the "Atlantic Wall" of "Fortress Europe", Allied armies began their break out from the narrow Normandy bridgehead to carve out a foothold on the French mainland. It would take a whole summer of tenacious fighting, pushing against fierce and ruthless German forces to advance east across France. In a brutal campaign of attrition, the Canadians faced fierce battles and vicious counterattacks as they clawed their way forward liberating villages and towns including Bretteville, Carpiquet, Caen and Falaise.



Corporal Adam Conway

Adam Conway would serve in France until he was wounded on August 15, 1944. He was returned to the U.K. where he was hospitalized, before joining the Canadian Infantry Training Regiment (CITR).

On November 9, 1944, Adam would again embark from the U.K., with the Highland Light Infantry (HLI), arriving in North West Europe. After the Battle of the Scheldt, over the winter of 1944-1945 most of the weary Canadians were given a rest, although the front was never quiet, with patrols and large-scale raids remaining constant. Canadian troops were stationed along the **Nijmegen sector** in the Netherlands. The Canadians were to hold and defend the Nijmegen salient and a small piece of Allied-held territory north of the Maas River.

This bridgehead would be used as a starting point for crossing the Rhine (in February 1945), and the Allies had to give the enemy the impression that an assault was imminent to force it to leave troops in that area. The Germans did their best to push the Canadians out of "the island" by flooding the area and constantly harassing them with mortar fire, artillery and aggressive patrols. Constantly vigilant, the men dug deep slit trenches, covered them with whatever was handy, and tried to keep warm from the snow and cold during one of the most frigid winters on record in northern Europe.

In the early months of 1945, Adam Conway attained the rank of Corporal with the HLI. In February 1945, the Allies launched a great offensive, the **Battle of the Rhineland** that was designed to drive the Germans eastward back over the Rhine River. There would be two formidable thrusts: one by the Ninth U.S. Army; and one by the First Canadian Army, strengthened by the addition of Allied formations. The resilient Germans had spent months improving their defences; winter rains and thaw had turned the ground into a thick, muddy quagmire and the enemy would fight fiercely to defend their home soil. During one month of fighting, the Canadians would succeed in clearing the Reichswald Forest, in breaking the Siegfried Line and in clearing the Hochwald Forest. But victory came at a high cost.

In May 1940, the Netherlands, despite its declaration of neutrality, had been invaded by the German blitzkrieg and put under Nazi control. It led to five years of suffering for the Dutch people. In March 1945, the 1st

Canadian Corps (who had been fighting in Italy) joined their comrades of the 2nd Canadian Corps (who had fought through France, Belgium, and Germany). For the first time in history, two Canadian Army corps would fight together. The two Canadian Corps were tasked with the **Liberation of the Netherlands**, on two fronts—northeastern Holland and northern Germany, and Western Holland. Grateful residents greeted the Canadians as heroes as they liberated towns and cities. It was never easy. The freedom fighters faced destroyed roads, bridges and dykes; experienced days of fierce clashes against a resilient, sometimes fanatical enemy; and engaged in house-to-house fighting. Many Canadians were killed in the Liberation. One was Sarnia's Adam Conway.

On March 24, 1945, Corporal Adam Conway would lose his life while fighting in northern Germany during the Liberation of the Netherlands. His remains were buried in Germany on March 30, 1945 at a location recorded on the Army Field Service Card as "Near Bienen, Germany 9th CIB Temp Cdn. Military cemetery MR. 048553 Rees Sh. 420, R.1 G.3". They would later be exhumed and reburied in Nijmegen Canadian Military Cemetery in Holland. Only one and a half months after his death, the war ended officially in Europe.

In early April 1945, Gladys Conway and his parents Edward and Annie would receive a telegram from the Director of Records in Ottawa informing them that, CPL ADAM EDWARD CONWAY HAS BEEN KILLED IN ACTION IN GERMANY. Later the same month, Gladys received the following letter from the Major-General, Adjutant-General:

Dear Mrs. Conway,

It was with deep regret that I learned of the death of your husband, A102217 Corporal Adam Edward Conway, who gave his life in the Service of his Country in the Western European Theatre of War on the 24th day of March, 1945.

From official information we have received, your husband was killed in action against the enemy. You may be assured that any additional information received will be communicated to you without delay.

The Minister of National Defence and the Members of the Army Council have asked me to express to you and your family their sincere sympathy in your bereavement. We pay tribute to the sacrifice he so bravely made.

Adam Conway was later officially recorded as, *Overseas casualty, killed in action, in the field (Germany)*. In June 1945, Gladys received a War Service Gratuity of \$480.70 for the loss of her husband. In early July 1946, she also received a letter from the Colonel, Director of Records, for Adjutant-General. Following is a portion of that letter:

Dear Madam:

Information has just been received from overseas that the remains of your husband, A102217 Corporal Adam Edward Conway, have been carefully exhumed from the original place of internment and reverently reburied in grave 12, row A, plot 19, of Nijmegen, Holland. Marked map is enclosed. This is a recognized military burial ground and will receive care and maintenance in perpetuity.

The grave will have been marked with a temporary cross which will be replaced in due course by a permanent headstone suitably inscribed. While it cannot now be stated when this work of permanent commemoration will begin, before any action is taken you will be communicated with and an opportunity will be given you to submit a short personal inscription of your own choice for engraving on the headstone...

Corporal Adam Conway, age 23, left behind his parents Edward and Annie, who lost their only child, and his wife of less than three years, Gladys. Adam Conway is buried in Groesbeek Canadian War Cemetery, Netherlands, Grave XIX.A.12. On his headstone are inscribed the words, IN MEMORY OF A BRAVE SOLDIER WHO DIED THAT HIS COUNTRY MIGHT LIVE. His name is also inscribed on the Sarnia Refinery Plaque. Unveiled in 1949, the plaque has the names of 24 Sarnia Imperial Oil employees who made the ultimate sacrifice in World War II. SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, L, N, 2C, 2D, 6O, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10V

CORE, Garnet Douglas (#A/106978)

In a letter he wrote to his aunt en route to what became known as The Battle of Italy, Garnet Core stated, *We had a swell trip coming over; spent my twenty-first birthday aboard ship*. He would never leave Italy and never live to see twenty-two.

Garnet Douglas Core was born in Forest, Ontario on March 28, 1923, the son of Wesley William and Myrtle Ruth (nee: West) Core. Parents Wesley (born January 1899 in Forest) and Myrtle Core (born July 1899 in Sarnia Township), were both age 21 when they married January 15, 1920 in Forest. Wesley farmed to support his household. Garnet had one brother, Raymond John Core, born four years after him, but unfortunately, Wesley and

Myrtle divorced. Myrtle later married James Bright, and they resided in Blackwell, Lambton County.

Before he enlisted in May 1943, Garnet had been working for the past fourteen months as machinist and valve tester at Muellers Limited, a job he wished to continue upon his return from the war. Sadly, he lost his mother Myrtle, who passed away in February 1943 at the age of forty-two. Garnet would join the army three months after his mother's death. His father was now residing in Windsor and his stepfather still lived in Blackwell. He also had an aunt, Mrs. Elba Smith, who resided at 244 Ontario Street, Sarnia.

Twenty year-old Garnet Core enlisted in the Canadian Army in London, Ontario on May 28, 1943. He stood five feet nine inches tall, had hazel eyes and brown hair, was single, recorded his address as R.R. #3, Sarnia, and his next of kin as his brother Raymond. In early June 1943, Garnet spent a few days at home on leave with his friends and grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. Henry West, Sr. of Blackwell. After leaving #1 District Depot in London, Garnet received his army training at #12 Basic Training Centre in Chatham, Canadian Infantry Training Centre at Camp Ipperwash and #1 Training Brigade in Debert, Nova Scotia.

Garnet's lifestyle was changing and it was about to do so again. While at Ipperwash in August 1943, he was given military permission to marry his girlfriend of two and a half years, Betty Vera Randall (born March 26, 1921 in London, Ontario), the eldest daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Arleigh Randall of Mooretown, Ontario. The wedding took place on October 1, 1943 at the United Church parsonage in Corunna. At the ceremony, Miss Freida Lapham of Sarnia served as bridesmaid, and Private Allan Nagorsen of Windsor, served as the best man. After the ceremony, the bridal party dined at the Cosy Café, and then the newlywed couple left for a wedding trip to Niagara Falls, New York. On their return, Betty Vera Core resided at R.R. #3 Sarnia, while Garnet returned to Camp Ipperwash after his 17-day furlough. Betty Core would later move to 206 Harkness Street, then Mooretown, and after the war, to 210 Confederation Street, Sarnia.

After completing his training at Ipperwash, then Debert, Garnet Core embarked overseas from Halifax for the United Kingdom on February 12, 1944. He was posted to #3 Canadian Infantry Reinforcement Unit (CIRU), where he would receive further training. Six weeks later, on March 27, 1944, he was bound for the Italian Theatre as a member of the Royal Canadian Regiment, with the rank of Private. He would spend his 21st birthday at sea, on his way to fight in Italy.

The **Italian Campaign**, the first sustained Canadian Army operation of the War, had begun with the invasion of Sicily in July 1943. The fierce fighting on the island would last more than four weeks, during which the Canadians would advance through difficult mountainous terrain, against an ever-stiffening German resistance. By August 17, the Germans had evacuated the island to the Italian mainland. In early September, Canadian and Allied forces would invade Italy. Though Italy surrendered shortly after, the occupying Germans made it clear their fight was not over. Liberating Italy would be a painstaking northward crawl, lasting 20 months, over a range of landscapes, through challenging weather, and against a series of well-protected defences held by some of the German army's best troops.

In the spring of 1944, while in Italy, Garnet wrote a letter to his aunt, Mrs. Victor Wellington, of 123 South Brock Street. In the letter, received in May 1944, Garnet described his life in Italy. The following are portions of his endearing letter written from "Somewhere in Italy":

I really covered a lot of miles since I left Canada... We had a swell trip coming over; spent my twenty-first birthday aboard ship. I really love the water; wish I had joined the navy. This country is beautiful and the climate is much like our own. The summer, they say, is really hot here. It is spring now; has been nice but is rather cool today. There are lots of fruits and nuts to be bought. Oranges cost about thirty cents a dozen. When it is orange season, you pick them off the trees.

The Italians are great for wine. It can be bought from thirty cents up for a quart most anywhere. They call it 'veno.' I had one taste of it. That's all I want. It's just like rotten cider. The people let their animals sleep in the house with them. It is not unusual to see a horse or a mule tied in a corner of the living quarters. I nearly died laughing the first time I saw a horse tied in a house. The buggy was inside also.

I went up to a monastery built on a mountain. It was really beautiful inside; sights which I had never seen before. The art work was lovely. The altars were great masterpieces which must have taken years to build. The food over here is really good, but I do miss fresh milk now and then. I had some Italian ice cream today. It was not too bad, but not as good as our Canadian ice cream. I have had the odd plate of spaghetti. Boy, it really is good, but darn dear. A plate alone, no bread, costs seventy cents.

Shortly after his aunt received his letter, Private Garnet Core was killed. On May 30, 1944, while fighting in

Italy, he was severely wounded—described in the Casualty Report Form as “multiple bomb (mine) wounds of extremities.” The next day, May 31, 1944, Garnet Core died from those wounds, at #5 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station in Italy. His remains were buried in Italy at a location recorded on the Army Field Service Card as “M.R. 798137 Sheet 160 – Italy”. They would later be exhumed and reburied in Cassino Military Cemetery, Italy.

Without the benefit of modern technology, a gap in time existed then between the occurrence of an event and news of it happening. Thus, in June 1944 when her husband was dead and buried, Betty received a telegram from Ottawa informing her that Garnet had been slightly wounded on May 30, 1944 while fighting with Canadian troops in Italy, during the battle of the Hitler Line and the advance to Rome. The nature of the wound was not revealed. Betty, naturally worried, told her family and friends that she hoped the wound was not serious and that he would be able to rejoin his unit soon. On an early June morning, Betty visited the *Canadian (Sarnia) Observer* office to advise them that her husband had been wounded in action in Italy on May 30.

A short time later, the Director of Records in Ottawa sent her the devastating news: her husband had died on May 31, 1944, as a result of wounds received during fighting. Later in June 1944, Betty Core received this letter from the Major-General, Adjutant-General:

Dear Mrs. Core;

It was with deep regret that I learned of the death of your husband, A.106978 Private Garnet Douglas Core, who gave his life in the Service of his Country in the Mediterranean Theatre of War on the 31st day of May, 1945.

From official information we have received, your husband died as the result of wounds received in action against the enemy. You may be assured that any additional information received will be communicated to you without delay.

The Minister of National Defence and the Members of the Army Council have asked me to express to you and your family their sincere sympathy in your bereavement. We pay tribute to the sacrifice he so bravely made.

Private Garnet Core was later officially recorded as, *Overseas casualty, died of wounds received in action, in the field (Italy)*. In early July 1944, the minister and congregation at Blackwell United Church honoured Private Core at a Sunday morning memorial service. The church was filled to capacity and was beautifully decorated with flowers and flags for the service. During the service, an honour roll bearing the names of fourteen men who had enlisted from the Blackwell congregation and community was unveiled and dedicated. The unveiling ceremony was performed by Private James Somes, R.C.A., and the prayer of dedication was pronounced by the Rev. P.S. Banes, of Point Edward.

In March 1945, Betty Core received a War Service Gratuity of \$131.39 for the loss of her husband of less than a year. Five months later, in August 1945, with the war in Europe officially over, a letter arrived to Betty's Harkness Street home from the Colonel, Director of Records, for Adjutant-General. The letter, in part, reads as follows:

Dear Madam:

Information has just been received from overseas that the remains of your husband, A106978 Private Garnet Douglas Core, have now been carefully exhumed from the original place of internment and reverently reburied in grave 12, row B, plot 13, of Cassino Military Cemetery, Cassino, Italy. Marked map is enclosed. This is a recognized military burial ground and will receive care and maintenance in perpetuity.

The grave will have been marked with a temporary cross which will be replaced in due course by a permanent headstone suitably inscribed. While it cannot now be stated when this work of permanent commemoration will begin, before any action is taken you will be communicated with and an opportunity will be given you to submit a short personal inscription of your own choice for engraving on the headstone...

Twenty-one-year-old Private Garnet Core is buried in Cassino War Cemetery, Italy, Grave XIII.B.12. On Garnet's headstone are inscribed the words, THE PEACE OF JESUS FILLED HIS BREAST AND IN HIS ARMS HE SANK TO REST.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 7C, 8X, 8Y

CRAWLEY, David (#R/183604)

David Crawley immigrated to Canada in his mid-teens with his widowed mother and two brothers, all seeking a new life after settling in Sarnia. David was active in the community, had a career, and was married less than two years when he signed up to serve. He would lose his life a year-and-a-half later in one of the most dangerous postings in the war.

He was born in Askam-in-Furness, Lancashire, England on November 14, 1912, the son of Thomas and Mary Ann (nee Mylray) Crawley. His parents, both born in Lancashire, England, were married in Lancashire on August 28, 1901. David had two brothers, Frank Mylrea (born 1909) and Edwin Thomas. When David was ten years old, he lost his father, a former miner, who died in June 1923 at age of thirty-eight of silicosis, a lung disease caused from his work. His mother, recording her occupation as housekeeper, and her sons Frank and David departed Liverpool, England aboard the *Montrose* and arrived in St. John, New Brunswick on December 3, 1927. Their intended destination was recorded as R.R. #1 Campbellford, Ontario, where Mary Ann's brother-in-law and sister, Mr. and Mrs. Bright, lived. David Crawley was fourteen years old when his family arrived in Canada.

David had received his education in England, at public school in Askam-in-Furness, 1918-1927, then Dalton Grammar School, 1927-1929. After living in Cumberland County for two years, the Crawley family moved to Lambton County in 1929. Years later, Mary Anne Mylray would re-marry, becoming Mrs. Tom Bright, and lived at 457 Cromwell Street, Sarnia. Tom and Mary Ann Bright would later reside in Campbellford, Ontario. Both of David's brothers would stay in Sarnia; Frank, at 457 Cromwell Street, and Edwin, at 133 S. Brock Street.

David was employed by W.B. Millholland as an inspector of cone's for V.8 Ford Castings from 1929-1940; then at Holmes Foundry in Sarnia doing laboratory work until he enlisted in 1942. In late 1940, at the age of 28, his life would change dramatically. On October 18, 1940, David Crawley married Blanche Doris (nee Maidment) in Forest, Ontario. The young couple resided at 255 ½ North Mitton Street. While David was overseas, Blanche Crawley lived at 254 North Front Street, Sarnia with her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Harry Maidment. While in Sarnia, David was a member of the 2nd 11th Field Company, Royal Canadian Engineers, as a Sapper from 1940-1942. David participated in bowling extensively, along with softball and tennis, and his hobby was shooting.

David Crawley had first applied to join the RCAF on September 15, 1939, five days after Canada had declared war on Germany. However his application was not completed. Three years later, the twenty-nine-year-old successfully enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force on August 5, 1942, in London, Ontario. He stood five feet four inches tall, had hazel eyes and dark brown hair, and he requested flying duties with a preference for Aircrew Air Gunner. Some of the Recruiting Officer's comments about David included, *Nature type, short, light build. Wiry and agile. Claims to have extensive experience with rifle on miniature ranges and won several prizes in Dominion Rifle competitions. Determined sort of chap... Should prove good Air Gunner.*

From #5 Manning Depot in Lachine, David received his air training at #16 Service Flying Training School (SFTS) in Hagersville, #23 PAE in Toronto, #2 Air Gunners Ground Training School (AGGTS) in Trenton and #3 Bombing and Gunnery School (B&GS) in MacDonald, Manitoba. The AGGTS Commanding Officer's comments about David included, *Shows initiative. Good average student... active worker, applies himself diligently, co-operates fully; displayed ample initiative in carrying out air exercises, reliable, should make a good crew member.* David was awarded his Air Gunner's Badge at MacDonald, Manitoba on June 25, 1943.



Sergeant-Air Gunner David Crawley

David Crawley left Halifax to go overseas to the United Kingdom on July 16, 1943. From #3 Personnel Reception Centre (PRC), he continued his training at #22 Operational Training Unit (OTU), #1659 Conversion Unit and then No. 61 Training Base in Yorkshire. On January 3, 1944, he became a member of RCAF #420 Snowy Owl Squadron "Pugnamus Finitum" (We fight to a finish), part of **Bomber Command**, with the rank of Sergeant Air Gunner.

During the course of the war, one of this country's most significant contributions was the approximately 50,000 Canadians who served with the RCAF and RAF in Bomber Command operations. Next to Britain, Canada was the largest contributor to Bomber Command, making up more than a third of all of Bomber Command personnel. The men who served in Bomber Command faced some of the most difficult odds of anyone fighting in the war.

RCAF #420 Squadron was formed on December 19, 1941 at RAF Waddington as part of No. 5 Group, outfitted with Handley Page Hampdens. The squadron converted to Vickers Wellingtons and moved its base to Skip-on-Swale, then Middleton St. George, and in May 1943 the unit was stationed in Algeria and Tunisia in North Africa (in support of the invasions of Sicily and Italy). In November 1943, the squadron returned to Britain, and was outfitted with Handley Page Halifax bombers based at Dalton and later at Tholthorpe. In April 1945, the squadron would convert to Lancasters. No. 420 was to be a predominantly Canadian squadron shortly after its formation, and in 1944 was adopted by the City of London, Ontario.

Only seven months after arriving overseas, David Crawley lost his life. On the night of February 24, 1944, he was part of a crew aboard Halifax III aircraft LW427 (markings PT-) on a night mission to Schweinfurt, Germany that took off at 1815 hours from its base at RAF Tholthorpe. There were 734 aircraft that took part in the operation, the first raid on this particular target, the centre of ball-bearing manufacture in Germany. A new tactic was introduced where the bomber force was split into two waves separated by two hours. The aircraft was shot down by an enemy night fighter, between 23.00-23.59 hours, crashing in enemy territory approximately 2 km south of Ostelheim, Germany. Perishing with Sergeant-Air Gunner David Crawley were F/O. Henry Maynard Long; P/O. Martin Allan Knight; FS. David Ballantine Richardson; Sgt.s Harvey Ellis Hirst and William Henry Botterill (RAF) and Tech/Sgt. Ray Jay Gile (USAAF). The bodies of the crew members were buried in one communal grave in the rear right hand corner of Ostelsheim Cemetery, (French section) in Germany.

In early March 1944, Blanche received a telegram from the Casualty Officer in Ottawa informing her that her husband, SGT DAVID CRAWLEY HAS BEEN REPORTED MISSING AFTER AIR OPERATIONS ON FEBRUARY 25. There were no other details provided and the message added that further information would be forwarded when received.

In mid-March, David's mother Mary Ann in Campbellford, Ontario, received a letter from the Squadron Leader, R.C.A.F. Casualties Officer, for Chief of the Air Staff. Following is a portion of that letter:

Dear Mrs. Bright:

It is my painful duty to confirm the telegram recently received by you which informed you that your son, Sergeant David Crawley, is reported missing on Active Service.

Advice has been received from the Royal Canadian Air Force Casualties Officer, Overseas, that your son was a member of the crew of an aircraft which failed to return to its base after a bombing raid over Schweinfurt, Germany, on the night of February 24th and the early morning of February 25th, 1944. There were four other members of the Royal Canadian Air Force in the crew and they also have been reported missing. Since you may wish to know their names and next-of-kin, we are listing them below...

This does not necessarily mean that your son has been killed or wounded. He may have landed in enemy territory and might be a Prisoner of War. Enquires have been made through the International Red Cross Society and all other appropriate sources and you may be assured that any further information received will be communicated to you immediately.

Your son's name will not appear on the official casualty list for five weeks. However, you may release to the Press or Radio the fact that he is reported missing, but not disclosing the date, place or his unit. May I join with you and the members of your family in the hope that better news will be forthcoming in the near future.

In late March 1944, Blanche received the following letter from the Squadron Leader:

Dear Mrs. Crawley,

On behalf of the Squadron and myself may I extend sympathy on the sad loss of your husband Sergeant David Crawley, who was missing from operations on the night of 24/25th February, 1944. Your husband was a very

popular member of our Squadron and carried out his duties as an Air Gunner very capably and willingly. His loss was keenly felt by all concerned.

Since take off nothing has been heard, however, it may be that he is a prisoner of war. Time alone can tell us this. May I explain that the request in the telegram notifying you of the casualty of your husband was included with the object of avoiding his chances of escape being prejudiced by undue publicity in case he is still at large. This is a precaution taken in the case of all personnel reported as missing. Please be assured that any information we may receive will be forwarded to you.

David Crawley was later officially recorded as, *Previously reported missing after air operations, now for official purposes, presumed dead, overseas (Germany)*. In September 1945, Blanche Crawley received a War Service Gratuity of \$239.44 for the loss of her husband. Three of the items returned to the Crawley family in May 1946 were David's mascot doll, a good luck horseshoe charm and a gold ring engraved with a Britannia. Blanche remarried years later, becoming Blanche Finn, residing at 254 North Front Street, Sarnia.

In May 1947, a Squadron Leader representing the Wing Commander, Officer Commanding No. 2 Missing Research & Enquiry Unit R.A.F., released his findings after visiting the cemetery at Ostelsheim, and the graves of the crew of Halifax LW427. Following is a portion of his report:

The grave is very well kept and is covered in flowers. On enquiring at the Burgonmaster's Office I found that this aircrew crashed on the night of 24th Feb. 1944 and the bodies of F/O Long and Sgt. Crawley were thrown clear out of the aircraft. Sgt. Crawley was alive but died in less than two hours. The rest of the crew were burnt beyond recognition... All papers and identity tags were taken from the Burgonmaster, on 29/4/46 by the U.S.A. Research Service and copies of the Burgonmaster's receipt are attached to the report, with photo of the burial in 1944 of the crew against the orders of the local Nazi leaders. On May 10th 1946 the American Graves Command exhumed, and transferred the body of T/Sgt Gile to the American Cemetery in St. Anold, in France, for reburial. On further enquiry I found that this aircrew was shot down by a night fighter.

The five airmen who were completely burnt, were all buried in one coffin and the bodies of F/O Long R21366 and of Sgt. CRAWLEY R183604 were buried in two separate coffins. The grave still contains three coffins. The remains of the aircraft, as usual, was removed to an unknown destination by the LUFTWAFFE Unit from ECHTERDINGH. All that remains is a few old pieces none of which bear a traceable Number...

In June 1949, David's mother Mary Ann Bright received the following letter from the Wing Commander, R.C.A.F. Casualties Officer, for Chief of the Air Staff:

Dear Mrs. Bright:

It is with regret that I refer to the loss of your son, Sergeant David Crawley, who lost his life on air operations against the enemy February 25th, 1944, and who with members of his crew was buried in the Civil Cemetery at Ostelsheim, Germany, but a report has been received from our Missing Research and Enquiry Service that your son and the five members of his crew buried with him have been moved to the permanent British Military Cemetery at Bad Tolz, Germany. The cemetery is known as the Bad Tolz (Durnbach) British Cemetery, and is located eight miles south southeast of Munich, Germany.

Your son is resting in Grave No. 23, Row C, Plot No. 4, and Flying Officer H.M. Long (R.C.A.F.), pilot of your son's crew, is beside him in Grave No. 22. Most unfortunately, individual identification could not be obtained of the four remaining members of the crew. They are: Pilot Officer M.A. Knight; Flight Sergeant D.B. Richardson; Sergeant H.E. Hirst (all R.C.A.F.); and Sergeant W.H. Botterill (R.A.F.), and they are resting in adjoining Multiple Graves, registered in their names, and numbered 24, 25 and 26, Row C, Plot No. 4.

Reinternment in a British Military Cemetery in Germany is in accordance with the agreed policy of the Nations of the British Commonwealth that all British aircrew buried in Germany would be moved to British Military Cemeteries located in Germany, where the graves and cemeteries will be reverently cared for and maintained in perpetuity by the Imperial War Graves Commission (of which Canada is a member). The Commission will also erect a permanent headstone at your son's resting place.

It is my earnest hope that you will be comforted with the knowledge that your son's resting place is known, and that it will be permanently maintained, and I would like to take this opportunity of expressing to you and the members of your family my deepest sympathy in the loss of your gallant son.

Thirty-one-year-old David Crawley is buried in Durnbach War Cemetery, Germany, Grave 4.C.23.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, M, N, 2C, 2D, 3J, 4B, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10B, 10U

DAWDY, Cecil Blake

Cecil Dawdy, a married father of five, was so eager to serve in the army that he enlisted a couple of days before Canada had officially declared war on Germany. He rose steadily in the military ranks before a tragic accident cut short his life.

Cecil Blake Dawdy was born in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan on April 18, 1908, the son of Blake Laverne (born in the United States) and Frances Hasard (nee Graham, born in Ontario) Dawdy. His parents were married in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan on March 28, 1905. Cecil had two brothers, Carmen Wesley (born 1906) and Laverne (born 1914, would serve overseas). When Cecil was seven years old, his family moved to Medicine Hat, Alberta. He was educated at Central High School in Calgary, leaving school after completing grade eleven. His father Blake was a merchant-jeweller. Cecil lost his father who died on September 2, 1938 at the age fifty-one. His mother Frances lived in Calgary and later Edmonton, Alberta. Cecil resided in Alberta until about the age of twenty-six, then moved to British Columbia where he lived for four years.

Cecil married Miranda Leona Dawdy (of Spokane, Washington) on January 25, 1936 in Trail, British Columbia. They had five children together: four sons; Edward Blake, Francis Anthony, Gerald Michael (born September 21, 1942 in London, Ontario) and Joseph Cecil; and a daughter; Marina Rosemary. Cecil was active in golf, tennis and swimming, and his hobby was woodworking. In civilian life, he had various jobs, most in British Columbia as a salesman, including six years for a drug company; two years for a confectionary; and three years selling electrical appliances. He had his own electrical appliances business for two of those years until 1938. Cecil and family moved to Ontario in 1939.

Thirty-one-year-old Cecil Dawdy enlisted to serve on September 8, 1939, in Sarnia, with the 11th Field Company, Royal Canadian Engineers (R.C.E.). Canada declared war on Germany two days later, on September 10, 1939. He stood five feet five and a half inches tall, had blue eyes and light brown hair, and recorded his address as Morden Hotel, Sarnia, while his wife and children were residing at 18 Wolseley Avenue, London, Ontario. His desire was to serve in the infantry, and his ambition for after the war was to have an administrative army position. The Recruiting Officer's comments about Cecil included, *Ambitious, high learning ability... valuable administrative experience, high stability, fine personality – alert – clean cut. Excellent officer material.* Cecil was employed by the R.C.E. in Sarnia as pay clerk for about three months, with the rank of Acting Lance-Sergeant. He was transferred to Royal Canadian Regiment (RCR) Depot in London, Ontario on December 16, 1939.

Cecil served as a member of the Royal Canadian Regiment at #1 District Depot in London, Ontario until June 1942, doing clerical work, attaining the rank of Company Sergeant-Major, Superintending Clerk. In March 1942, the brigadier in command of #1 District Depot to the Secretary, Department of National Defence in Ottawa wrote a report on Cecil that included the following; *CSM Dawdy, C.B. – This warrant officer has been the mainstay of this Depot from the "other rank" angle since I assumed command. He is a most dependable, trustworthy and thoroughly efficient warrant officer and has an uncommon flair for administration....*

Cecil then attended Officers Training Course (OTC) at Gordon Head and Victoria, British Columbia until July 1942, qualifying as a Second Lieutenant; and then A10 Canadian Infantry Training Centre (CITC) at Camp Borden, attaining the rank of Lieutenant. In August 1942, he returned to #1 District Depot in London, Ontario, becoming Records Officer until August 1943. For three months in that period, he was employed as Adjutant of the sub-depot in Windsor, Ontario. In August 1943, he was attached to Headquarters, Military District #1, in London (HQ MD1), where he would be promoted to the rank of Captain in January 1944. He continued doing administrative duties there, working in the deputy assistant Adjutant-General's office, and was evaluated by senior officers as, *doing good work, shows good aptitude for administrative duties, is hard working and dependable.*

On July 21, 1945, Cecil Dawdy lost his life in a tragic accident, in Willow Lake, Kitchener, Ontario. He was officially recorded as, *Died as a result of a broken neck suffered in diving accident, Kitchener Waterloo Hospital.* Eyewitness and doctors' medical reports following the accident included the following information:

O the afternoon of 20 Jul 45, Capt Dawdy proceeded from HQ MD1 in London around 1:30 p.m., arriving at #1 CWAC TC in Kitchener; he was on duty, carrying out details in connection with personnel; he completed his work and had to wait for the completion of clerical work in connection with his duty before returning to MD1; he was in high spirits and was particularly anxious to go swimming after finishing his business and take any members of the Mess who cared to go; it was very hot day and he said it was the first chance he had had in some time to get away from his work and enjoy a little recreation; there were five military personnel in the group (Dawdy and four CWAC

Officers), that left #1 CWAC TC some time between 7:30-8:10 p.m., arriving at approximately 8:30 p.m.; the Willow Lake resort at Doon, located on farm property about 6 miles outside of Kitchener, charged a fee of 5 cents per person to swim; in the lake, there were two platforms supported each by four piles and upon which planks were erected as spring boards for diving purposes; the group had been swimming approximately 1/2 hour according to one witness, when the accident occurred; the accident occurred at approximately 8:45 p.m. on July 20; Capt Dawdy had performed a "backward jack-knife" dive from the lower of the two installed diving platforms; he was next seen in distress, floating on the surface below the diving board; he was removed from the water, still conscious; he could not use his legs, and said that he feared that he had broken his neck, also saying "I can't move. Please get a doctor."; he was massaged and covered with blankets while medical attention was requested; at approximately 9:20 p.m. he was taken to Kitchener-Waterloo Hospital by ambulance; he was diagnosed with a sustained compound fracture of the 5th cervical vertebrae with rotation of 4th, 5th and 6th and probable dislocation with partial transection of the cord; he died the following day as a result of his injuries at approximately 6:00 p.m.

Evidence revealed that Capt. Dawdy was an experienced diver and swimmer; the springboard was slightly "off-level", and the water was five feet deep; He was not to blame; cause of accident may have been the combination of the "off-level" diving board, and the depth of the water, not sufficient depth for diving; Legal action was going to be initiated against those operating the resort by Mrs. Dawdy, with the recommendation that the Military provide her with a competent legal officer and legal aid.

The war in Europe had ended on May 8, 1945, two months prior to his death, and the war in Japan would end less than one month after that. Cecil Dawdy left behind his wife Miranda and their five children ranging from age one to 8 1/2. Thirty-seven-year-old Cecil Dawdy is buried in Mount Pleasant Cemetery, London, Ontario, Military Plot Sec. X, Grave 69. On his headstone are inscribed the words, REST IN PEACE.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, 2C, 2D, 7C, 8X, 8Y

DAWS, Frederick John (#J/12472)

Frederick Daws was a musician, a talented athlete and a youth leader in the community with aspirations to enter the field of aviation. He also had a desire to serve his country. He lost his life two years after enlisting in the Allied push to liberate Italy.

Frederick John Daws was born in Sarnia on November 2, 1920, the only son of Frederick Daws Senior (born in Oldham, Lancashire, England) and Annie Elizabeth (nee Graham, born in Oldham, England) Daws. His parents were married in Hamilton, Ontario in 1914. Frederick had one sister, Doris (McKellar), born in 1917. The family would move to 333 Wellington Street, and later to Lakeshore Drive in Sarnia. Father Frederick Senior Daws supported the family as a milkman in Sarnia.

Frederick attended Lochiel Street public school from 1926-1934, and then Sarnia Collegiate Institute from September 1934 - April 1940. Frederick was a member of the Central Century Club, where he played basketball, hockey and softball. While at Sarnia Collegiate, he was active in the Cadets, becoming a cadet major in 1940, and was the master of ceremonies of the annual school show. For a time at SCITS, he was a member of gold medal winning bands. He also played high school basketball and would play on the Sarnia Collegiate WOSSA rugby team. Later as a halfback, he played both junior and senior O.R.F.U. for Sarnia. Frederick also was a member of the Sarnia Imperials football team. He was greatly interested in organized boys' work, acting as chairman of the Boys' Work Board for three years, and acted as a leader on several occasions at the Boys' Camps at Lamrecton. Frederick was a member of the 2-11th Field Company, Royal Canadian Engineers in Sarnia, as a Sapper, from September 1940-July 1941. After completing high school in April 1940, he was employed at Mueller's Limited, as a Lathe operator, until he enlisted.

Twenty year-old Frederick Daws enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force on July 19, 1941, in London, Ontario. He stood five feet ten inches tall, had hazel eyes and brown hair, was single, and lived at home with his parents at the time, recording their address as Lake Huron Beach, Sarnia. He was anxious for flying duties, expressing his preference as either a pilot or observer. The Recruitment Officer's comments about Frederick included, *Keen and intelligent, very anxious to fly, courteous and confident personality, co-operative, and initiative, responsibility and reliability good.* Frederick planned to enter commercial aviation after the war.

From No. 1 Manning Depot in Toronto, Frederick received his air training at a number of locations including #4 Bombing and Gunnery School (B&GS) in Fingal; #6 Initial Training School (ITS) in Toronto; #12 Elementary Flying Training School (EFTS) in Goderich; and #14 Service Flying Training School (SFTS) in Aylmer, where he

was awarded his Pilot's Wings on July 3, 1942. He obtained the highest marks of his class in flying and received a commission as pilot officer. He then continued his training at #1 General Reconnaissance School (GRS) in Summerside, Prince Edward Island and then #31 Operational Training Unit (OTU) in Debert, Nova Scotia. Frederick Daws sailed overseas for the United Kingdom in January 1943.

In early June 1943, his parents Frederick Sr. and Annie Daws in Sarnia received a cablegram from overseas stating that their son had been promoted to the rank of Flying Officer from Pilot Officer. Later that month, on June 17, 1943, Frederick Daws married twenty year-old Kathleen May Wilson, of Bournemouth, England, in the district of Swindon, Wiltshire, England. His British bride would reside at Howeth Road, Ensburry Park, Bournemouth, England.



F/O-Pilot Frederick John Daws



Flying Officer-Pilot Frederick John Daws with his wife Kathleen May

Not long after marrying, Frederick Daws found himself on his way to Algeria, to be part of **Mediterranean Air Command (MAC)** Reinforcement Unit, which was gearing up for the **Sicily/Italy Campaign**. In mid-February 1943, Allied air forces in Morocco, Algeria, Egypt and Libya were reorganized into the MAC in order to coordinate efforts in the North African Campaign. When that campaign ended in mid-May 1943, MAC was then directed to play a role in the Mediterranean and Italian theatres.

The **Italian Campaign**, the first sustained Canadian Army operation of the War, supported by the Navy and Air Force, began with the invasion of Sicily on July 10, 1943. The fierce fighting on the island would last more than four weeks, during which the Canadians would advance through difficult mountainous terrain, against an ever-stiffening German resistance. By August 17, the Germans had evacuated the island to the Italian mainland. In early September, Canadian and Allied forces would invade Italy. Though Italy surrendered shortly after, the occupying Germans made it clear their fight was not over. Liberating Italy would be a painstaking northward crawl, lasting 20 months.

On July 23, 1943, Frederick was aboard Hudson MK. V aircraft AM788 that departed from Portreath, Cornwall, England on its way to Ras el Ma, Algeria. The Lockheed Hudson aircraft was a twin-engine light bomber used for reconnaissance, transport and maritime patrol. The aircraft arrived that evening, and two days later, was ordered to proceed to Blida, Algeria. On take-off on July 25, the aircraft experienced difficulties, crashed and caught fire. Frederick Daws failed to escape from the burning aircraft, suffering multiple 4th degree burns, resulting in his death. Along with Flying Officer-Pilot Frederick Daws, also killed was Flight Sergeant R.H. Jarvis. Frederick Daws had only been married one month, and overseas for six months.

At the end of July 1943, Fred Sr. and Annie received a cablegram informing them that their son, **FLYING OFFICER FRED J DAWS HAS BEEN KILLED IN ACTION OVERSEAS**. No other details were made available, though his parents believed that he may have been in action over Sicily. In his last letter home, Frederick mentioned that he expected soon to be leaving for Africa. Frederick Daws was later officially recorded as, *Killed in a flying accident, overseas (Algeria)*.

An account of the crash was written by one of the surviving crew members, F/O R.A. Dawe, to the Commander, R.A.F. Station, Davidstow Moor, England. Following is his written account:
Sir,

I have the honour to be in a position to report on the crash at RAS EL MA in Hudson A.M. 788 on July 25th, 1943. On July 23rd we left Portreath for RAS EL MA arriving there late the same evening. We were then informed we should proceed on July 25th to Blida to join a squadron.

We taxied to the end of the runway at approx. 12.30 hours. There was one runway at the airfield and the wind was across the runway. As Observer my position in the aircraft was next to the pilot. One Wop/Ag was at the radio and the other was working the T.R. 9 just aft of the main spar.

As we went to take off, when the tail came off the ground the aircraft swung but we became airborne and the pilot retracted his wheels. Almost instantaneously the port wing dropped and the aircraft started to turn to port. The pilot corrected for this but the aircraft did not respond and still kept turning and as we had very little height a crash looked imminent. The pilot throttled back and cut his switches. We hit the ground on the port wing and then fell back on the fuselage, at which point both tanks exploded and caught fire. By the time we came to rest the aircraft was ablaze from end to end, but no one had been hurt in the crash.

As the whole thing had happened so fast the door had not been jettisoned and on trying to open we found we could not, nor could we remove the parachute exit. The rest of the crew went forward and I stayed struggling with the door. I could not see the rest of the crew for smoke in the aircraft and myself had given up hope of getting out.

Suddenly I thought of the side window from which the V.G.O. usually protrudes. I don't remember any more until I picked myself up from where I had fallen out of the window. I got up and ran around the other side and found that one Wop/AG had escaped through the similar window on the other side. The crash tender was there but it was obvious it didn't have a chance of getting near the aircraft. We were then pulled away from the crash and put in the ambulance. We were then flown to Casablanca and admitted to a U.S. Hospital and never at any time have I been approached for a statement.



In June 1945, newlywed Kathleen Daws in Bournemouth, England received a War Service Gratuity of \$284.26 for the loss of her husband. Twenty-two-year-old Frederick John Daws was buried in Fez, French Morocco, but later was re-interred at Le Petit Lac Cemetery, Oran, Algeria, Plot E, Row C, Grave 17. On his headstone are inscribed the words, WE MISS YOU SO, YOUR WONDERFUL SMILE BUT IT'S JUST GOODBYE FOR A LITTLE WHILE.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, J, L, M, N, S, 2C, 2D, 7C, 8X, 8Y

DICK, Daniel (#A/106954)

Daniel Dick was a First Nations man who had worked many jobs and was helping to support his mother at home when he settled into employment in Sarnia. He joined the military to serve his country but did not have the opportunity to serve overseas, his life was cut short by disease.

Daniel was born in Fort William, Ontario on December 24, 1913, the second youngest child of John and

Josephine (nee St. Germaine) Dick, of Fort William Mission Bay Indian Reserve. He had two brothers; older brother James and younger brother Matthew; and two older sisters, Lucy and Josie Jane. An Ojibway First Nation member, he only completed grade five at the age of fifteen after about four years of irregular school attendance. Yet he was fluent in both English and Ojibway. He had an outdoor scouting background and enjoyed fishing and hunting. He worked five years with his father's lake fishing fleet, and nine years of various construction jobs and types of labour including driving teams and caterpillar tractors, before eventually making his way to Sarnia.

Some time before he enlisted, Daniel's father John Dick passed away. Daniel Dick was employed at Polymer Corporation Rubber Plant for nine months until he enlisted. Along with a brother, Daniel was helping to financially support their widowed mother – he was sending her \$10-15 per month. Daniel's plan was to return to Sarnia and his job at Polymer after the war.

Twenty-nine-year-old Daniel Dick enlisted in the Canadian Army on May 25, 1943, in London, Ontario. He stood five feet ten inches tall, had brown eyes and black hair, and was single. He recorded his next of kin as his mother in Fort William, his home address as Polymer Corp., Sarnia, and his occupation as steel worker. The Recruiting Officer's comments about Daniel included, *Has had good health. Is a fairly tall well set up chap. He has lived away from home for some years; likes to get back for an occasional visit and writes an occasional letter... he is probably quite amenable, has a bit of outdoor scouting background which should help him in Infantry training.* Daniel became a member of the Royal Canadian Infantry Corps, with the rank of Private.

From #1 District Depot in London, Daniel attended #12 Basic Training Centre (BTC) in Chatham, Ontario. In the sixth week of his training at Chatham, he complained of chest pains and was concerned he would not be able to complete his advanced infantry training. He continued however, completing his eight-week basic training course. In mid-August 1943, Daniel went absent with leave from #12 BTC until the new year. On January 3, 1944, a sick Daniel Dick would be admitted to Mountain Sanatorium in Hamilton, Ontario. While a patient in the hospital, he would be transferred to "A" Wing Holding Company, #2 District Depot in Toronto.

Daniel Dick would not get the opportunity to serve overseas. On April 3, 1944, Daniel passed away at Mountain Sanatorium, Hamilton as a result of what was listed as "pulmonary tuberculosis, far advanced". In April 1946, his widowed mother Josephine of the Fort William Reserve, received a War Service Gratuity of \$22.50 for the loss of her son. Thirty year-old Daniel Dick is buried in Squaw Bay, Fort William First Nations Cemetery, Thunder Bay, Ontario, Canada. The Imperial War Graves Commission (Commonwealth War Graves Commission) erected a military headstone over his grave.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, 2C, 2D, 4D, 7C, 8X, 8Y

DIONNE, Raymond William (#A/20675)

Raymond William Dionne was a veteran of the Great War, where he had been gassed and wounded in action. Twenty-two years later, the father of eight children chose to serve his country again. Four of his children would also serve.

Raymond Dionne was born on a farm in Camlachie, Ontario on June 22, 1899, the son of Charles (born in Kamouraska, Quebec) and Mary Philomene Dionne (nee Lalonde, born in Sarnia Township), of 142, later 344 Durand Street, Sarnia. Raymond had five brothers: Joseph (born 1895), Charles (born 1897), Clarence (born 1900), Delmore (born 1905) and Kenneth (born 1916); along with seven sisters: Rose (born 1894), Lila (born 1903), Anna (born 1908), Mae Celestine (born 1909), Teresa Cecilia (born 1910), Clara (born 1914) and Daisy (born 1917). Raymond was a member of Our Lady of Mercy and St. Joseph's Catholic Parishes, Sarnia.

Raymond William Dionne served in the Great War. He enlisted in Sarnia with the Canadian Overseas Expeditionary Force on January 4, 1916, becoming a member of the 149th Battalion. Raymond was sixteen years old at the time, but recorded his birthdate as June 22, 1897, stating that he two years older than he actually was. He stood five feet seven inches tall, had brown eyes and black hair. He recorded his birthplace as Sarnia, his occupation as labourer, and his next of kin as his father Charles Dionne, of 142 Durand Street, Sarnia.

Private Raymond Dionne (#844258) left Halifax aboard the *SS Lapland* on March 28, 1917. He arrived in Liverpool, England on April 7, and became a member of the 25th Battalion at Bramshott. In early June 1917, he was transferred to the 161st Battalion at Camp Witley. Seven months later, in early January, he was awarded a Good Conduct Badge there. In late February 1918, he was transferred to the 4th Reserve Battalion, and two weeks later, to the 47th Infantry Battalion at Bramshott. On March 16, 1918, Private Raymond Dionne arrived in the field in France. On April 11, 1918, he was transferred to the 4th Battalion, Canadian Machine Gun Corps (CMGC).

The **Hundred Days Campaign** (August 8 – November 11, 1918 in France and Belgium) would be the “beginning of the end” of the Great War. Canadians were called on again and again over the three-month period to lead the offensives against the toughest German defences. The first offensive in Canada’s Hundred Days Campaign was the Battle of Amiens in France (August 8-14, 1918), truly an all-arms battle, one that all four Canadian divisions would be involved in. The second offensive in this Campaign was the **Battle of Arras and Breaking the DQ Line** in France (August 26-September 3, 1918), where Canadians were part of a spearhead force tasked with crashing one of the most heavily fortified positions, the Hindenburg Line – a series of strong defensive trenches and fortified villages. It was during this battle, on August 31, 1918, that Raymond Dionne was wounded in action by a mustard gas shell. He was admitted to #47 Casualty Clearing Station, then #41 Stationary Hospital at Amiens. He would be discharged seven days later.

One month later, still with the CMGC, he was recorded as “gun shot wound abdomen, fractured right knee, died of wounds - in the field - September 28, 1918 at #38 Casualty Clearing Station.” Days later, it was “cancelled” and changed to “Previously reported D of W #38 CCS, now admitted to #56 General Hospital Etaples September 29, 1918 – shell wound left wrist.” He would spend nine days at the Military Hospital in York, and on October 28, 1918, he was discharged from a convalescent hospital in Epsom. The Great War ended in November 1918, and in late December 1918, he returned to Canada. He was discharged on demobilization on January 29, 1919 in London, Ontario, and returned to 14 Durand Street in Sarnia. Shortly after returning home, Raymond would lose his mother Mary Dionne, who passed away in April 1919.

On August 21, 1919, twenty year-old Raymond Dionne married eighteen year-old Golda Marie Young (born in Freemont, Ohio), the daughter of Robert and Emma Young (nee Williams) in Sarnia. At the time of his marriage, Raymond recorded his occupation as a pipe fitter. From March 1920 until June 1923, Raymond was a member of the Army Reserve, the 2nd Machine Gun, Sarnia. In December 1923, the young Dionne couple lived at 343 Victoria Avenue, in Point Edward. Raymond and Golda would go on to have eight children together, including sons; Raymond James (born 1921), Robert Charles (born 1923, see below), Melvin Joseph, Ronald Norris (born 1925), Gerald Edward and Cecil Louis; and daughters Audrey June and Rose Marie. After the Great War, along with raising his family of eight children, Raymond worked in a garage as an auto mechanic for 12 or 13 years, and then was employed at Holmes Foundry as a coremaker for eight years.

In 1941, the forty-two-year-old World War I veteran would again enlist to serve his country. He enlisted in the Canadian Army on November 24, 1941 in London, Ontario. He stood five feet nine and a half inches tall, had brown eyes and graying dark brown hair, and recorded his occupation as coremaker, and that he and his family were residing at 343 Victoria Avenue, Point Edward. From #1 District Depot in London, Raymond received his army training at #10 Basic Training Centre (BTC) in Kitchener, and then Royal Canadian Engineers Training Centre (CETC) in Petawawa.



Army Sapper Raymond William Dionne

Raymond Dionne left for the United Kingdom on June 2, 1942. He would soon celebrate his 43rd birthday

there, far from his home and family. He served in England with the Canadian Army, as a member of the Royal Canadian Engineers with the rank of Sapper. Prior to arriving overseas, in December 1941 while still in Petawawa, Raymond had experienced some bouts of heartburn and nausea after eating, abdominal pains and ailments that were treated with baking soda and that had cleared up. The symptoms returned in February 1942, progressively becoming more severe.

Once he was in England, the symptoms continued. He was examined by medical officials in late September 1942 at Bramshott, England. He had lost about 35 pounds in 3-4 months, was suffering occasional bouts of heartburn, nausea and gastric discomfort, had no appetite, had marked weakness and was easily fatigued after strenuous exercise. Doctors recommended treatment by diet until further investigation, and surgical treatment as soon as possible. On October 7, 1942, Raymond left the U.K. to return to Canada due to his medical issues. On November 23, 1942, Sapper Raymond Dionne of the Royal Canadian Engineers was honourably discharged from service, being unable to meet the required military physical standards. He returned to Sarnia later that month.

Four of Raymond Dionne's sons would also serve in uniform during World War II. His eldest son Raymond James joined the army coming from the army reserves in 1939, and arrived in England in early 1940. He would attain the rank of Corporal with the Canadian Army, serving in North Africa, Sicily and Italy. Raymond returned home in 1945. His son Melvin served with the Canadian Army, Lincoln-Welland Regiment, in Belgium. His son Ronald Norris lied about his age to serve alongside his father and brothers. Ronald became a member of the Canadian Army, with the rank of Sapper, initially serving in Canada. He would be wounded on Juno Beach on D-Day, was returned to England and later returned to battle where he was wounded again on the drive into Germany. And Raymond's son, Robert Charles, also became a member of the Canadian Army, losing his life while serving on October 1, 1944 (see below).

Raymond Dionne was again employed at Holmes Foundry upon his return to Sarnia, and the family lived at 343 Victoria Street, Point Edward. The Great War veteran and father of eight passed away on May 23, 1943 at Sarnia General Hospital, officially recorded as, *The result of gastric haemorrhage due to carcinoma of stomach, death was related to military service*. In March 1945, Golda Dionne received a War Service Gratuity of \$146.58 for the loss of her husband. She later moved from Victoria Avenue, Point Edward to Cemetery Road, Oakwood Corners, Ontario. Less than a year and a half after losing her husband, Golda tragically lost a son to war, twenty year-old Robert Charles, who was killed in Belgium. Forty-three-year-old Raymond William Dionne is buried at Sarnia (Our Lady of Mercy) Catholic Cemetery, Sarnia, Ontario, Canada.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 7C, 8Y

DIONNE, Robert Charles (#A/20654)

Robert Charles Dionne, 20, was one of the "fighting five" of the Dionne family to serve in the war. In a Netherlands war cemetery, the epitaph on his headstone was composed by his grieving mother: REST IN PEACE MY DARLING AND MAY YOU NOT HAVE GIVEN YOUR LIFE IN VAIN.

Parents Raymond William Dionne (see above) and Golda Marie (nee Young) Dionne were married on August 21, 1919 in Sarnia, and were blessed with eight children. Robert Charles was their second son, born in Sarnia on December 24, 1923. The sprawling family, which in wartime resided at 343 Victoria Avenue, Point Edward, included Robert's seven siblings: Raymond James (born 1921), Melvin Joseph, Ronald Norris (born 1925), Gerald Edward, Cecil Louis, and sisters Audrey June and Rose Marie.

Robert was raised in Sarnia and was a member of Our Lady of Mercy Catholic Parish. He attend Our Lady of Mercy School and then St. Patrick's Catholic High School for one year, but he admitted he disliked school. In a military interview in December 1942, he stated that he "used to play truant a good deal while going to school". He preferred playing action sports rather than sitting in dull classrooms. And play he did—whether it be boxing, swimming, and skating, or baseball and rugby. When not enjoying sports, he earned money by working at various times as a delivery boy and as a farm labourer. Prior to enlisting, Robert was employed for three months by Canadian Steamship Lines as a seaman on the *S.S. Noronic* in the Great Lakes.

Seventeen year-old Robert Dionne enlisted in the Canadian Army on August 19, 1941 in London, Ontario. He stood five feet seven inches tall, had brown eyes and black hair, was single, and recorded his occupation as a sailor. He wrote his reason for joining the Canadian Army was "patriotism." Like many other young men who enlisted, he had plans for his post-war life. Upon his return, Robert wanted to become a mechanic. First, he had to survive the war and to do that his training was essential to his survival. From #1 District Depot in London, Robert

received his military training at #12 Basic Training Centre (BTC) in Chatham and Royal Canadian Engineers Training Centre (CETC) in Petawawa. In January 1942 he proceeded to Valcartier, Quebec. Robert Dionne embarked overseas for the United Kingdom on January 25, 1942. He wasn't the only Dionne to take up the fight. Three of Robert's brothers, along with his father, Raymond William, a veteran of the Great War, also served in the Canadian Army during World War II. Raymond William, the Dionne patriarch, embarked for England four months after Robert.

Robert's older brother, Raymond James, was the first Dionne to serve in WWII, joining the army from the army reserves in 1939. Like Robert, Raymond was educated at Our Lady of Mercy school and found work locally—in this case, at Holmes Foundry; unlike Robert, he was married and his son was only a few weeks old when he went overseas on August 21, 1940. He attained the rank of Corporal with the Canadian Army and, after serving two years in England, he was among the first Canadians to go to North Africa. After North Africa, he was part of the intense Battle of Sicily and Italian Campaign. At the time of Robert's death, Raymond had served approximately four years overseas and had returned to Sarnia from Italy in late-August 1944. When interviewed about his Sicily/Italy experience, he described it as not so much fighting as chasing the enemy, with long, weary miles without rest. He said, *Messina and Reggio were not the beauty spots that appear in pictures when we got there after the bombardment. We had real hard fighting at Cassino. The Germans are tough fighters and do not give up while they have weapons or ammunition. One prisoner declared he was the last man in his unit and would have fought it out only his weapons were gone. After the fall of Rome most of us managed to get there on a visit. It was a fine sight after months spent in the fields.*

Three other members of the patriotic Dionnes went overseas. Younger brothers Melvin and Ronald were both Privates with the Canadian Army. Melvin served in Belgium whereas Ronald was one of the first infantry-men to step ashore on Juno Beach on June 6, 1944. Wounded on D-Day, Ronald was sent to England to recover from wounds received in France. He would later return to battle, where he was wounded again on the drive into Germany. Their father, Raymond William, who fought in England and France in the Great War, also served in World War II. He was in England with the Canadian Army, Royal Canadian Engineers, with the rank of Sapper, but returned to Canada in October 1942 because of an illness. Within six months, in May 1943, Raymond William Dionne, age 43, was dead, the result of gastric haemorrhage due to carcinoma of stomach which was attributed to his military service.

Robert Charles Dionne would arrive in England in late January 1942. He was originally posted with the Engineer Reinforcement Unit (ERU) to work on army equipment. By June, he had become a member of Royal Canadian Engineers, 11 Field Company with the rank of Sapper. It must have been a tense, exciting time for Robert, a time filled with anticipation as to what lay ahead. Also a difficult time, for in training, he received news that his father in Sarnia had passed away on May 23.

Just over one year later, on July 9, 1944, one month after D-Day, Robert Dionne landed on Juno Beach, France. The **Battle of Normandy** had begun for the Canadians with the June 6, 1944 D-Day landings at Juno Beach. After breaching the "Atlantic Wall" of "Fortress Europe", Allied armies began their break out from the narrow Normandy bridgehead to carve out a foothold on the French mainland. It would take a whole summer of tenacious fighting, pushing against fierce and ruthless German forces in order to advance east across France. In a brutal campaign of attrition, the Canadians faced fierce battles and vicious counterattacks as they clawed their way forward liberating villages and towns including Bretteville, Carpiquet, Caen and Falaise.

After the Allied breakout from Normandy, Canadian forces were assigned the "**Long Left Flank**", the less glamorous but vital tasks of clearing coastal areas in the north of France and Belgium of German occupiers; opening the English Channel ports for supplies essential to the Allied advance; and capturing the launching sites of German V-1 rockets. In a series of stop-and-start advances against stiff resistance in fortified positions, the Canadians liberated ports and villages including Rouen, Dieppe, Dunkirk, Boulogne and Calais.

In early September 1944, Allied forces had captured the inland port of Antwerp, Belgium, the second greatest port in Europe at the mouth of the Scheldt River. However, German forces still controlled the 45-mile-long Scheldt estuary (the Belgian-Dutch border area) that connected the port of Antwerp to the North Sea. The Canadians were entrusted with liberating the estuary. The **Battle of the Scheldt** was among the most difficult and grueling struggles in the war. The bitter fighting against a well-fortified and heavily entrenched enemy, took place in a bleak environment made worse by the winter cold in a flooded and freezing muddy quagmire.

As a member of the Royal Canadian Engineers (RCE), he was part of the troops that enabled the army to

move—they repaired and built roads, airfields and bridges; cleared mines and road blocks; and filled in craters and anti-tank ditches, all while working alongside combat troops at the front and often under fire. It was on October 1, 1944, in the early stages of the Battle of the Scheldt, that Sapper Robert Dionne was killed in action in Belgium. His remains were buried the same day at a location recorded on the Army Field Service Card as “R.C. Cemetery Westwall, Belgium. 24 & 34 MR 057877”.

Robert Charles Dionne would later be officially recorded as, *Overseas Casualty, Killed in action, in the field (Belgium)*. In mid-October 1944, the *Sarnia Observer* featured a photograph of three of the Dionne’s with the following description below it:

Sapper Robert Charles Dionne (centre), son of Mrs. R.W. Dionne, 343 Victoria avenue, Point Edward, was killed in action in Belgium on October 1. At left is Sapper Dionne’s father, Sapper R.W. Dionne, who served overseas in this war and who died last year after being invalided home. At the right is another son, Sapper Raymond Dionne, who recently returned from service in Italy.



Sapper Robert Charles Dionne



Robert Charles (standing), Raymond William (L), Raymond James (R)

From the *Sarnia Observer*, Oct. 1944

Also in mid-October 1944, Golda Dionne in Point Edward who had lost her husband nearly a year and a half earlier, received a telegram from Ottawa informing her that her son, SAPPER ROBERT CHARLES DIONNE WAS KILLED IN ACTION IN BELGIUM ON OCTOBER 1. Approximately two weeks later she received another telegram, this one informing her that her third son, PTE MELVIN DIONNE HAS BEEN WOUNDED OVERSEAS. Golda must have had strength of character to weather such blows to her family and to herself.

The following month the grief-stricken Golda opened this letter from the Brigadier, Acting Adjutant-General:

Dear Mrs. Dionne:

It was with deep regret that I learned of the death of your son, A20654 Sapper Robert Charles Dionne, who gave his life in the Service of his Country in the Western European Theatre of War on the 1st day of October, 1944.

From official information we have received, your son was killed in action against the enemy. You may be assured that any additional information received will be communicated to you without delay.

The Minister of National Defence and the Members of the Army Council have asked me to express to you and your family their sincere sympathy in your bereavement. We pay tribute to the sacrifice he so bravely made.

In July 1945, she received a War Service Gratuity of \$616.46 for the loss of her son Robert.

Sapper Robert Dionne was awarded a decoration posthumously in 1948 from the Belgian Government. In July 1948, Golda, then residing on Cemetery Road, Oakwood Corners (today the corner of Lakeshore Road and Colborne Road) received yet another letter from the Major-General, Adjutant-General in Ottawa:

Dear Mrs. Dionne,

It is with a feeling of pride that I write, on behalf of the Minister of National Defence and all ranks of the Canadian Army, to inform you that the Belgian Government has been pleased to confer the award of Croix de

Guerre 1940 avec Palme upon your son, the late A.20654 Sapper Robert Charles Dionne. This award was granted in recognition of his outstanding contribution towards the liberation of Belgium in the Second World War.

I regret exceedingly that your son did not survive to receive this well merited award himself. However I trust the knowledge that his services have been recognized in this manner by the Belgian Government will help to temper your very sad loss.

I am informed by the Belgian Embassy in Ottawa that the decoration which accompanies this award will be forwarded to you in the very near future.

The award "Croix de Guerre 1940 avec Paimé" was inscribed with the words, "*The King has been pleased to grant the following decoration in recognition of distinguished services in the cause of the Allies.*" In February 1946, the Colonel, Director of Records, for Adjutant-General wrote a letter to Golda. It reads in part as follows:

Dear Madam:

Information has just been received from overseas that the remains of your son, A20654 Sapper Robert Charles Dionne, have now been carefully exhumed from the original place of internment and reverently reburied in grave 10, row E, plot 5, of Bergen-op-Zoom Canadian Military Cemetery, four miles North-East of Bergen-op-Zoom, Holland. Marked map is enclosed. This is a recognized military burial ground and will receive care and maintenance in perpetuity.

The grave will have been marked with a temporary cross which will be replaced in due course by a permanent headstone suitably inscribed. While it cannot now be stated when this work of permanent commemoration will begin, before any action is taken you will be communicated with and an opportunity will be given you to submit a short personal inscription of your own choice for engraving on the headstone...

Twenty year-old Robert Dionne is buried in Bergen-Op-Zoom Canadian War Cemetery, Netherlands, Grave 5.E.10. On his headstone are inscribed the words, REST IN PEACE MY DARLING AND MAY YOU NOT HAVE GIVEN YOUR LIFE IN VAIN.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 7C, 8X, 8Y, a

DOWDING, John (Jack) Frederick (#J/46041)

John Dowding was so anxious to follow his distinguished older brother into serving in WWII that he lied about his age and enlisted at age 16. When he died at 17, he became Sarnia's youngest fallen soldier of World War II.

John Frederick Dowding was born in Sarnia on October 26, 1926, the younger son of Ivan Louis and Rhea Jean (nee Krohn) Dowding, of 162 John Street, Sarnia. He had one brother, Harry James Dowding, born September 27, 1921. Parents Ivan and Rhea Dowding were married in Sarnia on December 8, 1920. To support his wife and two sons at their home at 162 John Street, Ivan (born in Kerwood, Ontario) was a Pipe Fitter with Canadian Synthetic Rubber Company in Sarnia.

John attended Devine Street Public School from 1932 to 1939 and, of note, distinguished himself in a writing competition. His top ranked essay for "Fire Prevention Week" gained him acclaim and recognition in the *Canadian Observer* newspaper. As a prize, John was presented with a suit of clothes from Walker Brothers Store on Mitton Street. John had a variety of interests beyond writing, however. He attended Sarnia Collegiate from September 1939 to February 1943, where he was active in football, hockey, basketball and swimming. He was also a member of the High School Cadets for three years (Sergeant), and a member of the Young Men's Usher Club of St. Andrew's Church. He left school part way through grade eleven in February 1943 and was employed for one month in the laboratory of the Imperial Oil Limited from February to March 1943. John didn't like the shift work, so he then worked for Piggott Construction Company, Rubber Plant in Sarnia as a welder's helper in June and July of 1943. In August 1943, at age 16, he lied about his age to enlist. Undoubtedly, John was emulating his older brother, Harry, in doing his part in the war. If so, John chose a distinguished and intrepid role model.

Harry James Dowding, born September 27, 1921, enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force in March 1941 in London, Ontario. He graduated from No. 1 Service Flying Training School and received his wings at Camp Borden in December 1941. The following month, Harry was posted overseas. By the time he returned home to Sarnia three years later, Flying Officer Harry Dowding had made headlines and won accolades for his skill and bravery as a pilot.

Harry first made a name for himself as a Pilot of a Canadian Spitfire wing--as a member of the famous RCAF 403 (Wolf) Squadron (June 1942-October 1943--and then with the 442 (Caribou) Squadron (March-October 1944). In December 1942, Harry was promoted while overseas from Sergeant-Pilot to the rank of Pilot Officer. In

April 1943, parents Ivan and Rhea in Sarnia received a clipping from an English newspaper telling of the part their son played in an air attack over France the previous month. The clipping stated that, *two Royal Canadian Air Force Spitfire pilots, attacked and banished a Nazi freight engine during a low level sweep across France the previous week. Pilot Officer Edward Gimbel of Chicago, and Pilot Officer H. Dowding of Sarnia, were the fliers. They made two runs over the engine. The engine was stopped at the first attack.*

In May 1943, Halifax and Wellington squadrons of the RCAF took part in a daylight bombing raid of Meaulte district in France. As escorts, Allied fighters provided diversions and battled enemy fighters in the air. As part of this fighter escort group, Harry of Wolf Squadron was credited with the destruction of a German Messerschmitt. In June 1943, a Canadian Press story from “somewhere in England” mentioned Harry. A portion of the story reads as follows:

*Canadian Flyers Demonstrate Chivalry in War is not Dead
Hard-Hitting Fighters Hold to Scruples in Tough Going*

Chivalry in war may be on the wane (this is a very tough war), but it has yet to disappear altogether from aerial combat. There are still some niceties observed in the air by fighter pilots of both sides in this war.

Tough As They Look – This statement, born in the tough league that is Fighter Command, should not by any means suggest the aerial glad-handing which featured so many movies based on First Great War fighting is the vogue now. Not at all. But the fact is that these clean-looking Canadian kids like Pilot Officer Paul Gray, of Toronto, or Pilot Officer Harry Dowding, of Sarnia, Ont., are just as hard-hitting as they look when they head off a fighter sweep. At the same time they have scruples. They'd shoot a man down in a scrap but if he bailed out of a damaged aircraft they'd leave him to get down in the comparative safety of his parachute. “There is still a little bit of chivalry left, I guess,” said Sqdn.-Ldr. Chuck Magwood, D.F.C., of Toronto. “We are not allowed to shoot down any one parachuting in distress—that’s an order.”....

The following is a portion of an August 20, 1943 Canadian Press Cable from London, England that also mentioned Harry:

Canadians Down Enemy Fighters in Air Tangles

Three German fighters were destroyed and one was badly damaged yesterday by the R.C.A.F. fighter wing in sweeps over France and Holland, it was announced today. The actions cost the wing one pilot, who had received his commission just two hours before going on the sweep.

The Canadians sighted 15 or more Nazi fighters over Holland. The Nazis dispersed, but four were brought to battle and the Canadians blew two of them from the sky. Flight-Lieut. Dean Dover of Toronto, member of Wolf squadron, destroyed one with a short burst from 100 yards, and F.O. Harry Dowding, of Sarnia, Ont. and Thomas Brannagan, of Windsor, Ont., shared another...

In September 1943, Harry destroyed his fourth enemy plane when he closed to within 200 feet of a German fighter and sent it down in flames with one short burst. He was one of three Canadian fighter pilots who each shot down a German plane while flying as escorts for medium bombers attacking the railway yards at Abbeville, France.



Flying Officer Harry James Dowding

In late October 1943, Flying Officer Harry Dowding was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC) for his many exploits. The citation read, *This pilot has at all times displayed the utmost keenness to engage the enemy, and has destroyed three enemy aircraft, as well as sharing in the destruction of two others and damaging two more. On escort duty, in a period of five days, he recently succeeded in destroying two enemy aircraft and damaging another. His flying skill and fighting spirit have at all times been of the highest order.*

In early June 1944, Harry Dowding made headlines again, in a Canadian Press (CP) news release. He had made an emergency landing on the French invasion area on June 7, 1944, one day after D-Day. Following is a portion of the CP release:

Sarnia Airman Believed First To Land Plane in Invasion Area

With the R.C.A.F. in England – June 9, 1944 – Flt. Lt Harry Dowding of Sarnia, Ont., a Canadian Spitfire pilot, is believed to have been the first Allied airman to make a “both-wheels-down” landing on an emergency strip established on the French invasion area. Dowding did it yesterday, coming down after beachhead flak had punctured his gas tank and gas was spraying into his cockpit.

A companion, Flt. Lt. G. Keltie of Edmonton, “beat up” the strip a few times to warn persons on it that an aircraft was coming in. Every one cleared off but a French farmer who was pitching hay, and when Dowding landed he ran smack into the load of hay, escaping unhurt. Dowding returned to England by boat...

Harry had run smack into a full load of hay atop a horse-drawn wagon. Both the plane and wagon were wrecked, but Harry and his partner escaped unhurt. Officials later expressed their belief that the farmer had intentionally driven his hay wagon into the line of the landing plane, endangering the lives of both fliers, as the farmer and his whole family were found to have collaborated with the Germans.

On June 27, 1944, the words of P/O Stanley Helleur, from a Canadian airfield in France, were issued in a Canadian Press release. A portion of the CP release mentions Harry Dowding:

Sarnia, Winnipeg Aces Each Down Two Huns

Four more ME-109's fell today to sharpshooters of Sqdn. Ldr. Dal Russel's Canadian Spitfire squadron over France. F/L Harry Dowding, D.F.C., of Sarnia, and F/O Stan McClarty of Winnipeg each destroyed two. The squadron, one of the recently arrived units from Canada, now part of the Canadian wing led by Wing Cmdr. Johnny Johnson, spotted six Messerschmitts flying at low altitude and peeled to the attack from about 8,000 feet.

Both Dowding, who raised his own score to six destroyed, and McClarty were close on the tails of the victims when they made the kills. McClarty, for whom it was first blood, in fact, was so close he flew through the burning wreckage and scorched the propeller, starboard wing and elevator rudders of his Spit so badly the paint was peeled off...

Dowding's aircraft hadn't come to a full stop at its dispersal bay before his ground crew, led by LAC.

Maurice Smith of Ottawa, the armorer, were on the wings and asking Dowding all about it... It was a 'first' for McClarty's ground crew and one of their immediate problems was getting paint to inscribe two swastikas on the fuselage of the scorched aircraft...

With No. 442 Squadron, Harry was awarded the Bar to DFC. The award reads, *This officer continues to display the highest standard of skill, courage and devotion to duty. His example has greatly inspired the squadron which, within a period of a few weeks, has inflicted much loss on the enemy. More than 500 mechanical vehicles have been put out of action, many of them by Squadron Leader Dowding. In addition, this officer destroyed two of nineteen enemy aircraft which were shot down by the squadron during the period.*

Harry Dowding flew 220 operational sorties during his RCAF service, with victories that included at least six enemy Me109 aircraft destroyed and two enemy FW190 aircraft damaged. He was repatriated to Canada in late October 1944.

His younger brother's story would turn out completely different.

Wanting to follow in his older brother's footsteps, John Dowding enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force on August 4, 1943, when the Mobile Recruiting Unit from London visited Sarnia. On his RCAF attestation paper, John recorded his birthdate as October 26, 1925, making himself one year older than he actually was. Authorities assumed he was a seventeen and a half years old when, in fact, he was sixteen and a half. Consequently, all forms in his military Service File, including his Certificate of Registration of Death, record his birthdate as October 26, 1925. Only when his parents completed the mandatory Department of National Defence Estates Branch form after John's death did they record his actual birthdate of October 26, 1926.

Regardless of the lie, he would become Sarnia's youngest fallen soldier of World War II. John's interview with the recruiter is revealing. Fresh out of grade 11, the teenager made a favourable impression. He revealed he had made up his mind about eight months ago to enlist. When asked what factors drew him to applying in the air force, the interviewer recorded John's reasons: *Two of his friends are being enlisted. Three have been chums and want to go together.* The interviewer described John as *Alert, energetic young applicant. Brother a F.O. Spitfire pilot overseas. Anxious to follow in brother's footsteps.* A later fitness assessment sheet notes a score of 86 out of 100. Dowding scored high in *Staying power* and was *capable of prolonged and strenuous activity.* He also *puts all he's got into the workouts, energetic approach to all sports, attends sports parade with enthusiasm on all occasions.*



John Frederick Dowding

Sixteen year-old **John Dowding** stood five feet seven inches tall, had blue eyes and light brown hair, was single, and resided at home with his parents when he enlisted. He requested flying duties, preferably as an Air Gunner and his post-war ambition was to join the Air Force permanently. His preparation for the RCAF was extensive and his determination to be an air gunner never wavered. From #9 Recruiting Centre in London, he was transferred to #3 Manning Depot in Edmonton. John received his air training at #2 Initial Training School (ITS) in Regina, #4 Service Flying Training School (SFTS) in Saskatoon and #4 Initial Training School in Edmonton. While in Edmonton, John had no desire to complete the ITS course for pilots and observers, as he wanted to be an Air Gunner. The school's commanding officer removed Dowding from training and re-mustered him to air gunner at #3 Bombing and Gunnery School (B&GS) in MacDonald, Manitoba, with the comment; *very keen and interested in being an Air Gunner – Confident – Good type – Conscientious.*

At MacDonald, aerial gunnery was conducted on Bolingbrokes – obsolete aircraft used only for training purposes. Dowding learned to fire Browning .303 machine guns on the ground before advancing to firing them in the air. John earned his Air Gunners Badge at #3B&GS, awarded on June 2, 1944. His Commanding Officer at #3B&GS remarked that John was an *Above average student, clean-cut, enthusiastic, dependable, proficient at his trade.* He was then offered a commission as a pilot officer, which he accepted “for the duration of the present war and for the period of demobilization thereafter.” Later that month, he was posted to #5 Operational Training Unit (OTU) in Boundary Bay, British Columbia, and in July 1944, he was transferred to #1 Aircrew Graduates Training School (AGTS) in Maitland, Nova Scotia.

Now 17, John Dowding embarked overseas from Halifax on July 11, 1944. He arrived in Britain a week later for final training prior to undertaking bombing missions over Germany. From #3 Personnel Reception Centre, he would become a member of RAF #19 Operational Training Unit (OTU) on August 8, 1944, part of Bomber Command, with the rank of Pilot Officer Air Gunner.

In late July 1944, John Dowding was in England, and enjoyed a weekend leave together with his brother Harry, who was stationed in France. The meeting in England was the brothers' first meeting since John had arrived in England. Harry would relate this story and others when he addressed the St. Andrew's Presbyterian Men's Club in Sarnia in November 1944, one month after John's death.

During the course of the war, one of this country's most significant contributions was the approximately 50,000 Canadians who served with the RCAF and RAF in **Bomber Command** operations. Next to Britain, Canada was the largest contributor to Bomber Command, making up more than a third of all of Bomber Command personnel.

The men who served in Bomber Command faced some of the most difficult odds of anyone fighting in the war. There was no easy way to learn how to fly the heavy bombers, and training crews suffered a litany of disasters, crashes and deaths. By the end of the war, Bomber Command lost over 8,000 Allied airmen who were killed in training or by accidents alone.



Pilot Officer-AG John Frederick Dowding

RAF #19 Operational Training Unit (OTU) was formed in May 1940 at RAF Kinloss in the north of Scotland. Instructors trained night bomber crews using Armstrong Whitworth Whitley, a British twin-engine medium sized bomber. In August 1944, the squadron would re-equip with the Vickers Wellington, a twin-engine, long-range medium bomber. After training in a Wellington Bomber, John Dowding's Commanding Officer remarked on John's Training Report: *Has shown a keen interest in his work at this Unit and has a good average knowledge of most ground subjects. His airwork was steady and confident.*

On the evening of October 17, 1944, just over one year after enlisting, John Dowding was a part of a crew aboard Armstrong Whitley V aircraft AD685 (markings XF-J). This was the crew's fourth night cross-country training flight and the solo mission would take five hours to complete. The aircraft took off from RAF Kinloss at 19.06 hours, and over two hours later (at 21.22 hrs), another Whitley (flying north at 19,000 feet in the same vicinity) spotted AD685 flying south at a height of 12,000 feet. To this day, the cause of the crash remains unsolved. Perhaps the weather played a part in the fate of the Whitley V.

Conditions in the area were described as clear to fair, with breaks in the cloud cover. Visibility stood at 14 miles. The tops of storm tops stood at 12,000 feet but variable, with isolated clouds extending up to 18,000 feet. The skies were punctuated with frequent flashes of lightning. Shortly after being spotted, at approximately 2130 hours, the aircraft broke up in the air prior to crashing inland about five kilometres from the North Sea at Slingby Hill Farm, East Murton, County Durham, England. Wreckage was dispersed over a wide area. Every crew member was killed instantly, the result of terrible injuries. The medical officer's report on Dowding noted "Multiple Injuries... Head completely pulped; multiple abrasions with extensive tissue loss, fracture right humerus, fractured ribs both sides, complete fracture right tibia and fibula." Perishing with John Dowding were P/O Alexander Lorne Sunstrum; F/O.s Kenneth Reed (pupil pilot) and Walter Douglas Wall; Sgt. Leslie John Olmstead (all RCAF) and Sgt. Ernest William Leivers (RAF).

A portion of the investigation into the cause of the flying accident written by F/Lt. B.S. Hunt reads as follows: *F/O Reed was detailed by me for a five hour solo cross-country. He took off at 1906 hours and at 2130 hours the aircraft crashed, all the crew being killed. Reason for crash not known. F/O Reed and crew were briefed by me for the cross country in the cause of which I paid particular attention to the weather they were likely to meet en route, gave a minimum height to fly as thirteen thousand feet, which from met. should have been above cloud but to aim at 15,000 or more. They were also told to avoid any cu-nim. The aircraft flown by F/O Reed, AD.685 Whitley V was one of our best machines. As a pilot and type he was of average ability and in my opinion should have been capable of dealing with any normal emergency. The Durham Royal Observer Corps reported a; violent localized electrical storm moving through the area from the west at 21.30 hrs.*

On October 20, 1944, parents Ivan and Rhea Dowding in Sarnia received the following telegram from the RCAF Casualties Officer in Ottawa: DEEPLY REGRET TO ADVISE THAT YOUR SON PILOT OFFICER JOHN FREDERICK DOWDING J FOUR SIX NOUGHT FOUR ONE WAS KILLED ON ACTIVE SERVICE OVERSEAS ON OCTOBER SEVENTEENTH STOP PLEASE ACCEPT MY PROFOUND SYMPATHY STOP LETTER FOLLOWS.

Two days later, Ivan and Rhea received a second telegram from the RCAF Casualties Officer: YOU WILL WISH TO KNOW THAT FUNERAL FOR YOUR SON PILOT OFFICER JOHN FREDERICK DOWDING TAKES PLACE 7:30 P.M. OCTOBER TWENTY THIRD AT HARROGATE REGIONAL CEMETERY HARROGATE YORKSHIRE ENGLAND STOP LETTER FOLLOWS.

John Dowding's remains, identified by his identity discs, were buried on October 23, 1944 in Harrogate R.A.F. Regional Cemetery in England. His funeral was held with full service honours and military officers present; however, his family could not attend. A memorial service, conducted by the Rev. J.M. Macgillivray for Pilot Officer John Dowding was held on October 23, 1944 in St. Andrew's Church, Sarnia at the same hour as the burial service was taking place in Harrogate, England. John "Jack" Dowding would later be officially recorded as, *Killed in flying accident, overseas (England)*. As a courtesy, the British Air Ministry informed Harry Dowding in England of his younger brother's death two days after it occurred.

In late October 1944, J.A. Sully, Air Vice-Marshal, Air Member for Personnel in Ottawa sent this letter to the Dowdings on John Street:

Dear Mr. Dowding:

It is with deep regret that I must confirm our recent telegram informing you that your son, Pilot Officer John Frederick Dowding, was killed on Active Service.

Advice has been received from the Royal Canadian Air Force Casualties Officer, Overseas, that your son lost his life during flying operations at 9:25 P.M. on October 17th, 1944, at Slingby Hill Farm, East Murton, Durham County, England. The aircraft, of which he was a member of the crew, fell to the ground. His funeral took place at 7:30 P.M. on October 23rd, at Harrogate Regional Cemetery, Harrogate, Yorkshire, England.

You may be assured that any further information received will be communicated to you immediately. I realize that this news has been a great shock to you, and I offer you my deepest sympathy. May the same spirit which prompted your son to offer his life give you courage.

They received at the same time another letter, this one from R.G.G. Cole, Group Captain, Commanding R.A.F. Station, Kinloss:

Dear Mr. Dowding,

I find it my unfortunate task to confirm the telegram which you will have received informing you that your son was killed whilst flying on active service on the 17th October, 1944.

As air gunner of his aircraft, he took off in the evening of Tuesday, 17th October to carry out a cross-country detail. Contact was maintained with the aircraft until 21.22 hours, which was the last contact made. Information was received later that the aircraft had crashed at approximately 21.30 hours, a few miles inland west of Seaham Harbour, near Durham. It may be of some consolation to you to know that death must have been instantaneous. The cause of the accident has not yet been established.

Your son's Flight Commander spoke very highly of him and his loss is a great blow to his fellow members of this unit. Your son's fellow officers, the N.C.Os. of this station and I wish to convey to you our deep sympathy in your bereavement.

I have delayed writing to you in order to give you the details of your son's funeral which took place on Monday the 23rd October at R.A.F. Regional Cemetery, Harrogate, the service being conducted by the Revd. McLean of the Royal Canadian Air Force. Full service honours were accorded and officers from this station attended the funeral as representatives of the Unit. Wreathes were sent from the officers, N.C.Os. and myself.

You will wish to know that all war graves are taken care of by the Imperial War Graves Commission who will erect a temporary wooden cross pending the provision of a permanent memorial by them.

Your son's effects have been gathered together and sent to the Royal Air Force Central Depository, from where they will be forwarded to the Administrator of Estates, Ottawa, who will be writing to you in this regard in due course.

The names of all who lose their lives or are wounded or reported missing whilst serving in the R.C.A.F. will appear in the official casualty lists published from time to time in the press. Publication of the date, place and station

of a casualty and, particularly, any reference to the unit concerned, might give valuable information to the enemy and for this reason only the name, rank and service number are included in the official lists. Relatives are particularly requested to ensure that any notices published privately do not disclose the date, place and circumstances of the casualty or the unit.

Please do not hesitate to ask for any assistance that I or my staff may be able to give you to relieve your sorrow in any way.

In late October 1944, Ivan and Rhea received a second letter from J.A. Sully, Air Vice-Marshal, Air Member for Personnel in Ottawa:

Dear Mr. Dowding:

I have learned with deep regret of the death of your son, Pilot Officer John Frederick Dowding, on Active Service Overseas on October 17th and I wish to offer you and the members of your family my sincere and heartfelt sympathy. It is most lamentable that a promising career should be thus terminated and I would like you to know that his loss is greatly deplored by all those with whom your son was serving.

In early November 1944, the Dowding's received mementoes of their son's funeral along with this accompanying letter from R.G.G. Cole, Group Captain, Commanding R.A.F. Station, Kinloss:

Dear Mr. Dowding:

I am enclosing a set of photographs taken at the funeral of your son at the R.A.F. Regional Cemetery, Harrogate on the 23rd of October, 1944. Although these may prove to be a painful reminder of your sad loss, I feel sure you would wish to have them. May I once more express my deepest sympathy in your bereavement.

In early November 1944, brother Harry came home to Sarnia to spend a 30-day leave with his grieving parents. Later that same month, the Group Captain for Chief of the Air Staff in Ottawa sent a letter to Ivan. In part it read as follows:

Dear Mr. Dowding:

I have the honour to forward, herewith, the Royal Canadian Air Force Officer's Commission Script for your son, Pilot Officer John F. Dowding. This Script, which is being forwarded to you for safekeeping, represents the authority vested in Pilot Officer Dowding, as well as the trust placed in him by His Majesty, the King...

When John Dowding enlisted, he completed his Will as a requirement of his service. Like most single males, he left all his estate to his mother in the event of his death. In late April 1945, Rhea received the following letter from the Director of Estates in Ottawa:

Dear Mrs. Dowding:

Your son's personal belongings which could be located at his unit Overseas immediately after he lost his life have reached this Branch, and will be forwarded to you within the next few days in a carton and a Gladstone bag by prepaid express. We trust that they will reach you in good order, and would ask you to complete the enclosed receipt form and return it to this Branch after the carton and Gladstone bag have reached you. The key to the Gladstone bag is enclosed herewith.

John Dowding's worldly effects arrived shortly afterwards in the Gladstone bag and cardboard box. Among the items were articles of clothing--pants, shirts, vests, socks, ties, shoes--and non-issue items including a Kaschi lighter, brushes in a case, a pocket wallet with snaps and press cuttings, thirteen letters, Kodak box camera, a pocket wallet with snaps, a gold signet ring, a brooch, a cheque book, some cash amounting to three pounds, four shillings and a certificate for a one-hundred dollar Victory Loan Bond.

One year later, in November 1945, his parents received a War Service Gratuity of \$155.61 for the loss of their son. Three years after his death, a memorial service was held on Sunday, December 1, 1947 at St. Andrew's Church in Sarnia, conducted by Reverend J.M. Margillivray. Seventeen year-old John Dowding is buried in Harrogate (Stonefall) Cemetery, Yorkshire, United Kingdom, Section G. Row A. Grave 8. On his headstone are inscribed the words, HE CHALLENGED THOSE WHO WOULD DESTROY THE INNOCENT AND THE WAY OF LIFE HE LOVED SO WELL.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, J, L, M, N, R, 2B, 2C, 2D, 7C, 8M, 8N, 8X, 8Y, 10U

DRINKWATER, John Willard (#R/99962)

Despite his age, John ("Bill") Drinkwater, 18, was described by a training instructor as "Good, quick, clear thinking, steady and reliable. Above average ability." Barely more than a year later, the Devine Street teenager was killed on his fourth flying mission.

John ("Bill") Drinkwater was born in Sarnia on June 13, 1923, the only son of Edward William and Florence May (nee Martin) Drinkwater, of 223 Devine Street, Sarnia. Edward and Florence Drinkwater (both born in Evesham, England) had immigrated to Sarnia, and Edward, a former bricklayer, was employed in Sarnia at Imperial Oil. John had an older sister, Marjorie Lorraine, who was born June 21, 1921. Bill was educated at Devine Street and Wellington Street public schools from 1928 to 1936. He then spent four years at Sarnia Collegiate (1936 to 1940) and participated in a variety of activities. He loved sports, from swimming, hiking and rugby extensively (on the junior rugby team, he was the first string flying wing) to playing tennis, golf, badminton, and hockey. Sports was only one way he spent his spare time. Bill was also a member of the School Cadets and his hobby was building model aircraft. Prior to enlisting, he was employed at an Imperial Oil Gas Station on RR#3 Blue Water Highway (Lakeshore Road) as an attendant from April to September 1940. Bill then worked as a labourer/truck driver at King Milling Flour Company from September 1940 to June 1941. He also found time to be a member of the Sarnia Server's Guild.

Eighteen year-old Bill Drinkwater enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force on June 23, 1941 in London, Ontario. He stood five feet seven and a half inches tall, had hazel eyes and dark brown hair, was single, and resided at home with his parents on Devine Street at the time. He requested flying duties with hopes to become a pilot. He began his air training in St. Hubert, Quebec, and continued at #3 Initial Training School (ITS) in Victoriaville, Quebec, #20 Elementary Flying Training School in Oshawa, Composite Training School (KTS) in Trenton and #7 Bombing and Gunnery School (B&GS) in Paulson, Manitoba. The Chief Instructor at #7B&GS wrote of Bill Drinkwater: *Good, quick, clear thinking, steady and reliable. Above average ability.* He was awarded his Air Gunner's Badge at Paulson, Manitoba on November 24, 1941.

Bill was anxious to get overseas and he finally got his wish when he embarked from Halifax for the United Kingdom on December 12, 1941. From #3 Personnel Reception Centre he continued his training in the U.K. at #1 Air Armament School (AAS), #7 Air Gunners School (AGS) and #14 Operational Training Unit (OTU) at RAF Cottesmore. Bill had just turned 19 when, on July 19, 1942, he became a member of the RAF #44 Rhodesia Squadron "Fulmina Regis iusta" (The King's thunderbolts are righteous), part of **Bomber Command**, as Flight Sergeant-Air Gunner.

At the outbreak of the war, the squadron was part of RAF No. 5 Group bomber unit, equipped with Handley Page Hampden aircraft. In 1941, the squadron was renamed No. 44 Rhodesia Squadron in honour of that colony's contribution to Britain's war effort. In December 1941, it became the first squadron to receive the Avro Lancaster. The squadron spent the rest of the war as part of Bomber Command's main bombing force. It was based at RAF Waddington until May 1943, and then relocated to RAF Dunholme Lodge and later to RAF Spilsby.

During the course of the war, one of this country's most significant contributions was the approximately 50,000 Canadians who served with the RCAF and RAF in Bomber Command operations. Next to Britain, Canada was the largest contributor to Bomber Command, making up more than a third of all of Bomber Command personnel. The men who served in Bomber Command faced some of the most difficult odds of anyone fighting in the war.



RAF #44 Squadron Lancaster

Bill Drinkwater was killed nine months after arriving overseas. On September 18, 1942, he was part of a crew aboard Lancaster I aircraft W4177 (markings KM-W), when it crashed, due to enemy action, in the North Sea off Hunstanton, England. The aircraft had taken off at RAF Waddington and had been engaged in mine-laying operations at the time. Perishing with Flight Sergeant-Air Gunner Bill Drinkwater were RAF Sgt.'s John Beattie, Jack Cliffe, John Richard Locke, Frederick Walters, and Arthur Kenneth Wrigley, and RAF F/S Alan Frank Bentley.

One month later, in mid-October 1942, his parents in Sarnia received a notification from R.C.A.F. Headquarters informing them not of Bill's death, but that their son had been promoted to Flight Sergeant.

Only weeks later, in November 1942, they received the dreaded letter from the Casualty Officer in Ottawa informing them that, *the body of their son John Drinkwater, reported missing since September 18th, had now been recovered*. Seven weeks after the crash, on November 7, 1942, Bill's body had been recovered from the sea at Hunstanton, Norfolk. The letter also advised them that the body had been claimed by James Drinkwater, an uncle of the deceased flier, and had been conveyed to the hometown of his father, in Evesham, Worcestershire, England, where burial was made alongside his grandfather.

In mid-November 1942, a memorial service for the late Flight-Sergeant John "Bill" Drinkwater was held in St. John's Anglican Church, Sarnia. Bill Drinkwater was later officially recorded as, *Previously reported missing, now reported killed during air operations, overseas*. In August 1945, Edward and Florence received a War Service Gratuity of \$227.68 for the loss of their only son. Nineteen year-old John "Bill" Drinkwater is buried, alongside his grandfather, in the Evesham Cemetery, Worcestershire, England, Grave 2104. On his headstone are inscribed the words, ETERNAL REST.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, J, L, M, N, R, 2C, 2D, 3J, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10B, 10D, 10U

DUNCAN, John William (#R/170586)

That John William Duncan wanted to serve is evident. He left behind a baby daughter and his wife to enlist in the RCAF. That he was an asset to the military is undeniable. One instructor assessed him as being "most co-operative and willing to help others at any time, which makes him well-liked by his fellow instructors." Unfortunately, the truth about John's death in late May 1945 remains a mystery.

John Duncan was born in Toronto on October 9, 1915, the son of William and Sarah (nee Holmes) Duncan, of 45 Glendale Avenue, Toronto, Ontario. Parents William (an engineer) and Sarah Duncan were married in 1901 in Hamilton, Ontario. John had four siblings who lived in the family home in Toronto: brothers George David (born 1905) and Gordon Munro (born 1912); and sisters Muriel May (born 1901, married becoming Muriel Collins) and Jean Margaret (born 1918, married becoming Jean Harvey). John was educated at Toronto's Fern Avenue Public Elementary, 1921-1929, and then Parkdale Collegiate, 1930-1935. He enjoyed hunting and fishing, was active in rugby, hockey, basketball and swimming. John's life appeared to be very normal. To support himself prior to enlisting, John worked doing odd jobs from 1935-37, and then was employed from 1937-1942 by the Imperial Tobacco Company in advertising and as a travelling salesman. His hobby was building model airplanes and when he was in his early 20s, he acted in his interest in aviation and took some flying instruction in Hamilton, Ontario. He ended up logging over 16 hours of flying, through the Air Transport and Training Company.

On April 10, 1941, John Duncan married Olive Elizabeth (nee Braiden) in Toronto. The young couple moved to Sarnia and resided for a time at 191 ½ North Mitton Street. Later they were living at Kingston Apt #3 at the corner of George and Mitton Streets.

Twenty-six-year-old John Duncan enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force on May 26, 1942. Two of his references on his RCAF Attestation Paper were Sarnians; C. Storey, Manager, Front Street; and Mr. W. Gesham, Manager, Plank Road. At his RCAF interview, the Interviewing Officer noted that John Duncan was *quite keen to fly but application motivated by prospect of Army call – if he can't make the Air Force will enlist in Army*. John's ambition for after the war was to be involved in sales with some aircraft manufacturing firm.

He stood six feet one inch tall, had brown eyes and dark brown hair, was married and recorded his address as Kingston Apt. #3, Sarnia. John Duncan became an official member of the Royal Canadian Air Force, when he signed his Attestation Papers in Toronto on June 6, 1942. Approximately three months later, John and his wife Olive would have a baby daughter--Glenda Jean Duncan, born on September 14, 1942 in Toronto.

Like other recruits in the RCAF, John had extensive training which took him across Canada. He started at #1 Manning Depot in Toronto before heading to #1 "M" Depot in Quebec City. John received his air training at #3 Initial Training School (ITS) in Victoriaville, Quebec; #20 Elementary Flying Training School (EFTS) in Oshawa; and at #36 Service Flying Training School (SFTS) in Penhold, Alberta where he would be awarded his Pilot's Flying Badge on August 6, 1943. He continued training at #3 Flying Instructor School (FIS) in Arnprior and at #10 Elementary Flying Training School (EFTS) in Pendleton, Ontario. At Penhold, he was appointed to the rank of Temporary Flight Sergeant on May 6, 1944. His Commanding Officer at #10 EFTS wrote that *Sgt. Duncan is a very*

steady, hard worker who always produces more superior results than the average. He has always been most co-operative and willing to help others at any time, which makes him well-liked by his fellow instructors. If given more opportunity to display his reliability, he would rank high among the men at this unit. He is definitely of high calibre.

The spring and summer of 1944 saw upheaval in the Duncan family. On May 21, weeks after John received his rank promotion, William, John's father, died at the age of sixty-nine. In August, John left for overseas, and while gone, Olive and infant daughter Glenda moved to Toronto to live with her parents at 94 Sorauren Avenue.

John Duncan embarked overseas for the United Kingdom on August 3, 1944. From #3 Personnel Reception Centre (PRC), John continued his training at #6 (Pilot) Advanced Flying Unit (AFU). On May 1, 1945, a week before the war officially ended in Europe, he became a member of RAF #22 Operational Training Unit (OTU), with the rank of Warrant Officer Class I-Pilot. No. 22 OTU was formed in April 1941 at RAF Wellesbourne Mountford as part of No. 6 Group RAF Bomber Command and trained night bomber crews with the Vickers Wellington twin-engine, long-range medium bomber.



Warrant Officer I-Pilot John William Duncan

During the course of the war, one of this country's most significant contributions was the approximately 50,000 Canadians who served with the RCAF and RAF in **Bomber Command** operations. Next to Britain, Canada was the largest contributor to Bomber Command, making up more than a third of all of Bomber Command personnel. The men who served in Bomber Command faced some of the most difficult odds of anyone fighting in the war. There was no easy way to learn how to fly the heavy bombers, and training crews suffered a litany of disasters, crashes and deaths. By the end of the war, Bomber Command lost over 8,000 Allied airmen who were killed in training or by accidents alone.

The war in Europe ended on May 8, 1945, however the war with Japan continued (it would end in mid-August of 1945) and it was on a training mission for the Japanese theatre that John Duncan was killed. On May 28, 1945, John was the pilot and captain of a crew which comprised four pupils aboard Wellington X aircraft HE871, based at Wellesbourne, Mountford. This was John's first solo cross-country flight.

At 07.30 hours, crews were briefed on the operation and meteorological conditions of the day. The conditions were not ideal. The crews were warned that clouds would start to form rapidly by 1100 hours and that heavy shower activity was predicted mainly in the south west of the route with a possibility of thunderstorms on the return. The day cross-country exercise over St. George's Channel had an expected four-hour duration. Air crews were instructed to fly at 15,000 feet or higher if necessary to avoid the cumulus nimbus clouds (because of the heavy icing and turbulence in these clouds). The crews were warned not to fly through any cloud due to the heavy icing, freezing level at 4000' to 5000'.

John's Wellington HE871 aircraft took off at 10.05 hours from Gaydon aerodrome. Approximately two hours after take-off, the aircraft sent a message, but no further contact was heard after that. No one knew at that time

that the Wellington HE871 would never be seen again. When it failed to return to base after four hours, authorities waited another hour before sending out a search party. The plane was believed to have crashed into the sea, believed to be due to severe icing. The air sea rescue search instituted the following morning located an oil patch on the sea, but saw no sign of any wreckage or a dinghy. The entire crew was lost. Perishing with the Captain of the aircraft, Warrant Officer I-Pilot John Duncan were pupils F/O Albert Harry Handley, Sgt. Joseph Rene Isabelle (Morin), Sgt. Fred Theodore Gidilevich and Sgt. William Edwin Algar.

In the inquiry following the accident, the following facts were determined: the aircraft was believed to have crashed into the sea between position 50° 20'N 05° 50'W and the Cornish coast; the weather conditions at the time of the accident were reported as heavy cumulus cloud across route with tops to 18000' or above, violent bumpiness and frequent heavy rain showers; last contact from the aircraft was at 12.05 hours; from the reports of other pupil pilots over the route, there was a large bank of cloud extending well inland and it was necessary to climb to 19000 feet to clear the tops of the cloud; and W/O John Duncan was an experienced ex staff pilot and was considered to be a good average pilot and captain. It was the opinion of the Investigating Officer and Commanding Officer that the aircraft flew into cloud after turning from its sea position towards land, and control was lost due to turbulence or icing.

In early June 1945, Olive Duncan in Toronto received a letter from the Group Captain, Commanding, R.A.F. Station, Wellesbourne, Mountford, Warwickshire. Following is a portion of that letter:

Dear Mrs. Duncan,

As you know, your husband Warrant Officer John William Duncan, has been missing since the 28th May 1945; he was engaged on a cross-country training flight, and except for one message received, nothing was heard from the aircraft after it took off. Everything possible was done both by this unit, and the Royal Air Force organization to locate the aircraft, but all efforts, I regret to say, were unavailing.

As several days have now passed without bringing any news, I am writing to you to express my own very real sympathy, together with that of all the officers and airmen at Wellesbourne Mountford in the very anxious time through which you must be passing. I am afraid that owing to the lapse of time since your husband was reported missing, there is now very little hope that he is alive.

Your husband is of the very finest type of young man upon whom we are relying to win the war, and I need hardly tell you that he was extremely popular with everyone here. His keenness on the job and his enthusiasm for everything he took in hand were most marked...

Should any information of your husband come to hand, you will, of course, be notified immediately by cable. Again please accept my deepest sympathy in your great anxiety.

Later in June 1945, the R.C.A.F. Casualty Officer, for Chief of the Air Staff in Ottawa sent this letter to Olive:

Dear Mrs. Duncan,

Further to my letter of June 2nd, advice has been received from the Royal Canadian Air Force Casualties Officer, Overseas, that the last wireless message received from your husband's aircraft was at 12:05 P.M. on May 28th, 1945. At that time the aircraft was slightly north of the point, twenty miles north, north west of Land's End, Cornwall, England, from which they were to begin the last leg of their flight back to their base.

Please be assured that any further information received at these Headquarters will be communicated to you immediately.

In December 1945, the Air Vice-Marshal, Acting Chief of the Air Staff wrote to Olive:

Dear Mrs. Duncan:

I have learned with deep regret that your husband, Warrant Officer John William Duncan, is now for official purposes presumed to have died on Active Service Overseas on May 28th, 1945. I wish to offer you and the members of your family my sincere and heartfelt sympathy.

It is most lamentable that a promising career should be thus terminated and I would like you to know that his loss is greatly deplored by all those with whom he was serving.

On John Duncan's Death Registration, which records his address as George and Mitton Streets, Sarnia, he was officially recorded as, *Previously reported missing after air operations, now for official purposes, presumed dead. Death was the result of an accident, during a cross country training flight, overseas.*

In January 1952, almost seven years after John's death, Olive received the following letter from the Wing Commander, R.C.A.F. Casualties Officer, for the Chief of the Air Staff:

Dear Mrs. Duncan:

It is with reluctance that after so long an interval, I must refer to the loss of your husband, Warrant Officer Class II John William Duncan, but due to the lack of any information concerning him since he was reported missing, it must be regretfully accepted and officially recorded that he does not have a "known" grave.

Due to the extreme hazards attending air operations there are, unhappily, many thousands of British aircrew boys who do not have "known" graves and all will be commemorated on General Memorials that will be erected at a number of locations by the Imperial War Graves Commission (of which Canada is a member), each Memorial representative of a theatre of operations. One of these Memorials will be erected at Runnymede, England and the name of your husband will appear on that Memorial.

I realize that this is an extremely distressing letter and that there is no manner of conveying such information to you that would not add to your heartaches. I am fully aware that nothing I may say will lessen your great sorrow, but I would like to express to you and the members of your family my deepest sympathy.

John Duncan left behind his wife Olive and their 2 ½ year-old daughter Glenda. In February 1946, Olive Duncan received a War Service Gratuity of \$428.38 for the loss of her husband. Later, Olive remarried and returned to Sarnia as Olive Delderfield, residing at 239 Harkness Street. Twenty-nine-year-old John Duncan has no known grave. John Duncan's name is inscribed on the Runnymede War Memorial, Surrey, United Kingdom, Panel 281.

On a wall in St. Peter's Church in Wellesbourne, England, there is a brass plaque that was dedicated in 1986, to the members of RAF #22 Operational Training Unit who lost their lives in the war. The inscription reads, DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF THE 315 AIRMEN AND AIRWOMEN KILLED WHILE SERVING WITH NO. 22 OTU WELLESBOURNE MOUNTFORD AIRFIELD DURING WORLD WAR TWO. Two Sarnians were among the 315 names: John Duncan and Rex Gammon (included in this Project).

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, M, N, 2C, 2D, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10U

DUROCHER, Wilfred Albert (#A/110275)

Wilfred Albert "Frenchy" Durocher enlisted at age 28, when he was a married father of two infants, and died on German soil in the late stages of the war. The epitaph on his headstone reflects his commitment to serving his country: GREATER LOVE HATH NO MAN THAN THIS, THAT A MAN LAY DOWN HIS LIFE FOR HIS FRIENDS.

Wilfred Durocher was born in Casselman (Village), Russell, Ontario on July 24, 1915, the son of Eli Francis (born in Buckingham, Quebec) and Marie Almanda Alexandrine (nee Thibault, born in Hawkesbury, Quebec) Durocher. Parents Eli and Marie Durocher were married on February 24, 1907, and the family became larger with each passing year. They were blessed with thirteen children. Wilfred's siblings included seven brothers--Elie Remie (born 1908); Jean Baptiste Emile (born 1910); Oliver Joseph (born 1917); Joseph (born 1921, died April 1939); Omar Homer (born 1923, died two years later); Frederick Joseph (born 1927); and Raymond Albert (born 1928, died at birth)—and five sisters: Marie Rose Viola (born 1914, later to become Mrs. Lester Schram); Dora (born 1918, died in 1931 at age 19); an unknown female (born 1922, died a few months later); a female stillborn (1928); and Freida (born 1931, later to become Mrs. Gill Gaynes).

When Wilfred was six years old, the Durocher family was residing at 230 Shamrock Street, Sarnia. They would later reside at 239 Chippewa Street, Sarnia. He kept himself busy and enjoyed playing rugby, baseball and swimming, as well as singing. However, after completing grade eight at age fifteen, Wilfred left school to help his mother by going to work. He would spend seven years employed as a helper on a truck and then four years as a lumber shipper with Laidlaw Lumber Company in Sarnia. His pay was 55 cents per hour.

At age 24, Wilfred Durocher married Sarnia-born Florence Agnes (nee Hamilton) in Point Edward on August 17, 1939. The young couple had two children together: Helen Theresa (born March 14, 1940) and Joseph Edgar Albert (born July 21, 1944). The young Durocher family lived at 103 Alfred Street, Sarnia, and Wilfred was employed by the Laidlaw Belton Lumber Company. In January 1943, Wilfred would lose his father when Elie, an employee of the section gang of the Pere Marquette Railway, died at sixty-four.

Twenty-eight-year-old Wilfred Durocher enlisted in the Canadian Army on April 12, 1944, in London, Ontario. He stood five feet seven inches tall, had brown eyes and black hair, and was married with one child at the time, residing at 103 Alfred Street at the time. His post-war plan for after the war was to continue his employment with Laidlaw Lumber, who had promised him his job on his return. From #1 District Depot in London, Ontario, Wilfred received his army training at #12 Canadian Infantry Basic Training Centre (CIBTC) in Chatham and

advanced training at A29 Canadian Infantry Training Centre (CITC) at Camp Ipperwash. In mid-September 1944, he was granted eleven days leave prior to going overseas, giving him an opportunity to visit his loved ones at home in Sarnia.



Private Wilfred Albert Durocher



Wilfred Durocher with his wife Florence Agnes & their son

Wilfred Durocher embarked overseas for the United Kingdom on October 5, 1944. Upon arrival, he became a member of the Canadian Infantry Reinforcement Unit (CIRU). In early November 1944, Wilfred became a member of the Algonquin Regiment, R.C.I.C., with the rank of Private. One month after arriving overseas, he left the U.K. and disembark in the Northwest Europe theatre on November 4, 1944.

Durocher arrived with the Algonquin Regiment during the final stages of the **Battle of the Scheldt**, a grueling struggle to liberate the estuary, with bitter fighting against a well-fortified and heavily entrenched enemy. After that battle, over the winter of 1944-1945, most of the weary Canadians were given a rest, although the front was never quiet, with patrols and large-scale raids remaining constant. Canadian troops were stationed along the **Nijmegen sector** in the Netherlands. They were tasked to hold and defend the Nijmegen salient and a small piece of Allied-held territory north of the Maas River. This bridgehead would be used as a starting point for crossing the Rhine (in February 1945), and the Allies had to give the enemy the impression that an assault was imminent to force it to leave troops in that area. The Germans did their best to push the Canadians out of “the island” by flooding the area and constantly harassing them with mortar fire, artillery and aggressive patrols. Constantly vigilant, the men dug deep slit trenches, covered them with whatever was handy, and tried to keep warm from the snow and cold during one of the most frigid winters on record in northern Europe.

In February 1945, the Allies launched a great offensive, the **Battle of the Rhineland** that was designed to drive the Germans eastward back over the Rhine River. There would be two formidable thrusts: one by the Ninth U.S Army; and one by the First Canadian Army, strengthened by the addition of Allied formations. The resilient Germans had spent months improving their defences; winter rains and thaw had turned the ground into a thick, muddy quagmire and the enemy would fight fiercely to defend their home soil. During one month of fighting, the Canadians would succeed in clearing the Reichswald Forest, in breaking the Siegfried Line and in clearing the Hochwald Forest. But victory came at a high cost.

Less than four months after arriving in the northwest Europe, on February 26, 1945, while fighting in the mud and rain in Germany, Wilfred Durocher was wounded in action during the Battle of the Rhineland. He died later that day, as a result of those wounds. Wilfred Durocher’s remains were buried on February 27, 1945 at a location recorded on the Army Field Service Card as “Germany 2 Canadian Corps Cemetery, Bedburg 932527 Sh 6 P1 R9 Grave 22”.

In late March 1945, Florence Durocher on Alfred Street received the following letter from the Major-General, Adjutant-General:

Dear Mrs. Durocher:

It was with deep regret that I learned of the death of your husband, A110275 Private Wilfred Albert Durocher, who gave his life in the Service of his Country in the Western European Theatre of War on the 26th day of February, 1945.

From official information we have received, your husband died as the result of wounds received in action against the enemy. You may be assured that any additional information received will be communicated to you without delay.

The Minister of National Defence and the Members of the Army Council have asked me to express to you and your family their sincere sympathy in your bereavement. We pay tribute to the sacrifice he so bravely made.

The Colonel, Director of Records, for Adjutant-General wrote Florence the following letter in late May 1945:
Dear Madam:

Information has now been received from the overseas military authorities that your husband, A110275 Private Wilfred Albert Durocher, was buried with religious rites in a temporary grave located in Bedburg, Germany.

The grave will have been temporarily marked with a wooden cross for identification purposes and in due course the remains will be reverently exhumed and removed to a recognized military burial ground when the concentration of graves in the area takes place. On this being completed the new location will be advised to you, but for obvious reasons it will likely take approximately one year before this information is received.

Wilfred Durocher was later officially recorded as, *Overseas casualty, died of wounds received in action, in the field (Germany)*. At the time of Wilfred's death, two of his brothers, both Privates, were also overseas. Brother Emile was in a hospital in England after being wounded a few weeks earlier and Oliver was believed to still be somewhere in England.

Wilfred Durocher left behind his wife Florence and their two young children: Helen, age four; and Joseph, age seven months. In June 1945, Florence received a War Service Gratuity of \$132.90 for the loss of her husband. Almost a year after Wilfred lost his life while serving, Florence was still searching for answers. Following is a portion of a letter she wrote to the Director of Estates Branch, Headquarters in Ottawa in January 1946:

Dear Sir:

I am the widow of the above mentioned. He died of wounds while on active service in Germany on Feb 26, 1945. Up to this time, I have had no word as to the nature of his wounds of which he died. Nor have I had any of his personal belongings returned to me. Would you please advise me if you could supply any information regarding these matters or to whom I could write regarding same.

In February 1946 she received the following response letter from the Colonel, Director of Records, for Adjutant-General:

Dear Mrs. Durocher:

... With deep regret I wish to inform you your late husband died of wounds received in action on the 26th day of February, 1945, when his Unit, the Algonquin Regiment, participated in active operations against the enemy in the vicinity of Bedburg, Germany. As stated in this Headquarters' letter of the 25th May, your husband's remains were reverently buried in a temporary grave located in Bedburg, Germany, and in close proximity to the area in which he so gallantly laid down his life in the Service of his Country. Bedburg is a small hamlet approximately 1 ½ miles South East of Cleve, Germany.

Now living at 239 Chippewa Street in Sarnia, Florence received a letter from the Colonel, Director of Records, for Adjutant-General in July 1946. Following is a portion of that letter:

Dear Madam:

Information has just been received from overseas that the remains of your husband, A110275 Private Wilfred Albert Durocher, have been carefully exhumed from the original place of internment and reverently reburied in grave 6, row B, plot 9, of Nijmegen Canadian Military Cemetery four miles South-East of Nijmegen, Holland. Marked map is enclosed. This is a recognized military burial ground and will receive care and maintenance in perpetuity.

The grave will have been marked with a temporary cross which will be replaced in due course by a permanent headstone suitably inscribed. While it cannot now be stated when this work of permanent commemoration will begin, before any action is taken you will be communicated with and an opportunity will be given you to submit a short personal inscription of your own choice for engraving on the headstone...

Florence would eventually remarry, becoming Florence James and residing at 619 Cherry Drive, Sarnia. Twenty-nine-year-old Wilfred Durocher, father of two young children, is buried in Groesbeek Canadian War Cemetery, Netherlands, Grave IX.B.6. On his headstone are inscribed the words, GREATER LOVE HATH NO MAN THAN THIS, THAT A MAN LAY DOWN HIS LIFE FOR HIS FRIENDS.
SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 6O, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10V

ELLIOTT, Ralph Leslie (#J/45090)

Ralph Elliott was so popular among the Bombing Command members of his station, that after his death in a tragic accident, the Commanding Officer received many requests from his fellow officers wanting to be one of his pallbearers.

Ralph Elliott was born in Corunna on October 26, 1924, the son of Thomas Fleming (a farmer) and Mary Christina (nee Miller) Elliott, of R.R. #1, Corunna, later R.R. #3, Woodrowe Road, Sarnia. His parents Thomas (born in Moore Township) and Mary (born in Mandaumin, Ontario) Elliott were married on March 5, 1919 in Sarnia. Ralph had only one sibling, an older brother, Douglas Arthur Elliott, who at the time of Ralph's death, lived in Moore Township. When Ralph was fourteen years old, he lost his mother Mary, who died of a heart attack at age forty-eight on March 18, 1939.

Ralph attended S.S. #13 Sarnia and Moore School from 1931 to 1939, then Sarnia Collegiate from September 1938 to June 1942. He was part of the school cadets with the rank of sergeant from 1938 to 1942. He was active in football, baseball and hockey. For three months in early 1943, he took a correspondence course in mechanical engineering from the International Corps School in the U.S.A. He was employed as a junior draftsman with the Canadian Kellogg Construction Company in Sarnia "making progress reports" from September 1942 to July 1943, until he left to join the R.C.A.F.

Eighteen year-old Ralph Elliott enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force in London, Ontario on July 26, 1943. He stood five feet seven inches tall, had hazel eyes and black hair, was single, and lived at home with his parents in Corunna at the time. He had several friends in the R.C.A.F. and requested flying duties. He was keen to be a pilot but willing to serve wherever he was best suited. From #3 Manning Depot in Edmonton, Ralph received his air training at #4 Initial Training School (ITS) in Edmonton; #8 Bombing and Gunnery School (B&GS) in Lethbridge, Alberta; #1 Central Navigation School (CNS) in Rivers, Manitoba; and #1 Aircrew Graduates Training School (AGTS) in Maitland, Nova Scotia. He was awarded his Air Bombers Badge at AGTS in Maitland on May 5, 1944.

Ralph embarked overseas for the United Kingdom in June 1944. From #3 Personnel Reception Centre, he became a member of RAF #1 (Observer) Advanced Flying Unit (AFU) on September 27, 1944, part of **Bomber Command**, with the rank of Flying Officer-Bomb Aimer. Based out of RAF Wigtown, the training units were equipped with Avro Ansons.



Elliott family



Flying Officer Ralph Elliott

During the course of the war, one of this country's most significant contributions was the approximately 50,000 Canadians who served with the RCAF and RAF in Bomber Command operations. Next to Britain, Canada was the largest contributor to Bomber Command, making up more than a third of all of Bomber Command personnel. The men who served in Bomber Command faced some of the most difficult odds of anyone fighting in the war.

Less than six months after arriving, on December 6, 1944, Ralph was involved in a tragic accident at RAF Station, Wigtown, Wigtownshire, Scotland. The accident occurred at approximately 18.15 hours. He and another Flying Officer, P/O Farrell Robert Scarlett, were walking along a main camp road on their way to the air crew dressing room prior to reporting for duty in the briefing room. It was dark when they were accidentally struck by an R.A.F. vehicle, a signals van that was being driven by a soldier unauthorized to drive that type of vehicle. The R.A.F. vehicle struck P/O Farrell Scarlett with a glancing blow that threw him off the road, but Ralph was struck directly in the back. He was immediately transferred to E.M.S. Section of Galloway Hospital with multiple injuries including the fracture of his skull and both legs; the dislocation of his knee; shock; and multiple lacerations and abrasions. His general condition improved somewhat through the night, but suddenly at 05.00 hours on December 7, his condition deteriorated, and he succumbed to his injuries.

In the investigation that followed, Pilot Officer Farrell Robert Scarlett provided his account of the accident. Following is a portion of his testimony:

I am a pupil on No. 307 Air Bomber Course at R.A.F. Station, Wigtown. On the evening of the 6th December 1944, at about 18.00 hours, I was walking, accompanied by P/O Elliott from the Domestic Camp along the camp road to the Air Crew Dressing Room prior to reporting for duty to the Briefing Room. We were walking on the left hand side of the road. At a point a few yards short of the Training Wing Armoury a vehicle suddenly appeared behind me, the left mud guard caught me on my hip and threw me clear to the left. P/O Elliott was on my right, the vehicle struck him in the back and carried him for some distance and then passed over him. The vehicle finally stopped about two or three yards past him.

F/O Evans who was just approaching at the time went for medical assistance while I remained with P/O Elliott. I heard no warning from the approaching vehicle and at the time of the accident it was almost dark... Later I stepped out the distance from the point of impact to the point where the vehicle had pulled up and found it to be 22 paces.

The body of Ralph Elliott was buried in Newton Stewart Cemetery in Wigtownshire, on December 11, 1944. On that same day, Thomas Elliott in Sarnia received a telegram from the R.C.A.F. Casualty Officer in Ottawa informing him that his son, PILOT OFFICER RALPH LESLIE ELLIOTT HAS DIED OF INJURIES RECEIVED WHILE ON ACTIVE SERVICE OVERSEAS ON DECEMBER 7. The telegram also informed him that, HIS BURIAL WAS TAKING PLACE AT NEWTON STEWART CEMETERY WIGTOWNSHIRE SCOTLAND TODAY. There were no details of the injuries, but the telegram did state that a letter would follow.

In late October 1944, Thomas received a letter from the Group Captain, R.C.A.F. Records Officer in Ottawa. Following is a portion of that letter:

Dear Mr. Elliott:

I have the honour to forward, herewith, the Royal Canadian Air Force Officer's Commission Script for your son, Pilot Officer Ralph L. Elliott. This Script, which is being forwarded to you for safekeeping, represents the authority vested in Pilot Officer Elliott as well as the trust placed in him by His Majesty, The King...

In mid-December 1944, Thomas received the following letter from the Air Vice-Marshal, Air Member for Personnel in Ottawa:

Dear Mr. Elliott:

It is with deep regret that I must confirm our recent telegram informing you that your son, Pilot Officer Ralph Leslie Elliott, died on Active Service.

Advice has been received from the Royal Canadian Air Force Casualties Officer, Overseas, that your son was injured while on duty, when he was accidentally knocked down by a Royal Air Force motor transport on the main camp road at Wigtown, Wigtownshire, Scotland, on December 6th, 1944. He was admitted to the EMS Hospital, Galloway House, near Garliestown, Wigtownshire, suffering from shock, a fractured skull, and fractures to both legs. He died as a result of his injuries on December 7th. His funeral took place at 11:00 A.M. on December 11th, at the Newton Street Cemetery, Wigtownshire, Scotland.

You may be assured that any further information received will be communicated to you immediately. I realize that this news has been a great shock to you, and I offer you my deepest sympathy. May the same spirit which prompted your son to offer his life give you courage.

In late December 1944, Thomas received the following letter from the Group Captain Commanding R.A.F. Station, Wigtown, Scotland:

Dear Mr. Elliott,

I was terribly sorry to have to notify you through the Royal Canadian Headquarters of the death of your son. It was a very tragic affair and I hope you will accept my profound sympathy also that of my officers and men in your great loss.

Your son was walking along the main camp road on his way to fly, in the dark, at about 6 p.m., when he was knocked down by an R.A.F. vehicle. Your son was immediately taken to the nearest hospital, the E.M.S. Hospital, Galloway House, Garlieston, where after a very gallant fight, which we had great hopes might prove successful he died on the following morning.

A full enquiry was carried out and an airman is being charged as a result of the accident. I have not written before as I was awaiting copies of the photographs which were taken at the funeral so that I could send them to you with this letter. I attended the funeral which took place at 11 o'clock on 11th December, 1944 at the Cemetery Newton Stewart. There was a double funeral at which an Australian Sergeant who was killed in an aircraft crash was also buried.

Your son was extremely popular on the Station, so much so that his brother officers requested me for permission to act as bearers for his coffin, a most unusual request. I gave them permission, and I have never seen a smarter turn out than they made. The service was conducted by Squadron Leader Sinclair my other Denominations Padre as the Canadian Chaplain was unable to be present. It was a cold but fine day, and the sun was shining whilst we were at the cemetery. My Station Band played the funeral march whilst we slow marched through the camp, and again at the cemetery.

It was so sad that your son was killed in such a manner, so far from home and not in actual operations against the enemy, but he certainly made his mark before his death, and carried out his duties in an exemplary manner. You can justly be proud of him. His death will not only be a great loss to you, but the Station, to the Royal Canadian Air Force, and to the Service as a whole. Again in conclusion I would ask you to accept my deepest sympathy.

Ralph Elliott was later officially recorded as, *Died of injuries sustained when knocked down accidentally by RAF motor vehicle. Fracture to skull, both legs, and shock, overseas (England).* In November 1945, Thomas Elliott received a War Service Gratuity of \$216.74 for the loss of his son. Twenty year-old Ralph Elliott is buried at Newton Stewart Cemetery, Wigtownshire, United Kingdom, Section M, Grave 2. In November 2019, his name along with 25 others was added to the Sarnia cenotaph, engraved in stone to be remembered always.

SOURCES: C, D, E, F, G, L, M, N, 2C, 2D, 7O, 8X, 8Y, 10U

ELLIOTT, Thomas Harold (#J/90281)

Thomas Elliott was so eager to be part of an aircrew that he visited recruitment centres almost a dozen times. He became, according to his RAF station commander, part of a crew that proved themselves as keen and courageous. Thomas lost his life while on a mission to gather research crucial to the success of Allied bombers.

Thomas Harold Elliott was born in Sarnia on May 29, 1918, the son of Thomas Herman and Ethel (nee Holt) Elliott, of 212 Cromwell Street, Sarnia. Parents Thomas Herman (born in Exeter, Ontario) and Ethel (born in Kiva, Ontario) Elliott were married in Sarnia on January 12, 1915. Thomas' father, Thomas Herman, was employed as a pipefitter in the pumping department at Sarnia Imperial Oil Refinery. Thomas Harold had one brother, Elmer Bruce, born 1915, who would become a member of the Reserve Army.

Thomas was educated at George Street Public School in Sarnia from 1924 to 1931, then Sarnia Collegiate Institute from 1931 to 1937. While at Sarnia Collegiate, he played WOSSA rugby, was a member of the gymnastic team, and participated in basketball, hockey, swimming, and tennis. He was on the executive of the Boys' Athletic Committee and was a member of the editorial staff of the Collegiate magazine. In his last year at school he was Quartermaster Cadet Lieutenant of the high school cadets. After graduating from Sarnia Collegiate in 1937, he worked several jobs for two years, including the construction of the Blue Water Bridge. In 1939, he was employed as a machinist in the machine shoe department with the Sarnia Imperial Oil Refinery, where he would work for three years. In August 1939, Thomas enlisted with the 2nd-26th Battery of Sarnia, and served with them until February 1942, attaining the rank of Corporal.

Twenty-three-year-old Thomas Elliott enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force on February 7, 1942, in

London, Ontario. He had been very eager to join an air crew, having travelled to the London Recruitment Centre from Sarnia eight times, and visited the London mobile recruiting centre in Sarnia three times. He stood five feet six inches tall, had brown eyes and dark brown hair, was single and lived at home with his parents on Cromwell Street in Sarnia at the time. He expressed his desire to be a pilot or observer. He planned to return to Imperial Oil after the war. From #9 Recruitment Centre in London, he moved to #1 Manning Depot in Toronto. Thomas received his air training at #6 Initial Training School (ITS) in Toronto; #9 Elementary Flying Training School (EFTS) in St. Catharines; Composite Training School (KTS) in Trenton; #4 Bombing and Gunnery School (B&GS) in Fingal, Ontario; and #4 Air Observers School (AOS) in London, Ontario. He was awarded his Air Bomber's Badge on June 25, 1943. After graduating, he spent a short leave at home in Sarnia with his friends and family until July 9, 1943.



Pilot Officer Thomas Harold Elliott

Thomas embarked overseas from Halifax for the United Kingdom on July 15, 1943. From #3 Personnel Reception Centre, he continued his training in the U.K. at #6 Advanced Flying Unit (AFU), #24 Operational Training Unit (OTU), and #1664 Conversion Unit. His Commanding Officer's remarks about him included; ... *air work above average, showed keenness and intelligence, rather quiet individual but not lacking in drive*. On February 21, 1944, Thomas Elliott became a member of RAF #192 Squadron "Dare to Discover", which worked with **Bomber Command**. He was promoted to Flight-Sergeant in March 1944.

During the course of the war, one of this country's most significant contributions was the approximately 50,000 Canadians who served with the RCAF and RAF in Bomber Command operations. Next to Britain, Canada was the largest contributor to Bomber Command, making up more than a third of all of Bomber Command personnel. The men who served in Bomber Command faced some of the most difficult odds of anyone fighting in the war.

No. 192 Squadron was formed on January 4, 1943 as a radar counter-measures squadron at RAF Gransden Lodge. It was essentially a research unit, involved in identifying the types of radar, radar patterns and wavelengths used by the Germans. This was by no means a safe role, for the research flights had to take place over Germany and occupied Europe where the German radar was operating against them. They also carried out similar missions over the Bay of Biscay. During bomber raids, the aircraft would provide countermeasures to German radars. Originally outfitted with Vickers Wellingtons, they later converted to de Havilland Mosquitoes and Handley Page Halifaxes. Their base changed to RAF Feltwell in April 1943, then RAF Foulsham in November 1943.

Less than one year after arriving overseas, Thomas Elliott lost his life while on a night mission in April 1944. On the night of April 24, 1944, he was a member of the crew aboard Halifax MKIII bomber aircraft LW622 (markings DT-R). The aircraft took off from R.A.F. Station, Foulsham, on the night of April 24, detailed to accompany the Bomber Command attack on Karlsruhe, Baden, Germany. The aircraft did not return, and the crew members were not heard from again. The aircraft was later discovered to have crashed at Haesdonk, east of Sint-Niklaas, Belgium. Perishing with Thomas Elliott were FS. Peter Horace Gordon Vincent; F/O.s Charles William Cyril Crowdy and Leslie Lloyd Mortimer; P/O Frederick William Morris; Sgt.s Francis Etienne and Donald Parkin (RAF); and FS. Maurice Charles Wilmer (RAF).

Several days later, Thomas and Ethel Elliott in Sarnia received a telegram from the R.C.A.F. Casualty Officer in Ottawa that read, DEEPLY REGRET TO ADVISE YOU THAT YOUR SON J90281 SERGEANT THOMAS HAROLD ELLIOTT IS REPORTED MISSING AFTER AIR OPERATIONS APRIL 25. LETTER FOLLOWS. The message was a shock to his parents, since he had never once mentioned taking part in any raid in his letters home. They had heard, however, from friends overseas that he had been flying. On checking Canadian Press dispatches, the Elliott parents suspected that he may have been lost on an attack launched on Karlsruhe on April 24-25, in which 30 British aircraft were lost, including eight Canadian planes.

In late April 1944, Thomas and Ethel received a letter from R.A.F. Station, Foulsham, Norfolk. Following is a portion of that letter:

Dear Mr. Elliott,

It is with very deep regret that I have to confirm that your son, Sergeant Thomas Harold Elliott is missing from operations. There is very little I can tell you about this tragic incident at the present moment.

Your son was flying as Air Bomber with his usual crew in a Halifax aircraft which was detailed to accompany the Bomber Command attack on Karlsruhe on the night of the 24th/25th April, 1944. The aircraft took off from here at 22.45 hours and was due to return at 03.15 hours. Nothing at all has been heard since of the crew or the aircraft.

Your son's crew had been with the Squadron since the middle of February and they had proved themselves to be a keen and courageous crew. They worked together very well and always appeared cheerful and happy. Their loss will be felt very keenly by the Squadron. I will, of course, send to you immediately any further news that I receive.

I must ask you not to pass any information to the Press as this might prejudice his chances of escape should he have survived without being captured. This is not to say that any information about him is available other than that I have already given, but it is a precaution adopted in the case of all personal reported missing.

If there is any way in which I can be of assistance to you, or if you have any queries, do let me know as I shall be only too ready to help you. I am attaching a list of the crew and their next of kin, should you wish to get into touch with any of them. May I send to you the deepest sympathy of myself and everybody in the Squadron.

In August 1944, the Elliotts received the following letter from the R.C.A.F. Casualty Officer, for the Chief of the Air Staff in Ottawa:

Dear Mr. Elliott:

I have been directed to inform you that your son, Thomas Harold Elliott, has been promoted to the rank of Flight Sergeant with effect from March 25th, 1944.

It is regretted that no further information has been received regarding your son since he was reported missing on April 25th and I wish to extend to you and the members of your family my sincere sympathy in this trying time.

In early February 1945, they received a telegram from R.C.A.F. authorities informing them that their son, FLIGHT SERGEANT THOMAS ELLIOTT MISSING SINCE APRIL 25 1944 IS NOW FOR OFFICIAL PURPOSES PRESUMED DEAD. In October 1945, Thomas and Ethel received a War Service Gratuity of \$331.47 for the loss of their son Thomas.

More than two years after the crash, Air Ministry investigators were still trying to determine the identity of the crew members involved. In a report dated September 1946, which was based on German burial cards, it was recorded that Halifax LW622 crashed at Haesdonk, Belgium (12 kms SW of Antwerp), and eight members of the crew were killed and buried in graves at Antwerpen-Deurne Cemetery. Of the eight crew members identified by the Germans, Thomas Elliott was not one of them, but they did identify a Pilot Officer J. Wells, who was buried in Grave No. 121.

R.C.A.F. casualty officer officials had no doubt that Sergeant Thomas Elliott was buried with the remainder of his crew from LW622, but no positive identification of his body had been made. They sought to understand how he came to be identified as "Pilot Officer J. Wells". In May 1946, R.C.A.F. officials wrote a letter to Mr. John Roland Wells (P/O J. Wells), explaining their findings thus far, including that the eighth member of the downed crew, whose name was Sergeant T.H. Elliott was identified by the Germans as "Pilot Officer J. Wells". R.C.A.F. officials were hoping that John Wells may be able to explain how T.H. Elliott came to be identified as "Pilot Officer J. Wells".

In June 1946, John R. Wells, in the Montreal Military Hospital, sent a reply letter to the R.C.A.F. Casualty

Officer, for Chief of the Air Staff. The letter helped clarify the situation: J.R. Wells was aboard another aircraft that was part of the same mission. His aircraft was hit and he baled out of the wounded aircraft. He was captured by the Germans and sent to a POW camp. Following is a portion of the June 1946 letter written by J.R. Wells to R.C.A.F. Casualty Officer investigators:

... there is very little information I can give you regarding Sergeant T.H. Elliott except that it clarifies in my mind as to what happened to my aircraft.

I was under the impression until I met my crew members back in England that my aircraft had gone into the water, but other members of my crew state they saw an A-C crash and burn and they thought it was ours. This may have been the A-C of which Sergeant Elliott was a crew member and not ours as I was fairly positive that my aircraft had landed in the water.

Also, some hours after my landing, I found that one of my identity discs were missing which I believe I lost when I bailed out and this might have landed somewhere near where Elliott was found. Otherwise I can see no reason for Sergeant Elliott being identified as myself, except as a mistake in names or identity by the Germans themselves. I was taken to Dulagluft as Flying Officer J.R. Wells. I trust that the information I have given here will help clarify the situation somewhat.

On August 12, 1946, the R.C.A.F. Casualty Officer, for the Chief of the Air Staff in Ottawa, sent a letter to Thomas and Ethel. Following is a portion of that letter:

Dear Mrs. Elliott:

... a report which has now been received from a Missing Research and Enquiry Unit on the Continent advises that the graves in the Antwerpen-Deurne Cemetery have been exhumed and the entire crew laid to rest in the Schoonselhof Cemetery.

Pilot Officer Wells was contacted by Air Ministry and he advised that office that when he baled out of his aircraft which crashed near the aircraft of which your son was a member of the crew, he lost his identification discs, and it is therefore assumed that your son was identified as Pilot Officer J.R. Wells, as his identification disc was probably found near your son's body. Grave No. 121 in the Schoonselhof Cemetery has therefore, been accepted as the grave of your son, Pilot Officer Thomas Harold Elliott.

The reverent care of the burial places of all who served in the Forces of the British Empire is the task of the Imperial War Graves Commission. Already eminent architects are at work, planning the construction of beautiful cemeteries and each individual grave will be supported and sustained by the Nations of the Empire. I hope that it may be of some consolation to you to know that your gallant son's grave is in sacred care and keeping. May I again at this time extend my most sincere sympathy.

In a follow-up letter sent in August 1946 to the parents, the R.C.A.F. Casualty Officer informed them that:

... a report which has now been received from a Missing Research and Enquiry Unit on the Continent advises that the graves in the Antwerpen-Deurne Cemetery have now been exhumed and the entire crew laid to rest in the Schoonselhof Cemetery. Pilot Officer Wells was contacted by Air Ministry and he advised that office that when he baled out of his aircraft which crashed near the aircraft of which your son was a member of the crew and he lost his identification discs.

Thomas Elliott was later officially recorded as, *Previously reported missing after air operations, now for official purposes, presumed dead, overseas (Germany)*. More than four years after Thomas was killed, his mother was still searching for answers. In late October 1948, she wrote the following letter to the Wing Commander of the R.C.A.F. in Ottawa:

Dear Sir,

Have received the snap shot of my son's grave Pilot Officer Thos. Harold Elliott which I was very glad to receive. As this is the 1st word we have received that they had found his body as all the word we received was he was missing. I would appreciate it very much if I could find out in what country he is buried also the name of Cemetery.

The Wing Commander, R.C.A.F. Casualties Officer in Ottawa wrote a reply soon after. In it, he acknowledged receiving her letter, and he stated the name of the cemetery and the country that her son was buried in. He also wrote, *I have noted your remarks that this is the first word you had received that your son's body had been recovered, and his grave located, and it would appear that you did not receive our letter of August 12th, 1946, which conveyed the information that your son's grave was No. 121 in this cemetery.... May I again express to you and the members of your family my deepest sympathy in the loss of your gallant son.*

Twenty-six-year-old Pilot Officer-Bomb Aimer Thomas Elliott is buried in Schoonselhof Cemetery, Belgium, Grave IVa.D.39. On his headstone are inscribed the words, BELOVED SON OF MR. AND MRS. T.H. ELLIOTT, SARNIA, ONT., CANADA. His name is also inscribed on the Sarnia Refinery Plaque. Unveiled in 1949, the plaque has the names of 24 Sarnia Imperial Oil employees who made the ultimate sacrifice in World War II. SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, J, L, M, N, O, S, 2C, 2D, 6O, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10B, 10U

ELLIS, Norman George (#A/61791)

Norman George "Pinky" Ellis, was married for less than two years and had a young son at home when he enlisted. He gave his life for his country in a critical battle during a major Canadian offensive in France.

Norman was born in Sarnia on May 13, 1922, the eldest son of Herman Manford (a carpenter, born in Lambton, Ontario) and Annie Maria (nee Dunn, born in Courtright, Ontario) Ellis of 294 South Mitton Street, later 171 North College Street, Sarnia. Parents Herman and Annie Ellis were married on August 12, 1921 in Devine Street Church, Sarnia. Norman had six sisters and four brothers which included: Agnes (born 1923); Donna Jean (born 1926); Wilfred Henry (born 1930); Edith and Edward Carl (twins born 1935, though Edward died at birth); Eva May (died 1926); Gerald; Kenneth; Barbara; and Norma. Norman Ellis left school after grade seven at the age of fourteen, eager to learn a trade. He attended night school for several months taking a welding course. He was active in sports including boxing, softball and baseball, and he enjoyed hunting. He worked at several jobs in Sarnia, including a grocery store delivering and clerking, and at a bakery for three years. Following that, Norman was a driver (chauffeur) for three years with the Morris Taxi firm and a truck driver for Kist Beverages.

Norman married Gladys Louise Copeland of Inwood, the only daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Alvin Copeland at the United Church in Inwood on June 4, 1941. At the wedding ceremony, Miss Winnie Maidment of Sarnia served as bridesmaid, and serving as best man was "Bus" Nesbitt of Sarnia. Following the ceremony, a reception was held at the Masonic Hall in Inwood. A buffet luncheon was served on the lawn to approximately 150 guests. Afterwards, the newlywed couple left for a trip to eastern points. Upon their return, the young couple lived in Sarnia, at 294 South Mitton Street. The young couple would have one child together, a son, Norman Douglas Carl Ellis, born March 3, 1942.

Norman stood five feet seven and a half inches tall, had blue eyes and red-brown hair when he completed his National Resources Mobilization Act (NRMA) Enrolment Form on September 24, 1942 in London, Ontario. He was initially posted to the Lorne Scots Unit in London. On October 26, 1942, he was attached to #6 Defence and Employment Platoon, headquartered at 6th Canadian Division, Infantry, in Prince George, British Columbia. He trained and served with the No. 6 Defence and Employment Platoon into March 1943. The twenty year-old enlisted in the Canadian Army on March 10, 1943 in Victoria, British Columbia. Married less than two years, and with a one-year-old child at home, Norman recorded his address as 294 South Mitton Street, Sarnia. He expressed an interest in poultry farming following the war.



Private Norman George Ellis

In April 1943, Norman returned to Sarnia on an 18-day furlough from his base on Vancouver Island to visit his friends and family, which included his young wife Gladys and their son Douglas. On returning out west, Norman continued his army training, including taking a mountain warfare course, in Esquimalt, Prince George, Terrace and Vernon, British Columbia. In early May 1944, Norman returned to Sarnia on his embarkation furlough to be with his wife Gladys and their two year-old son. Norman Ellis embarked overseas from Debert, Nova Scotia on May 26, 1944, arriving in England on June 2, 1944.

Norman continued his training in the U.K., attached to the Winnipeg Grenadiers. Approximately two months after arriving, he arrived in France on July 30, 1944, a member of the Essex Scottish Regiment, R.C.I.C. with the rank of Private.

The **Battle of Normandy** had begun for the Canadians with the June 6, 1944 D-Day landings at Juno Beach. After breaching the “Atlantic Wall” of “Fortress Europe”, Allied armies began their break out from the narrow Normandy bridgehead to carve out a foothold on the French mainland. It would take a whole summer of tenacious fighting, pushing against fierce and ruthless German forces to advance east across France. In a brutal campaign of attrition, the Canadians faced fierce battles and vicious counterattacks as they clawed their way forward liberating villages and towns including Bretteville, Carpiquet, Caen and Falaise.

A little over one week after her husband arrived in France, Gladys received a letter from Norman on August 8, 1944 in which he stated that he was well. He also enclosed a piece of French currency. On that same day Norman Ellis lost his life in the Battle of Normandy during **Operation Totalize** of the **Battle of Verrières Ridge**, south of Caen.

The Battle of Verrières Ridge was a Canadian offensive that had the objectives of capturing the eastern section of Caen and securing the western bank of the Orne River and Verrières Ridge, with the goal of driving on to Falaise. The Canadian push towards Falaise was completed in several phases: *Operations Spring*, *Totalize* and *Tractable*. The second part, *Operation Totalize*, began before midnight on August 7 with Allied heavy bombers pounding the German defences. Columns of Sherman tanks moved out into the night with supporting infantry behind a rolling artillery barrage. Improvised armoured troop carrier vehicles, known as “defrocked” Priests or “Holy Rollers”, and later as “Kangaroos”, proved effective in transporting Canadian infantrymen rapidly on their targets. It was the first time ever that armoured personnel carriers were used to carry infantry into battle. The attack achieved initial success, as the first defensive lines were overrun including the ridge at Verrières. However, in spite of the heavy bombing, the German artillery, mortar, 88mm anti-tank guns, infantry and tanks (including the murderous 12th Panzer Division), put up a grim resistance during numerous counter-attacks. Fighting continued until August 10. The Canadians had advanced some 13 kilometres, had some 600 killed, but failed to break through the German “ring of steel” defence line.

Norman Ellis’ remains were buried in a shallow grave in a large orchard on August 10, 1944, at a location recorded on the Army Field Service Card as “Normandy NTC 7F/3 056587 Roquancourt.”

In late August 1944, Gladys was visiting her parents in Inwood when she received a telegram informing her that her husband, PRIVATE NORMAN G ELLIS WAS REPORTED MISSING ON AUGUST 8. In early December 1944, she received a telegram from the Department of National Defence informing her that her husband, PRIVATE NORMAN GEORGE ELLIS HAS BEEN REPORTED KILLED IN ACTION. In mid-December 1944, Gladys received the following letter from the Major-General, Adjutant-General:

Dear Mrs. Ellis

It was with deep regret that I learned of the death of your husband, A61791 Private Norman George Ellis, who gave his life in the Service of his Country in the Western European Theatre of War on the 8th day of August, 1944.

From official information we have received, your husband was killed in action against the enemy. You may be assured that any additional information received will be communicated to you without delay.

The Minister of National Defence and the Members of the Army Council have asked me to express to you and your family their sincere sympathy in your bereavement. We pay tribute to the sacrifice he so bravely made.

Norman George Ellis was later officially recorded as, *Overseas casualty, previously reported missing in action, now killed in action, in the field (France)*. In early December of 1944, a short memorial tribute was held in St. Paul’s United Church, Sarnia at a morning service to pay tribute to Private Ellis. In May 1945, Gladys Ellis received a War Service Gratuity of \$157.02 for the loss of her husband Norman.

In late August 1946, Gladys Ellis of 294 S. Mitton Street received a letter from the Colonel, Director of Records, for Adjutant-General. Following is a portion of that letter:

Dear Madam:

Information has just been received from overseas that the remains of your husband, A.61791, Private Norman George Ellis, have now been carefully exhumed from the original place of internment and reverently reburied in grave 14, row D, plot 8, of Bretteville-sur-Laize Canadian Military Cemetery, Bretteville-sur-Laize, France. Marked map is enclosed. This is a recognized military burial ground and will receive care and maintenance in perpetuity.

The grave will have been marked with a temporary cross which will be replaced in due course by a permanent headstone suitably inscribed. While it cannot now be stated when this work of permanent commemoration will begin, before any action is taken you will be communicated with and an opportunity will be given you to submit a short personal inscription of your own choice for engraving on the headstone...

Gladys Ellis would later remarry, becoming Gladys Glass, residing at 600 Maple Street, Sarnia. Twenty-two-year-old Norman Ellis is buried in the Bretteville-Sur-Laize Canadian War Cemetery, Calvados, France, Grave VIII.D.14. On his headstone are inscribed the words, HE GAVE HIS LIFE SO THAT HIS WIFE GLADYS, AND SON DOUGLAS, MIGHT LIVE IN PEACE.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, N, 2B, 2C, 2D, 7C, 8X, 8Y

ESSELMONT, John Clarence (#A/115857)

John Clarence “Jack” Esselment was married with two young children at home when he departed for overseas. He would give his life fighting for the Allied cause during a major Canadian-led offensive in Belgium, one of the most difficult and grueling struggles during the war in a bleak, frigid environment.

John Esselment was born in Wainwright, Alberta, on December 6, 1915, the middle son of James Edward and Alma L. (nee Luckins) Esselment, of Alvinston, Ontario. James (born in Sombra, a labourer) and Alma (born in Sarnia) were married in Sarnia on January 12, 1909. James Esselment had served in World War I. John, also known as Jack, had two brothers, older brother William (Walter) and younger brother Alton. The Esselment family moved to Ontario when John was a young boy, approximately eight years old.

John received his education in Sarnia, attending Johnston Memorial Elementary School and Sarnia Collegiate High School. He was active in swimming and hockey and would graduate with three years of technical studies and one year of drafting. He worked on numerous local farms over four years, and with Scott Misner Line freighters on the Great Lakes for two seasons, as a deck hand and watchman. Later, John was employed as a bartender at the Columbia Hotel in Alvinston (employed by Charles Binder), a job that he held for four years, until he enlisted.

On January 7, 1941, John married Annetta Gregory, of Brooke Township, in Kerwood, Ontario. John and Annetta Esselment lived in Alvinston, and later on Frank Street in Strathroy. John and Annetta would have two children together, Carole Eloise (became Mrs. Zavitz) and George Gregory (who passed away at a young age).

John stood five feet ten and a half inches tall, had blue eyes and brown hair, when he completed his National Resources Mobilization Act (N.R.M.A.) Enrolment Form on May 21, 1942 in London, Ontario. He was married and living in Alvinston at the time, employed as a bartender. He had served with the Middlesex and Huron Army Reserve since August 1940 until his enrolment. He planned to enter drafting and technical work after the war. He began his training in London, Ontario, attached to the Army Temporary Training Centre (TTC). On September 21, 1942 he was transferred to Prince George, British Columbia, becoming a member of the Oxford Rifles, Canadian Army. He continued his infantry training in British Columbia, which included taking a weapons course in Nanaimo (Jan-Feb 1944), and advancing to the rank of Acting Corporal. On June 12, 1944, the twenty-eight-year-old N.R.M.A. soldier completed his Canadian Army Attestation Papers in Prince George, British Columbia, becoming a rifleman with the Oxford Rifles.

John Esselment embarked overseas from Debert, Nova Scotia to the United Kingdom on August 1, 1944, becoming a member of the 2 Canadian Infantry Reinforcement Unit (CIRU). Only weeks later, he arrived in France on August 26, 1944, becoming a member of the Highland Light Infantry of Canada, R.C.I.C. Through the rest of that summer and into the fall, John moved with this unit through France and into Belgium.

After the Allied breakout from Normandy, in late August 1944 the Canadian forces were assigned the “**Long**

Left Flank", the less glamorous but vital tasks of clearing coastal areas in the north of France and Belgium of German occupiers; opening the English Channel ports for supplies essential to the Allied advance; and capturing the launching sites of German V-1 rockets. In a series of stop-and-start advances against stiff resistance in fortified positions, the Canadians liberated ports and villages including Rouen, Dieppe, Dunkirk, Boulogne and Calais.

In early September 1944, Allied forces captured the inland port of Antwerp, Belgium, the second greatest port in Europe at the mouth of the Scheldt River. However, German forces still controlled the 45-mile-long Scheldt estuary (the Belgian-Dutch border area) that connected the port of Antwerp to the North Sea. Beginning in early October 1944, the Canadians were entrusted with liberating the estuary. The **Battle of the Scheldt** was among the most difficult and grueling struggles in the war. The bitter fighting against a well-fortified and heavily entrenched enemy, took place in a bleak environment made worse by the winter cold in a flooded and freezing muddy quagmire.

A little over two months after arriving in France, on October 31, 1944, Private John Esselment lost his life while fighting in Belgium, during the Battle of the Scheldt. He and his fellow soldiers were hiding in a barn that was bombed by German air strikes. John Esselment's remains were buried on November 4 at a location recorded on the Army Field Service Card as "about 2 miles SW of Knocke, in the front yard of a big red house, sheet 21 NW 927135, Belgium."

At the time of John's death, brother William was with the Canadian Forces in Kingston. In mid-November 1944, James and Alma Esselment in Alvinston received a telegram from Ottawa informing them that their son, PTE JOHN ESSELMENT HAS BEEN KILLED IN ACTION. No other details were provided. In late November 1944, Annetta Esselment in Strathroy received the following letter from the Major-General, Adjutant-General:

Dear Mrs. Esselment:

It was with deep regret that I learned of the death of your husband, A115857 Private John Clarence Esselment, who gave his life in the Service of his Country in the Western European Theatre of War on the 31st day of October, 1944.

From official information we have received, your husband was killed in action against the enemy. You may be assured that any additional information received will be communicated to you without delay.

The Minister of National Defence and the Members of the Army Council have asked me to express to you and your family their sincere sympathy in your bereavement. We pay tribute to the sacrifice he so bravely made.

John Esselment was later officially recorded as, *Overseas casualty, killed in action, in the field (Belgium)*. In early January 1946, Annetta Esselment received a letter from the Colonel, Director of Records, for Adjutant-General. Following is a portion of that letter:

Dear Madam:

Information has just been received from overseas that the remains of your husband, A115857 Private John Clarence Esselment, have been carefully exhumed from the original place of internment and reverently reburied in grave 2, row E, plot 4, of Adegem Canadian Military Cemetery, Adegem, Belgium. Marked map is enclosed. This is a recognized military burial ground and will receive care and maintenance in perpetuity.

The grave will have been marked with a temporary cross which will be replaced in due course by a permanent headstone suitably inscribed. While it cannot now be stated when this work of permanent commemoration will begin, before any action is taken you will be communicated with and an opportunity will be given you to submit a short personal inscription of your own choice for engraving on the headstone...

Twenty-eight-year-old John Esselment is buried in Adegem Canadian War Cemetery, Belgium, Grave IV.E.2. On his headstone are inscribed the words, THERE WAS A MAN SENT FROM GOD, WHOSE NAME WAS JOHN. ST. JOHN I.6. John Esselment's name is also inscribed on the Village of Alvinston's Memorial. Annetta Esselment would later re-marry, becoming Annetta McLachlan, residing in Alvinston.

SOURCES: C, D, E, F, G, L, N, R, 2B, 2C, 2D, 7C, 8X, 8Y

ESSER, George (#A/105444)

George Esser had just turned eighteen when he enlisted to serve his country. He was still a teenager when he gave his life in the land of his birth during a major Canadian-led offensive to save a population who were suffering from years of Nazi oppression.

George Esser was born in Scherpenzeel, Holland on November 28, 1924, the son of Issac Lambertus and Anna Sophia (nee Van Dijk) Esser, of R.R. #2, Plank Road, Sarnia. His parents Issac and Anna were originally from the Netherlands, and were married on December 28, 1921 in Ede, Holland. George came to Canada with his parents

and three sisters in May 1926. The family arrived in Petrolia when George was not quite two years old, and they would later move to London Road in Sarnia. George came from a family of ten children that included brothers William (born 1932), John (born 1934), and Peter; and six sisters: Jennie, Lena, Cotje, Catherine (Kay, born 1922), Anna Sophia (born 1926) and Betty. George's sister, Kay Chivers (nee Esser), would join the RCAF in 1942 when she was nineteen years old. She would serve as a bookkeeper at Camp Borden for three years. The children attended London Road School and then Sarnia Collegiate. George attended school in Sarnia through grade nine, then worked as a labourer on a farm for one year while taking a night school course in woodwork. He then worked for a year and a half at a sash and door factory in Sarnia, mainly as a machine operator. For six months prior to enlisting, George was employed as a labourer in the C.N.R. car shops in Sarnia.



L to R: Father Issac Esser holding George, Catherine, Anna, mother Anna Esser holding Lena

Eighteen year-old George Esser enlisted on December 1, 1942 in London, Ontario. He stood five feet nine inches tall, had blue eyes and brown hair, was single, and recorded his occupation as a woodworker. He planned to continue with woodworking after the war. At his interview, he stated that he had a number of relatives in Holland, and that his family had heard from his father's brother only once since the Nazi occupation.



Private George Esser



Esser family July 1942 – Last photo before going to war
Back: Anna, Betty, Lena, George, Kay, Cotje
Front: Ann (mom), John, Jennie, Bill, Issac (dad)

From No. 1 District Depot in London, George received his army training at #6 Basic Training Centre (BTC) in Stratford; the Advance Training Centre in Petawawa and the Canadian Army Trade School (CATS) in Hamilton,

where he obtained qualifications in carpentry and bricklaying. A humorous incident occurred on July 2, 1943, while at the trade school in Hamilton. George was involved in organized sports in the drill hall when he fractured a bone (1st metacarpel) in his right hand. He had to have X-rays and a cast had to be applied at the military hospital. In George's own words, "I was boxing and hit my opponent on the head."

On July 12, 1944, George Esser embarked overseas to the United Kingdom, where he became a member of the Canadian Engineer Reinforcement Unit (CERU). In mid-August 1944, he was transferred to the Winnipeg Grenadiers. On September 23, 1944, he arrived in France, as a member of the Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders of Canada, R.C.I.C., with the rank of Private.

When he arrived, Canadian forces were nearing completion of their fighting along the "**Long Left Flank**", the vital tasks of clearing coastal areas in the north of France and Belgium of German occupiers; opening the English Channel ports for supplies; and capturing the launching sites of German V-1 rockets. In early September 1944, Allied forces had captured the inland port of Antwerp, Belgium, the second greatest port in Europe at the mouth of the Scheldt River. However, German forces still controlled the 45-mile-long Scheldt estuary (the northern Belgian-Netherlands border area) that connected the port of Antwerp to the North Sea. So in early October 1944, the Canadians were entrusted with liberating the estuary. The **Battle of the Scheldt** was among the most difficult and grueling struggles in the war. The bitter fighting against a well-fortified and heavily entrenched enemy, took place in a bleak environment made worse by the winter cold in a flooded and freezing muddy quagmire.

One month after arriving in France, on October 23, 1944, Private George Esser lost his life while fighting in his native Holland, during the Battle of the Scheldt. George's remains were buried on October 25 at a location recorded on the Army Field Service Card as "Newchurch Cemetery MR 626193, Huijbergen, Holland." His remains would later be carefully exhumed from the original place of internment and reverently reburied in Bergen-op-Zoom, Holland.

In early November 1944, Isaac and Anna Esser in Sarnia received a telegram from the Director of Records in Ottawa informing them that their son, PRIVATE GEORGE ESSER WAS KILLED IN ACTION OCTOBER 23 IN BELGIUM. Anna was not at home when the news arrived. It was a shock to the family because it was near war's end, and they thought that George was still training in Canada, not knowing that he had been shipped overseas. In late November 1944, Anna received the following letter from the Major-General, Adjutant-General:

Dear Mrs. Esser:

It was with deep regret that I learned of the death of your son, A105444 Private George Esser, who gave his life in the Service of his Country in the Western European Theatre of War on the 23rd day of October, 1944.

From official information we have received, your son was killed in action against the enemy. You may be assured that any additional information received will be communicated to you without delay.

The Minister of National Defence and the Members of the Army Council have asked me to express to you and your family their sincere sympathy in your bereavement. We pay tribute to the sacrifice he so bravely made.

George Esser was later officially recorded as, *Overseas casualty, killed in action, in the field (Holland)*. In February 1946, Anna Esser received a War Service Gratuity of \$208.69 for the loss of her son. Almost one and a half years after George's death, she received a letter in March 1946 from the Colonel, Director of Records, for Adjutant-General. Following is a portion of that letter:

Dear Madam:

Information has just been received from overseas that the remains of your son, A103444 Private George Esser, have been carefully exhumed from the original place of internment and reverently reburied in grave 1, row D, plot 4, of Bergen-op-Zoom Canadian Military Cemetery, four miles North-East of Bergen-op-Zoom, Holland. Marked map is enclosed. This is a recognized military burial ground and will receive care and maintenance in perpetuity.

The grave will have been marked with a temporary cross which will be replaced in due course by a permanent headstone suitably inscribed. While it cannot now be stated when this work of permanent commemoration will begin, before any action is taken you will be communicated with and an opportunity will be given you to submit a short personal inscription of your own choice for engraving on the headstone...

Nineteen year-old George Esser is buried in Bergen-Op-Zoom Canadian War Cemetery, Netherlands, Grave 4.D.1. On his headstone are inscribed the words, A SOLDIER OF THE CROSS WHO DID NOT LOSE THE BATTLE. In 1983, five of George's sisters visited their brother's grave in Holland for the first time.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, L, N, 2C, 2D, 7C, 8X, 8Y, y

EVERINGHAM, Arthur Charles (#A/117782)

Even when the fighting was brutal and intense, Arthur Charles Everingham, 20, never forgot his parents in Sarnia. Two months before he died in action in the Battle of the Rhineland, he arranged for his parents to receive flowers for Christmas.

He was born in Sarnia on September 22, 1924, the younger son of Earl Wesley and Beatrice Minnie (nee Archer) Everingham, and brother to Earl Clare, four years his senior. Parents Earl and Beatrice Everingham were married on April 12, 1918 in Sarnia. The Everinghams lived at 123 Capel Street and to support his family, Earl was a labourer at Polymer Rubber Plant (now ARLANXEO). Little is known about Arthur before he enlisted, but he was not afraid to work. He received his education at the Durand Street and London Road Public Schools and he played Juvenile baseball. On finishing school at age 15, he worked a variety of jobs in Sarnia: as a drug store deliveryman for 1 ½ years; as a Meat Market deliveryman for 6 months; as a labourer at the Polymer Corporation Synthetic Rubber Plant for 5 ½ months; and as a labourer at Auto Lite Company for 3 months until he enlisted.

Eighteen year-old Arthur Everingham enlisted in the Canadian Army on April 7, 1943 in Windsor, Ontario. He stood five feet seven inches tall, had grey-brown eyes and black hair, was single, and stated he planned to be a truck driver after the war. He expressed an interest in “getting into the Commandos” and stated that he had a cousin in a prison camp in Germany, which was one of the reasons he was enlisting. Arthur was accepted and his year long training in Canada began. From #1 District Depot in Windsor, Arthur received training at #12 Basic Training Centre (BTC) in Chatham and at A-29 Canadian Infantry Training Centre (CITC) at Camp Ipperwash. He was transferred in late August 1943 to the 1st Battalion Princess of Wales Own Regiment in Debert, Nova Scotia. In October 1943, he would be transferred to the Brockville Rifles at Camp Borden and then to #2 Canadian Armoured Corps Training Regiment (CACTR).

Arthur embarked overseas for the United Kingdom on May 4, 1944, becoming a member of the Canadian Armoured Corps Reinforcement Unit (CACRU). On July 26, 1944, Arthur arrived in France as a member of the Royal Canadian Armoured Corps (RCAC) att'd. H.Q. 4th Canadian Armoured Brigade, with the rank of Trooper. In Sarnia, Beatrice received a letter from her son assuring her that he had arrived safely in France with the Canadian Forces.

Arriving in Normandy in July 1944, the RCAC, 4th Canadian Armoured Brigade saw service in the **Battle of Normandy**. The Battle of Normandy had begun for the Canadians with the June 6, 1944 D-Day landings at Juno Beach. It would take a whole summer of tenacious fighting, pushing against fierce and ruthless German forces to advance east liberating villages and towns across France. After the Allied breakout from Normandy, Canadian forces were assigned the “**Long Left Flank**”, the less glamorous but vital tasks of clearing coastal areas in the north of France and Belgium of German occupiers, opening the English Channel ports and capturing the launching sites of German V-1 rockets (late August-early October 1944).

In early October 1944, the Canadians were entrusted with grueling task of liberating the Belgian-Dutch border estuary connecting Antwerp to the North Sea. The **Battle of the Scheldt** (early October-early November 1944) was among the most difficult and grueling struggles in the war. The bitter fighting against a well-fortified and heavily entrenched enemy took place in a bleak environment made worse by the winter cold in a flooded and freezing muddy quagmire.

After that Battle, over the winter of 1944-1945 most of the weary Canadians were given a rest, although the front was never quiet, with patrols and large-scale raids remaining constant. Canadian troops were stationed along the **Nijmegen sector** in the Netherlands. The Canadians were to hold and defend the Nijmegen salient and a small piece of Allied-held territory north of the Maas River. The Germans did their best to push the Canadians out of “the island” by flooding the area and constantly harassing them with mortar fire, artillery and aggressive patrols. Constantly vigilant, the men dug deep slit trenches, covered them with whatever was handy, and tried to keep warm from the snow and cold during one of the most frigid winters on record in northern Europe.

Arthur Everingham served in France and continued with the 4th Canadian Armoured Brigade (CAB) through Belgium and into Holland. In December 1944, Arthur, now serving with the Canadian Army in Holland, sent his parents flowers for Christmas. It would be the last thing they'd receive from Arthur for he had only two months to live.

In February 1945, the Allies launched a great offensive, the **Battle of the Rhineland** that was designed to drive the Germans eastward back over the Rhine River. There would be two formidable thrusts: one by the Ninth

U.S. Army; and one by the First Canadian Army, strengthened by the addition of Allied formations. The resilient Germans had spent months improving their defences; winter rains and thaw had turned the ground into a thick, muddy quagmire and the enemy would fight fiercely to defend their home soil. During one month of fighting, the Canadians would succeed in clearing the Reichswald Forest, in breaking the Siegfried Line and in clearing the Hochwald Forest. But victory came at a high cost.

On February 21, 1945, seven months after arriving in France, Trooper Arthur Everingham would lose his life while fighting in Holland, during the Battle of the Rhineland. His remains were buried on February 21 at a location recorded on the Army Field Service Card as “Holland Canadian Division Cemetery 320480 Hertogenbosch sheet 11 SW”.

At the end of February 1945, Earl and Beatrice received a telegram from Ottawa informing them that their son, TRP ARTHUR CHARLES EVERINGHAM HAS BEEN KILLED IN HOLLAND WHILE WITH THE 4TH CABHQ SQUADRON. The official communiqué did not state how he was killed nor where.

In March 1945, Beatrice received the following letter from the Brigadier, Acting Adjutant-General:
Dear Mrs. Everingham:

It was with deep regret that I learned of the death of your son, A117782 Trooper Arthur Charles Everingham, who gave his life in the Service of his Country in the Western European Theatre of War on the 21st day of February, 1945.

From official information we have received, your son was killed in action against the enemy. You may be assured that any additional information received will be communicated to you without delay.

The Minister of National Defence and the Members of the Army Council have asked me to express to you and your family their sincere sympathy in your bereavement. We pay tribute to the sacrifice he so bravely made.

Arthur Everingham was later officially recorded as, *Overseas casualty, killed in action, in the field (Holland)*. Just over two months after Arthur Everingham’s death, the war in Europe would come to an end. In October 1945, Earl and Beatrice received a War Service Gratuity of \$262.57 for the loss of Arthur.

The Colonel, Director of Records, for Adjutant-General wrote a letter to Beatrice in July 1946. Following is a portion of that letter:

Dear Madam:

Information has just been received from overseas that the remains of your son, A117782 Trooper Arthur Charles Everingham, have been carefully exhumed from the original place of internment and reverently reburied in grave 15, row C, plot 16, of Nijmegen Canadian Military Cemetery, four miles South-East of Nijmegen, Holland. Marked map is enclosed. This is a recognized military burial ground and will receive care and maintenance in perpetuity.

The grave will have been marked with a temporary cross which will be replaced in due course by a permanent headstone suitably inscribed. While it cannot now be stated when this work of permanent commemoration will begin, before any action is taken you will be communicated with and an opportunity will be given you to submit a short personal inscription of your own choice for engraving on the headstone...

Arthur Everingham, 20, is buried in Groesbeek Canadian War Cemetery, Netherlands, Grave XVI.C.15. On Arthur’s headstone are inscribed the words, UNTIL THE DAY BREAK AND THE SHADOWS FLEE AWAY.
SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, J, L, N, 2C, 2D, 7C, 8X, 8Y

EVERS, Orval Clare (#J/95536)

In Europe, the war was officially over but not for everyone. Sarnian Orval Clare Evers was nineteen years old when he was killed during a rescue operation one day after the war had ended. Perhaps this is why his headstone reads WE CANNOT, LORD, THY PURPOSE SEE BUT ALL IS WELL THAT’S DONE BY THEE.

He born in Kitchener, Ontario on September 8, 1925, the only son of Charles Neil and Susan (nee Caesar) Evers, of Lakeshore Road (Oakwood Corners), Camlachie, Ontario. Parents Charles (born Williamsford, Ontario) and Susan (born Bruce Peninsula) were married on December 31, 1906 in Wiarton, Ontario. Charles and Susan knew the joys and heartaches of raising a family. They had three daughters—Ruby (Snyder), Florence and Lorraine, and three sons. Unfortunately, only Orval survived—two died at a young age, one from diphtheria and the other died in infancy. Their children were all raised and educated in Kitchener, before the Evers family moved from Kitchener when the Polymer rubber plant (now ARLANXEO) was built in Sarnia in 1942. In his years at Kitchener Public

School (1931 to 1939), Orval was an avid swimmer. Immediately after completing school, he worked as a press operator for three years from 1939 to 1941. In Sarnia, the Evers family lived on Oakwood Corners (Lakeshore Road and Colborne Road area) and Orval worked odd jobs between 1941 and 1942 before he found work as a press operator at Electric Auto-Lite Limited from 1942 to 1943.

Eighteen year-old Orval Evers enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force on September 27, 1943 in London, Ontario and requested flying duties. He stood five feet four inches tall, had blue eyes and brown hair, was single, and stated that his reasons for joining varied from wanting “more excitement” and “having relatives in the Air Force” to wanting “to go along with his friends.” He was residing at Oakwood Corner at the time, but recorded his permanent address as 507 Victoria Street, Kitchener. Nine months later Orval left for overseas, but not before he received intensive training.

From No. 1 Manning Depot in Toronto, Orval received his air training at RCAF Station Mountain View (Ontario), Debert, Nova Scotia; No. 10 Bombing and Gunnery School in Mount Pleasant (P.E.I.); No. 4 Aircrew Graduate Training School (AGTS) in Valleyfield, Quebec; and Lachine, Quebec. He was awarded his Air Gunners Badge on April 21, 1944 and in late April-early May 1944, he spent a two-week furlough in Sarnia with his parents, family and friends. At the back of people’s minds must have been the thought of whether they would ever see Orval again. On June 16, 1944, Orval embarked overseas from Halifax.



Pilot Officer-AG Orval Clare Evers

Evers was initially be posted to #3 Personnel Reception Centre in Bournemouth, England and then to #28 Operational Training Unit at RAF Wymeswold. In September 1944, parents Charles and Susan placed an announcement in the *Canadian (Sarnia) Observer* stating that their son, Sgt. Orval Evers, who had been overseas for three months, was celebrating his 19th birthday in England. In late December 1944, Orval Evers would become a member of RAF #514 Squadron “Nil Obstat Potest” (Nothing can Withstand), part of **Bomber Command**, with the rank of Pilot Officer-Air Gunner.

During the course of the war, one of this country’s most significant contributions was the approximately 50,000 Canadians who served with the RCAF and RAF in Bomber Command operations. Next to Britain, Canada was the largest contributor to Bomber Command, making up more than a third of all of Bomber Command personnel. The men who served in Bomber Command faced some of the most difficult odds of anyone fighting in the war.

No. 514 Squadron was a Lancaster bomber squadron that was formed at RAF Foulsham, Norfolk on September 1, 1943. In November of 1943 the squadron moved to RAF Waterbeach, Cambridgeshire. Flying Avro Lancasters for course of its two-year operational life, the squadron took part in 218 bombing raids and four mine laying missions. At war’s end, the squadron took part in Operation Manna, the dropping of desperately needed food parcels for the Dutch, and a long series of flights to collect prisoners of war from France and Italy.

The war in Europe officially ended on May 8, 1945. A time of rejoicing and relief for everyone, but work still remained. Only one day after VE Day had been declared, Orval Evers was part of a 6-man crew aboard a

Lancaster Mark III aircraft RF230 (markings JI-B). As part of Operation Exodus, the Lancaster aircraft took off at approximately 12.15 hours from the airfield at Juvincourt, Belgium en route to England with 24 British Army personnel who were ex-prisoners of war. The pilot reported problems with the controls soon after takeoff and intended to return to Juvincourt. Approximately ten minutes into its flight, at 12.26 hours, the aircraft crashed in a forest near Roye Ami, France. Everyone on board was killed. Orval Evers had 11 flights to complete his tour of operations when VE Day was declared.

In Sarnia, mere days before the fatal crash, Charles and Susan received a letter on May 3 from Orval. In it, he stated that he was flying food from England to Holland. The next war-related correspondence they received was from Ottawa, one week after VE Day, a telegram informing them that their son, FLIGHT SERGEANT ORVAL CLARE EVERS HAS BEEN REPORTED MISSING BELIEVED KILLED AS A RESULT OF FLYING OPERATIONS ON MAY 9. The message gave no further information.

At the end of May 1945, Air Vice Marshal H.L. Campbell confirmed the report that their son was killed on active service in this letter to the grieving parents:

Advice has been received from the Royal Canadian Air Force Casualties Officer, Overseas, that your son lost his life during flying operations on May 9, 1945. His body has been recovered together with five other members of the crew and twenty-five passengers. Among the crew members were two others as well as your son, who belonged to the Royal Canadian Air Force. They were Flying Officer Ray Bertram Hilchey, whose next-of-kin is his father, S.B. Hitchey, of 108 Lawrence Street, Halifax, Nova Scotia, and Flt. Sgt. Robert MacPherson Toms, whose next-of-kin is his father, Edward Toms of 77 Botwood Road, Grand Falls, Newfoundland.

Eyewitness accounts and investigators' reports provided key information in the inquiry into the accident. A few facts were determined. First, the aircraft had flown for 43 nautical miles from Juvincourt before it crashed; next, the weather was good; and thirdly, the aircraft was seen to circle the Roye Ami airfield twice without losing height and with all engines functioning. As the plane made its approach, the undercarriage was lowered on the first circuit and the aircraft fired its red Verey lights. Then the undercarriage was raised and the controller on the airfield gave permission to land. No reply was received, however. Green Verey lights were fired to indicate that the pilot had permission to land. Eyewitnesses observed that the undercarriage was lowered again and the aircraft headed S.E. from the airfield flying slowly on its final turn to its approach. Then, inexplicably and tragically, the aircraft dipped into a vertical bank to port with nose up before going into a flat spiral leveling out just above some trees. It then dropped in a very flat attitude to the ground and caught fire.

The interpretation of the evidence included several observations and speculations: that for some undiscovered reason, the pilot decided something was wrong and prepared to make an emergency forced landing at the nearest airfield; that a number of the passengers had moved to the rear of the fuselage (nearest the door) while the aircraft was in flight; that the pilot immediately found the aircraft to be dangerously tail heavy and decided there was something wrong; that it was presumed the pilot prepared to make a forced landing at the nearest airfield; that the pilot was on his final turn in to his approach and, when he put the flaps fully down, that it was physically impossible for him to hold down the nose of the aircraft; that this action resulted in a stall and subsequent spiral; that none of the engines were under power when it hit the ground, crashing into the middle of a wood E.S.E. of the runway.

The Base Commander (R.A.F. No. 33 Base) concurred that the accident was caused by some of the passengers proceeding to the rear of the aircraft, but considered it doubtful whether this was the initial reason for the decision to make a forced landing. He believed that if the pilot, an experienced Lancaster pilot, had found the aircraft dangerously tail heavy, he would have had time to instruct the passengers to move forward. He believed that it was more likely that there was some other undiscovered reason for the decision to make a forced landing, and when the passengers – who up to that time may have been properly positioned – realizing that there was something wrong had reacted naturally by gathering farther to the rear of the aircraft and nearer the door.

Orval Clare Evers was later officially recorded as, *Previously reported missing as a result of a flying accident, now reported killed, overseas (France)*. Perishing with Pilot Officer-Air Gunner Orval Evers, were air crew members: Pilot Donald Beaton (RAF); P/O Robert Macpherson Toms (Newfoundland); F/Os Ray Bertram Hilchey (Nova Scotia); WOP John Goodworth Brittain; and FS. Alfred McMurrugh (RAF). The 24 British Army passengers killed were Sgt. Ronald Arthur Adams, Pte. Thomas Anderson, Pte. William Leonard Ball, Pte. Samuel James Bayston, Cpl. Emanuel L. Belshaw, Pte. Roland Albert Betton, Lt. Patrick Archibald Tomlin W.B. Campbell, Pte. Ronald Ernest Clark, Pte. Walter Croston, Gnr. Alfred James Spencer Crowe, Fus. Harold Cummings, Pte. Richard

Danson, Rfn. Thomas James Edwards, L.Cpl. George William Franks, Gnr. A.N. Labotske (South African Army), Pnr. W.L. Lindheimer, Pnr. Mordhai Maschit, Fus. Owen Parkin, Gdsmn. James Arthur Roe, Lt. Eric Thomas Theodore Snowdon, Cpl. Albert George Thompson, Pte. Ralph Turnbull, Capt. Robert Worsley Wheeler, and Pte. Patrick Yates.

In late May 1945, a Pentecostal Church in Kitchener was the site of a memorial service to honour Flt. Sgt. Orval Evers. In September 1945, his parents Charles and Susan in Camlachie received a War Service Gratuity of \$278.85 for the loss of their only son. Nineteen year-old Orval Evers is buried in Clichy Northern Cemetery, France, Plot 16, Row 12, Coll. Grave 7-18. On his headstone are inscribed the words, WE CANNOT, LORD, THY PURPOSE SEE BUT ALL IS WELL THAT'S DONE BY THEE.
SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, M, N, 2C, 2D, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10B, 10U

FARNER, Hugo Oscar (#J/20564)

Hugo Oscar Farner had everything going for him. His wife of nearly two years was expecting their first child in months and he was a competent flying instructor with the RCAF in the Ottawa area. Everything changed on a sunny afternoon in September 1943.

He was born in Sarnia on July 15, 1922, the son of Frank Charles (born in Dresden, Germany) and Florence (nee Mitchell, born in Newcastle, England) Farner of 412 Davis Street, later 106 McGibbon Street, Sarnia. Parents Frank and Florence Farner were married on February 25, 1914 at St. George's Rectory in Sarnia. Frank was a locomotive engineer with the Canadian National Railways. Hugo had two brothers: Richard Herbert, born 1914 who would serve with the Canadian Army overseas, and Vernon Charles, born 1918 (would later move to Cleveland, Ohio). When Hugo was three years old, he and his brother Vernon visited England with their mother. They returned via Liverpool to Quebec on board the passenger ship *Megantic*, arriving on September 12, 1925.

Hugo attended Devine Street School from 1927 to 1937 and then Sarnia Collegiate from 1937 to 1940. During his time at Sarnia Collegiate, he was prominent in junior athletics. He won a medal for life saving and the Jack Newton championship trophy for swimming. As well, he was on the junior rugby team and participated in football, baseball and hockey. Besides athletics, he was part of the High School Cadets for two years and found time for stamp collecting, his main hobby. For a year after high school, Hugo worked as an assembler at Electric Auto-Lite, 1940 to 1941. Two events shaped his life in 1941: he lost his mother Florence to cancer and he joined Active Service.

Nineteen years old and single, Hugo Farner enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force on July 28, 1941. The recruiting officer described Hugo as, *Clean cut, well built, bright, steady, intelligent, courteous, sincere... Is very anxious to fly. Should prove good Air Crew material.* He stood five feet eight inches tall, had brown eyes and dark brown hair, and requested flying duties wanting to be a pilot. On October 10, 1941, Hugo left #1 Manning Depot in Toronto for training at #6 Initial Training School (ITS) in Toronto. He continued his training at #3 Elementary Flying Training School (EFTS) in London (Ontario), and #6 Service Flying Training School (SFTS) in Dunnville, Ontario.

On November 6, 1942, sixteen months after enlisting, Hugo graduated and was awarded his Pilot's Flying Badge in Dunnville, with the commission of Pilot Officer-Pilot. The following month his brother Richard Herbert Farner, who had enlisted in June 1942, embarked overseas arriving in Italy with the Canadian Signal Corps.

Before Richard left for overseas, however, he had an obligation to fulfill. On November 7, the day after being awarded his Pilot's Flying Badge, Hugo married Betty Shirley Ash, the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. R.F. Ash, of 355 ½ Maxwell Street, Sarnia. Witnesses to the marriage in Sarnia were Dorothy Ann McNeil and Hugo's brother, Richard. The newlyweds enjoyed a two-week leave together before Hugo returned to service. In Sarnia, Betty resided at her parents' Maxwell Street home for the time being.

On November 25, 1942, Hugo attended #1 Flying Instructor School (FIS) in Trenton, where he flew Fleet and Moth aircraft and received his qualifications to be a flying instructor on January 7, 1943. In January 1943, he was made instructor at RCAF #2 Service Flying Training School (SFTS), Uplands, Ontario. Trainees at #2 SFTS Uplands attended the school for between 10 to 16 weeks with flying time varying from 75 to 100 hours. Potential pilots trained in single-engine North American Harvard and Yale advanced trainer aircraft with the goal of becoming fighter pilots. Training was dangerous and demanding in the crowded sky above the Ottawa Valley. Successful trainees graduated as Sergeant Pilot and received their Pilot's Wings.

When Hugo was transferred to Ottawa, Betty joined her husband in late January 1943 where they resided in

Hogsback, near Ottawa. In late summer 1943, the young couple was expecting to have their first child. Then tragedy struck the father-to-be on home soil.

In the mid-afternoon of September 24, 1943, Pilot Officer-Pilot Hugo Farner was killed when his single-engine Harvard aircraft #3293, on which he was the instructor, crashed at approximately 14.20 hours during an instruction flight at St. Andrews, East Quebec. Mercifully, he was killed instantly, with injuries described as multiple fractures and third degree burns. The weather at the time was ideal and the cause of the flying accident was listed as obscure. Along with instructor Hugo, Warrant Officer Alfred Edwin Frazer, a student pilot from Edmonton, Alberta, died in the crash.

In late September, Betty received the following letter at her residence in Hogsback from the Air Vice-Marshall, Deputy Chief of the Air Staff:

Dear Mrs. Farner:

I have learned with deep regret of the death of your husband, Pilot Officer Hugo Oscar Farner, on Active Service on September 24th, and I wish to offer you my sincere and heartfelt sympathy.

It is so unfortunate that a promising career should be thus terminated and I would like you to know that his loss is greatly deplored by all those with whom your husband was serving.

Hugo Farner was later officially recorded as, *Killed 24-Sept-43 as a result of a flying accident (at St. Andrews East Quebec).*

Hugo Farner and another Sarnian, Leading Aircraftman-Pilot Leonard Meere (who had died September 23 in a crash in Western Canada, and is included in this Project), were buried barely a wingspan apart in Sarnia's first double military funeral on September 28, 1943. Hundreds of relatives and friends attended both services, which drew thousands to the streets, around the churches, and along the walking routes to Lakeview Cemetery. Pallbearers, honorary pallbearers and a firing party came from R.C.A.F. flying school at Centralia. The Sarnia Air Cadet No. 44 Squadron band played at both funerals and they also provided an escort party.

The service for both began at the Robb Funeral Home. The funeral for Hugo continued at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church with Rev. J.M. Macgillivray officiating, while Rev. F.G. Hardy led the service for Leonard Meere at St. George's Anglican Church. Led by the firing party, the band and the escort party, the funeral corteges left their respective churches and marched slowly to the cemetery. At Lakeview, they again slow-marched to the gravesides, with the band playing the "Dead March in Saul". After the ministers conducted graveside services, the firing party delivered three volleys, with the band playing "Abide With Me" between them. Two buglers who accompanied the firing party from Centralia then stepped to the end of the graves and sounded the "Last Post". The pallbearers for both funerals were LACS L. Renaud, W. Cline, J. Young, R. McDermott, J. Smuk and R. Hill. Honourary pallbearers for Pilot Officer Farner were Flying Officers R.H. Fleming, M.A. L. Hicks, J.W. McGorman, D. Snelgrove, W.H. Dunbar and L.G. Polden.

Eight months after Hugo's death, Betty gave birth to their baby daughter, Connie Lea Farner, born May 13, 1944. Connie would never know her father. The following February, Betty, now living on Maxwell Street, received a War Service Gratuity of \$165.00 for the loss of her husband. Twenty-one-year-old Pilot Officer Hugo Farner is buried at the Sarnia (Lakeview) Cemetery, Sarnia, Ontario, Section E. Lot 137. On his headstone are inscribed the words, THE LORD BLESS THEE AND KEEP THEE. BELOVED HUSBAND OF BETTY ASH.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, J, L, M, N, 2C, 2D, 6H, 7C, 8X, 8Y

FERGUSON, William Lorne (#B/8354)

His postwar ambitions ranged from farming to accounting and, at 26, university graduate William Lorne Ferguson had much to live for. In an instant, a freak accident changed everything.

William Ferguson was born in Sarnia on November 28, 1915, the youngest son of William D. Ferguson Sr. and Anne Ferguson. Parents William D. Sr. and Anne Ferguson were married on September 11, 1907 in Sarnia. Besides William, the Fergusons had four other children: two sons, Burton A. and Gordon W. (both would later reside on London Road, Sarnia), and two daughters, Lois A. and Ruby W. (later Mrs. C.R. Black of Washington, D.C.). The family resided at 150 Watson Road and, to support his family, William Sr. was an executive of the Mac-Craft Corporation of Sarnia. He was also the former secretary-manager of the Sarnia Chamber of Commerce and the Blue Water Highway Association.

His parents were able to afford university educations and William Jr. made the most of it. After attending

Sarnia Collegiate for six years, William studied at the University of Western. In 1939, he graduated with a four-year Bachelor of Arts degree, majoring in business administration. He then joined the sales staff of the Hobbs Glass Manufacturing Limited in London, Ontario and was later transferred to Toronto, where he worked as a salesman. When he enlisted, William was residing at 107 St. George Street, Toronto. While in Toronto, he served in the University of Toronto C.O.T.C. Non-Permanent Active Militia from October 1940 to February 1941 and September 1941 to December 1941.

Twenty-six-year-old William Ferguson enlisted in the Royal Canadian Army on February 23, 1942 in Toronto. He stood five feet eight and three quarter inches tall, had blue eyes and black hair, was single, and stated that his postwar ambition was to farm or to enter the field of accounting. He became a member of the No. 2 Detachment, Royal Canadian Ordnance Corps (RCOC), serving as a clerk in Toronto until June 1, 1942, when he was transferred to National Defence Headquarters (NDHQ) in Ottawa. Only five days prior to his accidental death, William was promoted to the rank of Corporal.

In the late afternoon of Saturday July 18, 1942, William and other members of his unit had gone on a picnic party to the Hull, Quebec resort at Fairy Lake. William had only been in the water a few moments when he sank from view and tragically drowned. The Medical Examiner reported that William, *Suffered a broken neck while diving from end of pier into river*. After the body was returned to Sarnia, more than 300 relatives and friends of the family attended the July 22, 1942 funeral at D.J. Robb's Funeral Home.

In February 1946, William Sr. and Anne Ferguson on Watson Road in Sarnia received a War Service Gratuity of \$30.00 for the loss of their son. They also received his awarded Canadian Volunteer Service War Medal 1939-45. Twenty-six-year-old William Ferguson was buried on July 22 at the Sarnia (Lakeview) Cemetery, Sarnia, Ontario, Section I. Lot 140. On his headstone are inscribed the words, REST IN PEACE.
SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, J, L, N, R, 2C, 2D, 7C, 8X, 8Y

FISHER, Joseph Gerald (#A/116104)

A commanding officer assessed the life and death of Sarnia-Lambton's Joseph Fisher with a poignancy that resonates many decades later: *I considered him one of my bravest men and he was always there when duty called, regardless of the personal risk involved. He brought relief to many of his wounded comrades and I feel sure that save for his work and skill more Canadian lives would have been lost. He died as he lived, unselfishly, bravely and a good soldier.*

He was born in Petrolia (Enniskellen Township, 10th Line) on March 24, 1920, the son of Walter Frederick and Margaret Rosabelle (nee McLean) Fisher, of R.R. #2, Sarnia (4th Concession, Sarnia Township). Parents Walter and Margaret Fisher were married in September 1909 in Wyoming, Ontario. Walter and Margaret were blessed with a large family: three daughters--Dolores (born 1910, later Mrs. Fred Evoy, of Norwich); Beulah Sarah (born 1913, later Mrs. H.G. MacColl, of Petrolia); and Gwendolyn (born 1924) and five sons. Joseph's brothers were Andrew Clayton (born 1915, who at the time of Joseph's death was a Sergeant serving with the RCAF overseas); Donald Cleone (born 1919); Arlie Eugene (born 1926); and Wayne George (born 1931).

The centre of Joseph's life was farming, although he was active in softball and hockey. After completing grade 7 at age 14, he left school and worked on his father's farm. He did this for eight years and, after he enlisted, intended to resume farming when the war was over.

Twenty-two-year-old Joseph Gerald Fisher enlisted in the Canadian Army on September 18, 1942, in Windsor, Ontario. He stood five feet five and a half inches tall, had blue eyes and light brown hair, and was single at the time. From No. 1 District Depot in Windsor, he received training at #12 Basic Training Centre in Chatham. From there, he was transferred to the Canadian Army Training Centre at Camp Borden, where he received qualifications to be a stretcher-bearer.

Joseph Fisher embarked overseas for England on March 9, 1943. Six weeks after arriving, in late April, he would be transferred from the Canadian General Reinforcement Unit (CGRU) to the Royal Canadian Army Medical Corps (RCAMC) 22 Field Ambulance. Nearly a year later, in late March 1944, Joseph cabled his parents that he was "fine and hopes to soon be home again." It was the last communication they had with their son.

On June 5, Joseph Fisher departed from the U.K., arriving in France on June 6, 1944--**D-Day**. The **Battle of Normandy** would begin for the Canadians with the June 6, 1944 D-Day landings at Juno Beach. After breaching the "Atlantic Wall" of "Fortress Europe", Allied armies began their break out from the narrow Normandy bridgehead to

carve out a foothold on the French mainland. It would take a whole summer of tenacious fighting, pushing against fierce and ruthless German forces to advance east across France. In a brutal campaign of attrition, the Canadians faced fierce battles and vicious counterattacks as they clawed their way forward liberating villages and towns including Bretteville, Carpiquet, Caen and Falaise.

After the Allied breakout from Normandy, Canadian forces were assigned the **“Long Left Flank”**, the less glamorous but vital tasks of clearing coastal areas in the north of France and Belgium of German occupiers; opening the English Channel ports for supplies essential to the Allied advance; and capturing the launching sites of German V-1 rockets. In a series of stop-and-start advances against stiff resistance in fortified positions, the Canadians liberated ports and villages including Rouen, Dieppe, Dunkirk, Boulogne and Calais.

For three months, Private Joseph Gerald Fisher moved with the Canadians as they fought through the Battle of Normandy and into the “Long Left Flank”. On September 5, 1944, he was severely wounded in the back of his chest by enemy shellfire during the “Long Left Flank” fighting in northern France. He was admitted to #5 Canadian Field Dressing Station and later to #11 Canadian Field Dressing Station (CFDS). He was then moved to #22 Canadian Field Ambulance (CFA). The medical teams had to know how serious Joseph’s injuries were.

They operated on the stricken Sarnian, but they could not save him. Ten hours after the operation, Joseph Fisher died in a hospital in France as a result of his wounds. His remains were buried on September 6, the day he died, at a location recorded on the Army Field Service Card as “Ramburelles MR 686686 Sheet 9D/6, France”.

On September 13, 1944, Margaret Fisher at R.R. #2, Sarnia received the following telegram from the Director of Records: MINISTER OF NATIONAL DEFENCE SINCERELY REGRETS TO INFORM YOU A116104 PRIVATE JOSEPH GERALD FISHER HAS BEEN OFFICIALLY REPORTED WOUNDED IN ACTION FIFTH SEPTEMBER 1944 NATURE AND EXTENT OF WOUNDS NOT YET AVAILABLE STOP WHEN ADDRESSING MAIL ADD WORDS IN HOSPITAL IN BOLD LETTERS AFTER NAME OF UNIT FOR QUICK DELIVERY STOP WHEN FURTHER INFORMATION BECOMES AVAILABLE IT WILL BE FORWARDED AS SOON AS RECEIVED.

It was an understandably tense time for the entire Fisher family. Five days later, on September 18, another telegram arrived from the Director of Records. Any hope that it contained good news was extinguished quickly: MINISTER OF NATIONAL DEFENCE DEEPLY REGRETS TO INFORM YOU A116104 PRIVATE JOSEPH GERALD FISHER HAS NOW BEEN OFFICIALLY REPORTED DIED OF WOUNDS SIXTH SEPTEMBER 1944 STOP IF ANY FURTHER INFORMATION BECOMES AVAILABLE IT WILL BE FORWARDED AS SOON AS RECEIVED.

In late September 1944, the Colonel, Director of Records, for Adjutant-General mailed the following letter to Margaret:

Dear Mrs. Fisher:

Further to this Headquarters’ telegram of the 18th September, 1944, informing you of the regretted death of your son, A-116104 Private Joseph Gerald Fisher, in keeping with the policy of the Canadian Army of informing the next-of-kin of all details of battle casualties, the following paragraph informs you of the wounds sustained by Private Fisher. According to information obtained by this Headquarters from Canadian Army Medical Authorities, your late son died as a result of a shell fragment wound to the back. Please accept my sincere and heartfelt sympathy for the irreparable loss you have suffered.

Another letter, this one from the Brigadier, Acting Adjutant-General, arrived in early October 1944:

Dear Mrs. Fisher:

It was with deep regret that I learned of the death of your son, A116104 Private Joseph Gerald Fisher, who gave his life in the Service of his Country in the Western European Theatre of War on the 6th day of September, 1944.

From official information we have received, your son died as the result of wounds received in action against the enemy. You may be assured that any additional information received will be communicated to you without delay.

The Minister of National Defence and the Members of the Army Council have asked me to express to you and your family their sincere sympathy in your bereavement. We pay tribute to the sacrifice he so bravely made.

Private Joseph Fisher was gone, but was not forgotten by many. On October 22, 1944, an Honour Roll in Sarnia, bearing the names of the men and women of the London Road West United Church congregation serving in the forces was unveiled and dedicated at a service there. At the same ceremony, a special memorial service was held

for Private Joseph Gerald Fisher, R.C.A.M.C. who had been killed in action in France the previous month.

A few days later, the Fishers received two messages of condolence in the death of their son from Joseph's officers. The first, dated September 11, was from the Commander of his section, Captain J.W. Latimer:

By this short note I wish not only to convey to you my deepest sympathies but those of this entire unit and particularly of those members of my section in the loss of your son, Gerald Joseph. I will try also to give you a few details of the incidents which led up to his being wounded.

Gerald had been a member of my section for many months in England. He was held in high esteem by all the men and I was proud to have him under my command, not only because he was efficient at his work but also because he was an example to others. I was pleased to put him in charge of a squad long before the invasion. We crossed the channel together, landed on the beach together in France on D-Day and he has been with me ever since.

On September 5 we were travelling in a convoy along a highway when suddenly enemy shelling broke loose among our vehicles. I was riding in the rear of the convoy and saw the shells landing a short distance ahead. I immediately got out of my vehicle and ran up to where the shells had landed. The other members of my section had already managed to get Gerald and several others who were wounded into a ditch. I immediately dressed his wounds and gave him morphine to relieve his pain. We carried him to a nearby house where I administered "Plasma transfusion" to him. He was immediately sent back by ambulance to the hospital.

The wound he received was caused by a shell fragment which struck him in the back of the chest. On reaching hospital he was given blood transfusions and was operated on by a surgical specialist. Everything that could possibly be done for him was done and he was never allowed to have pain after he received his wound. He passed away about 10 hours after the operation.

Your son and I were very good friends, Mr. Fisher, and I feel your loss very deeply myself. We had been through many actions together in the past three months. I considered him one of my bravest men and he was always there when duty called, regardless of the personal risk involved. He brought relief to many of his wounded comrades and I feel sure that save for his work and skill more Canadian lives would have been lost. He died as he lived, unselfishly, bravely and a good soldier.

Lieut. Col. M.R. Caverhill, the officer commanding the 22nd Canadian Field Ambulance unit, added this shorter testimonial:

Your son was an excellent soldier, well liked by his companions and the officers of the unit, and had carried out his duties with the utmost faithfulness since landing in France on D-Day.

The war in Europe was officially over, but in late May 1945, Margaret Fisher in Sarnia received another letter from the Colonel, Director of Records, for Adjutant-General:

Dear Madam:

Information has now been received from the overseas military authorities that your son, A116104 Private Joseph Gerald Fisher, was buried with religious rites in a temporary grave located at a point approximately eleven miles South-West of Abbeville, France.

The grave will have been temporarily marked with a wooden cross for identification purposes and in due course the remains will be reverently exhumed and removed to a recognized military burial ground when the concentration of graves in the area takes place. On this being completed the new location will be advised to you, but for obvious reasons it will likely take approximately one year before this information is received.

That December, the Colonel, Director of Records, for Adjutant-General wrote to Margaret Fisher again. Following is a portion of that letter:

Dear Madam:

Information has just been received from overseas that the remains of your son, A116104 Private Joseph Gerald Fisher, have been carefully exhumed from the original place of internment and reverently reburied in grave 12, row B, plot 1, of Calais Canadian Military Cemetery, St. Inglevert, France. Marked map is enclosed. This is a recognized military burial ground and will receive care and maintenance in perpetuity.

The grave will have been marked with a temporary cross which will be replaced in due course by a permanent headstone suitably inscribed. While it cannot now be stated when this work of permanent commemoration will begin, before any action is taken you will be communicated with and an opportunity will be given you to submit a short personal inscription of your own choice for engraving on the headstone...

Joseph Gerald Fisher was later officially recorded as, *Overseas casualty, died of wounds received in action, in the field (France)*. More than a year after their son's death, in May 1946, the Fishers received a War Service

Gratuity of \$374.64 as compensation for their loss. In April 1948, Margaret received the following letter from the Director, War Service Records in Ottawa:

Dear Mrs. Fisher:

I am directed to forward the enclosed photograph showing a plaque which was erected by the citizens of La Capelle, France, in commemoration of a number of Canadian soldiers who lost their lives in the liberation of that community. This tablet bears your son's name and, no doubt, the photo will be of interest to you. La Capelle is a village in the Department of the Pas de Calais, a short distance East of Boulogne.



Twenty-four-year-old Joseph Gerald Fisher is buried in Calais Canadian War Cemetery, Leubringhen, France, Grave 1.B.12. On his headstone are inscribed the words, OUR DARLING IS SHELTERED BY THE ROCK OF AGES ANCHORED ON GOD'S GOLDEN SHORE.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, N, 2B, 2C, 2D, 7C, 8X, 8Y

FISHER, Melvin Kenneth (#A/106345)

When Melvin Kenneth Fisher departed overseas to serve his country, he left behind his career, his young daughter and his wife who was six months pregnant. Ten months later, he sacrificed his life for the Allied cause during the prolonged and brutal campaign to drive the Germans from Italy.

He was born in Inwood, Brooke Township on February 3, 1922, the eldest son of Archibald A. and Flora Fisher, of 118 Cameron Street, later 157 North Brock Street, Sarnia. Archibald (in Real Estate and Insurance, Lochiel Street) and Flora were married in Alvinston on April 7, 1920. Melvin came to Sarnia with his family at the age of seven. He attended Lochiel Street Public School, completing grade six at age fifteen, and then spent two years in special industrial class at Johnson Moriel Industrial College, 1937 to 1939. He attended both Sunday School and church at Central United Church. He was active in softball, hockey, basketball, swimming and bowling. Melvin had two brothers, Joseph and Keith; and one sister, Doris.

Prior to enlisting, Melvin Fisher was employed by Thomas Irwin as a carpenter's helper from July 1939 to September 1940; then at Sarnia Auto-Wreckers from September 1940 to July 1941; and finally at Electric Auto-Lite Limited in Sarnia from July 1941 to March 1943, where he was a generator tester. Melvin married Bernice Evelyn Dorothy (nee Coulter) Fisher (of Port Elgin) in Sarnia on April 10, 1942. Melvin and Bernice Fisher had two daughters together: Patricia Ann (born January 18, 1943 at Sarnia General Hospital); and Shirley Dianne (born May 22, 1944 in Goderich – Melvin was in Italy at this time). The Fisher family lived for a time at 117 Collingwood Street, Sarnia. While Melvin was overseas, a pregnant Bernice and their one-year old daughter, Patricia, lived with her parents, Mr. and Mrs. George Coulter at 470 Maple Street in Goderich, Ontario.

Twenty-one-year-old Melvin Fisher enlisted in the Canadian Army on March 17, 1943, in London, Ontario. He stood five feet ten inches tall, had blue eyes and brown hair, and was married and living on Collingwood Street at the time. His plan was to return to Electric Auto-Lite following the war. From #1 District Depot in London, Melvin

received his army training at #12 Basic Training Centre in Chatham until mid-September 1943; then at A29 Canadian Infantry Training Centre (CITC) at Camp Ipperwash.

In mid-April 1943, Melvin's brother Keith, made headlines in Sarnia for rescuing three men trapped in the debris of a collapsed and burning building. He was home in Sarnia on furlough from an East Coast station. He was visiting friends in Port Huron when an early morning fire broke out in the White Block, opposite the post office on Water Street in the business section. As the blaze grew worse, everyone in uniform including state troopers, civilian defence volunteers, members of the U.S. coast guard, city police and Keith Fisher, who was in uniform as a member of the R.C.N.V.R. were pressed into service. As the walls of the burning Webb Building collapsed, the second and ground floors were carried into the basement, trapping people inside. Keith led the way toward cries coming from beneath the debris, working to pull rubble aside, extricating three Michigan State Troopers trapped in the building, one of whom was unconscious as Keith carried him out. Aside from the property damage, the fire caused the death of one Michigan State trooper, three were critically injured and seventeen others were injured. Keith returned to Port Huron the next morning to see if there was any more work to be done, and to pick up his naval uniform which had been soaked through and was covered with plaster, dust and grime. The three men that Keith rescued would survive.

Melvin Fisher embarked overseas from Debert, Nova Scotia to the United Kingdom on February 13, 1944. His wife Bernice received word of his safe arrival in early March 1944. He was initially posted with the #3 Canadian Infantry Reinforcement Unit (CIRU), where he spent approximately one and a half months continuing his training.



Pte. Melvin Kenneth Fisher

On March 27, 1944, Melvin travelled from the U.K. to the Italian Theatre, as a member of the Perth Regiment, Royal Canadian Infantry Corps (RCIC), British 8th Army, in the Central Mediterranean Forces. Evelyn received a telegram from him in late April 1944, informing her of his safe arrival in Italy.

The **Italian Campaign**, the first sustained Canadian Army operation of the War, had begun with the invasion of Sicily in July 1943. The fierce fighting on the island would last more than four weeks, during which the Canadians would advance through difficult mountainous terrain, against an ever-stiffening German resistance. By August 17, the Germans had evacuated the island to the Italian mainland. In early September 1943, Canadian and Allied forces invaded Italy. Though Italy surrendered shortly after, the occupying Germans made it clear their fight was not over. Liberating Italy would be a painstaking northward crawl, lasting 20 months, over a range of landscapes, through challenging weather, and against a series of well-protected defences held by some of the German army's best troops.

As part of the Italian Campaign, Melvin took part in the horrific battle at Cassino. In a letter received by his parents in Sarnia not long before his death, he told them of his being on the front lines in Italy. On December 20, 1944, only days before Christmas, Private Melvin Fisher lost his life during a battle on the Lamone River in Italy. His remains were buried on December 21 at a location recorded on the Army Field Service Card as, "5th Canadian Armoured Division CEM No. 11 Villanova sh 89/III NW MR 451420 Row A Grave 3".

In late December 1944, Archibald and Flora in Sarnia received a telegram from the Department of National Defence informing them that their son, PTE MELVIN KENNETH FISHER HAS BEEN KILLED IN ACTION IN ITALY. No further details were provided. Melvin was later officially recorded as, *Overseas casualty, killed in action, in the field (Italy)*.

Melvin Fisher left behind his wife Bernice Evelyn and daughters Patricia Ann and Shirley, who at the time of his death, were residing with Mrs. Fisher's mother on Maple Street in Goderich. In early January 1945, a memorial was held at a morning service in Central United Church, Sarnia, to honour the memory of Private Melvin Fisher, killed in action in Italy in December 1944, along with Coder Joseph Griffith Bell, lost at sea in September 1943 (included in this Project). Both men were members of the congregation. The Rev. E.W. Jewitt extended the sympathy of all the congregation to the bereaved parents and voiced the hope for a just and enduring peace.

In mid-January 1945, Bernice in Goderich received the following letter from the Major-General, Adjutant-General:

Dear Mrs. Fisher:

It was with deep regret that I learned of the death of your husband, A106345 Private Melvin Kenneth Fisher, who gave his life in the Service of his Country in the Mediterranean Theatre of War on the 20th day of December, 1944.

From official information we have received, your husband was killed in action against the enemy. You may be assured that any additional information received will be communicated to you without delay.

The Minister of National Defence and the Members of the Army Council have asked me to express to you and your family their sincere sympathy in your bereavement. We pay tribute to the sacrifice he so bravely made.

In mid-April 1945, Flora Fisher on Brock Street in Sarnia wrote the following letter to the Minister of National Defence:

Dear Sir:

In answer to your letter of Jan. 11th, 1945 I would like to say that I have heard no particulars concerning my son's death in Italy around Dec. 20th, 1944, and if you have any further word I would appreciate it very much if you would write and let me know. I would like to know how he was killed, where he was buried and any other particulars which you might have.

I wrote the Captain of the Perth Regiment, of which my son was a member but that was two months ago but I have had no reply. I have had a letter from no one and I do not know any of the particulars except that he was killed in action. Please advise me if it would be possible to have his body removed to Canada after the war and what it would cost. I would like very much to hear from you.

In late April 1945, Flora received the following reply letter from the Colonel, Director of Records, for Adjutant-General:

Dear Mrs. Fisher:

Further to Colonel Cameron's letter of the 19th instant, I regret to inform you that the only information received from Overseas advises that your son, A.106345 Private Melvin Kenneth Fisher, was killed in action against the enemy in Italy on the 20th day of December, 1944.

No further particulars are received in this Office concerning the actual circumstances surrounding the death of an officer or soldier reported killed in action. In this connection, it is a custom of the Service when a member of the Canadian Army dies Overseas, for a letter to be written, by or for the Officer Commanding the Unit in the Field, direct to the next-of-kin giving all available details.

As your son's official next-of-kin is his wife, Mrs. Bernice Fisher, such a letter would be despatched to her and I hope that she will advise you of the contents.

According to information recently received from Canadian Military Headquarters, England, the remains of Private Fisher were buried on the 21st day of December, 1944, in grave 3, row A of a temporary military burial ground located at Villanova which is seven miles West-North-West of Ravenna, Italy.

The grave will have been temporarily marked with a wooden cross for identification purposes and in due course the remains will be carefully exhumed and removed to a recognized military burial ground when the concentration of graves in the area takes place. It should be borne in mind, however, that for obvious reasons, it may be some considerable time before this can be carried out. Please accept my sincere and heart-felt sympathy for the irreparable loss you have suffered.

In June 1945, Bernice Fisher received a War Service Gratuity of \$291.13 for the loss of her husband. In

August 1945, she received a letter from the Colonel, Director of Records, for Adjutant-General. Following is a portion of that letter:

Dear Madam:

Information has just been received from overseas that the remains of your husband, A106345 Private Melvin Kenneth Fisher, have been buried in grave 3, row A, plot 4, of the 5th Canadian Armoured Division Cemetery, Villanova, seven miles West of Ravenna, Italy. Marked map is enclosed. This is a recognized military burial ground and will receive care and maintenance in perpetuity.

The grave will have been marked with a temporary cross which will be replaced in due course by a permanent headstone suitably inscribed. While it cannot now be stated when this work of permanent commemoration will begin, before any action is taken you will be communicated with and an opportunity will be given you to submit a short personal inscription of your own choice for engraving on the headstone...

In May 1946, Melvin's sister, Doris Gunter of 129 James Street, Sarnia, wrote a letter to the Imperial War Graves Commission in Ottawa. She had become frustrated after reading an article that appeared in the London Free Press earlier that month about the cemetery where her brother was buried. Following is her letter:

Dear Sir;

In a letter to my mother of April 23, 1945 you instructed her that my brother Private M.K. Fisher #106345 was buried at Villanova near Ravenna in Italy. You also advised her that the Cemetery where he was buried would be well taken care of. In an article which appeared in the London Free Press of May 2, 1946 there was a piece written by William Ross saying this cemetery was in terrible condition. The Cemetery being in some places under an inch of water and weeds growing all around. I think this is a disgrace to Canada. My Mother asked permission to bring his body to Canada, but was refused. I now ask permission to have his body taken out of that terrible hole and brought to Canada.

The Army Deputy Minister, on behalf of the Imperial War Graves Commission, was quick to respond. Following is a portion of the letter Doris Gunter received from the Deputy Minister of the Army: *The press article you refer to in connection with the Villa Nova Cemetery at Ravenna has previously come to my attention. This matter has been referred to the Overseas authorities for careful investigation and if the situation described in this article does in fact exist, immediate action will be taken to see that this cemetery is properly maintained. May I assure you that the proper care and maintenance of the graves of deceased Army personnel is a matter of the utmost importance to this Department and every effort will be taken to insure that this will be properly cared for.*

Melvin Fisher left behind his parents Archibald and Flora, his wife Bernice Evelyn, and their two daughters Patricia Ann, age 23 months and Shirley Dianne, age 7 months. He also left behind his two brothers and sister: Joseph, at home in Sarnia; and Keith, a Leading Seaman on active service with the RCN; and his sister Mrs. Doris Gunter of 322 Wellington Street, later 129 James Street, Sarnia.

Sometime before 1950, Bernice Fisher re-married, becoming Mrs. Bernice Evelyn D. Levi, living at 137 Collingwood Street, Sarnia. In February 1950, she wrote to the Director of War Service Records in Ottawa requesting Melvin's war medals. In a portion of her letter she wrote, *I am enclosing this card to you in return of medals for which I feel I should receive on the behalf of his children & myself for which we hold memories very dear to us.*

Twenty-two-year-old Melvin Fisher is buried in Villanova Canadian War Cemetery, Italy, Grave IV.A.3. On his headstone are inscribed the words, IN LOVING MEMORY OF A BELOVED HUSBAND, WIFE EVELYN B. AND DAUGHTERS PATRICIA ANN AND SHIRLEY.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, J, L, N, S, 2C, 2D, 7C, 8X, 8Y

FORDYCE, Gordon William (#R/116865)

Gordon William Fordyce was 21 when he enlisted, and he became a member of an elite squadron of airmen, a critical part of bomber command. He lost his life in defence of freedom during one of the major operations of the war.

He was born in Sarnia on June 13, 1920, the youngest child of Gordon William Fordyce Sr. (born Mimico, Ontario) and Janet "Jennie" Wright (nee Marshall, born in Stenhousemuir, Scotland) Fordyce, of 115 Proctor Street, Sarnia. Gordon Sr. and Janet Fordyce had four children together; daughter Margaret Isobel (born 1913); and sons George Fordyce (born 1916), John Fordyce (born 1918), and Gordon Jr. Gordon Fordyce Sr. supported his family working as a railroad fireman. By the time Gordon Jr. enlisted, his parents had separated. At the time of Gordon's

death, his mother lived at 159 ½ North Front Street, Sarnia and his father worked with C.P.R. Railway in Belleville and lived at the Morden Hotel on Front Street in Sarnia.

His brother George also served in the war, initially as a member of the 26th Battery in Sarnia which went overseas in 1940. In September of 1944, George, who was a bombardier serving with the Royal Canadian Artillery in France, sent his mother Janet three souvenirs from his travels. The souvenirs included: a piece of paper money issued to Nazi troops when they occupied the Netherlands in 1940, which was dated October 1, 1938 (a year before the war began); a sample of propaganda which the Germans dropped in an attempt to induce the Allied soldiers to surrender (with purported excerpts from letters written home by British and American prisoners of war, telling of what fine treatment they received at the hands of the Nazis); and a “safe conduct pass” which was used by Germans who surrender to the Allies.

Gordon Fordyce Jr. attended Johnston Memorial public school from 1926 to 1934, then Sarnia Collegiate Institute from September 1934 to June 1938, taking courses in woodwork, machine shop, auto mechanics and electricity. He was active in sports, participating in swimming, softball and basketball, and he was a member of the school cadets. After completing high school, he was unemployed for one year. He then found work at Howard and Mundy as a clerk from August 1939 to August 1940. After, he was then employed at Kingston Brothers Service Station, North Vidal Street, as a service station attendant, from September 1940 until August 1941 when he enlisted.

Twenty-one-year-old Gordon Fordyce enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force in London, Ontario on August 12, 1941. He stood five feet eight and a half inches tall, had brown eyes and dark brown hair, and was single. He lived at 309 Maxwell Street in Sarnia at the time. He requested flying duties as an Observer. At his enlistment, the recruiter recorded that Gordon was a, *Fine, stable, type of boy. Knows what he wants and goes after it. Should make excellent Pilot or Observer. Keen to fly... a hard worker.*

From London, Gordon was sent to #4 Manning Depot in Valcartier, Quebec. He received his air training at #13 Service Flying Training School (SFTS) in St. Hubert, Quebec, moving to #3 Initial Training School (ITS) in Victoriaville, Quebec; then #4 Elementary Flying Training School (EFTS) in Windsor Mills, Quebec and finally #11 Service Flying Training School (SFTS) in Yorkton, Saskatchewan. In late August 1942, as a student pilot at Yorkton, he experienced a crash landing. It happened at around midnight, when while landing his Crane aircraft at Sturdee Runway; the landing gear collapsed, causing the aircraft to come down hard. The propeller and wing were damaged but he was uninjured in the crash. On September 11, 1942, he was awarded his Pilot's Flying Badge in Yorkton.

Gordon embarked overseas from Halifax on October 27, 1942 bound for the United Kingdom. Initially posted to #3 Personnel Reception Centre, he would serve with #18 (Pilots) Advanced Flying Unit (AFU); the #30 Operational Training Unit (OTU); and the #1662 Conversion Unit. On June 10, 1943, he was a member of #12 Squadron and on October 17, 1943, was transferred to #156 Squadron, part of **Bomber Command**, with the rank of Warrant Officer Class II-Pilot.

During the course of the war, one of this country's most significant contributions was the approximately 50,000 Canadians who served with the RCAF and RAF in Bomber Command operations. Next to Britain, Canada was the largest contributor to Bomber Command, making up more than a third of all of Bomber Command personnel. The men who served in Bomber Command faced some of the most difficult odds of anyone fighting in the war.

Beginning in mid-June 1943, Gordon would go on to fly twenty-four operational sorties with RAF Bomber Command, twenty-one with the #12 RAF Squadron based at RAF Wickenby, Lincolnshire and three sorties with #156 RAF Pathfinder Force based at RAF Warboys, Cambridgeshire at the time. No. 156 Squadron was a bomber squadron that became one of the four founding members of the Pathfinder Force, No. 8 Group, serving with that group from August 1942 until the end of the war. Operating with Vickers Wellington bombers, the squadron converted to Avro Lancasters in January 1943.

As a member of #156 Squadron, Gordon and his crew were part of the prestigious **Pathfinder Force**. The Pathfinder Force was made up of experienced, hand-picked crews from bomber squadrons with elite navigational abilities. These aerial rangers, equipped with the latest target-finding technologies were the spearhead of the bomber stream, arriving first over the target and dropping coloured flares to pinpoint and highlight the area to be bombed by the follow-on force.

As part of RAF #156 Squadron “We Light the Way”, Pathfinder Force, Warrant Officer Class II-Pilot Gordon Fordyce's Lancaster Bomber crew members included Sergeants Lawrence J. Collins (N), Albert Edward

Egan (WAG), R. Harris (BA), George Johnson (F/E), Ronald Horace Hodges (AG) and James Steel Minogue (AG, of Cumberland, Ontario). This crew, as part of #12 Squadron and of #156 Squadron participated in raids targeting cities such as Modane, France; Genoa and Milan in Italy, and Cologne, Hamburg, Nuremburg, Hanover, Munich and Berlin, in Germany. These raids dropped both bombs and “nickels” (propaganda leaflets).

The **Battle of Berlin** was the British air bombing campaign on Berlin (and other German cities) beginning in mid-November 1943, lasting until March 1944. On the night of November 23, 1943, a total of 383 aircraft including 365 Lancasters, ten Halifaxes and eight Mosquitos, left England targeting Berlin. Gordon Fordyce and his crew aboard #156 Squadron, Lancaster Mark III aircraft JB293 (markings GT-) took off from RAF Warboys as part of the 383 aircraft that night. The bomber stream used the same route as the previous night and the Germans had predicted Berlin as the target and had gathered their night-fighters in the target area. The target was obscured by clouds, but the Pathfinders arrived on time and marked the target accurately. Also helping the bombers mark their targets through the clouds was the glow of major fires still burning from the previous night when 764 aircraft attacked the city, the heaviest bombardment against Berlin to date. On the night of November 23, the time over the target was 7:58 – 8:15 p.m. and 1,377 tons of bombs were dropped, 734 high explosives, and 643 incendiaries. Though the raid was classified as a success, twenty RAF aircraft were lost, all Lancasters, including Gordon Fordyce’s Lancaster bomber.



WOII-Pilot Gordon William Fordyce

On its return from bombing Berlin, Gordon Fordyce’s Lancaster JB293 crashed into High Acre House, near Manor Farm, Harpley, Norfolk, England. A local lorry driver/Home Guard Sergeant heard the crash and rushed to the scene only 200 yards away. He entered the burning building and broke the plane’s cabin with bricks and rescued an airman trapped in the burning nose, another stuck under the wing, the rear-gunner trapped in the broken tail and a fourth member who had been flung from the plane. Three of the seven Lancaster crew members died in the crash. Gordon Fordyce was dead on the scene; his body had multiple injuries and was badly burned. His body was identified by his identity discs. Along with RCAF Flight-Sergeant Gordon Fordyce, also killed were Sgt. Ronald Horace Hodges, mid-upper gunner, (RAF), and Sgt. George Johnson, flight engineer, (RAF). Surviving the crash were: Sgt’s L.J. Collins, R. Harris, A.E. Egan (RAF) and James Steel Minogue (RCAF). Gordon Fordyce’s remains were buried on November 29, 1943 in R.A.F. Regional Cemetery in Cambridge.

In late November 1943, Janet Fordyce in Sarnia received a telegram from Ottawa informing her that her son, GORDON WILLIAM FORDYCE HAS BEEN REPORTED KILLED ON TUESDAY NOVEMBER 23 WHILE ON ACTIVE SERVICE OVERSEAS AND FURTHER INFORMATION WILL BE FORWARDED WHEN RECEIVED. No further details of the action that cost the life of her son were given. On November 30th, 1943, Janet received a cable informing her that her son, FLIGHT-SERGEANT GORDON WILLIAM FORDYCE KILLED IN ACTION WITH THE RCAF ON ACTIVE DUTY ON NOVEMBER 23 WAS BURIED AT CAMBRIDGE ENGLAND YESTERDAY AFTERNOON (NOV 29) AT TWO O’CLOCK. Gordon Fordyce was later officially recorded as, *Killed during air operations, overseas (England)*.

In late March 1945, Janet Fordyce received a War Service Gratuity of \$382.94 for the loss of her son. In April 1945, she received a photograph of the grave of her son who was buried in the Royal Air Force plot at Cambridge Borough Cemetery, Cambridge, England. The photograph and details of the plot were sent by R.A.F. Flt. Lieut. J.F. Flynn, Regional Burials Officer in England. Officer Flynn explained that the plot was a gift from the Borough of Cambridge to the Royal Air Force, which now contained many airmen of all ranks from all parts of the Dominion, together with French, Belgian and Polish comrades. In the photograph, Gordon Fordyce's grave was marked with a wooden cross, which would be replaced by a stone memorial after the war. There was also a wreath there, which was a tribute to him by his friends. Officer Flynn explained that the area was in the care of the Imperial War Graves Commission, which was responsible for its maintenance for all time. He added: *The principal architect to the Imperial War Graves Commission was here some months ago and he showed me the design for the final layout of the plot. I can assure you it will be very beautiful. The Royal Air Force desires to help the families of those lads who rest so far from their homeland and we are always ready to give whatever information we can.*

Gordon's three siblings at the time of his death were Mrs. Kenneth Buxton (Margaret) in Sarnia; John Fordyce in Sarnia; and Sergeant George Fordyce who was serving overseas. Twenty-three-year-old Gordon Fordyce, who had been overseas only one year prior to his death, is buried in Cambridge City Cemetery, Cambridgeshire, United Kingdom, Grave 14518. Gordon's service awards included the 1939-45 Star, Europe Star, Defence Medal, War Medal and the C.V.S.M.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, J, L, M, N, R, 2C, 2D, 3J, 4I, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10B, 10U

FOSTER, Charles St. Clair (#R/70200)

Charles Foster sacrificed his life in the battle to drive the Nazi's from occupied France. Fifty-seven years later, in a small French village, he was among fourteen Canadian and British airmen who were honoured by the eternally grateful citizens by the unveiling a monument to those who had lost their lives there.

Charles was born in Sarnia on August 14, 1916, the son of Cecil Horatio (employed at Imperial Oil Limited, Sarnia) and Matilda Isabella Maude Blanche (nee Bartlett, born in Blackwell, Ontario) Foster, of 221 North Mackenzie Street, Sarnia. Charles attended Central United Sunday School, later becoming an active member of the church, and served as an usher. He would also be a carrier for the *Canadian Observer* in Sarnia for a time. He received his education at George Street (high school entrance) from 1928 to 1929, then at Sarnia Technical from September 1929 to November 1934, specializing in drafting. He was a member of the Lambton Regiment, as a Signaller, from 1930 to 1934 when the regiment disbanded. He was active in sports, including golf, softball, swimming and hockey. His hobby was the construction of glider planes with some of his pals, known as the "Pee Wee Glider Club."



Sgt. Charles St. Clair Foster

After completing high school, Charles was employed at Walker Brothers Retail Department store on Mitton Street in Sarnia as a stock manager and sales clerk from 1935 to 1940. In a reference letter written on behalf of Charles by his boss at Walker Brothers, J.A. McKean wrote of Charles, *His work was completely satisfactory. His thoroughness, honesty, and ingenuity enabled him to do his work with a minimum of supervision. His ability to mix*

well with others and his willingness to co-operate brought him the high esteem of his fellow workmen. Charles Foster later left Walker Brothers to work at Galt Aircraft School as an airframe mechanic.

Twenty-four-year-old Charles Foster stood five feet eleven and a half inches tall, had blue eyes and blonde hair, and was single when he enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force in Hamilton on August 28, 1940. He recorded his current address as 89 Glenmorris Street, Galt, Ontario, and his permanent address as 221 N. MacKenzie Street, Sarnia. He requested ground duties as an airframe mechanic. From #1 Manning Depot in Toronto, Charles received his training in Trenton and #3 Bombing and Gunnery School in MacDonald, Manitoba. In mid-November 1941, Charles spent a 10-day furlough at his home in Sarnia with his family and friends. Not long after returning to his unit, he embarked overseas from Halifax for the United Kingdom on Christmas Day, December 25, 1941.

Initially posted to #3 Personnel Reception Centre, he became a member of RCAF #406 Squadron on January 22, 1942. In September 1942, he attended #4 School of Technical Training (S of TT) in St. Athan, South Wales. On January 9, 1943, he was posted with #1659 Conversion Unit, serving there for almost two months. On February 27, 1943, he became a member of RCAF #419 Moose Squadron “Moosa Aswayita” (written in Cree, not Latin, meaning “beware the moose-a ferocious fighter”), part of **Bomber Command**. By then, he had attained the rank of Sergeant Flight-Engineer.

During the course of the war, one of this country’s most significant contributions was the approximately 50,000 Canadians who served with the RCAF and RAF in Bomber Command operations. Next to Britain, Canada was the largest contributor to Bomber Command, making up more than a third of all of Bomber Command personnel. The men who served in Bomber Command faced some of the most difficult odds of anyone fighting in the war.

RCAF #419 Squadron was formed at RAF Mildenhall, England in December 1941, and named after its first commanding officer, Wing Commander John “Moose” Fulton. The unit moved to various bases throughout the war, including Leeming, Topcliffe, Croft and Middleton St. George. Initially operating Wellington bombers, in November 1942 the squadron converted to Handley Page Halifax bombers, and in March 1944 to Avro Lancasters.

On the night of March 28, 1943, three hundred twenty-three aircraft (179 Wellingtons, 52 Halifaxes, 50 Lancasters, 35 Stirlings and 7 Mosquitos) set off from bases in England to bomb the German submarine base at St. Nazaire, France. Charles Foster was part of a crew aboard Halifax II Bomber BB283 (markings VR-O) as part of this mission, that took off from their base at RAF Middleton St. George. This was this particular crews first operation together, and Charles’ first flight operation.

As the planes headed across the English Channel, the weather conditions were reasonably good with 4/10 to 6/10 cloud cover at 18,000 feet over the target. Crews reported the German flak was intensive, but mainly inaccurate. However, the German ground searchlights were able to spot the Halifax Bomber BB283 and successfully “coned” it in the lights. Despite of the aircraft’s twisting and turning, it could not escape the lights and was hit by heavy German anti-aircraft fire. Halifax Bomber BB283 went down near Escoublac-La-Baule in the yard of a steel factory, Trignac Ironworks. Perishing with Sergeant-Flight Engineer Charles Foster were FS.s Gerald McGrath, Roderick Murray McLeod, Robert Francis Beckett; Sgt. Joseph John Goldspink; and Sgt.s Dennis Ansley (RAF) and William James Stonard Boyd (RAF). Overall, the operation was successful in scoring 18 direct hits, but the aircraft caused minimal damage, failing to penetrate six meters of reinforced concrete that shielded the submarines.



Sgt. Charles St. Clair Foster

In mid-April of 1943, Cecil and Matilda Foster on MacKenzie Street in Sarnia received a telegram from Ottawa signed by the R.C.A.F. Casualty Officer, informing them that their son Charles Foster, who had been previously reported missing, was now believed to have been killed in the course of a raid on a Nazi submarine base. Charles Foster was later officially recorded as, *Previously reported missing after air operations, now for official purposes, presumed dead, overseas*. In August 1945, Cecil and Matilda received a War Service Gratuity of \$430.91 for the loss of their son. Twenty-six-year-old Sergeant Flight Engineer Charles Foster is buried in Escoublac-La-Baule War Cemetery, Loire-Atlantique, France, Grave 2.G.2. On his headstone are inscribed the words, IN THE GARDEN OF MEMORY WE MEET EVERY DAY. HIS SPIRIT IS ETERNAL.

In May 2000, Farrell McCarthy of Miramichi, New Brunswick travelled to the small town of Trignac, in France for the unveiling of a monument. That monument is located at the exact location where the Halifax Bomber was brought down on March 28, 1943, and is dedicated to the memory of the crew members who lost their lives in that crash, along with the crew of an RAF Lancaster lost on the same mission. Farrell McCarthy's uncle was Gerald McGrath, one of the seven members that included Charles Foster of Sarnia, from RCAF #419 Halifax Bomber BB283. The ceremony was especially touching for the McGrath family because for 56 years the family thought that the plane had crashed into the English Channel. It was only when members of the Memoire et Savoir Nazairien Committee had contacted them, did they also learn that Gerald McGrath had a grave in France. At the age of 92, Gerald McGrath's sister learned for the first time that her brother had a grave near Saint Nazaire, France.

Members of this committee had also contacted the City of Sarnia/Mayor Bradley in 1996 requesting assistance in locating family members and information on Charles Foster, one of the seven "heroes", as they called them, who helped drive the Germans out of France and free the world from Nazism. Following is a portion of a letter received by Mayor Bradley from the Memoire et Savoir Committee:

In order to honor and perpetuate the memory of those men's sacrifice and also that of the crew of another plane, a Lancaster, lost in the seas on the way back from that mission, in the same night and after a request for both our Associations, the Trignac Town Corporation has decided to have a monument erected on the very place of the dramatic crash. The monument was to be unveiled on May 8, 2000, with a great official ceremony, which were invited the victims' families and those who helped the village in their quest to identify the airmen. Jack Western, of the Sarnia Bomber Command Association, was able to provide the committee with information on Charles Foster.

When Gerald McGrath's family went to France, they learned further details of that fatal night of March 28, 1943. When the Halifax Bomber came down in the steel factory yard, there were many eyewitnesses who saw the bodies. The following are portions of three of those eyewitness accounts:

Mrs. Lamballe: *That evening, as soon as they saw the plane fall from the sky, my father, Francois LeFeuvre and our neighbor, Desire Dubois, immediately set out saying, 'It came down in the factory.' They went through the 'Trignac Door' – my father had the key – taking the shortest route. They were the first on the scene of the crash. They told us they saw three dead Canadians, with a cage containing two live carrier pigeons. Their first thoughts were to free the pigeons, but German soldiers arrived and prevented them from doing so. They had to step back as the German soldiers were armed.*

Raymond Gandon: *I left work at 7 a.m. on 29th March, and on passing in front of the company Serrurerie Nazairienne, I saw the cockpit of a plane. When I got closer, I saw the pilot sitting in his seat with his hands on the controls. He was a handsome, blonde man. He must have been fairly tall, and what particularly marked my attention was the fineness of his hands. At four or five meters from him were two other crew members. One on his back, and the other laid on his side. They were both tall and strong, and were wearing smart leather jackets. Near to these men was a cage on the ground which contained live pigeons. I intended to liberate the birds, but when I heard the sound of the boots of the German soldiers arriving, I was afraid for my own safety.*

Yves Thoby: *At that time, I was employed by the locksmiths Noel in Trignac doing maintenance work in the factory. After a horrific night's bombing, I went at 7:30 a.m. to the factory. At the base of the water tower, on the railway line, I saw an air crew member lied out, face to the ground. He was warmly dressed in a white roll neck sweater. However, he had neither shoes nor jacket. These had no doubt been stolen. A German soldier was standing at his side. A bit further to the left, in the iron ore pit, I saw the body of the aircraft with three members, a cage with two dead pigeons, and a wing of the plane on a conveyor belt. I saw this tragic sight very briefly as the German soldiers quickly pushed away all civilian presence.*

On May 8, 2000, more than 3,000 French citizens from the local area of Trignac turned out for the unveiling

of the monument to honour the 14 Canadian and British airmen who lost their lives that March night in 1943. A 70-member children's choir stood beside the monument and sang songs in English and French. Yves Thoby, the president of the "Memoire et Savoir Nazairiens Committee" stated, *We saw the Halifax fall to bits in the factory grounds; and above all, we saw the crew members – all of them dead. They appeared to us as tall, handsome, strong, young men, as we described in the memorial book. Twenty years old is far too young to die... Tell them (Canadians) that the French people have not forgotten such sacrifices. It is when times are difficult that you can come to know your friends. In our scanty shelters, during the bombing raids, and frightened out of our lives, we never doubted... We kneel with respect in front of such heroes.*

Shortly after the speeches, the flags of Canada, Britain and France that covered the monument were removed to show a large stone monument with metal plaques honouring the names of 14 airmen; seven from RCAF #419 Halifax Bomber BB283, and seven from RAF #97 Lancaster Bomber 754. The monument is on the site where the Halifax Bomber crashed. In the background can be seen the concrete remains of the vacant steel factory. There are two other metal plaques on the monument below those with the names of the fallen airmen. One plaque has inscribed in French (translated): *Lives of great men all remind us we can make our lives sublime, and, departing, leave behind us footprints on the sands of time. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.* The other plaque has inscribed in French (translated): *Honour to these men who gave their life to liberate the soil of France from the Nazi yoke. Trignac May 8, 2000.*

After the Trignac monument was unveiled, family members of the fallen were taken to Escoublac-La-Baule War Cemetery, 13 km west of St. Nazaire, and for some, they were able to see the graves of their loved ones for the first time. At the graveyard, family members met a local French women of 85 who showed them pictures of the graveyard taken soon after the burial of many of the men during the war. With money collected secretly from the generous local people, she provided a cross for every grave, had hedges planted, and employed a permanent gardener to tend to the cemetery. She had dedicated all her time and energy to maintain the graves. Later, the graveyard came under the control of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. The seven airmen of Halifax Bomber BB283, including Charles Foster of Sarnia, are buried side by side.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, J, L, M, N, S, 2C, 2D, 4B, 5C, 5D, 6G, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10B, 10U

FOWLIE, John (Jack) Mackintosh (#J/13989)

John Fowlie had begun his dream of teaching children when he made the decision to postpone his career in order to serve his country. He would lose his life during the dangerous training of flying heavy bombers.

He was born in Collingwood, Ontario on May 3, 1920, the only son of Melville Mackay (a watchmaker) and Margaret Rose (nee Mackintosh) Fowlie. Melville (born in Erin, Wellington County, Ontario) and Margaret (born in Collingwood, Ontario) Fowlie were married in Toronto on January 1, 1918. Margaret passed away on May 4, 1920, the day after a difficult childbirth delivering John. From the age six on John was raised by his father Melville and his second wife Catharine Clark (nee Ferguson) Fowlie. Melville and Catharine Fowlie had two children together of their own, Janet Catharine (born 1931) and Donald MacKay Fowlie (born 1933). The family resided in Collingwood for a time, then in 1930, moved to Elm Grove, West Virginia. Around 1936, the family moved to Sarnia, living at 144 South Forsythe Street. They opened a store in Sarnia, on Front and Cromwell Streets--Fowlie's Fine English China, Pottery and Crystal.

In his everyday life, John Fowlie went by the name Jack. Jack attended King George Public School in Collingwood (1924-1932), then Elmgrove Junior High in Elmgrove, West Virginia (1932-1934); Appleby High School in Oakville (1934-1937) and then Sarnia Collegiate in Sarnia in 1937, graduating in 1938. He was active in student life, particularly basketball and badminton; he also enjoyed football, hockey, soccer, softball and cricket, and he was a member of the debate team. His hobbies included reading and stamp collecting, and he was a member of the Odd Fellows and St. Andrew's Ushers Club. In the summer months of July and August from 1937 through to 1939, he worked as a farm labourer in Kerwood, Sarnia, Forest and Warwick.

In 1938-1939, he attended London Normal School, acquiring his Interim Teacher's Certificate. Jack's dream was to teach at a high school. He was part way toward his dream as before enlisting--he was a teacher in a one-room rural Sarnia Public schoolhouse at Bickford, on the Moore and Sombra town line from September 1939 to June 1940. Teaching all grades 1 through 8, and living with the Nichol's family while there, he earned between \$700-\$800 a year. In July 1939 and August 1940, he attended University of Western Ontario taking summer general arts courses. From August 1940 to September 1941, he worked as a farm labourer again, for John Day in Watford, until he

enlisted. During the war, Jack Fowlie put his dream of teaching on hold.



A young Jack Fowlie



Teenager Jack Fowlie

Twenty-one-year-old Jack Fowlie stood five feet ten inches tall, had blue eyes and brown hair, and was single when enlisted with the Royal Canadian Air Force in London, Ontario on September 13, 1941. He lived on Forsythe Street with his family at the time. He wanted to continue his education after the war, with the goal of teaching in mind. Jack requested flying duties, and his interviewing officer wrote of Jack, *Likes Mathematics and prefers to be an Observer. Keen to serve. Alert, stable. Should make good Observer.* From #1 Manning Depot in Toronto, he received training at #6 Initial Training School (ITS) in Toronto; then continued at #6 Air Observer School (AOS) in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan; followed by #5 Bombing and Gunnery School (B&GS) in Dafoe, Saskatchewan and #1 Central Navigation School (CNS) in Rivers, Manitoba. His initial training was in single engine, two-seater planes such as Anson and Battle aircraft, first learning to fly, then learning to drop bombs accurately.

Jack Fowlie was awarded his Air Observers Badge on September 5, 1942, where he was recommended for commission as an officer. That same month, Jack visited his parents in Sarnia, before leaving for a posting at #1 General Reconnaissance School (GRS) in Summerside, Prince Edward Island. Jack Fowlie embarked overseas for the United Kingdom on February 2, 1943.

From #3 Personnel Reception Centre (PRC), Jack continued his training in Hudson and Wellington twin-engine bombers, serving at various postings including #5 Operational Training Unit (OTU); #6 Operational Training Unit (OTU); #407 Squadron; #9 Advanced Flying Unit (AFU); and #22 Operational Training Unit (OTU). In February 1945, Jack became a member of RAF #1664 Heavy Conversion Unit (HCU), part of **Bomber Command**, with the rank of Flight Lieutenant-Bomb Aimer. RCAF #1664 HCU formed at RAF Croft in May 1943 to train Canadian crews on the Handley Page Halifax. It moved to RAF Dishforth in April 1944. The unit received some Avro Lancasters from November 1944, and had the Canadian name "Caribou".

With the introduction of new heavy bombers, the four-engine Stirling, Lancaster and Halifax, the Royal Air Force introduced heavy conversion units (HCU) in late 1941 to qualify crews trained on medium bombers to operate the heavy bombers before final posting to operational squadrons. Along with training recruits, some of the heavy conversion units carried out roles that included planting mines, patrolling for submarines, and bombing operations.

During the course of the war, one of this country's most significant contributions was the approximately 50,000 Canadians who served with the RCAF and RAF in Bomber Command operations. Next to Britain, Canada was the largest contributor to Bomber Command, making up more than a third of all of Bomber Command personnel. The men who served in Bomber Command faced some of the most difficult odds of anyone fighting in the war. There was no easy way to learn how to fly the heavy bombers, and training crews suffered a litany of disasters, crashes and deaths. By the end of the war, Bomber Command lost over 8,000 Allied airmen who were killed in training or by accidents alone.



F/L-BA John (Jack) MacKintosh Fowlie

On the evening of March 15/16, 1945, Fowlie's RCAF Halifax III aircraft MZ481 took off at 19:10 hrs from an RAF base in Dishforth, Yorkshire, on a night cross-country and bombing training exercise, bound for a base near Sheffield, England. At some point during the flight, the aircraft crashed into the North Sea. At 03:30 hrs a search began for the aircraft, but no trace could be found. The crew had not transmitted any message indicating that they had a problem. The plane and the bodies of all seven on board were never found. One of the theories was that the crew may have been incapacitated due to carbon dioxide entering their oxygen supply; however, the aircraft or crew were never found to confirm the reason for disappearance.

Approximately one week later, Melville and Catharine Fowlie in Sarnia received a telegram from Ottawa informing them that their son, FLIGHT-LIEUTENANT JOHN MACKINTOSH FOWLIE IS MISSING AFTER FLYING OPERATIONS OVERSEAS. Less than two months after receiving the above telegram, the war in Europe would end. In late April 1945, only weeks before VE Day, Melville Fowlie received the following letter:

Dear Mr. Fowlie,

Before you receive this letter you will have been informed by the Air Minister that your son, Flight Lieutenant John Mackintosh Fowlie, is missing. It is with deep regret that I have to inform you that no further information has been received regarding your son.

Your son was a member of a crew detailed for flying training on the night of 15/16th March. The plane took off at 19.00 hours, and nothing further has been heard of this aircraft. Every rescue effort has been made to trace this aircraft and its occupants, but without success.

You will be contacted immediately any news received. May I now express the deep sympathy which all of us feel with you during this sad time of waiting.

It was not until seven months after he was reported missing that Jack's parents were notified that their son was now officially recorded as, *Previously reported missing after air operations, now for official purposes, presumed dead, overseas*. Perishing with Flight Lieutenant-Bomb Aimer John (Jack) Fowlie were F/O. James Charles Pearson; F/L. Frank Earl Connors; and FS.s James Graham, John Howard James Grahame, Arthur Henry Jones, and Sgt. Kenneth James Parrish (RAF).

In late March 1946, Jack's parents received a War Service Gratuity of \$798.23 for the loss of their son. Over four years later, in early October 1950, Melville Fowlie wrote the following letter to the Department of National Defence in Ottawa:

Dear Sir;

My son, F/L John M. Fowlie J13989 was lost overseas on March 16/45. So far we have never received the parents medal. We did receive his regular service medals but are very anxious to have the other one. Would you kindly let us know why this one has never been sent.

Melville received a reply from the Director of War Service Records in Ottawa only weeks later. Following is a portion of that letter:

Dear Mr. Fowlie:

... Your letter has been referred to this Directorate inasmuch as the issue of the Memorial Cross is now under the jurisdiction of this office. In reply you are advised that the regulations governing the issue of this Cross provides that it is given by the Canadian Government as a memento of personal loss and sacrifice on the part of the mothers and widows of ex-service personnel. As the mother of your boy predeceased him it is regretted to inform you that the Memorial Cross, as a token of sacrifice, in this case is not issuable.

In late May 1952, Melville received the following letter from the Wing Commander, R.C.A.F. Casualties Officer, for Chief of the Air Staff:

Dear Mr. Fowlie:

It is with reluctance that after so long an interval, I must refer to the loss of your son, Flight Lieutenant John Mackintosh Fowlie, but due to the lack of any information concerning him since he was reported missing, it must be regretfully accepted and officially recorded that he does not have a "known" grave.

Due to the extreme hazards attending air operations there are, unhappily, many thousands of British aircrew boys who do not have "known" graves and all will be commemorated on General Memorials that will be erected at a number of locations by the Imperial War Graves Commission (of which Canada is a member), each Memorial representative of a theatre of operations. One of these Memorials will be erected at Runnymede, England, and the name of your son will appear on that Memorial.

I realize that this is an extremely distressing letter and that there is no manner of conveying such information to you that would not add to your heartaches. I am fully aware that nothing I may say will lessen your great sorrow, but I would like to express to you and the members of your family my deepest sympathy.

John (Jack) Fowlie's name, along with nineteen others, is inscribed on a tablet on the Memorial School building at Appleby College. The building was constructed as a memorial to the members of the Appleby community killed in World War II. Twenty-four-year-old Flight Lieutenant John (Jack) Fowlie has no known grave. His name is inscribed on the Runnymede War Memorial, Surrey, United Kingdom, Panel 278. Jack Fowlie's family also had a stone laid in tribute to him at Lakeview Cemetery, Sarnia.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, J, L, M, N, R, 2C, 2D, 3J, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10U, i

GALLAWAY, Lloyd George (#J/16499)

Lloyd Gallaway was an honour student, an excellent local athlete, and had started a successful career in sales. One of his air force application references referred to him as loyal, reliable and having a character beyond reproach. Overseas, he earned a reputation as one of the top-ranking Canadian fliers. He would lose his life in one of the most difficult placements of the Allied cause.

He was born in Sarnia on February 16, 1917, the son of Edgar E. and Gertrude Effie (nee Hoare) Gallaway, of 130 Bright Street, Sarnia. Edgar (born in Creemore, Simcoe County, Ontario) and Gertrude (born in Georgetown, Halton County, Ontario) Gallaway were married on September 29, 1910 in Georgetown, Ontario. Edgar Gallaway was a barber in Sarnia. Edgar and Gertrude had eight children together: sons Raymond William Thomas (born 1912); Edgar Dar (born 1914, would serve in the Army); Lloyd; and Jack Kenneth, and four daughters: Jean Marjorie (born 1911, married to become Newman); Dorothy (born 1915, married to become Coate); Irma Gertrude (born 1920); and Helen Eileen. Brother Edgar Gallaway would also serve--in September 1942, Edgar would celebrate his 20th birthday in England, a member of the 11th Field Company, Royal Canadian Engineers as a Sapper.

Young Lloyd was a member of St. John's Anglican Church, and worked as a carrier boy for the *Canadian Observer* in Sarnia from 1926 to 1936. He was educated in Sarnia: at Lochiel Street Elementary School from 1923 to 1931, then Sarnia Collegiate Institute from 1931 to December 1937, graduating as an honour student. While in high school, Lloyd was on the business staff of the magazine in 1936 and was part of Cadet Corps for six years. He was proficient in many sports including rugby and tennis extensively, gymnastics, golf and shooting. Of note, he was a member of the senior rugby team that won the W.O.S.S.A. football championship in 1937, and following graduation, he played junior football with the Canon Davis Memorial Church Team.

In July 1937, Lloyd began employment as a clerk with Walker Stores Limited in Sarnia, advancing to store-manager, a position he kept for two years until being transferred. In July 1939, he was given a promotion to merchandise manager, and transferred to the company's store in Barrie. In November 1939, he was transferred to

Gordon, MacKay and Company Limited in Toronto (the parent company), working as a salesman.

In his air force application, a May 1940 reference letter written on his behalf by his manager at Walker Stores, the manager wrote of Lloyd, *He is a thoroughly loyal, reliable, young man, and his character is beyond reproach.* Another reference letter was written in June 1940 by W. Haney of Robinson and Haines Barristers and Solicitors. W. Haney wrote of Lloyd, *I have known this young man all his life... He was an excellent student at Sarnia Collegiate Institute and Technical School from which he matriculated in 1937. While attending such Collegiate he was one of its outstanding athletic stars being particularly proficient in Gymnastics work and on the football field, having played in the First Team. Following his graduation he played Junior Football with the Canon Davis Memorial Church Team. He has always been noted as being a particularly clean type of sportsman. He is thoroughly reliable and honest and his habits of life are beyond reproach. One cannot speak too highly of this type of young man... I have no hesitancy in suggesting that this young man would do credit to himself and the Service if he is fortunate enough to secure an appointment.*



P/O-WAG Lloyd George Gallaway



Lloyd Gallaway with his brother Eddie

Twenty-three-year-old Lloyd Gallaway enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force on July 2, 1940 in Toronto. He lived at 21 Atlas Avenue in Toronto at the time, employed as a salesman. He stood five feet four and a half inches tall, had grey eyes and brown hair, and was single. He requested flying duties with a preference for being an air gunner. From the moment he enlisted, Lloyd loved the air force. From #1 Manning Depot in Toronto, Lloyd received air training at #1 Initial Training School (ITS) in Toronto; then at #2 Wireless School (WS) in Calgary and #4 Bombing and Gunnery School (B&GS) in Fingal, Ontario. On February 17, 1941, he was awarded his Air Gunners Badge.

On April 5, 1941, Lloyd Gallaway embarked overseas from Debert, Nova Scotia bound for the United Kingdom. He arrived in England along with three other Sarnia airmen: Sergeants William B. Clark (included in this Project), John Bennett and J.D. Murray. Lloyd Gallaway became a member of RCAF #61 Squadron "Per Puram Tunantes" (Thundering through the clear air), attaining the rank of Pilot Officer, and Wireless Operator/Air Gunner. From #3 Personnel Reception Centre, Lloyd attended #2 Signal School for three months, then was posted to #16 Operational Training Unit in mid-August 1941. By September 1941, Lloyd was taking part in bombing operations over German-occupied Europe. He was transferred to #97 Squadron on October 5, and ten days later, became a member of RAF #61 Squadron, based at RAF North Luffenham at the time, with the rank of Flight Sergeant-Wireless Operator/Air Gunner.

RAF #61 Squadron went to war equipped with Handley Page Hampden aircraft. The squadron spent most of the war operating as a night bomber squadron. For a time, the squadron also used the troubled Avro Manchester aircraft. By June 1942, the squadron converted to the Avro Lancaster.

During the course of the war, one of this country's most significant contributions was the approximately

50,000 Canadians who served with the RCAF and RAF in **Bomber Command** operations. Next to Britain, Canada was the largest contributor to Bomber Command, making up more than a third of all of Bomber Command personnel. The men who served in Bomber Command faced some of the most difficult odds of anyone fighting in the war.

There was no easy way to learn how to fly the heavy bombers, and training crews suffered a litany of disasters, crashes and deaths. By the end of the war, Bomber Command lost over 8,000 Allied airmen who were killed in training or by accidents alone.

Eight months after arriving with #61 Squadron, Lloyd experienced one of those accidents. On June 19, 1942, Flight Sergeant Lloyd Gallaway was aboard a Wellington aircraft at Central Gunnery School (in Cambridgeshire) along with four others. The aircraft was involved in a low flying gunnery exercise and when flying a little lower than it should have been, the aircraft struck an obstruction that damaged the aircraft. There were no injuries in the incident, and the pilot was disciplined.

In July of 1942, Lloyd completed the Gunnery leaders course in England. Following that, he was posted to Coastal Command, which he described as, "Not very exciting" after being in all the recent "big shows" including bombing operations on "Cologne, Essen and Bremen in three or four nights." With Coastal Command, rear gunner Gallaway would sit in his rear turret hour after hour on the long Atlantic patrols. He described it as:

Not very exciting, but it was often quiet back where I was on the bombing jobs. We just sat, first leaning on one side and then on the other to keep from getting cramped up and tired. All the time we kept looking out trying to spot night fighters, if it was a night raid. On some trips we didn't see a thing and never opened up on anything unless we were pretty certain it was an enemy taking a bead on us. The best thing to do was just sit tight keeping our guns quiet unless we could plainly see a Jerry swinging about taking aim. In that case, according to Lloyd, there was only one thing to do – smack him.



P/O-WAG Lloyd George Gallaway

During seventeen months of service Lloyd Gallaway took his place as one of the top-ranking Canadian fliers, and served with Australian and English crews. He was selected for many dangerous jobs and was frequently mentioned in news stories sent by *Canadian Press* writers from England. In the British motion picture "Target For Tonight" Lloyd was seen as an active airman. Many Sarnian's saw him when the movie was shown in Sarnia.

On October 1, 1942, Lloyd was part of a crew aboard Lancaster Mk. 1 R5703 (markings QR-) that crashed one mile north-east of Gunthorpe, Nottinghamshire in a flying accident. Shortly after clearing the runway after take-off from RAF Syerston, the Lancaster went into a shallow dive and hit the ground. Along with Pilot Officer-Wireless Operator/Air Gunner Lloyd Gallaway, also killed were Sgt. Frederick George Bellchambers (RAF), and RAF members of the crew: Pilot George Ernest Weston, P/O Nav George Alan Hawes, F/O W.Op Joseph Edward Hanson, W.Op/AG Jack Machin Robinson and Sgt. John McFadyen Ramsay.

Lloyd Gallaway's remains were buried on October 6, 1942 at Newark Cemetery in the U.K. Several days after the crash, parents Edgar and Gertrude Gallaway in Sarnia were advised by Air Force Headquarters that their son Lloyd was killed in action. No other details were given in the message. Lloyd Gallaway was later officially recorded as, *Killed during air operations, overseas.*

Lloyd Gallaway was posthumously awarded the rank of Pilot Officer, his third promotion since enlisting (he was listed as Flight-Sergeant at the time of his death). In a list of promotions prior to his death, the RCAF had mistakenly awarded the promotion to a "L.G. Hallaway", of Sarnia in February of 1942. It was not until after Lloyd's death that RCAF headquarters discovered its mistake. On October 6, 1942, the same day that his remains were interred in the English cemetery, a funeral service was held in Sarnia's St. John's Anglican Church, which was attended by members of the Gallaway family, relatives and friends.

In January 1943, Gertrude Gallaway received a letter from the Wing Commander, Royal Air Force, Syerston, England. Following is a portion of that letter:

Dear Mrs. Gallaway,

... Sapper Gallaway (his brother Edgar) called upon us some while ago and I feel sure that he has given you all the information available, but as I now find I can send letters by a special route I am repeating in confidence the information for you. I rather feel that it might not have been allowed out of the country from your son.

I felt that when I sat down to write to you I wanted to have available the findings of the Officers detailed to enquire in to the cause of the accident, so will you please forgive me for the delay.

It has now been ascertained beyond reasonable doubt that the accident was in no way due to human error, whether on the part of the aircrew themselves or of the ground staff. The evidence shows that an electrical fault caused the release of the dingy when in mid-air. The dingy fouled the tail of the aircraft and caused the Pilot to lose control. This is the first time that this kind of electrical failure has been known in some thousands of hours of flying done by this particular kind of aircraft. Of course steps were immediately taken to insert a device in all aircraft to avoid a recurrence of this failure. So again we have learned by bitter experience that it is next to impossible to foresee everything all the time.

It is a certainty that the Pilot almost the most experienced Officer in the Royal Air Force on this type of aircraft did all he could to minimize the effect of the fouling, but it was physically impossible for him to do more – and so we lost an absolutely outstanding crew.

Squadron Leader Weston, already a holder of the Distinguished Flying Cross was an 'ace' pilot, there is no doubt about that. And yet he could not of his own instill that utter confidence that he did unless he had with him airmen outstanding each at his own particular job.

F/Sgt. Gallaway was one of my ablest gunners and had just been recommended for a commission when this unfortunate disaster robbed us of his services. We enjoyed having him with us – he was so full of energy and so keen on his job.

On behalf of all ranks I offer you our deepest sympathy in the loss you have suffered and we trust that this war will soon be over so that these great sacrifices will not be necessary, and so that your other son may rejoin you.

Twenty-five-year-old Lloyd Gallaway is buried in Newark-Upon-Trent Cemetery, Nottinghamshire, United Kingdom, Section P, Grave 305. On his headstone are inscribed the words, SO HE PASSED OVER AND ALL THE TRUMPETS SOUNDED FOR HIM ON THE OTHER SIDE.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, J, L, M, N, R, 2C, 2D, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10B, 10U

GAMMON, Rex Thomas (#R/90157)

The second week of October 1945 must have been a disturbing and tumultuous time for James and Rhoda Gammon of Lochiel Street. The first letter that arrived informed them that their son, Rex, had been killed when his aircraft was shot down over Germany. A second letter a few days later confirmed that another son, William, was now a prisoner of war.

Rex Gammon was born in Sarnia on December 11, 1916, the eldest son of James (born in Bosanquet, Lambton County) and Rhoda Mae (nee Longley, born in Sarnia) Gammon, of 253 Lochiel Street, Sarnia. To support Rhoda and their four children—Drena (later Mrs. Edward Cockerham), Barbara, Rex and William aka "Bud" — James was a grocer and later a school attendance officer.

Prior to enlisting, Rex spent his entire life in Sarnia. He was educated at Lochiel Street School from 1923 to 1931 and then Sarnia Collegiate from September 1931 until the spring of 1936. Rex was also a member of the

Presbyterian Church and a carrier for the *Canadian Observer* for a while. He was a well-known athlete in the local sporting community; he enjoyed playing tennis as a member of the Sarnia Tennis Club and also was proficient at basketball, badminton, and curling. After high school, Rex entered the work force earning money as a local clerk from 1936 to 1939. He then was a coremaker at Mueller Limited in 1939-1940 and later worked at Ferguson and Brodie, a shoe store, from 1940 to 1941 until he decided to enlist.

Following are portions of two reference letters written in August 1940 on behalf of Rex as part of his application for the RCAF. A.T. Crockard, the VP of The King Milling Company wrote, *I have known Rex Gammon for the past ten years and believe he would be a suitable person for enlistment in the Air Force. He has shown great interest in sports and is a tennis player of much more than average ability.* Gordon Callum, foundry foreman at Mueller Limited wrote, *I have known the bearer of this letter Rex Gammon for two years. He has always been reliable, thorough and willing at all times, to do what he was asked to do. His work at present is in the core room of Mueller Ltd. Sarnia plumbing and waterworks m.f.s. Quite a lot of his work at the present time is on war orders.*

He was twenty-four when he enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force in London, Ontario on February 7, 1941. Rex stood five feet ten inches tall, had brown eyes and dark brown hair, was single, and recorded his occupation as coremaker. His post-war ambition was to be a newspaper reporter. Rex requested flying duties, with a preference to be an Air Gunner. Certainly, he made a good impression. A Recruiting Officer wrote this of Rex: *Smart boy, intelligent, good appearance, mentally alert, keen and enthusiastic, will readily absorb training and should develop into first class material for air crew. Recommended for Air Gunner.* Rex left shortly after for the R.C.A.F. #2 Manning Pool at Brandon, Manitoba. Before he left for out west, employees of Mueller Limited waited on Rex at his home and presented him with a set of military hair brushes.

Gammon's military training was very extensive at each camp as he criss-crossed the country. Following Brandon, Gammon was posted to #1 Manning Depot in Toronto and #4 Manning Depot in Quebec City. He received air training at #8 Service Flying Training School (SFTS) in Moncton, #4 Wireless School (WS) in Guelph and #1 Bombing and Gunnery School (B&GS) in Jarvis, Ontario. While Rex was at #1 B&GS, his younger brother William, who had also enlisted in the RCAF in May 1941, was a student pilot at an Eastern Canada air command training school. In late December 1941, William Gammon was awarded his Pilots wings at Moncton, New Brunswick, graduating with the 11th class at No. 8 Service Flying Training School. On January 3, 1942, Rex Gammon was awarded his Air Gunner's Badge, graduating as a Wireless Air Gunner at #1 B&GS in Jarvis, with his proud parents attending the graduation.



Flight Sergeant-WAG Rex Thomas Gammon

Both Rex and William Gammon embarked overseas together from Halifax to the United Kingdom on January 23, 1942. From #3 Personnel Reception Centre, Rex continued his training at #1 Signals School and #2 (Observers) Advanced Flying Unit (AFU). On May 26, 1942, he became a member of RAF #22 Operational Training Unit (OTU) as a Wireless Operator/Air Gunner in **Bomber Command** with the rank of Flight Sergeant. RAF #22 OTU was formed in April 1941 at RAF Wellesbourne Mountford as part of No. 6 Group RAF Bomber Command to train night bomber crews with the Vickers Wellington twin-engine, long-range medium bomber.

During the course of the war, one of this country's most significant contributions was the approximately 50,000 Canadians who served with the RCAF and RAF in Bomber Command operations. Next to Britain, Canada was the largest contributor to Bomber Command, comprising more than a third of the entire Bomber Command personnel. The men who served in Bomber Command faced some of the most difficult odds of anyone fighting in the war.

Unfortunately, Rex didn't beat the odds and was killed just over two months after he became a member of RAF #22 OTU. On the night of July 28/29, 1942, Flight Sergeant-Wireless Operator/Air Gunner Rex Gammon was a member of a crew aboard Wellington IC aircraft X9696 (markings XN-Z) that took off from RAF Wellesbourne Mountford. It was one of two Wellington bombers from #22 OTU sent on a night operation targeting Hamburg, Germany. Both bombers were recalled but neither responded. Both were shot down over their target. Perishing with F/S Rex Gammon were F/Ss Richard Butcher Ayers and James Spencer Evans. Four airmen in the other #22 OTU Wellington bomber X3201 were also lost: F/Ss Patrick Cluney Noel, Frank Edward Johnson, Elmer Leroy Wagner and Ernest Griffith White. A number of the Wellington airmen, including Canadian Sgts E.W. Bell, W.C. Warren and J. Pierce, were taken prisoners of war.

It was not until several weeks after the crash that Rex Gammon was listed as, *Missing after air operations*. At the same time, three members of the same crew were reported as, *Prisoners of war in Germany*.

Less than three months later, in October of 1942, James and Rhoda Gammon heard more news about Rex. They were advised by R.C.A.F. Headquarters at Ottawa that their son's body had been recovered and buried by the Germans in a cemetery at Neumunster, near Kiel, Germany two days after he was shot down.

It must have been a tumultuous week for James and Rhoda in Sarnia. Earlier that same week, they had received news informing them officially that their other son, William, of the R.C.A.F., was a prisoner of war in Germany. By early December 1942, Rex Gammon was officially recorded as, *Previously reported missing after air operations, now for official purposes presumed dead, overseas*. In September 1945, the Gammons on Lochiel Street received a War Service Gratuity of \$195.73 for the loss of their son Rex. In mid-April 1946, Rhoda received the following letter from the R.C.A.F. Records Officer in Ottawa:

Dear Mrs. Gammon:

It is a privilege to have the opportunity of sending you the Operational Wings and Certificate in recognition of the gallant services rendered by your son Flight Sergeant R.T. Gammon. I realize there is little which may be said or done to lessen your sorrows, but it is my hope that these "Wings", indicative of operations against the enemy, will be a treasured memento of a young life offered on the altar of freedom in defence of his Home and Country.

On a wall in St. Peter's Church in Wellesbourne, England, hangs a brass plaque that was dedicated in 1986 to the members of RAF #22 Operational Training Unit who lost their lives in the war. The inscription reads, DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF THE 315 AIRMEN AND AIRWOMEN KILLED WHILE SERVING WITH NO. 22 OTU WELLESBOURNE MOUNTFORD AIRFIELD DURING WORLD WAR TWO. Two Sarnians were among the 315 names: Rex Gammon and John Duncan (included in this Project).

Twenty-five-year-old Rex Gammon is buried in Ohlsdorf Cemetery, Hamburg, Germany, Grave 4A.E.14. On his headstone are inscribed the words, SON OF JAMES AND RHODA GAMMON SARNIA, ONTARIO, CANADA.

The Gammons had lost one son and were anxious about William. They had learned on October 8, 1942, that Rex's younger brother, RCAF Warrant Officer William "Bud" Gammon, was reported as, *Missing after air operations, believed to have been rescued after having been shot down at sea*. Three weeks later, they had received a message from the International Red Cross Society that German sources had reported that their son William was a prisoner of war in Germany, confined to Stalag 344.

In May 1944, the Gammons received a letter from William. Dated February 2, 1944 and posted at Stalag 344, he praised Canadian organizations that had been sending supplies to those interned by the Nazis and announced the transfer of some of the Sarnia prisoners. He wrote: *You certainly have to hand it to the different organizations in Canada in regard to looking after us. All Canadians received about two pounds of chocolate and the other day a shipment of plates, cups, forks and spoons, etc., came in. The Dieppe prisoners left for a new camp last week, including Ward, Date, Demary and the rest of the fellows from Sarnia. I was sorry to see them go, however, it will be a change for them.*

In mid-February 1945, the Gammons received the a telegram from Ottawa informing them that their son, WILLIAM ARTHUR GAMMON WARRANT OFFICER SECOND CLASS RCAF WHO IS A PRISONER OF WAR IN GERMANY HAS BEEN PROMOTED TO WARRANT OFFICER FIRST CLASS. William wrote his parents another letter, dated April 23, 1945, that they received in early May. His news was exciting to say the least.

In it, he provided details of his escape from the Germans and subsequent treatment at No. 4 Canadian General Hospital after meeting up with American troops. William revealed that five other prisoners and he had escaped while the camp's personnel were being marched to another area. His friends and he fled into the woods, where they remained for several days until they ran across units of an American Army. Eventually they returned to the Canadian forces and were hospitalized. William Gammon was able to return to Sarnia after the war. The patriarch of the family, James Gammon, didn't outlive his son Rex by much, passing away from a heart seizure on November 7, 1945, at the age of 56.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, J, L, M, N, R, 2C, 2D, 3J, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10U

GANDER, Arthur Frederic (#R/169746)

For seventeen consecutive weeks, a cheerful and energetic Arthur Gander had written a letter home to his parents on Mitton Street. When the eighteenth week had passed and no letter arrived, Arthur Sr. and Gladys knew something drastic had happened to their twenty year-old son.

Arthur Gander was born in Sarnia on August 15, 1923, the son of Arthur Edward Sr. and Gladys Genevieve Edith (nee Browne) Gander. During World War I, twenty-nine-year-old Arthur Edward Gander (born October 23, 1888 in Tunbridge Wells, Kent, England) was drafted under the Military Service Act of 1917, Class One. After undergoing his medical examination in Sarnia on October 4, 1917, Arthur Edward was called to service on April 16, 1918, reporting to the 1st Depot Battalion, Western Ontario Regiment in London, Ontario. He stood five feet seven and a half inches tall, had grey eyes and brown hair, was single and residing at 350 Confederation Street, Sarnia at the time. He recorded his occupation as machinist/munition worker and his next-of-kin as his mother, Mrs. Ada Jane Gander of Stonehan Road, Hove, Sussex, England (at enlistment, he did not know if his father was alive). Two weeks later, Private Arthur Gander was transferred to the 1st Battalion Canadian Garrison Regiment.

Arthur Edward Gander did not see any overseas service, and was discharged on June 6, 1918 in London, Ontario, less than two months after reporting to duty. Despite being assessed "very good" in both conduct and character, he was discharged deemed "being medically unfit not due to service" because of some heart irregularities. The Great War would end five months later. On April 5, 1920, Arthur Edward Gander married Gladys Genevieve Browne (born in Brighton, Sussex, England) in Brighton, Sussex, England. The young couple would return to Sarnia where Arthur supported his wife as a labourer at Imperial Oil.

Soon, they would have more mouths to feed at their home at 405 South Mitton Street for they were blessed with six children: four sons Arthur Jr.; Victor (born 1928, and would serve in the Korean War); Douglas (born 1934); and Norman (born 1936)--and daughters Margaret Edith (born 1921) and Esme. Arthur was educated in Sarnia at Devine Street Public School from 1929 to 1935, and then at Sarnia Collegiate from 1935 to 1940. His interests ranged from playing sports such as hockey, basketball and baseball to stamp collecting. After graduating from SCITS at the age of 17, Arthur found work as a machinist at Goodisons Company in Sarnia from 1940 until he enlisted in 1942.

Perhaps his father's experiences in the Great War influenced eighteen year-old Arthur Gander to enlist in the Royal Canadian Air Force on June 30, 1942 in London, Ontario. He stood five feet ten inches tall, had blue eyes and light brown hair, was single, and requested flying duties with a preference to be a pilot. Before he left for overseas, Arthur had extensive training. From #1 Manning Depot in Toronto, then #4 Manning Depot in Quebec City, he received air training at #5 Initial Training School (ITS) in Belleville, followed by a stint at #10 Elementary Flying Training School (EFTS) in Pendleton, Ontario. Arthur then headed east to #1 Air Gunners Ground Training School (AGGTS) in Quebec City, and then to #9 Bombing and Gunnery School (B&GS) in Mont Joli, Quebec. He graduated from #9 B&GS in Mont Joli, receiving his Air Gunner's Badge on July 9, 1943. One month later, on August 3, 1943, Arthur Gander embarked overseas departing from New York bound for Scotland.

From #3 Personnel Reception Centre in the U.K., Arthur was first posted to #1664 Conversion Unit. On September 5, 1943, Arthur became a member of the RCAF #427 Lion Squadron whose motto was "Ferte Manus Certas" (Strike Sure). #427 Squadron was part of **Bomber Command** and Arthur Gander held the rank of Sergeant-Air Gunner.

During the course of the war, one of this country's most significant contributions was the approximately 50,000 Canadians who served with the RCAF and RAF in Bomber Command operations. Next to Britain, Canada was the largest contributor to Bomber Command, making up more than a third of all of Bomber Command personnel. The men who served in Bomber Command faced some of the most difficult odds of anyone fighting in the war.



Graduation Class Air Gunners – Mount Joli, Quebec July 1943
Arthur Gander - Back row: Second from right



Sergeant-Air Gunner
Arthur Frederic Gander

No. 427 Squadron was formed in November 1942 as the eighth of fifteen RCAF Bomber Squadrons formed overseas, becoming a part of No. 6 (RCAF) Group. The squadron initially flew twin-engine Wellington aircraft out of RAF Croft, Yorkshire, and in May 1943, relocated to RAF Leeming and converted to four-engine Handley Page Halifax bombers and used them for the majority of the war.

On May 24, 1943, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM) adopted the Squadron and allowed the names of such stars as Judy Garland, Lana Turner, Greer Garson, Joan Crawford, Heddy Lamarr, and others to be displayed on the aircraft. Legend has it that MGM went so far as to provide all members with a lifetime pass to its theatres across North America. In addition, MGM presented a bronze lion to the squadron. This gift and the affiliation with the MGM lion mascot strengthened the squadron's nickname. Another highlight was the presentation of a lion cub, named Mareth, by British Prime Minister Winston Churchill.

While overseas, Arthur Gander wrote a letter home every week to his family. Following are portions of several of those letters:

August 20, 1943 (Letter #1);

Well I finally got here safe and sound. I have strict orders not to say anything concerning the trip so about all I can say is it was very dull and uneventful. The weather was very calm and hardly anybody got seasick including me. The first couple of nights we nearly roasted to death as the port holes all have to be kept closed on account of the blackout... When we landed they had a small Scottish band out for us. Coming through Scotland the country seemed very hilly and much the same as Englands except for the heather which was very plentiful. The country over here is very nice and some of the fields are so green and short that they just look like lawns. One thing that struck me as very picturesque is the miles and miles of stone fence in certain sections of the country. The weather over here is very cool and it seems just like autumn to me instead of the middle of summer.

At present I am living like a king or at least as good as anybody is. We are billeted in former hotels which are the flashiest barracks I have slept in yet and the food we get is not a great deal different from back home except there is not so much variety and not so much of it... So far nothing much has met with my distaste in this country. I imagine I would have liked to spend a vacation at this place in peacetime.... Things in general are very modern around here especially the uptown section. The shows here get some of the semi-latest American pictures although most of them are British films. They are quite expensive according to our standard of prices... At first I found the English money quite complicated and I got rooked once but I have got it figured out fairly well now.

The night before I got here this place had an air-raid but since I have been here all has been quiet... I will

write once every week to let you know how things are going. They tell me if you move around fast enough in this country your mail never catches you. Well I guess that's about all I have to say right now especially since I have about a mile to walk for my supper and not much time to do it in. Nobody ever eats breakfast here as they don't get up early enough to walk that mile there and a mile back.

September 16, 1943 (Letter #8);

... At present it is raining outside as it does at least half of every day. Even the Englishmen here say the weather around this section is as bad as you'll find anywhere in England. Its plain to see why the English were so kind about letting all the Canadian squadrons situate around here.... Last night I made my first trip over enemy territory. I don't remember the name of the place but it is in France near Germany. Our target was a rubber plant about ten times the size of the one at home. It was a fairly long trip about 7 ½ to 8 hrs but considered a fairly easy one. The jerries had quite a few search lights out and quite a bit of light flak but our kite didn't encounter any night fighters which are far the more dangerous. On the whole things ran fairly smooth and I think a good job was done by the look of the fires and by the cloud of smoke.

On leaving the target our kite got caught in the smoke at 9000 ft and for awhile we were tossed all over the sky. Sitting in a cramped up position for 7 ½ to 8 hrs is no cinch especially when you can hardly move for clothes and yet you still feel cold. Coming back I went to take a bite out of a chocolate bar and nearly broke my teeth. It was frozen solid. Tomorrow I think I will go over to stores and draw a electrically heated flying suit. I think most of the planes got back safely although one of ours was forced down at another station. Fellows who have flown over places like Munich or Berlin considered that trip a "piece of cake". Well I'm afraid that's all for tonight as I'm pretty tired. I only had five hrs sleep this morning.

September 25, 1943 (Letter #9);

... Since I last wrote you I haven't been on any more "ops" as the runways on this station are sinking and all this week we have been moving to a nearby station until they are repaired which I expect will be a couple of months. If everything had gone according to schedule we should have been bombing Jerry tonight but for some unknown reason take off was either postponed for a couple of hours or put off entirely. I don't know which yet as I am sitting in the crew room with half my flying clothes on waiting to get the latest "gin"... I still haven't wrote to Uncle Vic yet but I suppose I'll have to soon as I get leave from Oct 9 to the 15th and I might drop in and see him for a couple of days if the rest of the crew don't try too hard to convince me to spend it in London with them....

September 28, 1943 (Letter #10);

I've just finished my supper or maybe I'd be more correct to say my only meal today. It seems to me I just haven't been around when the eats were passed out today the reason being I was on "ops" last night and I just haven't been on any station at meal hours. Last night we raided Hanover. It was a pretty hot target and with the weather against us before we started it made things even tougher. When we left base it was completely clouded over and farther out we ran into an electrical storm which put our radio on the blink. After awhile we found we were off track and when we crossed the coast we ran into a heavily defended area. There were hundreds of searchlights wandering around and all of a sudden the "master" beam caught us and then all the rest of them turned on us. Immediately the skipper began throwing the plane all over the sky and after about five minutes of dodging heavy flak we escaped with only a couple of holes in the side of the fuselage and a memory of what a close shave we had.

Farther on we bombed the target which was already in flames. We were lucky we never got coned by the searchlights for long over the target but we saw several kites that were really caught badly by searchlights and we saw one plane explode in mid-air. Coming home we ran into the electrical storm again and a call came threw from base that the weather was too bad to land there so we were to land at another station. By this time some of our instruments were unserviceable and we weren't able to find the station they had instructed us to land at so we came down through the clouds assisted by two search lights and asked permission to land at a strange station. When we got down we found about six other planes that had got lost and had landed there. By this time it was about four A.M. and after having several cups of tea and a sandwich I found myself a chair and went to sleep in front of the fire place as there were no beds available. Next morning just after it got light we took off and flew back to base in rain and fog. About ten minutes ago a news report said that the bombing of the target was very concentrated and successful. We lost 38 bombers. Well I'm afraid I haven't got room for much more. So long.

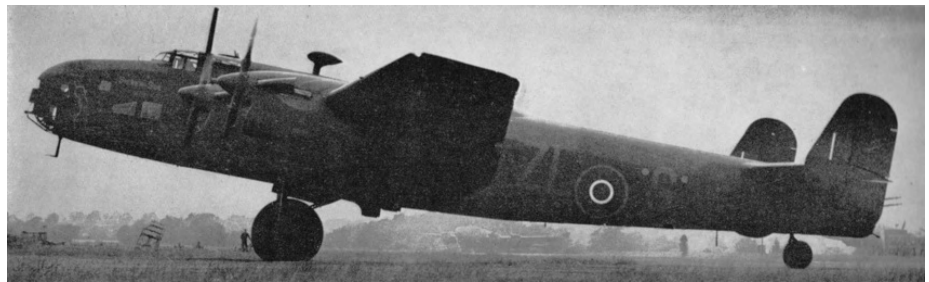
November 12, 1943 (Letter #17);

Today I received my second letter from Uncle Vic. He seemed rather anxious to know if I was all right as I haven't answered his first letter yet so I guess I'll have to drop him a few lines in the near future. There's not much

news this week. I haven't been on any more ops lately. Its gradually getting colder over here, this afternoon it hailed fairly hard and the meteorologist forecast snow for tonight. I suppose by this time you have had a couple of nice snowfalls... I expect another leave at the end of this month and I shall try to look up Daddy's mother. This week our squadron held a big party at which everybody had a good time and the next day some of the big shots from M.G.M. studios were here to look the place over and present us with a squadron crest. I read a piece in the paper about our crew the other day but I can't enclose it as they won't allow it in this type of letter. There are two other fellows besides myself from Sarnia on this station but I never knew them. They are both ground crew. I was glad to hear that Norman was such a good boy when he had his teeth out and was proud to hear that Esme did so well in the quiz contest. Well I'm afraid I'll have to quit before I freeze to death. At present I am sitting on the edge of the bed with no fire going as we left the ashes in the fireplace this morning and have no wood to start the fire. As you know most rooms over here are heated by fireplaces and it seems to me one of the biggest comforts is to draw a nice chair up close to the fire and sit and drink hot tea. Don't get the idea I'm getting like these cherrpers as I'm not its just that it's the only way to get warm. So long for now.



Sergeant-AG Arthur Frederic Gander



427 Squadron Halifax

Arthur Gander had made seven successful trips with his squadron over Germany. On the night of November 18, 1943 six days after writing the above letter, Arthur and his crew were aboard their Halifax V aircraft LK976 (markings ZL-Z) for their eighth mission. They took off from the Leeming aerodrome at approximately 16.30 hours, to carry out a night bombing mission on Mannheim Germany. They were due back the next morning, but when they didn't return, base knew something drastic had happened, especially since no wireless communication was received from the missing Halifax. It was presumed that their aircraft had crashed in the English Channel. Along with Sergeant Arthur Gander, also killed, on the given date of November 19, 1943, were WO. Percy George Jolliffe; FS. Robert Dixon; F/O.s Francis William Winter, Patrick J. Kennedy and Sgt. Walter Riddell (RAF); and FS. Geoffrey Cyril Harper (RAF). The body of F/O Francis William Winter was washed ashore and buried in Cayeux Sur Mer Parish Cemetery, Somme, France. The remaining six crew members were never located.

There were 395 aircraft involved in the Mannheim operation, one of the larger diversionary raids, and 23 aircraft were lost (5.8%). By comparison, the main raid on Berlin registered 2.0% losses.

While overseas, Arthur Gander had written home once a week for 17 weeks. When his family did not receive an 18th letter, his parents knew that something was wrong. Initially, they had received a telegram from the RCAF Casualties Officer in Ottawa informing them that their son, SERGEANT ARTHUR FREDERIC GANDER IS REPORTED MISSING IN ACTION AFTER AIR OPERATIONS OVERSEAS AFTER A RAID OVER GERMANY. In late November 1943, #427 Wing Commander R.S. Turnbull wrote this letter to Arthur Sr. in Sarnia:

It is with deep regret that I write to you this date to convey to you the feelings of my entire Squadron. We lost an excellent crew when this aircraft did not return from this operation and we count its loss a most severe blow to this Squadron. Although Arthur and the other members of his crew had not been long members of this particular Squadron, in the short period of time that he was with us he carried out his duties in cheerful and energetic manner.

Arthur was popular with all ranks of this Squadron's personnel and it is indeed a pity that his career with us should be terminated so abruptly by this tragic event. There is always the possibility that Arthur may be a prisoner-of-war, in which case, you will either hear from him direct, or through the Air Ministry, who will receive advice from the International Red Cross Society. Your son's effects have been gathered together and forwarded to the Royal Air Force Central Depository, where they will be held until better news is received, or in any event for a period of at least six months before being forwarded on to you through the Administrator of Estates, Ottawa. May I now express the great sympathy which all of us here share with you in your grievous anxiety, and I would like to assure you also how greatly we all honour the noble sacrifice your son has made, so far from home, in the Cause of Freedom, in the Service of the British Commonwealth of Nations.

Nine months later, in August 1944, the Ganders received another letter from the R.C.A.F. Casualty Officer:

It is with deep regret that, in view of the lapse of time and the absence of any further information concerning your son, Sergeant Arthur Frederic Gander, since he was reported missing, the Air Ministry Overseas now proposes to take action to presume his death for official purposes.

Arthur Gander was later officially recorded as, *Previously reported missing on active service with the R.C.A.F., now for official purposes, presumed dead.* After her son Arthur was declared dead, Gladys Gander wrote the following poem:

*Sometimes the note of his favourite song.
Brings a thought of him.
Of times the sound of a passing plane.
Is a temptation to speak his name.
A token of love and remembrance.
Of a son we shall never forget.
His memory is a treasure.
His loss a lifetime regret.*

In July 1945, Arthur Sr. and Gladys received a War Service Gratuity of \$162.30 for the loss of their son Arthur. In November 1946, Gladys received the following letter from the R.C.A.F. Wing Commander for Chief of the Air Staff in Ottawa:

Dear Mrs. Gander:

It is a privilege to have the opportunity of sending you the Operational Wings and Certificate in recognition of the gallant services rendered by your son, Sergeant A.F. Gander. I realize there is little which may be said or done to lessen your sorrow, but it is my hope that these "Wings", indicative of operations against the enemy, will be a treasured memento of a young life offered on the altar of freedom in defence of his Home and Country.

In October 1950, the Ganders received the following letter from the Wing Commander, RCAF Casualties Officer:

Dear Mr. Gander:

It is with regret that I refer to the loss of your son, Sergeant Arthur Frederic Gander. A report has, however, been received from our Missing Research and Enquiry Service concerning your son and members of his crew.

This Service has located the grave of Flying Officer Winter, your son's Navigator, in the Parish Cemetery at Cayeux-Sur-Mer in the Department of Somme, France. It was ascertained that his body had been recovered from the sea near Brighton, Department of Somme. Although this area has now been swept by search teams, unhappily, no information could be secured on any other member of the crew. In view of the above, therefore, it must be regretfully accepted that all members of the crew with the exception of Flying Officer Winter lost their lives at sea and have no known grave.

Due to the extreme hazards attending air operations there are, unhappily, many thousands of British aircrew boys who, like your son, do not have a known grave, and their names will be commemorated on General Memorials that will be erected at a number of locations by the Imperial War Graves Commission (of which Canada is a member), each Memorial representative of a theatre of operations. One of these Memorials will be erected at Runnymede, England and the names of your son and the other members of his crew will appear on that Memorial. A detailed announcement concerning these General Memorials will be made at a future date.

I realize that this is an extremely distressing letter and that there is no manner of conveying such news to you that would not add to your heartaches, and I am fully aware that nothing I may say will lessen your great sorrow, but I would like to take this opportunity of expressing to you and the members of your family my deepest sympathy in the

loss of your gallant son.

Twenty year-old Arthur Gander has no known grave. His name is inscribed on the Runnymede War Memorial, Surrey, United Kingdom, Panel 186.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, J, L, M, N, R, 2C, 2D, 4B, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10B, 10U, 2h

GLASS, William James (#J/95300)

Courtright resident William James “Billy” Glass had been married just two years when his aircraft was shot down during a bombing mission over Germany. His brother, also in the RCAF, honoured him with these lines: *To me he bides right by my side. As he did in days gone by; But the end has come, such a bitter end. Of my brother and truest friend.*

Billy Glass was born in Courtright, Ontario on January 31, 1923, the son of William Orison (born in Mooretown, Ontario) and Emma Viola (nee Campbell, born in Glencoe) Glass, of Courtright, Ontario. Parents William Sr. and Emma were married in Courtright on December 22, 1920. William and Emma were blessed with five children: four sons--John George (born 1925), Edward Bruce, Clifford Harold and Billy—and their daughter, Helen Virginia. To support his family, William Sr. was a bricklayer and stonemason.

Billy attended Courtright Public School from 1928 to 1937 and then Sarnia Collegiate from 1937 to 1939. He was a very active young man in and out of school. Billy participated in hockey and softball, was a member of St. Stephen’s Anglican Church, and was very active in the work of the local Anglican Young People’s Association. After completing grade school, he left school at the age of sixteen and found work as a deckhand and lookout with Colonial Steamships Limited in Port Colborne (1939-1941). Billy returned to Sarnia Collegiate for one year (1941-1942) for precision lathe operation. It paid off for he proceeded to work as a lathe operator with Electric Auto-Lite. He then worked as a bricklayer’s helper with Piggot Construction Company in Sarnia and later as a Pipefitter with Canadian Kellogg Company for several months until he enlisted.

Nineteen year-old Billy Glass enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force on November 12, 1942 in Sarnia. He stood five feet four inches tall, had blue eyes and brown hair, was single, and was living at home with his parents in Courtright at the time. He requested flying duties and wanted to be part of an aircrew. From #2 Manning Depot in Brandon, Manitoba, he began his training in April 1943 at #4 Initial Training School (ITS) in Edmonton, Alberta, and then #7 Bombing and Gunnery School (B&GS) in Paulson, Manitoba until mid-January 1944.

Before completing his stint at #7 B&GS, on December 31, 1943, Billy Glass married Frances Mabel Webb in her hometown of Fort Saskatchewan, Alberta. In mid-January 1944, newly-married William Glass continued his training at #5 Air Observers School (AOS) in Winnipeg, where he was awarded his Air Bombers Badge on February 25, 1944. In March, he continued his training at #4 Air Gunners Ground Training School (AGGTS) in Valleyfield. Billy had been married a little more than three months before he kissed Frances good-bye and embarked overseas from Halifax for the United Kingdom on April 10, 1944.



Pilot Officer-BA William James “Billy” Glass

From #3 Personnel Reception Centre in England, he continued training with #7 (Observers) Advanced Flying Unit (AFU) before being posted to #83 Operational Training Unit (OTU) in July 1944. On November 23, 1944, Pilot Officer-Bomb Aimer Billy Glass became a member of RAF #12 Squadron "Leads the Field", as part of **Bomber Command**.

During the course of the war, one of this country's most significant contributions was the approximately 50,000 Canadians who served with the RCAF and RAF in Bomber Command operations. Next to Britain, Canada was the largest contributor to Bomber Command, making up more than a third of all of Bomber Command personnel. The men who served in Bomber Command faced some of the most difficult odds of anyone fighting in the war.

At the outbreak of war, RAF #12 Squadron moved to France outfitted with Fairey Battle aircraft. By June 1940, the squadron was back in England stationed at RAF Finningley and then RAF Binbrook. By November 1940, still at RAF Binbrook, the squadron had been re-equipped with twin-engine Vickers Wellington medium bombers. In 1942 the squadron moved to RAF Wickenby and soon converted to Avro Lancaster four-engine heavy bombers.

On January 16, 1945, approximately nine months after arriving overseas, Billy Glass was part of a crew aboard Lancaster Mk. 1 aircraft LM213 (markings PH-G). The aircraft took off from RAF Wickenby on a night mission to bomb the huge synthetic oil plant at Zeitz, Germany. All but one crew member perished when enemy fire shot down the Lancaster over Bentheim, Germany. Perishing with Pilot Officer-Bomb Aimer Billy Glass were P/O. Donald Erwin Linington; F/O.s William Kerluk and Douglas James Bailey; and RAF Sgt.s Gilbert John Harris and Francis Joseph Tate. One Canadian, Sgt. A.F. Hyrnes, the rear gunner, was taken prisoner of war.

Billy's parents in Courtright received two telegrams from the RCAF Casualties Officer in the coming months. On January 20, 1945, the first telegram informed them that their son, FLIGHT SERGEANT BOMBARDIER WILLIAM (BILLY) GLASS JR WAS REPORTED MISSING IN ACTION OVERSEAS. One and a half months later, on March 9, 1945, a second telegram read REGRET TO ADVISE THAT INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS QUOTING GERMAN INFORMATION STATES YOUR SON FLIGHT SERGEANT WILLIAM JAMES GLASS LOST HIS LIFE JANUARY SIXTEENTH BUT DOES NOT GIVE ADDITIONAL PARTICULARS STOP PENDING FURTHER CONFIRMATION YOUR SON IS TO BE CONSIDERED MISSING BELIEVED KILLED STOP PLEASE ACCEPT MY SINCERE SYMPATHY STOP LETTER FOLLOWS.

Billy Glass was later officially recorded as, *Previously reported missing after air operations, now for official purposes, presumed dead, overseas (Germany)*. His brother, John, was serving in the RCAF as a Leading Aircraftman with the No. 5 Equipment Depot at Moncton, New Brunswick at the time of Billy's death. In a letter to his parents afterwards, John penned a few words of remembrance:

*They say he is gone to the land beyond, To a better world, I know;
But it does not seem right he should end his flight. When so young and so far away.
To me he bides right by my side. As he did in days gone by;
But the end has come, such a bitter end. Of my brother and truest friend.
He will always live on, he can never die, For his memories are always here -
Of his hurried walk, and his quiet talk: Oh my brother, so very dear.
So now you see why he will never die. My brother and truest friend -
He has left to me these memories. I shall cherish to my life's end.*

William "Billy" Glass left behind his parents William Sr. and Viola Glass in Courtright, and his wife of just over two years, Frances Mabel Glass. At the time of Williams' death, Frances was a Private with the Canadian Women's Army Corps (C.W.A.C.), residing at Argyle Barracks in Ottawa. In February 1946, Frances received a War Service Gratuity of \$344.19 for the loss of her husband.

Frances would later reside at 94th Street, Edmonton, Alberta, and re-marry. In January 1947, William Sr. and Viola Glass received a certificate from the Air Marshal, Chief of the Air Staff in Ottawa, informing them that their son, Pilot Officer W.J. Glass, "has been posthumously awarded the Operational Wings of the Royal Canadian Air Force in recognition of gallant service in action against the enemy."

Twenty-one-year-old William (Billy) Glass was buried at Bentheim, Germany, but was later exhumed and reburied in the Reichswald Forest War Cemetery, Germany, Grave 13.E.11. On his headstone are inscribed the words, WHOSOEVER BELIEVETH IN HIM SHOULD NOT PERISH, BUT HAVE EVERLASTING LIFE.

William "Billy" Glass' name is also inscribed on a memorial plaque on the interior wall of St. Stephen's Anglican Church in the Village of Courtright. In November 2019, his name along with 25 others was added to the Sarnia cenotaph, engraved in stone to be remembered always.

The following is an account from William Glass's Gunner, Al Hynes, the only survivor from the last mission:

My hometown is Winnipeg and that's where I joined the RCAF when I turned eighteen. At the time I joined they were not taking aircrew so I wound up ground crew and it took a few years before I finally got to re-muster. I tried out for a pilot but didn't make it. The war was getting on towards the end and I had to get into it so I volunteered to be a gunner. I went to Mont-Joli, Quebec where I took my gunnery training. We flew Fairey Battles with Bristol turrets. I went overseas and eventually wound up on an RAF squadron, No. 12, who were flying Lancasters which was fine with me. The Lancaster was the bird that everybody wanted to fly.

Our first trip was to Essen in the Ruhr Valley. That first trip - the flak and the searchlights and the bombs going down. It was absolutely beautiful - better than any fireworks display I've ever seen. As the trips progressed you began to realize that we were killing them and they're trying to kill you and the fear sets in. You don't really let that bother you because it's a short duration thing, eight to ten hours and you're back home. You go to the pub, get drunk, and have a good night's sleep in a bed with sheets. The food is fair and then away you go the next night to another hair-raising experience.

On my tenth trip we went to a German city called Zeitz - very deep into Germany. It was an oil refinery. We had a bad feeling about this trip - a premonition. We all had it. We discussed amongst ourselves whether we'd put the aircraft unserviceable. We decided, no, we'd go ahead and fly it. Who believes in premonitions? Anyway, we were over the target. We'd bombed it and it was quite different there. There was a layer of thin cloud over the target and the fires below and the searchlights, there were hundreds of them playing on the cloud layer, made a glowing screen and every plane in the bomber stream was clearly visible from above. We knew there were fighters around because they were dropping fighter flares and the photoflashes were going off. It was quite spectacular.

Anyway, I had a nasty feeling we were being hunted. I was desperately looking around. I swung my turret around and looked down and there was the hunter, a Messerschmitt 410. He was tilted up about 25 yards away. I directed my guns down immediately and opened fire. At the same time I yelled for the skipper (F/O William Kerluk RCAF) to corkscrew. This all happened within a heartbeat. The fighter opened fire. I could see his four cannons blink once. One cannon shell took the two guns out of my turret on the left side. One hit under my feet and blew out the pipelines (the hydraulic lines that powered the turret) and the intercom. One hit the tail and one I'm sure went up the fuselage and killed the navigator. All this happened just like that. I opened fire. I yelled for the skipper to corkscrew starboard. All he heard was, "Corkscrew," before the cannon shell cut off the intercom. He's yelling, "Which way? Which Way?" I could hear him but he couldn't hear me.

It was all over in seconds. I opened fire when this happened and I could see my tracers bouncing off him. Then he broke away down and it was all quiet. I used the hand crank to turn my turret and my intercom came back on. So I told the skipper the enemy fighter was directly below us and we had about ten seconds to live. I told him to corkscrew or dive to the clouds or do something. The last words he said were, "I'm afraid to move it. The controls are shot up." I said, "Here he comes!" and he tilted up and opened fire. He hit us in the gas tanks and we started to burn. The flame was coming down the fuselage and out through my turret.

Luckily I was wearing the new seat pack - I was sitting on my parachute (Previously the rear gunner's parachute was stowed on a hook in the fuselage and the gunner had to reach behind into the fuselage and clip the parachute pack on). Now when you parachute out of a gun turret you unplug your intercom, your oxygen mask, your oxygen mask heater, and your heated suit. The flames were hitting me in the face. I tried to get my face out of the flames so that I could unplug. I leaned out the doors while I was doing this. The wind caught my parachute harness and I couldn't get back in to unplug anything. So I let go and everything pulled loose which was something of a miracle because they told you if you didn't unplug it usually breaks your neck.

Anyway there I am. It's about 15,000 feet at eleven o'clock at night and 50 below zero. I'm falling on my back. I could see the Lancaster going away. I could see the Messerschmitt 410 coming back. I reached for the ripcord with my right hand but I couldn't reach it because my Mae West had inflated. So I reached with my left hand and got my thumb in the D-ring, pulled it, and after a long pause the parachute opened. I looked down and there's my boots disappearing into the clouds. It seemed like a long, long time that I came down. As soon as I got below the

clouds I realized that it was snowing quite heavily.

I couldn't see the ground but I kept looking down and all of a sudden there I was, "Bang." I landed in my stocking feet in a foot of snow. My Mae West had inflated so I couldn't reach the risers to deflate my chute and it was blowing me across the field. So I dug my hands in to think about what I was going to do next. I thought I'd get up and I'd run around the chute but the snow was too deep and in my stocking feet I couldn't do it.

So I was lying there and I saw a light coming. I knew I was in the middle of Germany so I thought, 'Well, I'll dig by hands into the snow and wait until this guy walks by and hope he doesn't see me in the falling snow.' He got behind me but a gust of wind blew me right into him and it turned out to be my wireless operator (F/S G.J. Harris). He was very badly burned. I grabbed him and I said hang on. I turned the quick release on my parachute. You bang it with your fist to release everything except that it was jammed. I kept banging it and banging it but it wouldn't open. So I got him to sit on my legs while I got my knife out and I cut away the parachute harness.

I looked at him. He was pretty bad. So I decided to give him a shot of morphine. I got my first aid kit out and I got the needle. I said, "Come on. I'll give you a shot of this and you'll feel a little easier." He'd have nothing to do with it. He was wild with pain and whatever. He was fighting me off. Finally I gave up and threw the thing away. He said, "There's a farm house over there. I'll give myself up and get some first aid." So I said, "Ok, I'll see you back in England." He disappeared into the snow. A while later I heard shots.

I knew I was in Germany but I didn't know where in Germany. I must have looked pretty damn conspicuous. I had cut off the legs of my electric suit and wound them around my feet. The sleeve of my electric suit had been burned off and so had my battle dress so everything was hanging by a thread here and a bunch of strings there. My face was burned so I got out the first aid kit. The first aid for burns was a dope called Gentian Violet. It was bright purple. So I got this purple ointment and smeared it on my face. I now had raggedy clothes and a purple face so I must have looked just a little suspicious.

SOURCES: C, D, E, F, G, L, M, N, R, 2C, 2D, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10U

GORING, Curtis Albert (#R/90290)

Curtis Albert Goring had planned to return to his job at St. Clair Motors after the war. Unfortunately, he never got the chance to do so. On September 1, 1943, he perished when his Halifax aircraft was shot down in a raid over Berlin.

Curtis was born in Sarnia on September 16, 1914, the eldest son of William Curtis (born in Petrolia, Enniskillen Township, a farmer) and Amanda Flora (nee McLean, born in Alvinston) Goring, of 133 Richard Street, Sarnia. He was also the nephew of Sarnians Mr. and Mrs. O.E. Mannen of Richard Street and Mr. and Mrs. Moses Hallam of 359 Wellington Street, later 162 Richard Street. The Gorings were blessed with seven children: sons Curtis, Ralph Archibald (born in Detroit, 1917); Keith Emerson (born 1918); Francis Carlyle (born September 1921, see below); and Scotty Ross (born September 1924); as well as two daughters Marion (born 1919) and Blanche (born 1927). Four of the Goring boys served in the Armed Forces, two of them made the supreme sacrifice.

Curtis was educated at Point Edward Public School from 1921 to 1928 and then attended Petrolia High School from September 1928 to mid-February 1930. He had a balanced education in high school where in his final year he studied English, French and Latin as well as algebra, art, agriculture, geography and history. Curtis kept himself active outside the classroom participating in baseball, rugby, golf, bowling, hockey, swimming, sail boating and rifle shooting. He was also involved in High School Cadet training.

In 1930, tragedy struck the Goring family when their mother, Amanda, passed away. After her death, Curtis, 16, was unable to attend school. Instead, he moved from Petrolia to live with his uncle and aunt, the Mannens, on Richard Street. From 1930 to 1936, Curtis worked for George Bell in Sarnia as a delivery truck driver. He was looking to get ahead, however. Between 1937 and 1940, Curtis resumed his education at Sarnia Collegiate where he took night courses in auto mechanics, typing and business. From 1936 until he enlisted in 1941, Curtis worked with St. Clair Motors of Sarnia Limited, first as a registered mechanic for two years and then as the manager of the Parts Department. His postwar plan was to return to St. Clair Motors.

Twenty-six-year-old Curtis Goring enlisted with the Royal Canadian Air Force on February 20, 1941 in London, Ontario. Perhaps he was influenced by his brother Francis (see below), seven years his junior, who had enlisted in the RCAF the previous month. Curtis stood five feet seven and a half inches tall, had brown eyes and dark brown hair, and was single at the time. He was living at home with his father on Richard Street, Sarnia. Curtis

requested flying duties, with a preference for the position of Air Gunner.



Ralph Archibald



Francis Carlyle



Scotty Ross



F/Sgt. Curtis Albert Goring

To be an Air Gunner required extensive training at a series of training centres throughout Canada. From #2 Manning Depot in Brandon, Manitoba, Curtis received his training at #4 Service Flying Training School (SFTS) in Saskatoon; at #2 Wireless School (WS) in Calgary; at Composite Training School (KTS) in Trenton, Ontario; and at #5 Bombing and Gunnery School (B&GS) in Dafoe, Saskatchewan. Nearly a year after he enlisted, Curtis was awarded his Air Gunners Badge on December 8, 1941 in Dafoe. Four days later, he was posted to #1 Y Depot in Halifax, where his brother Francis had been posted six days earlier.

The two Goring brothers embarked overseas for the United Kingdom on January 7, 1942. From #3 Personnel Reception Centre, Curtis continued his training in the U.K. at #7 Air Gunners School (AGS) and then #22 Operational Training Unit (OTU). In late July 1942, he became a member of #115 Squadron and later RCAF #419 Squadron, part of **Bomber Command**.

During the course of the war, one of this country's most significant contributions was the approximately 50,000 Canadians who served with the RCAF and RAF in Bomber Command operations. Next to Britain, Canada was the largest contributor to Bomber Command, making up more than a third of all of Bomber Command personnel. The men who served in Bomber Command faced some of the most difficult odds of anyone fighting in the war.

On October 12, 1942, Curtis Goring became a member of RCAF #405 City of Vancouver Squadron, **Pathfinder Force**. The squadron's motto was "Ducimus" (We lead) and Goring earned the rank of Warrant Officer Class II-Air Gunner. RCAF #405 Squadron was formed at RAF Driffild in April 1941. Outfitted with Vickers Wellingtons, they soon after completed their first bombing operation in Germany. Converting to Handley Page Halifax bombers in 1942, from October 1942 to March 1943, the squadron assisted Coastal Command in North Africa. In March 1943, the squadron returned to Bomber Command, and in April 1943, was selected to join the elite No. 8 (Pathfinder) Group with which it served until the end of the war, based at Gransden Lodge Airfield. It was the only Royal Canadian Air Force squadron that was a part of the Pathfinder Group.

The Pathfinder Force was made up of experienced, hand-picked crews from bomber squadrons with elite navigational abilities. These aerial rangers, equipped with the latest target-finding technologies, were the spearhead of the bomber stream. They arrived first over the target and dropped coloured flares to pinpoint and to highlight the area to be bombed by the follow-on force.

During his time overseas, Curtis experienced and survived two mishaps. First, he was injured in a crash landing in England and spent some time in hospital; and another time, his warplane was forced down in the North Sea where he and other members of the crew were rescued after drifting for some time on a rubber raft.



405 Squadron Halifax

Just over two years after enlisting, on September 1, 1943, Curtis Goring was aboard Halifax aircraft HR915 (markings LQ-O) that took off from RAF Gransden Lodge on a night operation targeting Berlin. The Halifax bomber failed to return from the operation and the cold truth emerged later--HR915 had been shot down by a night-fighter and crashed near Berlin. Canadian Squadron Leader Pearson and four other non-Canadian crew members were captured and became prisoners of war; sadly, Gunner Curtis Goring and WO1 Edwin Matthew McArthur were killed.

On September 3rd, 1943, William Goring on Richard Street received a telegram from Ottawa informing him that his son, FLIGHT SERGEANT CURTIS ALBERT GORING WAS MISSING AFTER AIR OPERATIONS OVERSEAS. The telegram did not indicate the date on which his son was reported missing. His aunt, Mrs. Mannen had not heard from Curtis for a number of few weeks.

In early October 1943, William received another telegram which confirmed that his son Curtis was now listed as, PREVIOUSLY REPORTED MISSING AFTER AIR OPERATIONS NOW FOR OFFICIAL PURPOSES PRESUMED DEAD OVERSEAS (GERMANY). No details of the action in which Curtis had lost his life were given. Reports were later received that on September 1st, of the 622 aircraft involved in the operation, eight Canadian bombers were included in the total of 47 Allied planes lost in a 45-minute raid on Berlin. The RCAF incurred some of its heaviest losses of the war in this September raid on Berlin.

At the time of Curtis' death, three of his brothers were in the aerial division of the armed forces: Sergeant Ralph A. Goring was overseas with the U.S. glider infantry; RCAF Flight-Lieutenant Francis Carlyle, who went overseas with Curtis, was in England; and brother LAC Scotty Ross Goring, was stationed at an RCAF base in Quebec.

In October 1945, William Goring received a War Service Gratuity of \$518.52 for the loss of his son Curtis. Twenty-eight-year-old Curtis Goring has no known grave. His name is inscribed on the Runnymede War Memorial, Surrey, United Kingdom, Panel 179. For widowed father William Goring in Sarnia, he would lose a second son in the war, Francis Carlyle of the RCAF, less than one year later.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, J, L, M, N, 2C, 2D, 4B, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10B, 10U, 10V, 3d

GORING, Francis Carlyle (#J/16344)

Francis Carlyle ("Lyle") Goring was one of four Goring boys who served in the Armed Forces. Lyle's daughter had been born only two months earlier when his aircraft was shot down in a reconnaissance mission during the Battle of Normandy.

Lyle was born in Brigden, Ontario on September 19, 1921, the son of William Curtis (born in Petrolia, Enniskillen Township, a farmer) and Amanda Flora (nee McLean, born in Alvinston, Brooke, Lambton County) Goring, of 133 Richard Street, Sarnia. He was also the nephew of Sarnians Mr. and Mrs. O.E. Mannen of Richard Street and Mr. and Mrs. Moses Hallam of 359 Wellington Street, later 162 Richard Street. The Gorings were blessed with seven children: sons Curtis Albert (born September 1914, see above), Ralph Archibald (born in Detroit, 1917); Keith Emerson (born 1918); Francis Carlyle; and Scotty Ross (born September 1924); as well as two daughters Marion (born 1919) and Blanche (born 1927). Four of the Goring boys served in the Armed Forces, two of them made the supreme sacrifice.



Curtis Albert



Ralph Archibald



Scotty Ross

When Lyle was only nine years old, he lost his mother, Amanda, who passed away in 1930. Lyle's education included attending Johnston Memorial Public Elementary from 1930 to 1935 and then Sarnia Collegiate from September 1935 to June 1940. Lyle was interested in the military at a young age. While attending Sarnia Collegiate, Lyle was a member of the Cadet Corps for five years, and his hobbies included building model aircraft and revolver and rifle shooting. He was one of the leading marksmen there, in revolver and rifle shooting. He was very active in sports, particularly hockey, football, swimming and baseball, along with softball, tennis, golf, lacrosse and basketball. After leaving Sarnia Collegiate, Lyle worked as a clerk at a drug store owned by A.E. Sole from July through September 1937. Later, he was employed as a clerk with Howard & Mundy Sheet Metal Works at 130 Ontario Street. He worked at this job for approximately six months until he enlisted.

Nineteen year-old Francis Lyle Goring enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force on January 4, 1941 in London, Ontario. One month later, his twenty-six-year-old brother Curtis (see above) would also enlist in the RCAF. Lyle stood five feet seven inches tall, had brown eyes and dark brown hair, was single, and recorded his occupation as student. He was residing with his aunt and uncle at the time, Mr. and Mrs. Moses Hallam of 359 Wellington Street. Lyle recorded his next-of-kin as his father William, and his address as, William Goring in care of J. Youngblood, R.R. #1 Woodstock, Ontario (farmer). Lyle requested flying duties, with a preference to be a Pilot or Air Gunner. After the war, Lyle planned to return to school towards the goal of working as a pilot, or administrator of an airline, or doing aeronautical research work.

His training in the RCAF was extensive. From #1 Manning Depot in Toronto, he was transferred to #1 Auxillary Manning Depot in Picton. Lyle received his training at #6 Bombing and Gunnery School (B&GS) in Mountain View, Ontario and then #1 Initial Training School (ITS) in Toronto. Later, he attended #3 Elementary Flying Training School (EFTS) in London and #6 Service Flying Training School (SFTS) in Dunnville, Ontario. He was awarded his Pilot's Flying Badge on December 5, 1941 at Dunnville, where he graduated as a Sergeant Pilot. On

December 6, 1941, Lyle was posted to #1 Y Depot in Halifax. Six days later, his brother Curtis would also arrive at Y Depot, Halifax. Not long afterwards, on January 7, 1942, Francis Lyle Goring and his brother Curtis embarked overseas for the United Kingdom.

From #3 Personnel Reception Centre in England, Lyle continued his training at #1 Service Flying Training School (SFTS) until early March 1942 when he became a member of #296 Squadron. Approximately four months after arriving overseas, Lyle experienced the thrill of being introduced to Their Royal Majesties. While stationed in England, Lyle shook hands with King George VI and Queen Elizabeth when they paid a surprise visit to the squadron. In August 1942, Lyle was discharged from the Royal Canadian Air Force on appointment to Commissioned Rank in the R.A.F. In January 1943, he was posted to RAF Chilbolton.



F/O-Pilot Officer Francis Carlyle "Lyle" Goring
(Left photo: June 10, 1943 at RAF Station Netheravon)

In March 1943, Lyle was promoted to Flight Lieutenant and made a Flight Commander in the R.C.A.F. In September of 1943, he celebrated his 22nd birthday "somewhere in England," as a member of #41 Operational Training Unit (OTU). During that same month, he would learn that his brother Flight Sergeant Curtis Goring was missing after air operations, and a month later, that his brother Curtis was now for official purposes, presumed dead in Germany.

This devastating news was followed by happier news. On November 29, 1943, Lyle Goring married Joyce Pamela Jones in Reigate, Surrey, England. Joyce was a member of the Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF). The couple had one daughter together, Christine Mary, born June 15, 1944. They resided first at Wray Park Road, Reigate, Surrey, and later Meadvale, Redhill, Surrey, England. After the war, in March 1950, Joyce Goring's address was recorded as 588 Cromwell Street, Sarnia.

On March 21, 1944, Flying Officer-Pilot Lyle Goring became a member of RCAF #430 City of Sudbury Squadron whose motto was "Celeriter certoque" (Swiftly and surely). No. 430 Squadron was initially created in January 1943 as an army co-operation squadron, and in June of that year was re-designated as a **fighter reconnaissance unit**, originally equipped with Curtiss Tomahawks, and later with North American Mustangs and Spitfires.

In March 1944, Francis Lyle Goring was part of a group of eight members of the Royal Canadian Air Force that were given the opportunity to visit a coal mine in North Wales. Arrangements had been made by the British Council, a national organization devoted to fostering goodwill. The eight members of the RCAF were outfitted with overalls, helmets and lanterns and descended the half-mile to the pit bottom so quickly that ear-drums clicked. Lyle Goring expressed the common thought: "Whoeee, just like a power dive." As the RCAF fliers debarked from the cage, they were met by the "onsetter," Freddie Edwards and shouted a cheery "Ullo chaps."

His 16-year-old assistant grinned through a layer of coal. The assistant had chosen this job when he became

eligible for compulsory employment in one of several industries. In the muffled darkness of the mine the fliers met muscular Britons toiling at the coal face. The Canadians and the miners were soon engaged in a friendly discussion as to the merits of working “above” versus “below” the earth’s surface, and each opined his job was the easiest. The fliers walked up slants and down steep grades, churning the dust and puffing audibly, surrounded by the deafening clatter, screeching and rumbling sounds inside the mine. One RCAF flier stated, “We’ll take a nice quiet war anytime.”

The **Battle of Normandy** would begin for the Canadians with the June 6, 1944 D-Day landings at Juno Beach. After breaching the “Atlantic Wall” of “Fortress Europe”, Allied armies, with the support of the navy and air force, began their break out from the narrow Normandy bridgehead to carve out a foothold on the French mainland. It would take a whole summer of tenacious fighting, pushing against fierce and ruthless German forces to advance east across France. In a brutal campaign of attrition, the Canadians faced fierce battles and vicious counterattacks as they clawed their way forward liberating villages and towns including Bretteville, Carpiquet, Caen and Falaise. RCAF #430 Squadron, then operating as a fighter reconnaissance unit, would carry out photo reconnaissance missions in support of planning for the Normandy landings. On D-Day, it provided support for the 2nd British Army, and after D-Day, missions included support for ground forces during the Battle of Normandy, and before-and-after photography of attacks on V-1 flying bomb launch sites.

On August 12, 1944, two months after the birth of his daughter, Francis Lyle Goring was aboard his Mustang aircraft AG455 that was engaged on a reconnaissance mission with one other plane. His aircraft was shot down over Culey Le Patry, between Falaise and Vire, France, during the Battle of Normandy and Lyle was killed in the incident. Local residents were able to extract his body from the wreckage for burial.

Approximately one week after the crash, William Goring in Sarnia received a telegram from R.C.A.F. Headquarters in Ottawa informing him that his son, FLIGHT LIEUTENANT F C GORING WAS REPORTED MISSING AFTER AIR OPERATIONS OVERSEAS ON AUGUST 12. The telegram also stated that a letter would follow. Not long before receiving this telegram, William had received a letter from his son Lyle stating that he expected to be returned to Canada soon.

At the time of Lyle’s death, three of his brothers were in the aerial division of the armed forces: Sergeant Ralph A. Goring was overseas with the U.S. glider infantry; RCAF Flight-Sergeant Curtis Albert Goring, who went overseas with Lyle, had been killed in action one year earlier; and brother LAC Scotty Ross Goring, was stationed at an RCAF base in Quebec.

In late August 1944, Lyle’s wife Joyce in Reigate, Surrey, England, received the following letter from the Wing Commander, for Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief, RCAF, Overseas:

Dear Mrs. Goring,

It is with deep regret that I must confirm the communication you have recently received which stated that your husband, Flying Officer Francis Carlyle Goring was reported missing as a result of air operations on the 12th August, 1944.

Your husband, piloting an aircraft took off for a tactical reconnaissance flight over France, and failed to return. This does not necessarily mean that he has been killed or wounded as it is possible he may be a prisoner of war or even free which I hope may prove to be the case.

The request that no information be given to the press is made in order that your husband’s chances of escape will not be jeopardized by undue publicity if he is still at large. This does not mean that information is available concerning him but is a precaution adopted in the case of all personnel reported missing.

I can assure you that enquiries are being made through every available source and any information which may be forthcoming will be communicated to you at once. Please accept my sympathy with you in your great anxiety.

In mid-June 1945, William received the following letter from the Air Vice-Marshal, Air Member for Personnel in Ottawa:

Dear Mr. Goring:

It is with deep regret that I must inform you that advice received from the Royal Canadian Air Force Casualties Officer, Overseas, states that your son, Flying Officer Francis Carlyle Goring, is now for official purposes presumed to have died on Active Service on August 12th, 1944.

I realize that this letter will be a blow to the hopes you have entertained for so long, and in your sorrow I offer you my deepest sympathy. May the same spirit which prompted your son to offer his life give you renewed courage.

Date Reported Missing: 12th August, 1944

Crew: One unidentified Pilot

... I proceeded to the village of Neron l'Abbaye where I contacted M. Georges Martin a resident of the village and mentioned in the file as one of the "Temoins a consulter". M. Martin accompanied us to the scene of the crash approx. 1 kilometre to the west of the village. Here we found the wreckage of a single engine fighter aircraft. It was badly smashed and we were unable to find the engine but found 5 machine guns, two of .5 calibre and 3 of .303 calibre. The numbers of these were as follows... Also on a part of the fuselage there could be discerned in large black lettering a number finishing with 55.

We saw the grave which had been dug at the side of the crash and which had housed the remains up till some 2 months ago when it was removed by English Army personnel... the body had been exhumed (on October 10, 1945) and reburied at Banneville British Cemetery where it is in plot 4, grave 3, row C, and is marked as an "Unknown British Airman". The concentration report disclosed that the coffin contained only a few bones, that it was buried beside a small aircraft which bore the number 6579 on a strut of the undercarriage. No other means of identification were found.

In January 1947, Joyce in Meadvale, Redhill, Surrey, England received the following letter from the Wing Commander for Chief of the Air Staff in Ottawa:

Dear Mrs. Goring:

It is a privilege to have the opportunity of sending you the Operational Wings and Certificate in recognition of the gallant services rendered by your husband, Flying Officer F.C. Goring. I realize there is little which may be said or done to lessen your sorrows, but it is my hope that these "Wings", indicative of operations against the enemy, will be a treasured memento of a young life offered on the altar of freedom in defence of his Home and Country.

In April 1947, Joyce Goring, then at 133 Richard Street, Sarnia, received a letter from the R.C.A.F. Casualty Officer, for Chief of the Air Staff in Ottawa. Following is a portion of that letter:

Dear Mrs. Goring:

After a great deal of investigation it has been decided that the evidence found proves conclusively that your husband, Flying Officer Francis Carlyle Goring, is buried in Banneville British Cemetery, Calvados, France. The Missing Research and Enquiry Service, on visiting the scene of the crash at Noron L'Abbaye, stated that on a part of the fuselage there could be discerned a number finishing with 55. The only other fighter aircraft missing the same date as your husband has been accounted for and as the registration number of your husband's aircraft was AG455 it is quite evident that this was his aircraft.

The Dominion Marksman gold ring which your father-in-law stated that your husband owned was similar to the one found at the scene of the crash. The Dominion Marksman Headquarters in Montreal have confirmed this... I am enclosing the ring in question for your retention. It will be noted that the ring has the name "J.R. Gaunt" inscribed inside. This of course, is the name of the manufacturer.

... The reverent care of the burial places of all who served in the Royal Canadian Air Force is the task of the Imperial War Graves Commission and these graves will be supported and sustained by the Dominion of Canada. I hope that it may be of some consolation for you to know that your gallant husband's grave is in sacred care and keeping. May I again, at this time, offer you my deepest sympathy in your great loss.

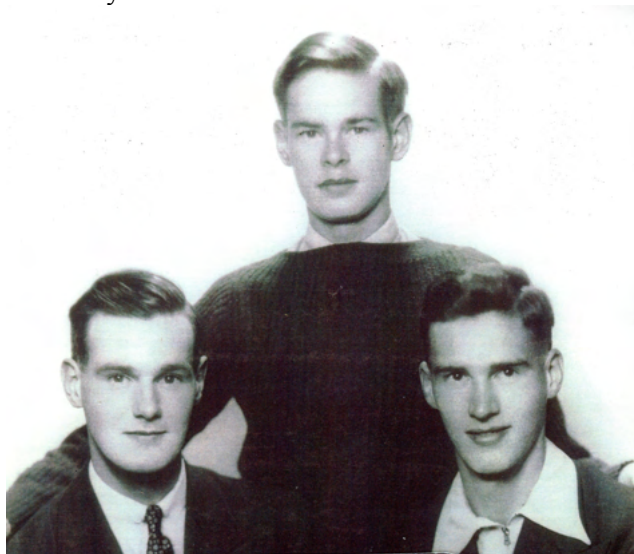
Francis Carlyle “Lyle” Goring was later officially recorded listed as, *Previously reported missing after air operations, now for official purposes, presumed dead, overseas (France)*. Twenty-two-year-old Francis Lyle Goring is buried in Banneville-La-Campagne War Cemetery, Calvados, France, Grave IV.C.3. He left behind his newlywed wife Joyce Goring, and their 2-month old daughter Christine. On his headstone are inscribed the words, IN BELOVED MEMORY NEVER FORGOTTEN. For widowed father William Goring back in Sarnia, this was the second son he lost in the war, losing his oldest son Curtis of the RCAF, less than one year prior. The wreckage of Francis Lyle Goring’s plane was rediscovered in 2005.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, J, L, M, N, 2C, 2D, 5F, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10V, 3d

GRAHAM, Lloyd, Jack and William (3 brothers)

All three Graham brothers served and fought in the war. Theirs are remarkable stories of honour and sacrifice on behalf of Canada, as the Graham family would lose two of their three sons to the war effort.

The boys' parents were Arthur Howard and Florence (nee Burfield) Graham. Arthur was born in Bruce County, Ontario and Florence was born in Wellingborough, England. They married in Windsor, Ontario on September 26, 1917. The Graham family lived in Windsor for a time, then Chatham briefly, before moving to Sarnia by 1938, residing at 144 N. Vidal Street. Arthur Graham was employed with the CNR as a fireman and engineer. A couple of years after the war, the Graham's moved to 1084 London Road, R.R. #1 Sarnia. Arthur and Florence had three children together, all boys: William Richard (born July 26, 1918 in Windsor); Jack Howard (born June 30, 1920 in Windsor); and Lloyd Thomas (born March 1, 1923 in Chatham). The oldest boy, William, enlisted along with his brother Jack, in September 1939 in Windsor, both becoming members of the Essex Scottish Regiment. After training at Camp Borden, they were sent to England for training on the Isle of Wight. In October 1942, the youngest Graham boy, Lloyd, became a member of the Royal Canadian Air Force.



The Graham brothers - William (left), Lloyd (back), Jack (right)

Lloyd Thomas GRAHAM (#J/92095) was born in Chatham, Ontario on March 1, 1923, the youngest of the Graham sons. He was educated in Sarnia, attending a Sarnia Public Elementary school from 1931 to 1938. At the age of sixteen, he served as a Private in the Essex Scottish Regiment Army Reserve in Windsor, Ontario from June to September 1939. He attended Sarnia Collegiate Institute from 1939 to 1941, acquiring a machine shop diploma. He was very active in sports, participating in hockey, soccer, football, basketball, softball, tennis, golf, boxing, horseback riding and swimming. His hobby was model aircraft building. In 1941, he was employed with Colonial Tool Company in Windsor, as a cutter, grinder, and inspector until October 1942 when he enlisted.

Prior to enlisting, Lloyd's two older brothers Jack and William were already in the Canadian Army, both serving overseas with the Essex Scottish Regiment. In August 1942, only days after the August 19 Dieppe Raid (where the Essex Regiment played a central role), parents Arthur and Florence in Sarnia received word that their middle son Jack was listed as missing in the Raid, and no word was received regarding eldest son William's fate in the Raid. In that same week, determined to get into the thick of things, nineteen year-old Lloyd decided he would enlist. Just days before enlisting, Lloyd said, "I applied for the R.C.A.F. two weeks ago. I want to be an air gunner, but mother would prefer to see me in the navy. I'll make up my mind in a day or so."

Lloyd stood six feet tall, had hazel eyes and light brown hair, and was single when he completed his Royal Canadian Air Force Attestation Paper on August 10, 1942, in Windsor, Ontario. He recorded his next of kin as his mother, Mrs. Florrie Graham of 144 N. Vidal Street, and his occupation as a tool and dye apprentice. He requested flying duties with a preference to be a wireless air gunner. He underwent his RCAF medical on August 17, 1942 and became an active enlistee on October 15, 1942. The recruitment officer who interviewed Lloyd recorded of him, *Good type, alert, cooperative, sincere, enthusiastic, keen to fly and be of service, has 2 brothers in the army – one of whom is reported missing after Dieppe action, should make good material for aircrew (A.G.).*

From #1 Manning Depot in Toronto, Lloyd received training at #4 Wireless School (WS) in Guelph and #4 Bombing and Gunnery School (B&GS) in Fingal, graduating as a Wireless Operator/Air Gunner (WAG) from Fingal on September 20, 1943. His parents were there at the graduation to witness Lloyd receive his newly won wings. Lloyd continued his training at #4 Air Observer School (AOS) in London, Ontario and #3 Aircrew Graduate Training

School (AGTS) in Three Rivers, Quebec. On March 15, 1944, Lloyd was posted to #1 Y Depot in Lachine, Quebec. Lloyd Graham embarked overseas for the United Kingdom from Halifax on March 25, 1944.



Pilot Officer-WAG Lloyd Thomas Graham



Sarnia Observer – August 25, 1942 (6 days after Dieppe)

Lloyd arrived in the United Kingdom on April 2, 1944. From #3 Personnel Reception Centre, he initially served with #6 (Observer) Advanced Flying Unit (AFU) and then #22 Operational Training Unit (OTU). On November 7, 1944, Lloyd became a member of RCAF #419 Moose Squadron “Moosa aswayita” (written in Cree, not Latin, means “Beware the moose—a ferocious fighter”), part of **Bomber Command**.

During the course of the war, one of this country’s most significant contributions was the approximately 50,000 Canadians who served with the RCAF and RAF in Bomber Command operations. Next to Britain, Canada was the largest contributor to Bomber Command, making up more than a third of all of Bomber Command personnel. The men who served in Bomber Command faced some of the most difficult odds of anyone fighting in the war.

RCAF #419 Squadron was formed at RAF Mildenhall, England in December 1941, and named after its first commanding officer, Wing Commander John “Moose” Fulton. The unit moved to various bases throughout the war, including Leeming, Topcliffe, Croft and Middleton St. George. Initially operating Wellington bombers, in November 1942 the squadron converted to Handley Page Halifax bombers, and in March 1944 to Avro Lancasters.

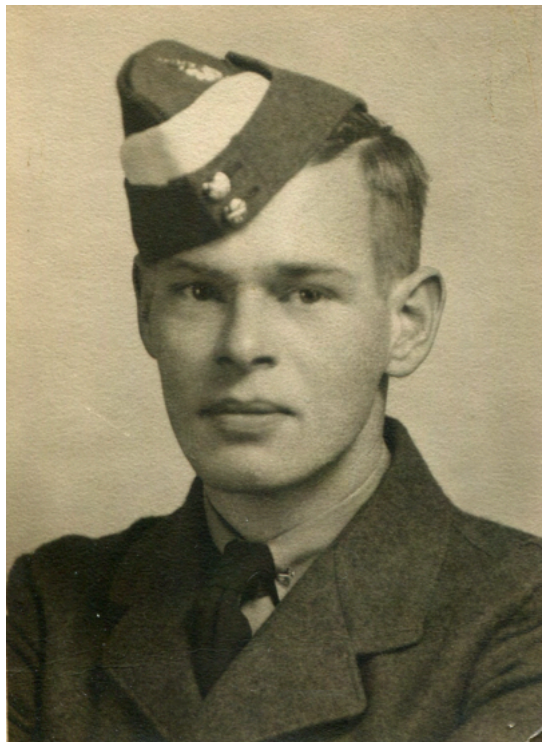
Only one month after becoming a member of #419 Squadron, Lloyd Graham lost his life. On December 6, 1944, he was aboard Lancaster X aircraft KB779 (markings VR-B) that left Middleton St. George, England at approximately 16.40 hours for a night attack against Osnabruck, Germany. Its estimated time of return was 22.40 hours; however, nothing further was heard from the aircraft after it left the base. A total of 453 aircraft took part in the operation, the first major raid on this target in more than two years. Sixteen Lancasters from Moose Squadron took part in the night operation in horrible weather. It was recorded that 18 bombs remained hung up in the bomb bays of various Moose aircraft because of the cold (a dangerous situation for the crews carrying them—aircraft had been lost when they attempted landings with bombs still hung up in the racks). The cold weather would have caused electrical contacts to contract, resulting in loose connections to the fusing circuits and release mechanisms. Therefore, the crews would not know if they had properly set them back to SAFE mode. What exactly happened to Lancaster KB779 and its crew on that night may never be known.^{6G}

The Lancaster aircraft may have encountered severe icing conditions or may have been shot down during the night attack against Osnabruck. Perishing with Pilot Officer-Wireless Operator/Air Gunner Lloyd Graham were F/O.s Bruce Douglas Hyndman, and Gordon Roy Cheesman; P/O.s George Edward Smith, Ezra Mulloy Hansen, and Douglas Lloyd Marcellus; and Sgt. Ronald Dennis Ovis (RAF). In mid-December 1944, Arthur and Florence received a telegram informing them that their son, FLIGHT SERGT LLOYD THOMAS GRAHAM RCAF IS MISSING OVERSEAS AFTER AN OPERATIONAL FLIGHT FROM ENGLAND. They received the telegram

almost simultaneously with a letter from their son Corporal Jack Graham, a veteran of Dieppe, who was then a prisoner of war in Germany.



Lloyd Graham at Wing Ceremony
#4 B&GS, Fingal, Ontario – September 1943
with Sarnia friend LAW Jessie Riddoch
(who was serving at Hagersville, S.F.T.S.)



Sergeant Lloyd T. Graham

In mid-December 1944, Florence on N. Vidal Street, also received a letter from the Wing Commander, Commanding 419 (RCAF) Squadron, “Moose Squadron”. Following is a portion of that letter:

Dear Mrs. Graham:

I regret to confirm the telegram you have already received notifying you that your son F. Sergeant Lloyd Thomas Graham, is missing from an attack on Western Germany on the night of December 6th. This was a very heavy and concentrated attack which has since proved very successful but unfortunately, nothing has been heard of your son's aircraft or crew since they took off and their loss can only be attributed to enemy action. There is still quite a possibility that all or part of the crew may be prisoners of war, but news of this could not be expected for some considerable time yet.

During the month your son was with us, he took part in seven attacks on the enemy. All of these were directed against the main German industrial regions and in each attack Lloyd proved himself worthy of his position. He set a very high standard of excellence as a Wireless Operator and that, combined with his friendly nature made him a very popular lad whom we can ill afford to lose....

May I convey my sincere sympathy to you in this trying time of waiting and hope with you that better news may follow.

Also in mid-December 1944, Arthur received a letter from the R.C.A.F. Casualty Officer, for Chief of the Air Staff in Ottawa. Following is a portion of that letter:

Dear Mr. Graham:

It is with deep regret that I must confirm the information conveyed to you by the Royal Canadian Air Force Chaplain, informing you that your son, Flight Sergeant Lloyd Thomas Graham, is reported missing on Active Service.

Advice has been received from the Royal Canadian Air Force Casualties Officer, Overseas, that your son and the entire crew of his aircraft failed to return to their base after taking off at 4:40 P.M. on December 6th, 1944, to carry out air operations over Osnabruck, Germany.

The term "missing" is used only to indicate that his whereabouts is not immediately known and does not necessarily mean that your son has been killed or wounded. He may have landed in enemy territory and might be a Prisoner of War; and should you receive any card or letter from him please forward it at once to the Royal Canadian Air Force Casualties Officer, Air Force Headquarters, Ottawa. Enquiries have been made through the International Red Cross Society and all other appropriate sources and I wish to assure you that any further information received will be communicated to you immediately.

... Your son's name will not appear on the official casualty list for five weeks. You may, however, release to the Press or Radio the fact that he is reported missing, but not disclosing the date, place or his unit. Permit me to extend to you my heartfelt sympathy during this period of uncertainty and I join with you and the members of your family in the hope that better news will be forthcoming in the near future.

In June 1945, Florence received a letter from the Group Captain for Chief of the Air Staff in Ottawa. Following is a portion of that letter:

Dear Mrs. Graham;

I have the honour to forward, herewith, the Royal Canadian Air Force Officer's Commission Script for your son, Pilot Officer Lloyd T. Graham. This script, which is being forwarded to you for safekeeping, represents the authority vested in Pilot Officer Graham, as well as the trust placed in him by His Majesty, The King.

Also in June 1945, Arthur received the following letter from the R.C.A.F. Casualty Officer, for Chief of the Air Staff in Ottawa:

Dear Mr. Graham:

I greatly regret that since my letter of December 22nd, 1944 no further information has been received concerning your son, Pilot Officer Lloyd Thomas Graham. Every effort is still being made to trace your son although due to the lapse of time it is now felt there is less hope of locating him. May I again assure you and the members of your family of my earnest sympathy.

In early August 1945, Arthur received another letter from the R.C.A.F. Casualty Officer, for Chief of the Air Staff in Ottawa. Following is that letter:

Dear Mr. Graham:

It is with deep regret that, in view of the lapse of time and the absence of any further information concerning your son, Pilot Officer Lloyd Thomas Graham, since he was reported missing the Air Ministry Overseas now proposes to take action to presume his death for official purposes.

Will you please confirm by letter that you have not received any further evidence or news concerning him. The presumption of death will proceed on hearing from you, and on completion you will receive official notification by registered letter from the Chief of the Air Staff.

May I extend to you and the members of your family my sincere sympathy in this time of great anxiety.

In August 1945, Arthur and Florence, then at R.R. #1, Sarnia, still held out hope about the fate of their son Lloyd. Following is a portion of their reply to the RCAF Casualty Officer, written by Florence:

Dear Sir,

On behalf of Mr Graham and myself... we have received no word, other than what has come from your office, concerning our dear son Pilot Officer Lloyd Thomas Graham. We could only wish that we had heard something. We lost our oldest son, Lt. William Graham, in action on March 2nd of this year. So our hopes were pretty high that perhaps Lloyd would be found for us. But it isn't to be that way I guess. Thank you for your kind expression of sympathy.

Though Lloyd had been reported missing in early December 1944, it was not until October of 1945, two months after the war had ended, that his parents were notified that their son, Pilot Officer Lloyd T. Graham, was officially recorded as, *Previously reported missing after air operations, now for official purposes, presumed dead, overseas (Germany)*. Following is the letter received by the Grahams in October 1945, from the Air Marshal, Chief of the Air Staff:

Dear Mr. Graham:

I have learned with deep regret that your son, Pilot Officer Lloyd Thomas Graham, is now for official purposes presumed to have died on Active Service Overseas on December 6th, 1944. I wish to offer you and the members of your family my sincere and heartfelt sympathy. It is most lamentable that a promising career should be thus terminated and I would like you to know that his loss is greatly deplored by all those with whom he was serving.

In January 1946, Arthur and Florence received a War Service Gratuity of \$325.65 for the loss of their youngest son Lloyd. In mid-February 1947, Florence received the following letter from the Wing Commander for Chief of the Air Staff in Ottawa:

Dear Mrs. Graham:

It is a privilege to have the opportunity of sending you the Operational Wings and Certificate in recognition of the gallant services rendered by your son, Pilot Officer, L.T. Graham. I realize there is little which may be said or done to lessen your sorrows, but it is my hope that these "Wings", indicative of operations against the enemy, will be a treasured memento of a young life offered on the altar of freedom in defence of his Home and Country.

It was not until August 1951 that Arthur and Florence received another letter from the Wing Commander, R.C.A.F. Casualties Officer, for Chief of the Air Staff. Following is a portion of that letter:

Dear Mrs. Graham:

It is with regret that I refer to the loss of your son, Pilot Officer Lloyd Thomas Graham, who lost his life on air operations against the enemy, December 6, 1944, but owing to the lapse of time and the lack of any information concerning your son, his aircraft or any member of his crew since they left their base in England, it must be regretfully accepted and officially recorded that your son and his crew lost their lives and do not have a "known" grave.

Due to the extreme hazards attending air operations there are, unhappily, many thousands of British aircrew boys who, like your son, do not have a "known" grave and all will be commemorated on General Memorials that will be erected at a number of locations by the Imperial War Graves Commission (of which Canada is a member), each Memorial representative of a theatre of operations. One of these Memorials will be erected at Runnymede, England, and the names of your son, Pilot Officer Lloyd Thomas Graham and the members of his crew will appear on that Memorial....

I realize that this is an extremely distressing letter and that there is no manner of conveying such information to you that would not add to your heartaches, and I am fully aware that nothing I may say will lessen your great sorrow, but I would like to take this opportunity of expressing to you and the members of your family my deepest sympathy in the loss of your gallant son.

Lloyd Graham was posthumously awarded the 1939-45 Star, the France and German Star, the Defence Medal, the General Service Medal and the C.V.S.M. Award and Clasp. Twenty-one-year-old Lloyd Graham has no known grave. He is memorialized at Runnymede Memorial in Surrey, United Kingdom, Panel 250.

Jack Howard GRAHAM (#A/21433) was born in Windsor, Ontario on June 30, 1920, the middle son of Arthur and Florence Graham. Jack grew up in Windsor and was a member of the local militia for two years prior to enlisting. Nineteen year-old Jack enlisted on September 19, 1939 in Windsor, Ontario, along with his older brother, twenty-one-year-old William (see below). The two brothers joined the Canadian Army, becoming members of the Essex Scottish Regiment, R.C.I.C. In early June 1942, Jack celebrated his 22nd birthday "somewhere in England" with a Western Ontario unit.

Two months later, on August 19, 1942, Jack Graham, along with his brother William, took part in **The Dieppe Raid**. On that day, 4,963 Canadian soldiers landed on the beaches of Dieppe, a small town on the coast of France. Called *Operation Jubilee*, the goals included: to destroy radar and other military installations; damage enemy shipping and port facilities; to seize a neighbouring airfield; to capture a German divisional naval headquarters in order to acquire intelligence documents; gather information from prisoners; it would serve as a test run for the future invasion of Europe; and would take some pressure off the Eastern Front. Recently declassified documents have shown that at its heart was a "pinch" (British slang for "steal") operation designed to capture cryptographic material for code breakers in Bletchley Park in England. The main goal of the raid was to capture German documents, code books and a four-rotor Enigma encryption machine.

The raiding soldiers were intended to arrive early in the morning under the cover of darkness, but they were delayed, and there was inadequate supporting fire. They had to approach the cliffs of Dieppe fully visible to the German troops waiting for them atop the 75 foot-high cliffs. The operation was a disaster, and of the 4,963 Canadians that landed, 907 were killed, 2,460 were wounded and 1,946 were captured.

One of those captured at Dieppe, by the middle of the day on August 19, 1942, was twenty-two-year-old Corporal Jack Graham. Days after the Dieppe raid, his parents in Sarnia received news that their son Jack was reported as missing in the raid, but no word was received on the fate of their other son William. Two days after

learning that Jack was missing, Arthur and Florence received a letter from him that had been mailed in the weeks prior to the raid. In the letter, Jack told of the strenuous training that the chosen Canadian troops had undergone over a protracted period in preparation for a “big scale raid on the French coast.” He also mentioned that there was a certain somebody in England whom he liked very much, but he had not got around to the point of asking about their future plans because of the uncertainties of the future (the “certain somebody” was an English girl by the name of Doris Tennessee Vera Dorrel). Jack also gave details regarding the commando course, and of how the troops had worked in close cooperation with the air force and the navy while making practice landings. He wrote, *The first month was the hardest, we worked in mud up to our necks. We were so tired during this time we seldom left the camp figuring sleep was more important. The men were up every day at 5 o’clock and lights were out at 9:30 o’clock.*

The days and weeks following the Dieppe raid was a very anxious time for the Graham family and for thousands of others, as news of the fateful outcome and the mounting casualties continued to be reported back in Canada. It was not until Thanksgiving of October 1942 that Jack’s parents received the “happy” news that their son Jack, previously reported missing at Dieppe, was a prisoner of the Nazi’s, confined at Camp Stalag 8B, Germany. Two other local families received the same news about their sons on that Thanksgiving Day. John Brown, of 281 Wellington Street learned that his son, Sapper Albert William Thomas Brown, who was with the 11th Field Company, was in the same Camp Stalag 8B; and Mr. and Mrs. Dunn of 405 Michigan Avenue, Point Edward learned that their son, Sapper Douglas Albert Dunn, also of the 11th Field Company was in the hands of the Germans.



Corporal Jack Graham



Jack Graham after the war

In February 1943, Arthur and Florence received a letter from Jack, dated December 6, 1942. In the letter, he wrote that he was well, but still looking for letters from his home in Canada, although he had received four letters from England. He also mentioned that he had met a boy from Sarnia in the camp, named Demeray [it was Norris Demeray, also captured at Dieppe]. Jack said that he would like his parents to send him a pair of shoes and a pack of cards. On a postcard dated November 29, 1942, he wrote that he had made himself a pair of warm mitts from the sleeve of a tunic. In April of 1943, Florence received another letter from Jack in the German prison camp. In that letter, he acknowledged the receipt of a parcel of dainties sent to him, along with the cigarettes from the Sarnia branch of the Red Cross. He was particularly pleased with several family snapshots that were included, stating that he enjoyed them more than “a whole parcel of chocolate.”

In mid-December 1944, Arthur and Florence received another letter from Jack, which arrived almost simultaneously as a telegram that they received informing them that their son Flight Sergeant Lloyd Thomas Graham was missing overseas. In Jack’s letter, he referred to others from the Sarnia district whom he had met in captivity, including Cecil Fowler, Don (Bunt) Murray, Joe Barr of Point Edward and another Essex Scottish man named Zink.

Jack Graham spent the remainder of the war as a prisoner of war. Approximately three years after the Dieppe Raid, Jack and his fellow prisoners were liberated by the British 'Desert Rats' in 1945, just prior to the end of the war. In late April 1945, Arthur and Florence received a cable from Jack stating that he had been liberated from German prison camp, Stalag 357 (Stalag II-B) by the advancing troops of the United Nations. In early May 1945, Arthur and Florence received the following letter from the Deputy Minister, Department of National War Services in Ottawa:

Dear Mrs. Graham,

Honourable J.J. McCann, Minister of National War Services, has requested me to express to you his great pleasure at learning that your son, Cpl. Jack Howard Graham, A-21433, is no longer a prisoner of war and is now in safe hands.

It has been a privilege of the Prisoners of War, Next of Kin Division of this Department to serve you during the long period of anxiety through which you have passed and the Minister is anxious that you should know how much your cooperation and consideration have been appreciated. It is our earnest hope that your son will soon be restored to you to resume his place in civilian life.

Following their liberation, Jack and his fellow POW's returned to England. Jack Graham, who stood six feet two inches tall, had his weight drop to approximately 100 pounds. Doris Dorrel, the "certain somebody in England" whom Jack liked very much, would travel by train to Brighton to be reunited with him on a train platform there. During the war, Doris had served with the Royal Air Force. Jack and Doris dated for a time, and were married on June 16, 1945 in Brighton, England. Jack would have to return to Canada without his new bride. His new wife Doris Graham, a "war bride", would follow him to Canada on the troopship *Mauretania*, arriving in Halifax on January 21, 1946.



Jack and Doris Graham

Jack and Doris Graham lived on London Road in Sarnia for a time, then moved to Ripley, Ontario for a couple of years before returning to Sarnia, where they lived on Superior Street for many years. They later moved to Point Edward. Jack and Doris had three children together; Lynne, Lloyd Richard and their youngest Marsha. [Note – Jack and Doris' only son was named in honour of Jack's two fallen brothers – Lloyd and (William) Richard].

By the time their kids were in high school, Doris had been employed over the years at several Sarnia hotels, including the Village Inn, Drawbridge Inn and Canterbury Hotel. Jack worked for, and eventually retired from, Dow Chemical Limited in Sarnia. Their daughter Marsha (Guthrie) gave Jack and Doris two grandchildren: Lisa and Melissa Guthrie. After marrying, Lisa (Melanson) went on to have two boys; Jeff and Garrett Melanson, and Melissa (Stebbins) had two girls; Alexandra and Lauren Stebbins (four great grandchildren for Jack and Doris).

Jack Graham never spoke of the war. His children knew very little of his experiences, except that he did not like turnips, or even the smell of them (he ate plenty of them as a POW). Even after his young children Lloyd and Marsha found an old keepsake tin box of his in their attic containing some of his war memorabilia, Jack did not want

to talk about it—he would get too emotional. Two of Jack’s other keepsakes included a scrapbook and the diary he kept as a POW. He (and other POW’s) received the scrapbook (referred to as a War-time log) on July 31, 1943 in Stalag VIIIB, part of War Prisoners Aid, from the World’s Alliance of Young Men’s Christian Associations based in Geneve, Suisse. Following is a portion of the instructions that came with the War-time log:

Dear Friend,

.... These blank pages offer many possibilities. Not everyone will want to keep a diary or even a journal – occasional notes on the story of his war-time experiences. If you are a writer, here is space for a short story. If you are an artist (some people are) you may want to cover these pages with sketches of your camp, caricatures of its important personalities, whether residents or authorities. If you are a poet, major or minor, confide your lyrics to these pages. If you feel that circumstances cramp your style in correspondence you might write here letters unmailable now, but safely kept to be carried with you on your return. This book might serve to list the most striking concoctions of the camp kitchen, the records of a camp olympic, or a selection of the best jokes cracked in camp....

You might want to do something altogether different with this book. Whatever you do, let it be a visible link between yourself and folks at home, one more reminder that their thoughts are with you constantly. If it brings you this assurance, the Log will have served its purpose.

War Prisoners’ Aid of the YMCA

Jack filled many of the pages of the scrapbook with drawings, sketches of the camp and with poetry, including the following two poems that he wrote about his parents:

My Mother

*No finer heart could be found,
Tho search the whole world you may;
No sweeter smile could greet the morn
And drive dull cares away.*

*No lovelier face could be my own
To hold within my humble heart;
A pulse that beats for me alone,
Tho some day we must part.*

*Once golden hair; now silver grey,
Adorns that head sublime;
No patience strong could ere be found
Or brought within an ace of time*

*I shall not need; I shall not have;
I’ll never find another
To take the place of one so kind
GODS MASTERPIECE – MY MOTHER*

My Dad

*So many years he’s toiled away,
A sacred pledge he’s kept each day;
He’s provided a home and comfort too:
For him – MY DAD – had lots to do.*

*A loving husband; father too
To wife and family; he’s been true;
And now his hair is silvering grey,
Too soon – MY DAD – must go away.*

*To you who’s kindly words and ways,
Have helped me through so many days;
There’ll never be another one,
I’m proud – MY DAD – to be your son.*

*So when you’ve left this toil and strife
To live in peace: the other life;
May I, your son, have strength to be,
The man – MY DAD – you were to me.*

Following is a poem that Jack wrote in his personal POW diary:

*On the waves of sweetest music
Comes the lovely thought of you
In the whisper of the breezes
And the sparkle of the dew
With the beauty of the morning
And the quiet of the night
Comes the breath of memory
That stirs old dreams of past delight
In the horror of the black moments
When the heart is gripped with fear
When the soul seems gripped in darkness
Groping blindly you are near
Giving me fresh faith and courage
Through sunshine and shadows
Comes the lovely thought of you*

One of Jack Graham's great grandchildren would have a profound effect on him. A young Garrett Melanson grew up knowing his great grandfather fought in a war and saw him wearing his formal wear and medals each Remembrance Day. In late 2004, ten year-old Garrett (at St. Joseph's in Corunna) was given a school assignment to write a story about his hero. He chose his great grandfather Jack Graham. Garrett interviewed Jack about his war experiences, wrote his story and presented it to his classmates. Following that, the classroom teacher contacted Garrett's mother, and asked if Jack would be interested in speaking to the class. Jack accepted and began to open up about his war experiences. Over several years, Jack spoke in other schools, at churches and to various interested groups. His mission was to make sure that people always remembered those who fought and lost their lives for our freedoms. He always ended his speech talking about his heroes--his parents--who worried and suffered at home during the war with three sons serving, and after the war having lost two sons.

Jack Graham's memories of that fateful Dieppe Raid morning included details such as his coming off the boat and being fired upon immediately; men getting killed, with many of his comrades dead around him; and the colour of the water--red with blood. He also recalled, *We had plenty of training under our belt and that training took over. We had practiced landing; however, the ramp went down and I found myself crawling over bodies, no training could prepare us for what lay ahead. I can clearly remember Pappy Beck shouting, 'Keep your head down!' I was carrying an E.Y. Rifle with a grenade on the end of the barrel. It was new to me and a bit top heavy. I recall getting it stuck in the stones once I reached the beach. Carnage was everywhere. It was a massacre.*

Jack Graham was to be held as a prisoner of war in Germany for 34 months, spending time in four different POW camps: Stalag 8-B Lamsdorf (Germany); Stalag 2-D Stargard (Poland); Stalag 20-A Thorn (Poland); and Stalag 11-B Fallingbomel (in NW Germany). He recalled his wrists being tied in ropes, then with shackles for many months; subsiding on turnips, often rotten; and being in forced marches. Some of his memories of the prisoner of war camps are given in the following: *If you behaved yourself, you would survive. I was scared and I followed the rules. There was an occasion when I cleared my throat and spat. Unfortunately, two German officers thought I was being disrespectful to them. I spent seven days in the 'cooler' for my actions. As the war progressed, we were aware of the Allied Forces' successes. Crystal radio receivers kept us posted and after 34 months I heard the bombs in the distance. That morning we climbed to the roof tops and could see the British 8th Army coming. The dogs and guards were gone and for the first time in nearly three years, we were free!*

Following is a portion of Jack's talk given to his great grandson Garrett's class and to others:

I had two years militia before I went active on September 9, 1939... The Essex Scottish were a kilted regiment. During World War I, kilted regiments were nicknamed "The ladies from hell". In 1942, the 2nd Division, including the Essex Scots were considered the best trained troops in Britain at that time, after nearly 2 years of extensive training with lots of commando training on the Isle of Wight.

We expected to raid Dieppe on July 4, 1942 but the weather and tides were against us so we returned to the mainland hoping no one would "shoot off their mouth" about our activities. On the night of August 18th, 1942, we embarked on the mother ships in a huge convoy leaving a few guys behind, thinking we were going on another scheme. But half way across the English Channel, we were told THIS IS IT – on our way to Dieppe! It was a little scary for a while until I realized – "What the heck, this is what I trained for all these years." So I settled down to try to remember my training.

We landed on August 19, 1942, in assault landing crafts later than expected, due to a part of the convoy coming across some German patrol crafts. NOW THEY KNEW WE WERE COMING. By the time we got near enough to shore they threw everything they had at us – many of our men were lost before they had a chance to land, many were drowned. A regiment of Churchill tanks tried to land but they still had old tracks on – not ready for battle.

It was 8 hours of HELL on the beach, machine guns hiding in the cliffs on three sides, artillery shells from inland, mortars too and German aircraft overhead – ALL in broad daylight. At last, we were told by our General Roberts that the ships in the channel could not, after many attempts, get us off the beach, that "all was lost". We took the bolts from our rifles, threw them as far as possible.

When we were captured, the Germans made us pile our helmets on the promenade. The Germans then marched us into town to a churchyard, surrounded by a high spike fence. After awhile, we were marched approximately 6 miles inland to an abandoned factory for the night. It was dark, I slept in a bed of stinging nettles. The next day we marched to a railroad station and were put on railroad box cars – 40 men to a car, much smaller than ours. There was a huge bucket for a toilet and a small pail of water and a cup in each car. They gave us each a ration of black bread. We could see through the cracks and had a window about 5" X 18" for air. There were guards on top of each car.

The next day we arrived at a holding camp in central France for interrogation, etc. and to gather our wits and see who was still alive. Three of four days later we were put back on a train for a long ride to a POW camp in (the) southeast corner of Germany. Camp #8B was our new home. We stayed the longest time here – it was the biggest camp in Germany. This is where we “Dieppers” had our wrists tied together with twine... for about 6 months. The Red Cross found out about it and made them put us in manacles – chains 18” apart, for approximately 6 months. All this for reprisals of treatment of their prisoners on the beach.

We did get parcels and mail from home. One Red Cross parcel each for awhile, then 2-1, then 4-1 and 8-1 – this was after D-Day. They had no way to get them to us. German rations were very small – turnip soup, black bread. We were supposed to get the same food as their troops. We were then moved to northeast Germany, Camp 2D. We saw lots of RAF bombing flights. There was a Russian POW camp near us – we watched them cart out the many, many dead.

We were moved again after a few months to the Polish Corridor, Camp 357 Thorun. We didn’t stay too long here because the Russian army was getting close. We could hear the battle noises from Krakow. So we moved again to 357 Fallingbostal in central Germany. Again lots of RAF bombing action. It was from here they force marched most of (the) allied troops away from any action. I did not have to go – the German doctor told me I was too sick to force march. I had a bad case of croupe.

I was left in charge of the compound. Food was getting scarce. We finally heard shells overhead all night. Next morning, (we) saw 8th Army troops and tanks coming across the fields and down the roads. Words cannot tell you how we felt at that time. They took over the camp and arranged our trip by plane to England. Remember, this was 34 months after the Raid on Dieppe!!... My Heroes of WWII were my parents – besides losing many pals, I also lost my older and younger brothers.



Jack Graham

Jack Graham never returned to Europe. The war did not sour his outlook on life though. He was always happy and enjoyed life. He was a board member with the New Hope School in Sarnia, was active in ballroom and square dancing, and loved spending time with his children, grandchildren and great grandchildren. Every November was a somber and melancholy time for Jack. He always carried several poppies with him, and if he ever saw someone not wearing one, he would pin a poppy on his or her chest. He himself always wore a poppy, all 365 days of the year. Every November he would have signs printed that read, “Remember Dieppe”, which he posted around Corunna and Sarnia. He walked each year in the Sarnia Remembrance Day parade, carrying a “Remember Dieppe” sign. He attended Remembrance Day ceremonies every year, no matter the weather, often accompanied by his daughter Marsha and granddaughter. The ceremonies themselves were deeply emotional experiences for Jack. In February 2011, Jack Graham passed away at the age of ninety.

William Richard GRAHAM (#A/21931) was born in Windsor, Ontario on July 26, 1918, the eldest son of Arthur Howard and Florence Graham. William attended three years of high school, and was active in sports including rugby, baseball, basketball, skating, swimming and hunting. When he enlisted, William was living with his parents who resided at 438 Aylmer Avenue, Windsor, Ontario. Not long after, his parents moved to 144 North Vidal Street, Sarnia.

Twenty-one year-old William Graham enlisted in the Canadian Army on September 19, 1939 in Windsor, Ontario, becoming a member of the Essex Scottish Regiment, R.C.I.C. His nineteen year-old brother Jack (see above) also enlisted with him in Windsor, also becoming a member of the Essex Scottish. William stood six feet three inches tall, had hazel eyes and light brown hair, and was single when he enlisted. He had been employed as a milk salesman/truck driver with Borden's Milk Products in Windsor since November 1938. Prior to 1938, William recorded his occupational history as "odds jobs as salesman, office clerk, etc". William was promised his job at Borden's following his service, but he also expressed a desire to start in fruit wholesale.

William received his army training in Windsor, as a member of the Essex Scottish, until late May 1940. In early June 1940, William along with his brother Jack, embarked overseas for the United Kingdom. William continued his training in the U.K., as a member of the Essex Scottish, at the Canadian General Base Depot, training that included taking courses in London and Aldershot. His U.K. preparations continued until August 1942.

On August 18, 1942, William Graham, along with his brother Jack, as part of the Essex Scottish Regiment, and 5,000 other Canadians, embarked for France, part of *Operation Jubilee*. They arrived as dawn was breaking early the next morning at Dieppe, France. **The Dieppe Raid** was one of the darkest chapters in Canada's military history. By mid-day, 907 Canadians were killed, 2,460 were wounded and 1,946 were captured. William Graham took part in the Dieppe Raid as a Sergeant-Major on that fateful August 19. Only days after the Raid, his parents received the news that son Jack was reported as missing, and no word was given on the fate of their other son, William. Jack Graham spent three years as a prisoner of war. William would survive Dieppe to fight another day.

In February 1943, Arthur and Florence in Sarnia received a letter from their oldest son William, dated January 1943. In the letter, he informed his parents that he had been in the Dieppe Raid and that he had returned to England unwounded. He also stated that he had been recommended for a commission. And he enclosed a souvenir memorial card that had been produced in England, to the memory of those who did not come back from Dieppe. He wrote that he had difficulty trying to erase Dieppe from his memory and that he had lived the raid over again repeatedly in his dreams.



Lieutenant William Richard Graham



William Graham

By March 1943, William was a Company Sergeant-Major, part of the #3 Canadian Reinforcement Unit (CIRU), and attended the Officers Cadet Training Unit (OCTU) School. In April, he transferred from 3CIRU to Non-Effective Transit Depot (NETD). In early May 1943, William was one of a large party of Canadian soldiers who returned to Canada from England. In mid-May of 1943, he made his way to Windsor to report to Essex Scottish headquarters. His mother Florence drove from Sarnia to Windsor to meet him.

On May 21, 1943 William Graham married Dorothy Joan (nee Davies), the daughter of Capt. and Mrs. A. Davies of Newmarket, Ontario, in London, Ontario. William nicknamed his new bride "Doodie" and the couple lived at 20 River View Gardens, Toronto. By the end of May, he was transferred to Officers Training Centre (OTC) in Brockville, Ontario. While in Brockville, he received further infantry training in tactics and small arms, and universal carriers. In mid-September of 1943, while at the Officers' Training School at Brockville, William and Doodie

returned to Sarnia for a weekend to visit his parents. In mid-October 1944, he was transferred to the Canadian School of Infantry in Vernon, British Columbia where he was to receive further training.

From January 3 to February 5, 1944, William continued training at No. 3 (Carrier) Wing of the Canadian School of Infantry in Vernon. The evaluator wrote of William, *An excellent knowledge of all subjects, sound tactical sense and a superior knowledge of all P1 weapons. A good Instructor, reliable and inspires confidence.* William returned to Brockville in March.

On September 3, 1944, William and Doodie had baby girl, Susan Anne Graham, born in Toronto. The young family then resided at 38 Prospect Street, Newmarket, Ontario. In the fall of 1944, William returned to his training. He was able to spend some time visiting his family, which included posing for a photograph on October 15, 1944, holding his one-month old baby daughter Susan.



William Graham with his wife Dorothy (Doodie)



William Graham with daughter Susan

In late October into November 1944, William returned to the Canadian School of Infantry in Vernon, for an Officer's refresher training course. The evaluator wrote of William, *This Officer's physical condition was good throughout the course and he was keen, alert and very enthusiastic. His tactics were sound and he displayed excellent qualities of leadership. He was quiet, not easily excited and confident while in command. His pleasant personality and humor made him well liked in the platoon. Recommendation: This Officer is capable of leading an infantry platoon in the field.* After obtaining his commission as Lieutenant, William was recalled overseas, leaving for the United Kingdom on December 25, 1944. He arrived in England on January 9, 1945 and was initially posted with the Canadian Infantry Training Regiment (CITR).

While sailing for and after arriving in England, William wrote letters home often, sometimes every evening, to tell Doodie how much he loved her, and to beg for news from back home, especially about their baby girl whom he barely knew. Following are excerpts from a number of his letters to Dorothy (Doodie):

Dec. 26, 1944: *Well we are on our way darling. And the sea is really rough... The ship is really heaving, and from all indications my stomach is going to be doing the same soon.*

Dec. 31: *I could write and tell you what a wonderful year this has been darling and all the happiness you have given me. But I am trying to think of other things. If I don't I'll be weeping all over the place.*

Jan. 1, 1945: *Happy New Year darling... I didn't even stay up for the celebrations... There is only one woman on board (the ship's nurse...) and the fellows got her pretty high. She tried to dance with some of them but the rolling and the drinks only made it a comedy.*

Jan. 4: *Great excitement to-day. A baby whale was spotted. Unfortunately I didn't see it. But we have something to talk about now.*

Jan. 9: *We land in a very few minutes. It has been a very interesting day. We saw two robombs exploded in the air. They were an awful long way away so we didn't see the bombs themselves. But it was quite a reception.*

Jan. 10 [Telegram]: *DARLING ARRIVED SAFE ADDRESS LATER LOVE BILL GRAHAM*

Jan 22: *Your description of Susan's first Christmas made me feel I could see all these things she received – and her Mummy got 'tanked up'. And so did Granny! Shocking! I wish I could have been with you darling. But we were on the ship that day. I couldn't let you know. We are under a security guard that was real.*

Jan. 24: *We have completed our move... we have a good bunch of fellows in the hut... We have started the S.P.C.E.L. – Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to the English Language. There is a fine of three pence for every cuss word.*

Jan. 25: *We just moved to another camp... It was two months yesterday that we left Vernon and we hadn't done any thing in the meantime... Our quarters are better. No warmer I'm afraid, but at least there is a place to write and a shower... One thing I am happy to say – the food is good and plentiful.*

Jan. 26: *Everyone seems to think the war in Europe will be over by late Spring or early Summer. I hope so... (I just thought of something you can include in my parcels darling. Toilet-paper! This stuff is cruel, and not too plentiful.)...*

Jan. 30: *Oh happy day! I received two very wonderful letters from you my darling... Gosh – imagine our daughter 17 ¼ lbs!... There is no fun being so far away and depending on snaps to watch your daughter growing up.*

Feb. 5: *I don't know what is happening to my mail darling... all the Toronto fellows got a stack except me. But I know it isn't your fault darling. You are using the right address too. I don't understand it.*

Feb. 6: *Oh happy day! I received a letter his evening... Believe me darling, I wish I was home too... Please godam war finish soon.*



Lt. William Graham cradles his 3-month infant daughter Susan

Following is a complete letter written by William, written on February 4, posted February 6, 1945 from Abergavenny, Wales, and addressed to his five-month old baby daughter:

My dear little Susan,

I wonder is this the first letter you receive. Anyway I hope I shall be able to write you when you are older. Your father is very proud of you. He and your grandfather were fortunate enough to have a few days together here. Your uncle Jackie was here at the same time.

I must thank you very much for the beautifully looking package we have just received from you sent by your grandpa. Your little ladyship showed wonderful discrimination in the choice of your gift to your aged ancestor.

In photographs we have received of your bonny self quite justify your fathers pride in you. Your g g ma will probably write you herself. She is laid up today with a severe headache.

Your uncle Jackie surprised us yesterday evening by paying us another visit on short leave before arriving from Greenwich to Cumberland.

Give your love to your mother Mrs. Graham & your aunt Marie & of course to your grandma and love to Susan.

*Your affectionately,
G.G.Pa*

Following are more excerpts from several of William's letters to his wife Dorothy ("Doodie"):

Feb. 11: *(I think) The pay-off battle has started in Europe. I hope to get over to the unit soon – very soon... I dreamed of you all last night. I hated waking up this morning. The terrible part of it was, we both knew it was a dream and we kept saying it was too bad that I'd be waking up in England.*

Feb. 14: *Valentines Day – but I don't have to ask you to be my valentine, darling. I know you are mine... I am afraid you'll have a break in your mail for a couple of days. But it is entirely out of my hands dearest... Please don't worry about me. And I'm not out for any medals or promotions. I love you and Susan too much to take any unnecessary risks.*

In mid-February 1945, Lieutenant William Graham returned to his unit, the Essex Scottish Regiment, flying into Northwestern Europe on February 17, 1945.

Feb. 19 [Datelined Belgium]: *The people have made a very quick recovery. I expected to find the children, in particular, showing signs of the years under the Nazis. But everyone is very healthy looking. The women are not at all shapely by our standards. But their morals are shockingly and disgustingly low... Say – I just re-read the statements... don't misinterpret them... I know you love me darling and it isn't necessary for me to ask you to trust me... The day was spent censoring mail. That is a very distasteful job. I hate reading mail other than yours my darling... The hateful part of leaving England was the destroying of your letters. I couldn't even put them in my trunk.*

Post marked Feb. 27 [Letter's date was blacked out by a censor. Datelined Germany]: *At this moment I am in very dramatic circumstances. It is from such positions that wars are won. At least the movies lead one to believe it. I am in a ruined house with a candle in a bottle, artillery is roaring overhead and machine guns chattering in the distance. But don't worry darling, it is quite safe. We are some distance back. I have my own platoon and they are a great bunch of fellows... I'll be glad when this mess is finally finished and we can settle down as human beings. It will not be long now.*

In February 1945, the Allies launched a great offensive, the **Battle of the Rhineland**, that was designed to drive the Germans eastward back over the Rhine River. There would be two formidable thrusts: one by the Ninth U.S Army; and one by the First Canadian Army, strengthened by the addition of Allied formations. The resilient Germans had spent months improving their defences; winter rains and thaw had turned the ground into a thick, muddy quagmire and the enemy would fight fiercely to defend their home soil. During one month of fighting, the Canadians succeeded in clearing the Reichswald Forest, in breaking the Siegfried Line and in clearing the Hochwald Forest. But victory came at a high cost.

Following is another complete letter written by William, mailed February 24, 1945 from "location unknown" [he was in Germany], addressed to Dorothy (Doodie). Their daughter Susan was then 5 1/2 months old:

My Darling:

I am afraid my letters are going to be few and far between dearest. I am kept pretty busy. But you can bet I'll do my best. I love you Doodie. And my letters will of necessity, be short. I can't tell you anything about what is going on. Besides you know more about the war than I do. We look for newspapers to tell us about it, and they are a day or so late.

If this is hard to read darling, please excuse it. It is a little on the difficult side to write here. We are in a ruined house and the writing facilities have disappeared. I'm struggling along on a rickety table, by candle light and sitting on a box. But I have to tell you I love you my dearest. So you must put up with this.

How is our Susan? She is quite a young lady now, I'll bet. Sitting in her high chair and eating grown up food. I'd sure like to see her. Does she miss her Daddy? The little devil probably gurgles and chuckles away to herself and is completely ignorant of my existence. But I love her just the same. I certainly miss her too, darling.

Have I told you that I love you yet my own Doodie? Well I do darling. More than you'll ever know. I'll certainly be glad when this is over. And I say that with more fervour that I ever thought possible. It will be so nice to settle down and live peaceful, normal lives again. I adore you my own dear wife.

So long for now sweetheart. Take care of yourself and Susan. We'll all be together soon. Kiss Susan for me darling. Give love to mom and the Burg's. I love you my Doodie. Forever & ever.

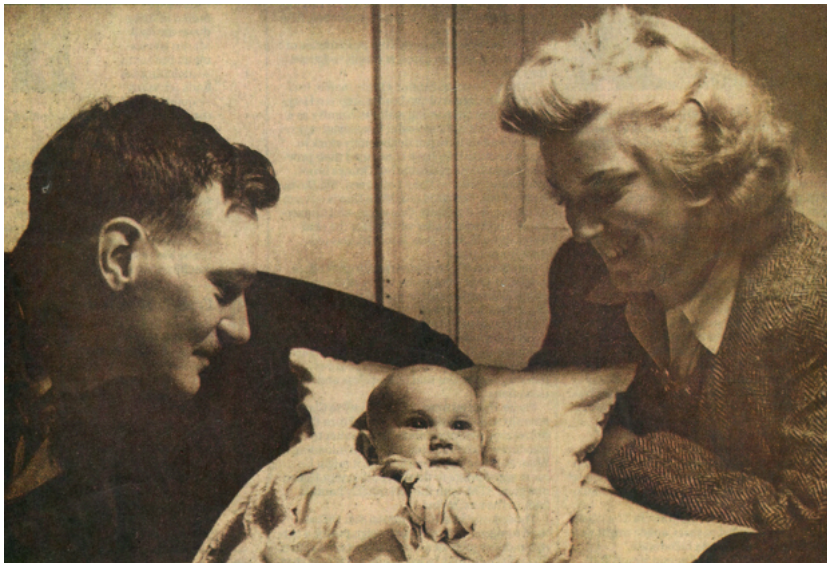
You're my own adoring

Bill XXXX

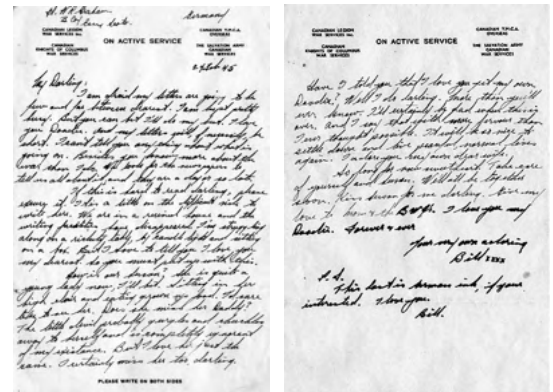
P.S. This last is German ink, if your interested. I love you.

Bill

*Note: from the word Burg's on, the letter is clearly written with a different kind of ink.



Lt. William Graham, daughter Susan and wife "Doodie"



William's letter home – February 24, 1945

Six days after the above letter was mailed, on March 2, 1945, Lieutenant William Graham of "B" Company, Essex Scottish Regiment, lost his life in a mortar bomb attack in the Hochwald Forest, Germany, during the Battle of the Rhineland. His remains were buried at a location recorded on the Army Field Service Card as "Germany Unit plot 1/25,000 sheet Xanten Xanten M.R. 0325/4330 Plot 1 row 1 Gr. 7". His remains were later carefully exhumed and reverently reburied in Nijmegen Canadian Military Cemetery.

Four days after William was killed, a letter from his wife Doodie arrived for him bearing two small snapshots--one of a Christmas tree, the other of baby Susan – and news that the "Pablum Eater", as he called her, had learned to roll over in her playpen. *I love you with all my heart and Susan and I will be waiting right here for you*, she wrote. The letter was returned to Mrs. Graham stamped "Reported Deceased" with a Return to Sender label that read: "The Postmaster General deeply regrets the circumstances which make this necessary."

In mid-March 1945, Dorothy, who was living in Newmarket, along with his parents Arthur and Florence in Sarnia, received word that Lieutenant William Graham had been killed in action, presumably on the Western Front. Arthur and Florence had received a letter from William only two weeks prior to his death and were unaware that he was in NW Europe. Approximately two months after William's death, the war in Europe ended. William Graham was later officially recorded as, *Killed in action, in the field (Germany)*.

In 1950 (and again in February 1995), the *Windsor Star* printed an article written by Colonel A.J. Hodges, MC, of the Essex Scottish Regiment. In the article he gave his eyewitness account of the regiment's battle at Hochwald Forest. Following is a portion of that article:

Fighting for a toehold in a German forest

A week after the battle at Louisendorf, the Essex Scottish were in it again. And again, the price would be high

This is the Hochwald story. The Hochwald story is the story of Fred Tilston and the winning of a Victoria Cross. It is the story of some 400 Essex Scots, 138 of whom became casualties, who fought a bloody and successful battle 50 years ago March 1 for a bridgehead in the Hochwald Forest, a strongly defended section protecting the fortified town of Xanten, guardian of the Wesel Bridge escape route across the Rhine.

It is very difficult, even for one who was a participant, to picture to his readers, without becoming too theatrical, the small groups of men walking slowly and deliberately, not running (for men geared for battle cannot run very far), across 500 yards of flat, open ground.

At the other end are other groups of men, enemies, protected by obstacles of wire and mines, concealed in trenches, camouflaged to blend into the forest that formed their background, using with terrible effect the deadly weapons of modern war, with so much effect that many of the advancing men fall and lie still. Some fall and jerk convulsively in pain. One clutches his stomach with both hands, turns, stumbles, falls, but the group does not stop, it keeps going. Tennyson best described it, when writing of another such battle: "Stormed at with shot and shell, Into the mouth of Hell."

continued over...

The story of the battle actually begins on the night of Feb. 28, 1945, when the Essex Scottish, under Lt.-Col. J.E.C. Pangman, spearheaded a Canadian drive toward the Hochwald Forest, advancing on a two company front. On the right, A Company, commanded by Maj. Ken MacIntyre; on the left, B Company, under Capt. Alf Hodges.

Both companies took their objectives, which were just short of the Hochwald, with comparative ease. When the companies were settled, B was instructed to move a platoon forward into the woods... They quickly ran into opposition, and, impeded by wire defences, pinned down by merciless machine-gun fire, were forced to withdraw, leaving most of their equipment behind. On the right, an A Company patrol had a similar experience. During the night, the battle plan was drawn up. C and D companies were to attack, assisted by artillery and tanks. D Company's objective was a group of buildings on the edge of the forest; C Company, on the left, was to gain a foothold on the outskirts of the Hochwald.

In the early morning hours of March 1, C and D Company's advanced forward to their objectives, supported by the 25-pounders of the Fourth Field Regiment, who boomed out a creeping barrage, the mortars of the Toronto Scottish and Essex Scottish Platoon, and the tanks of the Sherbrooke Fusiliers. They were met with German machine gun fire, enemy shells, mortars and grenades as they moved over knee-high wire and the threat of anti-personnel mines. The companies successfully cleared two lines of defended trenches that included hand-to-hand fighting with bayonets and grenades. During the battle there were many casualties and many individual acts of bravery that went unnoticed.

Both companies were now on their objectives and still in contact with the enemy. Lt.-Col. Pangman at this point decided to throw another company into the forest, to take some of the pressure from C and D. B Company was instructed to pass through C and occupy some 300 to 400 yards of the woods in front of C and D Company. The plan this time was slightly different. Instead of a creeping barrage, the artillery and mortars were to lay down fire on likely enemy gun and mortar positions picked from the map. Tanks were not considered, as owing to the softness of the ground they had not been able to be of much assistance thus far.

*B Company moved off, led by No. 12 Platoon on the right under **Lieut. Bill Graham** of Windsor; 10 Platoon left under Lieut. Harold Boer of Edmonton... Intense machine-gun fire was experienced from the German right flank and 25 men were hit before the woods were reached. Maj. Tilston greeted B Company, on the edge of the Hochwald, with the classic remark, "Keep going fellows, they've only a few rifles and grenades." A moment later, a shell landed beside this intrepid officer and he became a casualty. Lieut. Charles Gatton, the only remaining officer took over command of C Company and for his bravery and display of leadership that day was awarded the Military Cross.*

*B Company, after considerable mopping up, during the course of which many prisoners were taken, dug in on its objective... The attack was over and the Essex Scottish had their toehold on the Hochwald. A weary night was spent under fire, repelling counter attacks. An intense enemy artillery bombardment the following morning claimed the lives of three more of B Company – Capt. Leslie Bond, second-in-command; **Lieut. Bill Graham**, who had done a wonderful job during the attack; and Pte. Hutchings, a recruit signaler, who had performed miracles in maintaining communications during the night.*

Another 24 hours were spent in the forest holding. Then relieving battalions arrived and the Essex Scottish moved back to prepare for the attack on Xanten. More than 100 prisoners, numerous German casualties, three captured heavy guns as well as numerous mortars and automatic weapons, attested to the value the enemy placed on this stronghold and the desperate tenacity with which he defended it.

Maj. Fred Tilston won the Victoria Cross, then the military's highest award for bravery, as commander of C Company during the Hochwald battle. Despite being wounded three times during the fighting, he continued to direct his troops and helped to carry grenades and ammunition forward when supplies ran low. He lost his legs below the knees as a result of his wounds...

Many years after the war, Colonel Alfred J. Hodges of the Essex Scottish Regiment, who had witnessed William Graham's death, wrote a letter to William's cousin (Mrs. Branch) after visiting William's grave. Following is a portion of that letter:

Dear Mrs. Branch,

Thank you for your very kind letter, referring to Bill Graham's grave. I had a particular interest in visiting it and also that of Capt. Les Bond. They were killed by the same mortar bomb at the Hochwald Forest on the morning of Mar. 2, 1945.

I had first met Bill in Sept. 1942, when I joined the Regiment as a young lieutenant after Dieppe. Bill at that time was Sgt. Major of Support Company, and I was much impressed by him. He left the regiment to return to

Canada for his commission. Les Bond and I had gone thru OCTU together and he joined the regiment sometime later.

In late Feb. 1945, Bill reported to "B" Company, which I was commanding, shortly after the Louisenberg battle and was placed in command of a platoon. Les Bond was company second-in-command. He had been wounded in Normandy.

The Regiment proceeded towards the Hochwald, A & B Coys leading, followed by C & D. We all had objectives just short of the forest. I lost Bill's platoon in the dark, after taking our objective, and eventually found him forward, on C Coy's objective. So here we stayed while C Coy under Fred Tilston, remained on ours. Because of this Fred's coy was first into the Hochwald, where Fred won the V.C. (I used to tell him it was because of Bill's fine leadership).

Anyway, we followed C Coy into the forest, had a very rough time, Bill and I spent the night together in a slit trench. In the morning, (we) were moved back to part of the Siegfried Line, where a mortar bomb dropped between Bill and Les. Both were fine and brave officers. I am mentioning this to you, because when Bill's wife visited me after the war, I believe she thought I was embellishing things. Not so – he was killed instantly and suffered no pain...

William Graham left behind his parents, who at the time had already lost one son while another was a POW in Germany. William also left behind his wife Dorothy ("Doodie") and their six-month old baby daughter Susan. Twenty-six-year-old William Graham is buried in Groesbeek Canadian War Cemetery, Netherlands, Grave XXI.E.4.



On May 3, 2005, *The Globe and Mail* printed a story to mark the 60th anniversary of V-E Day that featured William Graham's moving tale and his final letters (story by journalist Jill Mahoney). In Sarnia, Jack Graham "pretty near fell over" when he saw that on the front page of the newspaper was a photograph of his older brother William, who had died 60 years earlier. He stated that the photograph "really brought back good memories, and bad memories along with them. But I was so pleased and so proud to see that picture there, that somebody is remembering him besides me."

He learned that members of Doodie's side of the family had recently discovered William's steamer trunk, which contained his wartime personal effects. He also learned that Doodie had died in the late-1990s. Jack Graham and his family, with the support of The Globes Jill Mahoney, then launched a mission to connect the Grahams with Todd Taylor in Toronto (William's great-nephew who had the trunk), and to locate Susan.

Though the family members had somehow lost contact over the years, they were successfully reconnected. In June 2005, Jill Mahoney was able to track down and to interview William Graham's daughter Susan, then named Susan Davies, in Fredericton, New Brunswick. Susan had been married, had two children, and took her mother's maiden name after being divorced. Following are portions of Jill Mahoney's story on Susan Davis:

Susan Davies knows her father only through stories. As a child, when the power would go out, she would sit on the floor with her mother and listen to candlelight accounts of her daddy who died when she was just six months old. He desperately wanted a baby girl and was so excited when her mother became pregnant that he paraded her up and down the streets of Newmarket, Ont. When the baby was born with a nose so squished it seemed to be missing, her mother cried but her father couldn't have been more proud. And in letters that Ms. Davies learned about just

weeks ago, she discovered that her father, a soldier during the Second World War, referred to his baby girl as the *Pabulum Eater* and was desperately homesick.



Susan holding a photo of herself as a baby with her father William

As a child, Remembrance Day was the most difficult time for Ms. Davies. "I'd always bust into tears at Remembrance Day because the other kids, most of them, their fathers had come home and mine hadn't." But she had a largely ordinary childhood, full of stories about her father. It was just like he was sort of still part of the family." She and her mother moved in with her grandparents and uncle, who she worshipped; she was told her uncle was much like her dad, funny and mischievous. Her mother worked as a telephone operator and eventually became an assistant hospital administrator. Doodie, who once visited her husband's gravesite in Holland when Ms. Davies was little, deeply missed her Bill but didn't dwell on her loss.

After her husband's death, her mother had no interest in dating. But when she and Susan moved to Oakville, she started to see a man across the street. Susan and his children got along well and helped orchestrate the marriage of their parents, both avid ballroom dancers. On their wedding day, her mother presented Susan, then 14, with the gold wedding band Bill had given her. Ms. Davies said that while her mother was "terribly fond" of her second husband, it was "never in the same sort of passionate way" as with Lt. Graham, whom Doodie had only known two or three years before he died. "It's because they had so little time together that that first kind of passionate love had never settled down into the sort of comfortable old-married type love."

During a visit a few years before her mother died, she noticed Ms. Davies wearing her old wedding band. "She said, 'Oh my God, I remember the day that was put on my finger.' And then she burst into tears and rushed out into the garden to have a little private cry, and I thought she's still just as in love with him as she ever was even though she remarried." Ms. Davies mother (Doodie) died of lung cancer in the late 1990s, and her stepfather passed away in 2000. And when she dies, Ms. Davies has told her children she wants her ashes scattered on her dad's grave, "so that my father and I will be together."^{8S}

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, J, L, M, N, 2C, 2D, 4B, 6G, 7C, 8S, 8X, 8Y, 10B, 10U, d, 2o

GRAINGER, Roy James (#V/17877)

Roy James Grainger was born in Kingston and, at some time, moved to Sarnia where he was employed at Loblaw's. He was the father of a young daughter when in 1941, he enlisted with the Royal Canadian Volunteer Reserve. By February 1943, he was a Supply Petty Officer aboard the *HMCS Athabaskan*. In late April 1944, *HMCS Athabaskan* on a mission to clear the English Channel in preparation for the Normandy landings was sunk off the coast of Brittany. Roy, 24, perished at sea, his body never recovered.

Roy Grainger was born in Kingston, Ontario on December 4, 1916, the youngest son of James Francis and Edith Mary (nee Ford) Grainger, of 24 Walton Street, Port Hope, Ontario. James and Edith were married in January 1906 in Toronto and their union produced three sons--Francis Raymond (born November 7, 1907); James Norman (born February 9, 1911, but died August 15, 1911 a result of chronic indigestion); and Roy—and four daughters: Dorothy (born 1909, later Mrs. Melville McCall); Eileen Edith (born June 7, 1912, later Mrs. John Donald Hogg); Marie (born 1918, later Mrs. L. Wilson); and adopted daughter Rose Marie (born around 1941, later Mrs. R. Austin). In 1921, the Grainger family residing in Kingston included parents James (37) and Edith (34), and their children Francis (13), Dorothy (12), Eileen (9), Roy (4) and Marie (3). James Grainger supported his family working as a machinist at a foundry.

Roy completed two years of high school at Peterborough High School. At some point, he moved to Sarnia. When he enlisted at age twenty-four with the Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve on November 27, 1941 in London, Ontario, he was residing at 145 Davis Street and was employed as a meat manager at Loblaw's Groceteria. Roy stood five feet seven and one-quarter inches tall, had blue eyes and auburn hair, and was single at the time. He served on several ships, including the *Prevost* (December 27, 1941 - January 4, 1942); *York* (January 5 - March 2, 1942); *Stadacona* (March 3 - December 11, 1942); and *Niobe* (December 12, 1942 - February 3, 1943). On February 4, 1943, Roy Grainger became a member of the *HMCS Athabaskan*, attaining the rank of Supply Petty Officer.

Beginning on the opening day of the Second World War, the **Battle of the Atlantic** would be the longest continuous campaign of the war, and one in which Canada played a central role. The Royal Canadian Navy, along with the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) and Canada's Merchant Navy, played a vital role in defending the country's eastern coast and escorting convoys of ships carrying men and essential machinery, arms, fuel and basic resources between North America and Europe.



Supply Petty Officer Roy Grainger



Tribal Class Destroyer *HMCS Athabaskan* G07

The *HMCS Athabaskan* (G07) was a destroyer of the Tribal class, built in 1940-41 and commissioned by the Royal Canadian Navy in February of 1943. She was plagued by mishaps during her very short service life. She had to be repaired due to weather-induced stress and was involved in two minor collisions that required repairs. The *Athabaskan* drew some good luck in its early days. On August 27, 1943, she was heavily damaged by a German Henschel glider bomb during an anti-submarine chase in the Bay of Biscay. During that incident, a "Chase me Charlie," as the gliders were known, had struck and passed through it, luckily without exploding. The *HMS Egret* was sunk in the same incident.

During English Channel operations in early 1944, RCN Tribal class destroyers *Haida*, *Huron*, *Iroquois*, and *Athabaskan* were involved in a series of battles along the French coast. In February 1944, the destroyers were engaged in *Operation Tunnel*--anti-shipping sweeps which the Canadian sailors described as "fooling around the French coast." After about twenty operations, in the early morning hours of April 26, the Tribals *Huron*, *Haida*, and *Athabaskan* intercepted three German torpedo boats near St. Malo. A running gun battle ensued. The Tribals illuminated the sea with starshells while the Germans laid a smokescreen and fired their torpedoes. As the Tribals closed the distance, they launched a salvo of shells, hammering the enemy vessel *T-29*. The other enemy vessels barely survived their full-tilt flight from destruction. The victory was a boost to morale, and *T-29* was the RCN's first enemy surface vessel sunk.⁴¹

Three nights later, in the early hours of April 29, 1944, the *HMCS Athabaskan* and her sister ship the *HMCS Haida*, were ordered to intercept a German force steaming towards Morlaix River, off the coast of Brittany in the English Channel. Just before 4:00 a.m., the *Athabaskan* made radar contact with two German Elbing destroyers, *T-24* and *T-27*, and an E-boat. Closing range to 4300 yards, the *Athabaskan* fired a volley of 4-inch star shells. Upon being illuminated in the darkness, the enemy created a smokescreen, fired their own starshells and their big guns. A fierce clash ensued, with the enemy firing shells and torpedoes while the two Tribals blasted away with their guns. As both

Canadian ships opened fire, they turned their bows directly towards the German destroyers, to present as little silhouette as possible and to avoid torpedoes fired at them. Unfortunately, an enemy torpedo from German boat *T-24* hit the *Athabaskan* at 4:17 a.m., causing catastrophic damage, with flames soaring ten meters high and ammunition exploding below deck.

The *Haida* laid a smokescreen to cover the wounded *Athabaskan* and continued to pursue the enemy. Within ten minutes of the first torpedo strike, *Athabaskan*'s magazine exploded, shooting 200-metre-high flames that were witnessed from over 40 kilometres away. Fires were raging fiercely above and below decks. Slowly, *Athabaskan* upended and slid under the surface, as steam and escaping air hissed her death knell. Survivors were scattered, some in boats, others clinging to floats and still others supported only by their life jackets in the freezing water, many of them barely alive. As the ship went down, darkness shrouded the last resting place of the destroyer, with only the red blinking lights on the life jackets providing some indication of the sailors' location in the water. Dozens of crew members died in the burning oil that polluted the surface water or succumbed to the freezing cold.

Haida had continued the chase and was able to punish *T-27* with accurate gunfire until she was run aground by her crew, with the other T-boat fleeing. *Haida* then returned to assist *Athabaskan*, even though the destroyer was vulnerable, as U-boats were likely converging on any possible rescue ships. When *Haida* arrived, it came across life jacket lights bobbing and blinking in the dark, many of the men barely conscious, located within five miles of the German-held French coast. The *Haida* dropped all of her life rafts and floats, scramble-nets were lowered over the side and her own men went down them to drag up dazed and exhausted survivors. Her motor cutter (power launch) also went over the side, manned by a party of three volunteers. With the tide pulling at the destroyer and dawn raising the probabilities for an imminent air attack, the *Haida* had limited time to rescue survivors.

After being stopped for ten minutes, word was passed along that the ship would have to go ahead in five minutes. The warning was repeated at one-minute intervals to the rescue parties labouring along the side and on the quarter-deck. Sixty seconds after the last warning, the order "slow ahead" was given. After fifteen minutes, and after rescuing as many as she could, the *Haida* was forced to make a run for it. The *Athabaskan* captain, Lieutenant Commander John Stubbs, in the water with the other survivors, declined rescue by *Haida* to swim back for more crew members.

Following is a portion of an account of the events from William Sclater's 1947 book *Haida*:

Just then there came a cry, "Athabaskan's been hit," which made every head on *Haida*'s bridge turn around. They could see her plainly... From somewhere aft of the bridge, a great column of flame was shooting up, outlining her foresection in bold relief. Even as they looked her B gun fired. From the enemy ships there came a frenzied burst of gunfire as they sighted the burning destroyer and turned all their guns on her in an endeavor to give her a knockout blow... In *Athabaskan*, after the crash and explosion aft there was no panic. That the propellers had ceased to function was evident and the ship was being carried forward only by her own impetus... There was fever activity now on the crippled ship's decks...

(Early damage reports included heavy damage aft, Y gun collapsed, after pump was gone, after steering position was out of action and ship was settling by the stern). The young Captain nodded. "All hands stand by their Abandon Ship stations," he said. "I'll let *Haida* know." Obedient to the order the crew started to file off the bridge... The Captain remained on the bridge, watching them go.... down there on the maindeck the men still worked desperately to bring the pump into action (to deal with the rising flames behind them). It was almost ready. The Chief Engineer turned to put the feedline overboard and the Gunner T was fixing up the fairleads to the starter when a sudden rumble in the fire presaged disaster.

A great roar of flame went blasting skywards and the after part of the ship became a holocaust. The deck on which they stood tilted crazily and then collapsed as internal explosions blew it out... Great blobs of burning oil were falling everywhere, over the forward section of the maindeck and the bridge. Men standing by the boats...covered their heads with their arms and dashed blindly forward, trying to find shelter under the boats, away from the burning oil. Many plunged headlong into the sea... The ship lurched violently and most of those who were left went tumbling over the side... "Abandon Ship!" came a shout...

The *Athabaskan* was going. She had righted and now the bow was rising. Up, up it came until it was nearly perpendicular and the ship was clear of the surface almost back to the first funnel. She seemed to poise there a moment and then slipped swiftly backwards, down into the engulfing waters. The brightness disappeared and darkness came down over the sea...

(After pursuing and punishing *T-27*, *Haida* turned back to where the *Athabaskan* had been). B gun fired and

a starshell burst over the spot where the *Athabaskan* had been. Under it the black clusters of survivors could be seen. There were three or four groups and numbers of small, separated figures... As *Haida* closed, the flashing lights of the survivors' lifejackets could be seen more than three miles away. Heading for the largest clusters, the Captain let the ship glide to a stop among them... It was an eerie scene in the dim, predawn gloom. Lifejacket lights were flashing and survivors were shouting and blowing their whistles in the adjacent waters as the rafts and boats were dropped and lowered away... The sea was heavy with fuel oil and those who reached the ship's side were covered with it from head to foot. Few had the strength left to climb up the scramble nets or the ladders, and *Haida*'s people went over the side and helped them in... Soon rescuers and rescued alike were filthy with the thick, slippery oil. Spreading on the decks it made men flounder and fall...

The minutes were going fast. The allotted quarter of an hour passed, by a long margin, when the call went out for the men to man their stations to get the ship under way again. From the bridge came telephone warnings at five, four, three, two and one minutes to go now, and then the ship started slowly ahead... Daylight was imminent and attack from land and air could be looked for at any moment here. It was time to go.^{9G}

Fourty-four oil-soaked *Athabaskan* crew members were picked up out of the water by her sister ship *HMCS Haida*. Eight *Athabaskan* crew members were able to climb into a lowered *Haida* motor cutter, and slowly made their way to safety. Three German torpedo boats picked up 83 survivors in the water, and sent to prisoner-of-war camps. A total of 129 of the crew were lost in the sinking of the *Athabaskan* that April 29 night, among them, the *Athabaskan* Commander John Stubbs and Petty Officer Supply Roy Grainger of Sarnia.

On May 2, 1944, Edith Grainger in Port Hope received the following letter from the Secretary, Naval Board; *Dear Mrs. Grainger:*

It is with deepest regret that I must confirm the telegram of the 1st of May, 1944, from the Minister of National Defence for Naval Services, informing you that your son, Roy James Grainger, Leading Supply Assistant, Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve, Official Number V-17877, is missing from H.M.C.S. "ATHABASKAN".

According to the report received from overseas, your son's loss occurred when H.M.C.S. "Athabaskan" was torpedoed and sunk by enemy action on the 29th of April, 1944, in the English Channel. Further particulars of this Naval disaster are being published in the newspapers.

While Leading Supply Assistant Grainger is reported as "missing", there is a possibility of his survival. It is understood that a number of the crew have been taken prisoners of war by the enemy. The Red Cross have been informed and are attempting to obtain from the German Government a list of those taken. Please be assured that as soon as any further information respecting your son has been received you will be informed.

Please allow me to express the sincere sympathy of the Minister of National Defence for Naval Services, the Chief of the Naval Staff and the Officers and men of the Royal Canadian Navy, the high traditions of which your son has helped to maintain.

Five months later, in October 1944, Edith received another letter from the Secretary, Naval Board. Following is that letter;

Dear Mrs. Grainger:

I must regretfully inform you that since your son was reported missing no further information has been received of his survival or that he is a prisoner of war. I wish to assure you, however, that the Department makes every endeavor to discover the fate of missing men and draws upon all likely sources of information about them.

In the case of men who are believed to be prisoners of war continuous efforts are made to speed up the machinery whereby their names and camp addresses can reach this country. The official means is by lists of names prepared by the enemy government. These lists take some time to compile, especially if there is a long journey from the place of capture to a prisoner of war camp. Consequently "capture cards", filled in by the prisoners themselves soon after capture and sent home to their relatives, are often the first news received in this country that a man is a prisoner of war.

Very slight hope is now held, however, that your son is a prisoner of war as the total number of names of men who are known to be prisoners from H.M.C.S. "ATHABASKAN" coincides with the number which the Germans claim to have captured from this ship. Even if no news is received that a missing man is a prisoner of war, endeavours to trace him do not cease. Enquiries are pursued, not only among those who were serving with him, but also through diplomatic channels and the International Red Cross Committee in Geneva. The moment reliable news is obtained from any of these sources it is sent to the Department and is immediately passed on to the next of kin.

Should no information be received to the contrary your son will be presumed dead by the Canadian Naval Authorities at a later date. May I extend my sincere sympathy in this time of anxiety.

Three months later, in mid-January 1945, Edith received a final letter from the Secretary, Naval Board. Following is that letter;

Dear Mrs. Grainger,

Further to my letter of the 10th of October, 1944 I regret to inform you that in view of the length of time which has elapsed since your son, Roy James Grainger, Supply Petty Officer, Official Number V-17877, Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve, was reported missing from H.M.C.S. "ATHABASKAN", and as no news has since been received to the contrary, the Canadian Naval Authorities have now presumed his death to have occurred on the 29th of April, 1944.

May I again express sincere sympathy with you in your bereavement on behalf of the Minister of National Defence for Naval Services, the Chief of the Naval Staff, and the Officers and men of the Royal Canadian Navy.

Roy Grainger would later be officially recorded as, *Missing, presumed dead, when H.M.C.S. 'ATHABASKAN' was torpedoed and sunk by enemy action in the English Channel.* Roy left behind his mother and father, his brother and sisters, and his four year-old daughter, Rose Marie Diana Grainger. Before he went to war, Roy had what was then termed "an illegitimate daughter" with a married woman. Roy financially supported his daughter Rose, and had the normal fatherly anxieties over her well-being—he cherished and loved her. Rose was adopted by his parents James and Edith Grainger in Kingston in late October 1943, while Roy was aboard the *Athabaskan*. In July 1945, James and Edith received a War Service Gratuity of \$403.98 for the loss of their son. Years later, on June 2, 1962, Rose Marie Grainger married RCAF Flying Officer R.R. Austin at RMC in Port Hope, Ontario. They later made their home in California. Twenty-seven-year-old Roy Grainger has no known grave. His name is inscribed on the Halifax Memorial, Nova Scotia, Canada, Panel 12.

Years later, there was speculation that the *Athabaskan* may have, in fact, been lost to a friendly fire incident after being torpedoed by a British motor torpedo boat, or that she had suffered some sort of catastrophic internal explosion in number one boiler room. Due to the poor condition of the wreck, and the poor record keeping and incomplete logs of other ships in the area at the time, neither of these theories has yet to be confirmed.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, P, T, U, X, Z, 2A, 2C, 2D, 4I, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 9G

GREEN, Harold Cecil (#A/606494)

Harold Cecil Green was the son of a World War I veteran who never had the opportunity to serve overseas. More than two decades later, like his father, Harold never had the opportunity to serve overseas, losing his life in a tragic accident in western Canada.

Harold Green was born in Sarnia on April 23, 1921, the youngest son of George Seymour and Annie (nee Lee) Green. George (born April 14, 1876 in Oxfordshire, England) and Annie (born in Watlington, Oxfordshire, England) were married in Watlington, Oxfordshire, England. George Seymour Green was a World War I veteran. On February 2, 1916, at the age of 39, George enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force in Forest, Ontario. He stood five feet six and a half inches tall, had brown eyes and black-grey hair, and lived at R.R. #1 Camlachie, Ontario with his wife (and next-of-kin) Annie. He recorded his trade or calling as blacksmith and bandsman. He became a member of the 149th Battalion.

George Green only saw service in Canada, due to his persistent health issues. In mid-August 1916, he was admitted to Kapuskasing Hospital diagnosed with chronic appendicitis. He was discharged from hospital ten months later, in mid-June 1917. One month later, he was admitted to Base Hospital in Toronto, diagnosed with mucous colitis, where he remained for three weeks. In mid-April 1918, he was admitted to London Military Hospital, still suffering from colitis. He was later transferred to Guelph Military Convalescent Hospital, and in late June 1918, was released from hospital. Despite undergoing two operations in Toronto and continual treatment, he still suffered from mucous colitis. Though his conduct and character while in service were graded as "very good", on July 2, 1918, he was discharged from the military in London, declared "medically unfit due to service, although fit for employment in civil life."

After George was discharged, the Green family lived at 398 George St., and later 259 Elgin St., Sarnia. George and Annie Green had two children: Harold and George Edwin Green, born in 1909 (he later lived at Manor Apartments, Christina Street). George Green supported his family working as a blacksmith. Approximately three years after the loss of his youngest son, George Green passed away at Sarnia General Hospital on November 10, 1947, the result of enteritis. He is buried in Lakeview Cemetery.

Harold Green was educated in Sarnia, and was a member of Canon Davis Memorial Church. Prior to his enlisting under the National Resources Mobilization Act (NRMA), Harold was employed at the Sarnia Elevator Company as a labour foreman.

Twenty-one-year-old Harold Green enlisted in the Canadian Army on June 29, 1942 in London, Ontario. He stood five feet eight and a half inches tall, had brown eyes and brown hair, was single, and lived at home with his parents at the time. He was initially posted to #1 District Depot, attached the 30th Reconnaissance Battalion (Essex Regiment) in Windsor, Ontario. In October 1942, he continued training as part of Canadian Armoured Corps (CAC), with the rank of Trooper, in Dundurn, Saskatchewan. He continued training in New Westminster, British Columbia in May 1943; then Vernon, B.C. in September 1943; and then Courtenay, British Columbia in November 1943. While in B.C., Harold was a member of the 31st (Alberta) Reconnaissance Regiment, the Royal Canadian Armored Corps Division. Just prior to his death, Harold had been expecting to come home to Sarnia on a furlough. Harold Green did not have the opportunity to serve overseas.

On April 24, 1944, while serving in British Columbia, Harold Green and three other men were riding in a Bren gun carrier that overturned, pinning the occupants beneath it. Trooper Harold Green and the three other men were seriously injured. On the same day as the accident, Harold's mother received the following telegram: FOLLOWING MESSAGE ADDRESSED MRS ANNIE GREEN 259 ELGIN ST SARNIA ONT DESPATCHED 1750 HRS 24/4/44 "SINCERELY REGRET INFORM YOU A606494 TPR GREEN HC REPORTED DANGEROUSLY ILL AS A RESULT OF FRACTURED SKULL IN MOTOR ACCIDENT STOP ADMITTED NORTH VANCOUVER GENERAL HOSP NORTH VANCOUVER BC STOP FURTHER INFORMATION FOLLOWS WHEN RECEIVED".

Harold Green was transferred to Shaughnessy Military Hospital, Vancouver, where on May 2, 1944, at 0200 hours, he died as a result of the fractured skull and injuries he had received in the motor accident. The coroner's report stated that the injuries he accidentally received during military maneuvers caused the death of Trooper Green. Harold Green was later officially recorded as, *Universal carrier accident while on training, New Westminster, British Columbia*. Harold Green's body arrived in Sarnia by C.N.R. not long after his death. His funeral was held at the Robb Funeral Home, followed by a public service at Canon Davis Memorial Church, followed by his internment. Twenty-three-year-old Harold Green is buried in Sarnia (Lakeview) Cemetery, Sarnia, Ontario, Section E, Lot 106. SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 7C, 8Y

GREEN, Russell Raymond (#A/17184)

When Russell Raymond Green, 21, enlisted in the Canadian Army in Sarnia, he had been married only two months. He joined the army out of a "sense of duty" and left for overseas months later. Russell never got to see his infant daughter grow up—he was killed in action during the Battle of Normandy.

He was born in Hamilton, Ontario on August 24, 1918, the son of John Archibald and Gertrude Beatrice Green. John and Gertrude were married in Midland, Ontario on July 5, 1917. When Russell was only four months old, his parents moved to Sarnia. The Green family lived at 244 Christina Street, later 106 North Brock Street, and later 254 Davis Street, Sarnia (Russell's father would be estranged from the family). Russell was of North American Indian descent, a member of the Iroquois. Russell was a year older than his half brother, Louis Currotte. Louis also served in the Canadian Army, a member of the Winnipeg Grenadiers.

Russell was always active, although he seemed to do much more outside the confines of a classroom. He received his education in a Sarnia Public school but left school after grade seven at age 14. He participated in sports such as baseball, hockey, and lacrosse, and spent many hours hunting and riding. He was never afraid of work. From 1934 to 1939, he worked part time as a grain elevator helper at Sarnia Grain Company. During winters from 1936 to 1938, he was a Foundry worker in Windsor and Walkerville. Every summer from 1936 to 1939, he was a tobacco farm labourer in Langton, Ontario.

The years 1939 and 1940 were pivotal in Russell's life. Still a young man in his early 20s, Russell married Eileen Marie, a young lady from Port Huron, Michigan, in her hometown on July 27, 1939. The young couple had one child together, Gail Patricia Green, born March 16, 1940.

Before Gail was born, however, Russell, 21, enlisted in the Canadian Army on September 9, 1939 in Sarnia, the day before Canada and Newfoundland declared war on Germany. He had been a member of the 26th Lambton Field Battery in Sarnia before that and joined the army out of a "sense of duty." His ambition for after the war was to

do mechanical factory work. Still, it must have been a tumultuous time for Russell. He stood five feet eight and a half inches tall, had brown eyes and dark brown hair, and when he enlisted, Russell and Eileen were residing at 244 North Christina Street. Before departing for overseas, however, Russell and Eileen separated, and Eileen resided at 111 Penrose Street and later in Port Huron.

In Canada, Russell received his gunner/battery training in Sarnia, Guelph and Petawawa. On August 21, 1940, he embarked overseas from Halifax for the United Kingdom, a member of the Royal Canadian Artillery, 4th Field Regiment, with the rank of Gunner. He continued his training in the U.K., and in August of 1942, he celebrated his 24th birthday "somewhere in England."



Lance Bombardier Russell Raymond Green

Almost four years after arriving in England, Russell Green embarked for front line action. He arrived in France on July 6, 1944, one month after D-Day. The **Battle of Normandy** had begun for the Canadians with the June 6, 1944 D-Day landings at Juno Beach. After breaching the "Atlantic Wall" of "Fortress Europe", Allied armies began their break out from the narrow Normandy bridgehead to carve out a foothold on the French mainland. It took a whole summer of tenacious fighting against fierce and ruthless German forces to advance east across France. In a brutal campaign of attrition, the Canadians faced fierce battles and vicious counterattacks as they clawed their way forward liberating villages and towns including Bretteville, Carpiquet, Caen and Falaise.

As Russell advanced with the 4th Field Regiment, he rose to the rank of Lance Bombardier. On August 13, 1944, a little over one month after arriving in France, Russell Green was killed in action while fighting during the Battle of Normandy. His body was buried three days later at a location recorded on the Army Field Service Card as "France Brayen anglais E side Main Rd north of forks 100 yds M.R. 7F/3 073461." His remains were later exhumed and reverently reburied in Bretteville-Sur-Laize Canadian War Cemetery.

In mid-August 1944, Gertrude Green in Sarnia received word that her younger son, Private Louis Currotte of the Winnipeg Grenadiers, had been wounded in his ankle while on active service in France (he was wounded only a few days prior to Russell's death). Only a few days later, she received a telegram from the Director of Records in Ottawa informing her that her other son, LANCE-BOMBARDIER RUSSELL RAYMOND GREEN HAS BEEN REPORTED MISSING IN ACTION IN FRANCE ON AUGUST 13. The message also stated that when further information became available, it would be forwarded to her.

In late September 1944, the Major-General, Adjutant-General wrote Gertrude, now living on Brock Street:
Dear Mrs. Green:

It was with deep regret that I learned of the death of your son, A17184 Lance Bombardier Russell Raymond Green, who gave his life in the Service of his Country in The Western European Theatre of War on the 13th day of August, 1944.

From official information we have received, your son was killed in action against the enemy. You may be assured that any additional information received will be communicated to you without delay.

The Minister of National Defence and the members of the Army Council have asked me to express to you and

your family their sincere sympathy in your bereavement. We pay tribute to the sacrifice he so bravely made.

Russell Green was later officially recorded as, *Overseas casualty, killed in action, in the field (France)*. In September 1945, the Children's Aid Society in Sarnia received a War Service Gratuity of \$972.86 for the care of Gail Patricia Green, on the loss of her father Russell Green. In early April 1946, Gertrude, now residing at 254 Davis Street, received a letter from the Colonel, Director of Records, for Adjutant-General. Following is a portion of that letter:

Dear Madam:

Information has just been received from overseas that the remains of your son, A.17184 Lance Bombardier Russell Raymond Green, have now been carefully exhumed from the original place of internment and reverently reburied in grave 9, row G, plot 12, of Bretteville-sur-Laize Canadian Military Cemetery, Bretteville-sur-Laize, France. Marked map is enclosed. This is a recognized military burial ground and will receive care and maintenance in perpetuity.

The grave will have been marked with a temporary cross which will be replaced in due course by a permanent headstone suitably inscribed. While it cannot now be stated when this work of permanent commemoration will begin, before any action is taken you will be communicated with and an opportunity will be given you to submit a short personal inscription of your own choice for engraving on the headstone...

Twenty-five-year-old Russell Green is buried in Bretteville-Sur-Laize Canadian War Cemetery, Calvados, France, Grave XII.G.9. On his headstone are inscribed the words, A BEAUTIFUL MEMORY DEARER THAN GOLD OF A SON WHOSE WORTH CAN NE'ER BE TOLD. MOTHER.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, J, L, N, 2C, 2D, 7C, 8X, 8Y

HALLAM, John Norman (#R/68193)

John "Jack" Norman Hallam was a popular and determined young man. He was finally accepted into the Royal Canadian Air Force when he was 22 and a year later was flying combat missions in Europe. On July 12, 1941, Sergeant-Pilot Hallam was killed when his plane crashed into the North Sea on a training mission.

John (Jack) Hallam was born in London, England on June 8, 1918, the only son of Cyril Francis (born in Marston, England) and Marjorie Laura (nee Park, born in London, England) Hallam. John had an older sister, Betty W. (born 1917) and a younger sister Nancy M. (born 1921). Between June 1912 and August 1914, Cyril Hallam stayed in Canada before returning to England. In 1928, Cyril and Marjorie brought their young family to Canada for good. John was nine years old when the Hallam family arrived aboard the passenger ship *Aurania* that had left Southampton, England and arrived in the port of Quebec on April 22, 1928. At that time, father Cyril recorded his occupation as a farmer, although he eventually became the manager of the Sarnia Riding Club.

John Hallam was an active and popular young man. He received his education at West Lorne Public School from 1927 to 1933, and then attended Sarnia Collegiate Institute from 1934 to 1938 when the Hallam family moved to Sarnia. At SCITS he took courses in woodworking, electricity, auto mechanics and specialized in draughting. He was exceptionally popular among the young people of Sarnia. John was active in such sports as swimming, golf, riding, football, hockey and baseball and his hobbies included building model airplanes, rifle shooting and sailing. While in high school, he was a member of the Air Cadets for five years.

And he was a determined young man who knew what he wanted. After graduating Sarnia Collegiate, he was employed at Sarnia Bridge Company as an assistant draughtsman from 1939 to 1940. He left the Sarnia Bridge Company in July 1940, determined to join the air force. He was refused initially. When war was declared in September 1939, he was no less determined and went on his own initiative to Camp Borden with the idea that it might be possible to enlist there; however he was told at Camp Borden, as he had been told earlier at London, that there were 25,000 men already on the waiting list, and all that could be done was to take an examination and await a future call. He took the exam, passed it, and returned home. A year later he received a call.

Now 22, John Hallam enlisted in the Canadian Air Force on July 18, 1940 in London, Ontario. He stood five feet seven inches tall, had blue eyes and light brown hair, was single, and was residing with his parents at Sarnia Riding Club at the time. Days later he departed enroute to #1 Manning Pool in Toronto of the Royal Canadian Air Force, along with fellow Sarnians John Murray and William Clark (William Clark is included in this Project).

In mid-August, John was posted to #1 Manning Depot in Trenton. He began his air training at #2 Initial Training School (ITS) in Regina in September 1940. In a letter to his parents from Regina, John mentioned Fred

Houston, “Bunt” Murray, Gordon Bracken, Harry Turnbull and Doug Wilder, all Sarnia boys who were in the same air school with him. John Hallam continued his training at #12 Elementary Flying Training School (EFTS) in Goderich and #4 Service Flying Training School (SFTS) in Saskatoon. He was awarded his Flying Badge in February 1941 in Saskatoon. His intensive study and a natural talent for flying enabled him to attain exceptional proficiency in the air. In mid-March, he was posted to #3 Manning Depot in Debert, Nova Scotia.

On March 25, 1941, John Hallam embarked overseas from Nova Scotia for the United Kingdom. From #3 Personnel Reception Centre in Uxbridge, he was first posted with #13 Operational Training Unit (OTU) based in Bicester. Only weeks after arriving overseas from Sarnia, he was flying over the English Channel where he was engaged in active aerial warfare. On July 1, 1941, John became a member of RAF #82 Squadron “Super Omnia Ubique” (Over all things everywhere), with the rank of Sergeant-Pilot.

No. 82 Squadron was a **light-bomber squadron** equipped with twin-engine Bristol Blenheim aircraft, and later Vengeance dive-bombers and de Havilland Mosquitos. The squadrons performed a variety of tasks over the course of the war: anti-shipping missions over the North Sea; anti-submarine patrols; attacking German forces; and supporting ground forces and targeted bombing.

During the course of the war, one of this country’s most significant contributions was the approximately 50,000 Canadians who served with the RCAF and RAF in **Bomber Command** operations. Next to Britain, Canada was the largest contributor to Bomber Command, making up more than a third of all of Bomber Command personnel. The men who served in Bomber Command faced some of the most difficult odds of anyone fighting in the war. There was no easy way to learn how to fly the heavy bombers, and training crews suffered a litany of disasters, crashes and deaths. By the end of the war, Bomber Command lost over 8,000 Allied airmen who were killed in training or by accidents alone.

On July 12, 1941, less than four months after arriving overseas, John Hallam was part of a crew aboard Blenheim IV aircraft V6524 (markings UX-) that took off from RAF Watton on a day training mission. Their aircraft went out of control in sea fog and crashed into the North Sea. Perishing with Sergeant-Pilot John Hallam were RAF Sgt.s Herbert Hastings and Wilfred Leonard Hiscock. On July 15th, John’s parents in Sarnia received an official cable informing them that their son John WAS REPORTED MISSING OVERSEAS, and that a letter would be following. In the newspaper story of John Hallam’s missing status, the *Canadian Observer* reported that, “In the case of a missing flyer, there is the possibility that he might be a prisoner or that he escaped in some other way and had not been able to report to headquarters.”

In late August 1941, Cyril and Marjorie received another letter, this one from the R.C.A.F. Records Office, giving some details relating to the previous official report that their son was “missing”. According to the letter, his squadron reported that “Jack’s” plane, the last time they had seen it, was flying “inverted” or upside down over the North Sea. The letter included a ray of hope when it noted that this did not rule out the possibility that the flyers had not perished even if the plane fell into the sea.

It was probable that the squadron had been over Germany and was returning. Whether John’s plane was damaged before it began the trip, or whether it was damaged in the attack over Germany or the Low Countries, or it had been assailed by fighter-planes at sea, was not disclosed. Both Britain and Germany maintained floating first aid posts in the North Sea and many fliers, first presumed lost, had reached one of these floats and were rescued.

In early September of 1941, Sarnia Collegiate teacher Miss Mae Burriss received a letter that awaited her when she returned from her summer vacation. It was from John Hallam, the former student of Sarnia Collegiate, who at that time in September, was still reported as missing overseas. The letter was dated July 10, 1941 (two days before he was shot down). The letter was in acknowledgment of the receipt of copies of “School Daze,” the Sarnia Collegiate periodical, concerning which John wrote:

They seemed to bring back many pleasant memories of the times I had at the Sarnia Collegiate.... I am very comfortable here. Our squadron is living in a country mansion. Our hours are not as when I was training in Canada. The food is very good and we get plenty to eat. We have a garden here and we grow lettuce, carrots, beans, etc., which we use in the officers’ and sergeants’ messes. The garden is worked by us, in some of our spare time, so you see that flying is not our only task. I am not flying fighters as I had hoped to, but then someone has to fly the bombers, don’t they?

On September 17, 1941, Cyril and Marjorie Hallam received a letter from the Officer in Charge of records at the Royal Air Force headquarters in England. The letter stated that no further word had been received concerning

their son who was first reported missing in mid-July and whose plane might have fallen into the North Sea. There had been a report recently that a resident in the Sarnia district had heard a German short-wave broadcast in which a name that sounded like “Halsam” was mentioned as a prisoner in Germany and Sarnia, Ontario was given as the place of origin of the prisoner. Enquiries at Ottawa only elicited a response that this broadcast was not transcribed by the intelligence service there.

Any hopes that John Hallam had survived were dashed when he was later officially recorded as, *Previously reported missing during air operations overseas, now for official purposes presumed to have died, overseas*. In May 1942, the Air Ministry in London, England, received information through the International Red Cross that stated airman John Hallam was buried in the Cemetery at Westerland, Sylt, Germany. In April 1946, Marjorie Hallam, then at Mallat Park, Sarnia, received a War Service Gratuity of \$136.64 for the loss of her son John. Twenty-three-year-old Sergeant Pilot John Hallam is buried in the Kiel War Cemetery, Schleswig-Holstein, Germany, Grave 3.B.3. On his headstone are inscribed the words, “GREATER LOVE HATH NO MAN”.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, J, L, M, N, 2C, 2D, 3J, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10U

HAMILTON, Thomas (#A/18184)

Sarnia born Thomas Hamilton was married and a father to a young daughter when he became one of the first men to enlist in Sarnia after Britain declared war on Germany in September 1939. One month after arriving in France, Sapper Hamilton was killed by a mine explosion in the Battle of Normandy.

Thomas Hamilton was born in Sarnia on July 24, 1916, the son of Alexander and Selena Hamilton, of R.R. #2, Sarnia. Alexander and Selena Hamilton were married in Belfast, Ireland on February 13, 1907. The Hamiltons had five sons: Thomas, Charles Jackson, Robert Alexander, James Henry and Herbert Jackson, the latter a Private serving at Camp Borden at the time of Thomas’ death. Thomas attended public schools in Sarnia and Sarnia Collegiate Institute. Prior to enlisting, he worked as a machinist/core maker at Holmes Foundry. His life changed dramatically when, on July 21, 1934, days before his eighteenth birthday, Thomas married Blanche Tryphena Billard in Sarnia. Thomas and Blanche later resided at 386 Savoy Street and had one child together, Ann Hamilton, born August 20, 1937.

When a recruiting station was opened in Sarnia shortly after Britain declared war on Germany on September 3, 1939, Thomas was among the first to enlist. Now 32, Thomas Hamilton joined the Canadian Army on September 9, 1939 in Sarnia. The next day, Canada declared war on Germany. Thomas stood five feet ten and three quarter inches tall, had hazel eyes and dark brown hair, and he, his wife and their two-year old daughter were residing on Cemetery Road (now Colborne Road) at the time.

Thomas Hamilton embarked overseas from St. John, New Brunswick for the United Kingdom on December 1, 1940, as a member of the Royal Canadian Engineers, 1 Field Park Company, with the rank of Sapper. He continued his army training in the U.K., rising to the rank of Corporal with the 1 Field Park Company. Three and a half years after arriving in England, Thomas embarked for front line action.

On July 8, 1944, one month after D-Day, Thomas Hamilton disembarked in Northwest Europe. The **Battle of Normandy** had begun for the Canadians with the June 6, 1944 D-Day landings at Juno Beach. After breaching the “Atlantic Wall” of “Fortress Europe”, Allied armies began their break out from the narrow Normandy bridgehead to carve out a foothold on the French mainland. It would take a whole summer of tenacious fighting, pushing against fierce and ruthless German forces to advance east across France. In a brutal campaign of attrition, the Canadians faced fierce battles and vicious counterattacks as they clawed their way forward liberating villages and towns including Bretteville, Carpiquet, Caen and Falaise.

As a member of the Royal Canadian Engineers (RCE), Thomas was part of the troops that enabled the army to move—they repaired and built roads, airfields and bridges; cleared mines and road blocks; and filled in craters and anti-tank ditches, all while working alongside combat troops at the front, and often while under fire.

Shortly before his death, Corporal Thomas Hamilton had sent a letter home to his relatives in which he said that he was in France, was getting along well, and told his family not to worry about him. One month after arriving in France, on August 9, 1944, Thomas Hamilton was killed in action while fighting during the Battle of Normandy, the result of a mine explosion. His body was buried the day after his death on August 10, at a location recorded on the Army Field Service Card as “Field Near St. Sur Orne 1/25000 – 05526012 Sheet 40/16 S.W. France”. His remains were later exhumed and reverently reburied in Bretteville-Sur-Laize Canadian War Cemetery.

In mid-August 1944, several hours after Blanche and their daughter Ann left for a vacation with friends in Royal Oak, Michigan, word from the Department of National Defence was received in Sarnia that CORPORAL THOMAS HAMILTON HAS BEEN KILLED IN FRANCE ON AUGUST 9 BY A MINE EXPLOSION. Members of his family communicated the news to Blanche and her daughter and she returned home to Sarnia immediately. In late September 1944, Blanche, then residing at 386 Savoy Street, received the following letter from the Major-General, Adjutant-General:

Dear Mrs. Hamilton:

It was with deep regret that I learned of the death of your husband, A18184 Corporal Thomas Hamilton, who gave his life in the Service of his Country in The Western European Theatre of War on the 9th day of August, 1944.

From official information we have received, your husband was killed in action against the enemy. You may be assured that any additional information received will be communicated to you without delay.

The Minister of National Defence and the members of the Army Council have asked me to express to you and your family their sincere sympathy in your bereavement. We pay tribute to the sacrifice he so bravely made.

(Note: the date of death was August 8, 1944)

Thomas Hamilton was later officially recorded as, *Overseas casualty, killed in action, in the field (France)*. In December 1944, Thomas Hamilton was awarded posthumously the decoration C-in-C Certificate, for Good Service. In April 1945, Blanche received a War Service Gratuity of \$1051.23 for the loss of her husband. Thomas left behind his parents, his four brothers, his wife of almost ten years, and his seven year-old daughter Ann.

In late March 1946, Blanche received a letter from the Colonel, Director of Records, for Adjutant-General. Following is a portion of that letter:

Dear Madam:

Information has just been received from overseas that the remains of your husband, A18184 Corporal Thomas Hamilton, have been carefully exhumed from the original place of internment and reverently reburied in grave 14, row E, plot 13, of Bretteville-sur-Laize Canadian Military Cemetery, Bretteville-sur-Laize, France. Marked map is enclosed. This is a recognized military burial ground and will receive care and maintenance in perpetuity.

The grave will have been marked with a temporary cross which will be replaced in due course by a permanent headstone suitably inscribed. While it cannot now be stated when this work of permanent commemoration will begin, before any action is taken you will be communicated with and an opportunity will be given you to submit a short personal inscription of your own choice for engraving on the headstone...

Twenty-eight-year-old Thomas Hamilton is buried in Bretteville-Sur-Laize Canadian War Cemetery, Calvados, France, Grave XIII.E.14. On his headstone are inscribed the words, LOVINGLY REMEMBERED BY HIS WIFE, DAUGHTER, PARENTS AND BROTHERS.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, J, L, N, 2C, 2D, 7C, 8X, 8Y

HARRIS, John Michael (#R/63612)

John Michael (Jack) Harris, a pilot with the RCAF, was scheduled to be flying aircraft in action overseas in the summer of 1941. Unfortunately, when his aircraft crashed in a training exercise near Montreal in April 1941, the 28 year-old Sarnian was killed. Of the many local men who served with the RCAF in WWII, John was the first to fall.

He was born at Sarnia General Hospital on January 8, 1913, the youngest son of Michael George (born in Arahova, Sparta, Greece, immigrated to Canada in 1904) and Rosamond (nee Moore, born in Chatham, Ontario) Harris of 264 North Brock Street, Sarnia. Michael, a merchant at the time, married Rosamond on January 11, 1909 in Chatham. Michael and Rosamond Harris had three sons: George Michael (born 1910), James (born December 1911), and John. A few years prior to his death, John and James had become partners in the operation of Sarnia's National Club. When John was born, the family resided at 182 ½ Front Street and Michael supported his family by working as a theatre owner and manager.

To say that John Harris was active would be an understatement. He attended local public elementary schools and then Sarnia Collegiate from September 1925 until May 19, 1930. In high school, John participated in many sports including sailing, shooting, baseball, hockey, tennis, golf, riding and swimming. His hobbies—which ranged from model aircraft building, designing, and drafting to photography and sailing—kept him busy. John later learned to fly in London, Ontario and he earned a civilian pilot's license. He also had some military training in the U.S., as a member of the U.S. Army Air Force when he was a young teen in Honolulu from 1928-1930. Before leaving to join

the war, John was employed at Harris Brothers, as a clerk-bookkeeper from 1933 to 1940.

Twenty-seven-year-old John Harris enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force on May 10, 1940 in London, Ontario. He stood five feet eleven inches tall, had hazel eyes and light brown hair, was single, and was residing with his parents on Brock Street at the time. He recorded his occupation as tobacconist, and he requested flying duties, with a preference to be a pilot. One of the references John Harris obtained for his application into the Air Force was from Ross W. Gray, Member of Parliament for Lambton West. Mr. Gray's reference letter on behalf of John read, *This is to certify that I have known Mr. J. Harris all his life and I am very pleased to give him a very high character reference. I feel sure that this young man will make a very capable flying officer.*

From #1 Manning Pool in Toronto, John was posted to #1 Initial Training School in Toronto for one month before being transferred to #1 Wireless School (WS) in Montreal. In November 1940, he continued his training at #1 Bombing and Gunnery School (BGS) in Jarvis, Ontario, where he was awarded his Air Gunners Badge on December 15, 1940.

On December 17, 1940, John Harris married Stella Matilda Logan, the eldest daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Robert E. Logan of South Mitton Street, at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church. At the ceremony, Mrs. George Harris served as the maid of honour, and John's brother George served as the best man. After the ceremony, an informal reception for immediate relatives was held at the home of the bride's parents. Then the newlywed couple left on a short wedding trip. John and Stella Harris initially resided at 116 South Mitton Street and then later at 166 Queen Street, Sarnia.

On December 27, 1940, John Harris was posted to RCAF Station Rockcliffe where, because of his civilian pilot experience of 32 hours of solo flying, he was given a flying test at Rockcliffe Airdrome. On January 6, 1941, John returned to Sarnia on a 9-day leave. While at home, he referred to his love for the air force and his work.

Upon returning to duty, he took a special course at Picton Air Base where he received his wings and graduated as a Sergeant-Pilot. In mid-January 1941, John returned to duty at #1 Auxiliary Manning Depot in Picton. He was awarded his Pilots Flying Badge on February 22, 1941 and on March 6, 1941 John returned to RCAF #1 Wireless Training School in Montreal where he was stationed as staff pilot flying out of St. Hubert's airport. One of his duties there was to fly new American built airplanes from Windsor, Ontario to Montreal, Quebec. Stella Harris went to Montreal with him and resided at 1921 Boyle Street.



WAG John Michael Harris

John Harris did not have the opportunity to go overseas and served less than one year before losing his life. On April 7, 1941, John was piloting his Menasco Moth aircraft #4824 while engaged in a two-hour wireless exercise. Eyewitnesses reported that the plane had been stunting for about 20 minutes at 1000 feet when its engine stopped. The engine faltered twice and then stopped again at about 700 feet before the plane side-slipped towards the ground. Between Caughnawaga and suburban Chateauguay, near Montreal, his aircraft crashed and struck a 10-foot high bush.

His flying companion, LAC R.L.W. Orchard, a New Zealander, escaped with bruises and was shaken up. Their aircraft was gliding down quite slowly and Harris tried to start the engine again; however, it stopped a few moments later before it crashed into the thick bush with its nose driving into the wet earth. A truckload of soldiers was first to the scene. LAC Orchard was able to walk away after soldiers removed him from the ship, but Sergeant Harris was pinned between the engine and the pilot seat. He was rushed to Notre-Dame Hospital in Montreal, but the prognosis was bleak. He was seriously injured, including a fractured skull and a few hours later died as a result of his injuries.

John's death was the first to occur in the ranks of Sarnians who were serving in World War II with the RCAF. His death was later officially recorded as, *Died in Notre-Dame Hospital, Montreal, as result of flying accident*. John Harris had been scheduled to be overseas flying aircraft only weeks after the crash.

One day after the crash, John's body was transported by train from Montreal for burial in Sarnia. Stella, his bride of not even four months, who had gone to Montreal to be with her husband only a short time prior to his death, also arrived in Sarnia accompanied by her mother. Recorded in the *Sarnia Observer* under the headline, "First Military Funeral of War Hero Held Here," a funeral with full military auspices was held at the Stewart Funeral Home. More than a thousand friends of Pilot John Harris and his well-known family paid their respects. At the crowded Stewart Funeral Home, Rev. Captain J.M. Macgillivray, minister of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, stated in his sermon that, *Jack Harris was a clean living boy, a keen sportsman and a general favorite with all who knew him. He was among the first in this community to answer the call. He was an experienced airman and had flown planes before the war broke out, and he offered his services in the capacity in which he could be of most use. He thought not of the danger – he was eager only to serve the cause of liberty. He shall be missed by a large circle of friends, but our deepest sympathy goes out to his young wife, so recently a bride, and his father and mother and brothers in their bereavement.*

After the service, John's casket, draped with a Union Jack upon which rested a wreath of Flanders poppies was brought out of the funeral home. The casket was carried past an honor guard and a aircraft's motor roared in the western sky. The Lambton Garrison Band, with muffled drums, played a funeral march as the procession moved along College Avenue. The casket in a flower-filled hearse was escorted by pallbearers along with officers of the 11th Field Company, the 26th Battery, members of the Royal Canadian Air Force and Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve, and veterans of the last war represented by Sarnia Branch 62 of the Canadian Legion and the American Legion, Port Huron. At the cemetery, a large throng gathered at the flower-banked graveside. As the ceremony concluded, the firing party's three volleys rang out over the grave and "The Last Post" was sounded.

In May 1945, Stella Harris on Queen Street received a War Service Gratuity of \$82.50 for the loss of her husband. Twenty-eight-year-old John Harris is buried in Sarnia (Lakeview) Cemetery, Sarnia, Ontario, Section E., Lot 176. On his memorial stone are inscribed the words, SGT. PILOT JOHN M. HARRIS BELOVED HUSBAND OF STELLA M. LOGAN KILLED IN SERVICE OF R.C.A.F. 1913-1941 "PER ARDVA AD ASTRA".

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, J, L, M, N, 2C, 2D, 7C, 8X, 8Y

HARRIS, Victor Henry (#J/9742)

Everyone who knew Victor Henry Harris had wonderful things to say about him. His father called his youngest child "a splendid boy" and a commanding officer assessed him as a "smooth flier" with excellent "conduct and deportment." Victor was only 24 when the aircraft he was piloting disappeared during a bombing mission over Nuremberg, Germany in February 1945.

He was born in Lambton County, Ontario on December 5, 1918, the youngest child of John William Henry and Hannah Beatrice (nee Chappell) Harris, of Shadynook, Exmouth Street, R.R.#1 Sarnia. Both John William (born Dec 5, 1918) and Hannah Beatrice were born in England but had immigrated to Canada and were married in Sarnia on May 10, 1912. To support his wife and his family, John worked as a Pipefitter/Pumpman at Imperial Oil. The Harris children included two sons--Victor and Bertrum John (born May 30, 1917, later resided in Fort Erie, Ontario) and two daughters: Vera Louise (born February 15, 1913, later married becoming Vera Archer, and resided in Fort Erie); and Beatrice Lillian (born December 25, 1915, later married becoming Beatrice Want, and resided at 113 Violet Street, Sarnia, later in Windsor). When Victor was three years old, the Harris family visited relatives in England, returning to Canada in July 1922 aboard the passenger ship *Montrose*. 254 Queen Street in Sarnia was their home when Victor was a child.

Victor attended SS #15 Public School from 1924 to 1932 and later Sarnia Collegiate from 1932 to 1937. Like

many youths his age, he found time to do many things. He delivered papers for five years to help support the family. Besides that, he was active in sports such as hockey, badminton, boxing, skiing, softball, and rugby—which he played extensively. He had eclectic hobbies which continued to occupy him after he graduated from SCITS. These included stamp collecting, rock study, first aid, flying and photography. He also was part of St. John's Ambulance Corps for four years. The Harris family suffered a great loss when Hannah, 46, passed away from heart problems on October 25, 1934. Victor was only fifteen years old when his mother died.

After finishing high school, Victor attended Haileybury School of Mines, in Haileybury, Ontario and completed courses in March 1938 in mineralogy, surveying, mapping, drafting, mining and geology. Harris was part of a government-sponsored program in which tuition, books and living allowances were supplied. The arrangement was part of the government's plan to alleviate the shortage of qualified miners. His education and work experience, however, did not end there. In April 1938, Victor began work with Moneta Porcupine Gold Mines Limited in Timmins, Ontario. He worked both in the assay office and underground where he was a machine helper, a load operator, and a drill runner. In September 1939, he attended Michigan College of Mining and Technology in Houghton, Michigan, in the Mining Engineering course and Plane Surveying course. He resided there until August 1940. When he had completed his studies there, he had taken courses in surveying, mapping, topographical drawing, chemistry, trigonometry, engineering, geometry, physics, calculus and analytical mechanics—all the while maintaining average grades in the high 80s and low 90s. In August, he returned to Timmins and Moneta Porcupine Gold Mines Limited and worked as a mucker underground and later as an engineer's assistant in his office. He was also a member of the American Institute of Mining and Metallurgical Engineers, and resided at 67 Birch Street in Timmins.

On May 14, 1941, Victor Harris, now 22, travelled over 225 miles to enlist in the Royal Canadian Air Force in North Bay. He stated that his reasons for joining the air force were, "To receive the training offered and to do my part in the war effort." Victor stood five feet eleven and a half inches tall, had brown eyes and light brown hair, was single, and requested flying duties with a preference to be a pilot. At 11:15 that night, the RCAF had him board a train in North Bay bound for Toronto, where he arrived at 7:15 the next morning.

From #1 Manning Depot in Toronto, then RCAF Station in Trenton, Victor began his training at #1 Initial Training School (ITS) in Toronto. His Commanding Officer wrote of Victor, *A bright and enthusiastic student. Determined and has applied himself diligently to his studies. Is very willing and co-operative. Should make good aircrew material.* Victor continued his training at #20 Elementary Flying Training School (EFTS) in Oshawa, where his Commanding Officer assessed the young Sarnian: *He is a smooth flier and learns quickly... He is a very good and willing worker. Conduct and deportment excellent. Ability above average. Possesses definite leadership ability.* Victor then continued his training at #16 Service Flying Training School (SFTS) in Hagersville, graduating on January 10, 1942 and earning his Pilot's Flying Badge.

On February 8, 1942, Victor Harris embarked overseas from Halifax for the United Kingdom. From #3 Personnel Reception Centre, he was first posted to #12 Advanced Flying Unit (AFU) in April 1942. He later served with several other units including #26 Operational Training Unit (OTU), #218 Conversion Flight, #218 Squadron and #1657 Conversion Unit. On December 13, 1942, Victor became a member of RAF #15 Squadron "Aim Sure", with the rank of Flight Lieutenant-Pilot.

No. 15 Squadron began the war as part of the Advanced Air Striking Force, a mission that made it one of the first squadrons to be sent to France. Initially the squadron flew Bristol Blenheim aircraft, but it was later re-equipped with Short Stirling aircraft. The Short Stirling aircraft was a British four-engine heavy bomber. For a short time, the bombers were used in RAF's efforts to "lean over the channel", as bait for German fighters. After too many Stirlings were lost to anti-aircraft fire, the squadron turned to night bombing and mine laying.

During the course of the war, one of this country's most significant contributions was the approximately 50,000 Canadians who served with the RCAF and RAF in **Bomber Command** operations. Next to Britain, Canada was the largest contributor to Bomber Command, making up more than a third of all of Bomber Command personnel. The men who served in Bomber Command faced some of the most difficult odds of anyone fighting in the war.

Even though he'd seen action for only two months with #15 Squadron, Victor was an experienced pilot who was a veteran of many flights over Germany and other enemy occupied territories. He was the "skipper" of his ship, a Stirling Bomber R9279, stationed out of Mildenhall, Lincolnshire, England.

On February 26, 1943, Harris and his crew were aboard their Stirling I R9279 (markings LS-J) bomber

detailed to attack a target in Cologne, Germany. After take-off, no news of the crew or their Stirling aircraft surfaced and it failed to return from operations. Of the 427 aircraft involved in the night operation, there were 10 losses, including Stirling R9279. Perishing with RCAF Flight-Lieutenant-Pilot Victor Harris were RAF crew members F.S. Richard Ashdown, and Sgt's Peter Rogers, Wilfred Shaw, Howell Rees Jones, Sidney Phillips, Jack Wratten and William Roy Matthews (AUS).

A day later, John, now living on Exmouth Street received a telegram informing them that his son, Victor Henry Harris, WAS REPORTED MISSING AFTER OPERATIONS OVER ENEMY TERRITORY. Days later, John received the following letter from the Wing Commander, RAF, Bourn, Cambs.:

Dear Mr. Harris

You will by now have been informed that your son, J9742 Flight Lieutenant Victor Henry Harris, failed to return from an operational flight on the night of 26/27th February, 1943. I am writing to express my deepest sympathy with you in your anxiety, but also to encourage you to hope that he is safe.

He was the Captain of an aircraft engaged on an important bombing mission over enemy territory, and after take-off nothing further was heard. It appears likely that the aircraft was forced down, and if this is the case, there is some chance that he may be safe and a prisoner of war. In this event it may be two or three months before any certain information is obtained through the International Red Cross, but I hope the news will soon come through.

Your son had done excellent work in the Squadron and had successfully completed sixteen operational flights. He will be very much missed by his many friends in the Squadron. His personal effects have been safeguarded and will be dealt with by the Committee of Adjustment as soon as possible who will write to you in the near future.

May I on behalf of the whole Squadron express to you our most sincere sympathy, and the hope that you will soon receive good news.

John Harris hoped desperately that his son was possibly a prisoner of war, knowing that many months could elapse before authorities could definitely determine the fate of one listed as missing. In late August 1943, he received the following letter from the Flight Lieutenant, RCAF Casualties Officer, for Chief of the Air Staff:

Dear Mr. Harris:

It is with deep regret that, in view of the lapse of time and the absence of any further information concerning your son, Flight Lieutenant Victor Henry Harris, since he was reported missing, the Air Ministry Overseas now proposes to take action to presume his death for official purposes.

Will you please confirm by letter that you have not received any further evidence or news concerning him. The presumption of death action will proceed after hearing from you, and on completion you will receive official notification by registered letter. May I extend to you my earnest sympathy in this time of great anxiety.

John Harris' letter of response to the Flight Lieutenant was as follows:

Dear Sir

Thank you for your kind message of sympathy. Victor was a splendid boy. As regards other information we have had no other evidence or news but we still keep hoping. Thanking you

Yours Sincerely JW Harris

Some time later, John Harris received the telegram informing him that his son Victor was now officially listed as, PREVIOUSLY REPORTED MISSING AFTER AIR OPERATIONS NOW FOR OFFICIAL PURPOSES PRESUMED DEAD OVERSEAS. In September 1945, John received a War Service Gratuity of \$406.93 for the loss of his youngest child. In July 1946, Victor's sister, Beatrice Want in Windsor, received the following letter from the R.C.A.F. Records Officer:

Dear Mrs. Want:

It is a privilege to have the opportunity of sending you the Operational Wings and Certificate in recognition of the gallant services rendered by your brother Flight Lieutenant V.H. Harris. I realize there is little which may be said or done to lessen your sorrow, but it is my hope that these "Wings", indicative of operations against the enemy, will be a treasured memento of a young life offered on the altar of freedom in defence of his Home and Country.

In May 1952, the Wing Commander, R.C.A.F. Casualties Officer, for Chief of the Air Staff sent a final letter to John.

Dear Mr. Harris:

It is with reluctance that after so long an interval, I must refer to the loss of your son, Flight Lieutenant Victor Henry Harris, but due to the lack of any information concerning him since he was reported missing, it must be regretfully accepted and officially recorded that he does not have a "known" grave.

Due to the extreme hazards attending air operations there are, unhappily many thousands of British aircrew boys who do not have "known" graves and all will be commemorated on General Memorials that will be erected at a number of locations by the Imperial War Graves Commission (of which Canada is a member), each Memorial representative of a theatre of operations. One of these Memorials will be erected at Runnymede, England and the name of your son will appear on that Memorial.

I realize that this is an extremely distressing letter and that there is no manner of conveying such information to you that would not add to your heartaches. I am fully aware that nothing I may say will lessen your great sorrow, but I would like to express to you and the members of your family my deepest sympathy.

Twenty-four-year-old Flight Lieutenant-Pilot Victor Harris has no known grave. His name is inscribed on the Runnymede War Memorial, Surrey, United Kingdom, Panel 172. In November 2019, his name along with 25 others was added to the Sarnia cenotaph, engraved in stone to be remembered always.

SOURCES: C, D, E, F, G, J, L, M, N, R, 2C, 2D, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10U

HEBNER, Clifford Vernon (#A/19360)

Only months after getting married, Clifford Hebner departed overseas. His first action against the enemy was in a disastrous Canadian raid in France. He survived that event and was later devastated to learn that his younger brother was killed in action at Normandy. More than two years after the disastrous raid, Clifford gave his life for Canada during the prolonged and brutal assault on German fortifications in Belgium.

He was born in Gilbert Plains, Manitoba on May 11, 1913, the son of Frank (a farmer) and Minnie May (nee Burroughs) Hebner, of Riding Park, Manitoba. Frank (born in Huntsville, Ontario) and Minnie (born Neepawa, Manitoba) were married in Gilbert Plains, Manitoba in 1907. A family farmed in Dauphin District, Manitoba, and Frank and Minnie had eleven children together: sons Arnold Stewart (born 1904); Wilford Laurance (born 1905, died 14 months later); Clifford, Mervin Chester (born July 17, 1915); Frank Earl (born 1925); Ivan Gerald (born 1928); and daughters: Violet Pearl (born 1908); Mabel Ruby (born 1911); Winnifred Blanche (born 1918); Verna Hazel (born 1919); and Alice Ivy May (born 1921).

Clifford was educated in Manitoba and completed one year of high school in 1926-27 in Dauphin, Manitoba. When he was twenty-three years old, he lost his father Frank who passed away in February 1936. Clifford lived in Manitoba for the first eighteen years of his life, then moved to Trail, British Columbia for five years, and finally to Ontario. Clifford was employed as a furnace man while in Trail, B.C., and then a service station operator with Imperial Oil for eighteen months beginning in 1937 in Sarnia.

Twenty-six-year-old Clifford Hebner enlisted in the Canadian Army on November 29, 1939 in London, Ontario. He stood five feet eight and a half inches tall, had blue eyes and light brown hair, was single, and lived in Sarnia at the time. He recorded his place of residence as c/o W. McEwen, R.R.#2, Sarnia, Ontario, and his trade as service station operator, stoker. Clifford began his army training in London, as a member of the Royal Canadian Engineers (RCE), 7th Field Company, originally with the rank of Sapper. He eventually rose to the rank of Sergeant.

On March 16, 1940, Clifford married Vera Mantle in London, Ontario. Clifford and Vera Hebner lived on Piccadilly Street, and later 322 Princess Avenue in London. Five months after getting married, on August 23, 1940, Clifford embarked overseas for the United Kingdom.

Clifford continued his army training overseas in the U.K., where he was able to obtain his carpenter qualifications. As part of the 7th Field Company, RCE, Lance Corporal Clifford Hebner and close to 5,000 other Canadians, sailed for France on August 18, 1942, part of *Operation Jubilee*. They arrived as dawn was breaking early the next morning on August 19, at Dieppe. The **Dieppe Raid** was one of the darkest chapters in Canada's military history. By mid-day, 907 Canadians were killed, 2,460 were wounded and 1,946 were captured. Clifford Hebner survived Dieppe, and returned to the United Kingdom to fight another day.

Clifford's younger brother by two years, Mervin Chester Hebner, also enlisted to serve in the army, completing his Attestation Paper in Winnipeg, Manitoba on February 7, 1942, a little over two years after Clifford had enlisted. Known by his middle name, Chester, he was twenty-six years old and single. He was a farm labourer living at home with his family at the time. He recorded his next-of-kin as his mother Minnie, in Riding Park, Manitoba. After a brief training period in Brandon, he arrived in the United Kingdom in June 1942. There he continued his army training, becoming a Gunner with the Royal Canadian Artillery, 3rd Anti-tank Regiment.

After almost two years of training in the U.K., Chester Hebner sailed for France. He arrived on Juno Beach at

Normandy on June 6, 1944--D-Day. One month later, on July 11, 1944, twenty-nine-year-old Gunner Chester Hebner was killed in action in Caen, France, during the Battle of Normandy. His remains were buried at a location recorded on the Army Field Service Card as "MR 995661 sheet M of 37/16 S.E. Cheux, Near Lemesnil, France." His remains would later be reburied in Beny-Sur-Mer Cemetery, Normandy, France, Grave X.E.10. On his headstone are inscribed the words, HE HAS GONE ACROSS THE RIVER WHOSE SHORES ARE EVERGREEN. REMEMBERED BY MOTHER AND FAMILY RIDING PARK, MANITOBA, CANADA. Minnie Hebner received a letter from her son soon after his death--the letter was dated July 7, four days before his death.



Sergeant Clifford Vernon Hebner



Gunner Mervin Chester Hebner

Lance Sergeant Clifford Hebner left the U.K. in early July 1944, arriving in France on July 6, 1944. He arrived in France one month after his brother Chester did, and only days before Chester was killed in action. The **Battle of Normandy** had begun for the Canadians with the June 6, 1944 D-Day landings at Juno Beach. After breaching the "Atlantic Wall" of "Fortress Europe", Allied armies began their break out from the narrow Normandy bridgehead to carve out a foothold on the French mainland. It would take a whole summer of tenacious fighting, pushing against fierce and ruthless German forces to advance east across France. After the Allied breakout from Normandy, Canadian forces were assigned the "**Long Left Flank**", the less glamorous but vital tasks of clearing coastal areas in the north of France and Belgium of German occupiers. In a series of stop-and-start advances against stiff resistance in fortified positions, the Canadians liberated ports and villages including Rouen, Dieppe, Dunkirk, Boulogne and Calais.

In early October 1944, Canadian forces were entrusted with liberating the Scheldt estuary, a 45-mile-long enemy-held area in the Belgian-Dutch border area that connected the port of Antwerp to the North Sea. The **Battle of the Scheldt** was among the most difficult and grueling struggles in the war. The bitter fighting against a well-fortified and heavily entrenched enemy, took place in a bleak environment made worse by the winter cold in a flooded and freezing muddy quagmire.

Clifford Hebner of the 7th Field Company, RCE, moved with the Canadian troops as they advanced through Normandy and the north of France and into Belgium. He was a member of the Royal Canadian Engineers, who enabled the army to move forward: they repaired and built roads, airfields and bridges; cleared mines and road blocks; and filled in craters and anti-tank ditches, all while working alongside combat troops at the front and often while under fire.

Only three months after arriving in France, on October 5, 1944, Sergeant Clifford Hebner was killed in action in Belgium, during the early stages of the Battle of the Scheldt. His body was buried at a location recorded on the Army Field Service Card as "In hospital grounds, Belgium MR701990 Sheet 24434 1/50,000 GSGS 4040". His body would later be reburied in Schoonselhof Cemetery, Belgium.

For Clifford's widowed mother Minnie in Riding Park, Manitoba, this was her second son lost in the war.

Only two months prior to receiving the news of Clifford's death, she had received the following letter from the Major General, Adjutant-General:

Dear Mrs. Hebner:

It is with deep regret that I learned of the death of your son, H-95535 Gunner Chester Hebner, who gave his life in the Service of his Country in France, on the 11th day of July, 1944.

From official information we have received, your son was killed in action against the enemy. You may be assured that any additional information received will be communicated to you without delay.

The Minister of National Defence and the Members of the Army Council have asked me to express to you and your family their sincere sympathy in your bereavement. We pay tribute to the sacrifice he so bravely made.

In October 1944, Minnie wrote a letter to the Chief Treasury Officer about her dependant's allowance. Following is a portion of that letter:

... My son (Chester) left home Feb. 4 – 42. In June of the same year he went overseas where he served until the time of his death 11th July 1944. I suffered a great loss when he was taken. A loss that nothing can ever fill... On Oct. 5th 1944 another married son Sgt. Clifford Hebner was killed in action so this is the second great loss I have suffered. I am a widow and have had a great struggle to bring up my children....

In early November 1944, Clifford's wife of four years Vera, then living at 175 ½ Dundas Street, London, received the following letter from the Brigadier, Acting Adjutant-General:

Dear Mrs. Hebner:

It was with deep regret that I learned of the death of your husband, A19360 Sergeant Clifford Vernon Hebner, who gave his life in the Service of his Country in the Western European Theatre of War, on the 5th day of October, 1944.

From official information we have received, your husband was killed in action against the enemy. You may be assured that any additional information received will be communicated to you without delay.

The Minister of National Defence and the Members of the Army Council have asked me to express to you and your family their sincere sympathy in your bereavement. We pay tribute to the sacrifice he so bravely made.

Clifford Hebner's death was later officially recorded as, *Overseas casualty, killed in action, in the field (Belgium)*. In late-January 1945, Vera received a letter from the Major, for Director of Records, for Adjutant-General. Following is a portion of that letter:

Dear Mrs. Hebner:

I am directed to inform you that your husband was awarded the Military Medal, authority Canada Gazette No. 52 dated 23rd December 1944, under the following heading:

The KING has been graciously pleased to approve the award of the Military Medal in recognition of gallant and distinguished services in the field: A.19360, L/Sgt. HEBNER, C.V.

The Minister of National Defence expresses his sincere regret that your husband did not live to receive this award, the presentation of which will be arranged in due course.

Thirty-two-year-old Clifford Hebner is buried in Schoonselhof Cemetery, Belgium, Grave IV.B.15. On his headstone are inscribed the words, CLIFF AND I LIVED A GLORIOUS LIFETIME TOGETHER IN FIVE SHORT MONTHS. VERA. On December 23, 1944, Clifford Hebner was awarded posthumously the Military Medal. The award reads: *The King has been graciously pleased to approve the following award in recognition of gallant and distinguished services in the field.*

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, N, 2B, 2C, 2D, 7C, 8X, 8Y

HEGARTY, Hugh Francis (#J/4536)

The nickname that Hugh Francis (Frank) Hegarty lovingly adopted from his nephews was far from the truth. Hugh was the only one in the family to graduate high school and he worked a series of jobs, mostly as a mechanic, prior to enlisting. In his air force training, he graduated with top marks and gained high praise from his superior officers. Hugh made the supreme sacrifice for the Allied cause while flying in Bomber Command, one of the most dangerous but vital operations of the war.

He was born in Culdaff, Donegal County, Ireland on August 23, 1917. He was the son of Hugh Hegarty Senior (a farmer, later gardener) and Catherine (nee Green) Hegarty. Hugh Sr. (born in Carndonagh, Donegal, Ireland) and Catherine (born Culdaff, Ireland) were married in Donegal, Ireland in 1903. Hugh Jr. came to Canada when he was just seven years old. He arrived in Quebec in 1924 with his mother aboard the passenger ship *Saturnia*.

Hugh Jr. had four sisters: Kathleen (born 1900, became Kathleen Gallagher, lived in New Jersey); Mary Bridget (born 1906, became Mary Hubbard); Cecilia (born 1915, became Cecilia Bullock); and Margaret (became Margaret Mahoney). Hugh also had three brothers: Michael (would live in Wallaceburg for a time, then return to Sarnia); Bernard (died 1924); and James (Jimmy). Hugh's brother Jimmy later lived in the Philadelphia area of the United States. He married, had children, and served with the United States Army during the Second World War. When their mother Catherine Hegarty passed away, Jimmy returned to Canada for her funeral. Ironically, when he went to return to the U.S.A., border officials would not allow him to enter the country because he was not a citizen of the United States. He stayed with his sister Margaret (Mahoney) in Sarnia for almost a year while things were sorted out.

The Hegarty family lived at 417 Confederation Street, and later 279 Rose Street, Sarnia during the war years. Hugh was a member of St. Joseph's Catholic Parish, Sarnia, Youth Organization. Hugh attended S.S. #2 Plympton School, 1924-1928; and then St. Joseph's Catholic Elementary School, 1928-1931, before going on to high school at Sarnia Collegiate. He was the only one of the Hegarty children to go on to secondary school, and he was often asked about exams by his family members. His reply was always, "I'll likely flunk'er", and so he became known as "Uncle Flunker" to all his nephews. Hugh attended Sarnia Collegiate Institute in 1931, graduating in 1935. He was active in hockey, rugby, softball, tennis, soccer and swimming. Hugh was also referred to as "Francie" by his family members, an Irish habit of adding "ie" to everyone's name.

After graduating, Hugh was employed as a mechanic for Howard Alward at Sarnia Motors from June 1935-September 1935. He left that job to become a truck driver for James Wynn of Vidal Street from September 1935-April 1936. He then went to work for W.H. Keelan Sports Store on Brock Street from April 1936 until he enlisted. At Keelan Sports Store, Hugh did general repair work as a mechanic on bicycles, outboard motors, marine service, acetylene welding and sales.

One of Hugh Hegarty's reference letters used in his application to the R.C.A.F. came from Rev. H.B. McManus, of St. Joseph's Catholic Church in Sarnia. Following is that April 1940 reference letter to the R.C.A.F in London, Ontario:

Dear Sirs-

The purpose of this letter is to certify to the righteous character of Francis Hegarty who is anxious to join His Majesty's Service in the R.C.A.F. I have known Francis for the past four years, and know him to be all that could be desired for one seeking service in the R.C.A.F. He has been steadily employed, and I know has been appreciated by his employer. He has no bad habits of which I am aware, but has always been a steady young man, doing the right thing at all times. Hoping you will find it possible to let him join the R.C.A.F.

With a lure for adventure, twenty-two-year-old Hugh Hegarty enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force on July 19, 1940, in London, Ontario. He stood five feet eight and three quarter inches tall, had hazel eyes and dark brown hair, was single, and lived with his sister Margaret at 417 Confederation Street, Sarnia at the time. He requested flying duties, with a preference to be an Air Gunner. From #1 Manning Depot in Toronto, then R.C.A.F. Station Camp Borden, Hugh began his air training at #2 Initial Training School (ITS) in Regina during the month of September 1940; and then continued at #2 Elementary Flying Training School (EFTS) in Fort William, Ontario in November and December 1940 (flying Tiger Moth's). The EFTS Commanding Officer's remarks on Hugh included: *Ability as a Pilot – Above Average... Flying test was very satisfactory. Is very keen and works hard. Should develop into an outstanding pilot. Conduct on the ground was very good.*

In mid-November 1940, Hugh wrote a letter from EFTS in Fort William to his sister Cecilia in Sarnia. Following is a portion of that letter. [Note: In his letter he refers to Leo (Bullock)--his brother-in-law who married Hughs' sister Cecilia, and his two nephews Billy (age 6) and Calvin (age 3) Bullock]:

Dear Sister,

"Hello Our Celia" – I sure was glad to hear from you, and I should have written you long ago but every time I thought about it, I didn't know your address. But I guess its better late than never so here I am scribbling you a few lines to let you know that I received your kind and ever welcome letter glad to see by it that you are all well and hope you will always be the same... I really am glad to hear that you, Leo, Billy and Calvin are all fine.

I'm also glad to hear your sort of looking after Helen for me, I knew there must be at least one of the Hegarty clan that would protect my interests. How is Leo getting along, I hope he's getting along fine and I'm sure he will if he keeps on studying. I have six subjects to study myself, besides our regular classes we have to study after six o'clock for eight hours a week. That's what I'm supposed to be doing right now but I spend most of my study

periods writing letters, it passes the time far quicker. The trouble is we have to write examinations in Armaments, Airframes, Airmanship, Aero Engines, Theory of Flight, Navigation and Signals every week. But I haven't been doing so badly so far as a matter of fact I managed to put the old Hegarty name at the top of the list on the last set of examinations. I had an average of 99% in everything put together.

I haven't been doing much flying on account of bad weather etc, but even if they can't make a flyer out of me, I at least showed them I could do the ground subjects. Boy if I ever start navigating one of these contraptions over Sarnia you better climb under something real solid and stay there until I'm well out of the way, besides I'd be afraid to fly over Sarnia, those shotgun guards at the Imperial would probably shoot the wings off me, are they still parked around the plant? You talk about driving a car, these cursed contrivances do the goofiest things you ever seen or heard tell of, they have a bad habit of trying to go in three or four directions all at once, it sure is funny...

One of the instructors took me up the other day and showed me how to do a spin, it's the cat's pyjamas, the ground and sky all start to go around in circles and its hard to tell whether you're going or coming for a while, but I really enjoyed it. If there wasn't so many things to watch and handle it really would be fun, by the time you have both feet on the rudders, one hand on the control column, the other on the throttle, and another one on the trimming gear if you have an extra one, you don't have much time to enjoy yourself.

Is Leo still thinking of joining the navy? Well just between you, me and the gate post I wouldn't encourage him too much most of these services look a lot better from the outside than they do from the inside. I'm satisfied myself, ... I haven't got anyone depending on me but if I had a wife and kids I'd be keeping myself right where the parachute hangs if I had.

Is Calvin's hand completely all better, I sure hope it is, how is Billy getting along at school, he hasn't started to play hookey yet has he. How's old "Will" by the way also Leo's mother I hope they are well. I guess I'd better stop before I make an essay out of this, give my regards to all the folks and write me again sometime. Well "So Long" for now and be good to Leo and the boys and don't let them beat up on old Will too much. Save me the left hind leg of your Christmas turkey, if I don't get home for Christmas. I'll wrap one of these old crates around a telephone pole then they can send me home for keeps. Incidentally I saw them testing a "Hawker Hurricane" being tested up here, if I could climb aboard it, I could be home in a whiff. Love to you, Leo and Billy and Cal

Flunker

Hugh continued his training at #7 Service Flying Training School (SFTS) in MacLeod, Alberta from mid-December 1940 until early March 1941, flying Avro Ansons. In mid-January 1941, he wrote another letter to his sister Cecilia. Following is a portion of that letter:

Dear Sister,

Hello our Celia. Thanks a lot for the Christmas gifts how did you know I needed galloshes, these old ones I got from the service were a disaster with a white shirt. I'm glad to hear you, Leo, Billy and Calvin are all fine, tell Billy I didn't happen to be flying that plane in the picture but I fly ones just like it, as a matter of fact I had one of them up by myself for the first time last Sunday... This place is just a few miles East of the Rocky Mountains and the wind really whistles through the Crow's Nest Pass, we have gales quite often here of 50 or 60 miles per hour. All you have to do is point these old crates into the wind, pull up the anchor and away you go, one of the lads was chasing a pig up wind the other day, he said he had the motors wide open but the pig was gaining on him so you see its quite drafty out here. Otherwise the weather is swell, there isn't any snow and its quite mild. I wish I had the patience to study like Leo has, the navigation we get here is slowly driving me bughouse, I dream about maps and charts etc.

But I'm going to do my damndest to get me a pair of wings even if I have to kill a prairie chicken to get them, will you sew them on for me. Thanks I knew you would... I've been feeling just the same as ever, once in a while I get sick of the whole business but I usually get over it, when I heard that I was being sent out here I felt like kicking the wings off one of the old Tiger Moths but I don't mind it so much now that I'm here. Well Celia I've got to get over to the mess hall before the rush starts, give my best regards to Leo, Billy, Calvin and all the rest of the folks. Write me again soon I sure like to hear from you, but don't think I'm stuck up if I don't write back right away this is the toughest part of the whole course and if I manage to sneak through here I'll finally get my wings in a month or so.

Good Bye with Love, Flunker

Hugh graduated on March 1, 1941 from #7 SFTS in MacLeod, where he was awarded his Pilot's Flying Badge and Wings. He then attended #31 General Navigation Reconnaissance School, Charlottetown, P.E.I. from mid-March through to late May 1941. It was here that pilots and air observers were trained in the techniques required for ocean patrol, the last stop before aircrews were assigned to operations. Hugh graduated #31 General Recon.

School with the top marks in his class. His Commanding Officer's remarks about him included: *Above the average. This officer has proved himself an intelligent and reliable navigator... has worked hard, and produced excellent results... has displayed great keenness and application... a sound reliable Officer and has the makings of a good G.R. Pilot.*



P/O-Pilot Hugh Hegarty



October 15, 1940 in Regina

Hugh Hegarty embarked overseas on June 20, 1941. Sarnia's Bill Bullock, who was seven years old at the time, remembers saying goodbye to his uncle on the crowded train platform. "Uncle Francie was a great guy, a terrific uncle," he said. "He always made a fuss over the kids."

Hugh arrived in the United Kingdom on July 2, 1941 and was attached to #3 Personnel Reception Centre. On July 15, 1941, he was assigned to RCAF #407 Demon Squadron "To Hold On High", part of **RAF Coastal Command**, with the rank of Pilot Officer-Pilot.

During the course of the war, one of this country's most significant contributions was the approximately 50,000 Canadians who served with the RCAF and RAF in Bomber Command operations. Next to Britain, Canada was the largest contributor to Bomber Command, making up more than a third of all of Bomber Command personnel. The men who served in Bomber Command faced some of the most difficult odds of anyone fighting in the war.

RCAF No. 407 Squadron's wartime history is divided into two parts. From mid-1941 to January 1943, it operated as a "strike" (bombing) squadron attacking enemy shipping. Hugh served with the squadron during this time. In late January 1943, it would be re-designated 407 General Reconnaissance Squadron, protecting friendly shipping from the U-boat threat operating Vickers Wellington aircraft.

No. 407 was one of seven RCAF units serving with RAF Coastal Command. It was based at RAF North Coates, then RAF Thorney Island, a North Sea Coast bombing post. Flying Lockheed Hudson twin-engine light bombers, they attacked enemy shipping and German motor torpedo boats. While Hugh Hegarty was a member, #407 Squadron had gone six weeks without a loss, while taking part in 104 operational sorties raiding German positions in the Netherlands and eleven shipping attacks. It was as a strike squadron that it won its reputation and its nickname "The Demon Squadron", due to its tenacity in carrying out attacks.

On October 10, 1941, during a blustery, rainy night, Hugh Hegarty and his crew flew Hudson Bomber AN586, "T for Tommy" on anti-shipping patrol off the Dutch coast, carrying 4 X 250 lb. bombs. On that night, the aircraft failed to return, and the crew were presumed killed during the flying operation. Their aircraft and crew were the first loss sustained by the #407 Demon Squadron Coastal Command, and the first aircraft reported missing from an R.C.A.F. Coastal Command in Britain. Also on board the aircraft was another Sarnian. Flight-Sergeant **Charles John Frederick McCrum** was the son of Mr. and Mrs. H.U. McCrum of Ottawa. The family, including Charles McCrum, lived in Sarnia for several years, where Charles attended Sarnia Collegiate. Charles' father was the former chief inspector for the Canadian Immigration Service in Sarnia, and the family moved to Ottawa only a few years prior to the war when Mr. McCrum was transferred to the capital.

Shortly after the aircraft's disappearance, the *Globe and Mail* printed a story with the headline, "*They Didn't Come Back*" that included the photographs of Sergeant C.J. McCrum, Ottawa; Pilot Officer Frank Hegarty, Sarnia; and Sergeant Don Mather of North Gower, Ontario. A portion of the story read: *RCAF Coastal Squadron Loses First Plane, Crew – On a cold, blustery night an R.C.A.F. coastal squadron plane took off from its airfield on the British North Sea coast and failed to return. The three Canadians pictured above were lost with their craft somewhere in the North Sea.*

The Hudson Bomber with Hugh Hegarty and its crew was never found. It was not until June 1942 that Pilot Officer Hugh Hegarty's death was officially recorded as, *Previously reported missing after flying operations, now for official purposes, presumed dead, overseas.* Perishing with Pilot Officer-Pilot Hugh Hegarty were FS. Don Stuart Mather; Sgt. Charles John McCrum; Flying Officer J.W. Renwick (RAF); and Sgt. Billy Smith (RAF).

On June 8th of 1942, a requiem high mass was celebrated at St. Joseph's Catholic Church in Sarnia for Hugh Hegarty. In mid-July 1942, Catherine of 279 Rose Street, received the following letter from the Air Marshal, Chief of the Air Staff:

Dear Mrs. Hegarty:

I have learned with deep regret that your son, Pilot Officer Hugh Francis Hegarty, previously reported missing on Active Service Overseas is now presumed to have died on October 10th, 1941. I wish to offer both you and Mr. Hegarty my sincere and heartfelt sympathy.

It is so unfortunate that a promising career should be thus terminated and I would like you to know that his loss is greatly deplored by all those whom your son was serving.

The following is a newspaper account of the night on which Hugh Hegarty's aircraft went missing (*Hamilton Spectator*, October 31, 1941 by Douglas Amaron, Canadian Press):

*RAID BY CANADIAN SQUADRON ENDS WITH ONE PLANE LOST
"T For Tommy" Does Not Return After Attack on French Coast
Is Awaited in Vain*

Darkness settled down over the air field as the last plane took off for the Netherlands coast. It was a cold night, with the salty rain blowing in from the North Sea, and Flight-Lieut. C.M. Warren, of Toronto, medical officer of the Royal Canadian Air Force coastal command squadron at the station, was bundled up like an Eskimo in a fur-lined flying jacket. "You can't keep too warm on a job like this," he said. "I have to be here until after midnight and it can get mighty cold at that time of night."

The Canadians, grounded all the previous week because of even worse flying conditions, were out almost in full force. Some were over the Netherlands coast looking for Nazi shipping, some were on cross-country training flights, and some were practicing night landings.

In the distance searchlights played against the low-hanging clouds and the sound of a gun brought the station defence crew to their sand-bagged posts. Flashes of anti-aircraft fire several miles away light the sky.

There were German planes in the area, but no one paid much attention to them. Raids in that district are almost a nightly affair and only a handful of people stayed out in the cold to watch the fireworks display which lasted less than 20 minutes. P.O. Bill Cameron, of Vancouver, brought his plane down for the night after a half dozen landings and muttered a few unkindly words about ground defences. He had flown through the barrage area and almost caught some of the shells meant for Nazi raiders.

"Damned indecent of them," he said as he landed. "They told me there was an enemy craft about so I followed him in. Then what did they do but fire at me. A fellow isn't safe anywhere these days." More planes came back – P.O. Bill Shankland, of Vancouver, from a landing practice, P.O. John McCulloch, of Point Pleasant, West Va., from a cross country flight, and P.O. Bob Wadds, of Toronto, from a flight over the North Sea.

"T for Tommy," with P.O. Frank Hegarty, of Sarnia, Ont., at the controls, and Sergts. Don Mather, of North Gower, Ont., and C.J.F. McCrum, of Ottawa, and an R.A.F. pilot officer in his crew, was the next plane due back. An hour went by and there was no word from it. Sgt. Pilots Bob Mullen, of Ganora, Sask., and J.K. Abbott, of Montreal, arrived almost together. They too had seen nothing but the night, and had heard nothing of "T for Tommy." P.O. Dale Cowperwaite, of Toronto, came in next after being reported several miles off course. "T for Tommy" was two hours overdue.

"A lousy night," Cowperwaite said. "The wireless went haywire, my lights went out, 'George' the automatic

pilot wasn't working, the compass went off. In fact the only thing that worked was the engines. And we didn't see anything either."

The crews huddled around a big kitchen stove, drinking hot tea, eating meat pies and cursing the blackness of the night – one of the few on which they had returned with nothing to report. Outside, Flight-Lieut. Warren stood on the edge of the darkened field beside his ambulance. The rain still beat down and the cold wind whistled around the low-lying buildings beside the sea.

There was still no word from "T for Tommy."

They waited another hour – Cameron, Shankland, McCulloch, Wadda, Mullen, Abbott, Cowperwaite and the crews, and Warren. Then, wearily and saying few words, they piled into their transport and drove slowly through the blackout to the operations room to turn in their reports.

These were brief and to the point and the briefest was in the space reserved for three young Canadians and an Englishman. There, for the first time since the squadron was formed, went down the one word – "missing." "T for Tommy" didn't come home.

In August 1945, Hugh Sr. and Catherine Hegarty received a War Service Gratuity of \$160.92 for the loss of their son Hugh. In late-March 1946, Catherine (then at 412 Confederation Street) received the following letter from an R.C.A.F. Records Officer in Ottawa:

Dear Mrs. Hegarty:

It is a privilege to have the opportunity of sending you the Operational Wings and Certificate in recognition of the gallant services rendered by your son Pilot Officer H.F. Hegarty. I realize there is little which may be said or done to lessen your sorrow, but it is my hope that these "Wings", indicative of operations against the enemy, will be a treasured memento of a young life offered on the altar of freedom in defence of his Home and Country.

Twenty-four-year-old Pilot Officer-Pilot Hugh Hegarty has no known grave. His name inscribed on the Runnymede War Memorial, United Kingdom, Panel 59. On the Sarnia cenotaph, his name is inscribed as H.F. Haggerty.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, J, K, L, M, N, 2C, 2D, 7C, 8X, 8Y, c

HORLEY, Wallace Carman (#V/31090)

Wallace Horley planned to return to his career at Imperial Oil after the war ended. He never got the chance. In the summer of 1944, he was aboard one of the "backbone" warships of the Canadian navy when he lost his life during an escort operation during the longest continuous campaign of the war to what British Prime Minister Winston Churchill said was "... the only thing that ever really frightened me during the war..."

Wallace was born in Dewar Lake, Saskatchewan on September 10, 1921, the son of Carman Walter and Rachel (nee Muirhead, born in Dumbarton, Scotland) Horley. Rachel Muirhead, along with her mother and six siblings emigrated from Scotland to Canada in 1911, and initially settled in Saskatchewan. Carman Horley, born 1896 in Becher, Lambton the son of Joseph and Jane Horley, was the fifth of eight children. Their 50-acre family farm was hardly big enough for the size of the family. At a young age, Carman and an older brother travelled west to work on the farms in Saskatchewan. When World War I broke out, Carman enlisted in the army; however he received a discharge in order to continue working on the farms. He started work with the Canadian National (CN) Railway in 1917 and as the rail-line was built westward, he moved with the company.

Carman Horley and Rachel Muirhead were married in Greene, Saskatchewan on November 29, 1917. The Horley's later moved to Cochrane, Ontario and in 1931 settled on a farm south of Port Lambton. In 1935, the Horley family moved a couple of miles north of Port Lambton where Carman supported his family working road construction during the warm weather months and cutting wood in the bush during the winter months. In 1939, the Horley family moved to Sarnia, living at 114 John Street, and Carman supported his large family working in the processing department of Sarnia Refinery.

Carman and Rachel Horley had four daughters and five sons together: Evelyn Mary (born 1918 in Loverna, Sask., became Evelyn Dellow); Alistair James (born September 17, 1919 in Greene); Wallace Carman; Floyd Arthur (born July 26, 1923 in Cochrane), Frances Rachel (born 1929, became Frances Godley); Joseph Robert (born 1931); Jane Isabelle (born 1933); Ruth Agnes (born 1935, became Ruth Sainsbury); and William Donald (born 1937).

Three of the Horley boys served with the Royal Canadian Navy during the war. The Royal Canadian Navy consisted of three organizations that were frequently lumped together with little distinction under the title of Royal

Canadian Navy: the professional force, the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN), were sailors that had made naval warfare their profession and had been trained at the naval college and on Royal Navy ships; the Royal Canadian Naval Reserve (RCNR), drew upon the merchant navy and the pool of men who made their living as fishers; and the Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve (RCNVR), the ordinary sailors from across the country who would form the bulk of the navy. The three categories of sailor were distinguished by the distinctive stripes on the cuffs of their uniforms: the RCN had broad straight stripes; the RCNR had criss-crossed stripes; and the RCNVR had wavy stripes, which led them to calling themselves the “Wavy Navy”.



Port Lambton 1937

Floyd (14), Alistair (18), Carman (41), Wallace (16) and Joseph (6)

The first to join was Floyd in January 1941, becoming a Wireless Operator with the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) serving off the west coast aboard the corvette *HMCS Moncton* and the River Class frigate *HMCS Buckingham*. Alistair was the second to join in the fall of 1941, becoming a Chief Petty Officer with the Royal Canadian Naval Reserve (RCNR) serving aboard the armed merchant cruiser *HMCS Prince Henry* in the Pacific and the “E” Class destroyer *HMCS Gatineau*. Wallace was the third Horley boy to join the navy, becoming a member of the RCNVR. The eldest Horley daughter, Evelyn, married William “Bill” Dellow. He also served in the war, with the Canadian Army, Elgin Regiment. Corporal Bill Dellow served with the Canadian Corps in Italy, was wounded there, and survived the war.

Growing up in Port Lambton, the Horley children spent a lot of their time on or in the water; sailing and swimming. Floyd, Alistair and Wallace all worked for a time on Canada Steamship Lines (CSL) ships on the Great Lakes. For them, that familiarity and comfort in the water no doubt impacted their decision to join the Navy. Wallace attended school in Port Lambton, leaving school after completing grade eight in order to work to help support the family. Wallace enjoyed playing baseball and sailing, he had a girlfriend, and his family members described him as the “strong, silent type”.

Canada and Newfoundland declared war on Germany on September 10, 1939. Three days earlier, on September 7, 1939, Wallace Horley joined the Canadian Active Service Force (CASF), the 11th Field Company, Royal Canadian Engineers in Sarnia. It was also three days before his eighteenth birthday. Wallace was a cement worker at the time, living in Port Lambton. Two months later, Sapper Wallace was discharged from the CASF when “his services were no longer required”. He then went to work at Imperial Oil Company in Sarnia, as a pipe fitter, living with his parents who were then residing at 114 John Street, Sarnia.

On March 19, 1942, twenty year-old Wallace Horley enlisted in the Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve in Windsor, Ontario. He stood six feet tall, had blue eyes and light brown hair and was single. He stated that he planned to return to Imperial Oil after the war. His initial training was in Windsor on the *HMCS Hunter* until mid-May 1942. He would serve on the *HMCS Cornwallis* (May 18-July 21, 1942), and the *HMCS Venture* (July 22, 1942-January 13, 1944). On January 14, 1944, then Stoker Horley was assigned to the crew of the *HMCS Alberni (K103)*, a corvette of the Flower class. The *Alberni* was based out of Stadacona (Halifax) until April 21, 1944, then based out of Niobe (Scotland).



Alistair J. Horley



Wallace C. Horley



Floyd A. Horley

Beginning on the opening day of the Second World War, the **Battle of the Atlantic** would be the longest continuous campaign of the war, and one in which Canada played a central role. The Royal Canadian Navy, along with the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) and Canada's Merchant Navy, played a vital role in defending the country's eastern coast and escorting convoys of ships carrying men and essential machinery, arms, fuel and basic resources between North America and Europe.

Built at the Yarrows Limited shipyard in Esquimalt, British Columbia, and named to honour the town of Alberni on Vancouver Island, the *Alberni* had been commissioned for service by the Royal Canadian Navy on February 4, 1941. She arrived at Halifax in mid-April 1941, and just over a month later, departed for St. John's to join the recently formed Newfoundland Escort Force (NEF). She was the first western Canadian corvette assigned as a convoy escort and played a prominent role in the Battle of the Atlantic when the depredations of German U-boats were at their peak. In her illustrious career, the *Alberni* was credited with one probable sinking of a Nazi submarine; it assisted in several other kills; had shot down a Junkers 88 bomber; took part in the British invasion of North Africa; and had rescued countless numbers of men from the sea after Allied ships were attacked. In April of 1944, she was one of seventeen RCN corvettes sent to the UK in support of *Operation Neptune*, the landings at Normandy in June 1944. Wallace wrote a letter to his parents saying that he had participated in the invasion of Normandy, France while aboard the *Alberni*.



Flower Class Corvette *HMCS Alberni K103*

In August 1944, *HMCS Alberni* was on patrol for U-boats to the eastward of the swept channel leading to the Normandy beaches. On August 21, 1944, she was steaming south along the Isle of Wight at 14 knots in tough weather escorting a convoy in the English Channel southeast of the Isle of Wight. At 11:37 a.m. the “hands to dinner” pipe was sounded, calling many of the hungry sailors to the mess halls below deck. Four minutes later, with no asdic warning whatsoever, the *Alberni* was struck by a torpedo fired by German submarine *U-480*. The torpedo struck the ship on her port side immediately aft of the engine room. Within moments of the attack the ship was awash from the funnel aft, listing to port. The stern sank first. The ship rolled to port, and then the bow went under. The *Alberni* disappeared in less than one minute.

There was a strong wind and heavy seas at the time, and with the speed of the disaster, there was no time to release the ship’s boats and Carley floats and many of the men didn’t have time to put on life belts. The surviving crew members were those positioned farther forward, but even many of them never reached the upper deck. Four officers and 55 members of the crew, representing 2/3 of the *Alberni*’s crew, were lost in the attack. For those dazed in the water, after forty-five minutes of struggling in the heavy seas, thirty-one crew members were rescued by Royal Navy motor torpedo boats 469 and 470 and taken to Portsmouth. Wallace Horley was one of the crew members who lost his life in the attack. At the time, no cause was given for the loss of the warship. The *Alberni* was the 8th corvette and 18th Canadian fighting ship to be lost in World War II.



Stoker 1st Class Wallace Horley

U-480 was an experimental vessel, considered by many to be the first stealth submarine due to its special synthetic rubber coating technology called “Alberich”. The rubber contained a series of holes that helped break up sound waves. This is why the *Alberni*, despite sweeping with asdic radar and sonar, had no indication the submarine was in the area. The *Alberni* was determined to be the first allied vessel to be sunk by “Alberich” technology. Between August 21-25, 1944, *U-480* sank two warships; *HMCS Alberni* and *HMS Loyalty*, and two merchant ships; *Fort Yale* and *Orminster*. Five months after sinking the *Alberni*, sometime between late January and mid-February 1945, *U-480* struck a mine southwest of the Isle of Wight, sending it to the bottom and the entire crew of 48 was lost.

On August 23, his parents on John Street in Sarnia received a telegram that read; THE MINISTER OF NATIONAL DEFENCE FOR NAVAL SERVICES DEEPLY REGRETS TO INFORM YOU THAT YOUR SON WALLACE CARMAN HORLEY STOKER FIRST CLASS OFFICIAL NO V-31090 IS MISSING AT SEA LETTER FOLLOWS. No other details were provided. In late August 1944, Carman received the following letter from the Secretary, Naval Board:

Dear Mr. Horley:

It is with deepest regret that I must confirm the telegram of the 23rd of August, 1944, from the Minister of National Defence for Naval Services, informing you that your son, Wallace Carman Horley, Stoker First Class, Official Number V-31090, Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve, is missing at sea.

The only information that can be given at this time is that your son is missing at sea when the ship in which he was serving was lost by enemy action in the English Channel. As soon as further particulars can be released, you will be informed.

Should you know the name of the ship in which he was serving, it is requested that, for security reasons, you will regard this information as confidential until such time as an official announcement is made. Please accept the sincere sympathy of the Department in your anxiety.

In mid-September 1944, Ottawa released the casualty list in connection with the sinking of the *Alberni*, and Stoker First Class Wallace Carman Horley was among those listed as missing from the lost warship. Information released from Ottawa included that two-thirds of the crew were either dead or missing after the sinking and that the attack occurred while the vessel was pursuing “invasion duties”. No cause was given for the loss of the ship.

In December of 1944, Wallace Horley’s death was later officially recorded as, *Missing, presumed dead. He was serving in H.M.C.S. ‘Alberni’ which was sunk in the English Channel.* In early March 1945, Stoker First Class Wallace Horley, along with Army Private Russell Jolly (included in this Project), were honoured at a memorial service at Devine Street United Church. Both men were members of the congregation and both had died recently while on active service. In mid-June 1945, Carman and Rachel Horley received a War Service Gratuity of \$311.59 for the loss of their son Wallace.

Many years later, Frances Godley (nee: Horley) recalled the day that the military men came to the John Street home to break the news. Then fifteen years old, Frances remembered what was on everyone’s mind was, “which of them is it?” because three boys were serving at the time. Frances also recalled the time the Commanding Officer (CO) of the *Alberni*, Ian H. Bell, came to visit Carman and Rachel months after the sinking. “He cried”, Frances remembered, because she had not seen a man cry before.

His death was a devastating blow to the Horleys—one that his siblings later described as “the saddest day in our family’s history”. Father Carman Horley seemed to be the most impacted by the tragedy—Wallace was named after his father, and like his father, had the strong, silent and stoic personality. For all the family members, little was said about Wallace after his death, the emotions were too agonizing. Years later, Carman and Rachel did visit the Halifax Memorial.

Twenty-two-year-old Wallace Horley has no known grave. His name is inscribed on the Halifax Memorial, Nova Scotia, Panel 12. His name is also inscribed on the Sarnia Refinery Plaque. Unveiled in 1949, the plaque has the names of 24 Sarnia Imperial Oil employees who made the ultimate sacrifice in World War II. Wallace’s parents are both buried in Lakeview Cemetery in Sarnia. On their gravemarker are inscribed the words, HORLEY CARMAN WALTER 1896-1968 HIS WIFE RACHEL MUIRHEAD 1899-1974 THEIR BELOVED SON WALLACE CARMAN 1921-1944 LOST AT SEA H.M.C.S. ALBERNI. SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, N, O, P, T, U, V, X, Z, 2A, 2C, 2D, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10V, 10Y, 4b, 4c

HUMBLE, George Horace (#A/50455)

George Humble, a dairy farmer, was married and had a four-month-old daughter at home when he made the decision to serve his country. He gave his life for Canada fighting in one of the most brutal and longest campaigns of the war.

He was born in Ridgetown, Ontario on August 14, 1912, the son of John (a farmer) and Beatrice Florence Humble, of Ridgetown, Ontario. John and Beatrice were married on May 6, 1897 in London, England, and they had ten children together. Their six sons were; George, John Thomas, Leonard Arthur, Albert Edward, Frank and William (John, Leonard and Albert would serve in the U.S. Army); and their four daughters were; Beatrice, Lillian May, Isabel Ellen and Francis Jean (would serve in the C.W.A.C.). George attended public school in Ridgetown until 1924, when at the age of twelve and in grade eight, he left school because he wanted to go to work. He was active in baseball, skating and swimming.

George’s pre-war employment included five years on dairy farm in the United States, three years working a tiling machine (drainage), two years driving as a chauffeur, and five years on a dairy farm--employed by Murray Smith of R.R. #1, Sarnia. At the age of twenty, George Humble married Mabel Ellen Humble on September 12, 1932 in Chatham, Ontario. George and Mabel had one daughter together, Maxine Dianne Humble, born in July 1940. Prior to enlisting, George served three months with the 2nd-11th Field Company, Lambton.

Twenty-eight-year-old George Humble enlisted on November 18, 1940 in Chatham, Ontario with the First Kent Regiment, Canadian Army. He stood five feet five and three quarter inches tall, had blue eyes and brown hair, and recorded his occupation as dairy farmer. He recorded his residence at the time as 163 Selkirk Street, Chatham, and his next of kin as his wife, Mabel Humble, c/o Mrs. Don Robertson, London Road, R.R.#1, Sarnia, Ontario.

George had plans to be a welder after the war.

George received his army training in Chatham, London, New Westminster and Terrace, British Columbia. He embarked overseas for the United Kingdom on March 22, 1943, where he became a member of #3 Canadian Infantry Reinforcement Unit (CIRU). On April 1, 1943, he was posted as a reinforcement to the Essex Scottish Regiment, with whom he continued his training. On June 2, 1943, he was transferred to the West Nova Scotia Regiment, Royal Canadian Infantry Corps (RCIC) with the rank of Private.

George Humble sailed from the U.K. on December 25, 1943, arriving the next day in the Italian Theatre, as a member of the West Nova Scotia's. The **Italian Campaign**, the first sustained Canadian Army operation of the War, had begun with the invasion of Sicily in July 1943. The fierce fighting on the island lasted more than four weeks, during which the Canadians would advance through difficult mountainous terrain, against an ever-stiffening German resistance. By August 17, the Germans had evacuated from the island to the Italian mainland. In early September, Canadian and Allied forces would invade Italy. Though Italy surrendered shortly after, the occupying Germans made it clear their fight was not over. Liberating Italy would be a painstaking northward crawl, lasting 20 months, over a range of landscapes, through challenging weather, and against a series of well-protected defences held by some of the German army's best troops.

George Humble served a little less than one year in the Italian theatre and was admitted to the Canadian General Hospital (CGH) at least two times. On December 10, 1944, Private George Humble was killed in action during operations in Italy. George's remains were buried on December 11 at a location recorded on the Army Field Service Card as "Russi WNSR Cemetery Sh 89/III SW Italy 1/25,000 MR 440325".

In mid-June 1945, Mabel Humble, c/o Don Robertson R.R.#1, Sarnia, received the following letter from the Colonel, Director of Records, for Adjutant-General:

Dear Madam:

Information has now been received from the overseas military authorities that your husband, A50455 Private Horace George Humble, was buried with religious rites in a temporary cemetery located at Russi, approximately nine miles South-West of Ravenna, Italy.

The grave will have been temporarily marked with a wooden cross for identification purposes and in due course the remains will be reverently exhumed and removed to a recognized military burial ground when the concentration of graves in the area takes place. On this being completed the new location will be advised to you, but for obvious reasons it will likely take approximately one year before this information is received.

In late December 1944, Mabel received the following letter from the Major-General, Adjutant-General:

Dear Mrs. Humble:

It was with deep regret that I learned of the death of your husband, A50455 Private Horace George Humble, who gave his life in the Service of his Country in the Mediterranean Theatre of War on the 10th day of December, 1944.

From official information we have received, your husband was killed in action against the enemy. You may be assured that any additional information received will be communicated to you without delay.

The Minister of National Defence and the Members of the Army Council have asked me to express to you and your family their sincere sympathy in your bereavement. We pay tribute to the sacrifice he so bravely made.

George Humble's death was later officially recorded as, *Overseas casualty, killed in action, in the field (Italy)*. On a Sunday afternoon in early February of 1945, London Road West United Church in Sarnia held a memorial ceremony for two members of the church who had lost their lives recently in the war. Rev. P.S. Banes presided over a ceremony honouring Private Horace Humble, who had lost his life December 10, 1944 in Italy and Lance Corporal Robert John Wade, who had lost his life January 4, 1945 in Italy (included in this Project).

In August 1946, Mabel Humble received a letter from the Colonel, Director of Records, for Adjutant-General. Following is a portion of that letter:

Dear Madam:

Information has just been received from overseas that the remains of your husband, A50455 Private Horace George Humble, have been carefully exhumed from the original place of internment and reverently reburied in grave 16, row F, plot 5, of Ravenna British Empire Cemetery, five miles West of Ravenna, Italy. Marked map is enclosed. This is a recognized military burial ground and will receive care and maintenance in perpetuity.

The grave will have been marked with a temporary cross which will be replaced in due course by a

permanent headstone suitably inscribed. While it cannot now be stated when this work of permanent commemoration will begin, before any action is taken you will be communicated with and an opportunity will be given you to submit a short personal inscription of your own choice for engraving on the headstone...

Thirty-two-year-old George Humble is buried in Ravenna War Cemetery, Italy, Grave V.F.16. George Horace Humble left behind his parents John and Beatrice Humble in Ridgetown, his wife of twelve years Mabel at R.R. #1, Sarnia, and their four-year old daughter, Maxine Dianne. On George Humble's headstone are inscribed the words, SOMEDAY WE SHALL MEET YOU WHERE THERE WILL BE NO MORE GOODBYES. LOVING WIFE AND DAUGHTER. Mabel later remarried, becoming Mabel Smith, residing on Mornington Avenue in London, Ontario.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 7C, 8X, 8Y

IRWIN, Frederick Hansell (#J/40904)

Frederick Irwin was born in Baltimore, Maryland, was educated in Alberta, and was working at Imperial Oil when he enlisted in the RCAF in 1943 at age 24. One month before the war ended, he was a navigator aboard Halifax MZ482 when it was on a bombing mission over Witten, Germany. The Halifax was hit by flak and, on its return flight, collided with an RAF Mosquito. Frederick Irwin, 25, was killed in the crash and was survived by his parents and his wife of under two years.

Frederick Hansell Irwin was born April 23, 1919 in Baltimore, Maryland, USA, the son of Leslie Henry (born in Calgary) and Zua Marie Irwin (nee Honens, born Iowa, USA). Leslie Irwin and Marie Honens were married on May 10, 1918 in San Francisco, California, and eventually resided in Edmonton, Alberta.

Frederick attended Earl Grey elementary school in Calgary (1925-33), and then Scona High School in Edmonton, Alberta (1933-37). From 1937 to 1941, he attended the University of Alberta (U of A) in Edmonton where he obtained his Bachelor of Science degree in Chemistry. In 1937-38, as an eighteen year-old student at U of A, he completed his COTC program, obtaining the rank of Corporal. In 1940-41, still a U of A student, he served as a Private in an Auxiliary Battalion. In 1941-42, he resided in Pasadena, California, where he completed post-graduate studies at the California Institute of Technology.

While in California, Frederick met and fell in love with his future wife, Anne Elizabeth Gillespie. She had just graduated from the University of California (U of C) in Los Angeles. Mrs. Helen Laughlin, the Dean of Women at U of C stated that Anne Gillespie, "was one of the most outstanding and thoroughly fine students that the university has ever had." After graduating U of C, Anne Gillespie was granted a two-year graduate scholarship at Syracuse University. After a year in California, Frederick returned to Canada. In 1942, he was employed as a chemist at D.I.L. (Explosive Division) in Nobel, Ontario. In 1942-43, he was employed as a chemist at Imperial Oil Limited in Sarnia.

On May 17, 1943, Frederick Irwin, 24, enlisted with the Royal Canadian Air Force at RCAF No.9 Recruiting Centre in London, Ontario. He stood five feet six inches tall, had blue eyes and brown hair, was single, and was residing at 186 Maria Street in Sarnia at the time. He recorded his permanent address as 8804-101st Street, Edmonton, Alberta; his next-of-kin as his mother Zua Marie at that same address; his father's occupation as merchant; and his own occupation as a chemist. Frederick was active in skating, swimming and tennis and enjoyed photography as a hobby. Three of his references were Sarnians: H.B. Galpin, Public School Inspector (Frederick had joined the Galpin family at home and at church while in Sarnia); Fred P. Irwin, Chairman of Imperial Oil Limited in Sarnia; and L.F. Whitfield, St. Clair Proc. Corp., Chief Chemist.

From #5 Manning Depot in Lachine, Quebec, Frederick received his training at #3 Initial Training School (ITS) in Victoriaville (June-September 1943); and #4 Air Observer School (AOS) in London, Ontario (September 1943); and at #2 Air Graduate Training School (AGTS) in Quebec (February 1944). On August 7, 1943, mid-way through his training, Frederick Irwin married Anne Elizabeth Gillespie in Ottawa, Ontario. She would go by the name Anne Gillespie Irwin. Eight months later, on April 29, 1944, Frederick embarked overseas from Halifax bound for the United Kingdom. He arrived in England on May 7, 1944.

Once overseas, from #3 Personnel Reception Centre, Frederick continued his training in the U.K. with an Advance Flying Unit (AFU) at Bishop's Court; and then #86 Operational Training Unit (OTU) at Gamston; and then #1664 Conversion Unit (CU) at Tholthorpe. On January 19, 1945, Flying Officer (F/O) Frederick Irwin became a member of RCAF #425 (Alouette) Squadron, part on **Bomber Command**.

During the course of the war, one of this country's most significant contributions was the approximately 50,000 Canadians who served with the RCAF and RAF in Bomber Command operations. Next to Britain, Canada was the largest contributor to Bomber Command, making up more than a third of all of Bomber Command personnel. The men who served in Bomber Command faced some of the most difficult odds of anyone fighting in the war.

No. 425 Squadron had formed in June 1942 at RAF Dishforth in Yorkshire, England. It was designated the "First French Canadian Squadron" and was equipped with Vickers Wellingtons. Bomber Command combed other squadrons for French speaking air and ground crews to fill its ranks. On January 1, 1943 the squadron was transferred to No. 6 (RCAF) Group. In May 1943, RCAF #425 Squadron had moved their base of operations from RAF Dishforth to Kairouan in Tunisia (North Africa). From there, still flying Wellingtons, it conducted operations against Sicily and Italy. In November 1943, the squadron returned to Dishforth and resumed its operations from there, and the following month was re-equipped with Handley Page Halifaxes. In December 1943, the squadron was transferred to RAF Tholthorpe, Yorkshire.

Frederick Irwin completed five operational missions over enemy territory. On the night of March 18, 1945, F/O Frederick Irwin was the Navigator aboard Halifax III MZ482 (markings KW-G) that took off from RAF Tholthorpe at 2355 hours. The aircraft was detailed to carry out a night bombing operation over Witten, Germany, one of 324 aircraft involved. While over the target, the Halifax was hit and damaged by flak. The aircraft then began its return to base, proceeding at 3,800 feet at 190 m.p.h.

In the early morning hours of March 19, between 0500 and 0530 hours, Halifax MZ482 was in a collision with another Allied aircraft, an RAF Mosquito Bomber from #515 Squadron. Both aircraft crashed to the ground near Laroche, Belgium. Of the seven crew members aboard the Halifax, six of them, including Frederick Irwin, did not have time to bale out. One survivor from the Halifax, the Rear Gunner, F/S B.A. Balyx, was thrown out of his turret when the aircraft turned over suddenly and was able to parachute to safety. He landed among trees and was picked up by villagers and conveyed in British Transport to Ciney Hospital.



F/O Frederick Hansell Irwin



The crew of Halifax MZ482

Perishing with F/O Frederick Irwin were W/O Arthur John Guy Temple; F/O Joseph Gilbert Newton Lejambe; F/S's John Shaw Wilson and Alexander Banks; and Sgt. Lloyd George Hinch. The two RAF crew members aboard the Mosquito aircraft also perished: F/L Arthur Walter Hiron (DFC) and F/S Peter Charles Williams. The bodies of the eight airmen were left overnight in the care of the villagers, and an R.A.F. burial party had arranged to arrive the next morning to carry out burial arrangements; however during the night, a party from one of the American Cemetery Organizations arrived and removed the bodies for burial to the American Cemetery at Neuville-en-Condor, Belgium. The eight bodies were so badly mutilated that only three of them--Temple, Banks and Wilson could be identified. The eight bodies were later exhumed and reinterred in the Hotton British Military Cemetery in Belgium.

On March 27, 1945, parents Leslie and Marie Irwin in Edmonton, and wife Anne Gillespie Irwin in New York, received an air mail letter from the Air Commodore in Ottawa informing them that Frederick Irwin was, PREVIOUSLY REPORTED MISSING 19-MARCH-45 AFTER AIR OPERATIONS OVERSEAS, IS NOW REPORTED KILLED ON ACTIVE SERVICE, BODY RECOVERED. During the war, Anne Gillespie Irwin

resided in New York City and later moved to Beverley Hills, California. Years later she remarried, becoming Anne Allen residing in Beverley Hills. Frederick Hansell Irwin, 25, is buried in Hotton War Cemetery, Belgium, Grave I.C.1-7. On his headstone are inscribed the words, THE LORD WATCH BETWEEN US AND THEE, WHILE WE ARE ABSENT ONE FROM THE OTHER. His name is also inscribed on the Sarnia Refinery Plaque. Unveiled in 1949, the plaque has the names of 24 Sarnia Imperial Oil employees who made the ultimate sacrifice in World War II.

SOURCES: C, D, F, L, M, 2C, 2D, 4B, 6O, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10B, 10U

JAMIESON, Rowland Craig (#V/22037)

Rowland Jamieson was married and had two young daughters at home when he made the decision to serve his country. It was during the longest continuous campaign of the war that he lost his life aboard a ship that was torpedoed by an enemy submarine.

He was born in Forest, Ontario on January 15, 1905, the son of David Craig and Nellie (nee Wiseman) Jamieson, of 111 Wellington Street, Sarnia. David Jamieson married Nellie Wiseman in Granton, Ontario on August 3, 1893. David and Nellie Jamieson had six children together: sons David Park (born March 1903, who later lived in Ottawa); Rowland, and James (who later lived in Indianapolis, Indiana, and died 1934); and daughters (who at the time of Rowland's death were all living in Sarnia) Annie Jamieson (111 Wellington St.); Mrs. Gordon Logan (273 George St.); and Mrs. Edwin McCracken (334 ½ Wellington St.). When Rowland was born, the Jamieson's were living in Forest, Ontario and David was employed as a baker.

At the age of twenty-seven, Rowland Jamieson married Laura Frances Jane Lindsay (of Toronto) on May 16, 1932 in Detroit, Michigan. Rowland and Laura Jamieson had two daughters together: Frances Craig (born July 14, 1933), and Mary Rachel (born September 30, 1938). Three years later, when Rowland was thirty years old, he lost his father David who passed away at the age of 75 on April 13, 1935.

Less than two years after the birth of his second daughter, thirty-five-year-old Rowland Jamieson joined the Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve (RCNVR) on July 15, 1940 in Toronto. He stood five feet nine inches tall, had brown eyes and brown hair, and was employed as a radio test engineer, with Burlec Limited, Scarboro Junction at the time. Rowland, his wife Laura and their two daughters were living at 198 Westminster Avenue, Toronto.

Rowland served at Division Headquarters in Toronto as an Ordinary Telegrapher until late November 1940, and then Nova Scotia Headquarters in the same capacity, and then as Leading Seaman until mid-February 1941. He then transferred to Ottawa Headquarters as a Warrant Officer, Special Branch until May 1941. He then embarked overseas, assigned to *HMS Victory*.

During World War II, the *HMS Victory* was a shore base barracks in Portsmouth, England where the famous ship of that name sat in drydock. The *HMS Victory* was the Royal Navy ship launched in 1765, made famous as Lord Nelson's flagship at the Battle of Trafalgar. Men stationed at *HMS Victory* during the Second World War were there either attending a training course or waiting for assignment to another ship. Rowland was stationed there until December 1941. In early January 1942, Rowland was re-assigned to Ottawa (*HMCS Bytown*).

On January 7, 1942, Warrant Officer (Special Branch) Rowland Jamieson began his voyage from the United Kingdom back to Canada. He travelled aboard the *Ringstad*, a Norwegian motor merchant ship of approximately 4,800 tons. The ship was originally constructed in April 1923 and named the *Talisman*, but in 1940, it was renamed the *Ringstad*.



Ringstad (when named *Talisman*)

After the sinking of the British passenger liner *SS Athenia* on September 3, 1939, merchant ships would be grouped in “convoys” and protected by escorting warships to save them from being destroyed by U-boats one at a time. The Royal Canadian Navy, along with the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) and Canada’s Merchant Navy, would play a vital role in escorting convoys of ships carrying men and essential machinery, arms, fuel and basic resources between North America and Europe (and in defending the country’s eastern coast). The **Battle of the Atlantic** would be the longest continuous campaign of the war. Even with the protection of armed escorts it was always a treacherous voyage for the dozens of merchant ships travelling in a zig-zag fashion across enormous tracts of ocean. They manoeuvred in crowded ranks, without lights, wireless or navigational aids and used haphazard communication. The risks included the constant threat of fierce attacks by German U-boats or air attack, the danger of collision, underwater mines, rough water and the hazardous weather, fog, gales and ice conditions in the North Atlantic.

On this January 1942 voyage, the *Ringstad* was on its way to St. John, New Brunswick, having left the United Kingdom ports of Cardiff and Belfast on January 13, joining the Convoy ON 56 (approximately 40 ships), with a cargo of 2600 tons of china clay. As the convoy sailed westward across the Atlantic, it ran into several days of stormy weather. As a result, the *Ringstad* lost touch with the convoy. The ship received a radio message on January 23 that one of the ships in the convoy had been torpedoed along their intended route, so the *Ringstad* altered her course. She was alone on January 24, 1942 when at 4:25 pm, approximately 85 miles southeast from Cape Race, Newfoundland, the *Ringstad* was hit on the starboard side in the foreship by one torpedo from German U-boat *U-333*. Following a powerful explosion, in the words of the U-boat captain, “shortly afterwards she slid stem-first into the depths” as all on board abandoned ship in three lifeboats. The *Ringstad* went down in about 20 minutes. The German U-boat came up and from the conning tower offered food and water, and then someone pointed in the direction of the nearest land, before the U-boat disappeared. The weather worsened and the boats were unable to stay together in the stormy and cold conditions.

After five days, one lifeboat containing the captain, twelve men, and the captain’s dog was spotted by an escorting aircraft. The American destroyer *USS Swanson* was sent to assist. The lifeboat was covered in ice and the men had been constantly bailing as it had been continually taking on water in the heavy seas. The exhausted and frostbitten men landed at Reykjavik, Iceland on February 5, 1942. The two other lifeboats containing 27 crew members and three passengers were never seen again. The captain assumed, based on his own experiences, that the 30 missing men in the other two boats had frozen to death. All were declared missing and presumed killed. Rowland Jamieson was part of the group that was never found.

In late February 1942, Laura Jamieson in Toronto received the following letter from the Secretary, Naval Board:

Dear Madam:

It is with deepest regret that I must confirm the telegram of the 20th February from the Minister of National Defence for Naval Services informing you that your husband, Rowland Craig Jamieson, Warrant Officer, R.C.N.V.R., is missing on war service.

Your husband was borne for passage to Canada in a British Merchant ship which sailed from a United Kingdom port about the 7th of January, and has been missing since the 24th of January. There are no details available at this time.

It is not possible to estimate the probability of his having been rescued, but to date no word has been received and very little hope is held out for his survival. You will be informed immediately should any further information be received.

I wish to express the sincere sympathy of the Chief of the Naval Staff, Officers and men of the Royal Canadian Navy, the high traditions of which your husband has helped to maintain.

Rowland Jamieson’s death was later officially recorded as, *Missing and presumed dead by Naval Authority. He was bound for passage to Canada in a British Merchant ship which sailed from a United Kingdom port about the 7th January, and has been missing since the 24th January, 1942.*

Five years after the sinking of the *Ringstad*, Laura was still searching for answers about the death of her husband. In late May 1947, she received the following letter from the Naval Secretary:

Dear Mrs. Jamieson:

Further to my letter of the 15th of April, 1947, in reply to your request for further information regarding the loss of your husband, the late Mr. Rowland Craig Jamieson, Warrant Officer (S.B.), Royal Canadian Naval

Volunteer Reserve, 0-36215, it is regretted that very few particulars concerning his death have come to light.

As you know, he was returning to Canada from the United Kingdom and was taking passage in the Norwegian cargo vessel, S.S. "RINGSTAD". This ship had departed from Cardiff, England, on the 14th of January, 1942, and was scheduled to dock at St. John, New Brunswick, on or about the 28th of January, 1942. The ship "RINGSTAD" was in Convoy ONS 56 which was made up of 37 ships when she was torpedoed by a German submarine about 90 miles South East of Cape Race, Newfoundland. The sinking occurred at about 4:30 p.m. on the 24th of January.

Rowland Jamieson left behind his widowed mother, his three sisters (all residing in Sarnia), his brother, his wife Laura and their two daughters, Frances (age 8) and Mary (age 3). After Rowland's death, Laura lived at 200 Merton Street, then 103 Castlefield Avenue in Toronto. In February 1946, Laura Jamieson received a War Service Gratuity of \$158.80 for the loss of her husband. Thirty-seven-year-old Warrant Officer Rowland Jamieson has no known grave. His name is inscribed on Halifax Memorial, Nova Scotia, Canada, Panel 8.

SOURCES: C, D, E, F, G, L, P, U, W, 2C, 2D, 7C, 8G, 8X, 8Y

JARVO, Francis Alexander (#A/108262)

Francis Alexander Jarvo found work in Sarnia that suited him before he enlisted at age 19. His post-war plans to get his electrician's ticket ended in 1944 when Francis was killed in the brutal fighting of the Battle of the Scheldt.

He was born in Cornwall, Ontario on October 1, 1924 the son of Robert Edward and Jeanette Mary (nee Morin) Jarvo, of 737 York Street, later 761 York Street, Cornwall, Ontario. Robert (born St. Andrew's, Ontario and employed in a paper mill) and Jeanette (born Cornwall, Ontario) were married in Cornwall, Ontario on November 3, 1915. It was a crowded household for the Jarvos had ten children together: daughters Vivian (Mrs. Lawrence Tessier), Elaine, Melva, Theresa, Camilla and Betty; and sons Basil Robert, Joseph Anthony, Bernard William and Francis. Basil and Francis both served with the Canadian Army during World War II.

Francis graduated from grade eight in a Separate Elementary School in Cornwall but attended only two years of high school and left before he complete grade 10. He felt he should stop and help finance the large family budget. To that end, he had several jobs after leaving school—as a labourer at a Beach Furniture Company; as a general helper at Floyd's Meat Market; as a labourer and storeman's helper at Pigott Construction Company; and as an electrician's helper at Carter Hall Contracting Company in Sarnia. Sometime before he enlisted, Francis had moved to Sarnia.

Nineteen year-old Francis Jarvo enlisted in the Canadian Army on September 22, 1943 in London, Ontario. On his enlistment papers, he wrote that he had worked in Sarnia for seven months as an electrician's helper and recorded his address as Polymer Corporation, Sarnia. He stood five feet four and a half inches tall, had blue eyes and brown hair, and was single at the time. He must have enjoyed his time as an electrician's apprentice because his post-war plans were to get his journeyman's ticket as an electrician. He volunteered for the Paratroops, but his superiors had other ideas and recommended him for infantry. From #1 District Depot in London, Francis received his army training at #12 Basic Training Centre (BTC) in Chatham; at A-29 Canadian Infantry Training Centre (CITC) in Ipperwash; and at Canadian Driving and Maintenance School (CD&MS) in Woodstock. Seven months after enlisting, Francis completed his training in mid-April 1944.

On April 29, 1944, Francis Jarvo embarked overseas for the United Kingdom, where he was posted with the #2 Canadian Infantry Reinforcement Unit (CIRU). On July 18, 1944, Francis arrived in France as a member of the Essex Scottish Regiment, R.C.I.C., with the rank of Private. He would serve with the Essex Scottish for three months as they advanced through France and into Belgium.

The **Battle of Normandy** had begun for the Canadians with the June 6, 1944 D-Day landings at Juno Beach. After breaching the "Atlantic Wall" of "Fortress Europe", Allied armies began their break out from the narrow Normandy bridgehead to carve out a foothold on the French mainland. It would take a whole summer of tenacious fighting, pushing against fierce and ruthless German forces to advance east across France. In a brutal campaign of attrition, the Canadians faced fierce battles and vicious counterattacks as they clawed their way forward liberating villages and towns including Bretteville, Carpiquet, Caen and Falaise.

After the Allied breakout from Normandy, Canadian forces were assigned the "**Long Left Flank**", the less glamorous but vital tasks of clearing coastal areas in the north of France and Belgium of German occupiers; opening

the English Channel ports for supplies essential to the Allied advance; and capturing the launching sites of German V-1 rockets. In a series of stop-and-start advances against stiff resistance in fortified positions, the Canadians liberated ports and villages including Rouen, Dieppe, Dunkirk, Boulogne and Calais.

In early October 1944, the Canadians were entrusted with liberating the Scheldt estuary--the 45-mile-long estuary (the Belgian-Dutch border area) that connected the port of Antwerp to the North Sea. The **Battle of the Scheldt** was among the most difficult and grueling struggles in the war. The bitter fighting against a well-fortified and heavily entrenched enemy took place in a bleak environment made worse by the winter cold in a flooded and freezing muddy quagmire.

It was during the Battle of the Scheldt, on October 18, 1944, that Francis Jarvo of the Essex Scottish was severely wounded in Belgium. The following day, he lost his life as a result of his wounds. Francis Jarvo's remains were initially buried on October 20, 1944 at a location recorded as "Military Cem of Antwerp Belgium MR.67095 Plot No. Brit, Row T, Grave 19".

A few days later, Jeanette Jarvo received the following telegram in Cornwall from the Director of Records about her son: MINISTER OF NATIONAL DEFENCE SINCERELY REGRETS TO INFORM YOU A108262 PRIVATE FRANCIS ALEXANDER JARVO HAS BEEN OFFICIALLY REPORTED WOUNDED IN ACTION EIGHTEENTH OCTOBER 1944 NATURE AND EXTENT OF WOUNDS NOT YET AVAILABLE STOP WHEN ADDRESSING MAIL ADD WORDS IN HOSPITAL IN BOLD LETTERS AFTER NAME OF UNIT FOR QUICK DELIVERY STOP WHEN FURTHER INFORMATION BECOMES AVAILABLE IT WILL BE FORWARDED AS SOON AS RECEIVED.

Jeanette did not have to wait long and the news was devastating. The very next day, Jeanette received this telegram from the Director of Records: MINISTER OF NATIONAL DEFENCE DEEPLY REGRETS TO INFORM YOU THAT A108262 PRIVATE FRANCIS ALEXANDER JARVO HAS NOW BEEN OFFICIALLY REPORTED DIED OF WOUNDS NINETEENTH OCTOBER 1944 STOP IF ANY FURTHER INFORMATION BECOMES AVAILABLE IT WILL BE FORWARDED AS SOON AS RECEIVED.

In November 1944, the Major-General, Adjutant-General wrote this letter to Jeanette:

Dear Mrs. Jarvo:

It was with deep regret that I learned of the death of your son, A108262 Private Francis Alexander Jarvo, who gave his life in the Service of his Country in the Western European Theatre of War on the 19th day of October, 1944.

From official information we have received, your son died as the result of wounds received in action against the enemy. You may be assured that any additional information received will be communicated to you without delay.

The Minister of National Defence and the Members of the Army Council have asked me to express to you and your family their sincere sympathy in your bereavement. We pay tribute to the sacrifice he so bravely made.

Francis Jarvo was later officially recorded as, *Overseas casualty, died of wounds received in action, in the field (Belgium)*. In November 1945, Robert and Jeanette Jarvo received a War Service Gratuity of \$157.95 for the loss of their son. In November 1948, the Director of War Service Records sent the Jarvos a photograph of the grave and temporary marker over the burial place of their late son, with its location. Twenty year-old Francis Jarvo is buried in Schoonselhof Cemetery, Belgium, Grave III.K.19. On his headstone are inscribed the words, OF CORNWALL, ONTARIO, CANADA. R.I.P.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, 2C, 2D, 7C, 8X, 8Y

JENSEN, Jens Carlo (#C/31217)

Born in Denmark, Jens Carlo Jensen made a new life in Canada and in Sarnia before he enlisted in 1941. A little more than three years later, Jens, 24, died in action in Belgium. He left behind his parents, a sister, and his wife of two years.

He was born in Aunslev, Denmark on April 17, 1920, the adopted son of Anders Christian and Emilie Anna Jensen of Aunslev, Denmark. When Jens' birth father died in 1921, Anders adopted Jens. Anders and Emilie were married on May 23, 1920 in Orte Kirke, Orte Sogn, Denmark. The Jensens also had one daughter, who became Mrs. L. Jorgensen, and she resided in Aunslev, Denmark. The circumstances have not been revealed, but in May 1931, Jens Jensen, age 11, departed from Copenhagen, Denmark and arrived in Halifax, Nova Scotia aboard the passenger ship *United States*. He ended up in Peterborough where he was active in sports including tennis, swimming, hockey,

softball and rugby. Fishing and stamp collecting were two of Jens' favourite hobbies. After completing high school, he took a 2-month course in drafting and was employed in 1940-41 as a draughtsman apprentice with Canadian General Electric in Peterborough.

Twenty-one-year-old Jens Jensen enlisted in the Canadian Army in Ottawa on June 16, 1941. At his enlistment, he recorded his occupation as a truck driver and his place of residence as 197 Brock Street, Peterborough. He stood a strapping six feet and one half inch tall, had blue eyes and sandy hair, and was single. Jens expressed his preference was to enlist in the Danish Army in England. His next choice was to join the RCAF, as a Wireless Operator. After the war, he planned to continue in his chosen field of draughting. The next two years were life changing for the young Dane.

From #3 Manning Depot in Ottawa, he was transferred in June 1941 to the Governor General's Foot Guards (GGFG) in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia where he continued his training. He attained the rank of Guardsman, GGFG – 21st Armoured Regiment.

Jens, now 22, also said goodbye to bachelorhood when, on April 7, 1942, he married Anna Mary Mallotte (of Ottawa) at Arnprior, Ontario. Newlywed Anna Jensen resided in Arnprior for a time until January 1943 when she moved to 141 Euphemia Street, Sarnia. Later she moved to 138 North Forsythe Street and a year later Jens' parents, Anders and Emilie Jensen, were also residing at 138 North Forsythe Street, Sarnia.

One month after getting married, on May 2, 1942, Jens Jensen embarked overseas from Debert Camp in Nova Scotia for the United Kingdom. He was initially posted with the #3 Canadian Armoured Corps Reinforcement Unit (CACRU). In mid-October 1942, he was again a member of the Governor General's Foot Guards, 21st Armoured Regiment, with the rank of Guardsman. He continued his advanced training in the U.K. until mid-July 1944. On July 22, 1944, Jens Jensen arrived in France, six weeks after D-Day; in fact, Anders, Jen's adoptive father, had mistakenly thought that Jens had participated in the D-Day invasion because he had received a letter from his son Jens that was written in France.

The **Battle of Normandy** had begun for the Canadians with the June 6, 1944 D-Day landings at Juno Beach. After breaching the "Atlantic Wall" of "Fortress Europe", Allied armies began their break out from the narrow Normandy bridgehead to carve out a foothold on the French mainland. It would take a whole summer of tenacious fighting, pushing against fierce and ruthless German forces to advance east across France. In a brutal campaign of attrition, the Canadians faced fierce battles and vicious counterattacks as they clawed their way forward liberating villages and towns including Bretteville, Carpiquet, Caen and Falaise.

After the Allied breakout from Normandy, Canadian forces were assigned the "**Long Left Flank**", the less glamorous but vital tasks of clearing coastal areas in the north of France and Belgium of German occupiers; opening the English Channel ports for supplies essential to the Allied advance; and capturing the launching sites of German V-1 rockets. In a series of stop-and-start advances against stiff resistance in fortified positions, the Canadians liberated ports and villages including Rouen, Dieppe, Dunkirk, Boulogne and Calais.

Guardsman Jens Jensen was part of the GGFG, 21st Canadian Armoured Regiment, as it advanced through France and into Belgium. On September 18, 1944, two months after arriving in France, Jens Jensen was killed in action while fighting along the "Long Left Flank" in Belgium. Jen Jensen's remains were buried at a location recorded on the Army Field Service Card as "MR.106005 Sh.22.32 (E. Flanders), Belgium". On October 2, 1944, Anna Jensen at her Forsythe Street home received the following telegram from the Director of Records about her husband: MINISTER OF NATIONAL DEFENCE DEEPLY REGRETS TO INFORM YOU THAT C31217 TROOPER JENS CARLO JENSEN HAS BEEN OFFICIALLY REPORTED KILLED IN ACTION EIGHTEENTH SEPTEMBER 1944 STOP IF ANY FURTHER INFORMATION BECOMES AVAILABLE IT WILL BE FORWARDED AS SOON AS RECEIVED. There was no indication of where or how her husband met his death. The week before being informed of Jens' death, Anders and Emilie Jensen in Sarnia had received a letter from their son in which he had written that, "he was in Belgium, and that he was getting along well".

The Brigadier, Acting Adjutant-General wrote this letter to Anna in late October 1944:

Dear Mrs. Jensen:

It was with deep regret that I learned of the death of your husband, C31217 Trooper Jens Carlo Jensen, who gave his life in the Service of his Country in the Western European Theatre of War, on the 18th day of September, 1944.

From official information we have received, your husband was killed in action against the enemy. You may

be assured that any additional information received will be communicated to you without delay.

The Minister of National Defence and the Members of the Army Council have asked me to express to you and your family their sincere sympathy in your bereavement. We pay tribute to the sacrifice he so bravely made.

Jens Jensen was later officially recorded as, *Overseas casualty, killed in action, in the field (Belgium)*. In September 1945, Anna Jensen received a War Service Gratuity of \$645.85 for the loss of her husband. The following January, the grieving widow received a letter from the Colonel, Director of Records, for Adjutant-General. Following is a portion of that letter:

Dear Madam:

Information has just been received from overseas that the remains of your husband, C31217 Trooper Jens Carlo Jensen, have been carefully exhumed from the original place of internment and reverently reburied in grave 12, row B, plot 4, of Adegem Canadian Military Cemetery, Adegem, Belgium. Marked map is enclosed. This is a recognized military burial ground and will receive care and maintenance in perpetuity.

The grave will have been marked with a temporary cross which will be replaced in due course by a permanent headstone suitably inscribed. While it cannot now be stated when this work of permanent commemoration will begin, before any action is taken you will be communicated with and an opportunity will be given you to submit a short personal inscription of your own choice for engraving on the headstone...

In late May 1946, Jens' mother on North Forsythe Street received the following letter forwarded to her by the Director of Records. The letter was originally from Betty Braeckman, Evergem, Bij Gent, Belgium, East Flanders. If nothing else, the kind words of the sender offered some consolation to Emile over the loss of her son.

Dear Mrs. Jensen:

I daresay that you will be surprised at hearing from me but as I knew your son and have been in his company I thought you would like to hear from me. When I heard the sad news that he had fallen for his country I sought after his grave and I have found it. It is in the Military Cemetery where nearly a thousand other poor men lay. I have promised to look after his grave as long as I live, I have paid for the cross. The war graves Committee asked all who could afford it to take over a grave so of course I asked for your son. Now I will close my letter to you. Sending you my best respects and if at any time you would like to visit your son's grave you will be welcome to come and stay with me. I am English. I remain your true friend, Betty

Mrs. Braeckman, 34 Eindeken, Evergem, Bij Gent, Belgium, East Flanders

In July 1948, the Major-General, Adjutant-General wrote to Anna regarding a posthumous medal her husband had earned for his efforts to protect others' freedom.

Dear Mrs. Jensen,

It is with a feeling of pride that I write, on behalf of the Minister of National Defence and all ranks of the Canadian Army, to inform you that the Belgian Government has been pleased to confer the award of Croix de Guerre 1940 avec Palme upon your husband, the late C-31217 Guardsman Jens Carlo Jensen. This award was granted in recognition of his outstanding contribution towards the liberation of Belgium in the Second World War.

I regret exceedingly that your husband did not survive to receive this well merited award himself. However I trust the knowledge that his services have been recognized in this manner by the Belgian Government will help temper your very sad loss.

I am informed by the Belgian Embassy in Ottawa that the decoration which accompanies this award will be forwarded to you in the very near future.

The Belgian Government's "Croix de Guerre 1940 avec Palme" awarded to Jens Jensen states: *The King has been pleased to grant unrestricted permission for the wearing of the following decoration which has been conferred upon the undermentioned in recognition of distinguished services in the cause of the Allies.* Twenty-four-year-old Jens Jensen is buried in Adegem Canadian War Cemetery, Belgium, Grave IV.B.12.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, J, L, N, 2C, 2D, 7C, 8X, 8Y

JOHNSTON, Jay Syver (#J/7987)

Jay Johnston, 21, was on his way home to Sarnia on leave aboard a Liberator aircraft when it crashed in poor weather, a tragic mishap that would be the largest single-crash loss of life in RCAF history.

He was born in London, Ontario on May 30, 1922, the youngest son of John Eugene and Florence (nee Goulder) Johnston. John Eugene (born Granby, Quebec) and Florence (born Laurence Station, Ontario) Johnston were married in Toronto on July 18, 1913. John Johnston's work as a janitor with a local school board supported

Florence and their three children: Robert Eugene, who was eight years older than Jay; and one daughter, Victoria Eloise. When Jay was two years old, he and his family moved from London, Ontario to Sarnia. They lived initially at 115 South Vidal Street and later 332 Confederation Street.

All three Johnston children attended Sarnia schools. From 1928 to 1935, Jay was at Durand-Lochiel Street and George Street Elementary Schools. He then attended Sarnia Collegiate Institute in 1935 and graduated in June 1940. Jay was very active young man in a few areas. He loved playing sports, especially rugby, hockey, baseball and swimming and his hobbies included stamp collecting and electricity. Jay was also a member of the Sarnia Cadet Corps for five years with whom he attained the rank of Sergeant and where he completed a technical electrical course. As a student he worked at Devine Street School as a caretaker's helper from 1934 to 1940, and for Mr. Ede at a Sarnia Meat Market as a parcel boy on weekends during 1939. The latter may have been to support his family, for the Johnston household was forever changed when their mother, Florence, passed away in 1937 (Jay was fifteen years old at the time).

At age seventeen years and eight months, Jay Johnston first applied to join the Royal Canadian Air Force in London, Ontario in January 1940. He was refused and told to return when he was 18. He did so on October 8th, 1940 when he was four months past his 18th birthday. He stood five feet eight inches tall, had blue eyes and dark brown hair, was single, had just graduated from high school, and was residing with his parents at 115 Vidal Street at the time. He requested flying duties, with a preference to be an Air Gunner. His plan for after the war was to go to Radio College.

In October 1940, Jay moved from the Recruiting Centre in London, to #1 Manning Depot in Toronto, then to RCAF Station in Rockcliffe. He received his air training at #1 Initial Training School (ITS) in Toronto; at #12 Elementary Flying Training School (EFTS) in Goderich; at #3 Wireless School (WS) in Winnipeg; at #2 Bombing and Gunnery School (B&GS) in Mossbank Saskatchewan (where he was awarded his Air Gunners Badge on September 29, 1941); and at #31 Operational Training Unit (OTU) in Debert, Nova Scotia. In December 1941, he became a member of the RCAF #10 Squadron, part of **Eastern Air Command**, stationed on the east coast of Canada (at Halifax, Dartmouth and Gander, Newfoundland).

RCAF #10 Squadron, nicknamed the "North Atlantic Squadron", was primarily used in a bomber reconnaissance and anti-submarine role on the Atlantic coast of Canada and Newfoundland. The squadron flew Westland Wapiti, Douglas Digby and Consolidated B-24 Liberator aircraft. In November of 1942, his widowed father John in Sarnia received the news that Jay had been promoted from the rank of Pilot Officer to Flying Officer. Jay later attained the rank of Flying Officer, Wireless Operator/Air Gunner with RCAF #10 North Atlantic Squadron.

War affected other members of the Johnston family. Robert, Jay's older brother, had enlisted in the army at the outset of war in September of 1939 and became a Sapper with a Western Ontario infantry unit of the Royal Canadian Engineers. One year after Jay's enlistment, in early December of 1941, Robert had been overseas for more than a year, while Jay was stationed at an eastern command. Robert survived the war, but his life was never the same after his wartime experiences.

In November 1943, Jay's sister, Eloise, married Michael Paithowski who served in the Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve, as a Petty Officer Stoker. Michael Paithowski and the entire crew of 89 other men lost their lives when a U-boat torpedoed the *HMCS Shawinigan* in November of 1944. Michael Paithowski's story is included in this Project.

In early October of 1943, John Johnston learned from R.C.A.F. Headquarters that his son Jay was part of a flying-boat crew that had emerged the victor in a running battle with a surfaced U-boat in the mid-Atlantic. The R.C.A.F. reported that the submarine battle was one of a series of six running fights with subs in which the famous North Atlantic Squadron had recently engaged in. The flying-boat on which Flying Officer Jay Johnston was deployed went into the attack at a low level and dropped six charges in what one member of the crew described as a "perfect straddle". The bow of the sub was tossed clear of the sea and smothered in depth-charge "blossoms". Four more charges were dropped as the sub started sinking, with no further forward motion. Shortly after, air bubbles rose for some time and a large oil slick appeared on the surface several hundred yards wide. Some debris was also seen. Aboard the successful flying-boat besides Jay were Flt. Lt. Robert Fisher; WO2s James Lamont and J.A. Barabanoff; and Sgt. E.M. Finn. Weeks later, all five men were passengers on a Liberator bomber that would crash, killing 24 members of the R.C.A.F.

In mid-October of 1943, Jay Johnston had advised his father back home that he was to start a leave on

October 19th, and that he would be back home in Sarnia a few days after that.

On October 19, 1943, B-24 Liberator aircraft #3701H (“Harry”) took flight en-route from Gander, Newfoundland to Mont Joli, Quebec. One of the passengers was Jay Johnston, as well as six RCAF crew members and seventeen other passengers, all members of the RCAF, returning to an Eastern Canada base from Newfoundland on leaves. After being grounded for most of the day by bad weather, the aircraft took off from Gander at 22:16 hours (on the 19th). The flight plan set the plane on a direct path for Mont-Joli. Based on records available, the plane was tracked as being directly on its flight path up to 00:20 hours (12:20 a.m.) on October 20—nearly three hours after take-off.

But the weather over Mont-Joli was not ideal for landing. At 01:45 hours, the crew requested permission to land at Mont Joli but were denied as the runways were closed due to the poor weather. They were told to proceed to Rockcliffe, Ontario or Dorval, Quebec. At 02:00 hours, the crew of “Harry” contacted the tower at the Mont-Joli airfield, and advised them they were proceeding to the alternate landing field at Dorval. Besides a call for help radioed to another aircraft flying near Grand-Mere some 250 miles west of Mont Joli, nothing further was heard from the aircraft. At 03:45 hours, an hour and a half after its scheduled arrival time at Mont-Joli and around its scheduled arrival time at Dorval, efforts were made to contact “Harry” on radio, and to listen for signals from the aircraft, but nothing was heard.

With the Liberator being reported overdue and missing, the RCAF launched a massive air search along the planned flight path; however, despite over 700 sorties between October 20 and November 26, no trace of the aircraft was found. Even though villagers in St. Donat reported hearing an aircraft and the sound of a crash that night, it was dismissed by the military authorities who had already concluded that the Liberator was lying somewhere on the bottom of the St. Lawrence. In fact, at some time in the early morning hours of October 20, the Liberator crashed and burned on the west side of a 2,500 foot high foothill of Black Mountain, near St. Donat, Quebec. The crash site remained a mystery until June 1946.

In Sarnia, beginning on October 20 and for a few days after, the Johnston family anxiously awaited Jay’s arrival home for his scheduled leave. Several days later, father John received a telegram from air force headquarters in Ottawa informing him that his son, FLYING OFFICER JAY S JOHNSTON WAS MISSING AFTER AIR OPERATIONS. The message gave no details of the operations in which his son was engaged when reported missing, but it said that further information would be forthcoming.

John considered that his son might have been one of the 24 personnel on board the four-engine Liberator which had been reported missing—and possibly had crashed in the St. Lawrence River. He clung to the hope that Air Force Headquarters would send him encouraging news. It was not to be. After ten days of anxious waiting and personal turmoil, John’s hopes were shattered by an announcement from air force headquarters in Ottawa on October 30th. It was the worst news possible. Jay Johnston was on the list of 24 RCAF members who were, *Officially reported missing somewhere in Canada*. All twenty-four RCAF members who were aboard the Liberator lost their lives in crash.

On August 2, 1944, John Johnston on Confederation Street, received the following letter from the Air Marshall, Chief of the Air Staff:

Dear Mr. Johnston:

I have learned with deep regret that your son, Flying Officer Jay Syver Johnston, is now for official purposes presumed to have died on Active Service on October 20th, 1943. I wish to offer you and the members of your family my sincere and heartfelt sympathy.

It is most lamentable that a promising career should thus be terminated and I would like you to know that his loss is greatly deplored by all those with whom your son was serving.

The whereabouts of the doomed Liberator remained a mystery until almost three years had passed. On June 26, 1946, a plane which was making an aerial search for another lost aircraft, spotted the wreckage near the top of Black Mountain, Quebec. That same day, a search party blazed a trail up through the rugged terrain and discovered the burnt out wreckage and the bodies of the 24 airmen. Owing to the harsh and remote mountainside as well as the fact that only three of the bodies could be positively identified, the authorities decided to bury the remains of the 24 men at the crash site. On July 3, 1946, a funeral and burial were held near the crash site on Black Mountain, with religious services conducted in the Catholic, Protestant and Jewish faiths. A simple white cross was erected for each airman. There they remained until 1985 when the Commonwealth War Graves Commission ordered that the men’s

remains be moved to the cemetery in the village of St. Donat, Quebec. There is a Memorial Cairn on Black Mountain at the crash site that was erected in memory of the crew. To this day, the pieces of the Liberator remain where they fell. The tragic mishap was the worst accident in Canadian military aviation history due to the number of lives lost.

Perishing with Flying Officer-Wireless Operator/Air Gunner Jay Johnston were crew members F/O. Stephen Andrew Sanderson; F/L Joseph Alfred Poirier; Sgt. William Gordon MacNaughton; WO.s Joseph Alexander Barabonoff; Jacob Silverstein; and P/O Robert William MacDonald; and passengers WO.s Wilfred Howlett; Franklin Elwood Jenkins; Cpl.s Harold David Beattie; Ronald Douglas Marr; Howard Kenneth Hambly; Alec Clare Johnston; P/O. James Lamont; LAC.s Charles Laurie Dynes; Guy Ridgewood Patterson; Albert James Radcliffe; Edwin William Read; Sgt.s Franklin Hicks Elliot; Eric Morgan Finn; Joseph Achille Veilleux; FS. Raymond Frank Ware; F/L. Robert F. Fisher; and Sgt. Stanley Albert Wood.

In June of 1944, Flying Officer Jay S. Johnston who, at the time, was still reported as “missing”, was mentioned in dispatches in connection with the King’s birthday honors list. A press release by the R.C.A.F. said that Flying Officer Johnston earned the award while a Wireless Operator-Air Gunner in the Eastern Air Command. He was the only Sarnian in the list of several hundred Canadian servicemen. Two former Sarnia residents were also on the list. The first was Windsor born Sergeant Major Charles Webb who was living on College Avenue. Webb, an employee at Sarnia General Hospital and an active member of the local Canadian Legion, was made a member of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire; also recognized was Brigadier A.C. Spencer, of London, formerly with the engineering department of Imperial Oil Company in Sarnia. He was made a Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire.

The fate of Jay Johnston was later officially recorded as, *Previously reported missing in flying accident, now for official purposes, presumed dead, overseas (Newfoundland)*. In April 1946, his widowed father John received a War Service Gratuity of \$651.13 for the loss of his youngest son. Twenty-one-year-old Jay Johnston is buried in St. Donat Catholic Cemetery, Quebec, Coll. Grave Lot GE 34. He received an award: Mentioned in Dispatches. On the Sarnia cenotaph, his name is inscribed as J.S. Johnson.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, J, L, M, N, 2C, 2D, 3J, 4B, 7C, 8X, 8Y, o

JOLLY, Russell Earl (#A/107229)

Russell Earl Jolly was only 18 when he enlisted and a year later got his first taste of real action on the beaches of Normandy on June 6, 1944. Two days later, the young Sarnian was killed in action.

Russell Jolly was born in Sarnia on January 5, 1925, the son of Stuart Thomas and Jane “Jennie” (nee Chaytor) Jolly, of 436 South Russell Street, Sarnia. In 1921, twenty year-old Stuart Jolly (born Oct. 1, 1900 in Plympton Township) was living with his parents and seven siblings at 261 Tecumseh St., Sarnia, and was working as a baker. In 1921, seventeen year-old Jane Chaytor (born January 1903 in Lynedoch, England) was living with her parents and four siblings at 115 Shepherd St., Sarnia, and was working as a saleslady at a bakery. The Chaytor family had immigrated from England to Canada in 1907. On November 12, 1923, twenty-three-year-old baker Stuart Jolly married twenty year-old Jane Chaytor in Sarnia. Stuart and Jane Jolly had four children together: James Albert (born 1924), Russell, Orville Ralph (born 1928), and Lois Maud (born 1941). Orville Jolly would become a career soldier who also served in the Korean War.

Russell Jolly attended Sarnia public schools and, in 1942, was a student at Sarnia Collegiate for one year, leaving school at the age of 17. Before enlisting, he worked as a baker for one year at the Canadian Bread Company. His brother James Jolly also enlisted at some point and became a Leading Aircraftman with the Royal Canadian Air Force.

Eighteen year-old Russell Jolly enlisted in the Canadian Army at London, Ontario on July 2, 1943. He stood five feet nine and a half inches tall, had brown eyes and brown hair, was single, and was living at home with his parents at the time. His plan for after the war was to return to Sarnia and the Canadian Bread Company, who had assured him of a job on his return. From #1 District Depot in London, Russell received his army training at #13 Basic Training Centre (BTC) in Listowel and at A-29 Canadian Infantry Training Centre (CICTC) in Ipperwash (where he obtained qualifications in a 3” mortars course). He was then transferred to #1 Training Brigade in Debert, Nova Scotia in January 1944.

Private Russell Jolly embarked overseas for the United Kingdom on March 6, 1944 where, he immediately continued his training with the #2 Canadian Infantry Reinforcement Unit (CIRU). On June 1, 1944, he embarked

from the U.K. as a member of the Highland Light Infantry Rifles. Only days later, he arrived with the Royal Winnipeg Rifles, Royal Canadian Infantry Corps (RCIC), with the rank of Private-Rifleman. Russell Jolly's first taste of real action was on Normandy Beach on June 6, 1944 – **D-Day**.

The **Battle of Normandy** began for the Canadians with the June 6, 1944 D-Day landings at Juno Beach. After breaching the "Atlantic Wall" of "Fortress Europe", Allied armies began their break out from the narrow Normandy bridgehead to carve out a foothold on the French mainland. It would take a whole summer of tenacious fighting, pushing against fierce and ruthless German forces to advance east across France. In a brutal campaign of attrition, the Canadians faced fierce battles and vicious counterattacks as they clawed their way forward liberating villages and towns including Bretteville, Carpiquet, Caen and Falaise.

Russell Jolly's war overseas against the enemy would be a short one. He would lose his life only two days after D-Day, on June 8, 1944 during the early invasion stage of the Battle of Normandy. Russell Jolly's remains were buried on June 16, 1944 at a location recorded on the Army Field Service Card as "MR 904727 Putot-En-Bessin North East Side of road, Graves number from South West to North East Thaon, France".

On June 24, 1944, Jane Jolly received the following telegram from the Director of Records about her son: MINISTER OF NATIONAL DEFENCE DEEPLY REGRETS TO INFORM YOU THAT A107229 PRIVATE RUSSELL EARL JOLLY HAS BEEN OFFICIALLY REPORTED KILLED IN ACTION EIGHTH JUNE 1944 STOP IF ANY FURTHER INFORMATION BECOMES AVAILABLE IT WILL BE FORWARDED AS SOON AS RECEIVED.

In early July 1944, Jane received the following letter from the Major-General, Adjutant-General:
Dear Mrs. Jolly:

It is with deep regret that I learned of the death of your son, A107229 Private Russell Earl Jolly, who gave his life in the Service of his Country in France, on the 8th day of June, 1944.

From official information we have received, your son was killed in action against the enemy. You may be assured that any additional information received will be communicated to you without delay.

The Minister of National Defence and the Members of the Army Council have asked me to express to you and your family their sincere sympathy in your bereavement. We pay tribute to the sacrifice he so bravely made.

Russell Jolly was later officially recorded as, *Overseas casualty, killed in action, in the field (France)*. In early March 1945, Private Russell Jolly along with First Class Stoker Wallace Horley (included in this Project), were honoured at a memorial service at Devine Street United Church. Both men were members of the congregation and both had died recently while on active service. In July 1945, Russell's parents received a War Service Gratuity of \$112.64 for their loss.

The Director of Records, for Adjutant-General, wrote the following letter to Jane Jolly in early September 1947: *I am forwarding herewith a photograph of the grave and marker over the burial place of your late son, A107229 Private Russell Earl Jolly, the location of which is grave 15, row C, plot 5, Bretteville-sur-Laize, France. Any errors appearing in the inscription will be corrected when the permanent headstone is placed.*

Nineteen year-old Russell Jolly is buried in Bretteville-Sur-Laize Canadian War Cemetery, Calvados, France, Grave V.C.15. On his headstone are inscribed the words, IN THE GARDEN OF MEMORY WE MEET EVERY DAY. SLEEP ON, DEAR SON, TILL WE MEET AGAIN. Russell's parents Stuart (died December 1989) and Jane (died September 1963) Jolly are buried together at Lakeview Cemetery in Sarnia.
SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, J, L, N, 2C, 2D, 7C, 8X, 8Y

JONES, Glyndwr (#A/18156)

Glyndwr "Glyn" Jones was a member of a large Welsh family whose central figure was his widowed mother Annie, affectionately known as "Mam" to her eleven children. The entire family, both in Sarnia and abroad, was affected by the war, especially when Glyn, 19, was killed in August 1942 in the disastrous Dieppe Raid.

Glyndwr "Glyn" Jones was born in Bargoed, Glamorgan, South Wales on June 1, 1921, the youngest son of David John and Annie Jones, of 224 Cromwell Street, later 114 ½ North Christina Street, Sarnia. David and Annie Jones were married in Merthyr, South Wales on August 20, 1901. The Jones were blessed with eleven children: eight sons--Thomas, David, James, John, William Benjamin, Oliver, Edward, and Glyn; and three daughters--Mary Ann, Ester and Nancy. The children referred to their indomitable mother as "Mam". They were a tightly-knit family that knew heartache.

Mam had lost another child, her twelfth, at birth. Then in 1911, William, aged two, died. Fifteen years later, in March 1926, tragedy struck again when David, a coal miner in South Wales, was killed in a mining accident. He was only 49 and the family had lost its patriarch and principal source of revenue. Glyn, the second youngest, was only five years old when his father died, but the five eldest Jones boys worked for a time in the same coal mines in South Wales as their father had. "Mam" was left to raise eleven children on her own, becoming the central figure of the family for the rest of her life.

By 1929, the Jones family had a strong interest in emigrating either to Australia or to Canada. Both countries offered inducements to prospective immigrants; for example, Canada (touted as "the country flowing with milk and honey"), offered assisted passage and free land (160 acres) per family. The land was located in the Peace River area of Alberta, an area that the Government was interested in opening up. In the final analysis, "Mam" Jones decided on Canada, after discovering that it typically took six weeks by ship to Australia. The trip to Canada was just one week. On the advice of their travel agent, the large family moved in two groups. More significantly, it was also pointed out that their background was hardly suitable to pioneering in northern Alberta, so they were urged to change their plans and to settle in Ontario.

In April 1929, the first family group, comprising of David, William and Mary Ann, along with the latter's husband David and their son, immigrated to Canada. They arrived in Halifax aboard the *Ansonia*, before boarding a train to Toronto. They made their way to Forest, where a Government agent arranged their placements on farms in the area. William was the exception. He went to Guelph to work on a government farm. Before long, the whole initial group had relocated to Thedford, where they resided and worked on farms. The rest of the Jones family, including eight year-old Glyn, came to Canada in November 1929, also aboard the *Ansonia*. They arrived in Quebec, then took a train to Toronto, before having to take a taxi to Thedford (all eleven of them).

The entire Jones family was reunited in Thedford, where they resided for four years. While working on farms in and around Thedford, they became involved in singing, performing at churches, social events and in competitions. Most of the family moved to Sarnia in 1933, and the rest followed by 1936. "Mam" Jones and many of her children resided on Cromwell Street and later 114 ½ N. Christina Street. By 1938, a few of the Jones family had returned to Wales and England. Among them were oldest brothers Thomas (and wife Mary Ann); David (and wife Catherine); and oldest sister Mary Ann (and husband David and their two children). Mary Ann and her family returned years later to Sarnia. As did Thomas in 1978, now a widower, with his daughter and son-in-law.

The Jones family kept growing because all of Glyn's siblings married and had children, including: Thomas to Mary Ann (nee Davies, in England); David to Catherine (nee Davies, in 1932, sister of Mary Ann); James to Beatrice (nee Bailey, in 1932); John to Margaret (nee Bridger); William to Ada (nee Brown, in 1935); Oliver to Ilene (nee Kearney); Edward to Josephine (nee Blondin-later divorced, and then to Marjory, nee Willick); and sisters: Mary Ann to David John Jones (in England); Ester to George Andrew (in 1941-later deceased, and then John Sygrove, 1947); and Nancy to Walter Irvine (in 1945). Glyn had many nieces and nephews and after the war, his brother, John who was married to Margaret, had five children. They named one of their two sons Glyn, in his honour.

Glyn was not the only family member affected by World War II. Glyn's brother-in-law, George Varnum Andrew, who was married to his sister, Ester, became a Pilot Officer in the Royal Canadian Air Force. In December 1943, on his 22nd mission, George Andrew's Lancaster bomber was lost during night operations over Germany. [Note: George Andrew's story is included in this Project]. Ester later remarried, to John Sygrove, who had served in the navy. After the war, Glyn's sister Nancy married Walter Irvine, who had served in the Air Force. Glyn's brothers Oliver and Edward both served during the war-- Oliver in the navy and Edward in the army.

After leaving farm life behind, Glyn's brother **Oliver Jones** got a job sailing the Great Lakes on a passenger ship, the *SS Noronic*, where he worked until the outbreak of war. Oliver enlisted early in 1940 and served in the Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve (RCNVR), as an Able Seaman. Twice while on convoy duty in the North Atlantic, he was aboard ships that were torpedoed by German U-boats. Oliver was in the local news just over a year prior to Glyn's death. He had given an interview to the *Sarnia Observer* in May of 1941 describing some of his experiences. The young sailor, who had worked for some time in the Sarnia General Hospital before signing up with the RCN, was home on "survivors' leave" at that time, visiting his mother, Annie.

In March 1941, Oliver was assigned to an ocean boat to take charge of an anti-aircraft gun crew. The ship on which he was serving, part of a convoy heading to England, had been sunk in the North Atlantic by a German submarine. He described how on a calm, moonless, starless night, with a moderate snow falling, several of the ships

in the convoy were attacked, with one bursting into flames. His ship was hit and sinking when the captain and men took to the lifeboats. They could see the burning ships, but the rest of the convoy had scattered as the attack started. They drifted for three hours before being picked up by a British destroyer. Not long after, they located the position of the “sub”, dropped depth charges and the sub rose to the surface to surrender. Seaman Oliver Jones described the crew members as, *Decent young fellows, the captain was about 22 and the men were all much younger, about 15 or 16.*

Oliver also described how prior to returning to Canada, he was on duty on the anti-aircraft gun at a barracks in Glasgow during the heaviest German air raid staged on the Clyde River port up to that time. *It was a terrible sight*, he recalled, describing a falling German plane as a *ball of flame* and telling of watching bombs bursting along the docks on the Clyde. *But the people in the shelters were marvelous, singing while the raid progressed, from about 10:30 at night till 5:30 next morning, and the damage was heavy.*

One of Oliver Jones closest friends during the war was fellow Sarnian Hector Le Gare. Hector also served in the RCNVR as an Able Seaman and became a member of the destroyer *HMCS Saguenay*. Oliver Jones was in the same convoy escort group when in the early morning hours of December 1, 1940, the *Saguenay* was torpedoed by an Italian submarine. Though the destroyer was able to limp to shore, twenty-one of its crew were killed in the attack, including Hector Le Gare. After the war, Oliver Jones married Ilene (nee Kearney), and they would have two children together, a boy and a girl. They named their son Ronald Hector Jones. [Note: Hector Le Gare’s story is included in this Project].

Glyn Jones attended public school in Thedford for a time and, after moving to Sarnia, attended Lochiel Street Public School and then spent two years at Sarnia Collegiate. Glyn also attended Central United Church. To make money, Glyn Jones and older brother Edward delivered newspapers for a couple of years. For a short time prior to enlisting, Glyn worked at a local Sarnia service station as a mechanic.

When war broke out, both Glyn and Edward joined the Army together. Eighteen year-old Glyn Jones joined the Canadian Army in Sarnia on September 6, 1939. Glyn stood five feet seven and a half inches tall, had blue eyes and light brown hair, was single, and was residing at home on Cromwell Street with his mother at the time. He did not have to wait long for action after enlisting. Four days after doing so, Canada and Newfoundland declared war on Germany on September 10, 1939.

Glyn received the first part of his three months of military training in Sarnia and Bright’s Grove, as a member of the First (Lambton) Field Company, Royal Canadian Engineers (RCE). In December 1939, he was transferred to #1 District Depot in London, Ontario. By June 1940, he was transferred to Petawawa (along with brother Edward), where he underwent advanced training with the Royal Canadian Engineers. Major Payne of Sarnia, who was Glyn’s Commanding Officer, had been one of his teachers at Sarnia Collegiate. He related that Glyn was very popular with the men of his company.



Sapper Glyn Jones

On December 1, 1940, Sapper Glyn Jones of the First Field Company, RCE, embarked overseas for the United Kingdom, arriving in Scotland on December 9, 1940. In late November 1941, both Glyn and his brother Edward, also with the Royal Canadian Engineers, had been overseas for almost a year, while brother Oliver, who had joined the Navy in early 1940, had been to England and back several times. Glyn and Edward both trained in England for more than one and a half years. While in Great Britain, the families of their siblings, brothers Thomas and David, and sister Mary Ann in Wales, provided a home away from home for Glyn, Edward and Oliver. When on leave, they usually spent their time with one another, getting into mischief and enjoying their time together after a long separation. After all these years and despite being separated by thousands of kilometres, the Jones siblings were still very close.

More than a year and a half after arriving in the U.K., Glyn Jones saw his first action against the enemy. Sapper Glyn Jones, as part of the Canadian First Field Park Company, RCE, embarked from the United Kingdom on August 18, 1942. They arrived in France in the early morning hours of August 19, 1942, on the beaches of **Dieppe**.

Code-named *Operation Rutter*, later *Operation Jubilee*, the **Dieppe Raid** was one of the darkest chapters in Canada's military history. On that day, 4,963 Canadian soldiers landed on the beaches of Dieppe, a small town on the coast of France. The Allies wanted to accomplish much in the raid: to destroy radar and other military installations; to damage enemy shipping and port facilities; to seize a neighbouring airfield; to capture a German divisional naval headquarters in order to acquire intelligence documents; and to gather information from prisoners. The Dieppe raid also served as a test run for the future invasion of Europe and would take some pressure off the Eastern Front. Recently declassified documents, however, have revealed that the focal point of the doomed raid was to capture cryptographic material for code breakers in Bletchley Park in England. The Allied code-breakers desperately needed to capture German documents, codebooks and a four-rotor Enigma encryption machine. At its essence, then, the Dieppe raid was a "pinch" operation (British slang for "steal").

Of the almost 5,000 Canadians who took part in the mission, more than 3,360 became casualties, including approximately 1,950 taken as Prisoners of War. Approximately 910 Canadians died on the beaches, in German captivity, or of their wounds after returning to England.

It was during the Dieppe Raid that Sapper Glyn Jones lost his life on August 19, 1944, the day he landed in France. His remains were buried at a location recorded on the Army Field Service Card as "Des Vertus Hautot-Sur-Mer, France. Grave 160." Glyn's brother Edward would have been on the same fateful raid, but instead was ill in a hospital in England.

For a time after the Raid, Annie "Mam" Jones on Christina Street in Sarnia only received news that her son Glyn was listed as, *reported missing* in the Dieppe Raid. In mid-December 1942, she received the following letter from the Major-General, Adjutant-General:

Dear Madam:

I deeply regret to inform you that your son, A.18156 Sapper Glyn Jones, gave his life in the Service of his Country at Dieppe, France, on the 19th day of August, 1942. From information we have received, your son was killed in action against the enemy.

You may be assured that any additional information received will be communicated to you without delay.

The Minister of National Defence and the Members of the Army Council have asked me to express to you and your family their sincere sympathy in your bereavement. We pay tribute to the sacrifice he so bravely made.

Glyn Jones was later officially recorded as: *Overseas casualty, Previously reported missing in action, now reported killed in action, in the field (France).*

In late June 1943, Annie "Mam" Jones received the following letter from the Colonel, Director of Records, for Adjutant-General:

Dear Madam:

Further to this Department's letter of December 16th last concerning the regretted death of your son, the marginally named, I am to advise that information has now come to hand through the overseas military authorities that the remains of Sapper Jones have been interred in grave 160, Des Vertus Cemetery, Hautot-Sur-Mer, France.

In March 1945, "Mam" Jones received a War Service Gratuity of \$488.64 for the loss of her son Glyn. Twenty-one-year-old Glyn Jones is buried in Dieppe Canadian War Cemetery, Hautot-Sur-Mer, Seine-Maritime, France, Grave E.57. On his headstone are inscribed the words, "COME, YE BOUGHT BUT NOT WITH GOLD WELCOME TO THE SACRED FOLD." WITH LOVE, MAM.

The Dieppe Canadian War Cemetery is unique among Commonwealth cemeteries as it was originally constructed by the occupying Germans to bury Allied soldiers killed in the Dieppe Raid. As such, it was laid out in the traditional German way, with headstones placed back to back in long double rows. After the Canadian army captured Dieppe in 1944, it was decided not to disturb the graves, so this unusual arrangement remains today.

At the end of January 1945, Glyn's brother Edward Jones returned home to Sarnia on leave after five years' service overseas. It was a reception typical of the sprawling Jones' family. He was welcomed at the Sarnia station by Mam; his wife Josephine (who resided at 375 Cameron Street); and other family members, including his brother and sister and a niece and two nephews; a long time friend of the family; a Red Cross member representing the Canadian Legion Br. 62; and Harbourmaster George Andrew, who had lost two sons in the service (both included in this Project). He was also greeted by his small daughter, Sandra, whom he had never seen. In addition, Pipe Major James Stewart, a First World War veteran, who was approaching his 80th year, moved up and down the platform, in the full regalia of the kilts, playing the music of the bagpipes, as he did for all trains returning with veterans.

Many years later on June 22, 1974, to celebrate "Mam" Jones 92nd birthday, all of the members of the Jones family came together under one roof for the first time since 1938. The gathering included the seven brothers and three sisters and all of their families, making up five generations, along with many close family friends. At one point during the celebration, the family paused to remember the youngest Jones son, Glyn, and also George Andrew (Ester Jones first husband), who both lost their lives in the war. Annie "Mam" Jones, the rock of her family, passed away in October 1975.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, J, L, N, S, 2B, 2C, 2D, 2I, 7C, 8X, 8Y

KEE, Ross James (#J/23901)

When Ross James Kee decided to serve his country, he planned to return to his career at Holmes Foundry after the war ended. According to his RCAF squadron commander, Ross "was popular with this Squadron, and fast becoming an 'Ace' Air Bomb Aimer." Ross Kee sacrificed his life during a catastrophic raid over enemy territory.

He was born on January 18, 1921 in Sarnia, Ontario, the son of John Blake and Gladys Irene (nee Ross) Kee, of 112 James Street, Sarnia. John (born in Ramsey, on the Isle of Man) and Gladys (born in Forest, Ontario) Kee were married in Forest, Ontario. John and Gladys Kee had five children together: sons Ross and John Murray (later lived in London), and daughters Irene, Edna (who later lived in Ottawa), and Jean (who lived in Sarnia). John Kee supported his family working as a salesman in Sarnia. John and Gladys Kee later moved to 52 Dundas Street, London.

Ross Kee attended Lochiel Street Public School in Sarnia from 1927 to 1935, then Sarnia Collegiate Institute from September 1935 to June 1940. He was very active in the athletics at SCITS, participating in rugby, baseball and hockey. He also played basketball with the Young Men's Ushers Club of St. Andrew's Church of which he was a member. His hobby was stamp collecting. Prior to enlisting, Ross was employed as a machine operator at Canadian Cannery in Forest in 1940, and then as an inspector at Holmes Foundry in 1940 to 1941. From January 5, 1941 to March 7, 1942, Ross continued his education taking the pre-entry aircrew educational course at the Ontario Training College in Hamilton (under the Dominion Provincial Youth Training Programme-DPYTP). He completed courses in mathematics (mark 92), science (mark 84) and English (mark 75) as a part of R.C.A.F. entry education.

Twenty-one-year-old Ross Kee enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force on March 7, 1942 in Hamilton, Ontario. He stood five feet ten inches tall, had blue eyes and brown hair, was single, and lived with his parents on James Street in Sarnia at the time. He requested flying duties with a preference to be a pilot. He planned to return to Holmes Foundry following the war.

From #1 Manning Depot in Toronto, Ross received his air training at #14 Service Flying Training School (SFTS) in Aylmer; followed by training at #5 Initial Training School (ITS) in Belleville; then at #10 Elementary Flying Training School (EFTS) in Pendleton; continuing with Composite Training School (KTS) in Trenton and #4 Bombing and Gunnery School (B&GS) in Fingal; and finishing at #4 Air Observer School (AOS) in Crumlin. He was awarded his Air Bomber's Badge at Crumlin on February 19, 1943. In early March 1943, Ross was posted to #1 Y Depot in Halifax, in preparation for embarkation. Ross arrived overseas in England in mid-April 1943 and became a member of RCAF #431 Iroquois Squadron "The Hatitén Ronteriiios" (Warriors of the Air), part of **Bomber Command**, with the rank of Flying Officer-Bomb Aimer.

During the the war, one of Canada's most significant contributions was to Bomber Command, as

approximately 50,000 Canadians served with the RCAF and RAF in Bomber Command operations. Next to Britain itself, Canada was the largest contributor to Bomber Command, making up more than a third of all of Bomber Command personnel. The men who served in Bomber Command faced some of the most difficult odds of anyone fighting in the war.

RCAF #431 Squadron had formed in Britain in November 1942, based at RAF Burn and was equipped with Vickers Wellington aircraft. In July 1943, it moved to RAF Tholthorpe and converted to Handley Page Halifax aircraft. In December 1943, the squadron moved again, to RAF Croft. The squadron remained at Croft for the remainder of the war, and in October 1944 would be equipped with Lancasters.

Ten months after arriving overseas, on February 19, 1944, Ross Kee was aboard Halifax Mk. V aircraft LK905 (markings SE-D) that took off at 23:21 hours from the Squadron 431 base at RAF Croft. The aircraft was part of an armada of 823 bombers on a night mission targeting Leipzig, Germany. The town was being attacked to destroy the Messerschmitt factory where the famous and deadly Bf 109 fighters were being built. The bomber stream flew into what appeared to be a trap. It seemed that the Luftwaffe and anti-aircraft guns were aware of the intended target and waiting to pounce as soon as the bombers crossed the Dutch coast. As a consequence, the bombers were subjected to constant attack by night fighters and intense flak. The winds were stronger than had been predicted and many bombers arrived early and had to orbit the target awaiting the Pathfinders, further increasing the likelihood of being picked off. The attack was by far the RAF's most costly raid of the war to date--seventy-nine heavy bombers failed to return from the catastrophic raid. The Halifax loss rate was 14.9% and as a result, Halifax Mk. II and V were permanently withdrawn from service over Germany.

Nothing more was heard from Halifax LK905 after taking off--it failed to return and was reported missing on February 20. It was learned later that the aircraft went down halfway between Berlin and Hanover, near Ziepel, Germany. Along with Flying Officer-Bomb Aimer Ross Kee, also killed were F/O.s John Alan Houston and Murray Sonshine; P/O.s David Anthony Gregory McKerry and Robert Edward Gillanders; and Sgt. Arnold Charles Twitchett (RAF). One of the crew, a Canadian, F/S A.G. Harvey (Navigator), managed to bail out of the aircraft and was taken prisoner of war.

In late February of 1944, John and Gladys Kee, then living in London, received a telegram from Ottawa informing them that their son, FLYING OFFICER ROSS KEE WAS REPORTED MISSING IN ACTION OVERSEAS. Days later, Gladys received the following letter from the Wing Commander, RCAF No. 431 Squadron:

Dear Mrs. Kee,

Before you receive this letter, you will have had a signal informing you that your son J23901 Flying Officer Ross James Kee is missing as a result of air operations.

At approximately 11:30 P.M. on the night of 19th February, Ross, and members of his crew took off from this aerodrome to carry out operations over LEIPZIG, but unfortunately failed to return. He, and his crew were due back at this aerodrome on completion of the sortie, but no news has been received from either the crew or aircraft since the time of take-off.

It is with regret that I write you this date to convey the feelings of my entire Squadron. Your son was popular with this Squadron, and fast becoming an "Ace" Air Bomb Aimer. He is greatly missed by his comrades, and his loss is regretted by all.

We lost one of our best air crews, when this aircraft did not return, for it had already been mapped out for a great future with my Squadron. Your son had 1 trip to his credit, and a total of 4 operational hours over enemy territory.

There is always the possibility that your son may be a prisoner of war, in which case, you will either hear from him direct, or through Air Ministry, who will receive advice from the International Red Cross Society. To be a prisoner of war is not the happiest thought in one's mind, particularly for you who are so fond of your son, but on the other hand, I hope you will bear with me that it carries a certain gratifying thought in knowing that our loved ones are alive, and well, and will some day return home safely.

This war has caused grief to millions of people all over the world, and it is a sorrowful state to know that so many fine young men must make supreme sacrifices in order to crush and erase from the face of the earth an infuriated enemy whose jealousy, and hatred of our spirit, and strength will eventually crush him, and his members.

I do not wish to grieve you further in your deep anxiety, but trust that you will bear with me until such time as definite word is received one way or other concerning the welfare of your son.

Your son's effects have been gathered together, and forwarded to the Royal Air Force Depository, where

they will be held until further news is received, or in any event for a period of at least six weeks, before being forwarded to you through the Administrator of Estates, Ottawa. The Commanding Officer, Central Depository will communicate with you in the near future.

May I offer my most sincere sympathies, as well as those of my Officers, and men in your anxiety.

In August 1945, John Kee received the following letter from the R.C.A.F. Casualty Officer, for Chief of the Air Staff:

Dear Mr. Kee:

Our Overseas Headquarters have forwarded to this office a statement made by Flying Officer Harvey, a member of the crew with your son, Flying Officer Ross James Kee. Flying Officer Harvey was previously a Prisoner of War.

He states that their aircraft crashed half way between Berlin and Hanover, Germany. It is regretted that he has no information whatever as to what happened to your son. I realize that this information is very slight and can be of little help to you but I thought you would wish to be advised of Flying Officer Harvey's statement.

There are several Services set up in an endeavor to find all particulars possible of crashed aircraft. Some information is available concerning a great many aircraft which crashed or were shot down by the enemy and every possible effort on an organized basis is being put forth to secure all information available. It is the duty of the Graves Registration Units, which are under the control of the Military Authorities to enquire for and locate the graves of all personnel known or believed to have crashed and to have been buried in occupied areas.

A Royal Air Force and Dominion Air Force Missing Research and Enquiry Service has been organized for the purpose of research and enquiry in liberated territories into the circumstances of aircrews reported as casualties. This service endeavours to obtain additional information to supplement that already received. The civilian population of these areas is being contacted by Radio, Press, and Proclamations through the various civic authorities to centralize through this Service any information or concrete evidence they may have about Air Force personnel or crashed aircraft. Similar instructions have been issued to all Service personnel in these areas.

I wish again to assure you that when any additional information is received concerning your son, it will be forwarded to you. However, I am sure you will realize that owing to the conditions existing in Europe at the present time and the great number of enquiries confronting these enquiry services, some time may pass before more information is received. May I again offer you and the members of your family my deep sympathy in your great sorrow.

In July 1947, the R.A.F. Missing Research and Enquiry Service, Berlin Detachment, released the results of its investigation and findings. Following is a portion those results:

The following details concerning this crash were supplied by the Burgomaster of ZIEPEL who also provided the writer with two photographs of the crashed aircraft...

On 20th Feb 1944 between 01.00 and 02.00 hrs the four engine aircraft which can now be identified as Halifax LK905 approached the village flying in westerly direction and trailing flames. Bombs were dropped at BREITEICHE approximately 10 km away from the village. Soon after the aircraft fell apart in the air; wings and engines crashed at a northern end of ZIEPEL and the fuselage fell about one km N.E. of the village.

The Burgermeister could not tell whether anybody baled out of the aircraft as it was returning from LEIPZIG. It is quite possible, he stated, that some of the crew managed to bale out. From the Casualty Enquiry it is clear that F/S HARVEY baled out and it is also possible that some other member of the crew baled out, but was either wounded or was injured in the fall and may be buried elsewhere as according to German records only five bodies were found.

This aircraft was most certainly shot down by night fighters as the witness heard machine gun fire in the air, moreover, when the place of crash was visited, there were bullet holes on two small bits all that was found of this aircraft. The wing part of the aircraft burnt for some considerable time and no bodies were found near this part of the wreckage. Four to five bodies were found near the fuselage which also burnt for a short while, three of them were badly smashed and it may be possible that they were remains of more than three airmen as they were in addition badly burnt. The two others were only slightly burnt, one was identified as Sgt. GILLANDERS.

These bodies were buried without coffins and without military honours or religious rites two days after the crash in the village cemetery. This communal grave is kept in good order and flowers were planted on the mounds. At the time of inspection there was no cross and instructions were given to the Burgermeister to erect one over the grave. The wreckage was removed by the Luftwaffe a few weeks later and apart from one or two small bits nothing remained of the aircraft when the place of crash was visited.

The identity disc belonging to Sgt. GILLANDERS was buried with the body, another identity disc was found at the place of crash a few days after the burial and was handed over to the police. The Burgermeister does not remember the name on the disc but promised he would try and trace it. And if found, it will be handed to the Exhumation Team at the disinternment. The exhumation will be carried out in the near future...

CONCLUSION: On the night of 20th Feb. 1944 at about 01.00 or 01.30 hrs Halifax LK905 was attacked by German night fighters whilst proceeding to the target and was set on fire. F/Sgt. HARVEY baled out and was captured, it is possible that another member of the crew tried to bale out but was either killed or fatally injured and may have been buried elsewhere. The remainder of the crew crashed with the aircraft and were killed. They were buried at ZIEPEL Cemetery two days after the crash.

Ross Kee's death was later officially recorded as, *Previously reported missing after air operations, now for official purposes, presumed dead, overseas (Germany)*. In June 1945, John and Gladys Kee received a War Service Gratuity of \$359.49 for the loss of their son Ross. In November 1946, Gladys received the following letter from the Wing Commander for Chief of the Air Staff:

Dear Mrs. Kee:

It is a privilege to have the opportunity of sending you the Operational Wings and Certificate in recognition of the gallant services rendered by your son, Flying Officer R.J. Kee.

I realize there is little which may be said or done to lessen your sorrow, but it is my hope that these "Wings", indicative of operations against the enemy, will be a treasured memento of a young life offered on the altar of freedom in defence of his Home and Country.

Twenty-three-year-old Ross Kee is buried in Berlin 1939-1945 War Cemetery, Germany, Coll.grave 6. D.12-17.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, F, G, J, L, M, N, 2C, 2D, 3J, 4B, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10B, 10U

KELLY, Gerald Reginald (#A/106785)

Gerald Kelly, 18, joined the army against his parents wishes, perhaps eager to follow in his two brothers footsteps. He definitely wanted to join his chums and do his part to end the war. He lost his life during a difficult but crucial battle in Belgium while heroically trying to save the life of a comrade.

He was born in Sarnia September 13, 1924, the youngest son of John Allan (born in Wyoming, Ontario), a Holmes Foundry employee, and Alice Marguerite (nee Webster, born in Oil Springs, Ontario) Kelly, of 258 Queen Street, Sarnia. Gerald had three brothers: Harold John (born 1914); William Henry (born 1921, later married Gwenna Estelle Scott); and Walter Allan (born 1923)--as well as five sisters: Alice Annabelle (born 1916, died at age 6); baby Kelly (born and died October 1, 1920); Marion Cecilia (born 1928, later Marion Codling), Dorothy Maxine (born 1929, later Dorothy MacKinnon), and Jean Edith (born 1935, later Jean Olney). At the time of Gerald's death, brother William was a trooper in the army, and had returned from overseas about one year prior; and Gerald's other brother Walter was a private stationed at a Canadian mechanized depot in London, Ontario.

Gerald Kelly attended Devine Street and Wellington Street schools before attending Sarnia Collegiate. He was also a former carrier boy for the *Canadian Observer* newspaper. He was active in basketball and bowling; he collected coins and enjoyed reading, and preferred machine shop at school. He left school at Christmas in grade eleven at age seventeen to go to work. He was employed at Loblaw's Grocery Store from April 1941 to October 1942 as a delivery boy and clerk, then went to work at Imperial Oil Limited from October 1942 to April 1943. He worked in the inspection laboratory at the oil refinery before leaving to enlist. Gerald joined the army "because of his chums and to get the war over sooner". His parents and brother William were opposed because of his William's loss of health while in the army.

Eighteen year-old Gerald Kelly enlisted in the Canadian Army on May 4th, 1943, in London, Ontario. He stood five feet seven inches tall, had brown eyes and brown hair, and was single. He lived at home on Queen Street with his parents at the time, and recorded his occupation as "machine shop practices". From #1 District Depot in London, Gerald began his army training at #13 Basic Training Centre (BTC) in Listowel. Some of the comments written by the Army Examiner at BTC of Gerald included; ... *Healthy, lots of energy, very cheerful and vigorous... A forthright lad with a high degree of self-confidence and an assertive personality. He has a vigorous attitude and appears quite inclined to take the initiative.... A bright, pleasant lad of fair appearance – learns readily – thinks clearly and quickly – should be watched for evidence of leadership ability.* Gerald continued his training at A29 Canadian Infantry Training Centre (CITC) at Camp Ipperwash. On February 15, 1944, he embarked overseas for the

United Kingdom, where he became a member of #3 Canadian Infantry Reinforcement Unit (CIRU). One month later, on March 13, 1944, Gerald Kelly became a member of the Algonquin Regiment Infantry Battalion, Royal Canadian Infantry Corps (RCIC), with the rank of Private.

On April 21, 1944, Gerald wrote a letter home to his mother Alice. Following is a portion of that letter:

Dear Mother,

Received your most welcome letter yesterday and was certainly glad to hear from you. I never had a chance to answer it last night as I was at a regimental dance last night. They had a good hall for the dance and an army orchestra. The eats and tea were free and there was a fairly big crowd. As yet I have not received any cigarettes from home but I expect them any day now...

Mother as I told you before I don't want you to save any money for me. If you want to bank it (as you said in your letter for a rainy day) you can put it in, in your name but don't save it for me. My fifth Victory bond will be paid up at the end of this month and when you get it would you put it in the bank also in your name.

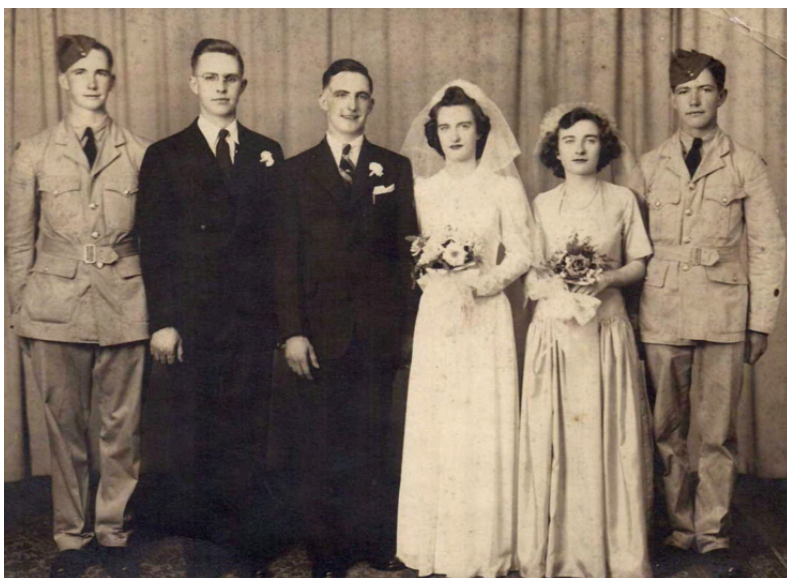
On June 10, 1944, Gerald wrote a letter to his sister Dorothy. Following is a portion of that letter:

Dear Dot,

Received your most welcome letter and seeing as I was writing quite a few letters I thought I'd answer yours at the same time... I like it over here alright Dorothy but its not the same as being back home... We have a horseshoe pitch set up in our lines and we put in most of our spare time playing horseshoes. They hold bingos about once a week here in camp. They have something on nearly every night so you're never without something to do. I do my own washing, ironing and sewing and if you could see me doing it I know you would get a great laugh out of it. I have not as yet met anyone that I knew back home so you can see just how much I would like to get Cliffs and Vernes address... I have been feeling fine and I hope everyone at home is the same.



Private Gerald Reginald Kelly



L-R: brothers Walter, Harold, William + Gwenna & her sister, Gerald

On July 20, 1944, Private Gerald Kelly and the Algonquin Regiment embarked from the U.K., arriving in France two days later at the shell-torn seaside town of Courseulles-sur-mer, along the western edge of Juno Beach. The **Battle of Normandy** had begun for the Canadians with the June 6, 1944 D-Day landings at Juno Beach. After breaching the "Atlantic Wall" of "Fortress Europe", Allied armies began their break out from the narrow Normandy bridgehead to carve out a foothold on the French mainland. It would take a whole summer of tenacious fighting, pushing against fierce and ruthless German forces to advance east across France. In a brutal campaign of attrition, the Canadians faced fierce battles and vicious counterattacks as they clawed their way forward liberating villages and towns including Bretteville, Carpiquet, Caen and Falaise.

After the Allied breakout from Normandy, Canadian forces were assigned the "**Long Left Flank**". Their jobs included the less glamorous but vital tasks of clearing coastal areas in the north of France and Belgium of German occupiers; opening the English Channel ports for supplies essential to the Allied advance; and capturing the launching sites of German V-1 rockets. In a series of stop-and-start advances against stiff resistance in fortified positions, the Canadians liberated ports and villages including Rouen, Dieppe, Dunkirk, Boulogne and Calais.

Gerald Kelly served with the Algonquin Regiment as they advanced through France in the Battle of Normandy and the Long Left Flank, and then into Belgium. On August 11, 1944 (one month before he was killed), Gerald wrote the following letter home:

Dear Mom and Dad,

Have received several letters from you but this is the first chance I've had to answer them. As I said in my last letter, I received a thousand cigs from you a couple of weeks ago and they certainly came in handy. I have smoked more cigarettes these last couple of weeks than I've ever smoked before so you see they certainly come in handy.

As I've said in my other letters, mother, I can't write as often as I used to but I will write just as often as I can. I borrowed the pen here from one fellow, the ink from another one and the envelopes were given to me by still a different person. I am writing this letter in my slit trench so you can see mother, the writing facilities aren't any too good.

I have written to both Cliff Bendall and Bert Pask but as yet have received no answer. Will you say hello to Marion, Dorothy and Jeannie for me? Thank Marion for helping with the parcel and tell Dot that I haven't any pictures right now.

By the way, I don't know if I ever mentioned it before but when I was back in England I met Nelson Archer and he said to be sure to say hello to Dad. Well Mom, I am going to try and write quite a few letters today so I had better say so long for now.

In early September 1944, Allied forces had captured the inland port of Antwerp, Belgium, the second greatest port in Europe at the mouth of the Scheldt River. However, German forces still controlled the 45-mile-long Scheldt estuary (located in the Belgian-Dutch border area) that connected the port of Antwerp to the North Sea. The Canadians would be entrusted with liberating the estuary—the **Battle of the Scheldt** would be among the most difficult and grueling struggles in the war.

In early September 1944, Gerald's Algonquin Regiment, part of the First Canadian Army, were in the Scheldt estuary area. The German army had begun an organized retreat and took up defensive positions behind a series of canals along the Belgian and Dutch border. Allied command believed that every opportunity had to be made to pressure the retreating German army. A pause by Allied forces for a few days may have given the enemy time to reinforce its positions.

As part of the preliminary battles leading up to the Battle of the Scheldt, the Algonquin Regiment was selected to cross the Canal de Derivation de la Lys and the Leopold Canal and establish a bridgehead crossing near the hamlet of Molentje, north of the village of Moerkerke in Belgium. The motto of the regiment, Ne-Kah-Ne-Tah (We lead, others follow) would be put to the test. The Germans had destroyed the bridges across the canal and were well-entrenched on the north side of the Leopold Canal. The two ninety-foot canals ran side by side, separated by a sixty-foot-wide dyke. Once across these and on the northern side of the Leopold Canal, the plan was for the four companies to advance roughly 200 to 400 metres north, then dig in and form a defensive perimeter around an old bridge site. After establishing the defensive perimeter, engineers were to build a new bridge.

The first **Battle of the Leopold Canal** would take place on September 13-14, 1944. The plan was doomed from the start; a diversion failed to draw the German forces away, the boat launch was late, and the artillery support ended too quickly. Many of the paddlers from other regiments assigned to assist the Algonquin Regiment never arrived, forcing the Algonquin troops to move the heavy wood and canvas assault boats across the canal and over the island where many German soldiers fired at them from hidden slit trenches.

At approximately 11:00 p.m. on the night of September 13, under the cover of darkness, and after supporting Canadian artillery units laid down a barrage of fire, the infantry crossed the two separate canals using assault boats and special ladders with grappling hooks to assist in scaling the steep banks, all while under enemy small arms, mortar and shellfire. All four companies, each at a strength of 90 men, managed to cross the canals and dig in on the far bank, succeeding in securing a bridgehead, though much smaller than originally planned. During the rest of the night, they repelled all attempts to dislodge them, while engineers began to build a bridge. Throughout the night, German soldiers utilized numerous gaps to infiltrate the Algonquins' positions and by the morning of the 14th, all four companies were running low in ammunition while coming under fire from every direction from an enemy who outnumbered them by at least two to one.

Also, early in the morning, German command ordered their troops to eliminate the bridgehead 'at all costs'.

A “storm of fire,” mortars and artillery, rained upon the Algonquins in the bridgehead, on their headquarters and on the engineers bridging the canal. Work on the bridge had to stop, many of the assault boats had been destroyed, and attempts to ferry ammunition across to replace the dwindling supplies was halted by intense and accurate enemy fire. By noon, it was realized that holding and exploiting the bridgehead was impossible. Orders were dispatched for the immediate withdrawal of the regiment. Heavy artillery and mortar barrages and thick smoke screens were fired to cover the retreat, as soldiers fought their way through pockets of enemy troops. There were insufficient boats and many of the survivors had to swim the two canals. The last of the regiment were out of the bridgehead at approximately 2:00 p.m.

Following is a portion of an eyewitness account of the battle by Captain Herbert of the Algonquin Regiment: *After crossing the canal the two remaining platoons of “B” Coy ran through the town and dug in fifty yds from the crossroads. They were always under fire from every direction as the enemy had not been cleared out of the town. The position became isolated and enemy infiltrated on every side. The Coy with the help of two sections from “A” Coy fought the Germans less than 20 yards away. They broke up all attempts of enemy reinforcements reaching the town and had to leave their weapon slits every once in a while to clear the buildings behind them from which snipers were picking the men off. Ammunition ran out and under this extreme fire several men ran around and picked ammunition from the wounded and dead. Even the mortar was fired at point blank low angle until ammunition was finished. The order was a German for every round of ammunition. Lt. Roberts was killed by shrapnel while sitting in the same slit trench as myself. The Germans had then our positions and were dropping shells right into our lines. Fifty percent of the men were wounded and this information was passed back to Comd Post. An order arrived to withdraw fighting from house to house. This was done until we fought our way back into the central perimeter of town. A new perimeter was formed and then the order came to withdraw. All wounded from the forward areas were taken out.*

For the Algonquin Regiment, the attempted crossing of the Leopold Canal was a disaster, costing the regiment 158 casualties (approximately 32 killed and 60 taken as prisoners) in fourteen hours. It was to be their largest single day loss of the war. The failure of the operation had not been because of a lack of training, fighting ability or bravery of the Algonquins, but rather the problems resulted from the use of too few men for too big an operation. The attack was renewed within a month. This time, the Algonquins participated with three divisions in a well-planned attack code-named *Operation Switchback*. The laneway from where the Algonquin Regiment launched its September assault across the Leopold Canal now bears the name Algonquinstraat.

Gerald Kelly, overseas for only seven months, lost his life on September 14, 1944 in the Battle of the Leopold Canal, one day after his 20th birthday. He was killed while re-crossing the Leopold Canal trying to rescue his wounded sergeant. Gerald Kelly’s remains were buried at a location recorded on the Army Field Service Card as “Cemetery France & Belgium 1/50,000 Zebrugge Brugge sh 21 & 31 934039 75 yards N of ruined bridge on canal W side of road.”

On September 30, 1944, Alice Kelly on Queen Street in Sarnia, received the following telegram from the Director of Records: MINISTER OF NATIONAL DEFENCE DEEPLY REGRETS TO INFORM YOU THAT A106785 PRIVATE GERALD REGINALD KELLY HAS BEEN OFFICIALLY REPORTED KILLED IN ACTION FOURTEENTH SEPTEMBER 1944 STOP IF ANY FURTHER INFORMATION BECOMES AVAILABLE IT WILL BE FORWARDED AS SOON AS RECEIVED.

Also, in September 1944, Alice received the following letter from Major G.L. Cassidy of Gerald’s Algonquin Regiment:

Dear Mrs. Kelly,

It is a most difficult task for me to write this letter, containing, as you will already have been officially informed, the news of Gerald’s death in action. Ever since he has been in my company he was everybody’s favorite – the perfect soldier and gentleman and his loss is a grievous one to you as well as to us. It may help you to know he died a hero’s death. After 24 hours of the hardest fighting this unit has ever seen or known, during which time Gerald distinguished himself on several occasions for bravery, the unit was ordered to withdraw - across a water obstacle.

Gerald was already at the obstacle and about ready to enter a boat, when it became known that a wounded sergeant, who was supposed to have been carried by another party, could not be found. Gerald and another sergeant, without being ordered or asked, at once returned through heavy shell and machine gun fire to bring back the wounded party. He was on his return with the sergeant on his back when a shell struck close by, killing him instantly. The other rescuer was wounded, but managed to get back, and he told me this story.

I am arranging to have Gerald's actions mentioned in despatches. May we all unite our deep sorrow with yours, Mrs. Kelly, remembering always that God is with him, and that we were all fortunate to have known him even for so short a space.

Shortly after receiving the above letter, Alice received another letter from Major G.L. Cassidy, informing her of the approximate location of her son's body:

Dear Mrs. Kelly,

I must apologize for my delay in replying to your letter, but it is only very recently that a representative of the battalion was able to revisit the scene of Gerald's heroic death. You see, the occasion was our attempt to cross the Leopold Canal, the first one to be made, and one which, unfortunately, was not successful. We were forced to withdraw, and for the next six weeks the ground remained in enemy hands. But we do know now that the Germans buried all our dead there, although not all the graves are marked. I will attach a little diagram to show you the approximate location.

Please accept our grateful admiration for the superb courage you and other Canadian mothers have shown in adversity. You are our inspiration throughout.

In mid-October 1944, Alice received the following letter from the Brigadier, Acting Adjutant-General:

Dear Mrs. Kelly,

It was with deep regret that I learned of the death of your son, A106785 Private Gerald Reginald Kelly, who gave his life in the Service of his Country in the Western European Theatre of War on the 14th day of September, 1944.

From official information we have received, your son was killed in action against the enemy. You may be assured that any additional information received will be communicated to you without delay. The Minister of national Defence and the Members of the Army Council have asked me to express to you and your family their sincere sympathy in your bereavement. We pay tribute to the sacrifice he so bravely made.

After being Mentioned in Despatches, Gerald was posthumously awarded a certificate of recommendation in January 1945, a certificate his mother received in recognition of her son's bravery and devotion to duty. The Ministry of National Defense also expressed its sincere regret "that your son did not live to receive this award." The Commander-in-Chief's Certificate for Good Service reads:

It has been brought to my notice that you have performed outstanding good service, and shown great devotion to duty, during the campaign in North West Europe. I award you this certificate as a token of my appreciation, and I have given instructions that this shall be noted in your Record of Service.

The award is signed by Bernard L. Montgomery, Field Marshal, Commander-in-Chief, 21st Army Group.

Gerald Kelly's death was later officially recorded as, *Overseas casualty, killed in action, in the field (Belgium)*. In July 1945, Alice Kelly received a letter from the Department of National Defence, Army, Estates Branch. Based on her son's length of qualifying service, she was to be paid a sum of \$190.30 as a War Service Gratuity. The letter also stated that, *We regret to inform you that none of your son's Personal Effects were recovered at the time of his death.*

In December 1945, Alice received another letter from the Colonel, Director of Records. Following is a portion of that letter:

Dear Madam,

Information has just been received from overseas that the remains of your son, A106785 Private Gerald Reginald Kelly, have been carefully exhumed from the original place of internment and reverently reburied in grave 4, row A, plot 3, of Adegem Canadian Military Cemetery, Adegem, Belgium. Marked map is enclosed. This is a recognized military burial ground and will receive care and maintenance in perpetuity.

The grave will have been marked with a temporary cross which will be replaced in due course by a permanent headstone suitably inscribed. While it cannot now be stated when this work of permanent commemoration will begin, before any action is taken you will be communicated with and an opportunity will be given you to submit a short personal inscription of your own choice for engraving on the headstone....

In January 1946, John and Alice Kelly in Sarnia received a War Service Gratuity of \$190.30 for the loss of their son Gerald. In October 1947, the Director of War Service Records sent Alice a photograph of the grave and marker over the burial place of her late son, along with the location of the cemetery and grave. Twenty year-old Gerald Kelly is buried in Adegem Canadian War Cemetery, Belgium, Grave III.A.4. On his headstone are inscribed

the words, HE IS GONE BUT NOT FORGOTTEN. THOUGHTS OF HIM ARE ALWAYS NEAR. His name is also inscribed on the Sarnia Refinery Plaque. Unveiled in 1949, the plaque has the names of 24 Sarnia Imperial Oil employees who made the ultimate sacrifice in World War II.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, L, N, 2C, 2D, 3G, 4A, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 9C, 9D, m

KETTLE, Alfred Smedley (#A/2382)

Alfred Smedley Kettle was 31 years old, much older than the average soldier's age, and had a 10-year-old son at home when he made the decision to serve his country. In February 1942, he was aboard one of the "backbone" warships of the Canadian navy when he lost his life during an escort operation during the longest continuous campaign of the war to what British Prime Minister Winston Churchill said was "... the only thing that ever really frightened me during the war..."

He was born in Petrolia, Ontario on May 14, 1909, the son of Alfred Smedley Sr. and Edith May (nee Collier) Kettle, of R.R. #2 Mandaumin, Plympton Township, Lambton County, Ontario. Alfred Sr. (born in Blackpool, England) and Edith May (born in Oxford, Ontario) Kettle were married on October 19, 1896 in Petrolia, Ontario. At the time of Alfred Jr.'s birth, his father worked as a horse buyer. Alfred Jr. had numerous brothers and two sisters. His brothers included: twins Earl and Harold (born 1900, although Harold died ten days after birth); Richard Selvenia (born 1910, who would serve in Canadian Army); Harold Alexander (born 1912); James Ernest (born 1905); Malcolm Benjamin (born 1914); Robert Gerald (born 1927, who would serve in WWII and Korea); William Henry (born 1903, deceased 1926); and Thomas Harrison (born 1908, deceased at age 9 months). His sisters were Annie May (born 1897, deceased 1918), and Verna Maude (born 1904).

Alfred served in the Lambton Regiment, with the rank of corporal from November 1934 to November 1935. Alfred was married for a time to Louise Kettle in Sarnia, but she left him approximately eight years before he enlisted. They had one child together, Alfred Wayne Kettle, born July 31, 1930, who lived with Alfred and his parents at R.R. #2 Mandaumin, Ontario. Prior to enlisting, Alfred was employed as a quartermaster for Canadian Steamship Lines (he had sailed on the lakes since 1927).

Thirty-one-year-old Alfred Kettle enlisted in the Royal Canadian Naval Reserve on July 29, 1940 in London, Ontario. He stood five feet eight and a half inches tall, had hazel eyes and dark hair, and was single. He recorded his marital status as "widower". From London Division Headquarters, Able Seaman Alfred Kettle was posted to the *HMCS Stadacona* from August 8 to June 27, 1940, where he rose in rank to Leading Seaman, then Petty Officer. Beginning on June 28, 1941, Alfred was posted to the *HMCS Spikenard*, where he attained the rank of Chief Petty Officer.



Chief Petty Officer Alfred Smedley Kettle



Flower Class Corvette *HMCS Spikenard K198*

Beginning on the opening day of the Second World War, the **Battle of the Atlantic** would be the longest continuous campaign of the war, and one in which Canada played a central role. The Royal Canadian Navy, along

with the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) and Canada's Merchant Navy, played a vital role in defending the country's eastern coast and escorting convoys of ships carrying men and essential machinery, arms, fuel and basic resources between North America and Europe.

The *HMCS Spikenard* (K 198) was a corvette of the Flower Class, commissioned by the Royal Canadian Navy in December of 1940. In early February of 1942, the *Spikenard* was part of convoy SC-67, sailing for the British Isles, part of an RCN escort to make the first "Newfie-to-Derry" run that would continue for the next four years (St. John's, Newfoundland and Londonderry, Northern Ireland).

At about 9:30 pm on the night of February 10, 1942, the *Spikenard* was approximately 465 nautical miles west of Malin Head Ireland, following a zigzag pattern ahead of the convoy in rough seas. Two torpedoes fired by German U-boat *U-136* struck the port side in the bow near the bridge. Almost simultaneously, a torpedo smashed into the nearby tanker *Heina*. A nearby corvette, *Dauphin*, saw one explosion and moved toward the position where the *Heina* was on fire. It took two hours to rescue the *Heina* survivors from the oily water.

Aboard the *Spikenard*, fire had broken out, destroying the bridge, the wireless room and one of her lifeboats. Flames then spread to fuel drums aft of the mast, and fire raced up the superstructure and down into the belly of the ship. Men on the mess decks had to fight their way to the forecastle through a curtain of flames. Many of them, groping forward, stumbled into the gaping hole blasted in the deck plates. After a second explosion, with the ship's whistle set off by the blast, blowing constantly with an eerie shriek, waves engulfed the vessel. The *Spikenard* sank within five minutes. As the men struggled in the water on the black, windy night, they shouted in vain and had no flares to attract attention. The other escorts in the group had been caught up chasing contacts and had not known the *Spikenard* was gone until she had not answered repeated radio calls. By dawn, there was no sign of the missing *Spikenard*. The commander, four officers and fifty-two of the crew were lost.

Incredibly, eight survivors were picked up clinging to a raft by *HMS Gentian* about 19 hours after the sinking. The eight survivors, many suffering burns, had picked up two other survivors after the second explosion, but both were so badly injured that they died shortly after being taken aboard. Alfred Kettle was one of the 57 crew members who were lost in the sinking of the *HMCS Spikenard*.

On February 18, 1942, Edith Kettle of R.R.#2 Mandaumin, received a telegram from the Minister of National Defence informing her that her son, Chief Petty Officer Alfred Smedley Kettle, was missing and presumed lost at sea. In late February 1942, Edith received the following letter from the Secretary, Naval Board:

Dear Madam:

It is with deep regret that I must confirm the telegram of the 18th February 1942 from the Minister of National Defence for Naval Services informing you that your son, Alfred Smedley Kettle, Chief Petty Officer, R.C.N.R., O.N. A.2382, is missing and must be presumed lost on Active Service.

Your son was serving in H.M.C.S. "SPIKENARD" which was torpedoed and sunk by enemy action on the 10th February 1942. Details of the action are not, however, available at this time. The possibility of your son having been rescued by other ships cannot be estimated but it has been established that he was not among the survivors landed at a United Kingdom port and very little hope is held out for the survival of the remainder. You will be informed immediately should any further information be received.

I wish to express the sincere sympathy of the Chief of the Naval Staff, Officers and men of the Royal Canadian Navy the high traditions of which your son has helped to maintain.

Alfred Kettle's death certificate simply states the cause of death as, *Loss of H.M.C.S. Spikenard, at sea*. In April 1947, Edith Kettle received a War Service Gratuity of \$237.54 for the loss of her son Alfred. Thirty-one-year-old Alfred Smedley Kettle has no known grave. His name is inscribed on the Halifax Memorial, Nova Scotia, Canada, Panel 6. Alfred Kettle's name is also inscribed on the Petrolia cenotaph in the Town of Petrolia. SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, P, T, U, X, Z, 2A, 2C, 2D, 6F, 7C, 8X, 8Y

KIRK, Leslie Gordon (#A/104549)

Leslie Kirk gave his life for Canada while fighting in the Italian Campaign, in a battle against the last major German defensive line in Italy, and the most fortified position the German army had yet thrown into the Allied Forces' path.

He was born in Kemble, Ontario (north of Owen Sound) on July 6, 1921, the only son of Thomas Edward and Annie Josephine Kirk, of East Linton, Ontario. Thomas (a farmer) and Annie Kirk were married in Owen Sound

on November 10, 1915. Thomas and Annie Kirk had four children together: son Leslie and three daughters; Evelyn Alma, Aleda Margaret and Gwendolyn. Leslie did not attend high school, leaving school at the age of thirteen. He participated in baseball and hockey, and his hobbies included playing guitar and tinkering with automobile engines. Leslie worked on his father's farm in East Linton from 1934 to 1937. Then from 1938 to 1942, he alternated between working as a sailor in the summer and doing bush work for his father in the winter.

Twenty-one-year-old Leslie Kirk enlisted in the Canadian Army in London, Ontario on September 17, 1942. He stood five feet five and a half inches tall, had blue eyes and fair hair, and was single. He recorded his occupation as sailor with Canadian Steamship, and lived at 152 Dundas Street, Sarnia at the time. He expressed his desire to serve as a motorcycle driver.

From #1 District Depot in London, Leslie Kirk began his army training at #10 Basic Training Centre (BTC) in Kitchener. In mid-October 1942, he was transferred to A29 Canadian Infantry Training Centre (CITC) at Camp Ipperwash. In mid-March 1943, he became a member of the Essex Scottish Regiment with the rank of Acting Lance Corporal. Leslie embarked overseas for the United Kingdom on March 27, 1943, where he became part of #3 Canadian Infantry Reinforcement Unit (CIRU). He continued his training in the U.K., became a qualified motorcycle driver, and in mid-May 1943, returned to the rank of Private at his own request.



Private Leslie Gordon Kirk

On March 27, 1944, Private Leslie Kirk embarked from the U.K., arriving in Italy on April 9, 1944, as a member of the Perth Regiment, Royal Canadian Infantry Corps (RCIC). He arrived nine months into the Italian Campaign. The **Italian Campaign**, the first sustained Canadian Army operation of the War, had begun with the invasion of Sicily on July 10, 1943. The fierce fighting on the island would last more than four weeks, during which the Canadians would advance through difficult mountainous terrain, against an ever-stiffening German resistance. By August 17, the Germans had evacuated from the island, retreating to the Italian mainland. In early September, Canadian and Allied forces would invade Italy. Though Italy surrendered shortly after, the occupying Germans made it clear their fight was not over. Liberating Italy would be a painstaking northward crawl, lasting 20 months, over a range of landscapes, through challenging weather, and against a series of well-protected defences held by some of the German army's best troops.

In late August 1944, the Canadians began their attack on the **Gothic Line** with the objective of capturing Rimini. The Gothic Line was the last major German defence line separating the Allies from the Po Valley. Since northern Italy contained many factories producing vital supplies, the Germans made the line formidable and would fight hard to prevent a breakthrough. The Gothic Line was meant to be impregnable, a series of strong-points, exploiting the natural terrain features, composed of machine-gun posts, anti-tank guns, mortar- and assault-gun positions and tank turrets set in concrete, as well as anti-tank mines, anti-personnel mine fields, bunkers, barbed wire obstacles, snipers, and anti-tank ditches, all arranged in depth. Six rivers also lay across the path of the advance to Rimini.

For twenty-eight days, the Canadians relentlessly battered their way forward through a rugged killing

ground, in a maze of fortified ridges and towns, hills and deep valleys, over blown-out bridges and roads blocked with debris from toppled buildings, and across rivers. Bitter fighting resulted in gruesome losses on both sides, but the Canadians kept grinding forward in step-by-step progress, often engaging in close-quarters and hand-to-hand combat. On September 21, the Allies entered a deserted Rimini. The breaking of the Gothic Line was one of the most important offensives won by Canadian forces in the Second World War, and the most difficult in the entire Italian campaign.

Approximately five months after arriving in Italy, on September 13, 1944, Leslie Kirk lost his life while fighting during the Italian Campaign. He was killed in action during the attack on the Gothic Line on the road to Rimini. Leslie's remains were buried on September 14 at a location recorded on the Army Field Service Card as "Roadside sheet 109/IV MR 892866 Grave 2, Italy". Only days before he was killed, his mother Annie had received a telegram informing her that her son Leslie had been wounded in action on August 31, 1944.

In mid-October 1944, Annie Kirk in East Linton received the following letter from the Brigadier, Acting Adjutant-General:

Dear Mrs. Kirk:

It was with deep regret that I learned of the death of your son, A104549 Private Leslie Gordon Kirk, who gave his life in the Service of his Country in the Mediterranean Theatre on the 13th day of September, 1944.

From official information we have received, your son was killed in action against the enemy. You may be assured that any additional information received will be communicated to you without delay.

The Minister of National Defence and the Members of the Army Council have asked me to express to you and your family their sincere sympathy in your bereavement. We pay tribute to the sacrifice he so bravely made.

In December 1944, Annie received the following letter from the Colonel, Director of Records, for Adjutant-General:

Dear Mrs. Kirk:

I am directed to inform you that official information has now been received from Canadian Military Headquarters Overseas advising that it has been ascertained that your son, A-104549 Private Leslie Gordon Kirk, was not wounded in action on the 31st August 1944, as previously reported.

It was his first battle casualty when he was killed in action on the 13th September 1944. You may be assured that any additional particulars received regarding his regretted death will be communicated to you. Please accept my deepest sympathy in your bereavement.

Leslie Kirk's death was later officially recorded as, *Overseas casualty, killed in action, in the field (Italy)*. In July 1945, Annie Kirk received a War Service Gratuity of \$367.65 for the loss of her only son. In late-January 1946, she received another letter from the Colonel, Director of Records, for Adjutant-General. Following is a portion of that letter:

Dear Madam:

Information has just been received from overseas that the remains of your son, A104549 Private Leslie Gordon Kirk, have been carefully exhumed from the original place of internment and reverently reburied in grave 3, row C, plot 2, of Coriano Ridge British Empire Cemetery, two miles North of Coriano, Italy. Marked map is enclosed. This is a recognized military burial ground and will receive care and maintenance in perpetuity.

The grave will have been marked with a temporary cross which will be replaced in due course by a permanent headstone suitably inscribed. While it cannot now be stated when this work of permanent commemoration will begin, before any action is taken you will be communicated with and an opportunity will be given you to submit a short personal inscription of your own choice for engraving on the headstone...

Twenty-three-year-old Leslie Kirk is buried in Coriano Ridge War Cemetery, Italy, Grave II, C 3. On his headstone are inscribed the words, GREATER LOVE HATH NO MAN THAN THIS, THAT A MAN LAY DOWN HIS LIFE FOR HIS FRIENDS.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, 2C, 2D, 7C, 8X, 8Y

KNIGHT, Wilfred Leslie (J/47880)

Wilfred Knight was only eighteen when he chose to serve his country, and had plans to return to his job at CN Rail when the war ended. He was still a teenager when he gave his life for Canada while serving against the Japanese after the war in Europe had ended.

He was born in Sarnia on September 1, 1925, the son of Charles Wesley and Lucy Ann (nee Corrigan)

Knight, of 107 Alfred Street, later R.R. #2, Sarnia. Charles (a yard foreman, C.N.R.) and Lucy Ann Knight, both born in Sarnia, were married on April 9, 1917 in Detroit Michigan. Charles and Lucy had four children together: daughters Norinne (later Norinne O'Hagan) and Shirley; and sons Wilfred and Thomas Patrick. Thomas also joined the RCAF, enlisting in September 1942, one year before Wilfred enlisted. Thomas became a Leading Aircraftman who was stationed in Nova Scotia at the time of Wilfred's death. Wilfred had two other brothers; however, they both died in infancy.

After completing public elementary school, Wilfred was unemployed for one year, 1939-1940. Wilfred then attended Sarnia Collegiate for two years (1940-1942), leaving school at age sixteen. He was very active in baseball, hockey and rugby. He was employed as a car checker at Canadian National Railways from 1942 to September 1943, when he left to enlist. After the war, he planned to return to Sarnia and his job at Canadian National Railways.

Eighteen year-old Wilfred Knight enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force on September 10, 1943 in London, Ontario. He stood five feet two inches tall, had blue eyes and dark brown hair, and was single. He lived at home with his parents on Alfred Street at the time. He requested flying duties, wanting to be part of an aircrew. From #9 Recruiting Centre in London, then #1 Manning Depot in Toronto, Wilfred received his air training at Air Force Headquarters (AFHQ)--Pre-Aircrew Education at Ottawa Technical School; he continued at #2 Wireless School (WS) in Calgary and #5 Bombing and Gunnery School (B&GS) in Dafoe Saskatchewan. He was awarded his Air Gunners Badge in Dafoe on August 11, 1944. In September 1944, he was posted to #1 Y Depot in Lachine Quebec, before being posted to #111 Operational Training Unit (OTU) at Nassau, Bahama Islands. He spent five months in Nassau with #111 OTU before returning to Dorval, Quebec in early February 1945.

On February 16, 1945, Wilfred Knight embarked overseas from Dorval bound for the United Kingdom. From #3 Personnel Reception Centre (PRC), then #9 Personnel Dispersal Centre (PDC), Wilfred became a member of RAF #354 Squadron on April 3, 1945. RAF #354 was an anti-submarine and anti-shipping squadron that served in the Far East and was equipped with Consolidated Liberator aircraft. One month after becoming a member of RAF #354, on May 7, Germany surrendered ending the war in Europe (VE Day). However, the war with Japan continued. On June 1, 1945, Wilfred became a member of RAF #160 Burma Squadron "Api Soya Paragasamu" (We seek and strike), with the rank of Wireless Operator-Air Gunner.



WAG Wilfred Leslie Knight

In early January 1942, RAF #160 Burma Squadron had been a heavy bomber/reconnaissance unit equipped with Consolidated B-24 Liberator aircraft based in Bedfordshire, England. It was later moved to the Middle East, carrying out night raids on enemy targets in Libya and Crete. In early 1943 the squadron moved to India, and then to bases in Ceylon (Sri Lanka), part of **South East Asia Command** (later renamed RAF Air Command Far East). In early February 1945, the squadron was based at RAF Minneriya (in Ceylon). It was involved in photo-reconnaissance missions, shipping protection, and minelaying. By June 1945, the squadron was transferred to Special Duties, dropping agents and supplies to resistance groups in Malaya and Sumatra.

Approximately one month after VE Day, Wilfred Knight was aboard Liberator aircraft BZ950 that took off at 0632 hours on June 9, 1945 for a secret destination. The aircraft was heading to the Cocos Islands on a photo recon detachment. Seven minutes after takeoff, the aircraft reported the failure of #1 engine and requested an emergency landing. Approximately three to four miles out, at 1000 to 1500 feet altitude, the port wing was observed to drop. The aircraft turned to port almost at right angles to its line of approach, and plunged steeply into the dense jungle. Nine minutes after take-off, the aircraft crashed at Minneriya, Ceylon as it attempted to return to the airfield. Along with Flying Officer-Wireless Operator/Air Gunner Wilfred Knight, also killed were Sgt.s Andrew Robin Thomson and Matthew Muirhead Smith (both RCAF); F/O John Patrick Hynes (RAAF), Sgt.s D. Davenport, D. Lumley, E.B. Wood, P.J. Taylor and F/O H.W. Daniels (all RAF) and ten RAF personnel passengers. Wilfred Knight's remains were buried two days later in Liveramentu Cemetery, Ceylon.

In mid-June 1945, Charles and Lucy Ann Knight in Sarnia received a telegram from Ottawa informing them that their son, FLYING OFFICER WILFRED KNIGHT HAS BEEN REPORTED KILLED IN ACTION OVERSEAS. Wilfred had been overseas for just under four months. He was reported to be the first Sarnian or district casualty in the continuing war against the Japanese since VE-Day in Europe. Wilfred Knight's death was later officially recorded as, *Killed as a result of a flying accident, overseas (Ceylon)*. The war with Japan ended on August 15, 1945, two months after Wilfred Knight was killed.

In January 1946, Charles and Lucy received a War Service Gratuity of \$308.03 for the loss of their son Wilfred. In January 1947, Lucy, then at R.R. #2, Sarnia, received the following letter from the Wing Commander for Chief of the Air Staff in Ottawa:

Dear Mrs. Knight:

It is a privilege to have the opportunity of sending you the Operational Wings and Certificate in recognition of the gallant services rendered by your son, Flying Officer W.L. Knight. I realize there is little which may be said or done to lessen your sorrows, but it is my hope that these "Wings", indicative of operations against the enemy, will be a treasured memento of a young life offered on the altar of freedom in defence of his Home and Country

Nineteen year-old Wilfred Knight is buried in Colombo (Liveramentu) Cemetery, Sir Lanka, Grave 3.G.5. On his headstone are inscribed the words, THE LAST PRIVILEGE OF LOVE IS MEMORY.
SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, J, L, M, N, 2C, 2D, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10B

KNOWLES, George William (#J/12998)

George "Ducky" Knowles led an active life in Sarnia before he enlisted with the RCAF in 1941. Described by his superiors as *Cheerful and hard working in his studies [and] ... a most conscientious and good class leader*, George, 22, was killed in a training exercise over the Bay of Fundy. No trace of the crew or its Hudson aircraft has ever been found.

He was born in Kincardine-on-Forth, Scotland on November 30, 1918, the eldest son of Gordon Allen and Catherine Young (nee Thompson) Knowles. Gordon (born in Clifton, New Brunswick) and Catherine (born in Lecropt, Scotland) Knowles were married in Kincardine-on-Forth, Scotland on September 25, 1917. The Knowles family immigrated to Canada in mid-1919, when George was only eight months old, and they resided in New Brunswick for five years. The family moved to Iroquois Falls for six months, and then to Sarnia when George was a little over six years old. George had one sister, Catherine Rebecca, and one brother, Robert Edward. To support his family, Gordon Knowles worked as a Still Runner at Imperial Oil Limited.

The family lived at 117 North Forsyth Street, a short walk for George to George Street Public School which he attended from 1926 to 1933. He then attended Sarnia Collegiate Institute from 1933 to 1939 where he was very active. He loved sports and played basketball and football at SCITS and belonged to the Central Century Club where he played softball, basketball and hockey. He also played City League softball and baseball.

At SCITS he was a member of the signalling team and was manager of the senior rugby team for one year. Away from school, George was also a member of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church. In his teens, George showed an interest in the military—he served as a member of the 2nd-26th Battery, Royal Canadian Artillery (RCA) in Sarnia with the rank of Signaller from August 1940 to February 1941. George worked as a grocery clerk at A & P Limited from September 1939 to April 1940 and then was employed as a machinist/drill press operator with Muellers Brass Limited, a job he held from April 1940 until he enlisted nearly a year later.

Twenty-two-year-old George Knowles enlisted with the Royal Canadian Air Force on March 6, 1941 in London, Ontario. He stood five feet four inches tall, had blue eyes and medium brown hair, and was single. He was

residing at home with his parents on Forsythe Street at the time and he requested flying duties. From the Recruiting Centre in London, then #1 Manning Depot in Toronto, Knowles received his air training at #1 Service Flying Training School (SFTS) at Camp Borden; at #1 Wireless School (WS) in Montreal; and at #1 Bombing and Gunnery School (B&GS) in Jarvis, Ontario.

At Montreal WS, he won a silver medal for proficiency by finishing second in a class of 58 candidates. At Jarvis B&GS, he finished third in the class. Little wonder his Squadron Leader and Commanding Officers' remarks about George were complimentary: *Cheerful and hard working in his studies, has practical ability as well. Has been a most conscientious and good class leader – accepts responsibility cheerfully and is most thorough in carrying out his duties. Suitable for Commissioned Rank.* George was awarded his Air Gunners Badge on July 20, 1942 and received his commission as a Pilot Officer. On August 8, 1942, George was posted to RAF #36 Operational Training Unit (OTU), based at Greenwood, Nova Scotia.



P/O-Pilot George William Knowles

No. 36 Operational Training Unit prepared crews to be part of **Bomber Command**. They used Lockheed Hudson aircraft—a twin-engine light bomber. There was no easy way to learn how to fly the heavy bombers, and training crews suffered a litany of disasters, crashes and deaths. By the end of the war, Bomber Command lost over 8,000 Allied airmen who were killed in training or by accidents alone.

Two months after being posted to #36 OTU, on October 8, 1942, George Knowles was part of a crew of seven in Hudson aircraft BW700 that was engaged in air exercises over the Bay of Fundy. During the training session on that day, the aircraft crashed four miles north of Point George, Nova Scotia. Eyewitnesses later reported that the plane had just circled close to the fishing community Port George shore and was turning to retrace its course, when the roar of its engines ceased, and the aircraft, already flying at a low altitude, slid off to one side and smacked into the water. Reports were that the plane sank almost immediately. "It seemed to go right under," according to one eyewitness. "There was the sound of the crash, a cloud of smoke, and that was all." Rescue attempts from shore could not be made as boats had been hauled hard aground in preparation for winter storage.

The next day, Gordon and Catherine in Sarnia received a telegram from headquarters advising them that their son, PILOT OFFICER KNOWLES IS MISSING BELIEVED KILLED WHILE ENGAGED IN AIR EXERCISES OVER THE SEA. No details of the crash were made available. Along with Pilot Officer-Pilot George Knowles, also killed were Sgt.s Robert Oliver Barrett, Douglas Wilson Armstrong, and Benoit Desmarais; P/O. Henry Raymond Woodman; F/O. Jack Campbell McFarlane; and FS. D. Shackell (RAF). No trace of any crew members was ever found. The waters at that point were reported to be deep and the current very strong when the tide was going out to sea.

The following is a portion of the *Winnipeg Evening Tribune* report published shortly after the crash:

Names of six of the seven airmen killed Thursday when an aircraft from the R.A.F. base at Greenwood, N.S., plummeted into the Bay of Fundy were released Friday by eastern air command officials. The name of the seventh airman was withheld pending notification of next-of-kin.

Pilot of the plane that crashed into the waters of the bay a scant two miles from the fishing village of St.

George, N.S., was FO. J.G. McFarlane, son of Mrs. R.W. McFarlane, 2111 14A st., west, Calgary. With FO. McFarlane on the training flight were two other officer-instructors, PO. G.W. Knowles, Sarnia, Ont., and PO. H.R. Woodman, Diby Co., N.C.

Student airmen in the plane at the time of the fatal plunge included Sgt. B. Desmarias, son of L. Desmarias, 130 Berry st. St. Boniface, Man.; Sgt. D.W. Armstrong, Montreal; and Sgt. R.O. Barrett, Kings Co. N.S....

In January 1943, St. Andrew's Church in Sarnia held a memorial service for three parishioners, all members of the Royal Canadian Air Force, who had paid the supreme sacrifice in the previous year—George William Knowles, Donald Cameron MacGregor and Howard Fraser Thompson. The service was arranged at the request of family members with Rev. Dr. J.M. Macgillivray officiating. In his brief address, Dr. Macgillivray's words expressed the sentiment of many at the time:

These men, as well as others like them, went forth possessed, perhaps, of a spirit of adventure not unnatural in young men. But it was not only the call of adventure that led them to the King's service in the clouds. There was a deeper motive than that. They had a vision of a new and better world; a world free of tyranny, oppression, injustice and fear. They knew that the only way to secure such a world was by overthrowing forever the forces of evil now threatening mankind; and to that holy task they dedicated their lives. They have entered into the larger life; and to God's keeping we commend them in the Easter hope of a final resurrection to eternal life.

It is my personal conviction that they are not now far away from us, and I read to you as suggestive and appropriate some words written by a French soldier killed in 1915 during the First Great War: 'I believe the dead live close to the living, invisible but present; and perhaps it is they whom God sends to us in answer to our prayers, so that their spirit, which is His, may continue to guide us and inspire us.'

In late May 1943, Gordon and Catherine Knowles received a telegram from the R.C.A.F. Casualties Officer stating, DEEPLY REGRET TO ADVISE YOU THAT YOUR SON PILOT OFFICER GEORGE WILLIAM KNOWLES REPORTED MISSING BELIEVED KILLED IS FOR OFFICIAL PURPOSES PRESUMED TO HAVE DIED OCTOBER 8 1942 PLEASE ACCEPT MY PROFOUND SYMPATHY. The following month, George's name appeared on the published R.C.A.F. casualty list, and he was officially recorded as *Previously reported 'missing and believed killed' on active service in Canada, approximately four miles north Port George N.S., Bay of Fundy. Now 'presumed dead' for official purposes.* In October 1948, Gordon and Catherine Knowles received a War Service Gratuity of \$112.50 for the loss of their son. George Knowles, 23, has no known grave. His name is inscribed on the Ottawa War Memorial, Ottawa, Canada, Panel 1, Column 5.
SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, J, L, M, N, S, 2C, 2D, 7C, 8X, 8Y

KROHN, Charles Henry (#A/107660)

Charles Henry Krohn, at 20, was hoping to get married, but four days before he was to do so, he was shipped overseas. Within five months he was killed in action in The Italian Campaign.

He was born in Sarnia on April 20, 1924, the only son of Roy and Lettie Krohn. Roy (born in Brigden) and Lettie (born in Wallaceburg) Krohn were married in Sarnia on June 28, 1919. Unfortunately, Roy and Lettie separated when Charles and his two sisters, Dorothy and Thelma, were young. Roy lived at R.R. #1 Corunna and Lettie lived at 112 Cromwell Street, later 293 Shamrock Street, Sarnia. Years later, after marrying, Charles' sisters were Mrs. Dorothy Thompson and Mrs. Thelma Hamilton, both residing on Shamrock Street.

Charles lived with his father in Corunna where he attended Corunna Rural Public School until the end of grade seven, leaving school at age fifteen. He was interested in sports and liked hunting. Instead of school, Charles preferred work and he had a number of jobs in Sarnia prior to enlisting. They ranged from being a waiter at the Windsor Hotel in Sarnia (3 weeks), a labourer at Imperial Oil (3 months), and a pipe-fitter's helper at Carter Hall Rubber Co. (1 month), to being a labourer at Holmes Foundry (2 months), a seaman with Canadian Steamship Lines (5 months), and a labourer at Sarnia Grain Elevator (3 years).

Nineteen year-old Charles Krohn enlisted in the Canadian Army on August 9, 1943, in London, Ontario. He stood six feet tall, had blue eyes and brown hair, was single, and was residing with his father at R.R. #1 Corunna at the time. His ambition for after the war was to get into the field of motor mechanics. Charles volunteered for duty in the paratroops, but was recommended for basic infantry. From #1 District Depot in London, Charles received his army training at #12 Basic Training Centre in Chatham and, beginning in early November 1943, at A29 Canadian Infantry Training Centre (CITC) at Ipperwash. On March 26, 1944, he was transferred to #1 Training Brigade in Debert, Nova Scotia.

Besides his job, Charles also wanted to change his marital status before he went overseas. On April 3, 1944, Charles completed an "Application for Permission to Marry" form. On it, he applied for permission to marry Mary Louise Prenott of Cemetery Road (now Colborne Road), Sarnia, on or about April 11, 1944. He had known Mary Louise, born April 20, 1922 in Sarnia, for three years and wanted to get married before going overseas. The Battalion Chaplain recommended granting permission, which Charles received on April 8 from his Commanding Officer. Charles, however, did not get the opportunity to marry his future wife. Four days later, on April 12, 1944, after being granted permission to marry, Private Charles Krohn embarked overseas from Debert, Nova Scotia for the United Kingdom. He would never see Mary Louise again.

Charles Krohn arrived in the U.K. six days later and became a member of #3 Canadian Infantry Reinforcement Unit (CIRU). Approximately two weeks later, on May 4, 1944, Charles Krohn departed the U.K. bound for Italy. There he became a member of the 4th Princess Louise Dragoon Guards, Royal Canadian Armoured Corps (RCAC).

The **Italian Campaign**, the first sustained Canadian Army operation of the War, had begun approximately ten months earlier with the invasion of Sicily on July 10, 1943. The fierce fighting on the island would last more than four weeks, during which the Canadians would advance through difficult mountainous terrain, against an ever-stiffening German resistance. By August 17, the Germans had evacuated the island to the Italian mainland. In early September, Canadian and Allied forces would invade Italy. Though Italy surrendered shortly after, the occupying Germans made it clear their fight was not over. Liberating Italy would be a painstaking northward crawl, lasting 20 months, over a range of landscapes, through challenging weather, and against a series of well-protected defences held by some of the German army's best troops.

Private Charles Krohn joined in the advance northward, but for only four months. On September 23, 1944, he was killed in action while fighting in Italy. Charles' remains were buried on September 24 at a location recorded on the Army Field Service Card as "Italy 5 CDN ARM'D DIV CE GOTHIC LINE - Sh. 101/III MR.785985 Row "H" Grave 8".

Not long after her son was killed, Lettie Krohn on Shamrock Street in Sarnia received a letter that Charles had written on September 21, 1944, two days before he was killed. In the letter, Charles wrote that, *we are really giving it to them now*, and that he expected to be home for Christmas.

On October 2, 1944, Lettie Krohn received the following telegram from the Director of Records in Ottawa: MINISTER OF NATIONAL DEFENCE DEEPLY REGRETS TO INFORM YOU A107660 PRIVATE CHARLES HENRY KROHN HAS BEEN OFFICIALLY REPORTED KILLED IN ACTION TWENTYTHIRD SEPTEMBER 1944 STOP IF ANY FURTHER INFORMATION BECOMES AVAILABLE IT WILL BE FORWARDED AS SOON AS RECEIVED.

In late October 1944, the Brigadier, Acting Adjutant-General wrote Lettie:

Dear Mrs. Krohn:

It was with deep regret that I learned of the death of your son, A107660 Private Charles Henry Krohn, who gave his life in the Service of his Country in the Mediterranean Theatre of War, on the 23rd day of September, 1944.

From official information we have received, your son was killed in action against the enemy. You may be assured that any additional information received will be communicated to you without delay.

The Minister of National Defence and the Members of the Army Council have asked me to express to you and your family their sincere sympathy in your bereavement. We pay tribute to the sacrifice he so bravely made.

Charles Krohn was later officially recorded as, *Overseas casualty, killed in action, in the field (Italy)*. In July 1945, Lettie Krohn received a War Service Gratuity of \$152.86 for the loss of her only son. In March 1946, she received a letter from the Colonel, Director of Records, for Adjutant-General. Following is a portion of that letter:

Dear Madam:

Information has just been received from overseas that the remains of your son, A107660 Private Charles Henry Krohn, have been carefully exhumed from the original place of internment and reverently reburied in grave 4, row G, plot 5, of Cesena British Empire Cemetery, Cesena, Italy. Marked map is enclosed. This is a recognized military burial ground and will receive care and maintenance in perpetuity.

The grave will have been marked with a temporary cross which will be replaced in due course by a permanent headstone suitably inscribed. While it cannot now be stated when this work of permanent commemoration will begin, before any action is taken you will be communicated with and an opportunity will be given you to submit a short personal inscription of your own choice for engraving on the headstone...

Charles Krohn, 20, is buried in Cesena War Cemetery, Italy, Grave V, G, 4. On his headstone are inscribed the words, OUR ONLY SON. SADLY MISSED BY MOM AND DAD, SISTERS DOROTHY AND THELMA. SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 7C, 8X, 8Y

LANG, Wallace Ewing (#J/43946)

Wallace "Wally" Lang had always been a responsible young man while growing up in Sarnia. That sense of responsibility was evident when Wally, now a 22 year old pilot with the RCAF, decided to continue occupational flying after the war ended. On November 3, 1945, he was killed instantly in a flying accident during a training exercise.

He was born in Sarnia on March 4, 1923, the eldest child of John R. and Mae Elizabeth (nee Wallace) Lang, of Sarnia. John (born in Sarnia, the son of Scottish parents) and Mae (born in Buffalo, New York) Lang were married in Sarnia on October 2, 1920. John and Mae's oldest child was named after his mother's maiden name, but he later became known as "Wally". Wally had one brother, Donald; and one sister, Virginia Helen (born in Michigan, later to become Virginia Wray). At the time of Wallace's death, Virginia was in training as a cadet nurse at Lansing, Michigan.

Wally received his education at Johnston Memorial public school in Sarnia from 1929 to 1937 and then later at Sarnia Collegiate from September 1937 to October 1941 where he completed grade eleven. During his youth, he was involved in a variety of activities. In terms of sports, Wally participated in tennis and baseball and was active in promoting boys' sports in Sarnia. He was also involved in several groups; for instance, he was a Scout for one year and a member of the Cadets for three years. Wally was president of the Sarnia Boys' Work Board for two years and he also gave of his talents to activities at St. Paul's United Church. A few months before enlisting, he joined the Central Century Club.

Wally was a *Canadian Observer* carrier boy for a while, and in 1941, was employed as a news reporter for a short time. In mid-November of 1939, he had been elected local member for the Ontario Older Boys' Parliament. The election took place during a youth rally that was attended by approximately 100 young men from Sarnia, Point Edward and Wyoming, held at Devine Street United Church and St. John's Anglican Church. His first duty was to attend the parliament for a week in late December in Toronto.

After leaving high school, Wally worked as a paint brander in the shipping department at Imperial Oil Limited from 1941 to 1942. He was helping to financially support his mother, Mae, who was living at 270 South Mitton Street at the time. His father, John, was employed as a switchman with the Grand Trunk Western Railway and was residing at the Fritch Hotel in Detroit. At the time of Wally's death in 1945, his parents were still living apart.

John, a veteran of World War I who had been gassed at the Somme, might have influenced his son to enlist. Before Wally turned 18, he left Imperial Oil and applied to the RCAF, but was rejected. On November 4, 1942, at the age of nineteen and a half, he re-applied and was accepted in the Royal Canadian Air Force in Toronto. He stood five feet seven and a quarter inches tall, had brown eyes and brown hair, and was single. He was residing with his mother at 270 Mitton Street at the time, and he requested flying duties. He got his wish and Wally began months of extensive training.

From the #11 Recruiting Centre in Toronto and then #5 Manning Depot in Lachine, Quebec, he was transferred to RCAF 16 X Depot in Debert, Nova Scotia. In early July 1943, he continued his training at #6 Initial Training School (ITS) in Toronto and in November 1943 was at #5 Bombing and Gunnery School (B&GS) at Dafoe, Saskatchewan. After completing B&GS at Dafoe, he took a six-week course in navigation at the #5 Air Observer School (AOS) at Winnipeg, Manitoba. He was awarded his Air Bomber's Badge and commission as a Pilot Officer, on April 7, 1944 in Winnipeg. In late April 1944, Wally began four weeks of Commando training at #1 Aircrew Graduates Training School (AGTS) at Maitland, Nova Scotia.

Wally Lang embarked overseas from Halifax on May 25, 1944, arriving in the United Kingdom one week later. Originally stationed at #3 Personnel Reception Centre (PRC), Wally was transferred in mid-August to #8 (Observer) Advanced Flying Unit (AFU). Two months later, in early October 1944, he was training at #24 Operational Training Unit (OTU) in Vickers Wellington aircraft. During Christmas 1944, Wallace Lang was promoted to Flying Officer (and Air Bomber).

During the course of the war, one of this country's most significant contributions was the approximately 50,000 Canadians who served with the RCAF and RAF in **Bomber Command** operations. Next to Britain, Canada

was the largest contributor to Bomber Command, making up more than a third of all of Bomber Command personnel. The men who served in Bomber Command faced some of the most difficult odds of anyone fighting in the war.

In mid-March 1945, Wally was transferred to #76 Base, and two weeks later attached to RAF Dalton, an airfield used by Bomber Command, as a member of #1666 'Mohawk' Heavy Conversion Unit, RCAF. There he trained in Lancaster bombers. He had almost completed a tour of operations when the war in Europe ended on May 8th of 1945. On that day, he became a member of RCAF #433 Porcupine Squadron "Quis'y frotte s'y pique" (Who opposes it gets hurt), then operating Lancaster bombers, based at RAF Skipton-on-Swale, Yorkshire. One of the tasks of #433 Squadron were flights from Germany and Italy bringing back troops and POWs to the U.K.



F/O-BA Wallace Ewing Lang

Though the war in Europe was over, Wallace made the decision to continue on occupational flying duty. (Japan would surrender in mid-August 1945). In early October 1945, #433 Squadron disbanded. On October 2, 1945, Wally Lang became a member of RCAF #429 Bison Squadron "Fortunae nihil" (Nothing to chance), part of Bomber Command, No. 6 Group.

No. 429 Squadron had been formed in November 1942 as a night bomber squadron, based at East Moor and equipped with Vickers Wellington aircraft. In August 1943 the squadron moved to RAF Leeming, Yorkshire and converted to Handley Page Halifax aircraft. In March 1945, the squadron converted to Avro Lancasters. At the end of the war, the squadron was used to transport troops and liberated POWs back to the U.K.



Lancaster RA571

Wally was settling into post-war life in England. At the end of October 1945, he purchased a car for himself and stored it at his base. Only weeks later, on November 5, 1945, nearly three months after VJ-Day, Wally Lang was killed in a Lancaster flying accident at Boulton Bridge in Yorkshire, England.

On the morning of November 5, the crew of Lancaster I aircraft RA571 was tasked with flying an hour-long local flying exercise which involved a "George" test. On board were six of the regular aircrew, including Wallace Lang, and two ground crew. In all probability they would only have been in England for a few more weeks before returning home to Canada. After take-off from RAF Leeming, Yorkshire at 11:04 hours the flight took them south and on their return north they were met with poor weather. The conditions in the Pennines in the mid-morning of this day were described as poor, with mist and low cloud covering the areas of high ground. As the aircraft flew into these conditions it descended below the clouds to get a visual fix on the ground. Unknown to them, high ground lay in front of them.

At 12:05 hours, the aircraft struck the southern side of Beamsley Beacon some fifty feet from the summit. It disintegrated on impact and burst into flames. Four of the eight airmen were killed in the impact, and of the four survivors, one, Sgt. Joseph Belanger, was less seriously injured and was the one to go for help. The aircraft was heard to fly over the area by people on the ground and upon hearing the crash, many made their way up to the crash site which took some time locating in thick mist. The other three survivors—F/O Alan Coleman, F/Sgt. Francis Moran and LAC Reginald Henderson--were taken down to waiting ambulances and then to hospital where they recovered. The four airmen killed were F/O Wallace Ewing Lang, F/O Walter Fred Conley, Cpl. William John Ellis and F/S Arnold Emerson Stinson.

Several days later, Mae, still living on Mitton Street, received a telegram informing her that her son, FLYING OFFICER WALLACE E LANG HAS BEEN REPORTED KILLED IN A FLYING ACCIDENT AT BOULTON BRIDGE YORKSHIRE ENGLAND ON NOVEMBER 5. No other details were given, but the message said that a letter would follow.

In mid-November 1945, Mae received the following letter from No. 429 Squadron, R.C.A.F.:

Dear Mrs. Lang,

Prior to the arrival of this letter you will have received a telegram informing you that your son, Flying Officer Wallace Ewing Lang, was killed in a flying accident on 5th November, 1945. I am very sorry to have to confirm this.

Wally and his crew were engaged in a flight during the morning of November 5th, and toward the end of the exercise the aircraft became enveloped by cloud. The aircraft was lowered in an attempt to find clear sky but crashed into a hill whose summit was covered by the low cloud. Your son and three other members of his crew were instantly killed and four members were seriously injured as a result of this accident which occurred near Ilkley, Yorkshire.

Unfortunately, owing to the time taken to communicate under present conditions, it was not possible to ascertain your wishes regarding the funeral and I had therefore to arrange for your son's burial without reference to you. You will, I am sure, understand the necessity for this action and I sincerely trust that the arrangements we were able to make were what you would have wished.

Your son's funeral took place at Harrogate on the 12th of November at 10.30 a.m. The service was conducted by Squadron Leader A.S. Roblin and Squadron Leader T.D. Jones, the Protestant Chaplains of this Station, in the chapel attached to the cemetery, after which his body was interred in the R.A.F. Regional Cemetery, together with the three of his comrades who died with him. Full Service Honours were accorded, the casket being carried by men of his own Squadron. It was covered with the Union Jack and the Last Post was sounded at the end of the service. A firing party was also provided.

I am enclosing herewith photographs taken of the funeral and of the graves, the number of your son's grave is K.2. You will wish to know that all war graves are taken care of by the Imperial War Graves Commission, Wooburn House, Wooburn Green,, Bucks., whose duty it is to arrange both for the temporary marking of the grave by a wooden cross and ultimately for the erection of a permanent headstone. I am instructed to explain also that the question of re-interment, if this were desired, could only be considered at a later date.

Wally's personal effects have been gathered together and sent to the Royal Air Force Depository from where they will be forwarded to the Administrator of Estates, Ottawa, who will be writing to you in this respect in due course.

I should like to assure you how much we all honour the unselfish sacrifice your son has made so far from his home in the service of his country and the Empire. It may also give you some satisfaction to know that Wally was regarded as a very good air bomber and that his loss is a severe blow, not only to ourselves as his colleagues, but to the Squadron as an operational Unit. May I now express the great sympathy which all of us feel with you in the sad loss which you have sustained.

Also in mid-November 1945, Mae received another letter, this from the Air Marshal, Chief of the Air Staff.
Dear Mrs. Lang:

I have learned with deep regret of the death of your son, Flying Officer Wallace Ewing Lang, on Active Service Overseas on November 5th, 1945, and I wish to offer you and the members of your family my sincere and heartfelt sympathy.

It is most lamentable that a promising career should be thus terminated and I would like you to know that his loss is greatly deplored by all those with whom he was serving.

Wallace Lang was later officially recorded as, *Killed as a result of a flying accident at Boulton Bridge, Yorkshire, England (Air Test Flight)*. In mid-June 1946, John and Mae received a War Service Gratuity of \$545.62 for the loss of their son Wallace. In mid-February 1947, Mae received the following letter from the Wing Commander for Chief of the Air Staff:

Dear Mrs. Lang:

It is a privilege to have the opportunity of sending you the Operational Wings and Certificate in recognition of the gallant services rendered by your son, Flying Officer W.E. Lang. I realize there is little which may be said or done to lessen your sorrow, but it is my hope that these "Wings", indicative of operations against the enemy, will be a treasured memento of a young life offered on the altar of freedom in defence of his Home and Country.

Wallace "Wally" Lang, 22, is buried in Harrogate (Stonefall) Cemetery, Yorkshire, United Kingdom, Section G, Row K, Grave 2. On the summit of Beamsley Beacon, there is a memorial plaque commemorating the crash that includes the names of the survivors and those lost in the crash. On his Wallace Lang's grave are inscribed the words, FATHER IN THY GRACIOUS KEEPING LEAVE WE NOW OUR DEAR ONE SLEEPING. His name is also inscribed on the Sarnia Refinery Plaque. Unveiled in 1949, the plaque has the names of 24 Sarnia Imperial Oil employees who made the ultimate sacrifice in World War II.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, J, L, N, S, 2C, 2D, 4B, 6H, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10B, 10U

LARSON, Paul Adolph (#M/50876)

Paul Adolph Larson was so determined to get overseas that he reverted from Acting Corporal to Private to do so. He was killed in the later stages of the Italian Campaign, ironically on the day his daughter in Sarnia, whom he never met, celebrated her first birthday.

Paul Larson was born in Provost, Alberta on May 10, 1921, the son of Henry and Gunhild Larson, of Provost, Alberta. Henry and Gunhild Larson were married on May 30, 1918 in Rosenheim, Alberta. The Larsons were blessed with seven children: six sons--Lewis, Clarence, Norman, Henry, Paul and Alvin (would serve in the RCAF)--and one daughter, Thelma. Sadly, when Paul was seventeen, the patriarch of the family, Henry, passed away at the age of 48 on August 25, 1938.

At age fourteen, Paul, who could also speak Norwegian, left school after grade eight and worked on the family farm for six years. We know little about Paul's life before he enlisted other than he was a member of the 19th Alberta Dragoons, Royal Canadian Artillery from September 1940 to June 1941 and that he worked as a truck driver, and was residing with his mother in Provost, Alberta.

Twenty year-old Paul Larson enlisted in the Canadian Army on June 3, 1941 in Calgary, Alberta. One of his reasons for joining the army was to "get out and see the world." He stood five feet nine and a half inches tall, had grey eyes and light brown hair, was single, and was residing at home with his mother at the time.

From #13 District Depot in Calgary, Paul received his army training at the Canadian Army Training School (CATS) in Hamilton; at #12 Basic Training Centre (BTC) in Chatham; and at A-29 Advanced Infantry Training Centre (AITC) in Listowel. In mid-November 1942, he continued his training at A29 Canadian Infantry Training Centre (CITC) at Camp Ipperwash and also took a 3-week Motor Mechanics course in Windsor. During his training, he became qualified as a driver of wheeled and track carriers and worked as a driver instructor on universal carriers. His Commanding Officer wrote that Paul, *gave a very good report on his ability and co-operation as an instructor... Worthy of promotion.*

Paul Larson advanced to the rank of Acting Corporal and remained at Ipperwash until mid-August 1943. This wasn't the only change in his life, however. From August 11 to August 16, Paul was granted six days special leave to get married. Acting Corporal Paul Larson married Mary Louise (nee Baikie) on August 14, 1943 in St. George's Church, Sarnia. Mary Louise was a Private in the Canadian Women's Army Corps (CWAC) based at #2

Vocational Training School (VTS) in Toronto. She was the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. F.W. Baikie of Sarnia. In the wedding party were Cpl. Harry Keen and Kay Baikie.

After his leave, Paul was transferred temporarily to #6 Basic Training Centre in Stratford and then in early September 1943, to #1 Transit Camp in Windsor, Nova Scotia. Paul was, according to his Commanding Officer, *anxious to go overseas*, and would revert to Private to do so. He left for the United Kingdom on September 14, 1943, and would never meet his daughter, Patricia Ann Larson, born February 24, 1944 at Sarnia General Hospital.



Corporal Paul Adolph Larson

After arriving in the United Kingdom on September 20, 1943, Paul continued his training there as a member of #1 Canadian Infantry Reinforcement Unit (CIRU), with the rank of Private. Four months later, on January 13, 1944, Paul embarked from the U.K, arriving in Italy on January 27, 1944, as a member of the Seaforth Highlanders of Canada, Royal Canadian Infantry Corps (RCIC).

The **Italian Campaign**, the first sustained Canadian Army operation of the War, had begun with the invasion of Sicily on July 10, 1943. The fierce fighting on the island would last more than four weeks, during which the Canadians would advance through difficult mountainous terrain, against an ever-stiffening German resistance. By August 17, the Germans had evacuated the island to the Italian mainland. In early September, Canadian and Allied forces would invade Italy. Though Italy surrendered shortly after, the occupying Germans made it clear their fight was not over. Liberating Italy would be a painstaking northward crawl, lasting 20 months, over a range of landscapes, through challenging weather, and against a series of well-protected defences held by some of the German army's best troops. The campaign came at a cost of more than 26,000 Canadian casualties including nearly 6,000 Canadians killed.

Paul Larson advanced northward through Italy with the Seaforth Highlanders and rose in rank to Acting Sergeant (the day his daughter was born in Sarnia), and later to the rank of Acting Corporal. At the very end of the Italian Campaign, on February 24, 1945, Corporal Paul Larson was killed while fighting in Italy. Ironically, it was the day his daughter, Patricia, celebrated her first birthday in Sarnia. His remains were buried on February 24 at a location recorded on the Army Field Service Card as "Italy, 2 CIB Cemetery Sh 89/III Ravenna W. MR 435395".

In early March of 1945, Mary Louise, now residing with her parents at 120 Cobden Street, received a telegram from Ottawa informing her that her husband, CORPORAL PAUL LARSON HAS BEEN KILLED IN ACTION OVERSEAS. Shortly after, his death was confirmed when Captain (the Reverend) H. Durnford, the chaplain of the unit, sent a letter telling Mary of the high esteem in which her husband Corporal Paul Larson was regarded by his officers and fellow soldiers in the regiment.

Also in early March 1945, Mary received the following letter from the Brigadier, Acting Adjutant-General: *Dear Mrs. Larson:*

It was with deep regret that I learned of the death of your husband, M50876 Corporal Paul Adolph Larson, who gave his life in the Service of his Country in the Mediterranean Theatre of War on the 24th day of February, 1945.

From official information we have received, your husband was killed in action against the enemy. You may be assured that any additional information received will be communicated to you without delay.

The Minister of National Defence and the Members of the Army Council have asked me to express to you and your family their sincere sympathy in your bereavement. We pay tribute to the sacrifice he so bravely made.

In mid-May of 1945, a short memorial service for Corporal Paul Larson was held during the morning service at St. George's Church, Sarnia. In June 1945, Mary received a War Service Gratuity of \$566.09 for the loss of her husband Paul.

The Colonel, Director of Records, for Adjutant-General wrote Mary in mid-August, 1946.

Dear Madam:

Information has just been received from overseas that the remains of your husband, M50876, Corporal Paul Adolph Larson, have been carefully exhumed from the original place of internment and reverently reburied in grave 22, row F, plot 5, of Ravenna British Empire Cemetery, five miles West of Ravenna, Italy. Marked map is enclosed. This is a recognized military burial ground and will receive care and maintenance in perpetuity.

The grave will have been marked with a temporary cross which will be replaced in due course by a permanent headstone suitably inscribed. While it cannot now be stated when this work of permanent commemoration will begin, before any action is taken you will be communicated with and an opportunity will be given you to submit a short personal inscription of your own choice for engraving on the headstone...

Paul Larson left behind his widowed mother, his brothers and sister, his bride of one and a half years Mary Louise, and their one year-old daughter Patricia. Paul Larson, 23, is buried in Ravenna War Cemetery, Italy, Grave V.F.22.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 6O, 7C, 8X, 8Y

LAVERS, William Wilfred Henry (#R/83468)

William Henry Lavers spent ten months training with the RCAF and was assessed as "cheerful, confident, enthusiastic, and keen." Six months after William, 23, arrived in England, his Wellington bomber was shot down in a mission over Germany. To this day no trace of the aircraft or any of its crew has been recovered.

William Lavers was born in Grand Mere, Quebec on August 27, 1919, the only child of Robert Henry and Maria Theresa (nee Kennedy) Lavers. Robert and Maria Lavers were both born in Montreal, and were married on June 5, 1918 in Montreal. On September 5, 1919, William was baptized at his parents' home parish in Granby, Quebec. His godparents were Wilfred Kennedy (represented by Elmer Cleary) and Lucy Kennedy.

In March 1925, when William was six, the Lavers family moved to Windsor, Ontario, where Robert supported his family by working as an accountant. William attended St. Anne's (1927-1931) and Victoria (1931-1934) Elementary Schools in Windsor, Ontario. He then attended Kennedy Collegiate in Windsor from 1934 to 1939. While at high school, William was very active in sports including football, hockey and softball extensively, as well as bowling and baseball. His hobbies included model aircraft and mechanical drafting. William had just graduated from high school when his mother, Maria Theresa, passed away at the age of 42 in February 1939.

Following his mother's death, from June to August 1939, William worked as a clerk at Parkdale Wine Store in Windsor, until the store moved to Toronto. He then returned to Assumption High School in 1939-1940 and took night school courses in mechanical drafting in 1940-1941. Beginning in October 1940, William worked as a Pipefitter's Helper with Brunner Mond. in Amherstburg until he enlisted.

Twenty-one-year-old William Lavers enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force on March 10, 1941 in Windsor. He stood five feet eleven inches tall, had hazel eyes and black hair, was single, and was residing at 1363 Benjamin Avenue in Windsor with his father Robert at the time. From the Recruiting Centre in Windsor and then #1 Manning Depot in Toronto, William began his air training at #1 Wireless School (WS) in Montreal and then #3 Initial Training School (ITS) in Victoriaville, Quebec beginning in June 1941.

Four months after enlisting, from July 16 to July 30, 1941, William had a 14-day leave. It was during his leave, on July 28, 1941, that he married Marie Delia Cloutier, 21, of Windsor in St. Alphonse Roman Catholic Church in Windsor. Marie was the daughter of Theophile Cloutier and Mary Jane Langis. Witnesses to the marriage were Wilfred Cloutier and Gertrude Menard. The newlywed couple resided at 1363 Benjamin Avenue, Windsor. Marie and "Wilf" as his wife called him, had one child together, a daughter, Carolyn "Lyn" Theresa Lavers.

William completed his training at #3 ITS in August 1941. His Commanding Officer described William as *Very bright. Cheerful. Good personality. Good appearance. Extremely enthusiastic about the Force. Confident. Keen.* William then continued his training at #9 Air Observer School (AOS) in St. John's, where he was awarded his Air Observer's Badge on December 6, 1941. William then continued training at #6 Bombing and Gunnery School (B&GS) in Mountain View, Ontario, and was then transferred to #2 Air Navigation School (ANS) in Pennfield Ridge, New Brunswick. On January 13, 1942, he was stationed at #1Y Depot in Halifax.



FS-O William W.H. Lavers (front center)

On February 8, 1942, William Lavers embarked overseas from Halifax for the United Kingdom. Initially posted to #3 Personnel Reception Centre, on April 8, 1942 he became a member of #2 (Observer) Advance Flying Unit (AFU). One month later, on May 12, 1942, he became a member of #22 Operational Training Unit (OTU). On July 30, 1942, he became a member of #101 Squadron, and on August 15, 1942, he became a member of RAF #75 New Zealand Squadron "Ake Ake Kia Kaha" (For ever and ever be strong), part of **Bomber Command**, with the rank of Flight Sergeant-Observer.

During the course of the war, one of this country's most significant contributions was the approximately 50,000 Canadians who served with the RCAF and RAF in Bomber Command operations. Next to Britain, Canada was the largest contributor to Bomber Command, making up more than a third of all of Bomber Command personnel. The men who served in Bomber Command faced some of the most difficult odds of anyone fighting in the war.

No. 75 New Zealand Squadron was the only Commonwealth Squadron to include its country name in its official title. Over the course of the war, it operated first with Vickers Wellington, later with the Short Stirling, and finally the Avro Lancaster bomber. During William's time with the squadron, it was based out of RAF Mildenhall. Over the course of the war, the RAF #75 carried out the fourth highest number of raids of any Bomber Command heavy squadron, but it also suffered the second highest casualty rate.

William served with #75 Squadron for less than one month. On the night of September 10, 1942, William and his crew were aboard their Wellington III bomber BJ968 (markings AA-W) that took off from RAF Mildenhall on a night operation targeting Dusseldorf. On that fateful night, their plane was shot down and its remnants and crew never located or recovered. Along with Flight Sergeant-Observer William Lavers, also killed were FS.s Frank Burrill, Ralph Ernest Gorman, Michael Bertram St. Louis and Randolph Cruickshank Smart (RNZAK). Of the 479 aircraft that took part in the operation there were 33 losses.

A few days following the aircraft's disappearance, Marie, residing at 461 Vera Place, Windsor, received a telegram from the Director of Records in Ottawa informing her that her husband, SERGEANT WILFRED WILLIAM HENRY LAVERS IS REPORTED MISSING ON ACTIVE SERVICE. No other details were provided.

In late September 1942, Marie received a letter from a Flying Officer, R.C.A.F. Casualties Officer, for Chief of the Air Staff. Following is a portion of that letter:

Dear Mrs. Lavers:

It is my painful duty to confirm the telegram recently received by you which informed you that your husband, Sergeant Wilfred William Henry Lavers, is reported missing on Active Service.

Advice has been received from the Royal Canadian Air Force Casualties Officer, Overseas, that your husband was a member of the crew of an aircraft which failed to return to its base after air operations, due to enemy action, on September 10th, 1942. There were three other members of the Royal Canadian Air Force in the crew and they also have been reported missing. Since you may wish to know their names and next-of-kin we are listing them below...

I desire to point out that this does not necessarily mean that your husband has been killed or wounded. It might be that he is a prisoner of war and inquiries have been made through the International Red Cross Society and all other appropriate sources. Official announcement that your husband has been reported missing will not be made through the Press for at least five weeks and, until then, you are requested not to give any information to the Press or Radio. It is possible that he has landed in enemy territory and in that event publicity at this time might imperil his chance to escape.

This is all the information that we have at these Headquarters but your husband's Commanding Officer is writing you a letter which you should receive shortly and which will give you all available details. Please be assured that any further information received will be communicated to you immediately.

May I join with you in the hope that better news will be forthcoming in the near future.

In early November 1942, Robert Lavers, then residing in Amherstburg, received a letter from the Royal Canadian Air Force Casualties Officer, for Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief R.C.A.F. Overseas. Following is a portion of that letter:

Dear Sir,

This will acknowledge receipt of your letter of the 30th September 1942 concerning your son Can/R.83468 Sergeant William Wilfred Henry LAVERS, Royal Canadian Air Force.

The Wellington aircraft of which your son was the navigator and air bomber took off on the night of the 11th September 1942, detailed to carry out an operational sortie against the enemy. From the time of the take-off nothing further has been heard. All members of the crew are reported missing.

I have forwarded a copy of your letter to the Commanding Officer of your son's Unit with a request that he write to you giving the particulars you require... In the event of his being reported a prisoner of war you will be notified immediately and instructions will be sent to you regarding communication.

Your name has been added to my records and you may rest assured that you will be notified, as soon as any further information is received, concerning your son. May I assure you of the sincere sympathy of the Department with you in your great anxiety.

William Lavers was later officially recorded as, *Previously reported missing after air operations, now for official purposes, presumed dead, overseas.* In late October 1944, Marie received the following letter from R.C.A.F. Records Officer, for Chief of the Air Staff in Ottawa:

Dear Mrs. Lavers:

I am directed to advise you that your husband, Wilfred William Henry Lavers, has been promoted to the rank of Flight Sergeant with effect from June 6th, 1942.

This promotion follows a procedure adopted by the Royal Canadian Air Force, that all aircrew members of the service if recommended by their Commanding Officer should at the end of the required lapse of time from their last promotion be promoted to higher rank. This promotion procedure has been made retroactive in order to extend the same recognition to those who lost their lives.

It is my sincere hope that you may find sustaining comfort in the knowledge that the qualities of your gallant son are thus recognized, and it is regretted that this information could not be passed to you at an earlier date but the delay in notifying you was unavoidable. May I express to you and the members of your family my profound sympathy.

In mid-June 1946, Robert Lavers in Amherstburg received the following letter from the R.C.A.F. Records Officer in Ottawa:

Dear Mr. Lavers:

It is a privilege to have the opportunity of sending you the Operational Wings and Certificate in recognition of the gallant services rendered by your son Flight Sergeant W.W.H. Lavers. I realize there is little which may be said or done to lessen your sorrow, but it is my hope that these "Wings", indicative of operations against the enemy,

will be a treasured memento of a young life offered on the altar of freedom in defence of his Home and Country.

William Lavers and his crew members have no known grave, but they are all memorialized at Runnymede Memorial in Surrey, United Kingdom, Panel 105. William Lavers, 23, left behind his widowed father, Robert, in Amherstburg, his young wife Marie, and their three-month old daughter Lyn, who never got to meet her dad.

Years later, William's widow, Marie Delia Lavers, married Ed Westfall of Sarnia, and the couple moved to 511 Cathcart Drive. In mid-June 1952, Marie Westfall (formerly Lavers), received the following letter from the Wing Commander, R.C.A.F. Casualties Officer, for Chief of the Air Staff:

Dear Mrs. Westfall:

It is with reluctance that after so long an interval, I must refer to the loss of your former husband, Flight Sergeant Wilfred Henry Lavers, but due to the lack of any information concerning him since he was reported missing, it must be regretfully accepted and officially recorded that he does not have a "known" grave.

Due to the extreme hazards attending air operations there are, unhappily many thousands of British aircrew boys who do not have "known" graves and all will be commemorated on General Memorials that will be erected at a number of locations by the Imperial War Graves Commission (of which Canada is a member), each Memorial representative of a theatre of operations. One of these Memorials will be erected at Runnymede, England, and the name of your former husband will appear on that Memorial.

Marie and Ed Westfall would become the parents of ten children of their own. Carolyn "Lyn" Theresa, the daughter of William and Marie, took the name Westfall. She was raised surrounded by the love of her mother, stepfather and ten brothers and sisters growing up in Sarnia and Point Edward. Lyn Westfall created a painting to honour her late father, "Dies Irae (Day of Anger)", which can be found on You-tube.

SOURCES: C, D, E, F, L, M, 2C, 2D, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10B, 10U, b

LECKIE, John Lyle (#J/38412)

John Lyle Leckie was a successful student, was active in his church and in sports, and was well on his way to a successful career as a draftsman when he made the decision to fight for others. He gave his life for Canada while serving in one of the most dangerous postings in the war.



A young John Lyle Leckie (center)
with his older siblings Marjorie and Ken



John Lyle Leckie

He was born in Sarnia on March 28, 1917, the youngest son of William Christopher and Agnes May (nee Niblock) Leckie, of 376 Cromwell Street, Sarnia. William (born in Carlton Place, Lanark County, Ontario) and Agnes (born in Parkhill, Middlesex, Ontario) Leckie were married in Parkhill, Ontario on April 8, 1908. William was employed as a carpenter/builder in Sarnia. John Leckie had one brother, Kenneth Paul (born 1910), and one sister, Marjorie Isabel (born 1913). John received his education at Johnston Memorial School in Sarnia (1927-1931) and then at Sarnia Collegiate beginning in 1931, graduating in 1936 in drafting. While at school he was on the editorial

staff of the Collegiate Magazine. He was a member of Central United Church serving as an usher, and he was one of the older members of the Century Club, being very interested in boys' work. He enjoyed participating in skiing, tennis, handball and golf. In 1936, after leaving school, he accepted a job in Peterborough and served a four-year apprenticeship for General Electric in practical training before working as a draughtsman for them in 1940-41. He also served with the Prince of Wales Rangers as a Private in Peterborough in 1940-41. In 1941, he moved to Toronto and worked as a draughtsman for De Havilland Aircraft and was employed there until he enlisted for service.

Twenty-five-year-old John Leckie enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force on June 24, 1942 in Toronto. He stood five feet eleven inches tall, had brown eyes and brown hair, was single, and he requested flying duties. After the war he planned to take engineering courses. After leaving #11 Recruiting Centre, and then #1 Manning Depot both in Toronto, John received his air training at #6 Initial Training School (ITS) in Toronto; then went to #4 Bombing and Gunnery School (B&GS) in Fingal; and #1 Air Observer School (AOS) in Malton, Ontario. The Commanding Officer at #4 B&GS wrote of John, *Effervescent personality who can be entrusted with any responsibilities*. John was awarded his Air Bomber Badge on November 17, 1943 in Malton. He was commissioned as a Pilot Officer and, after a 14-day leave at home, was transferred to #1 Y Depot in Halifax in early December 1943. In January 1944, John trained at #3 Aircrew Graduate Training School (AGTS) in Three Rivers, Quebec, and in February 1944, he trained at #1 Aircrew Graduate Training School (AGTS) in Maitland, Nova Scotia (taking a commando course). On February 18, 1944, John was stationed at #1 Y Depot in Lachine, Quebec.



Flying Officer-Bomb Aimer John Lyle Leckie

On March 30, 1944, John Leckie embarked overseas from Halifax bound for the United Kingdom. From #3 Personnel Reception Centre, John continued his training in the U.K. as a member of #1 (Observer) Advance Flying Unit (AFU), and then #28 Operational Training Unit (OTU) at Wymeswold. On October 29, 1944, he became a member of RAF #153 Squadron "Noctivitus" (We see by night), part of **Bomber Command**, with the rank of Flying Officer-Bomb Aimer.

During the course of the war, one of this country's most significant contributions was the approximately 50,000 Canadians who served with the RCAF and RAF in Bomber Command operations. Next to Britain itself, Canada was the largest contributor to Bomber Command, making up more than a third of all of Bomber Command personnel. The men who served in Bomber Command faced some of the most difficult odds of anyone fighting in the war.

No. 153 Squadron had two incarnations during the war, first as a night fighter squadron operating in England and in the Mediterranean, and then as a Lancaster squadron in Bomber Command. During John's time with the squadron, it was operating with Avro Lancasters based out of RAF Scampton, Lincoln, England. He would take part in twelve missions over enemy territory.

On the night of December 17, 1944, John Leckie and his crew of Lancaster III aircraft PB633 (markings P4-

J) were one of 18 aircraft detailed from No. 153 Squadron base at Scampton, Lincoln. They were to take part in an attack on Ulm, Germany that night. After taking off from their base, nothing was heard from the aircraft, and it went missing. It was later determined that while returning from Ulm, Lancaster PB633 was involved in a mid-air collision with another Lancaster and crashed near Laon (Aisne) in France. According to the #153 Wing Commander, "Enemy opposition consisted of only two or three bursts of flak, no fighters were seen, and searchlights were ineffective." The aircraft crashed at approximately 18:00 hours on December 17, 1944, ½ mile south of Vienne-la-Ville, France. Along with Flying Officer-Bomb Aimer John Lyle Leckie, also killed were F/O.s Harold Harrison Schopp, George Donald Frederick Hetherington and Sgt. Edward Whelan Davies (RAF). Three other Canadians in the crew—FS. R. Taylor, Sgt.s A.G. Pratt, and H. Cuthbertson, would survive the crash unharmed and were returned to their unit on Dec. 28, 1944.

In late December 1944, William and Agnes Leckie on Cromwell Street received a telegram from Ottawa informing them that their son, FLYING OFFICER JOHN LYLE LECKIE WAS MISSING AFTER AIR OPERATIONS OVERSEAS. Also in late December 1944, Agnes received the following letter from the Wing Commander, No. 153 Squadron, RAF, Scampton, Lincoln, England:

Dear Mrs. Leckie,

May I be permitted to express my own and the Squadron's sincere sympathy with you in the sad news concerning your son, Flying Officer John Lyle Leckie.

The aircraft of which he was the Air Bomber took off to attack Ulm on the night of the 17th December 1944 and nothing further has been heard. You may be aware that in quite a large percentage of cases aircrew reported missing are eventually reported prisoner of war and I hope that this may give you some comfort in your anxiety. Your son was a most efficient Air Bomber and his loss is deeply regretted. I would like you to know how greatly we all honour the sacrifice he has made so far from his home country in the service of the United Nations.

His effects have been collected and sent to the Royal Air Force Central Depository where they will be held until better news is received, or for a period of at least six months, before they are forwarded to you through the Administrator of Estates, Ottawa. In the meantime you may rest assured that should any news of your son be received you will be notified immediately.

At the end of December 1944, an investigation was conducted into the circumstances of the crash by interviewing the survivors. Following are portions of the report and interviews:

Aircraft was flying at 4,000-4,500 feet and had just come out of cloud... At approximately 2115 hours, aircraft was struck forward – appeared to be under pilot's cabin – and was lifted upward. Captain immediately gave the order, "Jump, jump". Flight Engineer (E.W. Davies) then asked if everything was O.K., Captain then said, "Emergency, jump, jump". Wireless Operator (R. Taylor) put on parachute and went to rear door and joined the two Gunners (A.G. Pratt and H. Cuthbertson) who were already there and had the door open. Then all baled out in turn with Wireless Operator leaving last. Approximately 30 seconds after leaving the aircraft, the aircraft was heard to crash.

From F/S R. Taylor, Wireless Operator: After the plane crashed I landed in a swamp near a small stream and found myself in water up to my waist. Immediately I was free of my 'chute I tried to find my way out. On the first attempt I just travelled in a circle. From there I managed to get a better bearing on the country and made my way to high ground... On the main road I proceeded in the direction of the aircraft which was still burning. When I arrived at the burning aircraft there were American troops from the 29th Infantry Division Security Troops (U.S.A.) there. A guard was left and two soldiers and one Lieutenant went with me to try to find the two Gunners that had baled out before me, in case they had sustained any injuries. Approximately an hour after... we located Sgt Pratt, the Mid Upper Gunner, in a French farm house... The next morning, I proceeded with a Lieutenant to the crashed aircraft to identify any personnel that I could. I managed to identify as best I could, parts of equipment and personal clothing which were on the crew. From there we located Sgt. Cuthbertson at the French farm house... They would be flown out of Laon, France on December 24 in an American C.47 to Bristol, England.

From Sgt. A.G. Pratt, Mid-upper Gunner: I was the first to jump. I opened the door and the Rear Gunner was just putting on his 'chute. I said "Come on Hugh" and then I jumped. I landed in water about a foot deep and the 'chute dragged me about 10 feet before I could release it. I got out of the water and started to head for the aircraft which I could see because it was burning. It would be about 4 to 5 miles away. I came to some more water and it looked pretty deep so I decided I had better not try and go through it. I started back and I thought I heard someone shouting, and I saw a light. I headed for the light but it went out. I came to a farm house and went in. They were French people. They gave me dry socks and some food. I tried to get the Military Police by telephone but the French people

couldn't understand me. About an hour after I came to the farm house the Wireless Operator and American soldiers came and they took us to their camp. The next day we picked up the other Gunner and the American Lieutenant took us to an aerodrome not far from Laon...

From Sgt. G. Cuthbertson, Rear Gunner: Upon leaving the aircraft via back fuselage door, I pulled parachute release and parachute shot up O.K. Floated down for about 40 seconds when our aircraft hit the ground exploding and bursting into flames. In the glow I saw three parachutes well up in the air. The Mid-Upper Gunner had gone first so I took the 'chutes to be other members of our crew, one being the W/Op. Floated down quite steadily until very near the ground when the ground wind started swinging my body. After a very short time I realized I was going to land in water so I inflated my Mae West and noted the closest way out to dry ground. Upon striking the water I immediately released the parachute harness and stood up. Though I had gone under water upon landing it was just a hole and the water though up to chest was not over the waist in most places. Having noted a light, or as I thought a star, I set out to reach the shore. The star turned out to be an aircraft with lights on. After wandering around in ice-cold water for nearly an hour I made for a large tree and remained there till morning. During the night there were 2 trains passed about ¾ miles away down the railroad line and across the water from me. At 7.30 a.m. I made my way through the water again to the railroad. Seeing a farm house in the distance I went there and had a cup of coffee and the people called the M.Ps. The M.Ps came with Taylor and we were taken to their billet, 29th Infantry Security Troops. From there we were taken to Laon, a landing (emergency) strip and American base. We were fogged in until Sunday when we flew back with an American Dakota to Bristol...

Of the crew of Lancaster PB633, FS. R. Taylor, Sgt.s A.G. Pratt, and H. Cuthbertson baled out and returned safely to England. F/O Hetherington and Sgt. Davies also attempted to bale out, but apparently came in contact with one of the propellers and their bodies were found with parachutes attached about a mile from the crash. The remaining two members; F/O-Bomb Aimer J.L. Leckie and F/O-Pilot H.H. Schopp, went down with the aircraft which crashed and burned near Laon... F/S Taylor returned to the crash the following day, December 18th, with an American officer and identified parts of equipment and personal clothing which were undoubtedly the property of F/O Leckie and F/O Schopp...

It was later determined that the remains of the dead airmen had been buried on December 20, 1944 in U.S. Military Cemetery, #1 Champigneul, Marne, France. F/O G.D. Hetherington was buried in Plot D, Row 2, Grave 39, and Sgt E.W. Davies was buried in Plot D, Row 2, Grave 40. In May 1945, the remains in Plot D, Row 2, Grave 42 were disinterred to determine the identity of the remains there. Inside Grave 42 were the remains of two deceased airmen. Although the remains were badly decomposed and severely mutilated, it was determined that they were those of F/O John Leckie and F/O H.H. Schopp. A red circled identification tag was found among the remains showing "Can J 38412, Officer J.L. Leckie, RCAF", along with a few pieces of a blue uniform and a cotton undershirt. The remains would be exhumed and reburied in Dieppe Canadian War Cemetery.

John Leckie's death was later officially recorded as, *Previously reported "missing" after air operations (over Ulm Germany), now reported "killed" during air operations, overseas.* In December 1945, William and Agnes Leckie received a War Service Gratuity of \$348.53 for the loss of their youngest son John. Twenty-seven-year-old John Lyle Leckie is buried in Dieppe Canadian War Cemetery, Hautot-Sur-Mer, Seine-Maritime, France, Grave N.8. On his headstone are inscribed the words, HE GAVE HIS LIFE FOR OTHERS.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, J, L, M, N, S, 2C, 2D, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10B, 10U

LEE, Thomas Edwin (#J/89415)

Thomas Edwin Lee was only eighteen years old when he decided to serve his country. He gave his life in defence of freedom while serving in one of the most dangerous postings in the war. His public funeral, held against German orders, is a poignant reminder that acts of compassion can occur even amid the horrors of war.

He was born in Petrolia on September 18, 1922, the son of Edwin and Irene (nee Miller) Lee, of 244 North Christina Street, Sarnia. Edwin (born in Petrolia) and Irene (born in Evansville, Indiana) Lee were married on September 3, 1920 in Detroit, Michigan. Thomas had four siblings: two brothers--Joseph Conrad (who served in the R.C.N.V.R., *H.M.C.S. Givenchy*), and Ronald Patrick; and two sisters--Leona Irene (who became Mrs. L.I. Poliski, residing on Water Street, Sarnia) and Mary Jane Lee. There was another Lee sibling, Sydney Randolph Lee; however, he passed away on April 21, 1928 at the age of 1 year, 7 months. Thomas attended Lochiel Street Public School from 1928 to 1936. When he was fifteen years old, he lost his father who died of heart disease on August 15, 1937 at the age of 39.

Thomas attended Sarnia Collegiate from 1936 to 1940. He was active in the school cadets and sports, including basketball, swimming and baseball, and his hobby was art. Prior to enlisting, Thomas had a number of jobs in Sarnia: part time while attending school at Fred Galbraith Garage (Dodge & DeSoto Dealer) 1939-40; in a machine shop from January-March 1941; a helper for sign painter George Audaer, March-July 1941; and as a labourer with C.N.R. for 1 month prior to enlisting.

Eighteen year-old Thomas Lee enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force on August 5, 1941 in London, Ontario. He stood five feet eleven inches tall, had blue eyes and dark brown hair, was single, and lived at home with his mother on Christina Street at the time. He requested flying duties, anxious to serve as a pilot or wireless operator air gunner. From #1 Manning Depot in Toronto, he received air training at #1 Service Flying Training School (SFTS) at Camp Borden; then #1 Initial Training School (ITS) in Toronto; and #10 Elementary Flying School (EFTS) at Mount Hope; continuing at Composite Training School (KTS) in Trenton; #7 Bombing and Gunnery School in Paulson, Manitoba; and #4 Air Observers School in London, Ontario. He was awarded his Air Bombers Badge on December 4, 1942.

On January 4, 1943, Thomas Lee embarked overseas bound for the United Kingdom. From #3 Personnel Reception Centre, he continued his training with #23 Operational Training Unit (OTU), before becoming a member of #1659 Conversion Unit in June 1943. He would go on to serve with RCAF #405 Squadron, RAF #1664 Conversion Unit and RCAF #431 Squadron in September 1943, as part of **Bomber Command**.

During the course of the war, one of this country's most significant contributions was the approximately 50,000 Canadians who served with the RCAF and RAF in Bomber Command operations. Next to Britain itself, Canada was the largest contributor to Bomber Command, making up more than a third of all of Bomber Command personnel. The men who served in Bomber Command faced some of the most difficult odds of anyone fighting in the war.

In November 1943, Irene Lee in Sarnia learned that Thomas had been recently promoted from Sergeant Air Gunner to Flight Sergeant while on active service. Also in November 1943, Thomas' brother Joseph Lee would report for duty with the Royal Canadian Navy at Windsor (Joseph's wife would also reside at 244 North Christina Street, Sarnia).

In late 1943, Thomas Lee and his crew were part of a powerful R.A.F.-R.C.A.F. night raid over Berlin, Germany. The Canadian bomber group included a large force of Lancasters and Halifaxes in what they described as a "perfect" attack. One flying officer said that he saw the streets of Berlin distinctly; another said fires were visible all the way through Denmark. Pilot Officer Jack Snelgrove of Regina said, "It looked like Sarnia, Ontario would if the entire Imperial Oil plant suddenly went up in flames."

On June 7, 1944, Thomas Lee became a member of RCAF #425 Alouette Squadron "Je Te Plumerai" (I shall pluck you), with the rank of Pilot Officer-Bomb Aimer. No. 425 Squadron formed in June 1942 at RAF Dishforth in Yorkshire, England. It was designated the "First French Canadian Squadron", equipped with Vickers Wellingtons. Bomber Command combed other squadrons for French speaking air and ground crews to fill its ranks. On January 1, 1943 the squadron was transferred to No. 6 (RCAF) Group. In May 1943, RCAF #425 Squadron had moved their base of operations from RAF Dishforth to Kairouan in Tunisia (North Africa). From there, still flying Wellingtons, it conducted operations against **Sicily** and **Italy**. In November 1943, the squadron returned to Dishforth resuming operations from there, and the following month were re-equipped with Handley Page Halifaxes. In December 1943, the squadron was transferred to RAF Tholthorpe, Yorkshire.

The **Battle of Normandy** would begin for the Canadians with the June 6, 1944 D-Day landings at Juno Beach. After breaching the "Atlantic Wall" of "Fortress Europe", Allied armies began their break out from the narrow Normandy bridgehead to carve out a foothold on the French mainland. In a brutal campaign of attrition, the Canadian army, supported by the navy and air force, faced fierce battles and vicious counterattacks as they clawed their way forward liberating villages and towns including Bretteville, Carpiquet, Caen and Falaise.

On August 5, 1944, Thomas Lee and his crew were aboard Halifax Mk. III bomber LL594 (markings KW-U) in an air raid mission in support of the Battle of Normandy. Their Halifax LL594 aircraft had the distinctive painted nose art of the 1942 Allan Cup (won by the Ottawa RCAF 'Flyers' hockey team) and the background logo used on the Ottawa hockey sweaters. In the August 5th operation, 172 Halifax bombers (from 408, 415, 420, 424, 425, 426, 427, 429, 431, 432, 433, and 434 squadrons) were joined by 52 Lancaster bombers (from 408, 419 and 428 squadrons) on a daylight attack of a V-1 storage site at St. Leu D'Esserent in northern France.



Halifax Mk. III

Lee's Halifax LL594 took off from its base at RAF Tholthorpe at approximately 11.00 a.m. This was Pilot Officer-Bomb Aimer Thomas Lee's 26th operation. Halifax aircraft LL594 was shot down by flak and crashed in the forest at Compiègne, France during the daylight trip to their target. Six crew members were killed and two were blown into the sky and parachuted to the ground where they were captured. Perishing with Pilot Officer-Bomb Aimer Thomas Lee were Pilot Officer Raymond Alexander Reed; FS. William Brown Gracie; and F/O.s Graham Beresford (RAF), Leslie George Stamp (RAF), and WO. Brian Clark (RAF). One Canadian, S/L. Gerald Philbin, was taken prisoner, hospitalized and later escaped, and Sgt. G.L. Milliard was taken Prisoner Of War.

In mid-August 1944, Thomas' widowed mother Irene Lee received a telegram from R.C.A.F. Headquarters at Ottawa informing her that her son, WARRANT OFFICER THOMAS LEE HAS BEEN REPORTED MISSING AFTER AIR OPERATIONS OVER ENEMY TERRITORY ON AUGUST 5. In mid-December 1944, Irene received a telegram from the R.C.A.F. Casualty Officer at Ottawa informing her that, INFORMATION FROM INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS STATES YOUR SON PILOT OFFICER THOMAS EDWIN LEE LOST HIS LIFE STOP PENDING FURTHER INFORMATION YOUR SON IS TO BE CONSIDERED MISSING BELIEVED KILLED. Thomas Lee's death was later officially recorded as, *Previously reported missing after air operations (overseas), now for official purposes, presumed dead.*

The story of how her son was buried in France after being shot down on the air raid was told to Irene Lee in a letter that she received from an American woman from Ohio. The American, Mrs. T.J. Kirby of Toledo, had just recently returned from France, and had witnessed the funeral. In her letter telling of his burial, she stated that before leaving France, she was entrusted with a little crucifix that had been placed on the body of Pilot Officer Lee after he met a glorious death at St. Maximin, Oise, France. The crucifix was placed there by the sisters of the Conde hospital at Chantilly where the funeral took place. Following is the letter that Irene Lee received just before Christmas 1945:

Well do I realize how you must have been felling when after all those many months of silence you received that holy relic of your beloved son. It is true that the only wound that never heals is that in a mother's heart.

We had some terrible bombing in July and August 1944 because that little French village of Saint Maximin was built right in the middle of large and deep stone quarries. Unfortunately for us, the Germans driven back by the speedy advance of the Allies during the battle of France, has started to stock large quantities of those V-1 bombs in the quarries and prepared launching platforms nearby to send their ghastly rockets against the approaching armies.

Thus, it became vital for the American and British airforces to destroy the quarries before the Germans could make use of the new weapon. Hundreds of planes came by night and day dropping powerful explosives until, at the end, not one house was left standing (the people had all been evacuated to nearby Chantilly) but the goal was attained as not one robot bomb ever got out of those quarries.

How the Germans reacted was awful and showed the importance they attached to the depot. To our horror we saw many planes brought down by their fire during those terrible days. Forgive me for recalling such things.

Your son was the only one among all those martyrs to have a special funeral. There must have been something about him to cause that exception. The Germans said they would permit the funeral to be held, according to the Catholic rites, under condition that nobody was to go to the cemetery.

But the sisters in charge of the hospital spread the word that at two o'clock in the afternoon there would be prayers and a service for a young Canadian aviator and just that verbal announcement was enough to bring practically all the people of Chantilly to the hospital.

The chapel was far too small and people had to stand on the surrounding grounds. Even the mayor of Chantilly was present.

I shall never forget the impression I received when entering the chapel to behold the casket draped in the folds of the French flag and surrounded by a bank of white flowers of all kinds. Everybody who could was bringing flowers and the good sisters did their best to make the decoration of the chapel beautiful and to do their most beautiful singing. What was most stirring was to see the emotion and profound respect of the people. There was not a mother there who was not thinking of that boy's mother and weeping with her.

At the end of the service, our venerable chaplain tried to say a few words, but his emotion was too great and his voice trailed away. He was only able to bless once more the body of your son. And then started the defile which lasted for two hours because so many persons took the time to go on foot or by bicycle to the cemetery in spite of the Germans.

The new cemetery of Chantilly is but a short walking distance from the town at the edge of a beautiful forest. Many people visit it on Sundays and the grave of your son is well taken care of. There is a cross and it was always decorated with flowers.

At the chapel of the Conde hospital, masses are frequently sung for the soul of Thomas Lee.

I hesitate to send this letter to you but yet I know there will be some sweetness and consolation for you to know what a splendid funeral your son had and how it came to be that a whole town, without knowing him, came to mourn for him.

In September 1945, Irene Lee received a War Service Gratuity of \$582.38 for the loss of her son Thomas. In January 1947, she received the following letter from the Wing Commander for Chief of the Air Staff in Ottawa:
Dear Mrs. Lee:

It is a privilege to have the opportunity of sending you the Operational Wings and Certificate in recognition of the gallant services rendered by your son, Pilot Officer T.E. Lee. I realize there is little which may be said or done to lessen your sorrow, but it is my hope that these "Wings", indicative of operations against the enemy, will be a treasured memento of a young life offered on the altar of freedom in defence of his Home and Country.

Twenty-one-year-old Thomas Lee is buried in Chantilly (St.Pierre) Communal Cemetery, Oise, France, Row 3, Grave 372. On his headstone are inscribed the words, IN OUR HEARTS YOUR MEMORY LINGERS, SWEETLY TENDER, FOND AND TRUE.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, F, G, J, L, M, N, 2C, 2D, 4B, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10B, 10U

LEGARE, Joseph Raymond Wilfred (#A/107057)

Joseph Raymond Legare's first day of action against the enemy was on June 6, 1944 on Juno Beach. Approximately six weeks later, the young man who planned to be a farmer after the war, would lose his life serving Canada while fighting for the Liberation of France.

He was born in Belcourt, Quebec on January 8, 1923, the son of Arthur and Yvonne Visina Legare, of Belcourt, Quebec. He was baptized Roman Catholic in Belcourt shortly after. Arthur and Yvonne Legare were married in Quebec on September 23, 1919. Joseph had an older brother, Albert, and two younger brothers, Jean-Guy and Andre. Joseph was educated in a French school in Belcourt, leaving school in grade eight at age sixteen. His interests included fishing, hunting and woodworking. In 1937, when Joseph was fourteen years old, his father Arthur, a woodworker, passed away. Years later, Joseph's mother re-married, becoming Yvonne Coulombe. Joseph worked as a farm hand for three years, and then a lumberjack for six months. French-speaking Joseph Legare then made his way to Sarnia, becoming an employee of Polymer Corporation, working as a labourer in construction for two months.

Twenty year-old Joseph Legare enlisted in the Royal Canadian Army on June 9, 1943 in London, Ontario. He stood five feet three and a half inches tall, had hazel eyes and black hair, was single, and recorded his residence at time of enlistment as Polymer Corp., Sarnia. He planned to own his own farm after the war. From #1 District Depot in London, in mid-June he was transferred to #42 Basic Training Centre (BTC) in Joliette, Quebec to begin his army training. In mid-October 1943, he was transferred to A-13 Advanced Infantry Training Centre (AITC) in Valcartier, Quebec, where he continued his training.

In March 7, 1944, Joseph Legare embarked overseas bound for the United Kingdom, becoming a member of #2 then #6 Canadian Infantry Reinforcement Unit (CIRU). On April 8, 1944, he was transferred, becoming a member of the Le Regiment de la Chaudiere, Royal Canadian Infantry Corps (RCIC) with the rank of Private. Less than three months after arriving overseas, he departed from the U.K., disembarking in France on June 6, 1944 – **D-Day**.

The **Battle of Normandy** would begin for the Canadians with the June 6, 1944 D-Day landings at Juno Beach. After breaching the “Atlantic Wall” of “Fortress Europe”, Allied armies began their break out from the narrow Normandy bridgehead to carve out a foothold on the French mainland. It would take a whole summer of tenacious fighting, pushing against fierce and ruthless German forces to advance east across France. In a brutal campaign of attrition, the Canadians faced fierce battles and vicious counterattacks as they clawed their way forward liberating villages and towns including Bretteville, Carpiquet, Caen and Falaise.

Private Joseph Legare survived the horrors of D-Day and served with Le Regiment de la Chaudiere, RCIC, as they advanced through France in the Battle of Normandy. Approximately six weeks after the Juno landings, on July 18, 1944, Joseph Raymond Legare lost his life while fighting during the Battle of Normandy. His remains were buried two days later on July 20 at Beny-Sur-Mer Cemetery.

Joseph Legare’s death was later officially recorded as, *Overseas casualty, killed in action, in the field (France)*. In May 1945, Yvonne Visina in Belcourt, Quebec received a War Service Gratuity of \$142.35 for the loss of her son. Twenty-one-year-old Joseph Raymond Legare is buried in Beny-Sur-Mer Canadian War Cemetery, Revers, France, Grave XII.A.4. On his headstone are inscribed the words, MORT LOIN DES SIENS SON SOUVENIR VIVRA. JESUS DONNEZ LUI LE REPOS ETERNEL. (Died far from home his memory will live on. Jesus, grant him eternal rest).

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, 2C, 2D, 7C, 8X, 8Y

LE GARE, Hector (#A/2084)

As a young child, Hector Le Gare had already experienced loss—the death of his brother and of his father. Yet as a young man, he chose to risk his own life for his country. He would make the ultimate sacrifice during the longest continuous campaign of the war, aboard a ship that would not sink, to what British Prime Minister Winston Churchill said was “... the only thing that ever really frightened me during the war...”

He was born in Chatham, Ontario on January 14, 1919, the son of Hector Octave and Hazel D. Le Gare. Hector Octave and Hazel Le Gare were married in Hull, Quebec in 1913. At some point, the Le Gare family moved to Sarnia, living at 330 North Mitton Street. Hector Octave Le Gare supported the family by operating a restaurant and poolroom near the Bell Telephone building. Hector had one brother, William, and five sisters: Jeanne and Katheline (Kay) (both would later move to Toronto); and Grace, Cora and Violet (all resided in Sarnia). On July 16, 1926, when Hector was just seven years old, his brother William passed away at the age of 5. Less than three years later, on January 18, 1929, when Hector was ten years old, he lost his father Hector Octave Le Gare, who died at the age of 39.



H. Le Gare

Hector Le Gare was educated at Our Lady of Mercy Catholic Elementary School in Sarnia and then Sarnia Collegiate, where he played football and was reputed to be a good swimmer. Hector was also a member of St. Joseph's Catholic Parish, Sarnia. Prior to enlisting, Hector had navigating experience as a seaman, having served six years on the *Noronic*, *Huron* and *Hamon* of the Northern Navigation division of the Canada Steamship Lines. He was a watchman on the latter vessel at the close of the previous navigation season, after which he was employed at the Sarnia General Hospital until he enlisted in the summer.

Twenty-one-year-old Hector Le Gare enlisted in the Royal Canadian Naval Reserve (RCNR) on July 12, 1940. He stood five feet five and a half inches tall, had blue eyes and dark hair, was single, and was living with his mother on Mitton Street, Sarnia at the time. Hector was initially posted for training at the eastern naval base *Stadacona* in Halifax. On September 4, 1940, he was transferred, becoming a member of the crew of the *HMCS Saguenay*, with the rank of Able Seaman.

Beginning on the opening day of the Second World War, the **Battle of the Atlantic** would be the longest continuous campaign of the war, and one in which Canada played a central role. The Royal Canadian Navy, along with the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) and Canada's Merchant Navy, played a vital role in defending the country's eastern coast and escorting convoys of ships carrying men and essential machinery, arms, fuel and basic resources between North America and Europe.

The *HMCS Saguenay (D 79)* was an River-Class Destroyer commissioned for service in the Royal Canadian Navy in 1931. The *Saguenay* was the first warship ever to be custom built for the Royal Canadian Navy. In the early morning hours of December 1, 1940, the *HMCS Saguenay* was part of a group escorting a convoy about 300 nautical miles west of Ireland. Travelling at twelve knots and in a zigzagging pattern, she noticed a flare shot up from the dark sea that had been fired by a U-boat moving in to attack the rear of the convoy. The *Saguenay* increased her speed and made for the position of the flare. At approximately 3:50 am, the submarine was sighted half a mile distant. Almost simultaneously, a torpedo struck the *Saguenay*. The torpedo had been fired by the Italian submarine *Argo*. The *Saguenay* bow was blown off, and flames broke out and raced through the ship. The *Argo* surfaced again, circling to get in a second shot. Able Seaman Clifford McNaught demonstrated the kind of courage indicative of the remaining crew. Clifford was suffering from painful burns to his face, and his hands were horribly mangled. He nevertheless dashed forward to assist the short-handed gun crew by passing shells to them. The *Saguenay* crew was able to fend off the *Argo*. The British destroyer *Highlander* arrived within an hour or so to find the *Saguenay* limping slowly forward. Ninety men were transferred to the *Highlander* to reduce casualties in case of another torpedo attack. Throughout the night and most of the next day, a skeleton crew remained on board the *Saguenay* continuing to fight the fires.



River Class Destroyer *HMCS Saguenay D79*



Torpedo damage December 1940

By noon of the next day, the *Saguenay*, "the ship that would not sink" had managed to limp to the British port Barrow-in-Furness on one engine. The ship would be out of service for six months. A total of 21 of the *HMCS Saguenay* crew lost their lives in the U-boat attack, and another 18 were wounded. Two of the lost crew members were from Sarnia. Hector Le Gare was one of those killed in action in the damaging of the destroyer *Saguenay*. He

served only eighty-nine days in the service before his death. Also on board the ship was Able Seaman Paul Brown of Sarnia, who was also killed in the attack. His name is also inscribed on the Sarnia cenotaph and his story is included in this Project. Hector Le Gare and Paul Brown were the second and third casualties from Sarnia to lose their lives in the Second World War.

Hector's widowed mother Hazel had not seen her only son since he had enlisted, as he did not receive any leave. She had received a letter from him just before he sailed and a cablegram informing her of his safe arrival in England. A week after the attack on the *Saguenay*, Hazel Le Gare on Mitton Street received the following telegram from Naval Service Headquarters: THE MINISTER OF NATIONAL DEFENCE FOR NAVAL SERVICES DEEPLY REGRETS TO INFORM YOU THAT YOUR SON HECTOR LE GARE ABLE SEAMAN RCNR OFFICIAL NO A-2084 IS MISSING BELIEVED KILLED IN ACTION. After receiving the telegram, Hazel retained hope that he would later be reported rescued. At an assembly at Sarnia Collegiate, Principal F.C. Asbury announced the loss of the two former students, which was followed by a period of silence in respect to the memory of the two Canadian sailors.

In mid-December 1940, Hazel Le Gare received the following letter from the Naval Secretary:

Dear Madam:

It is with very deep regret that I confirm the telegram of the 9th December from the Minister of National Defence for Naval Services that your son, Hector Le Gare, Able Seaman, R.C.N.R., Official Number A.2084, is reported to be missing from H.M.C.S. "SAGUENAY", believed killed in action following damage to this vessel by a torpedo on the 1st December, 1940.

Please allow me, therefore, to express sincere sympathy with you in your sad loss on behalf of the Chief of the Naval Staff and the Officers and men of the Royal Canadian Navy, the high traditions of which your son has helped to maintain.

Only days later, she received another letter from the Naval Secretary. Following is that letter:

Dear Madam:

With reference to my letter of the 11th December, 1940, it is with deep regret that I must advise you that it has now been definitely established that your son, Hector Le Gare, Able Seaman, R.C.N.R., Official Number A.2084, was killed in action on the 1st of December, 1940, in H.M.C.S. "SAGUENAY".

Advice has been received that your son was buried ashore in England with full Naval honours. Exact location of the grave will be given to you in due course. Please allow me, therefore, again to express sincere sympathy with you in your sad bereavement.

In mid-March 1941, Hazel received the following letter from the Naval Secretary:

Dear Madam:

Further to my letter of the 16th December, 1940, information has now been received that the body of your late son, Hector Legare, Able Seaman, R.C.N.R., O.N. A.2084, who was killed in action on the 1st December whilst serving in H.M.C.S. "SAGUENAY", has been buried in the cemetery at Barrow-in-Furness, Lancs, England. The funeral took place on the 14th December, 1940. The exact location of the grave is #2439 Section 7.

Hector Le Gare's death was later officially recorded as the result of, *Enemy action, at sea*. In July 1945, widowed Hazel Le Gare, then living on Vaughan Road in Toronto, received a War Service Gratuity of \$58.18 for the loss of her son.

One of Hector's closest friends during the war was fellow Sarnian Oliver Jones, who also served in the RCNVR as an Able Seaman. [Note: Oliver Jones was a brother of Glyn Jones, who is included in this Project]. Twice during the war, while on convoy duty in the North Atlantic, Oliver Jones was aboard ships that were torpedoed by German U-boats. Oliver was in the same convoy escort group as his friend Hector Le Gare on December 1, 1940, when the *Saguenay* was torpedoed by an Italian submarine. Oliver Jones survived the war, and after returning home, he married Ilene (nee Kearney), and they had two children together, a boy and a girl. They named their son Ronald Hector Jones in honour of Oliver's friend Hector.

Twenty-one-year-old Hector Le Gare is buried in Barrow-in-Furness Cemetery, Lancashire, United Kingdom, Sec. 7. R.C. Grave 2439. On his headstone are inscribed the words, HIS WARFARE O'ER HIS BATTLE FOUGHT HIS VICTORY WON SO DEARLY BOUGHT. On the Sarnia cenotaph, his name is inscribed as H. Legarrie.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, J, L, N, P, T, U, X, Z, 2A, 2C, 2D, 2I, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 3k

LIVING, Charles Henry (#J/12206)

Charles Henry Living, the son of a World War I veteran, was a university graduate and a star football player with a bright future ahead of him when he made the decision to serve his country. He heroically gave his life for Canada while serving in one of the most dangerous postings in the war. His is a story of remarkable courage and dedication.

He was born in Hafford, Saskatchewan on June 27, 1914, the eldest son of Charles William Robert and Viola Georgina Elizabeth (nee Chantelois) Living. Charles William (born March 13, 1885 in Ottawa) and Viola Chantelois (born 1896 in Iron River, Wisconsin) Living were married on September 21, 1911 in High River, Alberta. Charles William Living was a veteran of World War I. At age 31, Charles William Living enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force on June 14, 1916 in Pincher Creek, Alberta. He stood five feet six and a half inches tall, had blue eyes and brown hair, recorded his occupation as book-keeper, and his next-of-kin as his wife Viola (living in Pincher Creek, later changed to 27th Avenue, Calgary, Alberta). He was also the father of two children at the time: Georgina Beatrice (age 4) and Charles Henry (age 2). Charles Living Sr. was initially a member of the 192nd Battalion, Canadian Expeditionary Force. He arrived in England on November 11, 1916. Less than three weeks later, on November 30, he arrived in France as a member of the 10th Battalion, Canadian Infantry.

During his time in France, Charles Sr. experienced the horrors of war and was hospitalized on a number of occasions: in December 1916 for twenty-two days due to influenza; in November 1917 for almost two months due to a gun shot wound in hip; in February 1918 due to shell concussion, bronchitis and poison gas; in April 1918 due to a "not yet determined" poison gas; and in August 1918 due to a gun shot wound in the right arm received at Amiens. Charles Living Sr. survived the war and was discharged on demobilization in Calgary in January 1919.

Around 1924, the Living family moved to the United States, first residing in Minnesota and a year or so later in Michigan. Around 1928, the Living family resided on North Broad Street in Holly Village, Oakland County, Michigan. Charles Sr. and Viola Living had eight children together: three girls--Georgina Beatrice (born 1912), Viola (born 1919, died on May 3, 1924 at the age of 5), and Clara May (born 1920); and five sons: Charles Henry (born June 27, 1914), Frederick Stevenson (born July 9, 1921 in Sibbald, Alberta), Paul Alfred (born 1925), Reece Burt (born 1928) and Charles William Jr. Living (born 1932).

Sometime in the early 1930's, father Charles Living Sr. left the family. After the separation, Charles Sr., a carpenter by trade, lived on Spadina Avenue in Toronto (when his son Charles was killed in the war, Charles Sr. lived on 107th Avenue in Edmonton, Alberta). Mother Viola Georgina later remarried, to Robert O'Day, and together they would have one child together, Patricia Katherine O'Day, born in 1940 in Holly, Michigan.

Charles Henry Living grew up with his seven brothers and sisters in Holly, Michigan, attending Holly Public School (1923-1928) and Holly High School in 1928, graduating in 1933. He did very well in academics and was very active in sports, including football, baseball and basketball. He then attended St. Michael's College in Toronto, in the Arts program from 1934-1935. Along with participating in sports, Charles devoted part of his time to coaching sports. From May 1935 to June 1936, Charles worked at Ford Motor Company, Detroit, in the Transportation Department, before returning to school. Charles attended Michigan State College in Lansing, Michigan taking one year of physical education, 1936-1937. While at Michigan State College, Charles also had half a year of military training in artillery.

Charles took up residence in Sarnia in April 1938, living at 177 ½ North Front Street, and was employed as a labourer at Imperial Oil Limited. While residing in Sarnia for 1 ½ years, Charles regularly attended St. Joseph's Catholic Church. He also played football with the Sarnia Imperials of the ORFU, as a star snap and inside wing (the ORFU, Ontario Rugby Football Union, was the predecessor of the Canadian Football League). From an article in the Ottawa Journal on November 30, 1939; *Their kicking is fortified too by the snapping of Hank Living, one of the best in the business in defence player.* Subsequently, he played football for the Toronto Argonauts prior to enlisting in the RCAF. He also worked part time as an instructor with Toronto-St. Catharines Trucking, and had served five months with the Toronto Scottish Highlanders, as a Private, from mid-August 1940 to January 20, 1941.

Twenty-six-year-old Charles Living enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force on May 1, 1941 in Toronto. He stood five feet ten inches tall, had blue eyes and light brown hair, and was single. When he enlisted, Charles was living on St. George Street in Toronto, but on his Attestation Paper, he originally recorded his address as 177 ½ N. Front Street, Sarnia and later it was changed to 266 St. George Street. When Charles enlisted, his father was also living in Toronto, and his remarried mother Viola was residing in Holly, Michigan.

Charles recorded his occupation as “labor”, and he planned to stay in the R.C.A.F. after the war. He requested flying duties with a preference to be an air gunner. From the Recruiting Centre then #1 Manning Depot in Toronto, Charles received his air training at RCAF Station Trenton; followed by #3 Initial Training School (ITS) in Victoriaville, Quebec; and #4 Elementary Flying Training School (EFTS) in Windsor Mills, Quebec; and #13 Service Flying Training School (SFTS) in St. Hubert, Quebec; and then Composite Training School (CTS) in Trenton. Comments made by his instructors and commanding officers about Charles included: *Above average pilot. Airmanship excellent. Will develop into a very reliable pilot; Very heavy set appearance, rugged healthy, fairly neat, jolly type, pleasant personality; and Very big, good natured man. Keenly interested. Quiet. Well spoken. Applying himself. Frank. Serious, Highly recommended. A man to rely to when the going is really tough.* Charles Living was awarded his Pilot’s Flying Badge in June 19, 1942.

Appointed to a commission in June 1942, Charles Living continued his training at #16 Service Flying Training School (SFTS) in Hagersville; then at Composite Training School (CTS) in Trenton; and #4 Bombing and Gunnery School (B&GS) in Fingal, Ontario. Stationed at Fingal until mid-November 1943, he was such a skilled pilot that he served as a staff pilot while there and taught others how to fly. During one of his leaves, nine days in April 1943, he married Miss Mary Alyce Wocker of Sarnia, on April 17, 1943 in London, Ontario. The young couple would reside at 339 George Street, Sarnia.

On November 16, 1943, Charles Living embarked overseas from Halifax for the United Kingdom, where he was initially posted to #3 Personnel Reception Centre. He continued his training in the U.K. at #3 (Pilots) Advance Flying Unit (AFU), #85 Operational Training Unit (OTU) and #1668 Conversion Unit.



Flight Lieutenant-Pilot Charles Henry Living

While in England, Charles was also able to play football in two special exhibition games arranged between teams of selected stars in the Canadian and American armed forces. The idea for the first football game originated when Major Dennis Whitaker, a former quarterback for the Hamilton Tigers of the CFL and a Dieppe survivor, and a U.S. Special Services lieutenant met in a pub, and began talking football. The result of the chance meeting was the **Tea Bowl**. The game was to be a hybrid, with the first half played under American rules, and the second under Canadian.

The Canadian Army team, named the “Mustangs”, had several Sarnians: Charles Living, Nick Paithouski (brother of Michael Paithowski, included in this Project), and Ken Withers, and several CFL players. The Tea Bowl was played on February 13, 1944 before over 30,000 fans in White City Stadium in London, and was even broadcast on British radio. With the threat of German bombers, RAF Spitfires were deployed to cover the skies around the stadium during the game. The Canadian Army “Mustangs” defeated the U.S. Army Central Base Station “Pirates” by a score of 16 to 6. Stung by the loss, the Americans called for a rematch. Their new team, the U.S. 29th Army team, named the “Blues”, was reinforced with a contingent from the University of Iowa Cornhuskers and a former NFL all-

star. The rematch, played on March 19, 1944, again in White City Stadium, this time before a crowd of 50,000, was dubbed the Coffee Bowl. The U.S. “Blues” defeated the Canadian Army “Mustangs” by a score of 18 to 0. The outcome of the games were really irrelevant; what counted was the camaraderie, the friendly competitiveness, and a sense of shared purpose. Less than three months later, the Allied forces, including some of the games’ participants, joined together in something much larger--the D-Day landings in France.

Charles’ brother, Frederick Stevenson Living, also served in the war. Nineteen year-old Frederick enlisted in the Canadian Active Service Force, with the Lincoln & Welland Regiment on November 13, 1940 at Niagara Barracks, Ontario. He recorded his reason for joining as, “Change from job + father in Cdn Army last war.” Frederick was single, stood five feet six inches tall, had brown eyes and brown hair, was employed as a truck driver and lived at 38 Court Street in St. Catharines, Ontario at the time. He received army training in Nanaimo, British Columbia and St. John’s, Newfoundland before proceeding overseas in July 1943. He arrived in the United Kingdom on July 17, 1943. One year later, on July 21, 1944, Frederick Living disembarked in France. Just over two weeks later, on August 6, 1944, Private Frederick Living of the Lincoln & Welland Regiment, 1st Battalion, lost his life during the Battle of Normandy, “killed in action against the enemy.” Twenty-three-year-old Frederick Stevenson Living was buried at a location recorded as, “France sheet No 40/14 NW-M.R. 076615.” His remains were later carefully exhumed from the original place of interment, and reverently re-buried in Bretteville-Sur-Laize Canadian War Cemetery in Calvados, France, Grave Reference: I.B.7. It was during that same month, August 1944 that brother Charles was promoted to the rank of Flight Lieutenant in the RCAF.



Private Frederick S. Living’s grave – Bretteville-Sur-Laize Cemetery, France

On October 27, 1944, Charles Living became a member of RAF #576 Squadron “Carpe Diem” (Seize the Opportunity), part of **Bomber Command**, with the rank of Flight Lieutenant-Pilot.

During the course of the war, one of this country’s most significant contributions was the approximately 50,000 Canadians who served with the RCAF and RAF in Bomber Command operations. Next to Britain itself, Canada was the largest contributor to Bomber Command, making up more than a third of all of Bomber Command personnel. The men who served in Bomber Command faced some of the most difficult odds of anyone fighting in the war.

No. 576 Squadron was formed at RAF Elsham Wolds, Lincolnshire on November 25, 1943, part of Bomber Command’s main force. The squadron was equipped with Avro Lancasters, the four-engine, heavy bombers. In late-October 1944, the squadron transferred its base to RAF Fiskerton, Lincolnshire. The squadron engaged in operations that included: missions against mostly German targets by night; support of the D-Day landings and Allied Armies in the field; and targeting V weapon sites in Northern France.

Following is a record of Charles Living’s tour details leading up to his last one (Date-Target-Aircraft #): 04/11/44-Bochum-PD363; 06/11/44-Gelsenkirchen-JB410; 09/11/44-Wanne Eikel-ND521; 11/11/44-Dortmund-ND521; 16/11/44-Duren-JB410; 21/11/44-Aschaffenburg-ME735; 27/11/44-Freiburg-ME735; 29/11/44-Dortmund-ME375; 04/12/44-Karlsruhe-JB410; 15/12/44-Ludswighafen/Oppau-PD403; 17/12/44-Ulm-PD403; 28/12/44-Bonn-PD403; 31/12/44-Osterfeld-PD403; 05/01/45-Royen-PD403; 07/01/45-Munich-ME735; 14/01/45-Leuna-JB410; 22/01/45-Duisburg/Hambourn-ME735; 08/02/45-Politz-PB785; 13/02/45-Dresdan-ME735; and 14/02/45-Chemnitz-ME735. The crew’s next mission, their 21st, would be their last.

It was with #576 Squadron that fellow pilot Frank Phripp found Charles Living one evening in early 1945. Writing in the book "The RCAF at War," Phripp recalled hearing muffled sobs in the back of a hut. Going to investigate, he was shocked to find Charles sitting in the dark, crying his eyes out. *I had never seen a man cry, that was unthinkable among my Air Force friends*, he wrote. *And if the idea had occurred to me, Hank Living was the last man I would have expected to be so broken up. Hank was undoubtedly the biggest guy on our squadron. He had used his size well when he played centre on the line for the Sarnia Imperials in the Ontario Rugby Football Union. He was known as 'Hi' Living in 1938 when he starred in the final game with the Montreal Nationals that won the Imperials the ORFU championship. Yet there he was on his cot in a dim corner of our hut in Lincolnshire and heaving uncontrollably.*⁹⁸ Charles confided to Frank that he was afraid to keep flying, that he was sure he was about to be killed. Living explained his concern that because of his large size, combined with wearing a parachute and his Mae West, that he would not be able to squeeze through the small pilot's escape hatch. If his aircraft was hit, he would be trapped in his burning plane as it plunged to the ground. Despite his fears, Flight Lieutenant Charles Living kept flying.

On the night of February 21, 1945, Charles Living was the pilot aboard Squadron #576 Lancaster Mk. I aircraft ME735 (markings UL-B2), joining over 370 aircraft on a night mission attack against Duisburg, Germany. Pilot Living's Lancaster took off from RAF Fiskerton and went missing during the night trip, along with two other Lancasters from 576 Squadron. Eyewitnesses saw the plane crash with great force and explode in flames three miles south of Kevelaar, on the boundary of Germany and Holland, between the hours of 11:30-11:45 pm. No parachutes were seen to leave the aircraft, and all crew members aboard Lancaster ME735 lost their lives in the crash. Along with F/Lt-Pilot Charles Living, also perishing in ME375 were Flying Officers John Arnold Russell and Raymond Campbell Hill; Flight Sergeant Geoffrey Leonard Vyvyan Tabor; and Sergeants John Francis Arthur Mooney, Harry Burrows and Harold Peach. Unusually, the crew included three married men--Living, Mooney and Russell. Aircraft ME735 was a veteran machine, being lost on its 84th operation.

In late February 1945, Mary Alyce Living, residing at George Street in Sarnia, received a telegram from Ottawa informing her that her husband, FLIGHT LIEUTENANT CHARLES HENRY LIVING IS REPORTED MISSING AFTER OPERATIONAL FLIGHTS OVER ENEMY TERRITORY. Charles Living was later officially recorded as, *Previously reported missing after air operations, now for official purposes, presumed dead, overseas (Germany)*. In April 1946, Mary Living received a War Service Gratuity of \$660.13 for the loss of her husband.

In late November 1946, the results of an R.A.F. Missing Research & Enquiries Unit investigation of the crash site and fate of the crew was completed. Following are portions of that investigation report:

Aircraft: ... *The circumstances of the crash being well supported by interrogation of many local people. One feature however must be emphasized that is, the fact that the a/c (aircraft) upon striking the ground with full impact burned very fiercely indeed for many hours. Nothing traceable of the a/c remained at the scene of the crash.*

Aircrew: *The morning following the crash a Mr. Winkel, who was responsible for guarding the crash personally supervised the collection of all human remains, notwithstanding that many pieces of such remains were found over a wide area. The identity card of one of the crew members was taken to the town hall at Kevelaar, but efforts to obtain it, were abortive. A short distance from the scene of the crash at Map Ref. E 969282 I found by the side of the main road a small wooden cross bearing the inscription "3010345 PEACH and 4 British airmen crashed 18-2-1945".*

Exhumation: *It was decided to exhume immediately to discover how many airmen of this crew were actually buried in this isolated grave... The grave was quite a shallow one and after digging for about 18 ins. A large number of a/c pieces and a considerable quantity of parachute material was uncovered. A little further down we found a quantity of burnt and charred clothing among which pieces of Officer's service dress trousers battle dress and pieces of a blue pullover. Further down the remains of the first body were exhumed and here we were fortunate enough to positively identify him as Sgt. Tabor. Further down we brought out the remains of another body with every indication conducive to the belief that he was F/Lt. Living. After that there remained only a very large collection of badly charred remains which could have been those of at least five airmen.*

Conclusion: *In the light of the results of the investigation and of the exhumation there can be no possible doubt about the fate of this entire crew. F/Sgt. Tabor has been positively identified, Sgt. Peach was obviously identified and the identity card of F/O J.A. Russell is most probably the one (at the time) which had been handed in at the town hall Kevelaar and which subsequently I was unable to find. F/Lt. Living as the only F/Lt. in this crew seems satisfactorily accounted for by the details of the exhumation report. As for Sgt's Mooney and Burrows I am convinced beyond a shadow of doubt that the remains of all of them are together in that heap of charred and cremated remains at the bottom of the grave.*

... I arranged in conjunction with Major Dawson from 39 G.C.U. for the remains to be divided into seven parts and buried in REICHSWALD British Cemetery...

In late August 1948, Viola O'Day in Holly, Michigan, received the following letter from the Wing Commander, R.C.A.F. Casualties Officer, for Chief of the Air Staff:

Dear Mrs. O'Day:

It is with regret that I again refer to the loss of your son, Flight Lieutenant Charles Henry Living, but you will wish to know of a report received from our Missing Research and Enquiry Service.

The report states that the graves of your son's crew were exhumed and that Flight Sergeant Tabor and your son were identified. The crew have since been re-interred in the Reichswald Forest British Military Cemetery, three miles South West of Cleve, Germany. Your son was laid to rest in Plot I, Row H, Grave 12.

This is a permanent British Military Cemetery located in Germany, and will be turned over to the Imperial War Graves Commission (of which Canada is a member), who are responsible for the reverent and perpetual care of the resting places of all our Fallen. The cemeteries will be beautified by landscaping and the planting of shrubs and flowers, and a headstone will be erected at each grave. Unhappily, there are great numbers of these headstones to be erected and it will quite naturally take considerable time.

May I again offer you my most sincere sympathy in the loss of your gallant son.

For Charles' mother Viola O'Day, this was her second son lost in war, having already lost Frederick Stevenson Living in August 1944. Charles Living's wife Mary Alyce, later re-married, becoming Mrs. Mary A. Valek, of Page Street in Flint, Michigan. Thirty year-old Charles Living is buried in Reichswald Forest War Cemetery, Germany, Grave 1.H.12. In November 2019, his name along with 25 others was added to the Sarnia cenotaph, engraved in stone to be remembered always.

Tragically, she would lose one more son to war. Her youngest son, Charles William Living Jr. (born 1932), served with the United States Army in the Korean War. As a member of the 9th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Infantry Division, he was seriously wounded in action by the enemy in South Korea on March 5, 1951. He returned to duty on March 30, 1951. Just over two months later, on June 2, 1951, he was killed in action while fighting the enemy in North Korea. Nineteen year-old Sergeant Charles William Living Jr. was posthumously awarded the Purple Heart with Oak Leaf Cluster, the Combat Infantryman's Badge, the Korean Service Medal, the United Nations Service Medal, the National Defense Service Medal and the Korean War Service Medal. The patriarch of the family, Charles William Living Sr., a World War I veteran who had lost three sons in war, passed away at the age of eighty-four in Edmonton, Alberta on August 23, 1969.

*The following article is courtesy of Dan McCaffrey, local Sarnia author, who wrote this column in November 2007:

When local residents pause to remember the nation's war dead this Nov. 11, they might want to reflect for a moment on the story of Charles Henry Living.

Living, who was known to his friends as Hank, was a Saskatchewan native who came to our city in 1938 to play for the Sarnia Imperials football club. In addition to his athletic skills, he was a bright guy. In an era in which few people graduated from high school, he'd gone to St. Michael's College in Toronto and the University of Michigan. He married a Sarnia girl and became a much-loved local figure.

When war came, he joined the Royal Canadian Air Force. He wanted to go overseas but he was such a skilled pilot that he was assigned to a flight school, where he taught others how to fly. It was only in November 1944 that he was posted to a Lancaster bomber squadron in England. It was there that fellow pilot Frank Phripp found him one evening in early 1945.

Writing in the book "The RCAF at War," Phripp recalled hearing muffled sobs in the back of a hut. Going to investigate, he was in for a shock. Living was sitting in the dark, crying his eyes out. "I had never seen a man cry, that was unthinkable among my Air Force friends," he wrote. "And if the idea had occurred to me, Hank Living was the last man I would have expected to be so broken up. Hank was undoubtedly the biggest guy on our squadron. He had used his size well when he played centre on the line for the Sarnia Imperials in the Ontario Rugby Football Union. He was known as 'Hi' Living in 1938 when he starred in the final game with the Montreal Nationals that won the Imperials the ORFU championship. Yet there he was on his cot in a dim corner of our hut in Lincolnshire and heaving uncontrollably."

Phripp put his hand on the Sarnian's trembling shoulder. For the longest time the two men sat silently. Then

slowly and almost unintelligibly, Living began to explain that he was afraid to keep flying, that he was sure he was about to be killed.

The problem was his great size.

"He explained there was no way he could squeeze through the pilot's escape hatch of the Lancaster with his parachute and Mae West (lifejacket) on," Phripp recalled. "He had tried every way possible with the help of trainers and his crew, and it couldn't be done."

Fearing he'd be trapped in his burning plane as it plunged to the ground, Living had asked to be reassigned to a different job, but had been turned down. At this point he could simply have quit. All aircrew were volunteers and no one could force them to fly. They would be stripped of rank and forced to clean latrines or to do other menial tasks, but they wouldn't have to face the deadly flak and fighters over Germany. But Living decided not to take the easy way out. Despite his fears, he kept flying until the night of Feb. 21, 1945, when his plane was shot down. Witnesses on the ground saw no parachutes emerge from the bomber as it plummeted to earth. Just as he had feared, Living had gone down with his aircraft.

If Remembrance Day is about recalling sacrifice and heroism, then Living's story is well worth remembering. It's easier to be brave if you have faith that you're going to make it, that death will always come to "the other guy." It's quite another thing to carry on after you've lost your nerve, when you're certain you're going to be killed. Hank Living did that. His courage should never be forgotten.

*Dan McCaffery is a reporter, historian and the author of eight books, including six books on military history. He can be reached at danval3@cogeco.ca

SOURCES: C, D, E, F, J, L, M, N, 2C, 2D, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 9S, 10B, 10E, 10U, g

LOCHHEAD, Robert Lachlan (#J/90280)

Robert "Bob" Lochhead was so eager to serve that at sixteen, he lied about his age in an attempt to enlist. At age 18, his family then living in the U.S., he crossed back into Canada to enlist. According to his squadron wing commander, Robert was "fast becoming an 'Ace' Air Gunner". Robert Lochhead gave his life for the Allied cause while serving in one of the most dangerous postings of the war.

Robert was born in Toronto on June 27, 1924, the only son of Fraser Absalon and Gertrude Wilhelmina (nee Ward) Lochhead, of Mount Elliott Street, Detroit, and later Royal Oak, Michigan. Fraser, an electrician and engineer (born in Toronto) and Gertrude (born in Allandale, Ontario) were married on August 5, 1920 in Niagara Falls, New York. Fraser and Gertrude had two children together; son Robert and daughter Elizabeth Alba (later Elizabeth Doucher, resided on Bathurst St., Toronto).

Robert initially attended public elementary school in Toronto. After the family moved to Sarnia, he attended Wellington Street Public Elementary, 1930-1938 and Sarnia Collegiate in 1939-1940. He received his musical education in Sarnia and, being very interested in music, was a member of the Pressey's Boys Band for four years. During his musical career, Robert was awarded several medals for solo work. He was also fond of football, swimming, horseback riding and photography. Robert was a member of the Central Century Club and attended Central United Church. Robert and his family lived in Sarnia, at 128 North Christina Street, for more than seven years before moving to Detroit in 1941 (to reside at 8521 Mount Elliott Street).

On January 24, 1941, sixteen-and-a-half year-old Robert Lochhead enlisted in the Essex Scottish Regiment in Windsor, Ontario. He was living on Christina Street in Sarnia with his parents at the time, recording his occupation as musician (employed by Jack Kennedy, 1940-Jan. 41), and his date of birth as June 27, 1921 (making himself three years older than he was). From #1 District Depot in Windsor, Robert received his army training at Canadian Infantry Training Centre at Camp Borden, as a Private. Late in the year, army authorities discovered that his actual date of birth was June 27, 1924. Because he was underage (between the age of 17 and 18 at application), he was honourably discharged from the army on December 5, 1941 in London, Ontario. Robert then moved to Detroit to join his family. He studied at home from December 1941 to March 1942, and then worked as a "junior" with the Laucomer & Manser Engineering firm in Detroit from March to October 1942.

Upon reaching the required minimum age of 18, Robert Lochhead enlisted in Windsor, joining the Royal Canadian Air Force on October 13, 1942. He was living in Detroit at the time, and recorded his occupation as musician. He stood five feet ten and a half inches tall, had blue eyes and brown hair, and was single at the time. He requested flying duties with a preference to be a pilot. He planned to attend university and to study law after the war.

The interviewing recruiting officer wrote of Robert, *Good type, alert, cooperative, enthusiastic, keen to fly, discharged from army after 11 months service for being under age. A powerful, athletic, self reliant lad who is very keen to be of service, and should be excellent material for aircrew.*

From #1 Manning Depot in Toronto, Robert received his air training at #2 Wireless School (WS) in Calgary; followed by training at #2 Air Gunner School (AGGTS) in Trenton; and #3 Bombing and Gunnery School (B&GS) in Macdonald, Manitoba. He was awarded his Air Gunner's Badge on September 3, 1943. After a two-week leave, he was transferred to #1 Y Depot in Halifax. On October 8, 1943, Robert Lochhead sailed from New York bound for the United Kingdom.



P/O-AG Robert Lachlan Lochhead

Robert was initially posted to #3 Personnel Reception Centre (PRC) at RAF Bournemouth. He continued his training at #82 Operational Training Unit (OTU) and later #1664 Conversion Unit. On March 13, 1944, Robert Lochhead was transferred again becoming a member of RCAF #431 Iroquois Squadron "The Hatiten Ronterios" (Warriors of the air), part of **Bomber Command**, with the rank of Pilot Officer-Air Gunner.

During the course of the war, one of this country's most significant contributions was the approximately 50,000 Canadians who served with the RCAF and RAF in Bomber Command operations. Next to Britain, Canada was the largest contributor to Bomber Command, making up more than a third of all of Bomber Command personnel. The men who served in Bomber Command faced some of the most difficult odds of anyone fighting in the war.

RCAF #431 Squadron had formed in Britain in November 1942, based at RAF Burn, and was equipped with Vickers Wellington aircraft. In July 1943, it moved to RAF Tholthorpe and converted to Handley Page Halifax aircraft. In December 1943, the squadron moved again, to RAF Croft. The squadron remained at Croft for the balance of the war, and in October 1944 would be equipped with Lancasters.

Approximately five weeks after becoming a member of #431 Squadron, Robert Lochhead lost his life during a mission over enemy territory. On the night of April 22, 1944, he was aboard Halifax III aircraft MZ514 (markings SE-P) that left its base at Croft on a night operation targeting Dusseldorf, Germany. The aircraft failed to return to its base after the raid. In the early morning hours of April 23, Halifax MZ514 was lost during the operation. Of the 596 aircraft involved in the operation, there were 29 losses.

Later that month, parents Fraser and Gertrude Lochhead received a telegram informing them that their son, SERGEANT AIR GUNNER ROBERT LOCHHEAD WAS REPORTED MISSING IN ACTION OVER ENEMY TERRITORY AFTER TAKING PART IN AIR OPERATIONS OVER GERMANY. Further word released from Ottawa informed them that Robert, HAD TAKEN PART IN AIR OPERATIONS OVER DUESSELDORF GERMANY ON APRIL 21 AND FAILED TO RETURN FROM THE MISSION.

In late April 1944, Fraser and Gertrude in Detroit received a letter from the R.C.A.F. Casualty Officer, for Chief of the Air Staff. Following is a portion of that letter:

Dear Mr. Lochhead,

It is my painful duty to confirm the telegram recently received by you which informed you that your son, Sergeant Robert Lachlan Lochhead, is reported missing on Active Service.

Advice has been received from the Royal Canadian Air Force Casualties Officer, Overseas, that your son was a member of the crew of an aircraft which failed to return to its base after a bombing raid over Dusseldorf, Germany, on the night of April 22nd and the early morning of April 23rd, 1944. There were four other members of the Royal Canadian Air Force in the crew and they also have been reported missing. Since you may wish to know their names and next-of-kin, we are listing them below...

This does not necessarily mean that your son has been killed or wounded. He may have landed in enemy territory and might be a Prisoner of War. Enquiries have been made through the International Red Cross Society and all other appropriate sources and you may be assured that any further information received will be communicated to you immediately.

Your son's name will not appear on the official casualty list for five weeks. You may, however, release to the Press or Radio the fact that he is reported missing, but not disclosing the date, place, or his unit. May I join with you and the members of your family in the hope that better news will be forthcoming in the near future.

Also in late April 1944, Fraser and Gertrude received a letter from the Wing Commander, Commanding No. 431 (R.C.A.F.) Squadron. Following is a portion of that letter:

Dear Mrs. Lochhead,

Before you receive this letter, you will have had a signal informing you that your son R-187819 Sergeant Robert Lachlan Lochhead is missing as a result of air operations.

At approximately 10.30 P.M. on the night of the 22nd instant, Bob, and members of his crew took off from this aerodrome to carry out operations over DUSSELDORF, Germany, but unfortunately failed to return. He, and his crew were due back at this aerodrome on completion of the sortie, but no news has been received from either the crew or aircraft since the time of take-off.

It is with regret that I write you this date to convey the feelings of my entire Squadron. Your son was popular with this Squadron, and was fast becoming an "Ace" Air Gunner.

We lost one of our best crews, when this aircraft did not return, for it had already been mapped out for a great future with my Squadron. Your son had 4 sorties to his credit and a total of 19 operational hours over enemy territory.

There is always the possibility that your son may be a prisoner of war, in which case, you will either hear from him direct, or through Air Ministry, who will receive advice from the International Red Cross Society. To be a prisoner of war is not the happiest thought in one's mind, particularly for you who are so fond of your son, but on the other hand, I hope you will bear with me that it carries a certain gratifying thought in knowing that our loved ones are alive, and well, and will some day return home safely.

This war has caused grief to millions of people all over the world, and it is a sorrowful state to know that so many fine young men must make supreme sacrifices in order to crush him, and his members, an infuriated enemy whose jealousy and hatred of our spirit, and strength will eventually crush him, and his members.

I do not wish to grieve you further in your deep anxiety, but trust you will bear with me until such time as definite word is received one way or other concerning the welfare of your son....

It is desired to explain that the request in the telegram notifying you of the casualty of your son was included with the object of avoiding his chance of escape being prejudiced by undue publicity in case he was still at large. This is not to say that any information about him is available, but is a precaution adopted in the case of all personnel reported missing. May I offer my most sincere sympathies, as well as those of my Officers, and men in your anxiety.

Almost a year later, in March 1945, as the Lochheads had not received any further information about their son, Fraser wrote a letter to the RCAF Casualty Officer expressing his concern. Following is a portion of that letter:
Dear Sir:

I received your letter February 9 in which you ask us to confirm by letter that we have received no further evidence or news concerning our son, Pilot Officer Robert Lachlan Lochhead. I would like to state that we have been informed that a Mr. MacGregor of Toronto, Canada, had been sent information from you concerning his son, who was in the same flight with ours. We understand that you received your information from a Red Cross Committee in Geneva, and we feel we are not asking too much that the said information be sent to us also.

It is true we have not written you because we were of the opinion that any information received by your department would be distributed to all parents alike. Seemingly such has not been done. We are just as interested in our son as it is possible to be. As he was our only son we feel his loss keenly, but refrain from making ourselves a nuisance to your department, so we naturally feel keenly that we have not been informed...

I would like also at this time, to state that a mother of this same flight has received a script, which can be

framed, over her son's promotion to pilot officer. If such a certificate is to be had we would value it also of our son. I am sure you will understand, and trust you won't find this letter unduly harsh. At this time such small things are so big to us, and we are so eager for news of any kind concerning him.

One month later, in April 1945, the Lochheads received a letter from the RCAF Casualty Officer, for Chief of the Air Staff. Following is a portion of that letter:

Dear Mr. Lochhead:

I wish to acknowledge your letter of recent date concerning your son, Pilot Officer Robert Lachlan Lochhead. A report received from the International Red Cross Committee stated that Sergeant Priamo lost his life on April 23rd, 1944, and was buried in the Communal Cemetery at Veen, which is located approximately 30 miles North North West of Dusseldorf, Germany. A further report received from the Red Cross, advises that Sergeant Howcroft, who was also a member of your son's crew, together with four 'unknown' lost their lives and were buried in the same cemetery as Sergeant Priamo. Sergeant Howcroft is buried in grave number one, and the members referred to as 'unknown' are buried in graves two-three-four- and five.

As there were eight members in your son's crew, however, I am sure you will realize that it was not possible on the above information to identify the members referred to as 'unknown'. This information was not previously passed on to you as the report from the Red Cross did not specifically mention your son's name and it was, therefore, felt that it would only be the cause of additional distress and anxiety.

Your desire for further news of your son is well realized, and I wish to assure you that although presumption of death action is being instituted, it will not in any way affect or diminish any investigation being carried out to obtain all possible particulars.... May I express my sincere sympathy in this long and anxious period of waiting.

Later, the Lochhead's received official notification that their son Robert's death was officially recorded as, *Previously reported missing after air operations, now for official purposes, presumed dead, overseas (Germany).* Perishing with Pilot Officer-Air Gunner Robert Lochhead were F/O Peter George Harvey MacGregor; P/O.s Norman Herbert Lynch, Fred Hatchman, and Joseph Lidio Priamo; and Sgt.s Ronald Blair Corkill (RAF), Albert Howcroft (RAF) and Lt. Edmund Francis Boyle (American). The bodies were buried in a German cemetery at Veen on April 23, 1944. The remains were later exhumed but failed to produce any clues to individual identification.

In May 1946, Fraser and Gertrude received a War Service Gratuity of \$314.27 for the loss of their only son. In September 1946, the results of an R.A.F. Missing Research and Enquiries Unit investigation of the crash site and fate of the crew was completed. Following is a portion of that investigation report:

1. Calling at VEEN cemetery, I met a Mrs. Tiemann of VEEN, the owner of the ground on which the a/c (aircraft) crashed. She quite distinctly remembered that incident. She was up rather late and it might have been around 02:00 hours or 03:00 hours when the a/c hit the ground not very far from her house. It was seen as a ball of fire in the sky and was said to have been brought down by the flak from the nearby airdrome at BONNINGHARDT.

2. Although there was no terrific explosion – suggesting that the a/c was on its way back, it disintegrated in mid air and broke up all together, when hitting the ground. The wreckage burnt fiercely for the rest of the night and nobody could approach it, because of the heat and the exploding ammo. In the morning, only 2 more or less complete bodies were found, totally burnt though, 3 skulls and many bits and pieces of human bodies. Mrs. Tiemann remembers finding very small pieces of the bodies giving some indication of the force of the explosion. Those bits and pieces were collected and put in one grave, whilst the two bodies were placed in a coffin and buried in the local cemetery.

3. Mr H. Werner of VEEN, the local cemetery keeper, on which I called next confirmed what I had already heard from Mrs. Tiemann. Asked how he came to make just 5 graves, he said he had 2 bodies and another 3 skulls, so he presumed that there must have been 5 men in the crew. Graves No. 4 and 5 are empty, for there was not even enough to fill Grave No. 3.

4. A farmer Van Husen of VEEN had found 2 Identity Discs belonging to Boyle and Priamo respectively, which he had handed in to the authorities then....

5.... I met a Mr. H. SCHOOF, a young official there. He proved to be most helpful and had done some investigation on this case already. He suddenly remembered that rumours had been going around to the effect, that in the light of the search lights, 2 parachutes had been seen descending in the direction of Sevelen and ISSUM and it was assumed that they had come from this aircraft....

8. Exhumation would be without result, as apart from the 2 bodies which are burnt beyond recognition, nothing else would be found.

The investigator interviewed Burgomasters and Police Stations in Sevelen and Issum, but no records were

kept, or everything was destroyed through the war. Several local officials and farmers were also interviewed--some recalled POW's passing through the area, but not necessarily on that particular night. A weekly average of some 15 to 17 POW's passed through the area on the way to Stalag Luft III, but no records were available

In January 1947, Fraser and Gertrude Lochhead received a certificate from the RCAF Headquarters in Ottawa, signed by the Air Marshal Chief of the Air Staff. It read as follows:

Royal Canadian Air Force

This is to certify that Pilot Officer R.L. Lochhead has been posthumously awarded the Operational Wings of the Royal Canadian Air Force in recognition of gallant service in action against the enemy.

Dated this tenth day of January, 1947.

Nine months later, in October 1947, Fraser and Gertrude received the following letter from the R.C.A.F. Casualty Officer, for Chief of the Air Staff:

Dear Mr. Lochhead:

It is with regret that I again refer to the loss of your son, Pilot Officer Robert Lachlan Lochhead, but you will wish to know of a report received from our Missing Research and Enquiry Service.

Investigating Officers of this Service contacted Mrs. Tiemann of Veen which is approximately thirty miles North North West of Dusseldorf. Mrs. Tiemann is the owner of the ground on which your son's aircraft crashed. She quite definitely remembered the incident. She was up rather late that night and around 2:00 or 3:00 A.M. in the morning the aircraft hit the ground not far from her house. It was seen as a ball of fire in the sky and was said to have been brought down by anti-aircraft fire from the nearby airdrome at Bonninghardt. It disintegrated in the air and broke up altogether on impact with the ground.

The International Red Cross Committee reports which quoted information from German sources that Sergeant Priamo and Sergeant Howcroft had lost their lives was to some extent misleading as the identity discs of these two airmen were not attached to any of the remains. This was later proven on exhumation which was carried out in the local cemetery. Your son and his crew have since been re-interred in the Reichswald Forest British Military Cemetery, three miles South West of Cleve, Germany and are buried in collective graves 1 and 2 in Row E, Plot 18. I deeply regret having to convey such distressing information but it was thought that in view of the previous reports received from the International Red Cross an explanation was necessary so that you would know the reason the crew had to be buried collectively.

May I, at this time, extend my sincere and heartfelt sympathy to you and the members of your family in your bereavement.



In late fall 1954, Fraser and Gertrude Lochhead, then living in Royal Oak, Michigan, wrote a letter to the R.C.A.F. Casualties Officer, who had promised to send them a photograph of their son's grave. They expressed their sadness at not having received the promised picture, "as you must understand how very much it means to us... and have looked forward to seeing the picture long before now". In April 1955, Fraser received the promised photograph along with the following letter from the Wing Commander, R.C.A.F. Casualties Officer, for Chief of the Air Staff:

Dear Mr. Lochhead:

Some time ago you wrote here requesting a photograph of the permanent headstone at the resting place of your son, Pilot Officer Robert Lachlan Lochhead, at that time the permanent stones were not in place, but at long last I am able to send you the photograph you desired.

I am sorry indeed that it has taken so long, as you will notice there had been a light fall of snow shortly

before the picture was taken. I had the privilege of visiting the Reichswald Forest Cemetery in late 1953, and it is a beautiful location, the kind of place that I am sure you would approve of, and kept perfectly.

May I take this opportunity of expressing to you and the members of your family my deepest sympathy in the loss of your gallant son.

Nineteen year-old Robert Lochhead is buried in Reichswald Forest War Cemetery, Germany, Coll grave 18.E.1-5. On his headstone are inscribed the words, THE GRACE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST BE WITH YOUR SPIRIT. AMEN.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, J, M, N, S, 2C, 2D, 3J, 4B, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10B, 10U

LONEY, George Victor Lawrence (#A/69237)

George Loney had a career, a wife and two children at home with a third on the way, when he chose to serve his country. He sacrificed his life for Canada during the Allied push to rid France of the German forces.

He was born in London, Ontario on April 4, 1916, the only son of Joseph and Mary Alice Loney. Joseph and Mary Alice Loney were married in London, Ontario and they had two children together; George and Josephine Mary Alice (Sauve), who later lived at Cemetery Road, Sarnia. The Loney family moved to Sarnia in the early 1920s. Both of George's parents predeceased him. George also had a half-brother, Joseph, who predeceased him, and a half-sister, Frances Burnie, who later resided in Windsor, Ontario. George was educated at the Point Edward public school, and left school after passing grade seven at age sixteen. He was also a member of Our Lady of Mercy Catholic Parish.

On July 31, 1937, twenty-one-year-old George Loney married Teresa McGinn (born March 1912) who was originally from Preston, Lancashire, England. She was the daughter of Joseph and Mary McGinn, originally from England, then living in Hamilton, Ontario. George and Teresa were married at Our Lady of Mercy Church in Sarnia. At the ceremony, Marion Shortt of Point Edward served as bridesmaid and Orville Toole of Sarnia served as the best man. George and Teresa Loney had three children together: Larry (Lawrence Joseph born Sept. 5, 1938); George Douglas (born Dec. 28, 1939); and Marie Therese (born Sept. 25, 1942). The Loney family lived at 226 Cotterbury Street and later 240 Cobden Street, Sarnia. Prior to enlisting, George was employed at Electric Auto-Lite Limited in Sarnia as a machine operator for nine years.

With two young children at home, and a third on the way, twenty-six-year-old George Loney enlisted in the Canadian Army on April 20, 1942 in Watford, Ontario, becoming a member of the 48th Light Anti-Aircraft (48LAA) Battery, Royal Canadian Artillery. He stood five feet eight and a half inches tall, had greenish-blue eyes and dark brown hair, and recorded his residence at the time as 226 Cotterbury Street, Sarnia. George received his army training with the 48th LAA in Watford; followed by his training at #12 Basic Training Centre (BTC) in Chatham, and then with the 9th Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment in Petawawa and in Vancouver. While stationed in Vancouver in September 1942, his baby daughter Marie Therese was born in Sarnia. In January 1943, George was again training with the 48LAA in Terrace, British Columbia, and later in Wainwright, Alberta. During his training, he also received his Class III Driver and Class III Motorcyclist qualifications. In August 1943, he was transferred to #1 Transit Centre in Windsor, Nova Scotia.



Gunner George Victor Lawrence Loney

George Loney embarked overseas for the United Kingdom on August 28, 1943. He was initially posted to #3 Canadian Army Reinforcement Unit (CARU), and then #2 CARU, where he continued his training. In May 1944, he became a member of the Royal Canadian Artillery (RCA), 7 Medium Regiment with the rank of Gunner. He sailed from the U.K. on July 7, 1944, arriving two days later in France (one month after D-Day).

The **Battle of Normandy** began for the Canadians with the June 6, 1944 D-Day landings at Juno Beach. After breaching the “Atlantic Wall” of “Fortress Europe”, Allied armies began their break out from the narrow Normandy bridgehead to carve out a foothold on the French mainland. It would take a whole summer of tenacious fighting, pushing against fierce and ruthless German forces to advance east across France. In a brutal campaign of attrition, the Canadians faced fierce battles and vicious counterattacks as they clawed their way forward liberating villages and towns including Bretteville, Carpiquet, Caen and Falaise.

Gunner George Loney served with the RCA, 7 Medium Regiment as they advanced through France. One month after arriving in France, he lost his life. On August 8, 1944, George was killed in action against the enemy during the Battle of Normandy. His remains were buried the same day at a location recorded on the Army Field Service Card as “Canadian Military Temp. Cemetery, Mondeville MR087675”.

In mid-August of 1944, Teresa Loney on Cobden Street received a telegram informing her that her husband, GUNNER GEORGE LONEY WAS KILLED IN ACTION IN FRANCE ON AUGUST 8. At the time of George’s death, he left behind his wife, Teresa, and their three young children: Larry, age five; George, age four; and daughter Marie, age two.

In early September 1944, Teresa received the following letter from a Major-General, Adjutant-General:
Dear Mrs. Loney:

It was with deep regret that I learned of the death of your husband, A69237 Gunner George Victor Lawrence Loney, who gave his life in the Service of his Country in France on the 8th day of August, 1944.

From official information we have received, your husband was killed in action against the enemy. You may be assured that any additional information received will be communicated to you without delay.

The Minister of National Defence and the members of the Army Council have asked me to express to you and your family their sincere sympathy in your bereavement. We pay tribute to the sacrifice he so bravely made.

In November 1945, Teresa received a War Service Gratuity of \$365.14 for the loss of her husband. Five months later, in April 1946, she received a letter from the Colonel, Director of Records, for Adjutant-General. Following is a portion of that letter:

Dear Madam:

Information has just been received from overseas that the remains of your husband, A69237 Gunner George Victor Lawrence Loney, have been carefully exhumed from the original place of interment and reverently reburied in grave 16, row H, plot 11, of Bretteville-sur-Laize Canadian Military Cemetery, Bretteville-sur-Laize, France. Marked map is enclosed. This is a recognized military burial ground and will receive care and maintenance in perpetuity.

The grave will have been marked with a temporary cross which will be replaced in due course by a permanent headstone suitably inscribed. While it cannot now be stated when this work of permanent commemoration will begin, before any action is taken you will be communicated with and an opportunity will be given you to submit a short personal inscription of your own choice for engraving on the headstone...

Twenty-eight-year-old George Loney is buried in Bretteville-Sur-Laize Canadian War Cemetery, Calvados, France, Grave XI.H.16.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, J, L, N, 2C, 2D, 7C, 8X, 8Y

LOVE, John Frederick (#V/19486)

John Frederick Love had a career, was in his sixth year of marriage, and had a daughter at home when he chose to serve his country. He gave his life for the Allied cause while ensuring that vital naval supply lines remained open to what British Prime Minister Winston Churchill said was “... the only thing that ever really frightened me during the war...”

He was born in Brandon, Manitoba on September 28, 1913, the son of Robin and Violet Love of Regina, Saskatchewan. John had two brothers: Allan (later resided in Burlington, Ontario) and Laurie (would serve overseas); and three sisters: Dorothy (who served with the Women’s Air Force), and married sisters, Mrs. R. Colville (would

reside in Vancouver) and Mrs. T. Dempster (would reside in Melville, Saskatchewan). The Love family later moved to Yorkton, Saskatchewan, where John served in the 1st Yorkton Regiment, Militia, as a bugler from 1925 to 1927. He completed one year of high school, leaving at age fifteen.

John Love moved to Sarnia around 1933. On May 16, 1936, the twenty-two-year-old married Mabel Patricia (nee Rutter), the eldest daughter of John and Bernice Rutter of Port Huron, Michigan. John and Mabel Love lived at 156 Cotterbury Street, Sarnia. The couple had one daughter together, Deanna Marie Love, born December 13, 1936 at Sarnia General Hospital.

John was an employee at the Electric Auto-Lite plant in Sarnia as machine operator prior to enlisting. Twenty-seven-year-old John Love enlisted in the Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve on August 7, 1941 in Windsor, Ontario. He stood five feet ten inches tall, had blue eyes and brown hair, and stated that he planned to return to Sarnia after the war to continue work as a machinist. When he enlisted, John's father Robin was a resident of Detroit and his mother Violet was residing in Regina, Saskatchewan.

John trained at Windsor Division Headquarters as a Stoker II until October 1941, and was then transferred to Halifax base *Stadacona*. In early 1942, he was transferred again, and on January 9, 1942, he was posted overseas to the Royal Naval Base (RNB) in Chatham, England. There he became a member of the crew of the *HMS Grove*, with the rank of Stoker II.



Stoker John Frederick Love

The Royal Navy *HMS Grove* (L77) was a Type II Hunt-class destroyer, launched in May 1941 and commissioned by the Royal Navy in February 1942. The ship's name comes from the name of a fox-hunt in Nottinghamshire, England. In its five months of service, the ship was first deployed in the Arctic, then the Atlantic Ocean, and then off the coast of Libya in the Mediterranean. The vessel played a vital role in escorting convoys of ships carrying men and essential machinery, arms, fuel and basic resources. On March 27, 1942 in the North Atlantic, the *HMS Grove*, along with *HMS Aldenham*, *HMS Volunteer* and *HMS Leamington*, sank the German U-boat *U-587* by depth charges.

The **Battle of the Mediterranean** was the naval campaign that began in June 1940, fought in the Mediterranean Sea, between the Italian Royal Navy (supported by Axis forces) and the British Royal Navy (supported by Allied forces). Each side had the same objectives: to attack the supply lines of the other side; to keep open the supply lines of their own armies in North Africa; and to destroy the ability of the opposing navy to wage war at sea. In May 1942, the *Grove* was in the Mediterranean Sea at Alexandria, off the north central coast of Egypt. In early June 1942, the ship was part of a flotilla escorting supply convoys from Alexandria to the Tobruk garrison--a seaport town in northeastern Libya in North Africa.

On June 12, 1942, the *HMS Grove* departed Tobruk bound for Alexandria. The ship ran aground briefly at Tobruk, damaging a port propeller and shaft, reducing her speed to 8.5 knots. At 5:37 am, the ship was struck by two torpedoes from German U-boat *U-77* and sunk north of Sollum, Egypt. The bow and stern structures were blown off, and the ship sank in 14 minutes. Two officers and 108 men were lost, including Stoker John Love. Seventy-eight

survivors from the *HMS Grove* were rescued by the destroyer *HMS Tetcott*. [Note: at the same time, *Operation Vigorous* was underway in the area--an Allied operation to deliver supply convoy MW-11 from Haifa and Port Said to Malta. That convoy would encounter heavy enemy opposition and would return to Alexandria. *HMS Grove* was not part of that operation].

Prior to the sinking of the *HMS Grove*, John's wife Mabel and their five year-old daughter Deanna in Sarnia had not heard from him for six months. Approximately one week after the ship's sinking, Mabel received a telegram informing her that John Love was reported killed in action overseas. The *Toronto Globe and Mail* had the following report on June 25:

Sarnia Sailor Thought Dead

The Royal Canadian Navy in its eighty-ninth casualty list of the war, today reported that Stoker John Frederick Love whose wife, Mrs. Mabel Patricia Love, lives at 156 Cotterbury Street, Sarnia, Ont., is missing and presumed killed on active service. Stoker Love was a member of the Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve.

In late June 1942, Mabel received the following letter from the Secretary, Naval Board:

Dear Madam:

It is with deepest regret that I must confirm the telegram of the 16th June from the Minister of National Defence for Naval Services informing you that your husband, John Frederick Love, Stoker II, R.C.N.V.R., O.N. V.19486, is missing, presumed killed on Active Service.

No details are known at Headquarters, but should any further information be received you will be advised immediately. I wish to express the sincere sympathy of the Chief of the Naval Staff, Officers and men of the Royal Canadian Navy, the high traditions of which your husband has helped to maintain.

John Love's death was later officially recorded as, *At Sea, missing, and presumed killed on active service. He was serving in a Royal Navy ship overseas.* John Love lost his life only one year after enlisting. In March 1945, Mabel, then living on Earl Grey Road in Toronto, received a War Service Gratuity of \$140.75 for the loss of her husband John. Mabel Love later remarried, becoming Mrs. Mabel Christiansen, residing on Logan Avenue, Toronto. Twenty-eight-year-old John Love has no known grave. His name is inscribed on the Halifax Memorial, Nova Scotia, Canada, Panel 9.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, N, P, U, 2C, 2D, 7C, 8X, 8Y

LOWRY, James (#R/78911)

One year after enlisting, James Lowry would marry. Less than a year later, with his wife six months pregnant, James Lowry was shipped overseas to serve his country. He sacrificed his life for Canada while fighting to drive the Germans out of Italy.

He was born in Belfast, Northern Ireland on July 5, 1916, the son of John and Annie (nee Park) Lowry, of Crumlin, County Antrim, Northern Ireland. John (a farmer) and Annie were both born in Belfast, and were married in Crumlin, Northern Ireland in 1893, and later resided at Pond Park Cottage, Lisburn, Northern Ireland. James had seven brothers and two sisters. His brothers Robert, William, Corky and Sam all lived in Ireland (two served in the RAF); John lived in Pittsburg, Pa., and Richard and Andrew lived in British Columbia. His sisters, both married, and lived in Ireland; Mrs. Agnes Kennedy and Mrs. Margaret Thompson. The Lowry's had another daughter, Rachel, who died in 1907 at age nine.

James received his education at Straidhavern Public School in Ireland, attending school for ten years from August 1920 to March 1930, which was equivalent to four years of high school in Canada. He was very active in boxing, and enjoyed golf, soccer and swimming, and motorcycle racing. From 1930 to 1938 he worked odd jobs in Ireland.

James Lowry immigrated to Canada in early 1938, and first worked for Samuel Neely of R.R. Camlachie, Ontario as a farm helper. When work ended there, he worked at London Roofing Company in London, Ontario in 1939-1940. When the factory closed, he came to Sarnia. He worked as a salesman at Wholesale Supply Company, and as a press operator at Mueller Limited. He then worked as a truck driver in Sarnia until he enlisted in 1941.

Twenty-four-year-old James Lowry enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force on January 3, 1941 in London, Ontario. He stood five feet nine inches tall, had brown eyes and dark brown hair, was single, and lived at 255 South Brock Street, Sarnia at the time. He requested flying duties, with a preference to be a Pilot. From the Recruiting Centre in London, then #1 Manning Depot in Toronto and #1 Auxillary Manning Depot in Picton, James began his

air training at #1 Initial Training School (ITS) in Toronto. His commanding officer at ITS wrote of James, *Keen alert self confident scrappy type of trainee with excellent spirit who is anxious to get overseas and get along with the job. Irishman who knows England well. Could take good care of himself in a tight spot.*

James continued his air training at #3 Elementary Flying Training School (EFTS) in London and #6 Service Flying Training School (SFTS) in Dunnville, where his commanding officers, recommending James for a fighter pilot, wrote of him, *A hard worker energetic and aggressive – cheerful and willingly accepts orders... A high average pilot with a keenness for operational flying.* James was awarded his Pilot's Flying Badge on December 23, 1941.

On January 3, 1942, twenty-five-year-old James Lowry married Pauline Ella Lowry (nee Sayers, born 1923) in Ottawa. They lived on Preston Street in Ottawa briefly before James was sent out west for further air training. Pauline later moved to Sarnia, residing at 775 Exmouth Street (R.R. #1), and later 255 South Brock Street. James and Pauline had one daughter together, Judith Anne Lowry, born January 13, 1943 at Sarnia General Hospital.

Only days after getting married, on January 6, 1942, James was transferred from RCAF Station Rockcliffe to #5 Bombing and Gunnery School (B&GS) in Dafoe, Saskatchewan, where he continued his training until mid-August 1942. On August 21, 1942, he was transferred to #1 Y Depot in Halifax.



WO1-Pilot James Lowry

James Lowry embarked overseas from Halifax for the United Kingdom on October 26, 1942. Initially posted to #3 Personnel Reception Centre, he continued his air training, first with #9 (Pilot) Advanced Flying Unit (AFU), and on January 12, 1943, with #53 Operational Training Unit (OTU). On May 5, 1943, he was posted to #5 Personnel Despatch Centre (PDC).

On May 17, 1943, James sailed from the U.K. bound for the Middle East, ending up at RAF Headquarters in Krendi, Malta. James Lowry became a member of RAF #185 Squadron "Ara Fejn Hu" (Look where it is), a Spitfire pilot, with the rank of Flight Sergeant (later promoted to the rank of Warrant Officer Class I-Pilot, effective June 23, 1943). His Commanding Officer wrote of James, *A very fine N.C.O. at all times. Keen to engage the enemy, and to do his job. A valuable man to have in a squadron. Above average intelligence and personality.*

RAF #185 Squadron went through several different incarnations during the war. It began in March 1938 as a training squadron in Bomber Command. In April 1941, it was re-formed as a **fighter squadron** on Malta, based at RAF Takali and Hal Far, operating Hawker Hurricane aircraft. In early 1942, the squadron began converting to Spitfire fighter aircraft, taking part in the fierce air battles that raged over Malta. By the end of 1942, the squadron flew sweeps over Sicily, in preparation for an Allied invasion on the island. In July 1943, the squadron supported the invasion of Sicily, the beginning of the Italian Campaign. In the early part of 1944, the squadron moved to Italy where it operated as a fighter-bomber unit, supporting the Allied advance north up the length of Italy.

The **Italian Campaign**, the first sustained Canadian Army operation of the War, began with the invasion of Sicily on July 10, 1943. The fierce fighting on the island lasted more than four weeks. By August 17, the Germans

had retreated to the Italian mainland. In early September, Canadian and Allied forces invaded Italy. Liberating Italy would be a painstaking northward crawl lasting 20 months.

On July 2, 1943, only days before his 27th birthday, Flight Sergeant James Lowry lost his life. His Spitfire Mk. IX aircraft EN404 had taken off from Malta and was shot down into the sea by enemy aircraft during an offensive fighter sweep over Sicily. The following is from the official report on the incident by the Squadron Leader, Commanding #185 Squadron: *At approximately 1500 hours local summer time... After sweeping Sicily, leaving the coast at Pexala and flying about 10 miles South, a left about was given for three enemy Me.109's (enemy aircraft), which were approaching from 7 o'clock. F/Sgt. Lowry was last seen during the turn, when he was hit in a head on attack by one of the enemy aircraft. He was reported to have dived into the sea, 20 miles South of Cape Calabria. Searching aircraft and the High Speed Launch failed to find any trace of F/Sgt. Lowry, who was subsequently reported missing.*

Days after the aircraft went missing, Pauline Lowry on Exmouth Street received a telegram from Air Force Headquarters in Ottawa informing her that her husband, FLIGHT SERGEANT JAMES LOWRY HAS BEEN REPORTED MISSING ON ACTIVE SERVICE IN THE MIDDLE EAST. Days later, Pauline received the following letter from the Flight Lieutenant, R.C.A.F. Casualties Officer for Chief of the Air Staff:

Dear Mrs. Lowry:

It is my painful duty to confirm the telegram recently received by you which informed you that your husband, Flight Sergeant James Lowry is reported missing on Active Service. Advice has been received from the Royal Canadian Air Force Casualties Officer, Overseas, that your husband was a member of the crew of an aircraft which failed to return to its base after air operations twenty miles south of Sicily on 2nd July, 1943.

This does not necessarily mean that your husband has been killed or wounded. He may have landed in enemy territory and might be a Prisoner of War. Enquiries have been made through the International red Cross Society and all other appropriate sources and you may be assured that any further information will be communicated to you immediately. Your husband's name will not appear on the official casualty list for five weeks. You may, however, release to the Press or Radio the fact that he is reported missing, but not disclosing the date, place, or his unit. May I join with you in the hope that better news will be forthcoming in the near future.

Also in July 1943, Pauline received the following letter from the Flight Lieutenant, for Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief, RCAF, Overseas:

Dear Mrs. Lowry,

It is with deep regret that I must confirm the information which you already received from Air Force Headquarters, Ottawa, which stated that your husband, Flight Sergeant James Lowry was reported missing as the result of air operations on the 2nd July, 1943.

Your husband, piloting a Spitfire aircraft, took off from Malta for operations against the enemy... and failed to return. Enquiries are being made through the International Red Cross Committee and other available sources, and I can assure you that any news which may be forthcoming will be communicated to you at once by Air Force Headquarters, Ottawa. Please accept my deepest sympathy with you in your great anxiety.

Also in July 1943, Pauline received a letter from the RCAF #185 Squadron Leader, Royal Air Force Station, Krendi, Malta. Following is a portion of that letter:

My dear Mrs. Lowry.

You will have heard by now through official channels that your husband failed to return from an offensive operation on the evening of July the second, and I am writing on behalf of myself and everyone else in the Squadron to offer you our deep sympathy.

Your husband joined the Squadron about three weeks ago and I was immediately struck by his outstanding personality, and his keenness to start operations, and straightaway he took up his place as a valuable member of the Squadron and flew with us as often as he was allowed. He was an extremely cheery fellow and in himself happy to be with the Squadron, as his best friend, F/Sgt Mercer was here too, and you may imagine what a blow it was to us all when he failed to return from the operation of the second of July.

I am very glad to say though, that I can hold out some hope for you for there is quite a possibility of his being a prisoner of war. While returning from a sweep over enemy territory we were attacked by enemy fighters and your husband who saw them first, was one of the first to turn and engage them. In the combat which ensued he was heard to say over the wireless that he had been hit but nothing more was seen or heard of him, and it can only be hoped that he crash landed in enemy territory or bailed out and picked up by them. The area of sea over which the

fight occurred was searched by launches and aircraft, but no sign of him was found.

Unfortunately I can tell you no more as those are the only facts in our possession. If anything further should come to light I will write to you immediately...

It is really with deep regret that I write this letter for I feel I can understand to some extent what this news must mean to you. For us there is a gap in the Squadron, for his personality and sense of humour and keenness on his work made him very popular with all, and I can say no more than that I wish we had many more like him in the Squadron.

If you feel that I am able to help you in any way please do not hesitate to write me, as I shall be only too glad to do anything within my power to soften the blow of this sad news.

In late March 1944, Pauline, then at R.R.#1 Sarnia, wrote the following letter to the Secretary, Department of National Defence for Air, in Ottawa:

Dear Sir:

In reference to your letter of March 18, concerning my husband, Flight Sergeant James Lowry R78911. As yet I have had no further evidence or news of him, but sincerely feel that he is somewhere over there alive. Will the International Red Cross still make enquiries?

Some time ago there was a newspaper item saying there were quite a number of escaped allied prisoners hiding in underground Rome. If there is any truth in this report, could it not be possible that he may be one of them?

Would you be kind enough to reply, as the least bit of hope would be very encouraging.

Yours truly, Mrs. James Lowry

In April 1944, James' mother Annie Lowry in Lisburn, Northern Ireland received the following letter from the Air Ministry Wing Commander, R.C.A.F., Overseas:

Dear Mrs. Lowry:

It is with deep regret that I must refer to my letter of the 5th July, 1943, regarding your son Flight Sergeant James Lowry. In view of the large lapse of time and the absence of any further news concerning him, it must regretfully be concluded that he has lost his life. Action has accordingly been taken to presume, for official purposes, that he lost his life on the 2nd July, 1943. Please accept my profound sympathy in the loss of your son.

In early December 1944, Pauline Lowry received the following information from Ottawa (though presumed dead): *Flight Sergeant James Lowry, has been promoted to the rank of Warrant Officer, Class One, effective June 23, 1943. James Lowry's death was later officially recorded as, Previously reported missing after air operations, now for official purposes, presumed dead, overseas (Sicily).* James Lowry left behind his wife Pauline of one and a half years, and their five-month old daughter Judith Anne.

In February 1945, Pauline received a War Service Gratuity of \$366.88 for the loss of her husband. In June 1948, the #5 Missing Research and Enquiry Unit (RAF) released the results of its investigation on the fate of Spitfire IX EN404. Following is a portion of their results:

The above aircraft was shot down into sea by enemy aircraft about 20 miles South of Sicily after taking part in an offensive sweep over Sicily. A search was made by both aircraft and a high speed launch but no trace could be found of F/Sgt. Lowry.

As Searcher Party investigations in Sicily failed to reveal any unknowns who might prove to be F/Sgt. Lowry, we propose to close the case on the assumption that this casualty was "Lost at Sea". This is subject to Air Ministry Confirmation.

In September 1952, Pauline received a letter from Wing Commander, R.C.A.F. Casualties Officer, for Chief of the Air Staff. Following is a portion of that letter:

Dear Mrs. Lowry:

It is with reluctance that after so long an interval, I must refer to the loss of your husband, Warrant Officer Class I James Lowry, but due to the lack of any information concerning him since he was reported missing, it must be regretfully accepted and officially recorded that he does not have a "known" grave.

Due to the extreme hazards attending air operations there are, unhappily many thousands of British aircrew boys who do not have "known" graves and all will be commemorated on General Memorials that will be erected at a number of locations by the Imperial War Graves Commission (of which Canada is a member), each Memorial representative of a theatre of operations. One of these Memorials will be erected at Malta, and the name of your husband will appear on that Memorial...

I realize that this is an extremely distressing letter and that there is no manner of conveying such information

to you that would not add to your heartaches. I am fully aware that nothing I may say will lessen your great sorrow, but I would like to express to you and the members of your family my deepest sympathy.

Twenty-six-year-old James Lowry has no known grave. His name is inscribed on the Malta War Memorial, Malta, Panel 10, Column 2.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, M, N, 2C, 2D, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10B

LUCAS, William Eldon (#V/19180)

British Prime Minister Winston Churchill would say that “The only thing that ever really frightened me during the war was the U-boat peril.” Sarnia’s William Lucas was one of many who lost his life at the hands of the dreaded U-boats. He gave his life for the Allied cause in the protection of vital shipping lanes between the Caribbean Sea and England.

He was born in Sarnia on October 29, 1918, the youngest son of Thomas Henry (born in Camlachie, Ontario) and Lillian Mae (nee Martin, born in Sarnia) Lucas, of 368 Shepherd Street, Sarnia. Thomas and Lillian Lucas were married on June 28, 1905 in Sarnia, and they had four children together: Helena Mae (born 1906, later becoming Mrs. Edmund Mackey); James Wesley (born 1912); William; and Shirley Catherine (born 1924, later becoming Mrs. Charles Demars). William attended Sarnia Collegiate, completing school at the age of seventeen. A former scoutmaster, prior to enlisting William worked a variety of jobs in Sarnia: on a farm for three summers; as a gas station attendant; as a labourer (grinder) at Muellers Foundry; and then as a chauffeur employed by W.H. Kenney until he enlisted.

Twenty-two-year-old William Lucas enlisted with the Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve on November 18, 1940, in Windsor, Ontario. He stood five feet ten inches tall, had blue eyes and brown hair, was single, and lived at home with his parents on Shepherd Street at the time. He began his training at the Royal Canadian Naval Division Headquarters in Windsor. One month later, Ordinary Seaman William Lucas, still in training, returned to Sarnia from the barracks at Windsor to assist two recruiting officers of the Windsor depot in the interviewing of recruits for the Royal Canadian Navy. Recruiting in Sarnia for only one day, William explained to the young men that if they were accepted, they would be given a medical examination before going to Windsor; they would undergo training for a six-week period at the Windsor barracks; and then would be transferred to one of the coastal naval bases. At that one-day recruitment, more than one hundred young men from Sarnia, Petrolia, Wyoming and Courtright presented themselves at the armory for enlistment in the Royal Canadian Naval detachment. The average age of those accepted was 18 to 20 years, many of high school age.

In April 1941, William was transferred to Halifax base *Stadacona*, with the rank of Steward Probationary. His training continued in Halifax at *HMCS Kings* (King’s College), where he attained full Steward in November 1941. William returned to Sarnia on leave during Christmas and New Year’s 1941 until January 1942. He then returned to *Stadacona* in Halifax on January 9, 1942. According to his official Service Files, three days later, on January 12, 1942, his ship/establishment was recorded as “*Gaspe (Vison)*”, with the rank of Steward. Also recorded on that date was that he “*was borne for passage in SS Lady Hawkins bound for Trinidad*”.

The *HMCS Vison (S11/Z30)*, formerly the *Avalon*, was launched in 1931.* In June 1940, it left Halifax for Pictou where she was converted to an armed yacht of 181 feet in length and a displacement of 422 tonnes. In early October 1940 she was commissioned by the RCN in Halifax and assigned to the base at Gaspe. In December 1940, the ship was sent southward operating out of Trinidad and Bermuda until her return to Halifax in May 1941. In July 1941 she became a member of Gaspé Force, proceeding from Halifax for passage to Trinidad again in December 1941. William Lucas was bound for his posting on the *Vison*. He would not make it.

*Note: His Service File records the name of ship as *Vison*. Some sources record the name as *Vision*.

The **Battle of the Caribbean** was part of the Battle of the Atlantic. German U-boats and Italian submarines attempted to disrupt the Allied supply of oil and other material by attacking shipping in the Caribbean Sea and the Gulf of Mexico. The Royal Canadian Navy played a vital role in this theatre, protecting ships carrying the vital supplies of fuel and resources.

HMCS Vison rejoined the Halifax Local Defence Force in April 1942 and was transferred to Sydney Force in July 1942. In February 1943, *Vison* returned to Halifax as a training ship attached to *HMCS Cornwallis* and moved with the establishment to Digby in April 1943. She remained there until the end of the war as a seamen's training ship, exercising with RN submarines in the Bay of Fundy.



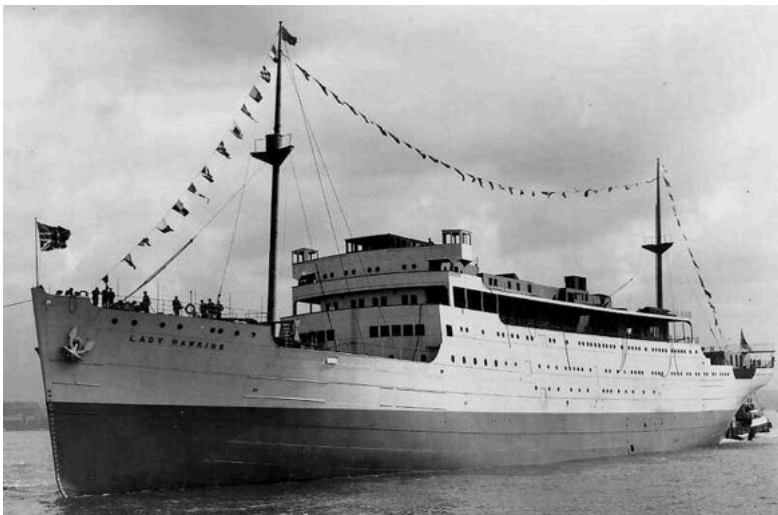
Steward William Eldon Lucas



Armed Yacht *HMCS Vison S11/Z30*

On January 12, 1942, William Lucas boarded the steamship *SS Lady Hawkins* in Halifax that had departed Montreal on its way to Bermuda (where the *Vison* was located at that time). The *Lady Hawkins*, a Canadian luxury liner, was part of Canada's merchant navy fleet designed for the Canada-West Indies service. Prior to the war, Canadian National Steamships operated a fleet of five luxury liners that sailed from eastern Canadian ports to Bermuda, the West Indies, British Honduras and British Guyana carrying passengers and freight. Known affectionately as the "Lady Boats", they were named after the wives of British admirals with a connection to the West Indies – *Lady Somers*, *Lady Rodney*, *Lady Nelson*, *Lady Drake* and *Lady Hawkins*. When war broke out, they were pressed into war service. Their sparkling white hulls were repainted with drab grey paint, and each had a four-inch gun mounted aft for protection against surface raiders and U-boats.

In January 1942, after leaving Montreal, then Halifax and Boston, the *Lady Hawkins* had 109 crew and 212 passengers, mostly civilian, on board. At least 50 of the passengers were Royal Canadian Navy Volunteer Reserve personnel (including William Lucas). The ship had no escort and only a small gun for defence, so it travelled in a zig-zag pattern and was blacked out for defence.



S.S. Lady Hawkins

On January 19, 1942, at about 2:00 a.m., the unescorted *Lady Hawkins* was sailing in the darkness when it was hit by two stern torpedoes from German *U-66*. The ship sank in less than 30 minutes, approximately 150 miles from Cape Hatteras, North Carolina. The ship's wireless sets were destroyed and no SOS was sent out, so there would be no quick rescue. Five of the ship's six lifeboats were smashed to bits and sank. One nine-metre lifeboat, built for 63, escaped the scene with 76 cold, wet survivors on board. One of those who survived later said, *There*

were no lights, no stars, no moon at that time of the morning. We could hear people in the water, but we couldn't actually see them. There were people shouting, but we couldn't take any more aboard. It was a horrible thing. Chief Officer Percy Kelly, in charge of the lifeboat, later reported that, (he gave) the agonizing order to pull away... there was nothing else we could do. The cries of the people in the water rang in my ears for years.

For five days the survivors drifted west under sail and by paddle, bailing out their lifeboat constantly, staying alive on meagre rations. Breakfast and supper consisted of half a biscuit and a dipper of water each. Lunch was a mouthful of condensed milk. After five days, the U.S. passenger steamship *Coamo* happened upon the lifeboat and picked up seventy-one survivors. Five of the 76 unfortunately had fallen into comas and died during the five days at sea. The *Coamo* landed at Puerto Rico on January 28. Two hundred fifty crew and passengers were lost in the sinking of the *Lady Hawkins*, including Sarnia's William Lucas.

Steward William Lucas' death was later officially recorded as, *Missing, believed lost at sea on war service*. On October 29, 1944, two and a half years after William Lucas was reported missing, the Remembrance Book at Devine Street Church was opened at the photograph of William Lucas in honour of his 26th birthday. Twenty-three-year-old William Lucas has no known grave. His name is inscribed on the Halifax Memorial, Nova Scotia, Canada, Panel 9.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, J, L, N, P, T, U, X, 2C, 2D, 2E, 7C, 7D, 8X, 8Y, 10V

LYCHOWICH, John Louis (#A/107694)

The death of John Lychowich, a carpenter at Polymer, revealed the dark and disturbing side of war. A member of the Winnipeg Rifles who was captured shortly after D-Day, John was one of over 150 Canadian soldiers who were systematically executed by members of the 12th SS Panzer Division (Hitler Youth).

John was born in Garson, Manitoba on January 20, 1918 and was raised on a farm there with his younger sister, Jean Engel. Their parents were Polish immigrants Steve (Szzepan, born in Galicia, Poland, a labourer and farmer) and Rosalie (nee Hower, born in Austria) Lychowich. On John's birth certificate, the family surname is actually spelled "Lehovitz".

After completing grade seven, John left school at age fourteen to work as a farmer and labourer in Manitoba and Saskatchewan. He spent five years working on "mixed farms" and sometime in 1940 made his way to Sarnia. He returned to Garson, Manitoba from time to time and worked there for short periods, but would always return to Sarnia. In Sarnia, he found employment at the Polymer Corporation, working almost three years as a carpenter. During his time living in Sarnia, he managed to find love, and made plans to marry Barbara Nemeth of Kitchener, Ontario.



John Lychowich



Steve and Rose
Lechowicz and John and
Jean - 1922.

On May 27, 1943, still single, John, 25, enlisted for military service and completed his National Resources Mobilization Act (NRMA) Enrolment Form at No. 1 District Depot in London, Ontario. He stood five feet seven and a half inches tall, had brown eyes and brown hair, and his hobby was baseball. He recorded his address as Polymer

Corp. Camp, Sarnia, and his occupation as a carpenter. He also expressed a preference for service in the Navy. John planned to return to Sarnia following the war, as Polymer Corp promised that once his service was complete, he would be employed with them. He was initially attached to #1 District Depot, Canadian Army in London, Ontario. In early June 1943, he ran into a bit of trouble when he was convicted of theft and sentenced to one month imprisonment in the “County Jail” at Sarnia. At the end of the month, he was released to the Military Police and attached to the Military Detention Barracks.

From #1 District Depot in London, John began his Canadian Army training on August 12, 1943 at #6 Basic Training Centre (BTC) in Stratford. In mid-September 1943, he was transferred to A-29 Canadian Infantry Training Centre (CITC) at Camp Ipperwash for advanced training. In mid-November, earning \$1.40 per day, he was granted a two-week furlough and an allowance of .50 cents per deim in lieu of rations. On December 23, 1943, he was granted a five-day Christmas leave, again with the .50 cents per deim allowance. At the start of the New Year, John earned himself a raise, to \$1.50 per day and four weeks later, on January 26, was transferred for further training to #1 Training Brigade in Debert, Nova Scotia.

On March 6, 1944, John Lychowich embarked overseas from Debert, Nova Scotia bound for the United Kingdom. He reported for duty in the U.K. on March 15, 1944, becoming part of #2 Canadian Infantry Reinforcement Unit (CIRU). He continued his training there and on May 25, 1944, became a member of the Royal Winnipeg Rifles (RWR), Royal Canadian Infantry Corps (RCIC), with the rank of Private.



Private John Louis Lychowich

In early June 1944, John departed from the U.K. bound for France, part of the Royal Winnipeg Rifles, 7th Infantry Brigade, 3rd Canadian Division. He disembarked with the Winnipeg Rifles in the first wave of landings on Juno Beach, June 6, 1944 – **D-Day**.

The **Battle of Normandy** began for the Canadians with the June 6, 1944 D-Day landings at Juno Beach. After breaching the “Atlantic Wall” of “Fortress Europe”, Allied armies began their break out from the narrow Normandy bridgehead to carve out a foothold on the French mainland. It would take a whole summer of tenacious fighting, pushing against fierce and ruthless German forces to advance east across France. In a brutal campaign of attrition, the Canadians faced fierce battles and vicious counterattacks as they clawed their way forward liberating villages and towns including Bretteville, Carpiquet, Caen and Falaise. John Lychowich would not to see these victories. John would not see these victories.

John Lychowich survived only those first couple of days of the invasion of France. On June 8, 1944, on his 94th day overseas, he was listed as “missing”. It was learned later that John had been captured by German troops and was one of as many as 156 Canadian soldiers who were executed by their captors. On Hitler’s order, as retribution for the invasion on France, members of the 12th SS Panzer Division (Hitler Youth) brutally murdered prisoners in scattered groups in various pockets of the Normandy countryside in the days and weeks following D-Day. It was one of the worst war crimes in Canadian history.

On June 7, the Germans took prisoners from the North Nova Scotia Highlanders and the 27th Canadian Armoured Regiment to Abbaye d'Ardenne, an ancient stone church. Later that night, eleven of the Canadian prisoners were taken into the Abbaye's garden and shot in the head. The next morning, seven more Canadian POWs were taken outside and shot. On June 8, sixty-four Canadians, including several dozen members of the Royal Winnipeg Rifles, were taken prisoner near Putot-en-Bessin.

The prisoners were marched to the Chateau d'Audrieu and, throughout the day, German soldiers murdered forty-five Canadians. One of those murdered on June 8, 1944 was John Lychowich. The murders of these Canadian soldiers and the consequent search for justice is documented in the book *Conduct Unbecoming: The Story of the Murder of Canadian Prisoners of War in Normandy* by Howard Margolian.^{D, 2N} The following is a portion of that book detailing the events of June 8th, beginning at about 2:00 in the afternoon:

At the crossroads east of Pavie, the column (of prisoners) was ordered to a halt. The first thing Bremer's men did was to instruct the prisoners to remove their helmets. Then, while they kept their hands clasped behind their heads, each prisoner subjected to a thorough, sometimes rough, search. All papers and personal effects confiscated. Identification documents were taken by the NCO in charge, while photographs, money, and other personal items were tossed willy-nilly to the ground, although the Germans did make a point of pocketing cigarettes. At the conclusion of the search, the prisoners, their hands still up, were marched another few hundred yards to the rear of a chateau.... Compared with the horrors of combat, the scene that greeted the prisoners on the grounds of the chateau must have seemed positively idyllic. Nestled among tall, leafy trees and other greenery, the chateau, named Chateau d'Audrieu, after the neighbouring village, recalled simpler, gentler times.

Three prisoners--Major Hodge, Lance Corporal Austin Fuller and Private Frederick Smith--were brought to a command post where they underwent interrogation. About 2:15, a frustrated and angry German officer ordered them killed. They were marched single file, arms still raised, onto a path that led to a cluster of shrubs and small trees and then ordered to halt. After ordering them to face away from the firing squad, German soldiers executed them. Half an hour later, after more unsuccessful interrogations, three more Canadian prisoners were executed. This time, however, after being ordered to lie on their stomachs, they were shot point blank in the back of the head. The German executors then returned to the chateau kitchen for food and cider. Bremer, the German officer, still thought the interrogation and the execution of prisoners three at a time was inefficient. This pace would have them executing the Canadians until the evening.

*Between 4:30 and 5:00 in the afternoon, Leon Leseigneur, a local dairy farmer, and Eugene Buchart, one of his farm hands, were walking along a dirt road past the hen house of the Chateau d'Audrieu. Gazing to the right, they noticed thirteen unarmed Canadian soldiers standing in the chateau's orchard. All were members of 9 Platoon of the Winnipegs' A Company. They were Mrs. Jennie Meakin's boys, George and Frank, both of whom were corporals, as well as Privates William Adams, Emmanuel Bishoff, Lawrence Chartrand, Sidney Cresswell, Anthony Fagnan, Robert Harper, Herve Labrecque, **John Lychowich**, Robert Mutch, Henry Rodgers, and Steve Slywchuk. The prisoners were being guarded by a detachment of SS Troopers. Buchart noted with interest that there were several officers among the guard....*

About forty yards past the hen house, Buchart and his employer headed into the pasture where the Leseigneur farm was situated. Just as they turned off the dirt road, the two men heard heavy bursts of gunfire. Buchart and Leseigneur instantly realized what this meant, but, after four years of brutal German occupation, they knew better than to investigate. Instead, the two men hurried back to the farm and tried to keep a low profile. A few minutes later, an SS officer and two troopers came by in order to appropriate Leseigneur's ladder. Forcing Buchart to carry the ladder for them, the Germans escorted him back towards their headquarters. As he passed the hen house and glanced left at the orchard, his worst fears were confirmed. The prisoners he had seen earlier were gone....

Based on what Buchart and Leseigneur saw and heard, as well as forensic evidence, the final moments of the thirteen Winnipegs was reconstructed.

Confined to the orchard by Bremer, the men of 9 Platoon probably milled about, exchanging small talk, bucking up each other's spirits. At around 4:30 PM, the guard detail was joined by several officers, with Bremer perhaps among them. A palpable tension would have filled the orchard. On orders from the most senior German officer (Bremer or a subordinate), the prisoners were lined up in a row. Facing them was a rough-and-ready firing squad, consisting of SS troopers with rifles, NCOs with machine pistols, and officers with sidearms. At the command to fire, the executioners opened up with a murderous fusillade. All of the Canadians went down with the first volley, although some clearly were not killed outright. Hearing the moans of Privates Bishoff, Labrecque, and Mutch, whose

wounds were not fatal, an officer walked over to where they lay and finished them off with shots to the head. As he moved down the line of stricken men, kicking each of them to see if he showed signs of life, the officer discovered that Lance Corporal Meakin and Private Slywchuk had not been hit at all. Slywchuk had apparently timed his dive perfectly, whereas Frank Meakin had been saved when George, in a last act of brotherly love, had stepped in front of him, taking a burst of machine-pistol fire across the chest. There would be no more reprieves, however. As Meakin lay waiting next to his lifeless brother, he was given the coup de grace. Then the officer emptied his pistol into Slywchuk's head. As the echo of the last shots faded, an eerie silence descended over the orchard.³²

Three days after the D-Day invasion, following heavy Allied naval and artillery bombardment, the Germans fled the Chateau. A British army unit, the Dorsets Regiment of England, soon occupied the mansion at Chateau d'Audrieu. The British were informed of the executions by the proprietor's daughter and were guided to the sites. At the orchard near the main house, they found a row of 13 Canadian soldiers lying dead along a fence. The Dorsets were forced to withdraw the next day, but the Chateau was liberated for good two weeks later by other British forces. The remaining bodies were found then. After his murder while a POW, John Lychowich's remains were buried at a location recorded on the Army Field Service Card as "Beny-sur-Mer Temp Cem. MR.987813 P19 Gr12".

On June 26, 1944, Mrs. Rosie Lychowich in Garson, Manitoba received the following telegram from the Director of Records in Ottawa: MINISTER OF NATIONAL DEFENCE DEEPLY REGRETS TO INFORM YOU THAT A107694 PRIVATE JOHN LOUIS Lychowich WHO WAS PREVIOUSLY REPORTED MISSING IN ACTION HAS NOW BEEN OFFICIALLY REPORTED KILLED IN ACTION EIGHTH JUNE 1944 STOP IF ANY FURTHER INFORMATION BECOMES AVAILABLE IT WILL BE FORWARDED AS SOON AS RECEIVED.

On July 5, 1944, the Major-General, Adjutant-General in Ottawa wrote this letter to John's grieving mother: *Dear Mrs. Lychowich:*

It is with deep regret that I learned of the death of your son, A107694 Private John Louis Lychowich, who gave his life in the Service of his Country France, on the 8th day of June 1944.

From official information we have received, your son was killed in action against the enemy. You may be assured that any additional information received will be communicated to you without delay.

The Minister of National Defence and the Members of the Army Council have asked me to express to you and your family their sincere sympathy in your bereavement. We pay tribute to the sacrifice he so bravely made.

A month later, in early August 1944, Rosie received this correspondence from the Colonel, Director of Records, for Adjutant-General:

Dear Mrs. Lychowich,

With regard to the regretted death of your son the late A107694 Private John Louis Lychowich, I am now to confirm the verbal message you received from an Officer of this Department earlier this week.

Prior to your receiving this verbal message, you were given all the information then available to the Authorities, both Overseas and here. Your son was reported from Overseas, first as Missing in Action, then as Killed in Action; and as the policy of the Department is not to withhold any information from those entitled to receive same, when the true manner in which Private Lychowich met his death became known to the Department of National Defence, it was felt that you should be advised verbally.

Details regarding date and place of burial have not as yet been received. They are being obtained from Overseas and you will be advised as soon as they become available here. Please accept my heartfelt sympathy in your sad bereavement and be assured that all information will be sent to you immediately as and when received.

In late August 1944, John's fiancée Barbara Nemeth on King Street in Kitchener, Ontario, wrote a letter to the Records Department in Ottawa searching for information about John. Following is a portion of that letter:

Dear Sirs:

Writing for information of the above (John Lychowich). Would appreciate as to his whereabouts not having heard from him since the end of May. Also would appreciate if you could forward me his home "address". Would you please send information as soon as possible.

Yours Sincerely, Barbara Nemeth (His Fiancee)

On September 12, 1944, Barbara received the following letter from the Colonel, Director of Records, for Adjutant-General:

Dear Miss Nemeth:

In reply to your letter dated 19th August, 1944, I deeply regret to inform you that your fiancé, A107694 Private John Louis Lychowich, has been officially reported to have been killed in action in France on the 8th of June, 1944.

In late May 1945, Rosie received the following letter from the Colonel, Director of Records, for Adjutant-General:

Dear Madam:

Information has now been received from the overseas military authorities that your son, A107694 Private John Louis Lychowich, was buried with religious rites in a temporary grave located at Beny-sur-Mer, approximately seven and a half miles North-North-West of Caen, in the Department of Calvados (Normandy) France.

The grave will have been temporarily marked with a wooden cross for identification purposes and in due course the remains will be reverently exhumed and removed to a recognized military burial ground when the concentration of graves in the area takes place. On this being completed the new location will be advised to you, but for obvious reasons it will likely take approximately one year before this information is received.

In January 1946, Rosie received a letter from the Colonel, Director of Records, for Adjutant-General. Following is a portion of that letter:

Dear Madam:

Information has just been received from overseas that the remains of your son, A107694 Private John Louis Lychowich, have been carefully exhumed from the original place of internment and reverently reburied in grave 16, row B, plot 15, of Beny-sur-Mer Canadian Military Cemetery, Beny-sur-Mer, France. Marked map is enclosed. This is a recognized military burial ground and will receive care and maintenance in perpetuity.

The grave will have been marked with a temporary cross which will be replaced in due course by a permanent headstone suitably inscribed. While it cannot now be stated when this work of permanent commemoration will begin, before any action is taken you will be communicated with and an opportunity will be given you to submit a short personal inscription of your own choice for engraving on the headstone...

John Lychowich's death was later officially recorded as, *Overseas casualty, killed in action, in the field (France)*. In February 1946, Rosie received a War Service Gratuity from the Department of National Defence for the loss of her son John. The gratuity broke down as: 301 days of Total Qualifying service = \$75.00 + 93 days of Qualifying Overseas service = \$23.25 + a 94 days Supplement for overseas service = \$9.89 for a Total Gratuity of \$108.14. Rosie also received the three campaign medals that John was awarded while in service: the 1939-45 Star; the France-Germany Star War Medal; and the 1939-45 CVSM and Clasp.

A memorial stele of white marble, with three mounted plaques, was erected in Audrieu, France, in memory of the members of the Royal Winnipeg Rifles and supporting arms who were murdered while prisoners of war at the Chateau d'Audrieu June 8, 9 and 11, 1944. John Lychowich's name is among the 64 names inscribed on the plaque.

Twenty-six-year-old John Lychowich is buried in Beny-sur-Mer Canadian War Cemetery in Reviers, France, Grave XV.B.16. The men who fell on the beaches of Normandy and in the bitter bridgehead battles that followed are buried in Beny-sur-Mer Canadian War Cemetery. John Lychowich is one of them. On John's headstone are inscribed the words, REQUIESCAT IN PACE.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, 2C, 2D, 2N, 3Z, 6O, 7C, 8X, 8Y

MACGREGOR, Donald Cameron (#R/102776)

Donald Cameron MacGregor, a pilot in the RCAF, was an outstanding athlete in Sarnia and was, as his superior officer described the 27-year old, "Vigorous, enthusiastic...very responsible and conscientious." Despite his extensive training, he was killed in a plane crash during training in May 1942.

He was born in Petrolia on November 21, 1914, the only son of Donald Cameron MacGregor Sr. and Margaret Ellen (nee MacEachern, born in Paisley, Ontario) MacGregor, of 208 South Mitton Street, Sarnia. Scottish born Donald Sr. worked at Imperial Oil Limited to support Margaret and their two children, Donald Jr. and Mary (later became Mary Turnbull).

Donald Jr. attended public elementary school in Peru from 1924 to 1929, where the family lived while his father was employed in the oil industry there. The MacGregors returned to Sarnia where Donald attended Sarnia Collegiate from 1929 to 1934. He was an outstanding athlete at SCITS, where he was a member of the school's

football teams, swimming team and the gymnastics team that won the junior championship of Canada in 1932.

Donald kept himself busy after he graduated from SCITS. He continued to be active in sports by playing golf, rugby, skiing, basketball and boxing. Between 1931 and 1936, Donald served with the Lambton Regiment NPMA (Non-Permanent Active Militia) with the rank of Sergeant. In 1935-1936, Donald attended a Business college taking an accounting course. He was also a member of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church.

Beginning in 1936, Donald attended Ontario Agricultural College (OAC) in Guelph, where he worked towards his Bachelor of Science Degree in Agriculture. Each summer, Donald worked a variety of summer jobs: as a labourer at Imperial Oil (April-Sept 1937); as a construction work in Sarnia (May-Sept 1938); and as a life-guard/swimming instructor at the Lion's Club Camp in Seaforth (June-Sept 1939 and 1940).

When he was in his fourth year of a chemistry course at the Ontario Agricultural College, Donald enlisted. Two reference letters in his application for the Air Force signify the type of person Donald was.

From the OAC Registrar: *I have known MacGregor for some years. He is a man of excellent character and considerable ability. I am very pleased to recommend him to you.*

From the Director of Physical Education: *This young man has served under me for the past four years in executive, as well as athletic capacities. I have found him to be a gentleman in every sense of the word. He undoubtedly rates well above the average and I am sure would be of value to the Royal Canadian Air Force.*

At age twenty-six, Donald MacGregor enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force on May 2, 1941 in Toronto. He stood five feet seven inches tall, had blue eyes and light brown hair, was single, and was living at home with his parents on Mitton Street at the time. He requested flying duties and his plan following the war was to complete his final year at Guelph to obtain his agriculture degree.

From #4 Manning Depot in St. Hubert, Quebec, Donald received his air training at #5 Equipment Depot in Moncton, New Brunswick; at #3 Initial Training School (ITS) in Victoriaville, Quebec; and then at #3 Elementary Flying Training School (EFTS) in London (Crumlin); in fact, while training at EFTS Crumlin, Donald flew over Sarnia during his training flights.

The Chief Instructor and Commanding Officer at EFTS wrote this about Donald: *A good pilot, absorbs training easily. Is good on aerobatics and will do well with further training,* and *"Vigorous, enthusiastic in what he undertakes. Very responsible and conscientious. Quick to grasp a situation and to take the initiative in acting promptly.* Donald continued his training at #2 Service Flying Training School (SFTS) at Uplands, Ontario, where he was awarded his Pilot's Flying Badge on January 16, 1942. On February 15, 1942, Donald was posted to #1 Y Depot in Halifax.



Sgt.-Pilot Donald Cameron MacGregor

Donald embarked overseas for the United Kingdom on March 8, 1942. He was initially posted to #3 Personnel Reception Centre before being transferred to RAF Station Exeter on May 1, 1942. There, he became a member of the RAF #286 Squadron, flying Oxford aircraft with the rank of Sergeant-Pilot.

No. 286 Squadron was formed at RAF Filton in November 1941. It operated a wide number of different aircraft in detachments at a number of airfields in the south-west of England. These aircraft, including the Westland Lysander, Hawker Hurricane, Boulton Defiant and Airspeed Oxford, were used for gun-laying training and for target towing for anti-aircraft gun practice.

On May 11, 1942, tragedy struck. Donald was aboard Oxford aircraft DF253 that crashed at Dymonds Farm, Honiton Clyst, near the aerodrome at Exeter RAF Station, Colerne, England. He was killed in the crash. The next day, his parents Donald Sr. and Margaret on Mitton Street, received a telegram informing them that their only son had lost his life while on active service in England. No other details were provided. Along with Sergeant-Pilot Donald MacGregor, two RAF members of the crew were also killed. Donald MacGregor's remains were buried on May 15, 1942. He was later officially recorded as, *Killed during flying operations, overseas*.

In January 1943, St. Andrew's Church in Sarnia held a memorial service for three parishioners, all members of the Royal Canadian Air Force, who had paid the supreme sacrifice in the previous year—George William Knowles, Donald Cameron MacGregor and Howard Fraser Thompson. The service was arranged at the request of family members with Rev. Dr. J.M. Macgillivray officiating. In his brief address, Dr. Macgillivray's words expressed the sentiment of many at the time:

These men, as well as others like them, went forth possessed, perhaps, of a spirit of adventure not unnatural in young men. But it was not only the call of adventure that led them to the King's service in the clouds. There was a deeper motive than that. They had a vision of a new and better world; a world free of tyranny, oppression, injustice and fear. They knew that the only way to secure such a world was by overthrowing forever the forces of evil now threatening mankind; and to that holy task they dedicated their lives. They have entered into the larger life; and to God's keeping we commend them in the Easter hope of a final resurrection to eternal life.

It is my personal conviction that they are not now far away from us, and I read to you as suggestive and appropriate some words written by a French soldier killed in 1915 during the First Great War: 'I believe the dead live close to the living, invisible but present; and perhaps it is they whom God sends to us in answer to our prayers, so that their spirit, which is His, may continue to guide us and inspire us.'

In April 1946, his parents received a War Service Gratuity of \$114.62 for the loss of their only son. Donald MacGregor, 27, is buried in Exeter Higher Cemetery, Devon, United Kingdom, Section Z.K. Grave 54. On his headstone are inscribed the words, HOLY FATHER, LOOK ON US TODAY, AS WE THINK OF HIM OUR DEAR ONE GONE AWAY.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, J, L, M, N, 2C, 2D, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10B

MARTINDALE, Ralph Omar (#V/17891)

Ralph Omar Martindale's plan after the war was to resume his career as a machinist. He joined the Royal Canadian Navy, but his life ended when his ship, the *HMCS Raccoon*, was attacked in the Gulf of St. Lawrence by what British Prime Minister Winston Churchill said was "... the only thing that ever really frightened me during the war...".

Ralph Omar Martindale was born in York, Haldimand County, Ontario on July 27, 1922, the son of Ralph Emerson and Ina Agatha (nee Renshaw) Martindale, of 413 Nelson Street, Sarnia. Ralph Emerson (born October 12, 1903 in Haldimand) married Ina Agatha (born March 25, 1904 in Haldimand) on August 13, 1921. Ralph and Ina Martindale were blessed with four children: sons Ralph Jr., Ernest Albert and Edward Lorne (died March 14, 1926), and daughter Geraldine Jane.

Ralph Jr. attended two years of high school at Sarnia Collegiate and left at the age of seventeen. For a year prior to enlisting, Ralph worked as a machinist at Canadian Machinery Corporation in Galt, Ontario. Also, for several years, he had a steady girlfriend in Sarnia and there was talk of marriage in the future.

At age 19, Ralph Martindale enlisted in the Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve on December 27, 1941 in London, Ontario. He stood five feet seven and a quarter inches tall, had blue eyes and auburn hair, and was single at the time. His plan for after the war was to continue his employment as a machinist.

Ralph began his training as an Ordinary Seaman, at *HMCS Prevost*, the Naval Reserve base in London, Ontario. In mid-February 1942, he was transferred to *HMCS Stadacona*, the naval base in Halifax, where he continued his training until mid-April 1942. On April 21, 1942, Ralph Martindale was transferred to the *HMCS Raccoon*. Two months later, in June 1942, Ralph returned home to Sarnia while on leave to visit his parents and

friends. After his leave, Ordinary Seaman Ralph Martindale returned to service aboard the *HMCS Raccoon*.

The *HMCS Raccoon (S14)* was a 148-foot, 377-ton civilian yacht (formerly the *Halongia*), originally built in 1931, and commissioned for military service by the RCN in June 1940. Beginning in the spring of 1942, the *HMCS Raccoon* was assigned to the naval base at Gaspe to patrol the river and Gulf of the St. Lawrence and to escort convoys of ships sailing from Quebec to Sydney, Newfoundland and Halifax.



Armed Yacht *HMCS Raccoon S14*

Beginning on the opening day of the Second World War, the **Battle of the Atlantic** would be the longest continuous campaign of the war, and one in which Canada played a central role. The Royal Canadian Navy, along with the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) and Canada's Merchant Navy, played a vital role in defending the country's eastern coast and in escorting convoys of ships carrying men and essential machinery, arms, fuel and basic resources.

The **Battle of the St. Lawrence** was an extension of the larger Battle of the Atlantic. It began on May 12, 1942 when after entering the Gulf of St. Lawrence, German U-boat *U-553* sank two steamers south of Anticosti Island, shocking Canadians. Between May 1942 and late 1944, German U-boats repeatedly penetrated the waters of the St. Lawrence River and the Gulf of St. Lawrence--sinking ships, destroying valuable cargo, and costing hundreds of lives. It was the first and only time since the War of 1812 that naval battles were waged in Canada's inland waters.

In early September 1942, the armed yacht *HMCS Raccoon*, along with corvette *HMCS Arrowhead*, minesweeper *HMCS Truro* and two Fairmile launches *Q-64* and *Q-83*, were escorting the convoy *QS-33* in the Gulf of St. Lawrence. The slow-moving convoy, bound for Sydney Nova Scotia, was unaware that two German U-boats, *U-165* and *U-517* were lying in wait on opposite sides of the river, by Cap Chat and Pointe-des-Monts, Quebec. Late on the night of September 6, 1942, west of Pointe-des-Monts where the St. Lawrence narrows to 50 kilometers in width, German U-boat *U-165* intercepted and struck the starboard side of the Greek steam merchant ship *Aeas* with one torpedo just under the bridge. The *Aeas* sank, two of the crew died, and the 29 others survived by abandoning ship and climbing into life rafts.

One of her escorts, the *HMCS Raccoon* left the convoy at midnight, zig-zagging in search of the German U-boat. Shortly after, at 1:12 am (September 7), a loud explosion ripped through the night air when the *HMCS Raccoon* was also torpedoed almost point-blank range by *U-165*. The *Raccoon*'s boiler exploded and the ship sank in minutes. Other ships in the convoy speculated they were hearing depth charges being dropped by the *Raccoon* as it pursued the U-boat. Explosions from both sinkings, which lit up the sky, could be heard for miles around; windows of houses close to shore were rattled by the detonations.

Three days later, only a few bits of debris from the *HMCS Raccoon* were found on the south coast of Anticosti Island: a portion of the ship's bridge, some signal pads, a life preserver and one body was found. The body was that of a well-known McGill University footballer, Sub-Lieutenant Russell McConnell, RCNVR. The entire *Raccoon* crew of thirty-seven men were lost, including Ralph Martindale, who had served less than five months aboard the *Raccoon*.

Days after the sinking, Ralph Sr. and Ina Martindale in Sarnia received a cable informing them that their son Ralph Jr. was reported missing when the Canadian patrol vessel *Raccoon* was lost while in convoy duty. Ralph Martindale was later officially recorded as, *At sea, presumed lost on board H.M.C.S. 'Raccoon'*.

On January 9, 1945, Ina Martindale passed away at the age of 40, a little over two years after she had lost her son. Ina is buried at Lakeview Cemetery in Sarnia. In two years, Ralph Sr. had lost a child and his wife. In July 1945, Ralph Sr. received a War Service Gratuity of \$107.59 for the loss of his son. Ralph Sr., passed away on October 10, 1987, two days before his 84th birthday. He is buried with his wife at Lakeview Cemetery. Twenty year-old Ordinary Seaman Ralph Omar Martindale has no known grave. His name is inscribed on the Halifax Memorial, Nova Scotia, Canada, Panel 9.

Another sad story in the loss of the *Raccoon*, is that of Supply Assistant John Sheflin, one of Ralph Martindale's crew-mates, who also perished in the sinking. At the very moment that the *Raccoon* was going down, a train sped through nearby Riviere-la-Madeleine carrying John Sheflin's wife, Marguerite, and their two pre-school children. They had made a spur-of-the moment decision to move from Toronto to join family in Eureka, Nova Scotia, so that they could see John when he took his occasional shore leave. It would be years before his family discovered just how close together they were, before tragedy tore them apart forever.

Less than three weeks after the sinking of the *Raccoon*, *U-165* experienced the same fate. The German submarine *U-165* had been commissioned in early February 1942, commanded by Captain Eberhard Hoffman. It carried out only a single war patrol, beginning with its departure from Kiel, Germany on August 7, 1942. It sailed across the North Atlantic, making its first two strikes off the northern tip of Newfoundland on August 28, 1942 (damaging an American merchant vessel and an American oiler). Just over a week later, *U-165* sank the *Aeas* and the *Raccoon* in the St. Lawrence River. By mid-September, it began its return voyage across the Atlantic. On September 27, 1942, on its 52nd day at sea, *U-165* was sunk in the Bay of Biscay by depth charges from an RAF #311 Squadron Wellington aircraft. All 51 hands aboard *U-165* were lost.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, J, L, N, P, T, U, X, Z, 2A, 2C, 2D, 7C, 8X, 8Y

McCALLUM, Albert Robert (#J/7070)

Albert Robert McCallum had planned to have a career in aviation after the war, so it was only logical that he enlisted to become a pilot with the RCAF. He had recently been promoted to Flight Lieutenant when his crew left in turbulent weather during the daytime on an anti-submarine patrol south-west of the Scilly Islands in the Atlantic. The plane managed to send one SOS, but it was never seen again.

Albert McCallum was born in Parry Sound, Ontario, on January 29, 1919, the only son of Gordon and Johanna (Joan) Katherine (nee Morrison) McCallum. Gordon McCallum (born in Dunchurch, Ontario) married Joan Morrison (born in Orville, Ontario) on January 6, 1918. Gordon and Joan had two children together: a son, Albert, and a daughter Margaret Dorothy McCallum, born in 1921. Gordon worked in Sarnia as a fireman with the C.N.R. The McCallums lived at 555 Confederation Street in Sarnia.

Albert attended Confederation Public Elementary School in Sarnia from 1925 to 1932. He then moved to Parry Sound where he completed his high school education in 1937 at the age of eighteen. Albert was active in sports, especially hockey, swimming and softball, along with rugby, tennis, badminton and bowling. Alfred was not afraid to be busy. After completing high school, he had several jobs: a Junior Clerk at Canadian Bank of Commerce in Parry Sound (1937-1938); a ledger-keeper in Seaforth (1938-1940); and a teller in Dublin, Ontario. He was an assistant Scoutmaster for one year ending in March 1940, and also served in the Middlesex and Huron Regiment NPMA (Non-Permanent Active Militia) "D" Company as a Private from July 29 to November 14, 1940 in Seaforth, Ontario.

When he was twenty-one, Albert McCallum enlisted with the Royal Canadian Air Force on November 15, 1940 in London, Ontario. He stood five feet eight inches tall, had blue eyes and brown hair, was single, and recorded his address as Dublin, Ontario (where he was employed as a bank teller), and his permanent address as 555 Confederation Street, Sarnia (where his parents were living). He requested flying duties with a preference to be a pilot. His plan for after the war was to enter the field of aviation. His training was extensive.

From #1 Auxillary Manning Depot in Picton, Ontario, Albert received his air training at #2 Service Flying Training School (SFTS) in Uplands, Ontario; at #3 Initial Training School (ITS) in Victoriaville, Quebec; at #1 Elementary Flying Training School (EFTS) in Malton; and at #5 Service Flying Training School (SFTS) in

Brantford, Ontario. Sergeant-Pilot Albert McCallum was awarded his Pilot's Flying Badge and "Wings" on September 1, 1941 at SFTS Brantford, along with two other Sarnians: Sergeant-Pilot Wesley K. McDermid and Sergeant-Observer Howard Fraser Thompson (Thompson is included in this Project). On September 5, 1941, Albert continued his training at #31 General Reconnaissance School (GRS) in Charlottetown, P.E.I., and in late November 1941, was posted to #31 Operational Training Unit in Debert, Nova Scotia.



F/L-Pilot Albert Robert McCallum

Albert embarked overseas for the United Kingdom on March 29, 1942. He was one of the first group of Canadians to ferry Hudson aircraft to England. He was initially posted to #3 Personnel Reception Centre. On April 11, 1942, he was transferred to RAF #119 Squadron where he continued his training in the spring and summer of 1942 at Loch Erne, Northern Ireland, on Catalina flying boats. In mid-August 1942, he returned to Canada on a two-week furlough at his home in Sarnia, spending it with family and friends. At the end of the month, he returned to the U.K. and #119 Squadron. In October of 1942, his parents in Sarnia received news of their son Albert's promotion from Pilot Officer to Flying Officer.

No. 119 Squadron was part of **RAF Coastal Command**. Coastal Command played a pivotal role in the Allied war effort, most notably against U-boats during the Battle of the Atlantic. They also sank enemy warships and merchant vessels, protected Allied shipping from aerial attacks, and carried out reconnaissance and air-sea rescues.

RAF #119 Squadron "By night and by day" began as a flying boat squadron that used civilian aircraft for maritime patrols from March to November 1941. The squadron reformed as an operational unit at RAF Lough Erne, Northern Ireland on April 14, 1942, originally operating the Consolidated Catalina. The first aircraft arrived in May, and in August eleven crews went to Canada to ferry new aircraft across the Atlantic. The last of these aircraft arrived in mid-September 1942 but, by then, the squadron was based at RAF Pembroke Dock and was preparing to convert to the Short Sunderland Mk. II and IIIs (a British flying boat patrol bomber). As part of Coastal Command, Sunderland patrols began on November 20, but only continued for approximately five months before disbanding in mid-April 1943. The squadron formed again in mid-July 1944 as a torpedo-bomber squadron that attacked German E-boats and R-boats.

On December 14, 1942, Albert was promoted to Flight Lieutenant-Pilot. The next day, he was with the #119 Squadron as the Pilot aboard Sunderland Mark III DV971 aircraft. The crew of eleven on board were on a day anti-submarine patrol over the Atlantic Ocean. At approximately 12.15 hours, an SOS was received from the aircraft giving their position as south-west of the Scilly Islands (an archipelago off the southwestern tip of the Cornish peninsula of Great Britain). Nothing else was heard from the aircraft and it failed to return. Sea conditions at the time were reported to be rough. An extensive search failed to locate the aircraft or dinghies. It was assumed that the crew lost their lives at sea. Perishing with Flight Lieutenant-Pilot Albert Robert McCallum were F/Sgt.s Raymond Ingham Law, Bliss Dunfield King, and William George Milne (all RCAF); F/O. E.N. Jackson (RNZAF, a passenger); and Cpl. H.R. Watkinson, F/Sgt. G. Hamilton, Sgt.'s A.G.E. Wilson, T.C. Gallagher, A.G. Shum and G.S. Crossan (all RAF).

The day after Albert's plane failed to return, Gordon and Joan McCallum in Sarnia received a telegram informing them that their son Albert was, MISSING AFTER AIR OPERATIONS OVERSEAS. On December 18, 1942, the McCallum's received the following letter from the Commanding Officer of #119 Squadron, RAF, Home Forces:

Dear Mrs. McCallum,

Before receiving this letter you will have been informed by telegram that your son Flight Lieutenant Albert Robert McCallum is reported missing while engaged on active operations against the enemy.

The aircraft took off at dawn on an overseas reconnaissance and failed to return. A sustained and determined air search has not been successful.

It is with deep regret and a very real sense of personal loss that I convey this news to you. "Bob", as he was affectionately known to all of us was one of the best aircraft Captains in the Squadron. His ability, good humour and unfailing sense of duty was an inspiration to all ranks. His loss is a very severe blow to the Squadron as a whole and myself in particular. In view of his excellent work he had been very recently promoted to the rank of Flight Lieutenant which he had well earned. His steadiness and reliability made him one of the main supports of the Squadron. There is a possibility, and I am still hoping, that he may have been picked up by a small vessel or fishing boat, if so the news will be immediately conveyed to you.

Your son's effects have been carefully collected together and forwarded to the Royal Air Force Depository, where they will be held until better news is obtained or for a period of six months, after which they will be sent to you.

The whole Squadron, very many of whom are Canadians, and myself as Commanding Officer, offer you our very sincere sympathy during this period of anxiety. If I can be of any assistance please let me know and I will do my best to help I any way possible.

In late December 1942, the McCallums received a letter from their son, dated December 14, 1942 in which he stated, *The weather has been bad but we expect to be out tomorrow to see some action.*

In September 1943, Albert Robert McCallum was officially recorded as, *Previously reported missing after air operations, now for official purposes, presumed dead, overseas.* Six months after the war ended in Europe, in November 1945, the McCallums received a War Service Gratuity of \$350.55 for the loss of their only son. In July 1946, the McCallums, now residing in Palmerston, Ontario, received the following letter from R.C.A.F. Records Officer in Ottawa:

Dear Mrs. McCallum:

It is a privilege to have the opportunity of sending you the Operational Wings and Certificate in recognition of the gallant services rendered by your son Flight Lieutenant A.R. McCallum. I realize there is little which may be said or done to lessen your sorrow, but it is my hope that these "Wings", indicative of operations against the enemy, will be a treasured memento of a young life offered on the altar of freedom in defence of his Home and Country.

Albert McCallum, 23, has no known grave. His name is inscribed on the Runnymede War Memorial, Surrey, United Kingdom, Panel 99.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, M, N, 2C, 2D, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10B

McCLURE, Donald Leonard (#A/103300)

Donald Leonard McClure, 22, had planned to return to his family and to his job at Holmes Foundry after the war. During the intense fighting of the Battle of Sicily in 1943, an enemy shell hit Donald's tank and perforated his abdomen. Despite receiving immediate medical attention, he passed away the same day and became the first Sarnian to die in the Battle of Sicily.

Donald was born in Euphemia Township in Lambton County, Ontario on March 23, 1921, the middle son of William Alexander (born in Brooke Township, Lambton County) and Edna Isabella (nee Bissell) McClure, of 249 Cromwell Street, Sarnia. It was Edna's second marriage. She had married Victor Iverson in 1914, but he passed away in February 1916. They had had one child together, a son Edward Leland Iverson, born in Oil Springs on February 5, 1916 (he was the grandson of Oil Baron Edward Iverson, 1846-1918). Widowed Edna Iverson married William Alexander McClure on January 14, 1919. William and Edna had three sons together: Donald Leonard; John William Alexander 'Jack' (born March 6, 1922); and James Kenneth (born May 15, 1920, see below). Along with Edward Leland Iverson, their half-brother, the three McClure boys grew up with Edna at 249 Cromwell Street. Sadly, when Donald was only five months old, his father William, a local Sarnia grocer, died of heart disease on August 27, 1921 at Sarnia General Hospital at the age of 35.

The McClure boys never shied away from doing their duty. At the time of Donald's death in 1943, his brother John William 'Jack' was residing in Sarnia; his half-brother Edward was in Detroit with the U.S. Navy (he would be stationed in Pensacola, Florida, but was never allowed to serve overseas); and his brother James was in the Canadian Army stationed on the east coast. John 'Jack' McClure also served in the war, but was sent home after his two brothers were killed in action.

Donald McClure attended Central United Church and was educated at Sarnia public schools and at Sarnia Collegiate which he attended for three years, until he was sixteen. During his high school days, he was a member of the rifle team. Upon graduating from a technical course in machine shop, he was first employed at Goodison Threshing Company and then at Holmes Foundry as a core-maker for two years prior to enlisting.

On May 10, 1941, Donald McClure, 20, married Ethel Mamie McClure in Sarnia. They initially resided at 249 Cromwell Street (with his mother), and later 264 Cameron Street, Sarnia. 1942 was a year of change for both Donald and Ethel. Just over a year after getting married, in June 1942, Donald enlisted in the Canadian Army. Four months later, on October 16, the young couple had one child together, but their son that was born stillborn. It must have been a horrible time for the young couple.

Donald McClure, 21, enlisted in the Canadian Army on June 15, 1942 in London, Ontario. He stood five feet nine and a quarter inches tall, had blue eyes and fair hair, and was residing with his wife Ethel and his mother at 249 Cromwell Street at the time. His plan for after the war was to return to Holmes Foundry. From #1 District Depot in London, Donald received his army training at #10 Basic Training Centre (BTC) in Kitchener and then at #A8 Canadian Armoured Corps (Advanced) Training Centre (CACATC) at Camp Borden. On November 17, 1942, he was granted his two-week embarkation leave.

On December 12, 1942, Trooper Donald McClure embarked overseas for the United Kingdom. Initially a member of #2 Canadian Armoured Corps Reinforcement Unit (CACRU), he continued his training in England and later Scotland. During his training, he attained qualifications as a Driver in charge (carrier), and a Driver in charge Class III (tank). On May 20, 1943, Donald was transferred to the 12th Canadian Army Tank (CAT) Regiment.



Trooper Donald Leonard McClure

Almost one year to the day after enlisting in the Army, on June 16, 1943, Donald embarked from the U.K. bound for Sicily. At some point, Donald wrote home, his letter included descriptions of Gibraltar and Algiers, which he had visited en route to Sicily. Trooper Donald McClure, as a member of the 12th Canadian Tank Corps of the Three Rivers Regiment, Royal Canadian Armoured Corps (R.C.A.C.), took part in the initial invasion force of Sicily on July 10, 1943. Donald, the co-driver of a tank, was part of a five-man tank crew.

The **Italian Campaign**, the first sustained Canadian Army operation of the War, began with the invasion of Sicily on July 10, 1943. **Sicily** was a mountainous island and, for the Italian and German forces there, the interior was a defensive planner's dream. For the Canadians, as they marched up Sicily island's dusty mountainous winding roads, in scorching temperatures above 40 degrees Celsius, their designated route had them fated to run into major

concentrations of German troops offering an ever-stiffening resistance, while holding the high ground in a series of lines. The fierce fighting on the island lasted more than four weeks, and by August 17, the Germans had evacuated the island to the Italian mainland. In early September, Canadian and Allied forces would invade Italy. Though Italy surrendered shortly after, the occupying Germans made it clear their fight was not over. Liberating Italy would be a painstaking northward crawl lasting 20 months.

Three weeks into the Sicily battle, Donald's tank was hit by enemy fire on July 30, 1943. Donald suffered a mortar wound that perforated his lower abdomen and, despite being administered plasma and blood and being operated on by an Army surgeon, he died as a result of his wounds at approximately 0245 hours on July 30. Of his other crew members, the other driver of the tank was killed instantly, two were wounded and one member escaped injury. Donald's remains were buried on July 31, 1943, at a location recorded on the Army Field Service Card as "East side of Olive Orchard near Leonforte MR.348925". Donald McClure was the first Sarnia fatality in the Sicilian campaign.

On Cameron Street, Ethel McClure received a telegram in mid-August from the Director of Records. It informed her that her husband of two years, TROOPER MCCLURE HAD BEEN OFFICIALLY REPORTED DIED OF WOUNDS ON A DATE NOT YET AVAILABLE. It added that further word would be forwarded when received. In mid-September 1943, Ethel received the following letter from the Major-General, Adjutant-General:

Dear Madam:

I deeply regret to inform you that your husband, A103300 Trooper Donald Leonard McClure, gave his life in the Service of his Country in Sicily on the 30th day of July, 1943

From official information we have received, your husband died as the result of wounds received in action against the enemy. You may be assured that any additional information received will be communicated to you without delay.

The Minister of National Defence and the Members of the Army Council have asked me to express to you and your family their sincere sympathy in your bereavement. We pay tribute to the sacrifice he so bravely made.

Donald McClure was later officially recorded as, *Overseas casualty, died of wounds received in action, in the field (Sicily)*. In mid-October 1944, Ethel received another letter from the Colonel, Director of Records, for Adjutant-General. Following is a portion of that letter:

No. A.103300, Trooper Donald L. McClure

Dear Madam:

With reference to the regretted death of your husband, the marginally named Canadian soldier, I am to advise that information has recently been received from overseas that his remains have been reburied in grave 486, row G, plot D, of the new Canadian Military Cemetery at Agira, Sicily. This is a recognized military burial ground.

The grave will have been marked with a temporary cross which will be replaced in due course by a permanent headstone suitably inscribed. For obvious reasons it cannot now be stated when this work of permanent commemoration will begin, but you may rest assured that before it is carried out you will be communicated with and given an opportunity of selecting a short personal inscription for engraving upon the memorial...

In May 1945, Ethel, now residing in Acton, Ontario, received a War Service Gratuity of \$184.64 for the loss of her husband Donald. Donald McClure, 22, is buried at Agira Canadian War Cemetery, Sicily, Grave D.G.486. On his headstone are inscribed the words, UNTIL THE DAY BREAK AND THE SHADOWS FLEE AWAY. For Donald's twice-widowed mother Edna in Sarnia, a little over one year later, she would lose a second son, James, who was killed in Italy.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, J, L, N, S, 2C, 2D, 7C, 8X, 8Y

McCLURE, James Kenneth (#A/28723)

In December 1944, James (Jim) Kenneth McClure, 24, was killed during the Italian Campaign. His death greatly affected his family in Sarnia. His mother, Edna, was overwhelmed, for James was her second son killed in the war; and his wife, Norma, was eight months pregnant with their only child, a daughter, that her husband would never see.

James was born in Norville, near Toronto on May 15, 1920, the eldest son of William Alexander (born in Brooke Township, Lambton County, Ontario) and Edna Isabella (nee Bissell) McClure, of 215 ½ North Christina Street, and later 249 Cromwell Street, Sarnia. It was Edna's second marriage. She had married Victor Ivinson in 1914, but he passed away in February 1916. They had had one child together, a son Edward Leland Ivinson, born in

Oil Springs on February 5, 1916 (he was the grandson of Oil Baron Edward Ivinson, 1846-1918). Widowed Edna Ivinson married William Alexander McClure on January 14, 1919. William and Edna had three sons together: James; John William Alexander 'Jack' (born March 6, 1922); and Donald Leonard (born March 23, 1921, see above). Along with Edward Leland Ivinson, their half-brother, the three McClure boys grew up with Edna at 249 Cromwell Street. Sadly, when James was only fifteen months old, his father William, a local Sarnia grocer, died of heart disease on August 27, 1921 at Sarnia General Hospital at the age of 35.

The McClure boys never shied away from doing their duty. At the time of James' death in 1944, his brother John William 'Jack' was residing in Sarnia; his half-brother Edward was in Detroit with the U.S. Navy (he would be stationed in Pensacola, Florida, but was never allowed to serve overseas); and his brother, Donald, a member of the Canadian Army, had been killed in action in the Battle of Sicily the previous year. John 'Jack' McClure also served in the war, but was sent home after his two brothers were killed in action.

James McClure was educated at a Sarnia public school from which he graduated in 1935. He then attended Sarnia Collegiate for only two months and left school at the age fifteen. James (Jim) was very interested in farming, so after leaving high school, he spent five years working on a farm. His responsibilities included managing a farm of 200 cleared acres over a two-year period. Following that, he was a seaman with Canada Steamship Lines and sailed for one season (8 months) on the *S.S. Huronic*.

James McClure, 21, enlisted in the Canadian Army on January 13, 1942 in London, Ontario. He stood five feet seven and three-quarter inches tall, had blue eyes and dark brown hair, and was single. He recorded his occupation as "labourer", and was residing with his mother on North Christina Street at the time. His plan for after the war was to return to farming. From #1 District Depot in London, and then #1 District Depot (Active Force) in Windsor, James received his army training as a Gunner at #10 Basic Training Centre (BTC) in Windsor and later at the Advanced Canadian Army Training Centre (CATC) at Petawawa until May 1942.

On May 2, 1942, James McClure, now nearly 22, married Miss Norma Louise Gehm, the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. H.C. Gehm, in a quiet ceremony at the military chapel at Camp Petawawa. The couple were attended by Gunner Sidney Morr, R.C.A. and Gunner Lloyd Illman, R.C.A. After their marriage, James returned to service and Norma resided in Watford for a short time, before moving to Sarnia to live with her mother-in-law, Edna McClure, at 249 Cromwell Street.

After his marriage, James was transferred to Debert, Nova Scotia, where he became a member of the 30th Anti-Aircraft Battery (30 LAA), Royal Canadian Artillery. In January 1943, while still a member of 30LAA, he was posted to Goose Bay, Labrador. Part of this unit's role was to guard the airport in Labrador while it was under construction. In July 1943, James was posted to St. John, New Brunswick, as a member of #22 Anti-Aircraft Regiment, Royal Canadian Artillery. During his time in St. John, James learned that his younger brother Donald, a member of the Canadian Tanks Corps, had been killed in action during the Battle of Sicily in late July of 1943.



Private James Kenneth McClure

It was during this time that the army was short in Infantry Reserves. Due to this shortage, in February 1944, Gunner James McClure transferred to the infantry and reverted to Private. He attended #12 Canadian Infantry Basic Training Centre (CIBTC) in Chatham, Ontario in mid-February, and the following month continued his training at A-29 Canadian Infantry Training Centre (CICTC) at Camp Ipperwash. In late May 1944, he was transferred to #1 Transit Camp in Windsor, Nova Scotia.

Private James McClure embarked overseas for the United Kingdom on June 4, 1944. Initially posted to #2 Canadian Infantry Reinforcement Unit (CIRU) and then #3CIRU, James became a month later a member of the Perth Regiment, Royal Canadian Infantry Corps (RCIC), of the Central Mediterranean Force (CMF). On July 16, 1944, a little more than one month after arriving overseas, James McClure embarked from the U.K. bound for Italy.

The **Italian Campaign**, the first sustained Canadian Army operation of the War, had begun with the invasion of Sicily on July 10, 1943. His brother Donald had been killed on July 30 in Sicily. The fierce fighting on the island would last more than four weeks, during which the Canadians would advance through difficult mountainous terrain, against an ever-stiffening German resistance. By August 17, the Germans had evacuated the island to the Italian mainland. In early September, Canadian and Allied forces would invade Italy. Though Italy surrendered shortly after, the occupying Germans made it clear their fight was not over. Liberating Italy would be a painstaking northward crawl, lasting 20 months, over a range of landscapes, through challenging weather, and against a series of well-protected defences held by some of the German army's best troops.

James McClure served with the Perth Regiment as they advanced northward through Italy. On December 13, 1944, fewer than five months after arriving in Italy, Private James McClure was killed in action while fighting during the Italian Campaign. His remains were buried on December 14 at a location recorded on the Army Field Service Card as "5 C.A.D. Cemetery No 11. sh.89/III. NW MR. 452418 Gr.A10".

In late December 1944, Captain A.J. Goldring of Military District No. 1 Headquarters, London arrived at 249 Cromwell Street. Living there were James' mother, Edna, and her daughter-in-law Norma, who was James' wife and who was eight months pregnant. Captain Goldring informed the two women that James had been killed in action while serving in Italy. It must have been an extremely painful time for everyone. Norma had lost her husband who would never see their child and Edna had lost her second son in war.

As for Captain Goldring, he must have known how difficult it was to be the bearer of such horrible news. According to the District Chaplain's report to the Director of Records in Ottawa, this is what occurred at the visit to Edna and Norma: *Captain Goldring proceeded on to Sarnia and located Mrs. McClure (Norma) at the address given. She received the sad news of her husband's death bravely and calmly, but the mother of Pte. McClure was somewhat overcome as this was the second son killed in action during the present conflict. Mrs. McClure is expecting her child some time in January, and it is presumed that she will be remaining at the Sarnia address.*

In early January 1945, Edna wrote a letter to the Department of National Defence, Director of Records in Ottawa. In it, she requested information about her fallen son Donald (see above) and the fate of her other son James. Following is a portion of that letter:

Dear Sir

.... I am writing to ask that any further information you receive (about Donald's gravestone) you will kindly notify me if that is in order. Don was living at home here with me & his younger brother (James) & his wife was also here of course when he enlisted and this was his only home so I feel that I am entitled to know anything that can be learned about his grave. Also I am concerned about my older son Pte. James K. McClure A28723 who was reported killed in action in Italy Dec 13/44. His wife at present is here with me and is expecting to go to Petrolia hospital almost any time now so if possible will you kindly inform us here of any information you may receive regarding his death. It is now over a month and we have not heard any more than that he was killed in action.... Hoping for further information soon and thanking you...

In mid-January 1945, Norma received the following letter from the Major-General, Adjutant-General:

Dear Mrs. McClure:

It was with deep regret that I learned of the death of your husband, A28723 Private James Kenneth McClure, who gave his life in the Service of his Country in the Mediterranean Theatre of War on the 13th day of December, 1944.

From official information we have received, your husband was killed in action against the enemy. You may be assured that any additional information received will be communicated to you without delay.

The Minister of National Defence and the Members of the Army Council have asked me to express to you and your family their sincere sympathy in your bereavement. We pay tribute to the sacrifice he so bravely made.

James McClure was later officially recorded as, *Overseas casualty, killed in action, in the field (Italy)*. In mid-June 1945, a month after the war in Europe ended, the Colonel, Director of Records, for Adjutant-General wrote the following letter to Norma:

Dear Madam:

Information has now been received from the overseas military authorities that your husband, A28723 Private James Kenneth McClure, was buried with religious rites in grave A10, of a temporary Cemetery located at Villanova, approximately eight miles North-West of Ravenna, Italy.

The grave will have been temporarily marked with a wooden cross for identification purposes and in due course the remains will be reverently exhumed and removed to a recognized military burial ground when the concentration of graves in the area takes place. On this being completed the new location will be advised to you, but for obvious reasons it will likely take approximately one year before this information is received.

In late August 1945, Norma received another letter from the Colonel, Director of Records, for Adjutant-General. Following is a portion of that letter:

Dear Madam:

Information has just been received from overseas that the remains of your husband, A28723 Private James Kenneth McClure, have been buried in grave 10, row A, plot 7, of 5th Canadian Armoured Division Cemetery, Villanova, seven miles West of Ravenna, Italy. Marked map is enclosed. This is a recognized military burial ground and will receive care and maintenance in perpetuity.

The grave will have been marked with a temporary cross which will be replaced in due course by a permanent headstone suitably inscribed. While it cannot now be stated when this work of permanent commemoration will begin, before any action is taken you will be communicated with and an opportunity will be given you to submit a short personal inscription of your own choice for engraving on the headstone...

In December 1945, more than one year after James' death, Edna McClure wrote the following letter to the Officer of Records, Department of National Defence:

Dear Sir

Would you kindly let me have a card of sympathy from the Can. Gov. like the one you sent Jim's wife. I received one relating to my other son Tpr. Donald McClure but so far have not received one regarding Pte. James K. McClure A-28723 killed in action Dec. 13/45. I would like to have the two to put together. Hoping this is not out of order. I am gratefully yours.

Edna I. McClure (mother)

James McClure, 24, is buried in Villanova Canadian War Cemetery, Italy, Grave VII.A.10. On his headstone are inscribed the words, UNTIL THE DAY BREAK AND THE SHADOWS FLEE AWAY.

Two months after James' death, on February 13, 1945, Norma gave birth to their daughter, Carol Louise, born in the C.E.E. Hospital in Petrolia. The baby was baptized in Central United Church, the same church where a memorial service was held for Private James McClure when Carol Louise was two months old.

Eight months later, in October 1945, Norma received a War Service Gratuity of \$342.33 for the loss of her husband. For James' twice-widowed mother Edna in Sarnia, this was her second son lost in the war. She had lost her son Donald, who had been killed in action the previous July in 1943 in Sicily.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, J, L, N, S, 2C, 2D, 7C, 8X, 8Y

McFADYEN, Gilbert Campbell (#R/220720)

Gilbert "Bert" McFadyen was eighteen years old and just out of high school when he made the decision to serve his country. He did not see his nineteenth birthday. He gave his life in defence of Canada while transporting necessary supplies to secret radar stations off the British Columbia coast. He has no known grave.

Gilbert McFadyen was born in London, Ontario on September 15, 1924, the eldest son of George Henry and Isabel May (nee Campbell) McFadyen, of 222 South Mitton Street, Sarnia. George (born in Sarnia) and Isabel (born in Caradoc Township) were married in Welland, Ontario on June 28, 1919. George and Isabel McFadyen had two children together: Gilbert Campbell and John Robert, born in April 1926. George supported his family working as a department store manager in Sarnia.

Gilbert spent the first seven years of his life growing up in London, Middlesex, then Waterloo, then back to Middlesex. The McFadyen family moved to Sarnia when Gilbert was seven years old. Gilbert received his education at Lochiel Street Public School in Sarnia (1930-1938) and then Sarnia Collegiate (1938-1943). He was active in basketball and baseball, and his hobby was music. He was an avid member of the Young Men's Christian Association and also took a very active part in Central United Church, having served as an usher. Gilbert was also a member of the Central Century Club, and was its vice-president during 1942. He was working part time at Zellers Department Store in 1943 as a stockroom clerk when he left school to join the service.

Eighteen-and-a-half year old Gilbert McFadyen enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force in Sarnia on April 30, 1943. He stood six feet one and a half inches tall, had blue eyes and brown hair, was single, and lived at home with his parents on Mitton Street at the time. He requested ground duties (general duties) with the Air Force. The Air Force medical officers deemed him unfit for aircrew due to his visual acuity (myopia). From #3 Recruiting Centre in London, and after a 12-day leave in Sarnia, Gilbert was posted to #2 Manning Depot in Brandon, Manitoba on May 13, 1943. On June 5, 1943, he was transferred to No. 3 Reception Depot in Vancouver, British Columbia. On July 14, 1943, he was posted to RCAF Headquarters of Western Air Command (WAC) in Vancouver, with the rank of Aircraftman 2nd Class. Two-and-a-half months after he enlisted, on July 15, 1943, Gilbert was assigned to the RCAF vessel *M427 B.C. Star*.



AC2 Gilbert Campbell McFadyen



RCAF *M427 B.C. Star*

Before the start of the war, **RCAF's Western Air Command** operated four high-speed crash vessels and a scow seaplane tender. During the buildup of the war effort on the West Coast, many new remote early warning radar units were built and maintained. The RCAF would requisition a fleet of fishing vessels and tugs for patrol, transport and supply duties to the remote defence sites along British Columbia's coast. These vessels were attached to the RCAF Marine Section. They were the "work horses" that plied back and forth on their unscheduled runs moving construction crews, material, and heavy equipment up and down the coast of British Columbia. To keep the radar units' existence and locations secret, radio silence was enforced on these runs, and all information regarding the movement of this type of marine vessel was classified. All communications were coded.

The *M427 B.C. Star* was one of the vessels engaged in the coastal supply of all the Air Force stations along the British Columbia coast. It was a former salmon seine fishing vessel built in Vancouver in 1940, with a wooden hull and diesel engine, and was 67 feet long. It was requisitioned by RCAF Western Command in January 1942.

On July 21, 1943, the *B.C. Star* left Vancouver with over 40 tons of gravel, cement and other supplies bound for a RCAF construction detachment at Cape St. James. She carried a crew of ten (including McFadyen) and three CMU (construction and maintenance unit) personnel. Two days later, the ship put in at the RCAF Station Bella Bella where she took aboard another 2.5 tons of cargo and three CMU personnel. On July 24, the *B.C. Star* departed RCAF Station Bella Bella with her cargo of forty-three tons of gravel, cement and cargo; her ten-man crew; and five No. 9

CMU personnel assigned to the construction project. They were bound for the new RCAF radar site at Cape St. James off Kunghit Island on the southern tip of the Queen Charlotte Islands. The vessel carried complete safety equipment including a lifeboat, two life rafts, eighteen life jackets and two life buoys. The *B.C. Star* never arrived at its destination.

The crew at No. 28 Radar Unit (RU) Cape St. James had no way of knowing that the supply boat was on its way, having not yet received the necessary cypher equipment to decode the movement message. Radio silence was enforced on the ship and no one missed her until August 3 when construction crews queried about their supplies. An intense sea and air search covered a wide area during the next several weeks. All crew and passengers were lost. Gilbert McFadyen had been aboard the *B.C. Star* less than two weeks when the vessel disappeared. Only two bodies were recovered weeks later, and very little wreckage was found. On September 3 an unidentified airman's body was found on Price Island. A tombstone was erected at the Meadow Island Cemetery, Bella Bella, to remember the unknown airman.

In the aftermath, speculation and rumours circulated about the vessel being attacked by a Japanese submarine. This information was enhanced by crewmembers aboard another RCAF Marine vessel inbound to Alliford Bay. They reported that they were listening to a Ketchikan Alaska radio station when its program was interrupted by a strange and unidentified transmission. The broken-up message read: *Star... out of bread and water... Alliford repeat message... Thank you... Good afternoon*. However, no conclusive evidence ever came to light that explained why the *B.C. Star* went down. Speculation was that the hull had simply opened up under the weight of her cargo and she sank so quickly that no lifeboats were launched and no distress signals were sent out.

This supply mission resulted in the largest loss of life in the history of the Marine Branch. One month after the loss, marine craft procedures were revised to ensure prompt reporting of arrivals and departures.

In early August 1943, George and Isabel McFadyen in Sarnia received a telegram from Royal Canadian Air Force Casualty officials informing them that their eldest son, AC2 Gilbert C. McFadyen, attached to a boat plying coastal waters, was missing after marine operations. Approximately one week later, it was confirmed that Gilbert was a member of the crew of the missing boat, and it was believed that all personnel had been lost. Time of the disappearance of the vessel was not disclosed by air force officials, but it was believed to have been sometime during the previous two weeks.

In mid-August 1943, George McFadyen received a letter from G. Hollis Slater, whose son, Sergt. Jonathan C. Slater, was among the ship's crew. In the letter, Hollis stated that he was hopeful that the airmen were still alive. Mr. Slater wrote, *It would appear that the ship left the mainland on July 24 for Cape St. James at the southern tip of the Queen Charlotte Islands and a day's run away. On August 5 the following message was reported to have been picked up by the radio at Ketchikan, Alaska, 'B.C. Star – Bread and water. Cumshaw Aliford, repeat'*. Reference to Cumshaw and Aliford were not clear, but Mr. Slater interpreted the message as meaning that the men were on Louris Island in the Queen Charlottes and were attempting to travel by land to Sandspit or Aliford Bay on the northeast of Moresby Island.

Also in mid-August 1943, Isabel received a letter from F/L H.S. McDonald, Chaplain, Western Air Command, Vancouver, B.C. Following is a portion of that letter:
My dear Mrs. McFadyen:

... At present there is nothing further to report on the loss of the "B.C. Star" and I can assure you that a diligent search is being pursued daily in an endeavor to find wreckage or other evidence of the boat. So far no word has been heard from any of the crew. As long as there is the faintest hope of finding any of the crew, the search will be kept up.

The "B.C. Star" operated with Vancouver as a base and journeyed from Station to Station under the direction of the Commanding Officer of No. 9 Construction & Maintenance Unit. It was while on one of these routine voyages that the boat was reported missing after leaving a west coast base.

It is the policy of the Station Chaplains to visit all boats that tie up at their wharf and I am quite sure that wherever your son's boat was docked and there was a chaplain on the Station they would have a visit. As a matter of fact it was the custom for the chaplain to have his morning coffee with the crew in the galley.

I recall meeting your son when he passed through No. 3 Repair Depot in Vancouver at which time I was one of the chaplains on that Station. I recall him because he came from Sarnia and I intimated the fact that my father had been one of the engineers that constructed the Sarnia tunnel and in that way we had a point of contact. He was not at

the Station very long before he was posted to duty. This made him very happy because like any other boy he was anxious to 'get going' since that is what he joined up for. He was quite happy and satisfied in his work and I am sure that he did his job well. I can assure you that if he is alive there is no danger of him being a prisoner of war and should any member of the crew be found I am quite sure that he would want to contact all the next of kin of the remainder of the crew.

Let me assure you that in the R.C.A.F. we know the boys, we have many chats and contacts with them and through this personal touch are able to help them in many ways. Should anything further develop to change the situation of missing to that of another category, you will be notified immediately. With all good wishes to you and praying for the safety of your son.

In March 1944, Gilbert Campbell's name appeared on the official casualty list of the Royal Canadian Air Force as, *Previously reported "missing in sinking of 'B.C. Star'" 24-July-43 life rafts only wreckage found presumed vessel sunk, now "presumed dead" 24-July-43 for official purposes.* Aircraftman Class II Gilbert McFadyen was one of sixteen RCAF airmen lost when the *B.C. Star* vessel sank. There were no survivors. Also killed were: LACs Harold Frederick Dakenfold, George Thornton Stead, and Clarence James Sherlock; Sgts Philip Eric Olsen, Jack Douglas Hearfield, Jonathan Charles Slater, and William Murray MacNeill; Cpls Charles Gordon Glover, and Tadeusz Ledwig Polec; ACs Titus Vollhoffer, Maurice Daniel Onuski, and Arthur Garnet Davies; FSgts Roy Henry Drouillard, and William Ernest Mitchell.

In September 1946, Isabel McFadyen received a letter from the R.C.A.F. Casualty Officer, for Chief of the Air Staff in Ottawa. Following is a portion of that letter:

... I regret there are very few particulars known of the tragedy in which your son AC.2 Gilbert Campbell McFadyen lost his life. The British Columbia Star departed from Bella Bella on July 23, 1943 for Rose harbor giving an estimated time of arrival at the latter port as 10 A.M. July 24. The last word received from the ship was a wireless message despatched at 6.10 P.M. Pacific War Time July 23 which read as follows: "Departed Bella Bella 17.20 hours 23-7-43 E.T.A. Rose Harbour 10.00 hours 24-7-43".

A Court of Enquiry was convened at Prince Rupert for the purpose of investigating the loss of this vessel and their findings revealed that the vessel was a good ship, in good repair and suitable for the voyage; that it was well fitted with all necessary and sufficient life saving, fire fighting and wireless equipment. It was commanded by an able and experienced Master. Its crew were sufficient in number for the safe handling of the vessel and were able and experienced. There is no evidence of negligence on the part of the Master or any of the crew and no blame is attached to any of them. An intensive search for the lost vessel was carried out by air and by sea and it is the opinion of the Court that in this connection everything was done that could have been done.

The possibility of the vessel getting off course and running aground appears unlikely as the extensive air and sea search would have been almost certain to disclose the whereabouts of the wreck. Loss by fire could not be seriously considered due to the fact that the two life rafts which were recovered showed no evidence of this. Had an explosion occurred wreckage would have been discovered. The possibility of the shifting of the cargo was given consideration by the Court but this cause could not be substantiated due to the fact that the hold was loaded almost to capacity and under the direct supervision of the Master thus eliminating the possibility of the cargo shifting in rough seas...

I deeply regret having to convey such distressing news and I only hope your sad loss will leave you fortified to face the future.

In October 1955, Isabel received the following letter from the Wing Commander, R.C.A.F. Casualties Officer, for Chief of the Air Staff:

Dear Mrs. McFadyen:

I am sorry indeed that after so long an interval I must refer to the loss of your son, Aircraftman Second Class Gilbert Campbell McFadyen, who has been officially recorded as not having a "known" grave.

Due to the extreme hazards attending air, land and sea operations, many Royal Canadian Air Force boys do not have a "known" grave. All are being commemorated by name on Memorials erected at a number of locations, each Memorial representative of a theatre of operations.

The Memorials are erected by the Imperial War Graves Commission (of which Canada is a member) who has announced that one of the Memorials will be erected in Ottawa, Canada. The name of your son will appear on that Memorial.

It is believed that the Memorial will be erected during 1956, and during the period of construction, before

the name of your son is engraved on the Memorial, you will receive a Verification Form to complete and mail to the Imperial War Graves Commission.

May I take this opportunity to express to you and the members of your family my deepest sympathy in the loss of your gallant son.

Eighteen year-old Gilbert McFadyen has no known grave. His name is inscribed on the Ottawa War Memorial, Ontario, Canada, Panel 2, Column 5.

On a beautifully clear, sunny day on July 6, 2013, the Denny Island War Memorial was dedicated on Denny Island, British Columbia, at the former Bella Bella RCAF base. On that day, dignitaries, military personnel, area families, RCMP, pipers, seventeen Chiefs and members of the First Nations took part in a memorial service and dedication ceremony unveiling the Bella Bella RCAF War Memorial and the Warrior Pole (dedicated to the memory of the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers and First Nation War Veterans). There were also several commemorative plaques unveiled that day: one telling the story of RCAF Station Bella Bella; one honouring Canso 9879 (crashed July 30, 1943); and one honouring the *BC Star*, that includes the names of the 15 crew/passengers who lost their lives on July 23, 1943. Sarnia's AC2 Gilbert Campbell McFadyen's name is included on that plaque.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, J, L, M, N, S, 2C, 2D, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10F, 10G

McISAAC, Charles Daniel (#B/157245)

Charles Daniel McIsaac was a married husband of four years and working in the mines in northern Ontario when he made the decision to serve his country. Ten months later, he lost his life in defense of the Allied cause while fighting to liberate Belgium.

Charles McIsaac was born in Glencoe, Nova Scotia on May 7, 1916, the son of Hugh and Mary Jessie McIsaac. Hugh (a miner) and Mary McIsaac, both born in Glencoe, Nova Scotia, were married in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia on September 12, 1905. Hugh and Mary were blessed with eleven children: sons Charles, John, Hugh, Daniel, Joseph, Alex and Duncan (latter died at age 3 in September 1932); and daughters Lena, Jessie, Hughina, and Margaret.

Charles left public school part way through grade seven at the age of fourteen, which is around the time the McIsaac family moved to Timmins, Ontario, where they resided at 264 Spruce Street. Going to work at an early age, Charles worked as a pipefitter's helper for almost two years at Hollinger Mines. Then for the next nine years, he worked in various mines in Timmins, doing blasting and drilling. His last employer prior to enlisting was Paymaster Gold Mines, where he worked as a gold miner. For relaxation, Charles enjoyed bowling, billiards, hunting and fishing. Twenty-three-year-old Charles married Margaret Virginia, of Sarnia, in Timmins on December 2, 1939. The couple lived with Charles' parents Hugh and Mary McIsaac in Timmins.

Twenty-seven-year-old Charles, married four years and with no children, enlisted in the Canadian Army in Toronto on December 17, 1943. He stood six feet one and a half inches tall, had blue eyes and dark brown hair, and recorded his occupation as gold and nickel miner. With one brother overseas in the engineers, Charles expressed a desire for the Royal Canadian Engineers, but was recommended for the infantry. He was anxious to get overseas as quickly as possible. From #2 District Depot in Toronto, Charles received his army training at #25 Canadian Infantry (Basic) Training Centre (CITC) in Simcoe, and in March 1944 continued at A-29 Canadian Infantry (Advanced) Training Centre (CITC) at Camp Ipperwash.

On July 11, 1944, Charles McIsaac embarked overseas for the United Kingdom. He continued his training in the U.K., as a member of #2 Canadian Infantry Reinforcement Unit (CIRU). On August 4, 1944, two months after D-Day, Private Charles McIsaac departed the U.K. bound for France, as a member of the Essex Scottish Regiment, Royal Canadian Infantry Corps (RCIC).

The **Battle of Normandy** had begun for the Canadians with the June 6, 1944 D-Day landings at Juno Beach. After breaching the "Atlantic Wall" of "Fortress Europe", Allied armies began their break out from the narrow Normandy bridgehead to carve out a foothold on the French mainland. It would take a whole summer of tenacious fighting, pushing against fierce and ruthless German forces to advance east across France. In a brutal campaign of attrition, the Canadians clawed their way forward liberating villages and towns including Bretteville, Carpiquet, Caen and Falaise.

After the Allied breakout from Normandy, Canadian forces were assigned the "**Long Left Flank**", the less glamorous but vital tasks of clearing coastal areas in the north of France and Belgium of German occupiers; opening

the English Channel ports; and capturing the launching sites of German V-1 rockets. In a series of stop-and-start advances against stiff resistance in fortified positions, the Canadians liberated ports and villages including Rouen, Dieppe, Dunkirk, Boulogne and Calais.

In early October 1944, the Canadians were entrusted with liberating the 45-mile-long Scheldt estuary (the Belgian-Dutch border area) that connected the port of Antwerp to the North Sea. The **Battle of the Scheldt** was among the most difficult and grueling struggles in the war. The bitter fighting against a well-fortified and heavily entrenched enemy took place in a bleak environment made worse by the winter cold in a flooded and freezing muddy quagmire.

Charles McIsaac served with the Essex Scottish as they advanced through France and Belgium. Only two months after arriving in France, on October 13, 1944, Charles lost his life in the early stages of the Battle of the Scheldt in Belgium. He was struck in the frontal area of his head by a shell fragment at approximately 0600 hours and examined at 0830 hours. Weak, with strenuous breathing and in some shock due to the loss of blood, he died on that day at approximately 1000 hours as a result of his wounds.

[Note: In Charles McIsaac's Military Service File, some documents record the location of his death as France, and others record it as Belgium].

Charles McIsaac's remains were buried on October 14, 1944 at a location recorded on the Army Field Service Card as "Military Cem. Antwerp Cemetery, Belgium Sh. 23 & 33 6490 Grave 15, row R, plot British". The burial site was later redesignated as Schoonselhof Cemetery, Antwerp, Belgium.

On October 20, 1944, Charles' wife of less than five years Margaret in Timmins, received the following telegram from the Director of Records in Ottawa: MINISTER OF NATIONAL DEFENCE DEEPLY REGRETS TO INFORM YOU THAT B157245 PRIVATE CHARLES DANIEL MCISAAC PREVIOUSLY REPORTED MISSING IN ACTION HAS NOW BEEN OFFICIALLY REPORTED WOUNDED AND DIED OF WOUNDS THIRTEENTH OCTOBER 1944 STOP WHEN FURTHER INFORMATION BECOMES AVAILABLE IT WILL BE FORWARDED AS SOON AS RECEIVED STOP LETTER FOLLOWS. In early November 1944, Margaret received the following letter from the Colonel, Director of Records for Adjutant-General:

Dear Mrs. McIsaac:

Further to this Headquarters' telegram of the 20th October 1944, informing you of the regretted death of your husband B157245 Private Charles Daniel McIsaac, in keeping with the policy of the Canadian Army of informing the next-of-kin of all details of battle casualties, the following paragraph informs you of the wounds sustained by Private McIsaac.

According to information obtained by this Headquarters from Canadian Army Medical Authorities, your late husband died as a result of a shell fragment wound to the frontal region of the head. Please accept my sincere and heartfelt sympathy for the irreparable loss you have suffered.

Private Charles McIsaac's death was later officially recorded as: *Officially listed as Overseas casualty, died of wounds, in the field (France)*. In June 1945, Margaret McIsaac, then living on Norfolk Street in Simcoe, Ontario, received a War Service Gratuity of \$103.10 for the loss of her husband. In September 1946, Margaret received a letter from the Colonel, Director of Records, for Adjutant-General. Following is a portion of that letter:

Dear Madam:

Information has been received from overseas that the remains of your husband, B157245 Private Charles Daniel McIsaac, are buried in grave 15, row R, of Schoonselhof Cemetery, Antwerp, Belgium. Marked map is enclosed. The portion of this civilian cemetery containing the graves of deceased members of the Forces has been made into a permanent recognized military burial ground which will receive care and maintenance in perpetuity.

The grave will have been marked with a temporary cross which will be replaced in due course by a permanent headstone suitably inscribed. While it cannot now be stated when this work of permanent commemoration will begin, before any action is taken you will be communicated with and an opportunity will be given you to submit a short personal inscription of your choice for engraving on the headstone....

Twenty-eight-year-old Charles McIsaac is buried in Antwerpen Schoonselhof Cemetery, Belgium, Grave III.A.15. On his headstone are inscribed the words, **THOUGH GOD HAS TAKEN YOU YOU ARE ALWAYS IN MY HEART FOR DEATH SHALL PART US NOT.**

SOURCES: C, D, E, F, L, 2C, 2D, 7C, 8X, 8Y

McKEOWN, Victor Herbert (#J/19969)

At age 31, Victor Herbert McKeown interrupted his career to serve his country. One of his RCAF training instructor's described him as, "keen, a deep sense of responsibility and displays ample initiative". Victor gave his life for the Allied cause while serving in one of the most dangerous postings of the war.

Victor McKeown was born in Portadown, Co Armagh, Northern Ireland on May 7, 1911, the son of John and Mary Ellen (nee Hewitt) McKeown. John and Mary Ellen were both born in Ireland, and were married on December 23, 1901 in Portadown, Northern Ireland. At some point, the McKeown family immigrated to Canada, first living in Toronto and then in Sarnia, at 355 George Street. John and Mary Ellen McKeown had eight children together: sons Victor; Thomas Douglas (Doug, who would become a Sergeant in the same R.C.A.F. unit as Victor); Joseph W.; William H. (the latter two would both later reside in Toronto); and Robert John (died in March 1909); and daughters, who at the time of Victor's death were Mrs. Alice Burr in Toronto, Mrs. James Struthers, and Mae (Mrs. Roy Chalmers), both residing in Sarnia. John McKeown supported his family working as a carpenter in Sarnia.

Victor spent the first seven years of his life in Toronto before the family moved to Sarnia. Victor was educated in Sarnia, attending London Road Public Elementary School (1918-1926), and then Sarnia Collegiate Institute from 1926 to 1928. While at high school, Victor was a well-known athlete, very active in lacrosse, football, softball, boxing and hockey. His hobbies included photography and rifle shooting. After leaving school at the age of 18, Victor was employed as a repairman at the Dominion Salt Company in Sarnia from 1928 to 1940. In August 1940, Victor had served in the 2-26th Battery, Royal Canadian Artillery in Sarnia, with the rank of Bombardier. Later in 1940, he moved to Toronto to work at De Havilland Aircraft as an aircraft inspector. He worked there from 1940 to 1942 when he left to enlist.

Thirty-one-year-old Victor McKeown enlisted with the Royal Canadian Air Force on September 14, 1942 in Toronto. He stood five feet six inches tall, had gray eyes and brown hair, was single, and lived at 11 Clarendon Avenue, Toronto at the time. Doubtful about his eyesight, he applied for ground crew, but was recommended for Air Gunner by the Selection Board. From #11 Recruitment Centre then #1 Manning Depot in Toronto, Victor received his air training at #6 Service Flying Training School (SFTS) in Dunnville; and #23 Pre-Aircrew Education Detachment (PAED) at University of Toronto; followed by #2 Air Gunner School (AGGTS) in Trenton; and then #3 Bombing and Gunnery School (B&GS) in MacDonald Manitoba. The Chief Instructor at #3B&GS wrote of Victor, *Keen on his work; has a deep sense of responsibility; obliging to others; carries weight with his fellow students; displays ample initiative in carrying out air exercises should make a capable crew member*. Victor was awarded his Air Gunner's Badge at #3B&GS in Manitoba on June 25, 1943. The next day, he began his 14-day embarkation leave. On July 10, 1943, he would be stationed at #1 Y Depot in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

Victor McKeown embarked overseas from Halifax bound for the United Kingdom on July 16, 1943. Initially posted to #3 Personnel Reception Centre (PRC), he was transferred to #1664 Conversion Unit (CU) on August 7, 1943. One month later, on September 10, 1943, he became a member of RCAF #434 Bluenose Squadron "In Excelsis Vincimus" (We Conquer the Heights), part of **Bomber Command**, with the rank of Pilot Officer-Air Gunner.

During the course of the war, one of this country's most significant contributions was the approximately 50,000 Canadians who served with the RCAF and RAF in Bomber Command operations. Next to Britain, Canada was the largest contributor to Bomber Command, making up more than a third of all of Bomber Command personnel. The men who served in Bomber Command faced some of the most difficult odds of anyone fighting in the war.

No. 434 Squadron was formed at RAF Tholthorpe, Yorkshire on June 13, 1943 as part of No. 6 (RCAF) Group. The unit was equipped with Handley Page Halifax aircraft, a four-engine heavy bomber. The squadron was adopted by the Rotary Club of Halifax and took the nickname "Bluenose" in reference to the schooner "Bluenose" and the common nickname for Nova Scotians (many of the initial squadron members were Maritimers). On December 11, 1943, the squadron transferred its base to RAF Croft where it remained for the rest of the war. In mid-December 1944, the squadron converted to the Canadian-built Avro Lancaster.

On the night of November 18, 1943, Pilot Officer Victor McKeown was one of a group of R.C.A.F. airmen who took part in a bombing mission on Mannheim, Germany. For more than eight hours, they withstood a temperature that fell to more than 35 degrees below zero but it didn't stop them from carrying out their part of the smashing attack on the important industrial city.

Two months later, on January 29, 1944, Victor was a member of Crew #31 aboard Halifax MK V aircraft LK916 (markings WL-D) that took off from RAF Croft on a night operation targeting Berlin. It was the third day of a

heavy Anglo-American aerial offensive on Germany. On that fateful night, their Halifax aircraft was blown up over their target of Berlin. Perishing with Pilot Officer-Air Gunner Victor McKeown were P/O.s Wallace Kingdon Maxwell, Carl Thomas Edward Lee, Edward Philip Devaney, William (Bill) Henry Martin, Sgt. Ernest Parker (RAF) and F/S Kenneth James Scales. Of the 677 aircraft involved in the operation there were 46 losses.



Pilot Officer-AG Victor Herbert McKeown



L-R: **Sgt. McKeown**, Sgt. C. Lee, Sgt. E. Devaney, Sgt. B. Martin (around the fire after returning from Nov. 18/19 Mannheim mission)

Several days later, John and Mary Ellen McKeown on George Street in Sarnia received a telegram from the R.C.A.F. Casualty Office in Ottawa informing them that their son, SERGEANT VICTOR HERBERT MCKEOWN HAS BEEN REPORTED MISSING AFTER AIR OPERATIONS OVERSEAS. Victor's brother Thomas Douglas (Doug), a member of the same unit, sent their parents an encouraging word. Doug cabled his parents the following, DON'T WORRY ABOUT VIC HIS CHANCES OF BEING SAFE ARE VERY GOOD. Another set of Sarnia parents, Howard and Margaret Thompson, received the same RCAF Casualty Office telegram on the same day about their son, Arthur Cameron Thompson, who was also listed as missing in the same bombing raid over Berlin (he is included in this Project).

In early February 1944, Mary Ellen received the following letter from the Officer Commanding No. 434 Squadron in Great Britain:

Dear Mrs. McKeown:

By the time you receive this letter you will doubtless have received official notification of the fact that your son, R.190962 Sergeant Victor Herbert McKeown, has been missing on operations since 28/29 January, 1944.

Your son was not only a valued Air Gunner of this Squadron but he was highly popular with all the ranks and will be sorely missed by his many friends and acquaintances here.

I can well understand the shock and grief that the sad tidings brought to you and I join with all the Officers, Non Commissioned Officers and Airmen of this unit in extending to you our heartfelt sympathy in this hour of bitter trial. There is always the possibility that your son may be alive and well even if a prisoner of war in enemy hands and we are all hoping for the best. There is no information to hand at the present time to justify this hope but you may rest assured that any information which may be received at some future date will be forwarded to you immediately.

Your son's personal effects have been carefully gathered together and forwarded to the Standing Committee of Adjustment, Central Depository, Royal Air Force, Colnbrook, Slough, Bucks., and they will communicate with you in due course. Please allow me once again to express the deep and lasting sympathy which we all feel with you at this time.

Victor's brother Doug McKeown, who was a Sergeant-Air Gunner with the R.C.A.F., arrived home in Sarnia in April 1944 to spend a leave with parents John and Mary Ellen. He had been overseas for two years and three months. He had been injured in a crash in England a year and a half prior, spent six weeks in hospital and had been assigned to ground duty since. At the time of Doug's visit, he and the McKeown parents had not received any further news of Victor's status.

In July 1944, John and Mary Ellen received a letter from Flight Lieutenant J.L. Westman of the R.C.A.F. Casualty Office at Ottawa informing them that their son, Sergeant Victor Herbert McKeown had been advanced to Pilot Officer on January 23, 1944 but regretted no further information had been received as to his fate.

In November 1944, Mr. M. Hewitt (Victor's uncle) in Portadown, Ireland wrote to the Canadian Casualty Branch in London, England, seeking information about his nephew Victor. A portion of his letter reads: ... *I know that sometimes it takes many months before any news is received of missing personnel, however I am still living in hopes that he may be a Prisoner of War somewhere and not been notified. I should be very much obliged if you would keep in touch with me regarding any future news that may become available...*

Later that month, Mr. M. Hewitt received a reply from the Wing Commander, for Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief, R.C.A.F. Overseas. Following is a portion of that reply: ... *I regret that no news has been received regarding him since the date on which he was reported missing, and due to the time which has elapsed, and the absence of any further information, action to presume, for official purposes, that his death has occurred, will shortly be taken. Please accept my sympathy with you in the loss of your nephew.*

In December 1944, John received the following letter from the Air Marshal, Chief of the Air Staff:
Dear Mr. McKeown:

I have learned with deep regret that your son, Pilot Officer Victor Herbert McKeown, is now for official purposes presumed to have died on Active Service Overseas on January 29th, 1944. I wish to offer you and the members of your family my sincere and heartfelt sympathy.

It is most lamentable that a promising career should be thus terminated and I would like you to know that his loss is greatly deplored by all those with whom your son was serving.

Victor Herbert McKeown's death was later officially recorded as, *Previously reported missing after air operations, now for official purposes, presumed dead, overseas (Germany)*. In October 1945, the McKeowns received a War Service Gratuity of \$211.70 for the loss of their son. In November 1946, Mary Ellen received the following letter from the Wing Commander for Chief of the Air Staff in Ottawa:

Dear Mrs. McKeown:

It is a privilege to have the opportunity of sending you the Operational Wings and Certificate in recognition of the gallant services rendered by your son, Pilot Officer V.H. McKeown. I realize there is little which may be said or done to lessen your sorrow, but it is my hope that these "Wings", indicative of operations against the enemy, will be a treasured memento of a young life offered on the altar of freedom in defence of his Home and Country.

In February 1947, Victor's sister-in-law Mrs. Joseph W. McKeown wrote the following letter to the Secretary, Department of National Defence for Air, in Ottawa:

Dear Sir,

In a number of recent publications I have read of some of the searches for missing aircrew in Europe, and I was wondering if perhaps there might have come to light any additional information regarding my brother, Pilot Officer Victor Herbert McKeown, missing on operations on Jan. 29, 1944.

I am in hopes that you have this information but have held it back for fear of re-opening our grief. We would much rather know the facts than spend the rest of our days wondering. Hoping have an early reply.

Following is a portion of the reply sent from the R.C.A.F. Casualty Officer, for Chief of the Air Staff:

... We regret that up until the present time no definite information has been received concerning your brother or any members of his crew. The loss of this aircraft is at present the subject of a Casualty Enquiry with our Air Force Missing Research and Enquiry Units. An airman believed to be Sergeant Parker, the Flight Engineer of your brother's crew, was washed ashore at Danemare in Denmark. You may be assured that should any information become available concerning your brother it will be forwarded to you. May I offer you my deepest sympathy in your sad loss.

In May 1952, Mary Ellen received the following letter from the Wing Commander, R.C.A.F. Casualties Officer, for Chief of the Air Staff:

Dear Mrs. McKeown:

It is with reluctance that after so long an interval, I must refer to the loss of your son, Pilot Officer Victor Herbert McKeown, but due to the lack of any information concerning him since he was reported missing, it must be regretfully accepted and officially recorded that he does not have a "known" grave.

Due to the extreme hazards attending air operations there are, unhappily many thousands of British aircrew

boys who do not have "known" graves and all will be commemorated on General Memorials that will be erected at a number of locations by the Imperial War Graves Commission (of which Canada is a member), each Memorial representative of a theatre of operations. One of these Memorials will be erected at Runnymede, England, and the name of your son will appear on that Memorial.

I realize that this is an extremely distressing letter and that there is no manner of conveying such information to you that would not add to your heartaches. I am fully aware that nothing I may say will lessen your great sorrow, but I would like to express to you and the members of your family my deepest sympathy.

Thirty-two-year-old Victor McKeown has no known grave. His name is inscribed on the Runnymede War Memorial, Surrey, United Kingdom, Panel 251.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, J, L, M, N, 2C, 2D, 4B, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10B, 10H, 10U

McKERNAN, John (#A/59800)

John McKernan was so eager to serve his country that he lied about his age in order to enlist. He became a member of an elite Canadian parachute battalion who lost his while fighting to liberate France during the Battle of Normandy. The loss of his only son left John's father devastated and seeking answers.

John McKernan was born in Windsor, Ontario on August 2, 1924, the only son of John McKernan Sr. and Eva May (nee Wells, born in Kent, Ontario) McKernan. John Sr. and Eva May were married on January 4, 1921 in Dresden, Ontario. John Sr. and Eva McKernan had three children together: John Jr., and daughters Mary Elizabeth and Florence May. In 1939, when John Jr. was fifteen years old, his mother Eva May passed away. His father remarried in 1943 and later moved from Dresden to Sarnia living at R.R. #3, Lakeshore Road.

John Jr. left school at age sixteen after completing grade nine in Dresden. His interests included bowling and pool. In 1940-1941, John worked as a delivery boy for one year at Dynes & Dynes in Dresden. He then worked at the Wallaceburg Brass Factory as a labourer doing grinding for eight months prior to enlisting.

Seventeen year-old John McKernan enlisted in the Canadian Army on March 2, 1942 in London, Ontario. He stood five feet seven and three-quarter inches tall, had hazel eyes and brown hair, and was single. On his attestation paper, he declared his birth date as August 2, 1921 (not 1924), making himself three years older than he was. As he declared his birth year as 1921, authorities believed that he was twenty years old. As a result, the documentation in his Service File, including his Death Certificate, records his birth year as 1921.

From #1 District Depot in London, John received his army training at #10 Basic Training Centre (BTC) in Kitchener; then #1 Canadian Signal Training Centre (CSTC) in Kingston; and Canadian Army Trade School (CATS) in Hamilton (to train as a radio mechanic). He was unsuccessful at CATS and was then transferred to A-10 Canadian Infantry Training Centre (CITC) at Camp Borden to complete advanced training in the infantry. He had hoped to qualify as a motorcyclist or dispatch rider but was designated as infantry. In mid-August 1943, he was transferred to Aldershot, Nova Scotia.

On September 13, 1943, John McKernan embarked overseas for the United Kingdom where he was posted to #5 Canadian Infantry Reinforcement Unit (CIRU). He continued his training in the U.K., and in March 1944, was transferred to #4 CIRU. In early June 1944, he became a member of the North Shore Regiment, Royal Canadian Infantry Corps (RCIC), with the rank of Private. On June 12, 1944, John departed the U.K., arriving the next day in France - six days after D-Day.

The **Battle of Normandy** had begun for the Canadians with the June 6, 1944 D-Day landings at Juno Beach. After breaching the "Atlantic Wall" of "Fortress Europe", Allied armies began their break out from the narrow Normandy bridgehead to carve out a foothold on the French mainland. It would take a whole summer of tenacious fighting, pushing against fierce and ruthless German forces to advance east across France. In a brutal campaign of attrition, the Canadians faced fierce battles and vicious counterattacks as they clawed their way forward liberating villages and towns including Bretteville, Carpiquet, Caen and Falaise.

John McKernan served for several weeks with the North Shore Regiment. In early July 1944, he was attached to the 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion. This airborne infantry battalion of the Canadian Army had been formed in July 1942, and in 1943, had been attached to the British 6th Airborne Division. On the night of June 5th to 6th, the 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion were part of the Allied paratroopers who were dropped into enemy territory in the hours before the D-Day landing. John McKernan joined this battalion in their ground operations to strengthen the bridgehead and support the advance of Allied troops towards the Seine River.

Less than ten weeks after arriving in France, on August 19, 1944, and approximately two weeks after his 20th birthday, John McKernan lost his life in the final days of the Battle of Normandy. His remains were buried in a temporary grave on August 20 at a location recorded on the Army Field Service Card as "France sheet 7F/2 MR 110736 Ranville Grave 96-A". Of the 27 officers and 516 men from the 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion who took part in the Battle of Normandy, 24 officers and 343 men gave their lives.

On August 28, 1944, John McKernan Sr. in Dresdan, received the following telegram from the Director of Records: MINISTER OF NATIONAL DEFENCE DEEPLY REGRETS TO INFORM YOU THAT A59800 PRIVATE JOHN MCKERNAN HAS BEEN OFFICIALLY REPORTED KILLED IN ACTION NINETEENTH AUGUST 1944 STOP IF ANY FURTHER INFORMATION BECOMES AVAILABLE IT WILL BE FORWARDED AS SOON AS RECEIVED.

In October 1944, John Sr., then residing at R.R. #3 Lakeshore Road, Sarnia, received the following letter from the Brigadier, Acting Adjutant-General:

Dear Mr. McKernan:

It was with deep regret that I learned of the death of your son, A59800 Private John McKernan, who gave his life in the Service of his Country in the Western European Theatre of War on the 19th day of August, 1944.

From official information we have received, your son was killed in action against the enemy. You may be assured that any additional information received will be communicated to you without delay.

The Minister of National Defence and the Members of the Army Council have asked me to express to you and your family their sincere sympathy in your bereavement. We pay tribute to the sacrifice he so bravely made.

In December 1944, John Sr. was still waiting for information about the circumstances of his son's death. He wrote the following letter to the Director of Records in Ottawa:

Dear Sir,

Will you pardon my again writing your Dept in regard to the matter of obtaining some particulars concerning my son's death in action overseas on August 19th, 1944. Not having had any communication from the O.C. of the unit in which my son, Private John McKERNAN, (Reg No. 59800) was serving, and being anxious to secure any available details as to where and how he was killed, I would gratefully appreciate your cooperation in the matter.

About five weeks ago I wrote the Minister of National Defence and was informed that such particulars did not reach that office but would eventually be forwarded in a letter from the Officer Commanding the unit in the field to myself. I was also informed that a cable had been forwarded on my behalf to the O.C, requesting that if he had not already done so, he was to write me as soon as possible. To date, I have had no communication and as the interval of time from date of my son's death (August 19) is now rapidly approaching four months, I feel that if I do not soon obtain some information on this matter, the element of time may make securing details more difficult or impossible.

For your further information, I would explain that neither myself or my two daughters had been in receipt of any letters from my son for a considerable period prior to his leaving Canada, and this naturally increases our anxiety, as we do not even know the name of the infantry regiment to which he was attached at the time of his being killed in action. Trusting that you may be able to render some assistance in the matter.

Later that month, John Sr. received a reply from the Colonel, Director of Records, for Adjutant-General. Following is a portion of that letter:

Dear Mr. McKernan:

... In reply thereto, I wish to inform you that your son was serving with the North Shore Regiment in the Western European Theatre of War at the time he was killed in action. A Burial Report now received from Overseas advises that Private McKernan was buried on the 20th day of August, 1944, in a temporary grave at Ranville which is approximately 5 ½ miles North East of Caen, France. A further cable has been despatched Overseas to-day requesting that a letter be forwarded to you by the Officer Commanding your late son's Unit respecting the circumstances surrounding his death.

In February 1945, John Sr., seeking the personal effects of his son, wrote a letter to the Estates Branch, Department of National Defence in Ottawa. Following is a portion of that letter:

Dear Sirs,

There having been no further word concerning any of the personal belongings of my son, the above mentioned soldier, who was killed in action exactly six months ago to-day, August 19th, 1944, I am taking the liberty of writing your Dept on the matter, trusting that it may yet be possible to learn whether myself and other members of

the family may hope to receive any article, however small, which may have been recovered at the time of his death.

As a result of my having received a communication from a Chaplain overseas some time ago, I learned that my son died in a United States army hospital in France. Previous correspondence from the Director of Records did not contain this information and it is only since learning that death did not occur on the field, that I am taking this matter with your Dept.

... Not having had any word from my Son's commanding officer or other member of his Unit overseas, (the chaplain from whom I had heard was attached to a Canadian Infantry Reinforcement Unit and had no connection with my son's regiment). I have no idea as to the actual circumstances of his death but would think that the fact that he is said to have died in a U.S. army field hospital would have made such recovery of personal belongings more certain than if he had been killed instantly. Any information which you may be able to obtain in this matter will be gratefully appreciated by my two daughters and myself.

In late April 1945, John McKernan Sr. was still anxiously waiting for any of his son's personal effects. From a portion of another letter to the Estates Branch, he wrote:

...I feel that the length of time which has now elapsed since Aug 19th, 1944, has been ample and would greatly appreciate any information which you may be able to obtain on the matter.

In this connection, I would like to draw your attention to a fact which may be of some value in any possible action you may take in attempting to trace my son's personal effects – namely, my first notification from official sources was that he had been killed in action while serving with the North Shore (N.B) Reg't. Then later I was advised in a letter from a chaplain that my son had died in a United States Army hospital in France and had been on the strength of the 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion.

Had his death taken place other than in a field hospital, I would not have been so surprised at the failure of any of my son's belongings to reach Canada. But in view of the death being in a hospital I do feel that somewhere there must be at least one small item which would be greatly appreciated by myself or other members of the family...

In June 1945 (more than one month after VE Day), John McKernan Sr. still had not received any of his son's personal effects.

Private John McKernan's death was later officially recorded as, *Overseas casualty, killed in action, in the field (France)*. In January 1946, John Sr. received a War Service Gratuity of \$331.37 for the loss of his only son. In October 1946, John Sr. was still seeking information on the location of the grave of his son in Normandy. His only previous information from overseas had been that his son had been buried in a temporary grave at Ranville, but was later to be re-interred in a permanent Canadian Military Cemetery. John Sr.'s intention was to go to France to visit the area where his son's grave was situated.

In November 1946, John Sr. received a letter from the Colonel, Director of Records, for Adjutant-General. Following is a portion of that letter:

Dear Mr. McKernan:

... advice has now been received from the overseas authorities that the remains of your son, (A59800 Private John McKernan), are now buried in grave 14, row E, plot 2, of Ranville Airborne Cemetery, Ranville, France. Marked map is enclosed. This is a recognized military burial ground which will receive care and maintenance in perpetuity.

The grave has been marked with a temporary cross which will be replaced in due course by a permanent headstone suitably inscribed. While it cannot now be stated when this work of permanent commemoration will begin, before any action is taken you will be communicated with and an opportunity will be given you to submit a short personal inscription of your own choice for engraving on the headstone...

Twenty year-old John McKernan is buried in Ranville War Cemetery, Calvados, France, Grave IIA.E.14. On his headstone are inscribed the words, I HAVE FOUGHT A GOOD FIGHT, I HAVE FINISHED MY COURSE, I HAVE KEPT THE FAITH.

SOURCES: C, D, E, F, L, 2C, 2D, 3F, 7C, 8X, 8Y

McLAGAN, John Pettigrew (#A/50287)

John Pettigrew McLagan had been married for just over a year-and-a-half when he chose to serve his country. Two months after arriving overseas, his wife gave birth to their only child, a baby girl. John never had the opportunity to hold her. John lost his life in the fight to liberate the Dutch people from years of suffering under Nazi control. One week after his death, the war in Europe ended.

John McLagan was born in Leith, Edinburgh, Scotland on March 22, 1908, the son of James Innes and Robina McLagan. James and Robina McLagan were married in Edinburgh, Scotland on January 6, 1905. When John was eight years old, he lost his father James, who died on September 7, 1916. Thirteen years later, in 1929, when John was twenty-one years old, the McLagan family immigrated to Canada and moved to Windsor, Ontario, living at 765 Huron Line. John had two full brothers: Thomas (would reside in Windsor) and James Innes (would become a member of the Chatham police force); and a half-brother, Edward Sanby Jollie (would reside in Pasadena, California).

John McLagan served two years with the Essex Scottish Militia while in Windsor. Around 1935, widowed mother Robina, John and his brothers moved to Chatham, residing at 216 ½ King Street. John was a member of Christ Anglican Church in Chatham and was affiliated with the A.Y.P.A. John was a baker for thirteen years prior to enlisting, working at Sergison Bakery in Windsor and then at the Sunshine Bakery in Chatham.

On December 31, 1938, thirty year-old John married Rose Bazeley (born in Stapleford, England) in Sarnia, Ontario. John and Rose McLagan had one child together, daughter Mary Anne, born May 25, 1943 in Sarnia (while John was overseas). Rose and daughter Mary Anne lived at 423 Davis Street, Sarnia while John was overseas.

Thirty-two-year-old John McLagan enlisted in the Canadian Army on August 14, 1940 in Chatham, Ontario, becoming a member of the 1st Kent Regiment. He stood five feet nine and a half inches tall, had brown eyes and brown hair, and lived at 216 ½ King Street, Chatham at the time. He planned to enter the civil service after the war. John received his army training at bases in London; Windsor; Halifax, Nova Scotia; Chippewa (Niagara); New Westminster; and Terrace, British Columbia; and then #12 Vocational Training School in Saskatoon (a driver mechanics course). In late February 1943, still a member of the Kent Regiment, he was posted to #1 District Depot in London, Ontario.

John McLagan embarked overseas for the United Kingdom on March 23, 1943, where he was posted to #3 Canadian Infantry Reinforcement Unit (CIRU). Two months after arriving overseas, Rose gave birth to their daughter Mary Anne. On June 18, 1943, John was transferred to the Essex Scottish Regiment, Royal Canadian Infantry Corps (RCIC), with the rank of Private. On July 3, 1944, John departed from the U.K. and arrived in France, one month after D-Day.



Private John Pettigrew McLagan

The **Battle of Normandy** had begun for the Canadians with the June 6, 1944 D-Day landings at Juno Beach. After breaching the “Atlantic Wall” of “Fortress Europe”, Allied armies began their break out from the narrow Normandy bridgehead to carve out a foothold on the French mainland. It would take a whole summer of tenacious fighting, pushing against fierce and ruthless German forces to advance east across France. In a brutal campaign of attrition, the Canadians faced fierce battles and vicious counterattacks as they clawed their way forward liberating villages and towns including Bretteville, Carpiquet, Caen and Falaise.

Private John McLagan served in France with the Essex Scottish as a driver mechanic motor vehicle class

“C”. Less than four weeks after arriving in France, he was wounded at Caen, France on July 30, 1944 during the Normandy campaign. He was returned to the U.K. for medical care. On August 10, 1944, Rose McLagan on Davis Street in Sarnia received the following telegram from the Director of Records: MINISTER OF NATIONAL DEFENCE WISHES TO INFORM YOU THAT A50287 PRIVATE JOHN PETTIGREW MCLAGAN PREVIOUSLY REPORTED WOUNDED IN ACTION NATURE OF WOUNDS NOW REPORTED SHELL FRAGMENT WOUND BOTH ARMPITS AND CHEST STOP IF ANY FURTHER INFORMATION BECOMES AVAILABLE IT WILL BE FORWARDED AS SOON AS RECEIVED. John spent five months convalescing in an English hospital, before being posted to #2 Canadian Infantry Training Regiment (CITR).

On January 8, 1945, Private John McLagan rejoined his Essex Scottish Regiment in North-West Europe, again as a driver mechanic motor vehicle class “C”. Prior to John returning to his unit, the Essex Scottish had taken part in the grueling struggle for the Battle of the Scheldt in Northern Belgium and the Netherlands. Christmas and the New Year was spent in the line near Grosbeek, Netherlands.

John joined the Essex in their next advance as they moved into German territory. In February 1945, the Allies launched a great offensive, the **Battle of the Rhineland** that was designed to drive the Germans eastward back over the Rhine River. There would be two formidable thrusts: one by the Ninth U.S. Army; and one by the First Canadian Army, strengthened by the addition of Allied formations. The resilient Germans had spent months improving their defences; winter rains and thaw had turned the ground into a thick, muddy quagmire and the enemy would fight fiercely to defend their home soil. During one month of fighting, the Canadians succeeded in clearing the Reichswald Forest, in breaking the Siegfried Line and in clearing the Hochwald Forest. But victory came at a high cost.

After a period of rest, the Essex moved back into Holland. Almost five years earlier, in May 1940, the Netherlands, despite its declaration of neutrality, had been invaded by the German blitzkrieg and put under Nazi control. It led to five years of suffering for the Dutch people. In March 1945, the 1st Canadian Corps (who had been fighting in Italy) joined their comrades of the 2nd Canadian Corps (who had fought through France, Belgium, and Germany). For the first time in history, two Canadian Army corps would fight together. The two Canadian Corps were tasked with the **Liberation of the Netherlands**, on two fronts--northeastern Holland and northern Germany, and Western Holland. Grateful residents greeted the Canadians as heroes as they liberated towns and cities. It was never easy. The freedom fighters faced destroyed roads, bridges and dykes; experienced days of fierce clashes against a resilient, sometimes fanatical enemy; and engaged in house-to-house fighting.

It was during the fighting to liberate the Netherlands that John McLagan lost his life in northern Germany. On April 30, 1945, John was killed in action in the Hatton area of Germany. His remains were buried on April 30 at a location in Germany recorded on the Army Field Service Card as “Kirchhatten Sh. 1/25000 2916 MR 4327/0043 Plot 1 Grave 2”. One week after John McLagan’s death, VE Day was declared, ending the war in Europe.

In mid-May 1945, Rose McLagan in Sarnia received a telegram from Ottawa informing her that her husband, PRIVATE JOHN P MCLAGAN WAS KILLED IN ACTION ON THE WESTERN FRONT ON APRIL 30. Also in mid-May 1945, Rose received the following letter from the Major-General, Adjutant-General:

Dear Mrs. McLagan:

It was with deep regret that I learned of the death of your husband, A50287 Private John Pettigrew McLagan, who gave his life in the Service of his Country in the Western European Theatre of War on the 30th day of April, 1945.

From official information we have received, your husband was killed in action against the enemy. You may be assured that any additional information received will be communicated to you without delay.

The Minister of National Defence and the Members of the Army Council have asked me to express to you and your family their sincere sympathy in your bereavement. We pay tribute to the sacrifice he so bravely made.

John McLagan’s death was later officially recorded as, *Overseas casualty, killed in action, in the field (Germany)*. In late August 1945, Rose received the following letter from the Colonel, Director of Records, for Adjutant-General:

Dear Madam:

Information has now been received from the overseas military authorities that your husband, A50287 Private John Pettigrew McLagan, was buried with religious rites in grave 2, row 1, plot 1, of a temporary cemetery located at a point approximately ten miles North-West of Delmenhorst, Germany. Marked map is enclosed.

The grave will have been temporarily marked with a wooden cross for identification purposes and in due course the remains will be reverently exhumed and removed to a recognized military burial ground when the concentration of graves in the area takes place. On this being completed the new location will be advised to you, but for obvious reasons it will likely take approximately one year before this information is received.

In November 1945, Rose McLagan received a War Service Gratuity of \$755.68 for the loss of her husband. In late-June 1946, she received a letter from the Colonel, Director of Records, for Adjutant-General. Following is a portion of that letter:

Dear Madam:

Information has just been received from overseas that the remains of your husband, A50287 Private John Pettigrew McLagan, have been carefully exhumed from the original place of internment and reverently reburied in grave 12, row B, plot 9, of Holten Canadian Military Cemetery, Holten, Holland. Marked map is enclosed. This is a recognized military burial ground and will receive care and maintenance in perpetuity.

The grave will have been marked with a temporary cross which will be replaced in due course by a permanent headstone suitably inscribed. While it cannot now be stated when this work of permanent commemoration will begin, before any action is taken you will be communicated with and an opportunity will be given you to submit a short personal inscription of your own choice for engraving on the headstone...

John McLagan left behind his wife Rose, and their daughter Mary Anne, who was one month short of her second birthday when he died. Thirty-seven-year-old John McLagan is buried in Holten Canadian War Cemetery, Netherlands, Grave IX.B.12. On his headstone are inscribed the words, JOHN BELOVED HUSBAND OF ROSE, DEAR FATHER OF MARY ANNE McLAGAN.

SOURCES: C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 7C, 8X, 8Y

McLAUGHLIN, Patrick Douglas (#A/28522)

Patrick Douglas McLaughlin left his father, James, and his hometown of Sarnia to serve with every intention of becoming a machinist in Sarnia on his return. He may have left his father to do his duty, but he never forgot him. From the day he enlisted to the day he died, Patrick sent his pay home to support his handicapped father. Patrick was killed in action in the Battle of the Scheldt in 1945, three months before the war in Europe ended.

Patrick McLaughlin was born in Sarnia on May 8, 1921, the youngest son of James and Lenora McLaughlin. James, a boilermaker by trade, and Lenora were married on May 17, 1920 in Sarnia. Five years later in 1925, James and Lenora separated, when Patrick was four. Patrick lived with his father at 444 South Brock Street and Lenora later resided in Timmons, Ontario. Patrick had an older brother, James, who later resided in Detroit, Michigan.

After being educated at St. Joseph's Separate School, Patrick attended Sarnia Collegiate Institute and Technical School for two and a half years. He enjoyed swimming, skiing and snowshoeing but left high school early, at age 15. Instead, he joined the work force by doing farm work; working at Auto-lite factory for six months; working as a clerk in a drug store for one year; and, prior to enlisting, working as a clerk for six months at Loblaw's Groceteria.

Nineteen year-old Patrick McLaughlin enlisted in the Canadian Army in on March 19, 1941 in London, Ontario. He stood five feet five inches tall, had hazel eyes and dark brown hair, was single, and was residing at home with his father on Brock Street at the time. Patrick's plan for after the war was to become a machinist. From #1 District Depot in London, Patrick received his army training as a Gunner at #10 Basic Training Centre (BTC) in Kitchener; his advanced training at Canadian Army Training Center A2 (CATC) at Petawawa and 3A District Depot in Kingston (training as a tradesman – motor mechanics); and at Canadian Army Training School (CATS) in Hamilton. He returned to CATC in Petawawa in early April 1942.

His additional training was extensive. On May 5, 1942, Patrick became a member of the 30th Light Anti-Aircraft (LAA) Battery, Royal Canadian Artillery, serving in Debert Nova Scotia. In early October 1942, he proceeded to "G" Force as a Bombardier, posted to Goose Bay, Labrador. On July 1, 1943, he became a member of the 22nd Anti-Aircraft Regiment, serving in St. John, New Brunswick. In late August 1943, he advanced in rank to Lance Bombardier. He served in St. John until January 1944, when he was transferred to #1 Transit Camp in Windsor, Nova Scotia. In February 1944, he was stationed at #24 Basic Training Centre in Brampton, and reverted to Private. In August 1944, he was granted a three-week embarkation leave.

On October 11, 1944, Patrick McLaughlin embarked overseas from Debert, Nova Scotia bound for the

United Kingdom. There he was posted to #2 Canadian Infantry Reinforcement Unit (CIRU), and later to #2 Canadian Infantry Training Regiment (CITR) where he continued his training in the U.K.

On November 10, 1944, McLaughlin departed from the U.K. and arrived the next day in the North-West Europe Theatre. He disembarked as a member of the Royal Regiment of Canada (RRoFC), Royal Canadian Infantry Corps (RCIC), with the rank of Private. He served with the Royal Regiment as they advanced through North-West Europe. All during the time Patrick was serving, he sent his pay home to his father James on Brock Street, to help him keep his home. His father James needed the money--he was handicapped, having lost one of his legs.

Patrick McLaughlin arrived soon after the grueling struggle for the Battle of the Scheldt in Northern Belgium and the Netherlands. After spending a frigid winter in the northern Netherlands, Patrick joined the RRoFC in their next advance as they moved into German territory. In early February 1945, the Allies launched a great offensive, the **Battle of the Rhineland** that was designed to drive the Germans eastward back over the Rhine River. There would be two formidable thrusts: one by the Ninth U.S. Army; and one by the First Canadian Army, strengthened by the addition of Allied formations. The resilient Germans had spent months improving their defences; winter rains and thaw had turned the ground into a thick, muddy quagmire and the enemy fought fiercely to defend their home soil. During one month of fighting, the Canadians succeeded in clearing the Reichswald Forest, in breaking the Siegfried Line and in clearing the Hochwald Forest. But victory came at a high cost.

It was during the fighting in the Battle of the Rhineland that Private Patrick McLaughlin lost his life. A little over three months after arriving in the NW Europe Theatre, on February 27, 1945, he was killed in action in north-western Germany. Patrick McLaughlin's remains were buried at a location recorded on the Army Field Service Card as "Germany Bedburg Cleve 932527 R.19 Gr. 19".

In early March 1945, James McLaughlin in Sarnia received a telegram from Ottawa informing him that his son, PTE PATRICK MCLAUGHLIN WAS KILLED ON THE WESTERN FRONT. In late March 1945, James received the following letter from a Major-General, Adjutant-General:

Dear Mr. McLaughlin:

It was with deep regret that I learned of the death of your son, A28522 Private Patrick Douglas McLaughlin, who gave his life in the Service of his Country in the Western European Theatre of War on the 27th day of February, 1945.

From official information we have received, your son was killed in action against the enemy. You may be assured that any additional information received will be communicated to you without delay.

The Minister of National Defence and the Members of the Army Council have asked me to express to you and your family their sincere sympathy in your bereavement. We pay tribute to the sacrifice he so bravely made.

Patrick McLaughlin was later officially recorded as, *Overseas casualty, killed in action, in the field (Germany)*. In March 1946, James received a War Service Gratuity of \$380.12 for the loss of his youngest son. In August 1946, James received a letter from the Colonel, Director of Records, for Adjutant-General. Following is a portion of that letter:

Dear Sir:

Information has just been received from overseas that the remains of your son, A28522 Private Patrick Douglas McLaughlin, have been carefully exhumed from the original place of internment and reverently reburied in grave 12, row B, plot 7, of Nijmegen Canadian Military Cemetery, four miles South-East of Nijmegen, Holland. Marked map is enclosed. This is a recognized military burial ground and will receive care and maintenance in perpetuity.

The grave will have been marked with a temporary cross which will be replaced in due course by a permanent headstone suitably inscribed. While it cannot now be stated when this work of permanent commemoration will begin, before any action is taken you will be communicated with and an opportunity will be given you to submit a short personal inscription of your own choice for engraving on the headstone...

In January 1948, the Director of War Service Records in Ottawa sent James McLaughlin on Brock Street a photograph of Patrick's grave and the marker over his burial place in Nijmegen, Holland. Twenty-three-year-old Patrick McLaughlin is buried in Groesbeek Canadian War Cemetery, Netherlands, Grave VII.B.12. On his headstone are inscribed the words, AT REST.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, J, L, N, 2C, 2D, 7C, 8X, 8Y

McLELLAN, Allan Joseph (#A/4167)

Allan Joseph McLellan, at age 36, enlisted with the Royal Canadian Naval Reserve (RCNR). Unfortunately, his stint in the military lasted only nine months when Allan was deemed “Medically unfit” and discharged in October 1941. He spent most of his remaining time in a sanitarium. Two years after the war ended and six years after first being diagnosed with tuberculosis, Allan passed away at Queen Alexandra Sanitarium.

Allan “Cap” McLellan was born on March 28, 1904 in Southampton, Ontario, the son of Alexander and Mary (nee Longe) McLellan. Alexander McLellan (born 1874 in Michigan) and Mary Longe (born 1875) were married on April 7, 1898 in Port Huron. Alexander and Mary McLellan would be blessed with six children together: Beatrice Alberta (born 1898); Harold Alexander (born 1901); Allan Joseph; John Angus (born 1906), Adeline ‘Ada’ (born 1909) and Arnold James (born 1911). Alexander McLellan supported his family working as a marine captain. The McLellans lived first at 264 Devine Street and later at 286 South Vidal Street, Sarnia.

Allan was a member of St. Joseph’s Catholic Parish, Sarnia, and attended two years of high school. In his younger days, he was an outstanding softball and soccer player and was also prominent in other forms of athletics. Allan had several jobs prior to joining the military: as an acetylene burner for six months with the Canadian Kellogg Company (construction); as a clerk in the Ontario Liquor Control Board store on Front Street in Sarnia; and as a Seaman with Imperial Oil Shipping Company.

After serving for some time with Imperial Oil Shipping, thirty-six-year-old Allan McLellan enlisted in the Royal Canadian Naval Reserve (RCNR) on January 20, 1941 in London, Ontario. He stood five feet five and one-quarter inches tall, had blue eyes and brown hair, was single and residing with his parents on Vidal Street in Sarnia at the time. From London Division Head Quarters, Allan was posted on April 22, 1941 to *HMCS Stadacona* in Halifax, with the rank of Able Seaman.

The *Stadacona* was originally a 682 ton, 196-foot yacht named *SS Columbia*, launched in 1899. It was commissioned by the RCN in August 1915 and renamed the *HMCS Stadacona*. The *Stadacona* was one of several private yachts acquired by the RCN during the First World War—it was a patrol vessel based out of Halifax. The *Stadacona* was sold in 1924, ending its RCN naval duties. The Royal Canadian Navy Maritime Command base in Halifax, Nova Scotia became the *HMCS Stadacona* in 1925. During World War II, this RCN shore establishment served as a depot and training base, with machine shops, stores buildings, barracks, administration offices and drill halls needed to maintain the hundreds of corvettes being commissioned during the Battle of the Atlantic.

Able Seaman Allan McLellan received his training at *HMCS Stadacona* and served only in Canada, from January 1941 to October 1941. It was during his service in Halifax, in May 1941, that he became ill, with symptoms that included a cold, sore chest, loss of voice and sick stomach. He was treated in the Halifax Military Hospital, and later diagnosed with Pulmonary Tuberculosis. He was discharged on October 6, 1941 as “Medically Unfit”.

After his discharge from the navy, Allan McLellan entered the Queen Elizabeth Sanitarium in Byron, where he remained for most of his time until his death. On May 23, 1947, two years after the war ended in Europe, forty-three-year-old Allan McLellan passed away at the Queen Alexandra Sanitarium. After his death, it was determined that his Pulmonary Tuberculosis condition had existed prior to his enlistment, but became worse during his service, and was “aggravated as a result of his military duties”. His cause of death was officially recorded as, *Far advanced pulmonary tuberculosis due to left broncho pleural fistula with pyoneumothorax. Death was related to military service.*

Besides his parents Alexander and Mary McLellan on Vidal Street in Sarnia, Allan was survived by his three brothers--Harold, John and Arnold--and his two sisters: Mrs. Beatrice Birmingham of Sarnia and Mrs. Kenneth Haines (Ada) of Talara, Peru. In January 1945, Alexander and Mary McLellan received a War Service Gratuity of \$60.00 for the loss of their son. Allan’s funeral was held on May 27, 1947 out of the McKenzie & Blundy Funeral Home with a Requiem High Mass celebrated at St. Joseph’s Church. Pallbearers were members of Sarnia Branch No. 62 Canadian Legion. Internment was at Our Lady of Mercy Catholic Cemetery, Sarnia, Ontario, Lot 11, Range 6, Grave D. On Allan McLellan’s headstone are inscribed the words, BELOVED SON OF ALEX AND MARY McLELLAN. In November 2019, his name along with 25 others was added to the Sarnia cenotaph, engraved in stone to be remembered always.

SOURCES: C, D, E, F, L, N, T, U, X, 2C, 2D, 7C, 8X

McRAE, Howard (#A/105640)

Almost three months after the Second World War ended, Howard McRae was still in Europe, waiting like so many of the troops to get home. In November 1945, Howard, 22, died as a result of a motor vehicle accident in Holland.

Howard McRae was born in Sarnia on September 1, 1923, the eldest child of James Howard and Johan Margaret (nee: McKay) McRae. As a young lad, James McRae (born July 9, 1899 in Glengarry, Ontario) had spent a lot of time with his father, a farmer, John Angus McRae ("Red Jack"), riding horses and working in the barn. Years later, twenty-five-year-old James McRae married Johan McKay (born June 1900 in Plympton Township, Ontario) on December 3, 1924 in Sarnia. At the time of their marriage, James was residing at 301 South Christina Street and was employed as a city fireman, while Johan was living at 258 South Vidal Street. James and Johan McRae had seven children together: Howard; William John (born 1926, Sarnia); Roderick (born 1932, Sarnia) and Robert Angus (born 1934, Sarnia); and daughters Catherine May (born 1927, Sarnia, died May 1940); Lila (born 1928, Sarnia); and Johan Margaret (born 1935).

Howard was an active youth, but his teenage years got off to a rough start. When he was fourteen years old, his mother Johan passed away at the age of thirty-eight in 1937. Howard attended high school for one year, but left school at the age of sixteen before passing his exams. He was active in baseball, rugby, swimming and hockey (a goaltender), and his hobbies included hunting and stamp collecting. Howard worked several jobs in Sarnia before enlisting: as a labourer unloading cars for C.N.R.; as a truck driver with Langs Transport (Aug – Dec 1941); and as a labourer with Dominion Alloy Steel Company (from Dec 1941 until he enlisted). Howard served with the Royal Canadian Engineers (R.C.E.) from March 1942 until the time he enlisted.

Nineteen year-old Howard McRae enlisted in the Canadian Army on January 4, 1943 in London, Ontario. He stood five feet eight and one-quarter inches tall, had blue eyes and red hair, was single, and was residing with his younger siblings and widowed father at 268 Cameron Street at the time. His reasons for joining the army included, "duty, and to be with friends". Howard's plan for after the war was to return to Dominion Alloy to become a welder.

From #1 District Depot in London, Private Howard McRae began his army training in late January 1943 at A-29 Canadian Infantry Training Centre (CITC) at Camp Ipperwash. In July 1943, he became a member of the Lincoln and Welland Regiment, Royal Canadian Infantry Corps (R.C.I.C.), based in Aldershot, Nova Scotia. Six months after enlisting, on July 20, 1943, Howard McRae embarked from Halifax bound for the United Kingdom.



Private Howard McRae

Howard continued his training with the Lincoln and Welland Regiment in the United Kingdom. One year after arriving in the U.K., he sailed across the English Channel and arrived in France on July 25, 1944. The Lincoln and Welland Regiment, part of the 10th Infantry Brigade, 4th Canadian Armoured Division, advanced through North-West Europe until the end of the war.

The **Battle of Normandy** had begun for the Canadians with the June 6, 1944 D-Day landings at Juno Beach.

It would take a whole summer of tenacious fighting, pushing against fierce and ruthless German forces to advance east liberating villages and towns across France. After the Allied breakout from Normandy, Canadian forces were assigned the **“Long Left Flank”**, the less glamorous but vital tasks of clearing coastal areas in the north of France and Belgium of German occupiers, opening the English Channel ports, and capturing the launching sites of German V-1 rockets (late August-early October 1944).

In early October 1944, the Canadians were entrusted with grueling task of liberating the Belgian-Dutch border estuary connecting Antwerp to the North Sea. The **Battle of the Scheldt** (early October-early November 1944) was among the most difficult and grueling struggles in the war. The bitter fighting against a well-fortified and heavily entrenched enemy took place in a bleak environment made worse by the winter cold in a flooded and freezing muddy quagmire. Howard McRae would be absent without leave for twenty days in late October until mid-November 1944, so he missed the last week of fighting at the Scheldt.

The Lincoln and Welland Regiment continued their advance across NW Europe. In early February 1945, the Allies launched a great offensive, the **Battle of the Rhineland** that was designed to drive the Germans eastward back over the Rhine River. There would be two formidable thrusts: one by the Ninth U.S Army; and one by the First Canadian Army, strengthened by the addition of Allied formations. During one month of fighting, the Canadians would succeed in clearing the Reichswald Forest, in breaking the Siegfried Line and in clearing the Hochwald Forest. For the first time in history, two Canadian Army corps would fight together. In March 1945, the two Canadian Corps were tasked with the **Liberation of the Netherlands**, on two fronts— northeastern Holland and northern Germany, and Western Holland. Grateful residents greeted the Canadians as heroes as they liberated towns and cities. Howard McRae would be absent without leave for 82 days from late February 1945 until mid-May 1945 (missing the Rhineland and Netherlands) when he surrendered himself at Oldenburg, Germany.

The war in Europe ended when Germany surrendered in early May 1945. When Howard returned to his Regiment in Holland, he volunteered for duty in the Pacific Theatre. He would not have the opportunity to serve in the Pacific, because in mid-August 1945, Japan surrendered, ending the war.

Almost three months after the Second World War ended, Howard McRae was still in Europe, waiting like so many of the troops to get home. On November 9, 1945, Howard died as a result of a motor vehicle accident in Holland. In the Court of Inquiry that followed, based on eyewitness accounts, investigators determined the following facts: on November 8, the Lincoln and Welland Regiment held a dance at the 61 Club (canteen) in Bussum; the dance ended at 2300 hours; after leaving the dance, a few of the Dutch girls discovered that their bus to Amsterdam had already left; several Canadian soldiers offered to return the girls to their homes in Amsterdam; a Willys 5 cwt jeep was taken without authority from a courtyard in Bussum between 2230 and 2359 hours on November 8.

It was determined that the jeep containing the driver and seven passengers was on an unauthorized journey to Amsterdam; the jeep occupants included four members of the Lincoln & Welland Regiment (all Canadian) and four civilian Dutch girls (one of the girls was Howard McRae's girlfriend, Hedwig van den Hout); one of the other soldiers drove the jeep to the Valkenweg ferry boat, and after the canal crossing, Private Howard McRae was the driver of the jeep at the time of the accident; the accident occurred at approximately 0030 hours November 9 on the Meeuwenlaan, North Amsterdam.

The accident was caused by excessive speed and a slippery road due to the rain and many leaves, contributed to the accident; as the vehicle rounded a corner, the jeep jumped a curb and swerved to avoid two persons walking on a sidewalk, then glanced off one tree and collided with a second tree, overturning next to the road; two of the occupants died at the scene of the accident, including Private Howard McRae (badly crushed skull) and one of the Dutch girls (H. Volkers); another Dutch girl had severe injuries and all other occupants would survive.

Howard McRae's body was buried on November 14, 1945 in the Canadian Military Cemetery, Nijmegen, Holland. On November 15, 1945, three months after the Second World war ended, James McRae on Cameron Street in Sarnia received the following telegram from the Director of Records in Ottawa; REGRET DEEPLY A105640 PRIVATE HOWARD MCRAE OFFICIALLY REPORTED TO HAVE DIED NINTH NOVEMBER 1945 RESULT OF A MOTOR ACCIDENT STOP YOU SHOULD RECEIVE FURTHER DETAILS BY MAIL DIRECT FROM THIS UNIT. James had last heard from his son several weeks prior, where at the time, he was stationed in Holland.

In late November 1945, widowed father James McRae received the following letter from a Major-General, Adjutant-General:

Dear Mr. McRae:

It was with deep regret that I learned of the death of your son, A105640 Private Howard McRae, who died while in the Service of his Country in Western Europe on the ninth day of November, 1945. The Minister of National Defence and the Members of the Army Council have asked me to express to you and your family their sincere sympathy in your bereavement.

In January 1946, James received a letter from the Colonel, Director of Records, for Adjutant-General. Following is a portion of that letter:

Dear Sir:

Information has just been received from overseas that the remains of your son, A105640 Private Howard McRae, have been buried in grave 2, row B, plot 16, of Nijmegen Canadian Military Cemetery, three and a half miles South-East of Nijmegen, Holland. Marked map is enclosed. This is a recognized military burial ground and will receive care and maintenance in perpetuity.

The grave will have been marked with a temporary cross which will be replaced in due course by a permanent headstone suitably inscribed. While it cannot now be stated when this work of permanent commemoration will begin, before any action is taken you will be communicated with and an opportunity will be given you to submit a short personal inscription of your own choice for engraving on the headstone...

In August 1947, James McRae received a War Service Gratuity of \$387.76 for the loss of his son Howard. Twenty-two-year-old Private Howard McRae is buried in Groesbeek Canadian War Cemetery, Netherlands, Grave XVI.B.2.

Howard's father, James McRae, joined the Sarnia Fire Department in 1923, and would work there for 26 years. Howard's mother, Johan McRae, had been sick for quite a long time prior to her death in 1937. During that period, Margaret Ann DeRush became the family's live in housekeeper/nanny, helping to care for the couple's seven children. Some time after Johan's death, James McRae married Margaret Ann DeRush.

Margaret, born April 24, 1911 in Sarnia, was the daughter of Eli DeRush and Mary Lucy Shaw. James and Margaret McRae resided on Cameron Street and the children loved Margaret as they did their biological mother. In mid-June 1949, James lost his life while on duty. In a fatal accident that occurred at the corner of Russell and Davis Streets, a 9-ton pumper truck accidentally backed over him and killed him instantly. James left behind his wife Margaret, his daughters Lila (in Toronto), Johan (in Sarnia), sons William, Roderick and Bobby, and stepdaughters Barbara and Betty (Mrs. Robert Macklin). On January 25, 1950, seven months after James McRae's death, Margaret McRae gave birth to their son, who she would name Howard. James McRae did not know his wife Margaret was pregnant at the time of his death.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, J, L, N, 2C, 2D, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 2v

MEERE, Leonard Raymond (#R/205555)

Despite his superiors' assessment of him as *An alert, keen, well-motivated airman, who... should do well with training* and despite his extensive training, Leonard Raymond Meere, 19, of Sarnia died in a solo practice flight near Prince Albert Saskatachewan in 1943. Leonard left behind his parents, his two brothers and his young fiancée.

Leonard was born in Aston, Birmingham, England on September 5, 1924, the youngest son of Thomas William and Edith Meere (nee Hudson). Thomas and Edith were both born in Birmingham, England, and were married in Lozells, Birmingham, England on August 1, 1915. They had three children together, all boys: Arthur Ernest, Jonathan Frederick and Leonard. At the time of Leonard's death, both of his brothers were also in the military. Arthur Meere was a Corporal of the RCAF, in Dunnville, Ontario, and Jonathan Meere had been overseas with the 5th Armoured Troops of the Canadian Army for two years.

The Meere family had immigrated to Canada arriving on May 14, 1927 aboard the passenger ship *Aurania*. Leonard was only two years eight months old when he arrived. Thomas had been a Special Constable in England, but upon arrival, he recorded his occupation as welder-bricklayer. After disembarking, the Meere family resided briefly at Thomas' mother's residence at 385 King Street, Toronto.

The Meere family moved in Sarnia sometime in 1928. Leonard Meere attended Johnston Memorial public school from 1929 to 1937. He then attended Sarnia Collegiate from September 1937 to June 1942, where he specialized in shop electricity. Leonard was also active in swimming and in basketball. After passing grade 12 and graduating from high school at the age of seventeen, Leonard worked as a labourer and a stockbroker at the Union

Gas Company of Canada Limited in Sarnia for six months before enlisting. Also prior to enlisting, Leonard had met, fallen in love, and had made plans to marry Gwen Robinson of Wallaceburg.

Now eighteen, Leonard Meere enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force on November 12, 1942 in Sarnia, requesting flying duties. He stood five feet five inches tall, had blue eyes and brown hair, was single, and was residing at 386 Brock Street with his parents at the time. Following the war, he planned to pursue employment in the electrical trade. The Recruiting Officers comments about Leonard included, *An alert, keen, well-motivated airman, who has lots of youthful enthusiasm, good athletic and work history. Would imagine he is better than average pilot material, and Has brother in R.C.A.F., another overseas. Has the right idea as regards to the service. Should do well with training.*

His training was extensive. From #9 Recruiting Centre in London and then #2 Manning Depot in Brandon, Manitoba, Leonard received his air training at #20 Pre-Aircrew Education Detachment (PAED) at University of Saskatchewan; at #7 Initial Training School (ITS) in Saskatoon; and at #6 Elementary Flying Training School (EFTS) in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan. At the end of his training, Leonard obtained the rank of Leading Aircraftman-Pilot.

The airfield near Prince Albert, Saskatchewan had been converted on July 22, 1940 under the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan (BCATP) to No. 6 Elementary Flying School (EFTS). From March 17, 1941 to September 11, 1942, the station also doubled as No. 6 Air Observer School (AOS). At No. 6 EFTS, trainees were given 50 hours of basic flying instruction over 8 weeks on simple trainer aircraft--the De Havilland Tiger Moth and Fairchild Cornell.

Early in the day on September 23, 1943, Leading Aircraftman-Pilot and student Leonard Meere carried out a practice flight of just over two hours. Later on the same day, Leonard Meere carried out a second practice flight. He took off from #6 EFTS at 1540 hours on a routine solo training exercise in Tiger Moth aircraft #1168. This time, the aircraft reached a maximum altitude of 5000 feet and had achieved an average altitude of 3000 feet, when after approximately 35 minutes of flying time, it crashed about ten miles North-West of the main aerodrome at Prince Albert. The cause of the accident was recorded as obscure. Leonard Meere was killed instantly--his skull and brains were crushed and his heart ruptured.

Shortly after the crash, Thomas and Edith Meere in Sarnia received a cable informing them that their son Leonard had been killed in a flying accident at Prince Albert, Saskatchewan. Two days after Leonard's death, Edith received the birthday present her son Leonard had sent her. It was a small green leather prayer book with a golden cross on the front. On the outside cover was printed "Common Prayer Hymn Book of Canada", and inside was his hand-written message, *"Happy Birthday, Love - Len"*.



Leading Aircraftman-Pilot Leonard Raymond Meere



One day later, the family received a communication from the Commanding Officer of the #6 Elementary Flying Training School at Prince Albert. It read, *I would like you to know, that as an honor to one who sacrificed his*

life in the course of duty, the remains were enfolded in the Royal Canadian Air Force ensign, before being placed in the casket.

With sincere sympathy, yours very truly, A.T. Chesson.

Among the items collected in Leonard Meere's personal belongings were some clothes, toiletries, tobacco, post cards and his Sarnia Collegiate yearbook. Leading Aircraftman-Pilot Leonard Meere and another Sarnian, Pilot Officer Hugo Farner (who died September 24 on an instruction flight in Quebec and is included in this Project), were buried barely a wingspan apart in Sarnia's first double military funeral on September 28, 1943. Hundreds of relatives and friends attended both services, which drew thousands to the streets, around the churches, and along the walking routes to Lakeview Cemetery. Pallbearers, honorary pallbearers and a firing party came from R.C.A.F. flying school at Centralia. The Sarnia Air Cadet No. 44 Squadron band played at both funerals and they also provided an escort party.

The service for both began at the Robb Funeral Home. The service for Leonard Meere was continued at St. George's Anglican Church where it was officiated by Rev. F.G. Hardy, while the service for Hugo Farner was led by Rev. J.M. Macgillivray at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church. Led by the firing party, the band and the escort party, the funeral corteges left their respective churches and marched slowly to the cemetery. At Lakeview, they again slow-marched to the gravesides, with the band playing the "Dead March in Saul". After the ministers conducted graveside services, the firing party delivered three volleys, with the band playing "Abide With Me" between them. Two buglers who accompanied the firing party from Centralia then stepped to the end of the graves and sounded the "Last Post". The pallbearers for both funerals were LACS L. Renaud, W. Cline, J. Young, R. McDermott, J. Smuk and R. Hill. One of those in attendance at the funeral of Leonard Meere was his young fiancée, Miss Gwen Robinson.

In September 1945, Thomas and Edith Meere received a War Service Gratuity of \$52.50 for the loss of their youngest son. As well as his parents and two older brothers, Leonard was also survived by his grandmother, Lucy Denton of Toronto, and his uncle, Albert Meere of Toronto, the only other living relatives in Canada. Nineteen year-old Leonard Meere is buried at Sarnia (Lakeview) Cemetery, Sarnia, Ontario, Section E. Lot 141. On his headstone are inscribed the words, REST IN PEACE.

Of the 2467 student pilots trained at No. 6 EFTS, most were RCAF and 475 were RAF airmen. The school closed on November 15, 1944. The aerodrome is now the Prince Albert Airport, and all that remains of the former No. 6 EFTS is one World War II era hanger. The city of Prince Albert renamed the airport Glass Field in honour of a local man with a long history as a pilot and pilot instructor during World War II. A monument was erected in front of the terminal building that commemorates No. 6 EFTS/AOS and pays tribute to the 17 airmen and one civilian who died in training accidents there in wartime – one of the names inscribed on the plaque is Sarnia's Leonard Meere.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, J, L, M, N, 2C, 2D, 7C, 8X, 8Y

MELLON, Ralph Jackson (#R/205716)

Ralph Jackson Mellon, 20, enlisted with the RCAF when he was eighteen years old. Ralph showed so much promise, that his commanding officer referred to him as one of his "ace gunners." Unfortunately, Ralph was killed on his first mission to bomb Germany, when his plane collided with another in his squadron over the Baltic Sea. Ralph's body was never recovered.

Ralph was born in Sarnia on May 29, 1924, the eldest son of Allan Alexander and Jessie May (nee Jackson) Mellon. Point Edward born Allan Mellon married and Jessie Jackson of Sarnia on March 30, 1918, and they would have three children together: Ralph and his twin sister, Ruth Evelyn, and Donald Charles, born nearly five years later on May 5, 1929. Allan supported Jessie and his children by working with the Canadian National Railway as a pumpman.

Ralph knew how to keep himself busy. He attended S.S. #15 Medowle Public School from 1930 to 1937 and then Sarnia Collegiate Institute from September 1937 to March 1941 until he left at age seventeen. He was active in basketball and softball, and his hobby was motorcycles. Prior to enlisting, Ralph was employed as a truck driver in Sarnia at White Packing Company (1940-August 1941) and then as a machine operator and welder at Electric AutoLite. Ralph also served with the 2-26th Field Battery Reserve in Sarnia as a Gunner from June 1941 until he enlisted.

The family dynamic changed when Ralph was eighteen years old. On July 13, 1942, his mother, Jessie, passed away. She was only forty-eight. One can only wonder if his mother's death influenced Ralph's decision at age eighteen to enlist four months after her death.

Ralph Mellon enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force on November 17, 1942 in London, Ontario. He stood five feet eight inches tall, had hazel eyes and brown hair, was single, and was living at R.R. #1 Sarnia with his widowed father at the time. Ralph requested flying duties, with a desire to be a pilot, but was eager to take on any role as part of an aircrew.

From #9 Recruiting Centre in London and #1 Manning Depot in Lachine, Quebec, Ralph received his air training with a Pre-Aircrew Education Course in Hamilton; then at #4 Wireless School in Guelph; at #1 Manning Depot in Toronto; and at #9 Bombing and Gunnery School (B&GS) in Mont Joli, Quebec, where he was awarded his Air Gunner's Badge on March 24, 1944. He then continued his training at #3 Aircrew Graduate Training School (AGTS) in Three Rivers, Quebec, before being posted to #1 Y Depot in Lachine, Quebec in early May 1944.



Flight Sergeant-AG Ralph Jackson Mellon

Ralph Mellon embarked overseas from Halifax bound for the United Kingdom on May 25, 1944. Initially posted to #3 Personnel Reception Centre (PRC), he was transferred to #22 Operational Training Unit (OTU) in July 1944. Two days before Christmas Day 1944, he was transferred to #433 Squadron. Just over three months later, in early April 1945, Ralph became a member of RCAF #431 Iroquois Squadron "The Hatiten Ronterriios" (Warriors of the air), part of **Bomber Command**, with the rank of Flight Sergeant-Air Gunner.

During the course of the war, one of this country's most significant contributions was the approximately 50,000 Canadians who served with the RCAF and RAF in Bomber Command operations. Next to Britain, Canada was the largest contributor to Bomber Command, making up more than a third of all of Bomber Command personnel. The men who served in Bomber Command faced some of the most difficult odds of anyone fighting in the war.

RCAF #431 Squadron had been formed in Britain in November 1942, based at RAF Burn and was equipped with Vickers Wellington aircraft. In July 1943, it moved to RAF Tholthorpe and converted to Handley Page Halifax aircraft. In December 1943, the squadron moved again, to RAF Croft. The squadron remained at Croft for the remainder of the war, and in October 1944 would be equipped with Lancasters.

Less than a month after joining #431 Squadron, Gunner Ralph Mellon lost his life in action. On April 25, 1945, Ralph was a part of a crew aboard Lancaster Mk.X aircraft KB831 (markings SE-E) that took off from Croft at 1455 hours for a day bombing operation targeting gun positions in Wangerooge, Germany. Their Lancaster aircraft KB831 and Lancaster aircraft KB822, both from the #431 squadron, were in a mid-air collision at approximately 1718 hours, 12,000 feet, over the Baltic Sea off Norderney on their way to their target. Both aircraft fell into the sea. Extracts from the report on the flying accident included: *...daylight, visibility good, aircraft flying in Gaggle formation, and ... at 1718 hours, 12000 feet, two Lancaster aircraft collided in mid-air, at position 5352N. 0740E. ... One went down on fire, and the other broke up in air. Six chutes were seen, and ... There is no conclusive evidence as to the cause of this accident.* Six of the seven aircraft lost on this mission were as a result of mid-air collisions, despite weather conditions being almost perfect.

Lancaster KB831 casualties were Flight Sergeant-Air Gunner Ralph Mellon along with F/L. Robert John Stingle; Barry Desmond Emmet; F/O. William Edward Hanna; WO. Clarence Robert Irwin Mark; Sgt. John Nugent Sims (RAF); and Sgt. Douglas Alexander Faulkner (RAF). F/L R.J. Stingle's body washed ashore and was buried in Cuxhaven Cemetery. Sgt. J.N. Sims body also washed ashore, at Langeoog Island and was buried in the military cemetery there. The rest of the crew, including Ralph Mellon, were lost at sea.

In late April 1945, widowed father Allan Mellon at 205 ½ North Front Street in Sarnia received a telegram from the Department for National Defence for Air in Ottawa informing him that his son, FLIGHT SERGEANT RALPH JACKSON MELLON WAS REPORTED MISSING IN ACTION RECENTLY AFTER AIR OPERATIONS OVER ENEMY TERRITORY. A few days later, Allan received the following letter from the Wing Commander, Officer Commanding, No 431 (RCAF) Squadron:

Dear Mr. Mellon,

Before you receive this letter you will have had a telegram informing you that your son Sergeant Ralph Jackson Mellon is missing as a result of air operations. At approximately 1501 on the afternoon of the 25th instant, Ralph and members of his crew took off from this aerodrome to carry out operations over WANGEROOGE, but unfortunately failed to return.

It is with regret that I write to you this date to convey the feelings of my entire Squadron, Ralph was popular with this Squadron, and was fast becoming one of my "ace" Gunners. Ralph had just started operational flying and this was his first trip over enemy territory.

There is always a possibility that your son may be a prisoner of war, in which case you will either hear from him direct, or through the Air Ministry who will receive advice from the International Red Cross Society. Ralph's effects have been carefully gathered together and forwarded to the Royal Air Force Central Depository, where they will be held until further news is received, or in any event for a period of at least six months before being forwarded to you through the Administrator of Estates, Ottawa.

On behalf of the Officers and men of the Squadron, may I express my most sincere sympathy to you at this very anxious time.

A little over one week after receiving the above letter, on May 8, 1945, VE Day was declared, ending the war in Europe.

In early May 1945, Allan received a letter from the R.C.A.F. Casualty Officer, for Chief of the Air Staff in Ottawa. Following is a portion of that letter:

Dear Mr. Mellon:

It is with deep regret that I must confirm our recent telegram informing you that your son, Flight Sergeant Ralph Jackson Mellon, is reported missing on Active Service.

Advice has been received from the Royal Canadian Air Force Casualties Officer, Overseas, that your son and the entire crew of his aircraft failed to return to their base after taking off to carry out air operations over Wangerooge Island, Germany, on April 25th, 1945.

The term "missing" is used only to indicate that his whereabouts is not immediately known and does not necessarily mean that your son has been killed or wounded. He may have reached enemy territory and might be a Prisoner of War; and should you receive any card or letter from him please forward it at once to the Royal Canadian Air Force Casualties Officer, Air Force Headquarters, Ottawa. Enquires have been made through the International Red Cross Committee and all other appropriate sources and I wish to assure you that any further information received will be communicated to you immediately.

Attached is a list of the members of the Royal Canadian Air Force who were in the crew of the aircraft together with the names and addresses of their next-of-kin. Your son's name will not appear on the official casualty list for five weeks. You may, however, release to the Press or Radio the fact that he is reported missing but not disclosing the date, place or his unit.

Permit me to extend to you my heartfelt sympathy during this period of uncertainty and I join with you and the members of your family in the hope that better news will be forthcoming in the near future.

In early November 1945, Allan received the following letter from the Air Marshal, Chief of the Air Staff:

Dear Mr. Mellon:

I have learned with deep regret that your son, Flight Sergeant Ralph Jackson Mellon, is now for official purposes presumed to have died on Active Service Overseas on April 25th, 1945. I wish to offer you and the members of your family my sincere and heartfelt sympathy.

It is most lamentable that a promising career should be thus terminated and I would like you to know that his loss is greatly deplored by all those with whom he was serving.

Ralph Mellon was later officially recorded as, *Previously reported missing after air operations, now for official purposes, presumed dead, overseas (Germany)*. In April 1946, widowed-father Allan Mellon received a War Service Gratuity of \$304.55 for the loss of his elder son. In February 1947, Allan received the following letter from the Wing Commander, for Chief of the Air Staff in Ottawa:

Dear Mr. Mellon:

It is a privilege to have the opportunity of sending you the Operational Wings and Certificate in recognition of the gallant services rendered by your son, Flight Sergeant R.J. Mellon. I realize there is little which may be said or done to lessen your sorrow, but it is my hope that these "Wings", indicative of operations against the enemy, will be a treasured memento of a young life offered on the altar of freedom in defence of his Home and Country.

Twenty year-old Ralph Mellon has no known grave. His name is inscribed on the Runnymede War Memorial, Surrey, United Kingdom, Panel 282.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, J, L, M, N, 2C, 2D, 3J, 4B, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10B, 10U

MENDIZABAL, Rodolfo (#J/15049)

Rodolfo Mendizabal's trademark calm and unflinching courage while fighting the enemy never deserted him. And in his experiences as an RCAF pilot in the Far East, Rodolfo, nicknamed "Rudy" and "Dizzy", faced death many times. He survived against improbable odds until he died during a training flight on August 10, 1943.

Rodolfo was born in Toronto, Ontario on March 5, 1918, the only son of Augustin Ranulfo and Mary Wilhelmina (nee Dafoe) Mendizabal. Born in Oruro, Bolivia, Augustin wed Mary in her hometown of Madoc in Hastings County on February 17, 1917 in Madoc, Hastings County, Ontario. The young couple had two children together: Rodolfo and his younger sister, Mary Isabel, born June 2, 1920 in Toronto (she later resided in Amherstburg, before returning to Toronto. A school teacher, she lost her fiancé to the war).

Augustin Mendizabal became a British citizen in 1915 and was a graduate in Civil Engineering from the University of Toronto and a graduate from the College of Education. During World War I, Augustin served overseas for two years and won a Distinguished Conduct Medal in France. He eventually became a long-time language teacher at Sarnia Collegiate. The Mendizabal family lived at 496 London Road and later 309 ½ North Brock Street.



Rodolfo's sister Mary Isabel
1938 – SCITS
Member of Editorial Board



1936 – SCITS – Gym Team

Back: **Rodolfo Mendizabal**, Bill Lester, Jack Thain, Doug Simpson
Middle: Mr. O'Donhue, **Mr. A. Mendizabal**
Front: Gordon Perry, Walker Humphrey
Note: Jack Thain is also included in this Project

Rodolfo attended Renfrew Public School from 1925-1929 but completed his elementary education (1929-1931) at a local school after the family moved to Sarnia. He then attended Sarnia Collegiate from 1931-1936. While at SCITS, he was heavily involved in many groups and became what one would term a "well-rounded student".

Rodolfo was the Boys Sports editor for the yearbook and was a member of several teams including the gymnastics, wrestling and rifle teams as well as the first aid team. He was also active in swimming, boxing, hockey, rugby and soccer. Besides sports, he was accomplished in music and languages, the latter no doubt influenced by his father. He was part of the school band where he played the clarinet and, along with English, he also had a sound knowledge of French, German and Spanish. Perhaps influenced by his father's service in the Great War, Rodolfo was part of the Sarnia Collegiate Cadet Service in 1936 and won second prize at the provincial indoor pistol matches at Listowel. While part of the rifle team, he won a special gold medal for shooting accuracy and a Dominion Marksman gold ring.

After completing high school, Rodolfo attended the University of Toronto, in the Bachelor of Arts program from 1936 to 1940, where he also took courses studying chemistry and mineralogy. He was a member of the U. of T. Gymnastics team and took Canadian Officer Training Corps (C.O.T.C.) training in 1939-40. In the summer of 1938, he worked for Ontario Research Foundation in Toronto doing steel analysis, and in the summer of 1939, he worked for the Dominion Salt Company Limited in Sarnia. In mid-February 1940, Rodolfo completed his Non-Permanent Active Militia of Canada Attestation application in Toronto.

On August 23, 1940, twenty-two-year-old Rodolfo Mendizabal enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force in Toronto. He stood five feet four and a half inches tall, had brown eyes and dark brown hair, was single, and was residing at 321 Bloor Street, West in Toronto at the time (he recorded his permanent address as 496 London Road, Sarnia). He was planning to enter his final year in obtaining his B.A. Degree at the University of Toronto, but enlisted instead, requesting flying duties, with a preference to be a pilot. He planned to complete his education after the war was over.

Portions of two of the reference letters written on Rodolfo's behalf in his application give a glimpse of his character. His uncle at the Medical Arts Building in Toronto wrote that Rodolfo *has a strong patriotic urge just now to help in this war, and this desire is probably reinforced by his wish to follow his father's example in the last war.* His Physical Education Professor at U. of T. wrote that *At all times under all conditions, his conduct and behavior was in line with his training – thoroughly disciplined, dependable and responsible to any trust put upon him to discharge. His manner is quiet and unassuming, his character is exemplary, his personal habits clean and beyond reproach.* Little wonder that the RCAF Recruiting Officer wrote this of Rodolfo: *An excellent type – splendid education – should make a first rate single seater fighter pilot. Has had a fair amount of military training. Strong on sport.*

From #1 Manning Depot in Toronto, Rodolfo received his air training at #3 Training Centre (TC) in Ottawa; at #1 Initial Training School (ITS) in Toronto; at #1 Elementary Flying Training School (EFTS) in Malton; and at #1 Service Flying Training School (SFTS) at Camp Borden, where he received his Pilots Flying Badge on April 28, 1941. Two weeks later, on May 12, 1941, Rodolfo was posted to #1 Manning Depot in Halifax, Nova Scotia. On May 29, 1941, Rodolfo embarked overseas from Halifax bound for England.

Initially posted to #3 Personnel Reception Centre in the U.K., he was transferred to No. 59 Operational Training Unit (OTU) on July 7, 1941 where he continued his training. Soon Rodolfo became a member of **Fighter Command**. On August 26, 1941, he was posted to RAF No. 136 Squadron where he would fly Hawker Hurricanes. In mid-November 1941, he was appointed his commission with #136 Squadron, at Kirton-on-Lindsay, Lincolnshire. There he gained experience in taking photographic mosaics and obliques and in conducting escort duty and runner torpedo attacks.

In November 1941, RAF No. 232 Squadron departed England for the Middle East. By the time they arrived in South Africa, Japan had entered the war and the squadron was diverted to Singapore in the Far East. On January 13, 1942, Mendizabal arrived at Singapore with a reinforcement convoy of RAF aircrew and 51 crated Hurricane II fighters. He became part of No. 232 Squadron (the Hurricanes had also been diverted from the Middle East to the Far East to supplement the few Buffalo fighters defending the island fortress). With the airfields near the city already too dangerous to use, the squadron embarked two days later aboard the Royal Navy aircraft carrier *HMS Indomitable* bound for Malaya. Following the Japanese invasion of the Malayan peninsula on December 8, 1941, by the end of January 1942, there were no airfields left in British hands, so the squadron flew off to Java.

On January 22, 1942, Mendizabal was in action flying a Hurricane against some Japanese Navy Fighters over Malaya. His aircraft was badly shot up with bullets in the engine and there was considerable damage to the undercarriage. Both tires were punctured and he sustained a bullet flesh wound in the leg. In spite of this, he managed

to land his torn up Hurricane aircraft on damaged landing gear and was fit for flying four days later.

One week later, on January 29, his Hurricane II aircraft crashed due to landing gear technical problems and he survived unscathed. Sometime in the early part of 1942, Rodolfo wrote a letter to his parents in Sarnia informing them that he had been transferred to a Royal Air Force squadron in Calcutta, India.

On February 2, 1942, #232 Squadron arrived in Palembang on the island of Sumatra. Following the Japanese invasion of Sumatra on February 13, a further withdrawal was required. The following day the squadron evacuated to Java and the situation regarding serviceability was so grave that No. 232 was merged with No. 242 Squadron, and its ground crews were evacuated to Ceylon. Operating alongside No. 605 Squadron, the two fighter squadrons were in action in Java from February 17-27, often operating at odds of ten to one or worse. It was a last ditch defence as soon, Java would also be in the hands of the Japanese.

The Japanese forces landed in Java on March 1, 1942. Days later, a stranded Mendizabal, two Australians, a New Zealander, and a Dutchman would make a daring escape from the soon-to-be "Japanese held" Java, in a makeshift Lockheed 10 aircraft. When orders for a cease-fire came through, every aircraft that could be flown out of the country had been destroyed as the Japanese advanced. Demolition parties were also ordered to blast holes in all the landing strips. This group of five Allied Force airmen were not willing to surrender: F/O Rodolfo Mendizabal (RCAF), Sgt. Stuart Munroe (RAAF), Sgt. Alan Bryant Martin (RAAF), Sgt. Douglas Jones (RNZAF), and Dutchman Frederik Pelder.

At the Pameungpeuk airfield, this international quintet came across an old abandoned Lockheed 212 training plane with a smashed tail in a corner of one flying field and another Lockheed that had been destroyed by a truck driving into it. The five men, pilots not mechanics, patched together the wrecks of the two damaged Lockheed 212 transport planes into a single airplane that could barely fly. For lack of a screwdriver, a coin was used to true up the replacement tail, which was tied together with rope. Forty-gallon wing fuel tanks were removed from another airplane and installed inside the fuselage with strings and bits of bamboo. A hole was made in the side of the fuselage through which a length of hose was jammed into the wing fuel tank, the idea being to feed from tanks inside the fuselage. A number of full 20-litre cans were carried into the cabin. On March 9, after the official surrender, the five airmen and their makeshift Lockheed was ready for flight.

The only clear takeoff path on the damaged airstrip ran in zig-zag fashion and was no more than the width of the landing gear. It seemed nearly impossible that the overloaded Lockheed could take off successfully. At the extreme end of the field, the engines were revved up to full power, the brakes were eased off, and the plane veered down the strip with craters whizzing by under the wings. The aircraft was bounced into the air by the lip of a crater, clearing the fence at the end of the field by inches.

Once airborne, they then flew in stages, each taking turns at piloting the twin-engine Lockheed for seven hours, first from Java, 1,200 miles to Medan in Northern Sumatra. The tired airmen spent March 10 at Medan, checking out the plane, looking for maps, and arranging for a refueling stop at Lho Nga, near Kata Rakja on the northern tip of Sumatra. The local Governor gave them codes which they were to deliver to the Admiralty in Ceylon, so that Ceylon could re-establish contact with Sumatra.

Early on the morning of March 11, the Lockheed left on its next hop, a 1,400-mile journey across the Bay of Bengal to Ceylon. They would alight to refuel at Lho Nga, still in friendly hands. The Dutch there helped to camouflage the aircraft during refueling, shielding it from Japanese reconnaissance aircraft in the area. On take-off, upon clearing the trees at the end of the airstrip, two Japanese bombers were diving down on the Lockheed. The aircraft was a few seconds ahead and was gradually able to pull out of range to escape over the ocean. After an eight-hour, 1,400-mile overwater flight, the Lockheed arrived at Colombo, Ceylon. Luck was on their side one more time as on their approach, they happened to fire the correct coloured flare, signaling the flak gunners not to fire on them.

A May 1943 newspaper account of the escape had the headline: "Escape From Java in Patched-Up Lockheed – International Quintet Fly Training Crate 2,600 Miles." The following is a portion of an account of their escape, as written by the New Zealander in the group, Sergeant Pilot Doug L. Jones of the New Zealand RAF (RNZAF). The account was sent to Mr. and Mrs. A.R. Mendizabal in a letter and printed in the *Canadian (Sarnia) Observer* on March 22, 1943, one year after the events:

Rodolfo Mendizabal and Four Flying Companions In Thrilling Air Escape

An epic story is told in a New Zealand paper of how Rodolfo Mendizabal, son of Mr. and Mrs. A.R.

Mendizabal, along with four companions, escaped from the Japs after the fall of Java. The task seemed so hopeless that none of those who knew what these young men were attempting, had any idea that they would succeed. The boys in the escapade were all sergeant-pilots, Rodolfo Mendizabal, the Canadian; Stuart Munroe and Alan Martin, Australians; Doug L. Jones, a New Zealander, and a Dutchman, whose name is unknown (was F.Pelder). Together, they feature in the best aerial escape story of the war. After the fall of Java, with Japanese troops a few miles away, they joined together the undamaged sections of two shattered aircraft and braving the hazards of distance and Jap Zeros, flew from Java to Sumatra and then on across the Bay of Bengal to Ceylon. Their story, which can now be told, throws new light on the last days of the Netherlands, East Indies. Here is their story, as told by Sergeant Pilot D.L. Jones, NZRAF.

"Fresh from Durban, I was in the last convoy into Singapore, and was bombed 26 times by as many as 50 Jap planes. Our convoy was one of the last to leave. We were there for three days, then came out on the same ship as we went in on. There were no planes for us to fly at Singapore, so there was no use in staying there. Anyway, the Japs had already landed on the island and the evacuation was in full force. In Java we were sent to Buitenzorg, 35 miles in from Batavia. We waited there hoping to get planes to fly. It soon became obvious that we were not to get any. When the Japs began attacking the island in earnest, they issued us all with rifles and ammunition with the idea of making a stand somewhere-sort of backs-to-the-wall stunt. This idea didn't appeal to us much, so a few of us got working on our own".

"They were short of transport to shift the camp, so half a dozen of us went into Balavia to see if we could pick up any lorries. Batavia by this time was a deserted city. The Japs had landed troops on each side of it. All around the docks there were sunken vessels, which had either been bombed or scuttled. The Dutch had sunk a large vessel across the harbor mouth to stop ant ship getting in. We found some lorries after a while, but the trouble was none of them would go-which was why they were left. But we each managed to repair a lorry and get back to camp. At 4 a.m. next day we were awakened, and told to get moving as the Japs were down the road. Fortunately, a few transports had come up and they were able to take the whole camp to the town of Garut, 140 miles away. We were there a week waiting for word to come through to tell us which port to go to. We did not know at the time that there wasn't an open port in Java. (Already blockaded Java's "escape port", Tjilitjap on the south coast, was completely destroyed by Jap bombers on March 5, a few hours after I left in the last ship to get away from Java)".

"At 10 p.m. on March 7 we received instructions that the town we were in was an open city, and we were to hand in our arms and await occupation. We asked the C.O. of our unit if he would let a few of us escape as best we could. He said he wouldn't. We told him to come back in half an hour and we would hand over our arms. In that half-hour we worked like mad, loading up our cars with food and ammunition. We had a couple of machine guns, which we had picked up at a bombed-out drone, a couple of Tommy-guns and dozens of rifles. We started out, reached the coast next day, and traveled along it, keeping a look-out for boats. Near a small native village called Pamaunpouk we found a deserted aerodrome with damaged aircraft scattered over it. A Dutch pilot and four of us sergeant-pilots looked them over and found a twin-engined Lockheed 10 with its tail blown off, but its engines in running order. Searching further, we found another machine of the same type, with the nose and wings smashed, but the tail untouched".

"We all hit on the same idea at once. With the few tools we had we started. I used a 6d for a screwdriver, and got tied up in knots with ballraces, and lockingpins and God knows what! We found that the tail part of the good machine was strained out of alignment, and we finished up tying it together with rope. We fitted a machine-gun in the turret and another in the nose, firing forward. There was plenty of petrol lying around the field in drums. We also found couple of spare wing tanks with a capacity of 40 gallons apiece, which we strapped inside the fuselage with bits of bamboo and string after plugging up some holes with cork and bits of wood. I bashed a hole in the side of the fuselage, fitted a piece of bowser-hose through, and jammed one end in the tank in the wing, with the idea of feeding petrol from the tanks into the fuselage. Next day at 9 a.m. we were ready. After figuring out the range of the plane, we found we could not quite make Australia, so we agreed to fly up the coast of Sumatra, as we had been told the top end was still in Dutch hands". "While we were repairing the plane, word came through that the Dutch government had capitulated, and that all members of the army were to proceed to Bandoeng to be demobilized. Before going, the Dutch destroyed the airfields-and a real job they made of it. They dynamited the whole field. We found the only clear patch ran in zigzag fashion barely the width of the undercarriage and with an overloaded plane it seemed a 10 to 1 chance that we wouldn't get off. The Dutchman had flown Lockheeds before, so he took the controls. At the extreme end of the field we revved the engines up until they were about to shake themselves to pieces, let off the brakes and

away we went. We zigzagged down the field with craters whistling by under our wing-tips. I looked ahead and thought we couldn't get off without hitting the fence at the end. I still don't think we would have, had we not hit the lip of one of the craters, which bounced us into the air. We cleared the fence by inches, got over the beach and out to sea. We flew 800 miles up the coast of Sumatra, then turned inland in the hope of finding an airfield. Later we discovered it was Medan airport. It was cluttered up with obstructions so we guessed it was still in Dutch hands. We couldn't see any signs of life, so we took it we had caused an air-raid alarm".

"We lowered our wheels and began to circle the field, wagging our wings. Soldiers appeared as if by magic and began clearing away the obstructions. Cars began to come in from the city packed with civilians and in a few minutes, hundreds of people were clearing the field so we could land. The Dutch treated us like kings. Next day we returned to our plane determined to try to get to Ceylon. The governor had given us codes, which we were to deliver to the admiralty if we got there, so as to re-establish contact with Sumatra. At Kuta Raja, on the northern tip of Sumatra, we had the same trouble in landing, but eventually got down OK. The Dutch immediately grabbed our machine, pushed it under cover and threw camouflaging over it, as they said the Jap reconnaissance plane was due over in five minutes. They set their watches by this plane, and at exactly 9 a.m. over she came. She circled us twice and then made off in a devil of a hurry. We guessed we had been spotted, so we started filling up as quickly as we could. We had just about finished when a lookout reported nine Jap bombers headed our way. We filled up in double-quick time while the Dutch soldiers were pulling off the camouflage and our Dutch pilot was revving up. Right in front of us was a whopping big hill, behind which we could see the Jap bombers heading toward us. The only thing to do was to turn as soon as we were in the air. We did it! We must have missed the trees on that hill by mere inches. We turned out to sea as fast as we could go with two of the Jap bombers armed with cannons diving down on us. But we were just those few seconds too soon for them. We just managed to keep out of range, and in the end gradually drew away from them. The old bus had a marvelous turn of speed when pushed. We owe our survival to that. We set what we thought was a course for Ceylon, but the only map we had was one of the world torn from a magazine. We had a job transferring petrol from the cabin to the wing tanks, but in the end found that by banking the plane over, we could gravity-feed it in".

"It was well into the afternoon when we did sight land. I was at the controls at the time and didn't know whether it was Ceylon or India. Knowing Colombo was on the other side of the island, I headed inland and ran slap-bank into hills and a hailstorm. Eventually we hit the coast and followed it down. Very soon we saw a large town and seaport ahead-Colombo. Then we had an uncanny bit of luck. There were a large number of warships in the harbor and on sighting us they started to challenge us with a signalling lamp. The correct thing to do when so challenged is to fire what we call 'colors of the day' with a Verey pistol. We had a Verey pistol on board and cartridges, but there are dozens of colors to choose from and they change the color every day. We had to shoot something off, so I picked up a two-star red, fired it and waited. We expected every gun in the harbor to open up on us, but nothing happened. We found the landing field and landed. We found out later that the colors of the day were a two-star red-just what we had fired. The trip from Java to Medan took seven hours ten minutes, and we landed with ten minutes petrol supply left. The flight from Kuta Raja took eight hours and we landed with 15 minutes supply left".

Of the five airmen who had survived the March 1942 escape from Java with Mendizabal, only one was to survive the war. Along with Mendizabal, also killed in wartime service were Sgt. Stuart Munroe, RAAF, killed in action as member of #75 Squadron at Milne Bay, New Guinea on August 27, 1942; Sgt. Alan Bryant Martin, RAAF, killed in a training accident as member of #76 Squadron in Queensland, Australia on May 21, 1942; and Sgt. (later F/O) Douglas Loftus Jones, RNZAF, killed in action as a member of #17 Squadron on a mission to Rabaul, New Guinea on January 9, 1944. Only the Dutchman, Frederik Pelder survived the war. He would go on to fly B-25's with No. 18 (Dutch) RAAF Squadron during the war, retire as a Colonel, and was awarded the Cross of Merit (for his escape from Java). After the war Pelder entered Netherlands civil aviation.

In August 1942, Mendizabal was posted to RAF #151 Operational Training Unit (OTU). In December of 1942, Rodolfo was part of a special escort. One of the highest-ranking officers of the R.C.A.F., Air Vice-Marshal Harold Edwards, was on an inspection tour of R.C.A.F. and R.A.F. establishments in India and Middle East theatres of war. It brought him to front-line fighter and bomber stations from which many Canadians were flying against the Japanese in Burma. He met airmen who called themselves, "the Canadians closest to the Japanese forces." Vice Marshall Edwards travelled in a Hudson bomber escorted by fighters. One of the fighters was piloted by F/O Rodolfo Mendizabal, of Sarnia, a veteran of Singapore and East Indies campaigns. At the time, Mendizabal did not claim any victories over the Japanese, but said that he had seen "plenty" of them.

The Burma Campaign had begun in December 1941 when the Japanese moved through Thailand and invaded the British colony of Burma. The Japanese saw Burma as a stepping-stone to India as well as protection for their troops fighting in the Malayan peninsula and in Singapore. It would be one of the longest campaigns of the war, fought primarily by British Commonwealth and Chinese and U.S. forces against the forces of Imperial Japan and their allies. The campaign had a number of notable features that included dense jungles, mountainous terrain, lack of roads for transport, prevalent disease, and weather conditions that included severe heat and monsoon seasons. Approximately 8,000 Canadians, including Sarnians, served in the Burma Campaign. Many of them were part of RAF squadrons carrying out duties that included doing reconnaissance, protecting convoys, dropping supplies and troops, escorting operations, conducting patrol and bombing missions, and becoming part of fighter squadrons.

By the end of 1942, Rodolfo Mendizabal had become a member of RAF No. 5 Squadron "Frangas Non Flectas" (Thou mayest break but shall not bend me). The Curtiss Mohawk fighter was the squadron's main aircraft at the time. From May 1942 to May 1943, the squadron was based in Assam, India, performing escort duties and ground attack sorties in Burma. In mid-1943, the squadron converted to Hawker Hurricanes and carried out Fighter Bomber duties. Along with carrying out attacks on enemy targets, the fighters of No. 5 Squadron provided bomber and transport escorts, and flew as escorts for Blenheims making reconnaissance flights.

In his book *Mohawks Over Burma*, Gerry Beauchamp described several of missions that Rodolfo "Rudy" Mendizabal participated in. He was flying a Curtiss Mohawk fighter when he was part of RAF No. 5 Squadron (while based at Agartala in Tripura, India). Following are some of those missions:

On December 25, 1942, No. 5 Squadron took part in a major sortie over Burma, flying from their base to Imphal, Ywamandaung, Yuwa, and Ye-U. The Mohawks attacked factory-like buildings, railway stations, shipping, Army-huts and an airfield. At Kenswe, a train consisting of trucks and a locomotive with steam was attacked. F/O Mendizabal did one run down the entire length of the train and saw DeWilde strikes (incendiary bullets), while another F/O (Rashleigh) concentrated on the engine, carrying out an attack from the side. Troops were seen to dash away. At the airfield, Mendizabal fired a short burst into a large bamboo hut. Further attacks were made on shipping before the formation returned to base.

On January 19, 1943, two sections of three Mohawks from No. 5 Squadron escorted Blenheim light bombers from Feni on a bombing attack on Akyab Island. At 0915 hours, some Japanese Army Nakajima Ki-43 fighters (code-named Oscars) were seen near Narigan. Some of the Mohawks engaged the Oscars while others continued escorting the Blenheims to their target before returning to the fight. The combat turned into a series of dogfights over the northern end of the island, lasting approximately 30 minutes. F/O Mendizabal claimed two enemy aircraft damaged. Two Oscars were downed and three of the Mohawks were slightly damaged.

On March 19, 1943, the RAF used Vultee Vengeance dive bombers on an operation for the first time, and No. 5 Squadron had the honour of escorting them on this first mission. Six Vengeances and six Bisley bombers were to rendezvous over Dohazari before proceeding to their target area at Hitgive. At 1600 hours, five Mohawks (one piloted by F/O Mendizabal) would escort the Vengeance dive bombers to the target, staying with them until the action was complete. The Mohawks were then supposed to escort back the Bisley twin-engine bombers on the return trip. The Mohawk pilots could not find the Bisleys, and so returned to Dohazari, landing at 1815 hours.

The next evening, a ration of two Australian bottles of beer was given out to each of the airmen in the Officers' Mess, to celebrate the promotion of W/O Harold Oskar Seifert, RCAF, to Pilot Officer. A piano was brought over from Wing, the men joined in singing songs and everyone had an enjoyable evening. Being the end of March, one member of No. 5 Squadron recorded that the weather was becoming increasingly unstable as the monsoon season approached. The days were still relatively fine but there were fitful winds and brilliant, almost continuous lightning at night.

On March 29, 1943, at 1520 hours, six Mohawks took off from a rough airstrip south of Chittagong, Bangladesh, codenamed Reindeer, near base camp Hove. One of the Mohawks was piloted by Rodolfo Mendizabal. The six aircraft were scrambled from Reindeer to intercept hostile aircraft approaching from the south (one of the Mohawks was airborne slightly later than the others, was unable to locate the group, so stayed airborne above the base). When in line abreast formation at 17,000 feet over Maungdaw, the five Mohawks (including Mendizabal) saw a dozen Oscars (Japanese Ki-43 fighters) at 16,000 feet, nine to starboard and three to port. The Japanese turned towards the Mohawks upon recognition and, in doing so, split up the five fighters. A confused melee ensued. One of the Mohawk pilots later reported that the Japanese seemed to work in pairs, one feigning attack by wagging his

wings, another on the other beam actually carrying out the attack. Mendizabal got in several long deflection bursts at one enemy aircraft which dove away. He also carried out a head-on attack on another Oscar which passed below him. He could not see strikes on either of these aircraft because his windscreen had oiled up. All five Mohawks were able to return safely to base, some riddled with bullet holes. As Mendizabal was coming up the coast on the return flight, his engine stopped and he made a belly landing about 20 miles (32 km) north of the base. He was unhurt, and according to the Operations Record Book, he later stepped out of a lorry at the base looking as though nothing untoward had happened.



‘B’ Flight of No. 5 Squadron at Agartala, early 1943.

Standing on the wings (l to r): F/Sgt Worts and F/Sgt Cutfield (both New Zealand).

Standing on ground (l to r): **F/O Rodolfo Mendizabal** (Canada), P/O Bellinger and P/O Lee (both English), F/L MacEwan (N.Z.), F/O Souter (Scotland), and Sgt Parsons (England).

Kneeling (l to r): F/O Chancellor and F/Sgt Baines (both N.Z.).

Photo: “Mohawks Over Burma”

In early February of 1943, his parents in Sarnia received word from the Canadian government that their only son Rodolfo had been missing for several months in the eastern theatre of war. No other information was provided. A few weeks later, Augustus and Mary were advised by the government that the report of their missing son issued weeks earlier was incorrect. In a telegram, the Hon. C.G. Power, Minister of National Defence for Air, relayed a cablegram that he had received from Air Vice-Marshal Edwards in England in regard to Rodolfo Mendizabal. The Vice-Marshal said that Rodolfo had been an escort pilot with him while on a tour of India during December of 1942, and at the time Rodolfo was safe and well. The Vice-Marshal expressed his profound regret that there had been an official report that their son had been reported missing on air operations for several months. The Commander said that he would endeavour to obtain further information about the Sarnian’s whereabouts. He was later reported safe and had been in Burma since October 1942.

In mid-April 1943, Mendizabal was posted to the RAF base at Ramu, India and in July 1943 was posted to Air Fighting Training Unit (AFTU) based at RAF Station Amarda Road, India. Airmen were posted to AFTU to teach them various fighter flying tactics deemed valuable in the unique air war against the Japanese.

On August 10, 1943, Flying Officer-Pilot Rodolfo Mendizabal was aboard his Hurricane IID aircraft KW859 on a Fighter Affiliation training exercise (learning to be an Air Fighting Instructor). He was detailed with Flight Lieutenant Fogg of Amarda Road, Air Fighting Training Unit (A.F.T.U.), to carry out attacks with cine’ camera guns on a formation of Vultee Vengeances (dive bombers). At approximately 1140 hours, the formation was at 1,000 feet when his aircraft broke away downwards for his third solo attack. When it was very near the ground, at an angle of approximately 60°, the aircraft appeared to pull out slightly, but hit the ground and burst into flames immediately. The crash occurred four miles east of the Amarda Road Station at Subhanauika Bridge, India. Rodolfo died instantly of multiple injuries in the crash. The aircraft was badly smashed and the pieces were spread over a wide area.

In the investigation that followed, it was impossible to say from the ground examination exactly what happened. A portion of the investigators report reads as follows: *It appears to have hit the ground at a high speed at the bottom of a dive, in a slightly nose down attitude, rebounding and turning over. At the same time the fuel tanks exploded, and the aircraft disintegrated. The only burnt portion is the remains of the cockpit and fuselage, this being due presumably to the reserve tank exploding. The airframe has completely disintegrated, and the engine is very severely damaged, the crankcase being smashed, reduction gear torn off, and most of the accessories and their drives being broken away.* The investigation concluded that some failure of the controls was a possibility, but more likely, the pilot made an error of judgement that didn't allow him sufficient time to pull out of the dive.

On August 10, 1943, fellow pilot F/O Harold Seifert wrote a letter home to his mother Lydia and younger sister Trudy in Winnipeg, Manitoba. (Of note, Harold had lost his brother Pilot Officer Arnold Seifert in May 1942 during a raid over Germany). Following is a portion of Harold's August 1943 letter to his mother and sister:

I have received lots of mail in the last couple of days, with your pictures. Have you ever changed and seem to be a grown up girl, and not the little sister I left behind.

I was given some bad news just before I left for the hospital. One of our airplanes was seen to spin in and Mendizabal was the only one flying, so he must have been killed. He was quite a good friend of mine, and then you say you got a letter from his father, so it is really tragic. I just got the picture of he and I in the Free Press two days ago and I was going to show him.

Fatal accidents happened to two Canadians while RAF No. 5 Squadron was re-equipping with Hurricanes at Amarda Road. The first involved Rodolfo on August 10, 1943. The second was twenty-two-year-old F/O Harold Seifert, who was killed while carrying out a tactical formation exercise on November 8, 1943 (three months after Mendizabal's death). His Hurricane went into a dive at 8,000 feet and collided with the ground at a high speed and steep angle. He was buried at the scene of the crash at Kharagpur, near Bengal, 100 miles north of Calcutta, India. Harold Seifert is buried in Ranchi War Cemetery in India.



Pilot Officer Harold Seifert (L) and Flying Officer-Pilot **Rodolfo Mendizabal** (R)
On a Curtiss Mohawk that they flew in Burma (both lost their lives in Burma)
(notice the maple leaf, the squadron's badge, on the aircraft forward fuselage)
Department of National Defence photo

Rodolfo Mendizabal's name would appear on the official R.C.A.F. casualty list approximately one week after the crash. No other details were included in the report and no information was available locally as his parents Augustin and Mary Mendizabal were vacationing in Haliburton. The last word the parents had received from their son indicated that he was still in the Far East and there was some speculation as to whether he took part in the Sicilian campaign.

In late August 1943, Augustin Mendizabal of London Road in Sarnia received the following letter from the Flight Lieutenant, R.C.A.F. Casualties Officer, for Chief of the Air Staff in Ottawa:

Dear Mr. Mendizabal:

It is my painful duty to confirm the telegram recently received by you which informed you that your son, Flying Officer Rodolfo Mendizabal, was killed on Active Service.

Advice has been received from the Royal Canadian Air Force Casualties Officer, Overseas, that your son, who was the sole occupant of an aircraft, lost his life on August 10th, 1943, during flying operations at Subhanauika Bridge, four miles east of Amarda Road Station, India. His funeral took place on August 11th, 1943, at the Amarda Road Cemetery. Group Captain C. de Crespigny officiated.

You may be assured that any further information received will be communicated to you immediately. May I take this opportunity to offer both you and Mrs. Mendizabal my deepest sympathy.

Also in late August 1943, Augustin received the following letter from Flight Lieutenant C.S. Courtney-Clarke, Officer Commanding, No. 5 Squadron, R.A.F. India:

Dear Mr. Mendizabal,

It is with great regret that I must write to you about the sad loss of your son. He has not only been one of my pilots, but a personal friend ever since he joined the squadron, and we have been through a lot of fighting, and also a lot of fun together. "Dizzy" and I went on leave together only last month and had a grand time sharing a house boat up in Kashmir.

He was killed while flying a Hurricane at Amarda Road in Orissa. He was on a course there learning to be an "Air Fighting Instructor". I have had the report on his accident and apparently he misjudged his height while recovering from a practice attack on another aircraft, and hit the ground at great speed. There is no doubt that he was killed instantly.

He was buried at Amarda Road, with full Military honours, and representatives of the squadron flew down for the funeral. Please allow me to express on behalf of myself and all his other squadron friends the sympathy we all feel with you in your bereavement.

Rodolfo Mendizabal was later officially recorded as, Killed as a result of a flying accident, overseas (India). In October 1945, Augustin received a letter from the R.C.A.F. Casualty Officer, for Chief of the Air Staff. Following is a portion of that letter:

Dear Mr. Mendizabal:

Further to my letter of August 22nd, a reply has now been received to my enquiry Overseas and although his log book and operational record books of the Squadrons, with which he carried out his operational flying, are not available the following particulars have been secured through the R.C.A.F. District Headquarters, India.

He is recorded as having been posted to No. 59 O.T.U. on May 29th, 1941, and to No. 36 Squadron on September 4th, 1941, where he probably gained experience in taking photographic mosaics and obliques, and in escort duty and runner torpedo attacks.

On November 18th, 1941, he was posted to No. 136 Squadron at Kirtoon-on-Lindsay and appears to have gone with that Squadron to Singapore where he disembarked on January 13th, 1942, and commenced operations with 'B' Flight from Seletah airfield on January 19th.

On January 22nd, 1942, he was in action against some Jap. Navy Fighters, flying a Hurricane. His aircraft was badly shot up with bullets in the engine and there was considerable damage to the undercarriage. Both tyres were punctured and he sustained a bullet flesh wound in the leg, but in spite of this he landed his aircraft safely and was fit for flying again on January 26th, 1942.

On January 29th, Sgt. Mendizabal crashed in landing a Hurricane. In lowering his undercarriage for landing it carried on past the normal vertical position.

On February 2nd, 1942, he sailed with No. 136 Squadron ground personnel and a few pilots from Singapore in the SS. Whangpu, arriving at Palembang in Sumatra on February 4th, and commenced operating from Palembang 1, and also assisted in the Control Room of No. 226 Fighter Group. The Japanese made a parachute attack on Palembang 1 and caused the Squadron to evacuate to Palembang 2 on February 14th, 1942, and the following day, when Sumatra was evacuated, Sergeant Mendizabal probably left P.2 by air for Java.

On February 20th, 1942, he commenced operating with the Squadron from Tjililitan near Batavia, and on February 24th was attached with the Squadron C.O. and the remainder of the serviceable pilots to No. 242 Squadron. When the Squadron arrived in Java, verbal information was received that Sgt. Mendizabal had been commissioned, but no official confirmation ever reached the Squadron.

After being with No. 136 Squadron in India from March 17th, 1942, Sgt. Mendizabal was posted to No. 151 O.T.U. on 2nd August, 1942, to No. 224 Group on October 19th, 1942, and to No. 5 Squadron on October 29th, 1942.

Squadron Leader N. Welch, R.A.F., R.A.F. Station, New Delhi, who supplied most of the foregoing information pertaining to No. 136 Squadron, was under the impression that Sgt. Mendizabal had not escaped from Java until another N.C.O. of the Squadron informed him that the Sgt. was in India. He has no knowledge of how Sgt. Mendizabal escaped. However, four of the aircraft left behind in Java did get out to Australia, and it has been suggested that the following personnel may be able to supply information as to what happened in Java after 24th February, 1942...

If you will write to the above mentioned personnel in care of R.A.F. Records Office, Gloucester, your letters will be forwarded to them at their latest address, most promptly. I am giving you the names of the four above mentioned as I felt you would wish to communicate with them yourself.

In late-February 1947, Augustin, then residing on North Brock Street, received the following letter from the Wing Commander for Chief of the Air Staff in Ottawa:

Dear Mr. Mendizabal:

It is a privilege to have the opportunity of sending you the Operational Wings and Certificate in recognition of the gallant services rendered by your son, Flying Officer R. Mendizabal. I realize there is little which may be said or done to lessen your sorrow, but it is my hope that these "Wings", indicative of operations against the enemy, will be a treasured memento of a young life offered on the altar of freedom in defence of his Home and Country.

In late-November 1951, Augustin received the following letter from the Wing Commander, R.C.A.F. Casualties Officer, for Chief of the Air Staff:

Dear Mr. Mendizabal:

It is with regret that I must again refer to the loss of your son, Flying Officer Rodolfo Mendizabal. The Imperial War Graves Commission has advised, however, that your son has been moved to the Balesore New Cemetery, hundred miles north east of Cuttack, Orissa, India, he was laid to rest in Grave 53, in the Military Plot. Your son's grave will be reverently cared for and maintained in perpetuity by the Commission who will also erect a permanent headstone over the grave. May I take this opportunity to extend my sincere sympathy.

In March of 1945, the "FO. Rodolfo Mendizabal Shooting Trophy", named in honour of the young flier, was presented during assembly in the auditorium of Sarnia Collegiate Institute, to Pte. Angus Young, of the Army Cadet Corps. The young cadet achieved the highest shooting scores in a contest held in the collegiate rifle range, among entrants from the three Sarnia cadet corps-Army, Navy and Air. Rodolfo's father, Augustin Mendizabal, who was a member of the Collegiate Institute teaching staff, presented the trophy, a silver statue of an athlete upon a mahogany base.

Ten years after the end of World War II, on November 11, 1955, the "new" renovated Sarnia cenotaph in Victoria Park (now Veterans Park) was re-dedicated. The renovated grey granite monument had been enlarged by the addition of two new "wings", on which were inscribed the names of Sarnia's fallen soldiers from World War I, World War II along with a plaque with the Korea War fallen. The prior existing WWI bronze tablets had been removed and are now located on the outside west wall of the Royal Canadian Legion, Branch 62. The November 11th, 1955 re-dedication ceremony was preceded by a parade consisting of civic, military and veteran units marching from city hall to Victoria Park. During a Friday morning drizzling rain, the cenotaph was unveiled by Lieutenant-Colonel J.H. Coleman, M.B.E., Ed, Commanding Officer of the Sarnia Garrison, followed by a dedication ceremony by Rev. G.G. Stone. The first wreath laid upon the cenotaph was by Captain and Mrs. Augustin R. Mendizabal on behalf of all the next of kin.

Rodolfo Mendizabal, 25, is buried in Madras War Cemetery, Chennai, India, Grave: 9.B.7. On his headstone are inscribed the words, BORN IN TORONTO, CANADA, 5TH MARCH 1918. STUDENT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, J, L, M, N, R, 2C, 2D, 3J, 7C, 7O, 8L, 8X, 8Y, 10B, 4i

METCALFE, William Stuart (#A/50101)

Sarnia born William "Bill" Metcalfe was only nineteen years old when joined the army. Two and a half years later in England, he married his British bride, and they later had a son together. William served in Italy for 16 months before moving into northwest Europe, fighting in France, Belgium and Germany. One month after VE day, William lost his life in a tragic accident in Holland.

William was born in Sarnia on February 21, 1921, the only son of Karl Steadman and Julia Stuart Metcalfe. Karl and Julia were married on April 17, 1920 in Sarnia, Ontario (they would divorce in 1938). William's

grandfather was Lieutenant Colonel William Wallace McVicar, a veteran of the Great War, who lived in Sarnia. William attended public school in Petrolia, and then completed his education at Sarnia Collegiate Institute. William participated in swimming and basketball. He was a member of Central United Church and of the Central Century Club, serving as the club's pianist on Sunday afternoons. William was also able to obtain First Class Honours in his second year from the Toronto Conservatory of Music. Prior to enlisting, he was a grocery store clerk and manager in Byron, Ontario from September 1938 to July 1939, earning twenty-five dollars a week.

At age nineteen, William Metcalfe enlisted in the Canadian Army on August 13, 1940 in Chatham, Ontario with the Kent Regiment. He stood five feet eight inches tall, had hazel eyes and dark brown hair, and lived with his mother Julia Metcalfe at 309 North College Street, Sarnia at the time. Julia was employed as a supervisor at the Port Huron Michigan General Hospital. His father Karl, an accountant, was living at 326 Dundas Street, London, Ontario at the time. William's plan for after the war, was to enter the Civil Service, possibly the postal department.

William began his training with the Kent Regiment in Chatham (army trade school), before transferring to #1 District Depot in London. In May 1941, he trained at #12 Basic Training Centre in Chatham, taking an electricians' course. Two months later, he trained at Canadian Army Training School (CATS) in Hamilton. In September 1941, William was posted to Camp Borden with the 5th Canadian Armoured Division, as a Signaller. Two months later, William embarked overseas for England on November 14, 1941. Initially appointed Lance Corporal, he would revert to Signaller, serving in the U.K. with the Royal Canadian Corps of Signals 5th Canadian Armoured Division.



Signalman William Stuart Metcalfe

While in the U.K., William met and fell in love with a British woman. After a six-month relationship and receiving written permission to marry from his Commanding Officer, William married Helen Rosa Appleby on February 17, 1943 at the Chelsea Registry Office, Middlesex, England. Helen, born June 28, 1920 in St. Pancras, London, England, was serving with the Canadian Army in England, a Private with the No. 1 Royal Canadian Corps of Signals (RCCS). William and Helen had one child together, a son, Terrence William Stuart Metcalfe, born September 12, 1943 in Lingfield, England. The young Metcalfe family lived at 207 Walton Road, East Molesey, Surrey, England.

William departed the United Kingdom bound for Italy on October 24, 1943. The **Italian Campaign**, the first sustained Canadian Army operation of the War, had begun with the invasion of Sicily on July 10, 1943. The fierce fighting on the island lasted more than four weeks, during which the Canadians would advance through difficult mountainous terrain, against an ever-stiffening German resistance. By August 17, the Germans had evacuated the island to the Italian mainland. In early September, Canadian and Allied forces would invade Italy. Though Italy surrendered shortly after, the occupying Germans made it clear their fight was not over. Liberating Italy would be a painstaking northward crawl, lasting 20 months, over a range of landscapes, through challenging weather, and against a series of well-protected defences held by some of the German army's best troops.

William Metcalf served in Italy with the 5th Canadian Armoured Division Signals, Royal Canadian Corps of Signals (R.C.C.S.), part of the British 8th Army in the Central Mediterranean Forces. In late 1943, not long after his

arrival in Italy, he wrote a letter to his grandfather in Sarnia, Lt. Colonel William W. MacVicar. The following are portions of that letter:

I never saw so much filth and poverty anywhere. These towns are beyond all imagination. The first few days here were beautifully warm, and we thought there was something to this "Sunny Italy" business, despite the fact that the nights almost "did us in". Don't know when I ever ran into such bone-biting coldness. You can put on everything you own, and still shake like a model T Ford.

Then came the rains, and believe me, it has everything that England ever showed us in the way of rain beaten by a mile. We are bivouacked in a vineyard, using pup tents as a home. They aren't too bad except that every time you touch the canvas when it is raining, the water pours through in torrents, and being so low we are always touching them, so, there being no room upward, we decided to go down, and now are sleeping some three feet below the surface of the ground in something that is a cross between a tent and a dugout. It is not bad, though, and actually it is comparatively dry and quite warm. We are thankful that conditions are no worse than they are. They definitely could be very much worse. The food is good and can be supplemented with all kinds of oranges, apples and nuts.

The one thing here worth mentioning is the music one can hear anywhere in the streets. It seems to be the only thing these people can do properly, and they do it under the least provocation. Some poor broken specimen of humanity shuffling along will suddenly burst forth in a flood of song that would put Nelson Eddy to shame, and when they get about half "vino-ed" up you should hear them.

Speaking of "vino", it is no wonder these people got licked at every turn of the wheel if they have been drinking that brew ever since they were infants. It's vile! About the only thing I can say for it is that it would make good ink.

William served in Italy until February 26, 1945, when the Italian Campaign ended. The following day, he embarked for the Northwest Europe Theatre, first arriving in France. He continued to serve with the 5th Canadian Armoured Division Signals, R.C.C.S., as they advanced through France and Belgium towards Germany. On May 7, 1945, Germany surrendered, and VE Day, marking the end of war in Europe, was celebrated on May 8, 1945.

Approximately one month after VE Day, on June 4, 1945, William Metcalfe lost his life in a tragic accident in Groningen, Holland. On the night of June 3, 1945, he along with a few of his comrades, attended a Unit dance being held in the Appollo Club in Groningen. After the dance, he and his comrades left the club and returned to their quarters at about 0130 hours, June 4. At about 0200 hours, William left alone from his billet accommodation. At the 0900 hours roll call that morning, William was absent. Five days later, on the morning of June 9, 1945, his body was recovered from the Loopende Canal in Groningen.

In the investigation that followed, it was determined that at some time in the very early hours of June 4, William had been walking on the cobble-surfaced street alongside the Loopende Canal when he fell in and accidentally drowned. The canal was approximately 40 feet wide, varied in depth from 10 to 15 feet, and had no curb or railing at the edge of the street forming the canal wall. William's body was discovered in the canal five days after he fell in and was recovered. He was buried on June 9, 1945 at 5th Canadian Armoured Division Temporary Cemetery, Groningen. His remains were later reburied in Holten Canadian Military Cemetery.

In mid-June of 1945, Lt. Col. William W. McVicar in Sarnia was notified of the death of his grandson, Signalman William Stuart Metcalfe, which had occurred in Holland on June 4. Also in mid-June 1945, Julia Metcalfe on College Street received the following letter from a Major-General, Adjutant-General:

Dear Mrs. Metcalfe:

It was with deep regret that I learned of the death of your son, A50101 Signalman William Stuart Metcalfe, who died while in the Service of his Country in the Western European Theatre of War on the 4th day of June, 1945.

You may be assured that any additional information received will be communicated to you without delay. The Minister of National Defence and the Members of the Army Council have asked me to express to you and your family their sincere sympathy in your bereavement.

William Metcalfe's death was later officially recorded as, *Overseas casualty, in the field (Holland), cause of death accidental drowning*. William left behind his parents Karl and Julia Metcalfe in Canada, and his wife of a little over two years Helen, and their one year-old son Terrence, in England.

In July 1945, Karl and Julia Metcalfe began the application process with the Director of Immigration to bring their daughter-in-law Helen and their grandchild Terry to Canada. The hope was that they would come to Canada to

live either with Karl at 22 Duke Street, London, or with Julia, who was living with her parents Colonel and Mrs. McVicar at 309 North College Street, Sarnia. In December 1945, Helen, still in England, received a War Service Gratuity of \$988.68 for the loss of her husband. In February 1946, the Director of Immigration approved the settlement arrangements for Helen and Terry Metcalfe to come to Canada. They initially resided with Karl on Duke Street in London, and by June 1946, were residing on their own at 277 Steele Street, London.

William Metcalfe, 24, is buried in Holten Canadian War Cemetery, Netherlands, Grave VI.B.13. His name is also inscribed on the Petrolia cenotaph.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, J, L, N, S, 2C, 2D, 7C, 8X, 8Y

MILLER, David Douglas (#R/68104)

David Douglas Miller was operating his own business in Sarnia when he joined the air force. During his training he found time to marry his fiancée. One month later, he embarked overseas. After completing thirty-seven operations in one of the most dangerous postings of the war, he sacrificed his life for the Allied cause. He left behind his wife and their two year-old daughter.

David was born in Sarnia on November 5, 1915, the eldest son of Douglas Martin and Iva Ellen (nee Shephard) Miller, of 394 Campbell Street, Sarnia. Douglas (born in Sombra) and Iva (born in Wilkesport) were married in Wilkesport, Ontario on December 23, 1914. Douglas and Iva Miller had five children together: David; Clifford A. Stanley (born 1916); Lloyd Gordon (born 1918, died two years later); Nadine Anne (born 1920); and Claire Miller. Douglas supported his family working as a railway employee, a C.N.R. engineer.

David Miller attended several public elementary schools in Sarnia from September 1921 to September 1928, including Russell Street, George Street and Confederation Street schools. He then attended Sarnia Collegiate from September 1928 to June 1934, taking courses that included mechanical drafting, mathematics, typing, shorthand and bookkeeping. David participated in rugby, hockey, baseball and basketball.

David had a number of jobs before he enlisted: he was employed by W.A. Duggan, General Merchant on Campbell Street in Sarnia doing deliveries and as a clerk for almost ten years until October 1934; he was employed as a clerk at E. and R. Shoe Company in Sarnia from October 1934-February 1935; he was employed as an attendant by Harry Hayes at a service station in Detroit from March 1935-March 1936; and he was employed as a truck driver by J.W. Krantz in Detroit from March 1936-June 1938.

In June 1938, David returned to Sarnia, operating a Supertest gasoline service station at the corner of London Road and Vidal Street. He operated the station until he joined the R.C.A.F. David's manager at the Supertest Station wrote a reference letter to the Recruiting Officer on behalf of David, stating, *While under his employ, he distinguished himself greatly by taking over the business and through his efforts he brought it up from a very low standard of efficiency to the highest rating it had ever known.* The manager stated that he was very reluctant to lose him, but would, without hesitation, accept him again.

David originally joined the Royal Canadian Air Force as a tradesman, on September 15, 1939 (five days after Canada declared war on Germany). Nine months later, on June 25, 1940, twenty-four-year-old David Miller officially enlisted in the R.C.A.F. in London, Ontario. He stood five feet four and a half inches tall, had brown eyes and light brown hair, was single, and lived with his parents on Campbell Street in Sarnia at the time. Keen to fly, he requested flying duties, with a preference to be a pilot.

On July 2, 1940, David took the late morning train from London and arrived at #1 Manning Pool, at Exhibition Grounds, Toronto. From #1 Manning Depot in Toronto, David began his air training at #1 Initial Training School (ITS) in Toronto, and then continued at #2 Wireless School in Calgary. In late September 1940, while at #2 Wireless School in Calgary, he wrote the following letter to his Commanding Officer (it was a military requirement that a soldier had to obtain his Commanding Officer's written permission in order to marry):

Dear Sir:

It is my desire to obtain your permission to my getting married. My future wife is a Graduate Nurse from Chatham General Hospital, Chatham Ontario. Her name is Miss Marguerite Irwin. She is still working at the above mentioned hospital.

We have been engaged for nearly two years now and have only been waiting her graduation till we marry. She is now a Graduate Nurse and her complete training is ended December 18th. Our plans have been for some time to be married on or about December 27th. However these will have to be altered now to suit the situation.

Miss Irwin is twenty three years of age, I am twenty-five. We both come from Sarnia, Ontario. My financial position is such that we both feel we can get married at this time.

Your earnest approval of this marriage will be deeply appreciated.

Yours truly, R.68104 David D. Miller

In January 1941, David continued his air training at #4 Bombing and Gunnery School (B&GS) in Fingal, Ontario. That same month, the Irwin family doctor (Dr. Tutt, Front Street, Sarnia) wrote a letter to the Commanding Officer of #4 B&GS on behalf of Marguerite. Following is that letter:

The Officer Commanding Gunnery and Bombing School, Fingal, Ontario

Sir: I have known Miss Marguerite Irwin and her family well for several years. They are very fine people, of spotless record so far as I, as family doctor and friend, have ever heard. Miss Irwin is a graduate nurse of an excellent training school for nurses where discipline is rigid and standards high. I unhesitatingly say she is a most desirable, moral and splendid type of person.

David Miller received his Commanding Officer's authority to marry. On February 16, 1941, David married Jessie Marguerite Irwin, the eldest daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Chester Irwin of 142 Clarence Street, Port Colborne. The marriage took place at St. Paul's United Church in Sarnia. At the ceremony, Miss Wilma Irwin, sister of the bride, served as bridesmaid and Alex Hodges served as the best man. A reception was given by the bridegroom's parents.

On February 17, 1941, one day after getting married, David was awarded his Air Gunner's Badge and began a three-week leave. The newlywed couple travelled on a motor trip to Toronto and Niagara Falls for their honeymoon. On their return, Jessie initially lived with her in-laws, Douglas and Iva Miller at 394 Campbell Street, Sarnia. David and Jessie later had a daughter together, Saralea Faith Miller.



WAG David Douglas Miller

In mid-March 1941, David was posted to the Embarkation Depot in Debert, Nova Scotia. On April 8, 1941, one month after getting married, he embarked overseas bound for the United Kingdom. Initially posted to #3 Personnel Reception Centre (PRC), he continued his training in the U.K., including at #1 Signals School; and with #22 Operational Training Unit (OTU) in Warwickshire; and at Station Portreath in Cornwall, England. In mid-March 1942, David Miller became a member of #15 Operational Training Unit, RAF Harwell. Two weeks later, on April 1, 1942, he departed the U.K. bound for the Middle East, where he became a member of #205 Group. By late May 1942, he was a member of RAF #148 Squadron "Trusty", part of **Bomber Command**.

During the course of the war, one of this country's most significant contributions was the approximately 50,000 Canadians who served with the RCAF and RAF in Bomber Command operations. Next to Britain, Canada was the largest contributor to Bomber Command, making up more than a third of all of Bomber Command personnel. The men who served in Bomber Command faced some of the most difficult odds of anyone fighting in the war.

RAF #148 Squadron went through three different incarnations during the war. From April 1939 to April

1940, it was a Group Pool Squadron based in England, training airmen in Ansons and Wellingtons. In mid-December 1940 it was reformed in Malta, once again operating Vickers Wellington, a twin-engine medium bomber. This time the squadron was an active bomber squadron, carrying out attacks on Axis bases in Italy and Libya, first from Luqa, Malta and later from Kabrit, Egypt, supporting the 8th Army in North Africa. This second incarnation, which David Miller was a part of, ended on December 14, 1942. The third incarnation was as a special duties squadron, using a wide range of aircraft that carried out supply drops to resistance groups across the Balkans, and later carrying out pick-up missions.

As part of #148 Squadron, David took part in the **North African Campaign**. The campaign began in June 1940 and continued for almost three years, as Allied and Axis forces pushed each other back and forth across the desert. Battles between British Commonwealth, U.S. and French forces against Italian-German Axis and Vichy France forces took place across Libya, Egypt, Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia. Canadians fought as part of British army units, as members of the RAF or the Royal Canadian Air Force and with the Royal Canadian Navy.

On September 28, 1942, David Miller was part of a 6-man crew aboard Wellington HD947. The aircraft was on a night operation to attack Tobruk Harbour in North Africa when it went missing. Nothing was heard from the crew after it was reported missing, and it was assumed that the aircraft came down in the sea, and the crew lost their lives. Perishing with Flight sergeant-Wireless operator/Air Gunner David Miller were F/O S.C. Pearse, and Sgt's R.H. Gresham, A.H. Threlfall, D.A. Mitchell and R.C.M. Banbury.

In early October 1942, Jessie Miller, then residing with her in-laws, Douglas and Iva Miller on Campbell Street, received the following letter from the Air Commodore, Air Officer in Charge, Air Ministry Records:
Madam,

I am commanded by the Air Council to express to you their grave concern on learning from the Casualties Officer of the Royal Canadian Air Force that your husband, CAN.R.68104 Sergeant David Douglas MILLER has been reported missing.

The Wellington aircraft of which your husband was a wireless operator and air gunner failed to return to its base on the 28th September 1942 from an operational flight. This does not necessarily mean that he is killed or wounded, and if he is a prisoner of war, he should be able to communicate with you in due course. Meanwhile enquiries will be made through the International Red Cross Society and, as soon as any definite news is received, you will be at once informed.

If any information regarding your husband is received by you from any source you are requested to be kind enough to communicate it immediately to the Secretary, Department of National Defence for Air, Ottawa, who will forward it to the Air Ministry. The Air Council desire me to express their deep sympathy with you in your great anxiety, and earnestly hope that favourable news of your husband may be forthcoming.

Also in early October 1942, Jessie received the following letter from the Officer Commanding #148 Squadron:

Dear Mrs. Miller,

You will have received the news that your husband was missing from an operation on the night of 28th/29th September. He was front gunner in an aircraft that took off during the evening of the 28th to bomb the harbor at Tobruk. From that time we heard no more of the aircraft or crew. I am sorry that I am unable to give you any more information, but that is all I know.

Your husband was a member of an excellent crew and had himself completed thirty seven operations since joining the Squadron at the end of May. He operated at high pressure throughout June, July and August while the Germans were advancing.

You have a husband to be proud of Mrs. Miller and I sincerely hope that he will prove to be a prisoner of war.

In November 1942, Douglas and Iva Miller received the news that their eldest son David was reported missing, and that he had not returned from an operational flight in the Middle East several weeks prior. In Port Colborne, David's wife Jessie also received the news that her husband was reported missing after not returning from operations in the Middle East. David Miller's death was later officially recorded as, *Previously reported missing after air operations, now for official purposes, presumed dead, overseas.*

In June 1943, Jessie, then living at 294 Campbell Street, received a telegram from Ottawa informing her that her husband, FLIGHT SERGEANT DAVID DOUGLAS MILLER IS PRESUMED TO HAVE DIED ON

SEPTEMBER 28 OF THE PREVIOUS YEAR DURING AIR OPERATIONS OVER TOBRUK IN AFRICA.

In February 1945, exactly four years after getting married, Jessie Miller, then living with her parents in Port Colbourne, received a War Service Gratuity of \$463.34 for the loss of her husband. Two years later, in late February 1947, Jessie received the following letter from the Wing Commander, for Chief of the Air Staff in Ottawa:

Dear Mrs. Miller:

It is a privilege to have the opportunity of sending you the Operational Wings and Certificate in recognition of the gallant services rendered by your husband, Flight Sergeant D.D. Miller. I realize there is little which may be said or done to lessen your sorrow, but it is my hope that these "Wings", indicative of operations against the enemy, will be a treasured memento of a young life offered on the altar of freedom in defence of his Home and Country.

In November 1952, Jessie received a letter from the Wing Commander, R.C.A.F. Casualties Officer, for Chief of the Air Staff. Following is a portion of that letter:

Dear Mrs. Miller:

It is with reluctance that after so long an interval, I must refer to the loss of your husband, Flight Sergeant David Douglas Miller, but due to the lack of any information concerning him since he was reported missing, it must be regretfully accepted and officially recorded that he does not have a "known" grave.

Due to the extreme hazards attending air operations there are, unhappily, many thousands of British aircrew boys who do not have "known" graves and all will be commemorated on General Memorials that will be erected at a number of locations by the Imperial War Graves Commission (of which Canada is a member), each Memorial representative of a theatre of operations. One of these Memorials will be erected at El Alamein, and the name of your husband will appear on that Memorial...

I realize that this is an extremely distressing letter and that there is no manner of conveying such information to you that would not add to your heartaches. I am fully aware that nothing I may say will lessen your great sorrow, but I would like to express to you and the members of your family my deepest sympathy.

David Miller left behind his parents Douglas and Iva, his brother and two sisters, all residing in Sarnia, and his wife Jessie and their daughter Saralea Miller, who was not yet two years old. Years later, Jessie Miller re-married, becoming Mrs. Jessie Hodgkins, living at 627 Maple Avenue, Sarnia.

Flight Sergeant David Miller, 26, has no known grave. His name is inscribed on the Alamein Memorial, Egypt, Column 264. David Miller's Citations include: Etoile de 1939-1945, Africa Star, Defence Medal, War Medal 1939-1945, Canadian Volunteer Service Medal & Clasp, Operational Wings posthumously awarded on February 28, 1947.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, J, L, M, N, 2C, 2D, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10B

MILLS, Thomas Gordon (#A/105836)

At age 21, Thomas Gordon Mills left his machinist apprenticeship at Imperial Oil to serve his country. It was a career he planned to return to after the war. He never got the chance. He gave his life in defence of freedom while fighting to liberate Italy.

Thomas was born in Sarnia on July 9, 1921, the eldest son of Gordon and Gretchen Kathleen Mills who were married on September 9, 1919 in Sarnia. Gordon and Gretchen Mills had two children together: Thomas and Robert Arthur. The Mills family lived at 104 Norman Street in Sarnia, and Gordon supported his family working on the staff of Marketing Accounting Department at the Sarnia Imperial Refinery. Thomas' grandmother Sarah Vansickle, and aunt Frances Kettle, both resided at 224 Cameron Street, Sarnia.

Thomas attended Sarnia Collegiate for two years, leaving school in 1939 after grade ten at the age of eighteen. He enjoyed swimming, bicycling and baseball. After completing grade ten, he worked for twenty months at Mueller Brass Limited in Sarnia as a milling machine operator. He then worked as a machinist (apprentice) at Imperial Oil Limited Refinery in Sarnia for ten months--six months in the machine shop and four months in the drum plant.

On July 6, 1940, Thomas married Gladys Annabell Wells in Sarnia. Thomas and Gladys Mills had one child together, a son, Thomas Gordon Mills Jr. After less than three years of marriage, and before Thomas enlisted, he and Gladys separated by mutual agreement. Gladys and son Thomas Jr. would live with her parents, Mr. and Mrs. E. Wells, at 128 Penrose Street, Sarnia.

On January 19, 1943, twenty-one-year-old Thomas Mills enlisted in the Canadian Army in London, Ontario. He stood five feet eight and three-quarter inches tall, had brown eyes and dark brown hair, and was living at home with his parents on Norman Street at the time. He gave no specific reason for joining the army, but did say he was, “excited to get a few whacks at ‘Gerry’”. He expressed a preference to be a driver. After the war he planned to return to Sarnia to work as a machinist at Imperial Oil. From #1 District Depot in London, Thomas received his army training at #13 Basic Training Center (BTC) in Listowel (where he qualified as a Class III driver); and advanced training at A-29 Canadian Infantry Training Centre (CITC) at Camp Ipperwash. On July 18, 1943, six months after enlisting, Private Thomas Mills embarked overseas for the United Kingdom.

Arriving in the U.K. in late July 1943, Thomas continued his training as a member of the #3 Canadian Infantry Reinforcement Unit (CIRU). In mid-October 1943, Thomas was transferred, becoming a member of the Perth Regiment, Royal Canadian Infantry Corps (RCIC). On October 26, 1943, Private Thomas Mills of the Perth Regiment departed from the U.K., arriving in Italy on November 8, 1943.

The **Italian Campaign**, the first sustained Canadian Army operation of the War, had begun with the invasion of Sicily on July 10, 1943. The fierce fighting on the island would last more than four weeks, during which the Canadians would advance through difficult mountainous terrain, against an ever-stiffening German resistance. By August 17, the Germans had evacuated the island to the Italian mainland. In early September 1943, Canadian and Allied forces would invade Italy. Though Italy surrendered shortly after, the occupying Germans made it clear their fight was not over. Liberating Italy would be a painstaking northward crawl, lasting 20 months, over a range of landscapes, through challenging weather, and against a series of well-protected defences held by some of the German army’s best troops.

Thomas Mills served with the Perth Regiment as they advanced northward through Italy. Gordon and Gretchen Mills in Sarnia received letters from their son Thomas, two of the later ones were dated September 9 and 15, 1944. In the second letter, Thomas stated that he was out of the lines at the time but that he expected to return to them soon.

On October 1, 1944, almost eleven months after arriving in Italy, Private Thomas Mills lost his life while fighting near Rimini. Thomas’ remains were buried at a location recorded on the Army Field Service Card as, “11 CIB Cem. Cesena sh 100A MR 742023 RB Grave 3, Italy.”

On October 14, 1944, Gladys Mills on Penrose Street, received the following telegram from the Director of Records in Ottawa: MINISTER OF NATIONAL DEFENCE DEEPLY REGRETS TO INFORM YOU THAT A105836 PRIVATE THOMAS GORDON MILLS HAS BEEN OFFICIALLY REPORTED KILLED IN ACTION FIRST SEPTEMBER 1944 STOP IF ANY FURTHER INFORMATION BECOMES AVAILABLE IT WILL BE FORWARDED AS SOON AS RECEIVED. No other details of his death were given.

Since Gordon and Gretchen had received letters written by their son on September 9 and 15, 1944, they believed that there was an error in the transmission, and that his death should have read October 1. Three days later, Gladys Mills and Thomas’ parents received the following telegram from the Director of Records in Ottawa: TELEGRAM 2532 DATED FOURTEENTH OCTOBER 1944 SHOULD HAVE READ AS FOLLOWS STOP MINISTER OF NATIONAL DEFENCE DEEPLY REGRETS TO INFORM YOU THAT A105836 PRIVATE THOMAS GORDON MILLS HAS BEEN OFFICIALLY REPORTED KILLED IN ACTION ON A DATE NOT YET CONFIRMED STOP LETTER FOLLOWS.

In late October 1944, Gretchen received the following letter from the Colonel, Director of Records, for Adjutant-General:

Dear Mrs. Mills:

With further reference to my telegram of the 17th instant concerning the regretted death of A.105836 Private Thomas Gordon Mills, I wish to inform you that information received from Overseas advises that Private Mills was killed in action on the 1st September, 1944.

However, as the casualty return received from the Unit was dated 5th October, it is considered that there was an error in the date as shown on the casualty return. The Overseas Authorities are presently investigating the correct date of your son’s death and I wish to assure you that you will be immediately advised on receipt of further official information from Overseas Authorities.

In mid-November 1944, Gladys received the following letter from the Major-General, Adjutant-General:

Dear Mrs. Mills:

It was with deep regret that I learned of the death of your husband, A105836 Private Thomas Gordon Mills, who gave his life in the Service of his Country in the Mediterranean Theatre of War on the 1st day of October, 1944.

From official information we have received, your husband was killed in action against the enemy. You may be assured that any additional information received will be communicated to you without delay.

The Minister of National Defence and the Members of the Army Council have asked me to express to you and your family their sincere sympathy in your bereavement. We pay tribute to the sacrifice he so bravely made.

Thomas Mills' death was later officially recorded as, *Overseas casualty, killed in action, in the field (Italy)*. In late October 1945, a stained-glass window in memory of Pte. Thomas Gordon Mills was unveiled and dedicated at a morning service in Canon Davis Memorial Church. In December 1945, the Children's Aid Society in Sarnia received a War Service Gratuity of \$307.29 for Thomas Gordon Mills Jr., for the loss of his father.

In late April 1947, the Director of Records, for Adjutant-General, sent Gretchen Mills a photograph of the grave and marker over the burial place of her eldest son. Thomas Gordon Mills, 23, is buried in Cesena War Cemetery, Italy, Grave III, G, 8. On his headstone are inscribed the words, BE THOU FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH, AND I WILL GIVE THEE A CROWN OF LIFE. His name is also inscribed on the Sarnia Refinery Plaque. Unveiled in 1949, the plaque has the names of 24 Sarnia Imperial Oil employees who made the ultimate sacrifice in World War II.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, J, L, N, O, 2C, 2D, 7C, 8X, 8Y

MISENER, Everett Paul (#R/122986)

Nineteen year-old Everett Misener interrupted his college studies to serve his country. While training, he displayed all the attributes to be an excellent fighter pilot. It was during training that he lost his life in a tragic flying accident. The death of their youngest son devastated his family, and was made worse by a military error.

Everett was born in Sarnia on December 30, 1921, the youngest son of Robert Scott (born in Brucefield, Huron, Ontario) and Olive Elizabeth (nee Glass, born in Sarnia) Misener. The Misener family lived at 286 North Vidal Street, Sarnia, and Robert Misener was a captain and president of Colonial Steamships Limited, Port Colborne, Ontario (in Everett's Service File, several documents record Captain Robert Misener of Sarnia Steamships Limited, Port Colborne). Robert and Olive Misener had six children together: William Austin Miles (born 1903, but died at 6 months old); Ralph Scott (born 1908, would serve in the Royal Canadian Mounted Police reserve in Winnipeg); John Erwin (born 1905, enlisted in the navy in the fall of 1940 and became a Sub-Lieutenant in the Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve, and would serve at an Eastern Canadian port, in the North Atlantic, the North Sea, the English Channel and the Irish Sea); Inez Mildred Elizabeth (born 1905); Dorothy Olive (born 1915) and Everett. Years later, both of Everett's sisters married, becoming Mrs. J.B. Pierson, of Montreal, and Mrs. J.A. France, of Sarnia.

Everett Misener attended London Road Public School from 1927 to 1934, then Sarnia Collegiate from 1934 to 1939. He was very active in basketball and football, and participated in track, rugby and softball. He was a congregant of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church where he became a member of the Young Men's Ushers Club. After completing high school, Everett continued his education at Ridley College, St. Catharines, Ontario from February 1940 until June 1941. At Ridley College, he worked on his Junior Matriculation, and was also member of the Air Cadet Corps there, which was affiliated with the 119th Bombing Squadron, Hamilton. In a reference letter written by the Ridley College Assistant to the Headmaster on behalf of Everett's RCAF application, the Assistant wrote, *(Everett) has a pleasing personality, and is exceptionally well-liked by his fellow students. He is of sound moral character, and has a high sense of honour and loyalty. I have no hesitation in recommending him to you most highly in every way. I feel sure that he would be an asset to any branch of the Service.*

Nineteen year-old Everett Misener interrupted his studies at Ridley to enlist in the Royal Canadian Air Force on September 1, 1941 in Hamilton, Ontario. He stood six feet one inch tall, had blue eyes and blonde hair, was single, and recorded his address as 286 Vidal Street, Sarnia (at home with his parents). Everett recorded that he had worked for approximately eight months in 1941 as a steel handler with Port Arthur Shipbuilding Company Limited. He expressed his desire to be a pilot, and the RCAF Medical Board declared Everett to be, *Above average intellect, physically fit, an above average recruit, should make an excellent pilot*. The Recruiting Officer recorded of Everett, *Good average young Canadian – keen to fly and serve overseas and should do well in training*. From #1 Manning Depot in Toronto, Everett received his air training at #1 Bombing and Gunnery School (B&GS) in Jarvis; and at #1 Initial Training School (ITS) in Toronto; continuing at #7 Elementary Flying Training School (EFTS) in Windsor; and at #2 Service Flying Training School (SFTS) at Uplands (Ottawa).

Just prior to his graduation at Uplands, Everett was able to take a few days away to be the best man at the wedding of his brother John. John Erwin Misener of the RCNVR, married Catherine Patricia Marie Taylor of Sarnia on August 15th, 1942. The wedding took place in the chapel of HMCS King's College in Halifax, where John had graduated as a sub-lieutenant that morning. Three years later, in mid-August of 1945 only days after VJ-Day, Lieutenant John Misener was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for his part in the sinking of a German submarine in early March of 1945.

Everett Misener graduated from SFTS Uplands a little over one week after his brother's wedding and was awarded his Pilot's Flying Badge on August 28, 1942. The SFTS Commanding Officer comments on Everett included, *Slow at first but caught on and progressed rapidly to above average on inst. Has considerable natural ability once he gets going... Has been above average during course. Link Trainer progress and ability excellent and High character and leadership qualities... Courteous, clean-cut, popular, plenty of initiative, mature, neat, intelligent and hard worker.* The Chief Instructor recommended Everett for Fighter Squadron.



Sergeant-Pilot Everett Paul Misener

On September 27, 1942, Everett began an instructor's course at RCAF #3 Flying Instructor School (FIS), in Arnprior, Ontario. As part of the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan, provisions were made for three separate flying instructor schools in Canada—No. 1 at Trenton, Ontario for twin-engine aircraft; No. 2 at Vulcan, Alberta (later Pearce) for Harvard instructors; and No. 3 at Arnprior, for instructors at elementary flying schools. #3 FIS at Arnprior operated from August 1942 to January 1944.

Approximately two weeks after beginning his instructor's training, Everett Misener lost his life in a flying accident. Prior to the accident, he had over 102 hours of dual flying and 170 hours of solo flying hours. On October 11, 1942, Sergeant-Pilot Everett Misener was on a solo cross-country training flight aboard his Cornell Fairchild aircraft #10505, from Arnprior to Kingston, Ontario. At approximately 1100 hours, his Cornell aircraft crashed seven miles north-west of Watertown, New York, while endeavouring to make a forced landing on a three-lane highway. Everett, who suffered multiple injuries in the plane crash, died instantly; his body was found in the wreckage. The circumstances of casualty were officially listed as, *Low Flying. Possibility of vision being obscured temporarily by the sun in his eyes. Aircraft struck high tension wires and crashed into tree.*

A few days later, Everett's funeral with military honours was held in Sarnia. Following a service at the Misener home for family and friends, a public service was held in St. Andrew's Presbyterian church that was largely attended. The Rev. J.M. Macgillivray of St. Andrew's, assisted by Flight-Lieutenant O. Nimmo, oversaw the church service. In part of Rev. Macgillivray's eulogy he said, *This sad bereavement has brought the horrors of war closer to us. Today we mourn the loss of another one of our fine young men who has given his life for the cause. Paul represented the finest type of Canadian manhood. He was clean, strong, vigorous and every inch a man. He had the stuff that makes good airmen and he was beloved by all who knew him. It is hard to think that a young life has been snuffed out. He gave all he had – his years of success to come – for the things most precious to him. His sacrifice is nonetheless real because he did not fight the foe overseas. He gave his life for his country, his family, for you and for*

me. As the funeral party made its way to the Sarnia (Lakeview) Cemetery, it was accompanied by a R.C.A.F. band and an escort from the air base at St. Thomas. At the cemetery, a firing party fired a volley and the "Last Post" was sounded.

In mid-November of 1942, still mourning the recent loss of their son, the Misener family had to deal with a painful error made by the Department of National War Services. On November 18, 1942, a letter was received at the Misener home from the National War Services with a notification that Everett Paul Misener was to report for medical examination prior to his call to service in the military. There had been reports that there were similar cases of this kind of tragic error not only in the Sarnia-Lambton district but across the country. Captain Robert Scott Misener took the matter up with the authorities so that steps would be taken to prevent further hurt to members of such families.

Following is the letter that Captain Robert S. Misener sent to the Department of National War Services, in London, Ontario, and to the Minister of the Department of National War Services in Ottawa:

Dear Sir,

Your notice of call No. A-73816 for my son Everett Paul Misener was received at my home on November 18, 1942.

On October 11 of this year, my family and I experienced one of the greatest sorrows a family could suffer. We lost our youngest son on active service with the R.C.A.F. This boy had voluntarily offered his services to his country in July, 1941, in order that he too might share in the struggle of all free men against oppressive tyranny. He worked hard so that his family, his country and all free peoples might the sooner see peace and happiness emerge out of today's chaos. His ambition was realized on August 26, 1942, when he received his wings. Now he, too, could join those thousands of other brave young Canadians who hammered at the foe in every corner of the globe. Such was what he wanted, but destiny intervened and his young life was cruelly cut off before the realization of his fondest hopes for us all.

The late Sgt. Pilot Everett Paul Misener, whose military call was received last week, needed no call to arms. He knew his duty; he gave his life for his country.

Such was the man whose memory you have insulted, though perhaps unintentionally, with a call to service. As his father, my wrath transcends my sorrow. I denounce with all my strength the gross carelessness and utter incompetency of the clerks in the department you represent. I blame no less the superior officers and executive chiefs of the department for their negligence and inefficiency in permitting such errors to be made by members of their staff. Worse, if they know that such conditions exist, I condemn them for their unforgivable lack of consideration for their fellow men by not ensuring against a repetition of such occurrences.

So that their feelings may be spared at least this additional wound, I feel that I speak on behalf of all parents, and others concerned, in the same position as I am, in saying that such careless and inefficient methods should be dealt with immediately.

In August 1945, Captain Robert Scott and Olive Misener received a War Service Gratuity of \$97.50 for the loss of their youngest son Everett. A little over five months later, another Sarnian, Pilot Officer Edwin Robert Myles, would lose his life in a training accident at the same school (he is included in this Project). Everett Misener, 20, is buried in Sarnia (Lakeview) Cemetery, Sarnia, Ontario, Section E. Lot 121.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, J, L, M, N, 2C, 2D, 7C, 8X, 8Y

MONTEITH, Charles Clarence (#A/108948)

Charles Clarence Monteith interrupted his career as a mechanic, and left behind his wife and three young children so that he could serve his country. After more than sixteen months of training, and not long after arriving overseas, he suffered a brain haemorrhage. One month after he died, VE Day was declared.

Charles was born in Delaware Township, Ontario on June 27, 1915, the eldest son of Bert (born in Delaware Twp., Ontario) and Gertrude May (nee Finch) Monteith. Bert and Gertrude Monteith were married in Lambeth on September 14, 1910, and lived in Petrolia. Bert Monteith supported his family working as a truck driver. Charles had four brothers and one sister, who at the time of his death were: Lorne Nelson (born 1923) and Walter Cecil (born 1928) both residing in Petrolia; Morley (born 1917), who had been overseas with the Governor-General's Foot Guards for three years and was in Germany at the time; Melvin Bertram (born June 1914, but died a month later); and his only sister, Leatta Viola (born 1912, later became Mrs. Alfred Hall, residing in Petrolia).

Charles attended Petrolia High School for only one year in 1928, leaving grade nine at the age of thirteen. After, he took a night course in welding in Sarnia. Charles had little interest in sports but enjoyed motor mechanics.

He had a number of jobs before enlisting including: six years as a rural mail carrier; six years as a motor mechanic (part at Lambton Motors); one year at Polymer, Sarnia doing maintenance on diesel engines; and four months at Dow Chemical of Canada Limited in Sarnia in mechanics maintenance. And he always found time for his hobby, working late hours on two or three engines in his workshop.

On April 24, 1937, Charles married Edythe Helen Ferguson, the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. D.L. Ferguson at the Wyoming Parsonage. Miss Leta Monteith served as bridesmaid and Alfred Hall served as the best man. Following the wedding ceremony, a wedding dinner was served at the home of the bride's sister, Mrs. J.M. Gillatly. After the ceremony, Charles and Edythe Monteith left for a wedding trip to Detroit. On their return, they resided in Thamesville. Charles and Edyth Monteith had three children together: Edna Rosalee (born Dec. 23, 1937); Robert Clarence (born April 3, 1941); and Reginald Duncan (born Nov. 27, 1942).

Twenty-eight-year-old Charles Monteith enlisted in the Canadian Army on November 23, 1943 in London, Ontario. He stood five feet seven inches tall, had blue eyes and brown hair, and along with his wife and three children were living at 442 George Street at the time. After the war he planned to return to his work as a motor mechanic. From #1 District Depot in London, Charles began his army training at #23 Canadian Armoured Corps Basic Training Centre (CACBTC) in Newmarket, Ontario. In mid-February 1944, he moved to Camp Borden where he received further training at #1 Canadian Armoured Corps Training Regiment (CACTR); and then Technical & Schools Wing (T&S Wing), Canadian Armoured Corps Training Establishment; and then Canadian Armoured Corps Trained Soldiers Regiment (CACTSR). Rising in rank to Lance Corporal at CACTSR, he earned qualifications as a Class III Driver and Driver Mechanic Group "C" (tank).

Almost sixteen months after enlisting, in March 1945, Charles Monteith reverted to the rank of Trooper, and on March 19, 1945, he sailed for the United Kingdom. Overseas, he continued his training as a member of #2 Canadian Armoured Corps Reinforcement Unit (CACRU). As a member of the Royal Canadian Armoured Corps (RCAC), he sent several letters home to his family, the last one on April 5, 1945. Less than three weeks after arriving overseas, on April 9, 1945, Charles was admitted to No. 17 Canadian General Hospital in Wokingham, England.

On the morning of April 9, 1945, Charles Monteith was getting ready for morning parade among his comrades when they saw him fall. Unconscious and with laboured breathing, he was brought to the hospital right away. He was diagnosed with a brain haemorrhage, and over the next six days, his condition gradually deteriorated. In the early morning hours of April 14, 1945, Charles fell into a coma, and lost his life as a result of the brain haemorrhage, at No. 17 Canadian General Hospital. The cause of twenty-nine year olds death was recorded as: "subarachnoid haemorrhage – unknown cause". Charles Monteith was buried on April 17, 1945 in Brookwood Military Cemetery.

On April 10, 1945, Edythe on George Street received the following telegram from the Director of Records: SINCERELY REGRET INFORM YOU A108948 TROOPER CHARLES CLARENCE MONTEITH HAS BEEN OFFICIALLY REPORTED SERIOUSLY ILL NINTH APRIL 1945 DIAGNOSIS BRAIN HAEMORRHAGE STOP WHEN FURTHER INFORMATION BECOMES AVAILABLE IT WILL BE FORWARDED AS SOON AS RECEIVED STOP WHEN ADDRESSING MAIL ADD WORDS IN HOSPITAL IN BOLD LETTERS OVER NAME OF ADDRESSEE FOR QUICK DELIVERY.

On April 13, 1945, Edythe received the following telegram from the Director of Records: SINCERELY REGRET INFORM YOU A108948 TROOPER CHARLES CLARENCE MONTEITH HAS NOW BEEN OFFICIALLY REPORTED DANGEROUSLY ILL ELEVENTH APRIL 1945 STOP WHEN FURTHER INFORMATION BECOMES AVAILABLE IT WILL BE FORWARDED AS SOON AS RECEIVED.

On April 17, 1945, Edythe received the following telegram from the Director of Records: REGRET DEEPLY A108948 TROOPER CHARLES CLARENCE MONTEITH HAS NOW BEEN OFFICIALLY REPORTED TO HAVE DIED FOURTEENTH APRIL 1945 STOP YOU SHOULD RECEIVE FURTHER DETAILS BY MAIL DIRECT FROM THIS UNIT.

In late April 1945, Edythe received the following letter from the Major-General, Adjutant-General:
Dear Mrs. Monteith:

It was with deep regret that I learned of the death of your husband, A108948 Trooper Charles Clarence Monteith, who died while in the Service of his Country in the United Kingdom on the 14th day of April, 1945.

You may be assured that any additional information received will be communicated to you without delay.

The Minister of National Defence and the Members of the Army Council have asked me to express to you and your family their sincere sympathy in your bereavement.

Charles Monteith's death was later officially recorded as, *Overseas casualty, died as result of brain haemorrhage, England*. Less than one month after Charles' death, VE Day was declared, ending the war in Europe. Charles left behind his mother and father, three brothers and a sister, his wife Edythe and their three children; Edna (age 7), Robert (age 4) and Reginald (age 2).

In September 1945, Edythe received a War Service Gratuity of \$125.41 for the loss of her husband. In September 1946, the Colonel, Director of Records, for Adjutant-General, sent Edythe a photograph of the grave and marker over the burial place of her late husband in Surrey, England. Charles Monteith, 29, is buried in Brookwood Military Cemetery, Surrey, United Kingdom, Grave 51.C.1. On his headstone are inscribed the words, LOVING AND KIND FAITHFUL AND TRUE BEAUTIFUL MEMORIES WE HAVE OF YOU. FAMILY.
SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 7C, 8X, 8Y

MORRIS, Howard Paul (#J/14392)

Sarnia born Howard Morris had been active all his life in a variety of activities. His desire for action and for service to Canada led him to enlisting in the RCAF in 1941 when he was only 19. On December 16, 1943, Howard was killed when his Lancaster aircraft crashed as it returned to base after a night raid on Berlin.

Howard Paul Morris was born in Sarnia on September 19, 1921, the only son of Lloyd David and Marie Adams (nee Hickimbotham) Morris. Goderich born Lloyd wed Sarnia native Marie on September 8, 1920 in Sarnia, and they were blessed with two children: Howard and a younger daughter, V. Georgine. Lloyd supported his family working in the Pumping Department at Sarnia Imperial Oil Refinery and the family lived at 568 North Christina Street.

From an early age, Howard had a variety of interests that kept him busy. He received his early education at London Road Public School from 1928 to 1934 and then attended Sarnia Collegiate for six years from 1934 to 1940. He was active in tennis, swimming, baseball, golf, hockey and badminton, and his hobby was building model planes. Howard was also very interested in hunting and camping and had belonged to a local Boy Scout Troop.

He was a member of Central United Church and the Central Century Club. Howard was very interested in church affairs and, besides ushering on Sundays, he was chosen one year as the Junior Member of the Board of Stewards. For several years, Howard played in Robinson's and Pressey's Boys' Bands and, in the course of his musical career, had been awarded several medals. After graduating high school in 1940, he was employed in 1941 at F.W. Woolworths as a stock room manager. He then worked for six months at Sarnia Imperial Oil Limited Refinery, doing asbestos insulation and brick masonry.

Two months shy of his twentieth birthday, Howard enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force on July 19, 1941 in London. He stood six feet one inch tall, had blue eyes and brown hair, was single, and was residing at home with his parents on Christina Street at the time. He requested flying duties, with a preference to be either a Pilot or Observer. From the Recruiting Centre in London and #1 Manning Depot in Toronto, Howard received air training at #4 Bombing and Gunnery School (B&GS) at Fingal; at #6 Initial Training School (ITS) in Toronto; at #12 Elementary Flying Training School (EFTS) in Goderich; at #1 Service Flying Training School (SFTS) at Camp Borden; and Composite Training School (KTS) in Trenton. He then attended #4 Air Observer School (AOS) in London and finished third in his class. Howard was awarded his Air Observers Badge on September 25, 1942. In late September-early October of 1942, Howard spent a fourteen-day leave in Sarnia with his family and friends. Howard Morris then embarked overseas from #1 Y Depot in Halifax for the United Kingdom on October 10, 1942.

In late October 1942, Howard cabled his parents in Sarnia that he had arrived overseas safely. From #3 Personnel Reception Centre, he continued his training in the U.K. at #6 Air Observer School (AOS). In March 1943, Howard became a member of #22 Operational Training Unit (O.T.U.), training in Wellington bombers. On May 20, 1943, he became a member of RCAF #426 Thunderbird Squadron "On Wings of Fire", part of **Bomber Command**.

During the course of the war, one of this country's most significant contributions was the approximately 50,000 Canadians who served with the RCAF and RAF in Bomber Command operations. Next to Britain, Canada was the largest contributor to Bomber Command, making up more than a third of all of Bomber Command personnel. The men who served in Bomber Command faced some of the most difficult odds of anyone fighting in the war.

No. 426 Squadron was established at RAF Dishforth, Yorkshire, on October 15, 1942, as part of No. 4

Group. In January 1943, it was transferred to No. 6 (RCAF) Group. The squadron was equipped with Vickers Wellington aircraft to deliver bombs and mines to the enemy. In June 1943, the squadron transferred to RAF Linton-on-Ouse and switched to Avro Lancaster bombers. Later in April of 1944, the squadron began to convert to Handley Page Halifax bombers that they used until the end of the war in Europe. The thunderbird crest used by the squadron originates from North American natives, and according to myth, signifies disaster and death to anyone on the ground who perceives it.



Flying Officer-Navigator Howard Paul Morris

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Howard Morris was the Navigator for the Commanding Officer of #426 Squadron, Wing Commander L. Crooks, until the Commanding Officer was killed in action on August 17, 1943. In June of 1943, Lloyd and Marie Morris in Sarnia received news that their son Howard was promoted from Pilot Officer to Flying Officer on March 25, 1943.

No. 426 Squadron took part in many daring raids over enemy territory, including raids on Berlin, Leipzig and Frankfurt. One of those raids was on a December 16, 1943, a night raid over Berlin, Germany where 483 Lancasters took part in the operation. Howard Morris and the crew of Lancaster II aircraft DS779 (markings OQ-Q) took off from Linton-on-Ouse and were able to strike their target over Berlin and to make their way home; however, at approximately 23.25 hours on December 16 (7 hours after take-off), as the pilot let down through very low cloud on its approach to base, the aircraft crashed at Hunsingore near Marston, Moor, Yorkshire, England. The aircraft hit the ground and ran for several hundred yards. As it did, all the propellers snapped off as did the oil cooler, part of one rudder and other parts of the airframe. The pilot was able to lift the aircraft into the air again, clearing some trees and high-tension wires, before it crashed about a mile further on.

Five airmen were killed in the crash and two were injured and survived. Perishing with RCAF Navigator-F/O Howard Paul Morris were F/Sgt-Pilot Reginald Donald Stewart; Sgt's John Greenwell and Leslie Sale (both RAF), and F/O William Hamilton (RAF). Injured and surviving were Sgt. D.S. Jamieson (RCAF) and Sgt. Duncan Ernest Stewart (RAF).

Thirty bombers were lost in the raid including 25 Lancasters. A number of them were lost on their return to England due to very poor weather across almost all airfields. Several days after the crash, Lloyd and Marie Morris received a telegram from the R.C.A.F. Casualty Officer in Ottawa informing them that their son, FLYING OFFICER

HOWARD PAUL MORRIS WAS KILLED ON DECEMBER 16 WHILE ON ACTIVE SERVICE OVERSEAS. No details of the air operation in which Howard was killed were given, but it was intimated that a letter would soon follow. Howard Morris' remains were buried on December 22, 1943 at Harrogate Cemetery, England.



Flying Officer-Navigator Howard Paul Morris

In late December 1943, Marie received a letter from the Wing Commander of RCAF No. 426 Squadron. Following is a portion of that letter:

Dear Mrs. Morris:

You will have received a telegram informing you that your son, Flying Officer Howard Paul Morris, was killed on active service, some time before this letter reaches you. I know that you will want to know the circumstances of his death and I am extremely sorry that I have been unable to write sooner to give you such details as are available.

Your son was the Navigator of an aircraft detailed to attack Berlin on the night of the 16th December 1943. He and his crew had successfully carried out their mission and had reported on R.T. when approaching Base. Unfortunately, however, the weather had closed in on Base at the time of their return and the aircraft crashed whilst endeavouring to break cloud to come in for a landing. Your son and four other crew mates were killed instantaneously, the other two members being very seriously injured.

Your son was buried with full Service honours and interment took place at Stonefall Cemetery, Harrogate, Yorks. Owing to the time taken to communicate under present conditions, it was not possible to ascertain your wishes regarding the funeral, in the time available. I hope you will understand the necessity for this action and I sincerely trust that the arrangements made were what you would have desired. You will wish to know that all War Graves are taken care of by the Imperial War Graves Commission who will erect a temporary wooden cross pending the provision of a permanent memorial. I have to advise also that the question of re-interment, if this is desired, could only be considered at the conclusion of hostilities....

The news of Howard's death came as a severe blow to the members of this Squadron. He was a very capable and efficient Navigator, having completed several operational sorties over enemy territory. The quiet and efficient manner with which he carried out his duties as a Navigator earned him the respect of his entire crew. He died in the performance of his duty and this Squadron will miss him. We join with you in sorrow at his passing, and I wish to extend to you the deep felt sympathy of the officers and men of this Squadron in your bereavement.

There may be something I have not mentioned here which you may wish to know. If so, please do not hesitate to write to me, Mrs. Morris, as I am only too anxious to give you any information which may help you to bear the sad loss you have sustained.

Howard Morris was later officially recorded as, Killed after air operations at Hunsingore near Marston Moor, Yorkshire, England on returning from a bombing raid over Berlin, Germany. In July 1945, Lloyd and Marie received a War Service Gratuity of \$449.18 for the loss of their only son. Howard Morris, 22, is buried at Harrogate

(Stonefall) Cemetery, Yorkshire, United Kingdom, Section C, Row G, Grave 6. His name is also inscribed on the Sarnia Refinery Plaque. Unveiled in 1949, the plaque has the names of 24 Sarnia Imperial Oil employees who made the ultimate sacrifice in World War II.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, J, L, M, N, O, S, 2C, 2D, 4B, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10B, 10U

MYLES, Edwin Robert (#J/24295)

Edwin Robert (Edwin Jr.) Myles had much to look forward to after the war. With four years of experience working in an auto shop before he enlisted in 1941, he planned on becoming a licensed engine mechanic. Edwin would also be spending more time with Marjorie, a young lady he had married less than two years ago. Edwin's dreams of his future died when he was killed in a training accident near Ottawa in April 1943.

He was born in Sarnia on August 31, 1920, the only son of Edwin William and Emily Edith (nee Scammel) Myles. Edwin Sr. (born in Dorsetshire, Cranbourne, Surrey, England) and Emily (born in Egham, England) were married on April 2, 1919 in Egham, England and, at some point, immigrated to Canada. Edwin and Emily had two children together: first Edwin Jr. and then daughter Edith Kathleen. When Edwin Jr. was eight years old, his mother Edith and he visited England together, returning to Canada on September 10, 1928 aboard the passenger ship *Ausonia*. The Myles family initially lived at 213 Tecumseh Street and later moved to 103 Rose Street. This was convenient for Edwin Sr. as he worked as a car inspector at Imperial Oil.

Edwin Jr. attended Devine Street Public School in Sarnia from 1926 to 1932 and then Sarnia Collegiate Institute from 1932 to 1936. He completed school at the age of seventeen and was very active during his years at Sarnia Collegiate. While attending high school, he was a member of the Signal Corps, Non-Permanent Army Militia (NPAM) for six months, and was captain for a time. Edwin also participated in baseball, basketball, handball and bowling, and his hobbies were woodworking and photography. He was also busy outside school. Edwin was a member of St. John's Anglican Church and an active worker in the local Boy Scout Association for many years. He was Scoutmaster of the 2nd Kinsman Troop for a time. In recognition of his efforts, he was made a King Scout in 1937, an honour that permitted his name to be entered into a souvenir book of permanent record at Dominion Headquarters of the Boy Scout Association.

After completing high school, Edwin was unemployed for about a year, but his life changed in the next few years. First, he was hired in 1937 by Fred Galbraith to work at his Dodge and DeSoto dealership on Davis Street, a job he would have until he enlisted, doing body and mechanical work. To bolster his credentials, Edwin took a mechanics night course at Sarnia Collegiate in 1940.

Secondly, Edwin said goodbye to his days of bachelorhood. On June 20, 1941, Edwin, 20, married Marjorie Lorraine Drinkwater, the only daughter of Mr. and Mrs. E.W. Drinkwater, at St. John's Anglican Church in Sarnia. At the wedding ceremony, Miss Millicent Miller served as bridesmaid and the flower girl was Miss Edith Myles, the sister of the groom. Serving as best man was Bill Drinkwater, a brother of the bride. A reception was held at the YMCA for forty-six guests and, following that, the newlywed couple left on a motor trip to northern points. On their return, Edwin and Marjorie Myles lived with his parents at 103 Rose Street. Marjorie would later live at 223 Devine Street, Sarnia.

At age twenty-one and seven months after getting married, Edwin Myles joined the Royal Canadian Air Force in London, Ontario on January 26, 1942. He stood five feet nine and a half inches tall, and had brown eyes and dark brown hair. Marjorie and he were living at 103 Rose Street at the time. He requested flying duties, with a preference to be either a Pilot or Observer. His plan for after the war was to become a licensed engine mechanic. The Recruiting Officer recorded that Edwin was, *Eager for Air Crew, energetic, sociable, natural, self-possessed, modest, clear headed, has leadership training. Resolute and straight forward.*

From #9 Recruiting Centre in London and then #1 Manning Depot in Toronto, Edwin received his air training at the #1 Initial Training School (ITS) at the former Eglinton Hunt Club in Toronto; at #9 Elementary Flying Training School (EFTS) in St. Catharines; and then at #16 Service Flying Training School (SFTS) at Hagersville. The Instructor and Commanding Officer commented that Edwin was *A keen, alert, serious type of airman, dependable, with fine deportment and leadership qualities; A keen student of exceptional academic ability, good average flying ability... should go far with more experience in flying; and Should make a satisfactory twin engine instructor as seems anxious to carry on this work.*

Edwin Myles was awarded his Pilot's Flying Badge at Hagersville on March 5, 1943. At the ceremony, he

was presented with an R.C.A.F. identification bracelet for graduating from the St. Catharines E.F.T.S. with the highest marks on ground school work. After graduation, he returned to Sarnia on a 14-day leave to visit his parents Edwin and Emily, and his wife Marjorie. Returning to duty on March 19, 1943, Edwin went to Arnprior, Ontario to take an instructor's course, as a member of RCAF #3 Flying Instructor School (FIS), with the rank of Pilot Officer.

As part of the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan, provisions were made for three separate flying instructor schools in Canada—No. 1 at Trenton, Ontario for twin-engine aircraft; No. 2 at Vulcan, Alberta (later Pearce) for Harvard instructors; and No. 3 at Arnprior, for instructors at elementary flying schools. #3 FIS at Arnprior operated from August 1942 to January 1944.



Pilot Officer Edwin Robert Myles

Approximately two weeks after arriving at Arnprior, Edwin Myles was killed in a training accident. On April 3, 1943, P/O Edwin Myles and another officer, Pilot Officer R.W. Moeller, were flying in a Cornell aircraft FH740. Up to this point, Edwin had 115 hours of dual flying time and over 104 hours of solo flying. The two airmen were engaged in a routine mutual instruction instrument cross-country training flight, with Edwin in the front cockpit acting as Pilot-Student Instructor. At approximately 0930 hours, the aircraft crash landed into the ground in dense swamp bush-land, four miles North West of Cormack near Eganville (about 95 miles west of Ottawa). Edwin was killed instantly, suffering a compound fracture of the skull with multiple fractures of bones in both legs. The other airman, Pilot Officer R.W. Moeller was uninjured although the plane was completely destroyed.

Just one day after the crash, Edwin's parents and his wife Marjorie, who were all living on Rose Street, received news from R.C.A.F. Headquarters in Ottawa that Edwin was instantly killed in an R.C.A.F. training plane crash near Ottawa. The name of the other occupant of the plane was withheld by air force authorities at the time.

Edwin's remains arrived in Sarnia two days later. On that same day, Marjorie, now residing at 223 Devine Street, received the following letter from the Air Marshal, Chief of the Air Staff:

Dear Mrs. Myles:

I have learned with deep regret of the death of your husband, Pilot Officer Edwin Robert Myles, on Active Service on April 3rd and I wish to offer you my sincere and heartfelt sympathy.

It is so unfortunate that a promising career should be thus terminated and I would like you to know that his loss is greatly deplored by all those with whom your husband was serving.

A military funeral was held in Sarnia for Pilot Officer Edwin Myles under R.C.A.F. auspices. The funeral was held at the Robb Funeral Home, with a service conducted by Rev. J.A.E. Blackwell, rector of St. John's Anglican Church. From the funeral home, the cortege proceeded to St. John's Church where a public service was held. A party of R.C.A.F. officers and men from the Technical Training School at St. Thomas attended the funeral. Honorary pallbearers included five fellow Flying Officers and active pallbearers included six fellow Flight Sergeants. Accompanying the funeral party to internment at Lakeview cemetery was the R.C.A.F. band.

At the graveside, a firing party fired a volley while the band played "Abide With Me" and "The Last Post"

was sounded. Rev. Blackwell speaking from the text read, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith, we are met here once again to pay a last respect to one whom Almighty God has been fit to take..." He then said, "Is there any text more fitting to describe Pilot Officer Myles' life than the words which I have chosen; his faith which he kept to the end, cultivated and developed among you who knew him so well; his devotion to any task assumed; his steadfastness in his purpose and dependability in any task must serve as an inspiration to strengthen us to follow his example. Intermingled with the natural sorrow of our hearts will be the pride and joy in the memory of one who fought a good fight and kept the faith as a son, a husband or a companion."

Approximately five months earlier, another Sarnian, Sergeant-Pilot Everett Misener, had lost his life in a training accident at the same school (he is included in this Project). Pilot Officer-Pilot Edwin Myles was later officially recorded as, *Killed as the result of a flying accident (about four miles north west Cormac near Evanville Ontario) (Mutual instruction instrument flying cross country)*. Edwin Myles, 22, is buried at Sarnia (Lakeview) Cemetery, Sarnia, Ontario, Canada, Section E. Lot 122. On his headstone are inscribed the words, THERE IS COMFORT IN THE THOUGHT THAT A LOVING GOD KNOWS BEST.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, J, L, M, N, 2C, 2D, 7C, 8X, 8Y

NASH, Charles Arthur (#R/90884)

Sarnia born and educated Charles Arthur Nash, 24, was a young man who always kept himself busy, and after the war he planned to pursue one of his interests by becoming an electrical engineer. On a night raid over Munster, Germany in June 1943, as part of the #83 Pathfinder Force, his aircraft never returned. Charles Nash has no known grave.

Charles Nash was born in Sarnia on November 21, 1918, the only son of Albert Clarence (born in Grimsby, Ontario) and Lillian Kate (nee Kerry, born in Otford, Kent, England) Nash. Albert, a landscape gardener for the City of Sarnia, and Lillian were married in Sarnia in May 1915. Albert and Lillian were blessed with five children together: a son Charles, and daughters Lilian Alberta (Allison), Winnifred Gertrude (Carol), Alice Irene (Stamos), and Marian Evelyn Nash. The Nash family lived at 194 Elgin Street.

Charles attended public schools in Sarnia from 1924 to 1932 and then Sarnia Collegiate from September 1932 to May 1935. At Sarnia Collegiate, he pursued several interests. Besides taking courses in electricity, woodworking, math, history, science, English and Literature Composition, Charles was active in hockey, rugby, football and gymnastics, and his hobby was sailing. Outside school, Charles kept himself busy. He was a member of St. George's Anglican Church and he worked at a number of jobs prior to enlisting: making and applying brick siding at Insulated Building Materials in Sarnia from 1935 to 1937; doing electrical work at Imperial Electric in Sarnia for several winter months; applying brick siding at Ontario Roofing from 1937 to 1940; and in 1940 until he enlisted, working as an applicator and salesman with Western Roofing in North Bay. He had also worked for six months with S. Rigby Taxi and Transfer in North Bay as a driver.

At age twenty-two, Charles Nash enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force on June 23, 1941 in North Bay, Ontario. He stood five feet eight and a half inches tall, had blue eyes and brown hair, was single, and was residing at 91 Worthington Road, North Bay at the time. He requested flying duties as opposed to ground duties. His plan for after the war was to work in the field of electrical engineering. From the Recruiting Centre in North Bay and then #1 Manning Depot in Toronto, Charles received his air training at #1 Service Flying Training School (SFTS) at Camp Borden; at #1 Wireless School (WS) in Montreal; at Composite Training School (KTS) in Trenton; and then at #6 Bombing and Gunnery School (B&GS) in Mountain View, Ontario. At #6 B&GS, he finished third in his class of 35, and was awarded his Air Gunners Badge on May 11, 1942, with the rank of Sergeant-Air Gunner.

He then enjoyed a 14-day leave at his home in Sarnia before going overseas. After returning to duty, Charles was posted to #1 Y Depot in Halifax and the RAF Trainees Pool. On July 5, 1942, Charles embarked overseas for the United Kingdom. His parents in Sarnia received a cable from Charles later that month, telling them of his safe arrival at an English port.

Disembarking in the U.K. on July 18, 1943, from #3 Personnel Reception Centre, Charles continued his training at #7 Air Gunnery School (AGS) at Stormy Down, Wales, and then at #14 Operational Training Unit (OTU) Cottesmore, in Rutland, England. In early February 1943, he was transferred to #1660 Conversion Unit at RAF Swinderby. On April 3, 1943, Charles Nash became a member of RAF #83 Squadron "Strike to Defend", part of **Bomber Command**, with the rank of Warrant Officer Class II-Air Gunner.

During the course of the war, one of this country's most significant contributions was the approximately 50,000 Canadians who served with the RCAF and RAF in Bomber Command operations. Next to Britain, Canada was the largest contributor to Bomber Command, making up more than a third of all of Bomber Command personnel. The men who served in Bomber Command faced some of the most difficult odds of anyone fighting in the war.

RAF No. 83 Squadron, part of No. 5 Group, spent the first half of the war operating as a night bomber squadron, based at RAF Scampton, equipped with Handley Page Hampden twin-engine medium bombers. In late December 1941, the squadron began to convert to Avro Manchester bombers, also a twin-engine medium bomber. Flaws in the aircraft soon became apparent (underpowered and unreliable engines), and after only five months, in May 1942, the Manchesters were replaced by Avro Lancasters, which the squadron kept for the rest of the war. In August 1942, there were two big changes for the squadron—its base was transferred to RAF Wyton; and it became part of the **Pathfinder Force**.

The Pathfinder Force was made up of experienced, hand-picked crews from bomber squadrons with elite navigational abilities. These aerial rangers, equipped with the latest target-finding technologies were the spearhead of the bomber stream, arriving first over the target and dropping coloured flares to pinpoint and highlight the area to be bombed by the follow-on force.



WOII-AG Charles Arthur Nash

Approximately two months after joining RAF #83 Pathfinder Force, Charles lost his life during an operation against the enemy. On the night of June 11/12, 1943, Charles Nash was a crew member aboard Lancaster Mk. I R5686 aircraft (markings OL-G) that took off from Wyton on an operation targeting Munster, Germany. The aircraft failed to return from the operation and nothing was heard from the crew. It was assumed that they lost their lives at sea. The aircraft apparently crashed into the sea off the coast of Holland. Perishing with Warrant Officer II-Air Gunner Charles Nash were F/O Christian Godfrey Miller (RCAF); F/O Daniel Owen Thomas (RAF); F/L Cornelius Vincent Joseph Geary (RAF); Sgt. Norman Greenwood (RAF); Pilot James Eric Swift (RAF); and Sgt. James Joseph Anderton (RAF). The bodies of the crew were never recovered; however, the bodies of J.E. Swift and J.J. Anderton washed ashore days later. The remains were recovered by the Germans and buried in Holland.

Not long after the aircraft's disappearance, Albert and Lillian in Sarnia received a telegram from Ottawa informing them that their son, SERGEANT CHARLES ARTHUR NASH WAS REPORTED MISSING AFTER AIR OPERATIONS OVERSEAS JUNE 12. Albert and Lillian had received a letter from Charles only days earlier.

Several days before Christmas in 1943, Albert received the following letter at his Elgin Street home from the Squadron Leader, R.C.A.F. Casualties Officer, for Chief of the Air Staff in Ottawa:

Dear Mr. Nash:

It is with deep regret that, in view of the lapse of time and absence of any further information concerning your son, Sergeant Charles Arthur Nash, since he was reported missing, the Air Ministry Overseas now proposes to

take action to presume his death for official purposes.

Will you please confirm by letter that you have not received any further evidence or news concerning him. The presumption of death will proceed after hearing from you, and on completion you will receive official notification by registered letter.

May I extend to you and the members of your family my sincere sympathy in this time of great anxiety.

In October 1945, Albert and Lillian Nash received a War Service Gratuity of \$333.10 for the loss of their only son. Nine years after Charles' death, in June 1952, Albert received the following letter from the Wing Commander, R.C.A.F. Casualties Officer, for Chief of the Air Staff in Ottawa:

Dear Mr. Nash:

It is with reluctance that after so long an interval, I must refer to the loss of your son, Warrant Officer Class 2 Charles Arthur Nash, but due to the lack of any information concerning him since he was reported missing, it must be regretfully accepted and officially recorded that he does not have a "known" grave.

Due to the extreme hazards attending air operations there are, unhappily, many thousands of British aircrew boys who do not have "known" graves and all will be Commemorated on General Memorials that will be erected at a number of locations by the Imperial War Graves Commission (of which Canada is a member), each Memorial representative of a theatre of operations. One of these Memorials will be erected at Runnymede, England, and the name of your son will appear on that Memorial.

I realize that this is an extremely distressing letter and that there is no manner of conveying such information to you that would not add to your heartaches. I am fully aware that nothing I may say will lessen your great sorrow, but I would like to express to you and the members of your family my deepest sympathy.

Charles Nash, 24, was later officially recorded as, *Previously reported missing after air operations, now for official purposes, presumed dead, overseas.* Charles Nash has no known grave. His name is inscribed on the Runnymede War Memorial, Surrey, United Kingdom, Panel 180. On the Sarnia cenotaph, his name is inscribed as G.A. Nash.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, J, L, M, N, 2C, 2D, 3J, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10B, 10U, f, 2b

NEAL, Donald Leland (#A/17881)

Courtright born Donald Leland Neal decided at age twenty-four to enlist in the Canadian Army. After working for eight years in a variety of jobs, Donald decided to become a mechanic after the war. But first, he wanted to serve his country. Sadly, he was killed in action in the Italian Campaign in late September 1944.

Donald Neal was born in Courtright on November 29, 1918, the son of Guy Elmer and Annie Duncan (nee Alexander) Neal, of R.R. #1, Courtright, Ontario. Guy (born 1879 in Lambton, a farmer) and Annie (born 1883 in Lambton) were married on September 17, 1914 in Brigden, Ontario. Guy and Annie were blessed with six children: sons William Alexander (born 1915); Milton Stockdale (born 1916); and Robert and Donald; as well as daughters, Doris Jean (later resided on Brock Street) and Bessie L. Neal.

Donald attended Sarnia Collegiate but left after one year at the age of sixteen. Like many others his age, he had a variety of interests. He was active in baseball and hockey and enjoyed hunting and working on cars. Prior to enlisting, Donald had a number of jobs: he helped his father for a number of years on their 120 acre Courtright farm; he assisted an operator of a weed sprayer for Moore Township for several months; he worked in a saw mill for one winter; he worked at marine construction by building docks, slips and breakwaters; and he worked as a labourer on Donald McRae's farm at R.R. #1 Courtright. Needless to say, Donald filled in the hours he missed at school with gainful labour.

At age twenty-four, Donald Neal enlisted in the Canadian Army on April 20, 1943 in Windsor, Ontario. He stood five feet five inches tall, had blue eyes and light brown hair, was single, and was residing at home in Courtright at the time. His plan for after the war was to pursue employment as a mechanic. From #1 District Depot in Windsor, Donald received his army training at #12 Basic Training Centre (BTC) in Chatham and his advanced training at A-29 Canadian Infantry Training Centre (CITC) at Camp Ipperwash. In early December 1943, he was transferred to Headquarters #1 Training Brigade in Debert, Nova Scotia. On February 13, 1944, Donald embarked overseas for the United Kingdom.

Disembarking in the U.K. on February 24, 1944, he was posted to #3 Canadian Infantry Reinforcement Unit (3CIRU). When he arrived overseas, Donald cabled his parents in Courtright that he had made it safely. He continued his training in the U.K. for approximately one month. On March 28, 1944, Donald Neal departed the U.K. bound for

Italy, as a member of the Perth Regiment (Motor), Royal Canadian Infantry Corps (RCIC), with the rank of Private.

The **Italian Campaign**, the first sustained Canadian Army operation of the War, had begun with the invasion of Sicily on July 10, 1943. The fierce fighting on the island would last more than four weeks, during which the Canadians would advance through difficult mountainous terrain, against an ever-stiffening German resistance. By August 17, the Germans had evacuated the island to the Italian mainland. In early September 1943, Canadian and Allied forces would invade Italy. Though Italy surrendered shortly after, the occupying Germans made it clear their fight was not over. Liberating Italy would be a painstaking northward crawl, lasting 20 months, over a range of landscapes, through challenging weather, and against a series of well-protected defences held by some of the German army's best troops. Donald Neal would serve with the Perth Regiment as they advanced north through Italy.

On September 27, 1944, six months after arriving in Italy, Donald Neal lost his life during fighting there. On October 10, 1944, Guy and Annie in Courtright received the following telegram from the Director of Records in Ottawa; MINISTER OF NATIONAL DEFENCE DEEPLY REGRETS TO INFORM YOU THAT A117881 PRIVATE DONALD LELAND NEAL HAS BEEN OFFICIALLY REPORTED KILLED IN ACTION TWENTYSEVENTH SEPTEMBER 1944 STOP IF ANY FURTHER INFORMATION BECOMES AVAILABLE IT WILL BE FORWARDED AS SOON AS RECEIVED.

In early November 1944, Annie in Courtright received the following letter from the Brigadier, Acting Adjutant-General:

Dear Mrs. Neal:

It was with deep regret that I learned of the death of your son, A117881 Private Donald Leland Neal, who gave his life in the Service of his Country in the Mediterranean Theatre of War on the 27th day of September, 1944.

From official information we have received, your son was killed in action against the enemy. You may be assured that any additional information received will be communicated to you without delay.

The Minister of National Defence and the Members of the Army Council have asked me to express to you and your family their sincere sympathy in your bereavement. We pay tribute to the sacrifice he so bravely made.

In December 1945, Annie received a letter from the Colonel, Director of Records, for Adjutant-General. Following is a portion of that letter:

Dear Madam:

Information has just been received from overseas that the remains of your son, A117881 Private Donald Leland Neal, have been carefully exhumed from the original place of interment and reverently reburied in grave 8, row F, plot 7, of Cesena British Empire Cemetery, Cesena, Italy. Marked map is enclosed. This is a recognized military burial ground and will receive care and maintenance in perpetuity.

The grave will have been marked with a temporary cross which will be replaced in due course by a permanent headstone suitably inscribed. While it cannot now be stated when this work of permanent commemoration will begin, before any action is taken you will be communicated with and an opportunity will be given you to submit a short personal inscription of your own choice for engraving on the headstone...

Donald Neal's death was later officially recorded as, *Overseas casualty, killed in action, in the field (Italy)*. In February 1946, Guy and Annie received a War Service Gratuity of \$192.23 for the loss of their son Donald. In April 1947, the Lt.-Col. Director of Records sent Annie Neal a photograph of the grave and marker over the burial place in Italy of her son Donald.

Donald Neal, 25, is buried in Cesena War Cemetery, Italy, Grave VII, F, 8. On his headstone are inscribed the words, BELOVED SON OF GUY AND ANNIE NEAL, COURTRIGHT, ONTARIO, CANADA. Donald Neal's name is also inscribed on a Memorial plaque on the interior wall of St. Stephen's Anglican Church in the Village of Courtright.

SOURCES: C, D, E, F, G, L, N, 2C, 2D, 7C, 8X, 8Y

NORTHCOTT, John Henry (#A/20182)

John Henry Northcott, 22, was deployed to England a year after he was married and, while in England, his young wife, Johanna, gave birth to their only child, a son named John after his father. Northcott would never get to meet his young son, for he was killed in a freak accident in England in May 1943.

John Northcott was born in Sarnia on April 17, 1921, the eldest child of John (Jack) George Blackstock and Iva Luxton (nee Willis) Northcott. John Sr. (born May 17, 1902 in Toronto) and Iva Northcott (born December 25,

1898 in Sarnia) were married on November 28, 1918 in Sarnia. [Note: On their Marriage Certificate, John's age is recorded as 21]. When John Sr. married Iva, he was employed as a conductor. In 1921, John Sr. was a fireman, supporting Iva and their newborn son John Jr. at their home at 262 Brock Street. At some point, John Sr. was later employed as a chauffer with a motorbus company in Detroit. The Northcott family soon grew and John Jr. had four siblings: two brothers--David William and Lyle Edward and two sisters, Francis May and Margaret Annie Northcott. John Sr. and Iva also lost two children at a young age: Cecil Jack (May 1, 1920) and June Marie (January 13, 1929).

Tragedy struck the Northcott family when John Jr. was not quite eight years old. His father John Sr., a young man at twenty-six, died on March 21, 1929 in Highland, Michigan, from injuries sustained in an auto collision. Iva later remarried, to James L. Burley and they lived in Stokes Bay, Ontario. John's step-father James also served in the war, as a Sapper in the Canadian Army.

Existing records show little information about John Jr.'s life before he enlisted. At the age of thirteen, he left school after completing grade eight. Prior to enlisting, John Jr. took a six-month business course and was employed for two years by his stepfather as a truck driver.

John served in the Non-Permanent Active Militia, with the 11th Field Company, Royal Canadian Engineers, from April 22, 1937 to October 13, 1938. On September 15, 1939 (five days after Canada declared war on Germany), eighteen year-old John Northcott enlisted in the Canadian Army in Sarnia. He stood five feet eleven and one quarter inches tall, had blue eyes and light brown hair, and was living in Stokes Bay, Bruce County, Ontario at the time, employed as a truck driver. He planned to enter the civil service after the war, possibly as a policeman. From #1 District Depot in London, John received his army training at Royal Canadian Engineers Training Centre (RCETC) at Camp Petawawa, as a member of the 11th Field Company with the rank of Sapper.

On April 4, 1940, John obtained permission from the military to marry. On April 8, 1940, seven months after enlisting, he married Johanna Gweneth Pearl Burley (born 1922), in Wiarton, Ontario. His new wife Johanna, also resided in Stokes Bay, the same community as John's mother, brothers and sisters. On August 23, 1940, four months after getting married, John Northcott embarked overseas from Halifax, Nova Scotia bound for the United Kingdom. On May 15, 1941, thirteen months after getting married, Johanna Northcott gave birth to the couple's son, John Leroy Northcott in Wiarton, Ontario. John Northcott was in England when his son was born.

Disembarking on September 5, 1940 in Greenock, Great Britain, Sapper John Northcott continued his training, including receiving qualifications as a driver and completing a wireless course. He served only in the U.K., as a member of the 11th Field Company, Royal Canadian Engineers, including duty as a truck driver.

On the night of Sunday, May 2, 1943, during a weekend leave in London, John Northcott died in a tragic accident. He had been with two other Sappers from the 11th Field Company during the Saturday, May 1st day and evening enjoying the city. At some point in the evening, John became separated from his buddies. At approximately 12:15 a.m. on the Sunday, John was struck by an electric tube train at Cockfosters Railway Station, Southgate, Middlesex County. It was the last train of the night, and after stopping at its usual stopping point, the driver reported that as he was approaching the platform, he had felt a bump, and thought that he had run over something. It was very dark at the time and with no platform lights on, visibility was practically nil.

Upon investigation, rail personnel discovered the body of a soldier lying under the third car of the train. After police and a doctor had arrived at the scene, the current was taken off, the soldier was examined and pronounced dead, his body removed from the track, placed on a stretcher and taken to Enfield Mortuary. John Northcott had died at the scene as a result of his injuries that included severe head injuries, severed esophagus and trachea, fracture of ribs and cervical spine, his right foot almost severed, and abrasions from being dragged.

John Northcott was buried on May 7, 1943 at Brookwood Cemetery in Woking, Surrey. A temporary wooden cross bearing his name and regimental particulars was erected over the grave. In the inquest that followed, military investigators determined that his death was completely accidental, and not the result of any improper conduct by the deceased.

In mid-May 1943, Johanna, still living in Stokes Bay, received the following letter from the Major-General, Adjutant-General:

Dear Madam:

I deeply regret to inform you that your husband, A.20182 Sapper John Henry Northcott, gave his life in the Service of his Country in the United Kingdom on the 2nd day of May, 1943. You may be assured that any additional

information received will be communicated to you without delay.

The Minister of National Defence and the Members of the Army Council have asked me to express to you and your family their sincere sympathy in your bereavement. We pay tribute to the sacrifice he so bravely made.

Iva Northcott would learn the news of her son's death not from official sources, but from her daughter-in-law Johanna. John Northcott's death was later officially recorded as, *Overseas casualty, accident, due to being run over by a train, cause of death a fractured cervical spine, England*. His widow Johanna, mother of one, was awarded a pension of \$75 per month from the Canadian Military. In August 1945, Johanna, now residing in Sudbury, received a War Service Gratuity of \$733.34 for the loss of her husband John. Johanna also received the Silver Cross medal for the loss of her husband. The card accompanying the medal read, *This Memorial Cross is forwarded to you by the Minister of National Defence, on behalf of the Government of Canada, in memory of one who died in the service of his Country.*



Brookwood Military Cemetery



Silver Cross awarded to Johanna Northcott 1943

In June 1946, the Colonel, Director of Records in Ottawa sent Iva Burley in Stokes Bay a photograph of the grave and marker over the burial place in England of her son John. Johanna Northcott later remarried (to Clifford Neil Patterson), becoming Johanna Patterson, residing in Virginiatown, Ontario. Twenty-two-year-old John Northcott is buried in Brookwood Military Cemetery, Surrey, United Kingdom, Grave 34.I.10.
SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, J, L, 2C, 2D, 7C, 8X, 8Y

O'CONNOR, James Michael Barry (#R/68264)

Ten months after twenty-one-year-old James Michael Barry O'Connor enlisted, he married the love of his life in Winnipeg. Two months later, he sailed overseas to serve in one of the war's most dangerous postings. On his 24th mission aboard a Halifax bomber, one short of his 25th and then being sent home, his aircraft failed to return from its target. He has no known grave.

Although his first name was James, he was known as Barry. Barry O'Connor was born in Sarnia on January 22, 1919, the eldest son of James Phillip and Angela Loretta (nee Barry) O'Connor. James O'Connor (a contractor, born in Oil Springs, Ontario) and Angela Barry (born in St. Mary's, Perth, Ontario) were married on January 2, 1918 at Our Lady of Mercy Church in Sarnia. James and Angela O'Connor had six children together: sons James Michael Barry; John Edward (born November 1922); Patrick William (born 1924); and Joseph Peter (born 1932), and daughters Mary Catherine (born 1921, later Mrs. Lloyd Mathers) and Margaret Lorraine. Two of Barry's brothers also served in the war: John Edward, a Private in the Royal Canadian Army Service Corps, attached to National Defence Headquarters in Ottawa; and Patrick William, a Stoker First-Class in the Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve (RCNVR). Patrick also served in the Korean War (he is included in this Project on page 1097).



Barry's brother - Private John Edward O'Connor, RCASC

The O'Connor family lived at 231 Harkness Street, and later 236 Proctor Street, Sarnia. Barry attended Our Lady of Mercy Catholic Elementary School from 1926 to 1931, Sarnia Collegiate from September 1932 until June 1934, and then two years at St. Patrick's Catholic High School. He was active in boxing and skating, enjoyed hunting and shooting, and was a member of St. Joseph's Catholic Parish, Sarnia. In 1937, he worked at Holmes Foundry as a spare man for three months until he was laid off (seasonal work), and then worked for the rest of the year at J. Maylor Tobacco Store as a clerk. In 1938, he began work at Electric Auto-Lite and continued there until he enlisted.

Twenty-one-year-old Barry O'Connor enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force on August 12, 1940 in London, Ontario. He stood five feet nine and a half inches tall, had blue eyes and black hair, was single, and lived with his parents on Harkness Street at the time. He requested flying duties, with a preference to be a pilot or air gunner. From #1 Recruiting Centre in London, Barry received his air training at several Commonwealth Air Training Plan facilities, including at #3 Wireless School in Winnipeg, Manitoba and #5 Bombing and Gunnery School (B&GS) in Dafoe, Saskatchewan.

On June 21, 1941, ten months after enlisting, Barry O'Connor married Helen Grace Hood, the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Edward Hood of Winnipeg, at St. Mary's Academy in Winnipeg, Manitoba. The ceremony was officiated by Flying-Officer (Rev. Father) Lucien Vinet, chaplain of the R.C.A.F. school at Winnipeg. In early August 1941, Barry was posted to #1 Y Depot in Halifax. On August 24, 1941, two months after getting married, Barry O'Connor embarked overseas from Halifax bound for the United Kingdom.

Initially posted to #3 Personnel Reception Centre in the U.K., Barry continued his training at #1 Signals School, and on January 20, 1942, at #22 Operational Training Unit (O.T.U.) at RAF Wellesbourne Mountford. In mid-June 1942, he became a member of RAF No. 156 Squadron in Alconbury, part of **Bomber Command**.

During the course of the war, one of this country's most significant contributions was the approximately 50,000 Canadians who served with the RCAF and RAF in Bomber Command operations. Next to Britain, Canada was the largest contributor to Bomber Command, making up more than a third of all of Bomber Command personnel. The men who served in Bomber Command faced some of the most difficult odds of anyone fighting in the war.

No 156 Squadron had been formed in February 1942 based at RAF Alconbury, operating Vickers Wellington twin-engine, long-range medium bombers. In August 1942, still equipped with Wellingtons, they moved their base to RAF Warboys, and the squadron became one of the founding members of the Pathfinder Force. The **Pathfinder Force** was made up of experienced, handpicked crews from bomber squadrons with elite navigational abilities. These aerial rangers, equipped with the latest target-finding technologies were the spearhead of the bomber stream, arriving first over the target and dropping coloured flares to pinpoint and to highlight the area to be bombed by the follow-on force.

In August of 1942, James and Angela O'Connor received a letter from their son Barry. In it, he revealed how he was in one of the recent big R.A.F. raids on Bremen. Following is a portion of that letter:

The most fun I've ever had was one night recently coming back from Bremen. Incidentally, I got direct hits on

my target with bombs of the 4,000 pounds size which are absolutely guaranteed to wake the baby and scare the chickens. Anyhow, on my way back, we met a stooge in a Me. 109, who, incidentally, didn't see us, for he came belting towards us, head on, off to the starboard a bit. I was in the front turret, as I'm front gunner as well as bomb-aimer. I got in two nice long bursts from my guns square into him. He never fired a shot just went into a long dive. Wish I knew whether he went all the way down or not but we didn't linger to check up. We just went down in another long dive in the opposite direction, in case there were others about. They find it pretty tough chewing to tackle a heavy bomber down on the deck, so we dove from 15,000 feet down to ground level, low enough in fact to scrape our trailing aerial on the coast of Holland. The trailing aerial is 15 feet in length, so you can realize we were plenty low. The searchlights and flak couldn't depress low enough to get at us and it sure was funny watching the gun and searchlight crews digging themselves into their holes and trying to pull them in after we zipped over them, or should I say, passed them?

Barry also had words of praise for a watch that his father had given him before he went overseas: *It's still keeping time right to the second. In fact it's a better timepiece than the air ministry chronometer our navigator was given. He often uses my watch to get our exact turning point. James added, I've been in 13 raids and have only 17 more to go. I'm nearly half through now. I wouldn't mind if it was 170 if I could get home between them.*



WOII-BA (James Michael) Barry O'Connor

On October 22, 1942, Barry was transferred from #156 Squadron, becoming a member of RCAF #419 Moose Squadron "Moosa Aswayita" (written in Cree, not Latin, means "Beware the moose-a ferocious fighter"), with the rank of Warrant Officer Class II-Bomb Aimer. RCAF #419 Squadron, part of Bomber Command, was formed at RAF Mildenhall, England in mid-December 1941, and was named after its first commanding officer, Wing Commander John "Moose" Fulton. The unit moved to various bases throughout the war, including Leeming, Topcliffe, Croft and Middleton St. George. Initially operating Wellington bombers, in November 1942 the squadron converted to Handley Page Halifax bombers, and in March 1944 to Avro Lancasters.

Approximately eight months after he mailed the above letter to his parents, Barry O'Connor lost his life. On the night of April 28, 1943, the RAF carried out an operation involving approximately 226 aircraft dropping over 590 mines in the Danish waters and in the Baltic Sea. That night, Barry O'Connor was aboard Halifax II aircraft JB923 (markings VR-Q) that took off at 20:42 hours from RAF Base Middleton St. George for a "Gardening" operation (nickname for mine laying) to Skagerrak, to an area designated as "Silverthorne". It was Barry's 24th sortie with Halifax Bomber JB923, while most others of the crew were serving on only their 4th or 5th mission. As a reservist, Barry would have been sent home after his 25th mission. His Halifax aircraft would be lost that night, to enemy action while it was laying mines in the Skagerrak Strait, Norway. The operation was not successful that night for Moose Squadron--two of the aircraft returned because of the heavy cloud cover, one was hit by flak and had to return, and JB923 did not return.

[Note: Some sources list the aircraft JB923 as JB929. This follows the error in the Squadron ORB for that night].^{6G}

Perishing in Halifax bomber JB923 with twenty-four-year-old Barry O'Connor were WO.s George Kenneth Alfred Smallwood and James Gordon Acker; Sgts. Robert Russell Gourde and James Arthur Laurence Allen; and FS.s Lloyd Joseph Charles Murphy and John William Carley. In early May 1943, James and Angela in Sarnia received word that their son, FLIGHT SERGEANT JAMES MICHAEL BARRY O'CONNOR WAS REPORTED MISSING AFTER AIR OPERATIONS OVERSEAS.

In mid-May 1943, Helen, then living on Spadina Avenue in Toronto, received a letter from the Wing Commander of No. 419 (R.C.A.F.) Squadron. Following is a portion of that letter:

Dear Mrs. O'Connor,

It is with very deep regret that I write to inform you of the circumstances of your husband's posting as missing.

Flight Sergeant O'Connor was the Bomb Aimer of an aircraft detailed to perform an operation on the night of April 28th. The operation was generally successful, but unfortunately your husband's aircraft failed to return and nothing has since been heard of it. There is, of course, a hope that all, or part of the crew may either be interned in neutral territory, or may be prisoners of war in enemy hands. This, of course, would not be known for some considerable time but if any word comes in we shall notify you immediately.

Flight Sergeant O'Connor was with us for seven months and had twenty-four operations to his credit. Some of these were among the Squadron's most hazardous and successful, and against the enemy's most heavily defended targets.

Your husband was a great favourite with all sections of the Squadron. His cheery manner and keen sense of humour, coupled with his reliability, will certainly make his loss felt for some considerable time. As you are probably aware, he took quite a prominent part in our Station sports and activities; in fact, he was such an all-round man that this Squadron, and the Air Force as a whole, will find him hard to replace....

If there is anything I can do, or any help I can give you, do not hesitate to write and let me know. May I express the sincere sympathy of the entire Squadron in the loss of a very gallant gentleman, and hope with you that better news may follow shortly.

Helen O'Connor received two more letters shortly after: one from the Flight Lieutenant, for Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief, R.C.A.F., Overseas; and the other from the Headquarters of the R.C.A.F. Casualties Officer in Ottawa. Both letters confirmed the information she had received in the above letter and added; *...enquiries are continuing through the International Red Cross Committee, and all other available sources, and any news which may be forthcoming will be communicated to you at once. If any information regarding your husband is received by you from any source you are requested to be kind enough to communicate it immediately to the R.C.A.F. Casualties Officer,... Ottawa.*

In November 1943, Helen wrote a letter to RCAF Headquarters, frustrated and anxious for information about her husband. Following is a portion of that letter:

Dear Sir:

I received your letter... asking me to confirm the fact that no further information has been received by me, concerning my husband. I regret to say, that the only information I have received about him, came from R.C.A.F. headquarters and that was very little.

There is one thing I would like to know, and I feel that I have the right to ask. I know my husband was "lost" on a raid somewhere over Germany and I feel that enough time has elapsed now that I should be able to know just where it was.

I know this action to "presume him dead" is only for official purposes. Will they keep on trying to trace him? I pray that they will... I have not heard anything about my husband, not in six whole months, I'm hoping for some better news shortly...

The reply letter from the Flight Lieutenant, R.C.A.F. Casualties Officer was received by Helen very soon after. Following is a portion of that letter:

Dear Mrs. O'Connor:

... It is regretted that no additional particulars are available at these Headquarters regarding the flight from which your husband's aircraft failed to return or the target which he had been detailed to attack, however enquiries are being made Overseas and as soon as a reply is received it will be forwarded to you.

Please be assured that although the Air Ministry now proposes to presume your husband's death it is for official purposes only and such action will not in any way affect or diminish the search being made for him. May I again offer my sincere sympathy in this trying time.

In late January 1944, Helen received the following letter from the Air Marshal, Chief of the Air Staff:

Dear Mrs. O'Connor:

I have learned with deep regret that your husband, Flight Sergeant James Michael Barry O'Connor, is now for official purposes presumed to have died on Active Service Overseas on April 28th, 1943. I wish to offer you and the members of your family my sincere and heartfelt sympathy.

It is most lamentable that a promising career should be thus terminated and I would like you to know that his loss is greatly deplored by all those with whom your husband was serving.

Soon after, James and Angela received the news that their son Barry O'Connor's death was officially recorded as, *Previously reported missing after air operations, now for official purposes, presumed dead, overseas.* In December 1944, James and Angela received official information advising them that their son, Flight Sergeant J.M. Barry O'Connor, who has been missing since April 28, 1943, was promoted to Warrant Officer, Class 2, as of November 2, 1942.

In February 1945, Helen, then living in Prince Rupert, British Columbia, received a War Service Gratuity of \$549.84 for the loss of her husband Barry. In August 1946, Helen received the following letter from the R.C.A.F. Records Officer in Ottawa:

Dear Mrs. O'Connor:

It is a privilege to have the opportunity of sending you the Operational Wings and Certificate in recognition of the gallant services rendered by your husband Warrant Officer, Class 2, J.M.B. O'Connor. I realize there is little which may be said or done to lessen your sorrow, but it is my hope that these "Wings", indicative of operations against the enemy, will be a treasured memento of a young life offered on the altar of freedom in defence of his Home and Country.

In January 1952, Helen, then living on Close Avenue in Toronto, received the following letter from the Wing Commander, R.C.A.F. Casualties Officer, for Chief of the Air Staff:

Dear Mrs. O'Connor:

It is with reluctance that after so long an interval, I must refer to the loss of your husband, Warrant Officer Class II James Michael Barry O'Connor, but due to the lack of any information concerning him since he was reported missing, it must be regretfully accepted and officially recorded that he does not have a "known" grave.

Due to the extreme hazards attending air operations there are, unhappily, many thousands of British aircrew boys who do not have "known" graves and all will be commemorated on General Memorials that will be erected at a number of locations by the Imperial War Graves Commission (of which Canada is a member), each Memorial representative of a theatre of operations. One of these Memorials will be erected at Runnymede, England and the name of your husband will appear on that Memorial.

I realize that this is an extremely distressing letter and that there is no manner of conveying such information to you that would not add to your heartaches. I am fully aware that nothing I may say will lessen your great sorrow, but I would like to express to you and the members of your family my deepest sympathy.

Barry O'Connor left behind his father James and mother Angela, his three brothers and two sisters, and his wife Helen of less than two years. More than twenty years after her husband lost his life, Helen, then living on Durie Street in Toronto, was still searching for answers. Following is the letter she wrote to R.C.A.F. Headquarters in late November 1964:

Dear Sirs:

After so long an interval I find it hard to have to write this letter. However I should like my address on file, in the event that some trace of my late husband's aircraft should turn up. My common sense tells me this is almost impossible, however he has been on my mind so much this last – while I wonder.

I know my husband's plane went down somewhere in or, around the Skagerrak, I have enclosed this small clipping from the Toronto Star dated Nov. 10/64. [The clipping was a news article about a massive drilling rig that was being moved through the area of Skagerrak. The rig's long steel legs were going to be lowered to the North Sea bottom, to drill for oil and natural gas].

The Air Force was very kind in giving me all the information it could at the time Barry was missing. Would it be possible to tell me just where in England my husband was stationed all the time he was overseas? I would imagine this is all on file. I plan on going to England this year and would like to know where he spent the last months of his life.

This is very important to me, and I would be most grateful if you could help me to obtain this information. I

have since remarried, however my heart and mind remembers that Barry has no “known” grave among many others. I must thank you and the dept for all your kindness in the past. Please let me know where Barry was stationed.

James Michael Barry O'Connor, 24, has no known grave. His name is inscribed on the Runnymede War Memorial, Surrey, United Kingdom, Panel 180. Parents James and Angela O'Connor in Sarnia lost a second son to war--Patrick William O'Connor, a veteran of WWII, would lose his life in the Korean War (he is included in this Project on page 1097).



Composite picture of the three O'Connor brothers who served in WWII.
John Edward (L), Patrick (C) and James Barry (R)



O.L.M. Cemetery, Sarnia

There is a memorial headstone in Our Lady of Mercy Catholic Cemetery in Sarnia that has inscribed on it the names of six O'Connor family members, including: James and Angela O'Connor, and their children Joseph Peter, Mary Catherine, Pte. Patrick William and W.O. Barry O'Connor, RCAF.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, J, L, M, N, 2C, 2D, 4B, 6G, 6O, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10B, 10U, 2d

OLIVER, William John (#J/23152)

A well-rounded young man who was active in sports, music, his church and the Boy Scouts, William Oliver was only eighteen years old when he made the decision to serve his country. After almost two years of air training in Canada and the U.K; receiving his pilot flying badge; and being promoted to flying officer-pilot; William Oliver lost his life as a result of a tragic accident while serving in the United Kingdom.

William John (Jack) Oliver was born in Sarnia on October 25, 1923, the son of George Wilfred and Della (nee Hume) Oliver. George and Della, both born in Petrolia, were married on December 9, 1914 in Forest, Ontario. George supported his family working at a fence company and later at Polymer Corp in Sarnia. George and Della had five children together: sons William John; Kenneth Lyle; Clare LaVerne; and Wilfred Ray (born Feb. 3, 1918, served as a Lieutenant in the Canadian Army, with a Royal Canadian Artillery Unit). Unfortunately, their only daughter Hilda Marie Oliver, died at the age of nine months in March 1922.

The Oliver family lived at 123 Proctor Street, Sarnia. William attended Johnston Memorial Public School in Sarnia from September 1929 to June 1936, and then Sarnia Collegiate from September 1936 until April 1941. He participated in football, hockey and softball, and was a member of Boy Scouts of Canada. His hobbies included model railroad building, photography and music. He played in the school orchestra and the cadet band while at Sarnia Collegiate, and was a member of the Lambton Garrison Band. William was also a member of the Devine Street United Church and the Young Men's Club of St. Andrew's Church. Prior to enlisting, William was attending Sarnia Collegiate part time, and was employed (since April 1941) as a laboratory assistant in the inspection lab at Sarnia Imperial Refinery.

Eighteen year-old William Oliver enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force on November 14, 1941 in London, Ontario. He stood five feet six inches tall, had brown eyes and black hair, was single, and lived at home with his parents on Proctor Street at the time. He requested flying duties, with a preference to be a Pilot or Observer. Following the war, William planned to attend university. The Recruiting Officer wrote of William, *Keen bright young man, very anxious to serve. Should be excellent Air Crew material in every respect.*

From #9 Recruiting Centre in London and then #2 Manning Depot in Brandon, Manitoba, William received his air training at #7 Bombing and Gunnery School (B&GS) in Paulson, Manitoba; and #16 Service Flying Training School (SFTS) in Hagersville, Ontario; continuing at #5 Initial Training School (ITS) in Belleville, Ontario; and #13 Elementary Flying Training School (EFTS) in St. Eugene, Ontario; and then #2 Service Flying Training School (SFTS) at Uplands, near Ottawa. William was awarded his Pilots Flying Badge on January 22, 1943 at Uplands. During his training, he flew Anson, Harvard and Fleet Finch II aircraft. After receiving his Pilots Flying Badge, William completed a Navigational Reconnaissance Course at #31 General Reconnaissance School (GRS) at RCAF Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island. In April 1943, William enjoyed a 16-day pre-embarkation leave.



Lt. Wilfred Ray Oliver, R.C.A.



Flying Officer-Pilot William John Oliver

By the end of April 1943, William was posted at #1 Y Depot in Halifax, Nova Scotia. On May 8, 1943, eighteen months after enlisting, William embarked overseas from Halifax bound for the United Kingdom. Initially posted to #3 Personnel Reception Centre, he continued his air training in the U.K. at #3 (Pilot) Advanced Flying Unit (AFU), and in July 1943, he was promoted to the rank of Flying Officer-Pilot. On August 3, 1943, he was transferred, becoming a member of RAF #6 Operational Training Unit (OTU).

RAF No. 6 Operational Training Unit was formed and reformed a number of times throughout the war. During that time, it was equipped with a variety of different aircraft; operated from several different bases; and trained airmen to carry out a range of tasks (fighters, bombers and reconnaissance). In March 1943, the unit, then based at RAF Silloth, was equipped with Vickers Wellingtons (twin-engine medium bomber) and Avro Ansons (twin-engine, multi-role aircraft), and trained airmen to be part of Coastal Command.

Five months after arriving overseas, on October 6, 1943, William Oliver was killed when he accidentally fell from the roof of the St. George Hotel, 19 George Street, Edinburgh, Scotland. He and three of his fellow officers on leave had arrived at the hotel on October 5 from the R.A.F. Station Silloth, Cumberland, having booked a room there. The men had spent part of the evening in a dancehall in the city and returned to the hotel about 10 p.m. William was last seen between 11:15 and 11:30 p.m. obtaining the key for the room they were sharing.

In the investigation that followed, it was determined that shortly after midnight William climbed through a window onto the top floor of the hotel and was walking on the roof. It was while walking on the roof that he inadvertently walked over the edge of the roof, falling 80 feet to the ground. His body was found at 6:45 a.m. that morning (October 6). The investigation that followed the incident concluded that it was entirely accidental.

Not long after the accident, George and Della Oliver in Sarnia received a cable from R.C.A.F. Headquarters in Ottawa informing them that their son, Pilot Officer W.J. Oliver had been killed on active service overseas. No details were given as to how he met his death, although it was stated that the funeral would be held at East Fortune near Edinburgh, Scotland.

In late October 1943, William's brother Ken on South Russell Street in Sarnia, received the following letter from the Group Captain, Commanding, R.A.F. Station, Silloth, Cumberland:

Dear Mr. Oliver,

You will have been informed by the Air Ministry that your brother, William John Oliver, lost his life on the 6th October as a result of a fall from the roof of a hotel in Edinburgh.

May I offer on behalf of all at Silloth and myself, our sincere sympathy with you in your sad bereavement. It is very tragic that your brother should have lost his life at the conclusion of his long period of training, and at a time when he no doubt expected to be soon engaged on active operations.

As it appears that nobody was with him when the accident happened, it can only be assumed that after climbing on the roof of the hotel for some reason which we do not know, he inadvertently fell off, and was killed by the fall to the pavement below.

I appreciate how you must feel when you receive this letter, and again express our true sympathy.

William Oliver's death was later officially recorded as, *Killed while on leave. (Fell off roof of hotel), overseas (Scotland)*. Not long after his death, a memorial service was held for William at Devine Street United Church, officiated by its pastor Rev. Arnold Mathews, assisted by Rev. J.M. Macgillivray of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church. The memorial service in Sarnia occurred while William's funeral was being held in Scotland. His brother, Lieutenant Wilfred Ray Oliver, who was overseas with a Royal Canadian Artillery Unit at the time of William's death, was able to attend the funeral.

In June 1945, George and Della Oliver received a War Service Gratuity of \$249.33 for the loss of their son. William John Oliver, 19, is buried at Haddington (St.Martin's) New Burial Ground, East Lothian, United Kingdom (Scotland), Section E, Grave 18. On his headstone are inscribed the words, FOR HONOUR, FOR COUNTRY AND FOR GOD. His name is also inscribed on the Sarnia Refinery Plaque. Unveiled in 1949, the plaque has the names of 24 Sarnia Imperial Oil employees who made the ultimate sacrifice in World War II.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, L, M, N, O, 2C, 2D, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10V

OTTAWAY, Ernest Edward

Ernest Edward Ottaway experienced plenty of grief in his life—when he was seven, he lost his sister; when he was nine, he lost his father, a World War I veteran; and after marrying, he and his wife lost their first-born child. Yet, he was one of the first in Sarnia to enlist to serve his country. Four years later, he was killed in action in Belgium while leading his platoon during one of the most difficult and grueling battles in the war.

Ernest Ottaway was born in Calgary, Alberta on August 29, 1912, the eldest child and only son of Ernest Augustine and Lillian Florence (nee Dochstader, born in Ontario) Ottaway. Father Ernest Augustine was born March 1889 in London, England, and his family immigrated to Calgary, Alberta, in 1904, when he was fifteen years old.

Ernest Sr. Ottaway and Lillian Dochstader were married in Calgary, Alberta on June 8, 1911. Ernest Sr. and Lillian Ottaway had three children together: son Ernest Edward (Jr.) and daughters Virginia Lillian (born 1914, became Virginia Baldwin) and Ruby Gertrude (born August 2, 1915, accidental death on September 25, 1919).

Father Ernest Augustine Ottaway (#160577) was a veteran of the Great War. On October 11, 1915, twenty-seven-year-old Ernest Sr. enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force in Calgary. He stood five feet eight and one half inches tall, had brown eyes and black hair, was employed as a printer pressman, was married to Lillian, and lived in Calgary at the time. He also had three very young children at home at the time; his eldest, son Ernest Jr. was just three years old. He recorded his prior military experience as three years with the No. 11 Army Medical Corps. He became a member of the 82nd Battalion with the rank of Private. Seven months later, he embarked overseas, arriving in Liverpool, England on May 29, 1916. Just over four months later, on October 8, he arrived in France, as a machine gunner with the 1st Canadian Machine Gun Company.

In May 1918, Ernest Augustine was promoted to Corporal. The Hundred Days Campaign (August 8 – November 11, 1918) would be the “beginning of the end” of the Great War. Canadians were called on again and again over the three-month period to lead the offensives against the toughest German defences. The first offensive in Canada’s Hundred Days Campaign was the **Battle of Amiens** in France (August 8-14), a truly all-arms battle, one that all four Canadian divisions would be involved in. During one week at Amiens, the Canadians advanced nearly 14 km – but it came at a cost of 11,822 Canadian casualties.

On August 9, 1918, Corporal Ernest Augustine Ottaway was wounded in action at Amiens, recorded as “gun shot wound right thigh and head”. He was operated on three days later at No. 9 General Hospital, Rouen. He was returned to England, recovering in a General Hospital in Liverpool one week later, and Princess Patricia Canadian Red Cross Hospital in late September. On October 4, 1918, he was discharged from hospital to duty. The Great War would end one month later. On December 24, he was returned to Canada, and was discharged on demobilization in February 1919 in Calgary, Alberta.

Seven months after being discharged, Ernest Sr. and Lillian lost their four year-old daughter Ruby, the result of an accident. Ernest Jr., who spent his early childhood in Calgary, was seven years old at the time. In October 1920, the Ottaway family moved east, residing briefly at 413 Nelson Street, Sarnia, the home of Lillian’s brother, Joseph Dochstader. In June 1921, the family was living in Cardiff Township, Ontario. The Ottaway household included parents Edward Sr. and Lillian; Edward Sr.’s parents Valentine Edward and Selina Georgina; and their two children Ernest Jr. and Virginia Lillian. Months later, on September 18, 1921, Ernest Sr. died at the age of 32 in Bancroft, Ontario. His death was the result of his service overseas—he had been both wounded and gassed in France, and died as a result of congestion of his lungs. Ernest Jr. was nine years old at the time. Later, widowed Lillian Florence Ottaway moved to 225 Cromwell Street, Sarnia.

By the time Ernest Jr. Ottaway moved to Sarnia, he had already finished his formal education, completing 8th grade public school. In Sarnia, he was a member of St. George’s Anglican Church. He participated in tennis and softball, and enjoyed his hobby of photography. Prior to enlisting, Ernest Jr. was employed in Sarnia as a painter and printing pressman. He had also done some work as an auto mechanic and had taken a six-month business course. He was employed for several years with the Frontier Printing Company, and approximately one year with the Canadian Printing Company.

On October 10, 1936, Ernest Ottaway married Petrolia-born Gertrude Leila Hallam, the youngest daughter of Robert and Eva Mabel Hallam at Canon Davis Memorial Church, in Sarnia. Ernest was a printing pressman residing at 413 Nelson St., while Gertrude was a clerk residing at 204 Proctor St. at the time. The groom’s sister, Miss Virginia Ottaway, served as bridesmaid and William E. Baldwin served as the best man. After the ceremony, Ernest and Gertrude Ottaway left on a wedding trip to the United States and, on their return, they lived at 413 Nelson Street. Ernest and Gertrude Ottaway had two daughters together: Joanne Earnestine (tragically a stillborn, February 18, 1937); and Marlene Diana, born April 9, 1938.

Ernest Ottaway was a member of the local Sarnia militia unit, the 11th Field Company, Royal Canadian Engineers (RCE) from May 1937 until July 1938, where he attained the rank of Sergeant. Twenty-seven-year-old Ernest Ottaway was one of the first men to enlist in Sarnia, joining the Canadian Army on September 8, 1939 (two days before Canada declared war on Germany). He stood five feet ten inches tall, had brown eyes and black hair, and was married with a one year-old daughter at home. He recorded his occupation as painter, and his address as 413 Nelson St., later changed to 149 Brock St., Sarnia (in his Service File, his next of kin’s address—Gertrude, is

changed twice to 302 George Street and 163 ½ North Forsythe Street, Sarnia). Ernest began his army training in London, Ontario. As a member of the 11th Field Company, Royal Canadian Engineers, Canadian Active Service Force (CASF), he advanced in rank to Company Sergeant-Major (CSM) in February 1940.

After helping to train infantry troops at Petawawa camp, Ernest Ottaway embarked overseas from Halifax bound for the United Kingdom on August 23, 1940, a member of the Royal Canadian Engineers, 11th Field Company, with the rank of Company Sergeant-Major. He continued his training in the United Kingdom, took command of a battalion for a time, and was an instructor at a bomb disposal school. In August 1942, after being in the United Kingdom for more than two years, Ernest spent his 30th birthday overseas, far from his wife and daughter.

In late March 1943, Ernest returned to Canada to take an Officer's Training Course (OTC) in Brockville, Ontario. He was pleased to make it home to Sarnia for a short while, in time for his daughter Marlene's fifth birthday. When he arrived in Sarnia by train, he was met by his wife Gertrude and daughter Marlene; Sergeant-Major Alf. Luckins with whom he had served overseas; and two members of the Canadian Legion. Although she had not seen her father for almost three years, little Marlene Diana rushed toward him as he talked with two other soldiers. "She knew him instantly," her mother said. Ernest said, "My one worry from the time I left England was whether I would make the grade in time for her birthday. Now we'll have a nice little party."

While in Sarnia, Ernest told a reporter for the *Canadian (Sarnia) Observer* of some of his experiences. On more than one occasion he had been close to exploding bombs. He was so close to one that it lifted him bodily, together with the truck he was driving, and deposited both in a nearby field, after the truck had neatly cleared a four-foot hedge. Miraculously, Ernest had escaped injury. "The bomb exploded about 40 feet away from the truck one night as I was driving to the barracks," he said. "Owing to the noise of the engine I did not hear its approach. I didn't know what happened until I found the hole made by the bomb in the road." He said that he was in London on several occasions when "Jerry came over" as he put it. He said that the approach of a high explosive bomb can be likened to the noise made by an express train. Half an hour after he arrived at an English camp, a lone plane came over and strafed the barracks with machine gun fire. About a month before he returned to Canada, he was machine-gunned again with other soldiers who were stationed at a point on the south-east coast of England.

While back in Canada, Ernest secured his commission in the infantry, receiving his certificate at the Canadian Army Officers' Training Centre (OTC) at Brockville in July of 1943. He was then transferred to A-29 Canadian Infantry Training Centre (CITC) at Camp Ipperwash for advanced training, graduating on August 20, 1943 with the rank of Lieutenant. He was then posted to #12 Canadian Army (Basic) Training Centre (BTC) in Chatham as a Platoon Commander, and soon after to Officers Training Centre (OTC) in Brockville, Ontario. In December 1943, Ernest spent his Christmas leave at home in Sarnia with his wife Gertrude and daughter Marlene. It would be the last Christmas they would spend together.

On February 17, 1944, Lieutenant Ernest Ottaway returned to England, becoming a member of the #4 Canadian Infantry Reinforcement Unit (#4CIRU), and later the #3CIRU. He continued training in the U.K., and was awarded a Canadian Efficiency Medal in April 1944. On August 25, 1944, Ernest embarked from the U.K. and arrived in France the next day as a member of the Queen's Own Rifles of Canada, Royal Canadian Infantry Corps (RCIC).

Ernest arrived in France soon after the Battle of Normandy (June 6-August 21, 1944). After the Allied breakout from Normandy, Canadian forces were assigned the "**Long Left Flank**". This offensive included the less glamorous but vital tasks of clearing coastal areas in the north of France and Belgium of German occupiers; opening the English Channel ports for supplies essential to the Allied advance; and capturing the launching sites of German V-1 rockets. In a series of stop-and-start advances against stiff resistance in fortified positions, the Canadians liberated ports and villages including Rouen, Dieppe, Dunkirk, Boulogne and Calais. Lieutenant Ottaway served with the Queen's Own Rifles as they advanced through northern France and Belgium from late August to early October.

In early September 1944, Allied forces had captured the inland port of Antwerp, Belgium, the second greatest port in Europe at the mouth of the Scheldt River. However, German forces still controlled the 45-mile-long Scheldt estuary (the Belgian-Dutch border area) that connected the port of Antwerp to the North Sea. In early October 1944, the Canadians were entrusted with liberating the estuary. The **Battle of the Scheldt** was among the most difficult and grueling struggles in the war. The bitter fighting against a well-fortified and heavily entrenched enemy took place in a bleak environment made worse by the winter cold in a flooded and freezing muddy quagmire. Ernest Ottaway and the Queen's Own Rifles would take part in the advance through northern Belgium towards the Netherlands.

On October 10, 1944 Ernest Ottaway became a replacement officer of a platoon of the Queen's Own Rifles of Canada R.C.I.C. In a letter to his wife Gertrude in Sarnia, he indicated that he first participated in the fighting on October 16. Ernest Ottaway lost his life only five days later on October 21, 1944 while leading his platoon of Alpha Company during the Battle of the Scheldt at the town of Schoondijke, in Belgium. Though killed on October 21, 1944, Ernest Ottaway's remains were not buried until November 13, 1944. His remains were buried at a Holland location recorded on the Army Field Service Card as "1/25000 Philipine Sheet 22 SW in corner of pear orchard by farm house on east side of highway MR 179071."



Lieutenant Ernest Edward Ottaway



Memorial Cross

On October 28, 1944, Gertrude Ottaway on Forsythe Street in Sarnia received the following telegram from the Director of Records in Ottawa: MINISTER OF NATIONAL DEFENCE DEEPLY REGRETS TO INFORM YOU THAT LIEUTENANT CEM ERNEST EDWARD OTTAWAY HAS BEEN OFFICIALLY REPORTED KILLED IN ACTION TWENTY-FIRST OCTOBER 1944 STOP IF ANY FURTHER INFORMATION BECOMES AVAILABLE IT WILL BE FORWARDED AS SOON AS RECEIVED. No other details were provided.

In early November 1944, Gertrude received the following letter from the Major-General, Adjutant-General:
Dear Mrs. Ottaway:

It was with deep regret that I learned of the death of your husband, Lieutenant Ernest Edward Ottaway, who gave his life in the Service of his Country in the Western European Theatre of War on the 21st day of October, 1944.

From official information we have received, your husband was killed in action against the enemy. You may be assured that any additional information received will be communicated to you without delay.

The Minister of National Defence and the Members of the Army Council have asked me to express to you and your family their sincere sympathy in your bereavement. We pay tribute to the sacrifice he so bravely made.

In mid-November 1944, Gertrude received the following letter from the Lieutenant-Colonel commanding the 1st Battalion, Queen's Own Rifles of Canada:

It is with great personal regret and sorrow that I have to write you concerning the death of your husband on October 21 during the battle of the Scheldt pocket. The battalion had driven the enemy from the village of Ijzendijke and was pursuing them into the heavily defended belt based on the town of Oostburg. "A" company, to which your husband was attached, was given the job of "feeling out" the enemy defences in the area of a large farm, which was manned by several machine-guns and a number of snipers. During the course of the patrols that were necessary to get this information your husband, while leading his platoon forward, exploded an anti-personnel mine in the ditch up which he was crawling, killing him instantly.

Although Edward had been with us only a few days, we already knew that we had been lucky in getting an officer of his caliber. We are all very sorry to lose him in this way, as we were convinced he had a future with the regiment. I can assure you that he died carrying out his duty, leading his platoon into an action which we all knew was an extremely dangerous and hazardous one. We have indeed lost a very fine soldier. May I offer you, on behalf of myself and the regiment, our sincere sympathy in your great loss.

More than a year after Ernest Ottaway was buried, Gertrude received a letter from the Colonel, Director of Records, for Adjutant-General in mid-December 1945. Following is a portion of that letter:

Dear Madam:

Information has just been received from overseas that the remains of your husband, Lieutenant Ernest Edward Ottaway, have been carefully exhumed from the original place of interment and reverently reburied in grave 7, row E, plot 2, of Adegem Canadian Military Cemetery, Adegem, Belgium. Marked map is enclosed. This is a recognized military burial ground and will receive care and maintenance in perpetuity.

The grave will have been marked with a temporary cross which will be replaced in due course by a permanent headstone suitably inscribed. While it cannot now be stated when this work of permanent commemoration will begin, before any action is taken you will be communicated with and an opportunity will be given you to submit a short personal inscription of your own choice for engraving on the headstone...



Pear orchard cemetery where Ernest Ottaway and other Queen's Own Rifles were buried in October 1944.
Located in Dunnepolder in the province of Zeeland, Netherlands

Ernest Ottaway's death was later officially recorded as, *Overseas casualty, killed in action, in the field (Holland)*. In May 1945, Gertrude received a War Service Gratuity of \$1157.50 for the loss of her husband. Ernest Ottaway left behind his widowed mother Lillian, his sister Virginia, his wife of eight years Gertrude, and their six-year old daughter Marlene.

Ernest Edward Ottaway and his father Ernest Augustine Ottaway both died at the age of 32, both as a result of war. In early December of 1944, a memorial service in Ernest Edward Ottaway's honour was held in St. George's Anglican Church, Sarnia during the regular morning Sunday service. Rev. F.G. Hardy, the choir and congregation paid a solemn tribute to his memory, which included the singing of a favourite hymn of his, "Unto the Hills Will I Lift Up Mine Eyes" and the recital of appropriate prayers. Ernest Ottaway, 32, is buried in Adegem Canadian War Cemetery, Belgium, Grave I.I.E.7. On his headstone are inscribed the words, IN LOVING MEMORY OF MY DEAR HUSBAND WHO WAS KILLED IN OOSTBURG, HOLLAND.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, J, L, N, 2B, 2C, 2D, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 2z

PAITHOWSKI, Michael Joseph (#V/17380)

NOTE: Michael Paithowski spelled his surname with a "w" in it. The rest of the family spelled the surname with a "u", as Paithouski.

Less than three years after enlisting, Michael Joseph Paithowski married the love of his life. Seven months later, he was serving on one of the sturdy little "work horses" of the Royal Canadian Navy. Three months after the birth of his son, Michael Paithouski lost his life off the east coast of Canada to what British Prime Minister Winston Churchill said was "... the only thing that ever really frightened me during the war..."

Michael Joseph Paithowski was born in Hamilton, Ontario on December 7, 1916, the son of Michael Paithouski Sr. (nicknamed "Tato") and Rosa Paithouski. Rosa Paithouski (nee Doskevitch) was born in Lvov, Poland. Rosa had a previous marriage to Paul Lukasevich, and Rosa and Paul had two children together: Peter Lukasevich (born 1901) and Mike Lukez (born 1907, changed his name from Lukasevich), who later became half-brothers to Michael Paithowski. Rosa emigrated from Poland to Canada, leaving behind her husband and two children. Peter Lukasevich and Mike Lukez later immigrated to Canada, arriving in their twenties in Sarnia, and they later moved to Windsor.

Michael Paithouski Sr. (“Tato”) was born in Vilshanka (near Kiev), Ukraine. When Tato emigrated from Trieste in northeastern Italy to North America in 1909, his first stop was Ellis Island, New York. Tato’s last name was actually Piatkowski, but the immigration officer recorded it as Paithouski, which it was to remain afterwards. His name is recorded on the American Immigrant Wall of Honor at Ellis Island in New York Harbor. Tato Paithouski then made his way from New York to Montreal and later to Hamilton. It was in Canada that Tato married Rosa. Tato and Rosa had three children: Mary (born 1915 in Montreal); Michael Joseph (born December 7, 1916 in Hamilton); and Nicholas Joseph (born October 26, 1917 in Hamilton). Eventually the Paithouski family moved to Sarnia, residing at 589 South Vidal Street. Tato supported his family working as a boiler foreman at Imperial Oil’s Refinery.

The Paithouski siblings and their spouses were very busy people. Michaels’ sister, Mary, married Earl Joseph Wynne just before Earl went off to war in September 1939 (he would become a Sergeant in the army). Michael’s younger brother **Nicholas (Nick) Joseph Paithouski**, was a star football player for Queen’s University, from where he graduated in 1940 as a civil engineer. In his first season as a football player at Queen’s in 1936, Nick played on the junior team because he was viewed as too small for the senior squad. That season, he was voted as the junior team’s Most Valuable Player. He would play as a regular on the senior offensive and defensive line for the following three years for the Queen’s Golden Gaels. Nick won the Johnny Evans Trophy as MVP as a lineman in the 1939 season. Graduated in engineering in 1940, Nick was the only one of five children from a Ukrainian-Polish immigrant family to receive a university education.

Nick also was an outstanding player for the Sarnia Imperials and the Regina Roughriders. As it turns out, his football experience would figure greatly during the war. Nick played centre and linebacker for the 1940 Sarnia Imperials where he was an all-star and won the 1940 Imperial Oil Trophy as the Ontario Rugby Football Union (ORFU) league MVP. In 1941, Nick played one year for the CFL Regina (later Saskatchewan) Roughriders. In April 1942, Nick enlisted with the Royal Canadian Engineers, later becoming a lieutenant. He arrived overseas around August 1943. During his time overseas, one of Nick’s highlights was playing in two famous football games in London, England.

The idea for the first football game originated when Major Dennis Whitaker, a former quarterback for the Hamilton Tigers of the CFL and a Dieppe survivor, and an American Special Services lieutenant met in a pub, and began talking football. The result of the chance meeting was the **Tea Bowl**. The game was to be a hybrid, with the first half played under American rules, and the second under Canadian. The Canadian Army team, named the “Mustangs”, had a number of Sarnians (Nick Paithouski at center, Charles Henry Living—including in this Project, and Ken Withers) and several CFL players. The Tea Bowl was played on February 13, 1944 before over 30,000 fans in White City Stadium in London and was even broadcast on British radio. With the threat of German bombers, RAF Spitfires were deployed to cover the skies around the stadium during the game. The Canadian Army “Mustangs” defeated the U.S. Army Central Base Station “Pirates” team by a score of 16 to 6.

Stung by the loss, the Americans called for a rematch. Their new team, the U.S. 29th Army team, named the “Blues”, was reinforced with a contingent from the University of Iowa Cornhuskers and a former NFL all-star. The rematch, played on March 19, 1944, again in White City Stadium, this time before a crowd of 50,000, was dubbed the Coffee Bowl. The U.S. “Blues” defeated the Canadian Army “Mustangs” team by a score of 18 to 0. The outcomes of the games were really irrelevant; what counted was the camaraderie, the friendly competitiveness, and a sense of shared purpose. Less than three months later, the Allied forces, including some of the games’ participants, joined together in something much larger – the D-Day landings in France.

As a platoon leader with the Royal Canadian Engineers, Nick Paithouski was responsible for supplying the equipment and building of bridges, 51 of them in 45 days in France, Belgium, Germany and the Netherlands between March 24 and May 5, 1945. In late 1945, Lieutenant Nicholas Paithouski was awarded the decoration “Mention in Despatches”. The award reads, “The KING has been graciously pleased to approve the award of Mentions in Despatches, in recognition of gallant and distinguished services.” After the war, the United States military authorities recognized his distinguished service and bravery, awarding Nick the USA Bronze Star for his efforts, an honour bestowed on a very small number of non-American servicemen, for supplying bridging parts and equipment to Allied Forces in North West Europe. After the war, Nick Paithouski married ‘Effie’ Barbara Paul in 1946 in Hamilton. Nick went on to play two seasons with the Hamilton Tigercats (Wildcats at the time), in 1947 and 1948, while working at Stelco. He then returned to Sarnia to start a family with ‘Effie’ Barbara Paul. They were successful, as ‘Effie’ gave birth to Janet Elizabeth (1951, later Janet Baker) and Joseph Paithouski (1953).

‘Effie’ Barbara Paul was the daughter of Lt. Charles Marr and Frances (nee Williams) Paul. ‘Effie’ was born

in London, England in November of 1917 during a Zeppelin air raid. Her parents Charles and Frances decided that mother and child should travel to Sarnia, Ontario and await the father's discharge from the army. In September 1918, baby 'Effie' Barbara and her mother Frances Paul left Southhampton, England bound for New York aboard the *RMS Olympic* (one of *Titanic's* sister ships), under the constant threat of U-boat attack. The British Government had paid for their tickets, a special deal for English wives and children of colonial soldiers to reduce the number of people to be fed. Both Frances' and Effie's names are recorded on the American Immigrant Wall of Honor at Ellis Island in New York Harbor. When mother and daughter Paul arrived in Sarnia, Frances received a telegram informing her that her close sister "Lou" had died back in England. Frances' husband Lt. Charles Marr Paul was still fighting in Europe (more on Lt. Charles Paul below).

Nick and 'Effie', along with their children Janet and Joseph Paithouski, moved to Ottawa in 1960. Nick supported his family working there as a civil engineer for the Federal Department of Transport. 'Effie' Barbara Paul earned a Bachelor of Arts degree and became a teacher with the Carleton Board of Education. 'Effie' Barbara Paul Paithouski passed away in July of 1976.

Nick Paithouski returned to Sarnia in 1984 to receive a local award - he was inducted into the Sarnia-Lambton Sports Hall of Fame for football in 1984. Trip Trepanier, the Hall of Fame Director, former teammate and long-time friend of Nick Paithouski, described him as "one of the best centres in Canada, not just one, but for a couple of years... He never bragged about anything; he just took everything as it came." On September 15, 1985, Nick Paithouski passed away at the age of eighty-seven. Both Nicholas Joseph Paithouski and Effie Barbara Paithouski are buried in Lakeview Cemetery in Sarnia.

In the autumn of 1987, Nick Paithouski was posthumously accepted into the Queen's University Football Hall of Fame. The Paithouski Prize, honouring his memory, is awarded annually at Queen's University to the graduating engineering student who has demonstrated the most consistent improvement in academic performance. Twenty-five years after his death, on May 15th, 2010, Lieutenant Nick Paithouski was inducted into the Canadian Veterans Hall of Valour in Carleton Place near Ottawa.

Nick Paithouski's induction into the Hall of Valour was doubly moving for the Paithouski family. 'Effie' Barbara Paul's father, Lieutenant **Charles Marr Paul**, was also inducted into the Hall of Valour on the same day. Charles Marr Paul was born in Sarnia and was in the first contingent of Canadians to leave for battle in the First World War, leaving Val Cartier with the CEF on October 3, 1914. Charles joined the 8th Battalion of the 90th Winnipeg Rifles, nicknamed the Little Black Devils and was later credited with saving many lives. Lieutenant Charles Paul received the Military Medal for courage and gallantry under fire while holding the line during the first German attack with poison gas at Ypres in April 1915. He also earned a Meritorious Service Medal for saving more lives during the Battle of the Somme in 1916. His unit was also at Vimy Ridge and Passchendaele in 1917 and the following year he was made officer in the field. It was during the war that Lt. Charles Paul met and married Frances Williams in England. After returning to Sarnia with his British bride, Charles and Frances Paul raised eight children: Francis (would serve in the Royal Canadian Navy); Robert, Elva, Lillian, Edna Jean, Edith (married Roy Telfer--served with Canadian Army); Betty Elizabeth (married Jack Stevens who served in the Canadian Army and was wounded at Dieppe); and Effie Barbara who would become Nick Paithouski's future wife. More information on Charles Paul, including portions of two letters that he wrote to his mother from the Front in April of 1915 are included in this Project on page 116.



Lt. Nick Paithouski - World War II



Lt. Charles Marr Paul - World War I

Michael Joseph Paithowski was born December 7, 1916 in Hamilton. NOTE: Many of the documents in Michael's Military Service File, including his Death Certificate, record his birthdate as December 7, 1917. In fact, he was born in 1916.

Michael Paithowski was a member of St. Joseph's Catholic Parish in Sarnia, and prior to enlisting worked for approximately six months as a labourer at Kellogg Construction Limited in Sarnia. He was twenty-four years old when he enlisted in the Canadian Navy, Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve (RCNVR), on January 23, 1941 in London, Ontario. He stood five feet seven and one-quarter inches tall, had blue eyes and fair hair, was single, and lived with his parents on Vidal Street at the time. He recorded his occupation as fireman, C.S.L. After the war he planned to gain employment as a stationary engineer. Michael initially received training in London, then in April 1941, continued training at the naval base Stadacona (Halifax), and then Hochelaga (Quebec). On September 17, 1941, he became a member of the crew of the *HMCS Drumheller*, a Flower-Class corvette. He served on the *Drumheller* until December 16, 1943. The ship had a number of assignments, including part of the Sydney Force, Newfoundland Command, the Newfie-Derry run, and Mid-Ocean Escort Force escorting convoys across the Atlantic.

Beginning on the opening day of the Second World War, the **Battle of the Atlantic** would be the longest continuous campaign of the war, and one in which Canada played a central role. The Royal Canadian Navy, along with the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) and Canada's Merchant Navy, played a vital role in defending the country's eastern coast and escorting convoys of ships carrying men and essential machinery, arms, fuel and basic resources between North America and Europe.

On November 30, 1943, Michael Paithowski married Miss Eloise Victoria Johnston (born 1920), the only daughter of John Eugene Johnston and Florence Johnston of 332 Confederation Street at St. George's Chapel in Sarnia. At the wedding ceremony, Mrs. Hazel Smith served as the matron of honour and George Kumchy served as the best man. Following the ceremony, the immediate families were entertained at the Colonial Hotel for a reception before the newlyweds left on a short wedding trip. On their return, the couple lived at 332 Confederation Street and later 215 Confederation Street, Sarnia. Michael and Eloise Paithowski had one child together, a son, John Michael, born August 22, 1944.

Michael's wife, Eloise Victoria Johnston, had two brothers, both of whom also served in the war. One brother, Eugene, served in the infantry, his life forever altered by his wartime experiences. Her other brother Jay Syver Johnston, became a Flying Officer-Wireless Operator/Air Gunner with the Royal Canadian Air Force. Jay Johnston (Michael's brother-in-law) lost his life during the war when the Liberator aircraft he was in crashed into Black Mountain in Quebec in October of 1943. The crash took twenty-four airmen's lives, the largest single-crash loss of life in the history of the RCAF. The plane was listed as missing, and its remains were not found until after the war. Jay Johnston's story is included in this Project. Michael and Eloise Paithowski married just one month after Eloise had lost her brother Jay.

After serving aboard the *HMCS Drumheller* until mid-December 1943, Michael Paithowski was then stationed at the base Stadacona in Halifax for a time, and on June 13, 1944, he was transferred to the *HMCS Shawinigan*, with the rank of Petty Officer Stoker.

Before he joined the *Shawinigan*, Michael returned to Sarnia on a few weeks leave, to visit his parents, his new wife and his many friends. It would be the only time he would see his young son Johnny. When he returned to duty, Michael sent his new wife Eloise and their young son three letters while aboard the *Shawinigan*. Less than one year after getting married, Michael Paithowski lost his life.

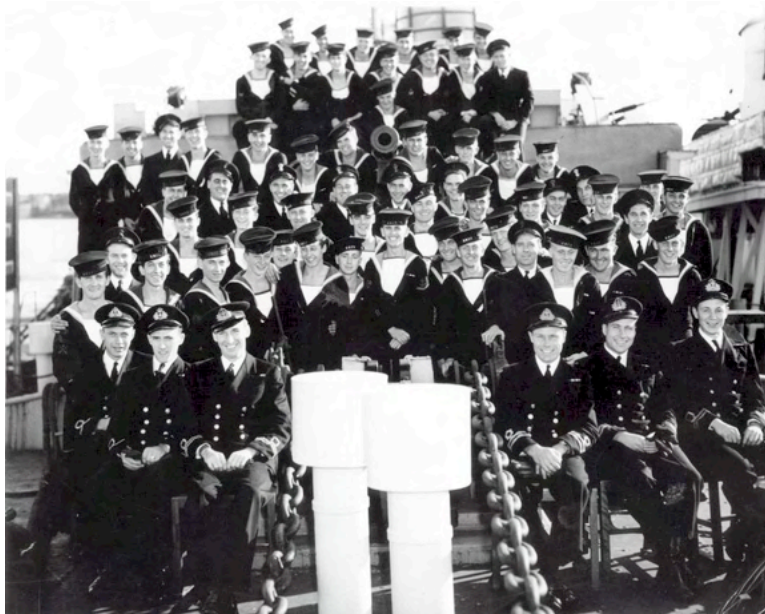
The *HMCS Shawinigan (K136)* was a Flower-class corvette, originally designed to accommodate a standard crew of less than fifty. Commissioned on September 19, 1941 at Quebec City, it was one of the sturdy little "work horses" of the RCN and was to become the 9th corvette and 19th Canadian warship lost in the war. She was in the navy's convoy escort and patrol fleet. Her sea miles totaled more than 150 000, and she had been one of the busiest vessels of her class, escorting convoy runs in the Atlantic Ocean and off the east coast of Canada. Few ships of her class spent more time at sea during the period when German U-boats were most active in the North Atlantic. During the two years prior to her sinking, she did not lose a ship under her charge. Men who served aboard her had been acclaimed for fighting efficiency, for rescue work and attacks on enemy U-boats. She escorted hundreds of thousands of vital war supplies and shipping to Allied ports.

On November 24, 1944, the *HMCS Shawinigan* and a United States Coast Guard Cutter *Sassafrass* escorted the ferry *Burgeo* from Sydney, Nova Scotia to Port aux Basques, Newfoundland. Ferries on this route were always

escorted after the tragic loss of the passenger ferry *SS Caribou* two years earlier. In mid-October of 1942, the *Caribou* had been torpedoed on the same route and 136 lives were lost, including ten children. In November 1944, the three ships made an uneventful crossing to Port aux Basques, at which time the *Shawinigan* detached to continue doing an independent anti-submarine patrol in the area. The *Shawinigan* was scheduled to rendezvous with the *Burgeo* the following morning for the return to Cape Breton. But the *Shawinigan* never made it.



Petty Officer-Stoker Michael Joseph Paithowski



Crew of the *Shawinigan* 1944

On that fateful November 24 moonlit night, the *Shawinigan* maintained radio silence while performing anti-submarine patrol in the Cabot Strait between Newfoundland and Cape Breton Island. Nearby, German U-boat *U-1228* was trying to repair a faulty snorkel without success and had decided to return to Germany for repairs. It was now 9:30 p.m. As soon as *U-1228* started her return route into the Atlantic, she sighted the *Shawinigan*. In its first recorded attack on enemy shipping, *U-1228* fired a single T-5 Gnat torpedo that struck the corvette in the stern.

Four minutes after the attack, the *Shawinigan*, with its entire crew, disappeared in a plume of frigid Atlantic water and a shower of sparks. The ship had no time to transmit any messages and authorities later speculated that the *Shawinigan's* depth charges exploded as she sank, adding to the destruction. The next morning, the *Burgeo* left Port aux Basques on schedule in the fog but could not find the *Shawinigan*. They maintained radio silence and did not inform command of *Shawinigan's* failure to appear.



Flower Class Corvette *HMCS Shawinigan K136*

Unescorted, the *Burgeo* made for Sydney and arrived on November 25 at 6 pm. Suspecting something had happened to *Shawinigan*, naval officers in Sydney ordered an air and sea search for the missing corvette, but bad weather put a stop to much of that. A day or so later, searching ships came upon fragments of wreckage, an empty Carley float and six bodies, which were all that remained to indicate what had happened to the *Shawinigan*.

A third of *Shawinigan*'s crew were twenty years old or younger and no crewmember survived the tragic sinking. Seven officers and 84 crew members, including Michael Paithowski, were lost. It is impossible to record exactly what happened to *Shawinigan* during her final moments. Some sailors were probably killed instantly by the horrific explosion; others inevitably died in the icy water as the ship sank. Those fortunate enough to get into their life vests and survive the explosion would later die in the freezing North Atlantic.

The *Shawinigan* was one of only three RCN ships lost with all hands. Twenty-three-year-old Petty Leading Coder William Anderson, another Sarnian, was also on board and perished in the sinking. His name is also inscribed on the Sarnia cenotaph and his story is included in this Project.

In late November 1944, Michael Sr. and Rosa Paithouski in Sarnia received a telegram from the Department of National Defence informing them that their son, PETTY OFFICER MICHAEL PAITHOUSKI HAS BEEN REPORTED MISSING AT SEA. The message contained no other information and intimated that a letter would follow. The message was received exactly one year to the day that Michael had married Eloise Victoria Johnston.

On November 29, 1944, Eloise Victoria Paithowski at 332 Confederation Street, received the following letter from the Secretary, Naval Board:

Dear Mrs. Paithowski:

It is with deepest regret that I must confirm the telegram of the 29th November 1944, from the Minister of National Defence for Naval Services, informing you that your husband, Michael Paithowski, Stoker Petty Officer, Official Number V-17380, Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve, is missing at sea.

The only information that can be given at this time is that your husband is missing at sea when the ship in which he was serving was lost. Please be assured, however, that as soon as further particulars can be released, you will be informed.

It is regretted that slight hope is held for your husband's survival. When it is considered, beyond all reasonable doubt, that no further hope exists and should no information be received to the contrary, an official presumption of death will be made by the Canadian Naval Authorities.

It is requested that, for security reasons, you regard the name of the ship in which your husband was serving, as confidential until such time as an official announcement is made. Please accept the sincere sympathy of the Department in your anxiety.

On December 7, 1944, Eloise received the following letter from the Secretary, Naval Board:

Dear Mrs. Paithowski:

Further to my letter of the 29th of November, 1944, details of the disaster in which your husband has been reported missing are now being released.

H.M.C.S. "SHAWINIGAN", a Royal Canadian Navy corvette, was lost while on operational duty at sea. Seven officers, including her Captain, Lieutenant W.J. Jones, R.C.N.R., and seventy-eight ratings are missing. The bodies of five other ratings have been recovered and identified. There are no known survivors.

It is requested that you will regard this information as confidential until an official announcement is made. May I again express sincere sympathy with you in your anxiety.

On December 7, 1944, in a dispatch from Ottawa, the Hon. Angus L. Macdonald, Minister of National Defence for Naval Services, announced the loss of the *H.M.C.S. Shawinigan* while on operational duty in the North Atlantic. He gave no details but said the ship's complement had been lost and five bodies have been recovered and identified. It was announced locally that two Sarnia seamen, Michael Paithowski and William Anderson, were members of the crew of the *Shawinigan* and were reported missing.

In mid-February 1945, the Paithouski family in Sarnia received a telegram from Ottawa informing them that their son, PETTY OFFICER MICHAEL PAITHOUSKI WHO WAS REPORTED MISSING AT SEA LAST NOVEMBER IS OFFICIALLY PRESUMED LOST. Also in February 1945, Eloise received the following letter from the Secretary, Naval Board:

Dear Mrs. Paithowski:

Further to my letter of the 7th of December, 1944, I regret to inform you that in view of the length of time which has elapsed since your husband, Michael Paithowski, Stoker Petty Officer, Official Number V-17380, Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve, was reported missing from H.M.C.S. "SHAWINIGAN", and as no news has since been received to the contrary, the Canadian Naval Authorities have now presumed his death to have occurred on the 24th of November, 1944.

Please allow me to express sincere sympathy with you in your bereavement on behalf of the Minister of National Defence for Naval Services, the Chief of the Naval Staff, and the Officers and men of the Royal Canadian Navy, the high traditions of which your husband has helped to maintain.

Michael Paithowski's death was later officially recorded as, *Missing, presumed dead, when the ship in which he was serving, H.M.C.S. 'Shawinigan' was lost while on operational duty at sea.*

In late August 1945, Eloise, then at 215 Confederation Street, received a War Service Gratuity of \$817.95 for the loss of her husband. Also in late August 1945, she received the following letter from the Secretary, Naval Board: *Dear Mrs. Paithowski:*

Further to my letter of the 15th of February, 1945, the Department is now able to release additional information regarding the loss of your husband's ship and I am accordingly passing on the following particulars which will, no doubt, be of interest to you.

H.M.C.S. "SHAWINIGAN" sailed from Sydney, N.S., on the 24th of November, 1944, to escort a merchant ship to Port Aux Basques, Newfoundland, and arrived off Port Aux Basques that night. In accordance with orders she was then to carry out a patrol in the area for the duration of the night, after which she was to meet the same merchant ship the next morning and return with her to Sydney.

The merchant ship arrived in Sydney unescorted on the night of the 25th of November and after it was ascertained that "Shawinigan" had not appeared at the designated rendezvous to provide escort as instructed, searches were instituted and "Shawinigan" was discovered to be missing.

It was the opinion of the Department at the time that the ship had been torpedoed by an enemy submarine during the night of the 24th/25th of November, 1944, as submarines were known to be operating in that area; and this has since been confirmed from German evidence. Although no survivors were found, a few bodies were recovered by later searches, due to tidal movements, some distance from the area in which "Shawinigan" was known to be operating. As a result, the position of the sinking can not be exactly ascertained, although from German evidence and the Department's computation, it is estimated to be in the vicinity of the three mile limit off Channel Head, near Port Aux Basques, Newfoundland.

It was not until after the war ended and U-1228 surrendered, that the details of what had happened to the *Shawinigan* that night were uncovered. When the U-boat commander was interrogated in May 1945, he stated the ship sank quickly, followed by two underwater explosions. He saw no survivors in the water.

Michael Paithowski, 27, has no known grave. He is memorialized on the Halifax Memorial, Nova Scotia, Canada, Panel 12. On the Sarnia cenotaph, his name is inscribed as M. Paithouski. The page displaying Michael's name in the Book of Remembrance in the Memorial Chamber of the Peace Tower on Parliament Hill, Ottawa is open each year every September 1st.

Michael left behind his new wife Eloise and their three-month old son Johnny Paithouski. For Eloise, she did not have clear closure of her brother's death or her husband's death until after the war ended. Eloise would go on to be employed at Bell Canada as a switchboard operator, working midnight shifts and leaving their son Johnny to be cared for by Michael's sister Mary and her husband Earl Wynne. Years later, Eloise remarried, to Tom Rue, a Norwegian Merchant Marine, stationed in Canada.

Fifty-three years after the sinking, on June 14, 1997, at Trois Rivieres, Quebec, the Prime Minister of Canada Jean Chretien and his wife took part in a Royal Canadian Navy ceremony to officially commission the new *HMCS Shawinigan (704)*. A memorial monument dedicated to the 91 lost was also unveiled. In attendance were Johnny Paithouski and his wife Paulette. They were there with other families who had lost loved ones on board the *HMCS Shawinigan* on that fateful night in November of 1944. Johnny had married Paulette, her second marriage, and she had a son from her first marriage, Shawn. A number of years later, with his step-son's full approval, Johnny in the first legal case of its kind in Ontario, adopted Shawn who then became Shawn Paithouski.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, J, L, N, P, T, U, X, 2A, 2C, 2D, 3E, 7C, 8M, 8X, 8Y, o

PARSONS, Arthur Edward (#J/11636)

Arthur Edward ("Ted") Parsons trained for two years in Canada and the United Kingdom to be an RCAF flying officer. Less than three months later, he sacrificed his life for the Allied cause while serving in one of the most dangerous postings in the war.

Ted Parsons was born in Sarnia on November 26, 1916, the third child of Arthur Edwin and Olive Sarah (nee

Cornish) Parsons, both of whom were born in Portsmouth, England. At some point they both immigrated to Canada, and married each other on March 18, 1913 in Point Edward, Ontario. Arthur Parsons supported his family working as a civil and stationary engineer. The Parsons family lived at 286 Kathleen Avenue, later 170 Proctor Street, and then 263 North Vidal Street, Sarnia. Arthur and Olive Parsons had five children together: sons John (the eldest son), Arthur Edward (Ted) and Thomas; and two daughters, Gwendolyn (the eldest daughter) and Shirley. Note: Thomas and Shirley were fraternal twins, the youngest of the Parsons children. Many years later, brother Thomas Parsons would name his only son Ted, after his older brother who had such an impact on Thomas.

Ted Parsons attended three elementary schools in Sarnia from 1925 to 1931: London Road, Lochiel Street and Devine Street Public Schools. He then attended Sarnia Collegiate from September 1931 until June 1934. Ted was a member of the SCITS rugby and basketball teams, was active in swimming and track, and enjoyed his hobby of photography. According to his family members, Ted was hard-working, well-liked and well-respected. With his charming, out-going and fun-loving personality, he developed quite a reputation as a ladies man during his youth.

Ted Parsons had a number of jobs prior to enlisting: as a clerk at Clement Drug Company in Sarnia, 1929-1930; as a salesman with Parson's Gift Shoppe in Sarnia, 1934 to 1936; as a jeweller at C.A. Remus Jewellers in Timmins, 1936 to 1940; and then as a jeweller at W.H. McCreery Jewellers in Windsor, from September 1940 until early 1941. Reference letters written by two of Timmins business people on behalf of Ted in his RCAF application included the following comments: *I have always found him honorable and trustworthy in every respect. I would say that Mr. Parsons exemplifies our finer type Canadian Youth and I am sure that he would not be found lacking in any trust imposed with him; and I have found him to be a willing, honest and able worker at all times. He has resided in Timmins for the past four years, and is well known here, and well-liked by business associates and personal acquaintances.*

Twenty-four-year-old Arthur "Ted" Parsons joined the Royal Canadian Air Force on February 24, 1941 in Windsor, Ontario. He stood five feet seven inches tall, had blue eyes and brown hair, was single, and was residing at 1019 Pelissier Street, Windsor at the time. He recorded his permanent address as 286 Kathleen Avenue, and his next-of-kin as his mother Mrs. Olive Parsons, of 286 Kathleen Avenue, Sarnia. He also recorded that he had applied to join the RCAF in September 1940 in North Bay, the result being he transferred to Windsor. He had already begun working on his flying license prior to enlisting, with 9 ½ hours of dual flying and 2 ½ hours of solo flying experience. He requested flying duties with the RCAF, with a preference to be a pilot.



Arthur Edward "Ted" Parsons



Ted Parsons (kneeling)

From the Recruiting Centre in Windsor and #1 Manning Depot in Toronto, Ted Parsons received his air training at #5 Service Flying Training School (SFTS) in Brantford; and #1 Initial Training School (ITS) in Toronto; followed by #12 Elementary Flying Training School (EFTS) in Goderich; and Composite Training School (KTS) in Trenton; continuing at #7 Air Observer School (AOS) in Portage la Prairie; and #3 Bombing and Gunnery School (B&GS) in MacDonald, Manitoba; and then #1 Air Navigation School (ANS) in Rivers, Manitoba. The Chief

Instructor and Commanding Officer at #1 ANS commented that Ted Parson was, *Above average student. Conscientious worker, excellent navigator. Good appearance and personality, and Excellent officer material – would make a good instructor.*

Just over one year after joining the Air Force, Ted lost his father Arthur Parsons who died March 8, 1942. Ted was training at #3 B&GS in Manitoba at the time and was given a 15-day leave to return home. The following month, on April 11, 1942, Ted Parsons was awarded his Air Observer's Badge at #3B&GS. One month later, on May 11, 1942, Ted received his commission as Pilot Officer at #1 ANS in Rivers, Manitoba. Ted then spent his two-week pre-embarkation furlough with his widowed mother Olive in Sarnia. By July 1942, he was posted east, to #31 Operational Training Unit (OTU) in Debert, Nova Scotia and then #31 Personnel Depot (PD) in Moncton, New Brunswick.

On July 20, 1942, Ted Parsons embarked overseas, arriving in the United Kingdom ten days later. Initially posted to #3 Personnel Reception Centre, he was transferred to #9 (Observer) Advanced Flying Unit (AFU), and then #14 Operational Training Unit (OTU) on August 8, 1942. On February 6, 1943, Ted became a member of RAF #77 Squadron, part of Bomber Command. In March 1943, his mother Olive in Sarnia received news that her son Arthur "Ted" Parsons had been promoted to Flying Officer from Pilot Officer by the R.C.A.F. "somewhere in England".

At the start of the war, RAF #77 Squadron was based at RAF Driffield and equipped with Armstrong Whitworth Whitley aircraft--twin engine, medium bombers. Initially, the squadron played a role in the propaganda war, dropping leaflets "Nickels" over Germany. By March 1940, as part of No. 4 Group, they had begun bombing missions against Germany, operating from several different RAF bases over a couple of years: Kinloss, Linton-on-Ouse, Topcliffe and Leeming. In the period between September 1939 and May 1942, it is believed that #77 Squadron carried out more raids and suffered more losses than any other Whitley squadron. From early May to October 1942, the squadron was loaned to Coastal Command, where they carried out convoy escorts, anti-submarine patrols and shipping strikes from RAF Chivenor, off South West England. In October 1942, RAF #77 Squadron returned to **Bomber Command** and converted to Handley Page Halifax aircraft--four engine, heavy bombers.

During the course of the war, one of this country's most significant contributions was the approximately 50,000 Canadians who served with the RCAF and RAF in Bomber Command operations. Next to Britain, Canada was the largest contributor to Bomber Command, making up more than a third of all of Bomber Command personnel. The men who served in Bomber Command faced some of the most difficult odds of anyone fighting in the war.

No. 77 Squadron also became the first occupant of the newly-built RAF Elvington airbase, just outside of York. RAF Elvington station was a recently constructed temporary camp with wooden buildings and Nissen hut accommodations, with far less luxury and comfort than their previous base. The airfield and squadron were declared fully operational at the end of January 1943 as part of Bomber Command with No. 4 Group.



F/O-Navigator Arthur Edward Parsons



Ted Parsons at RAF Elvington (3rd from right)

As an RCAF member of RAF #77 Squadron “Esse Potius Quam Videri” (To be, rather than seem), Ted Parsons attained the rank Flying Officer-Navigator. He would serve with #77 Squadron for less than three months, aboard Halifax II aircraft JB803. In that short time, the crew flew twelve missions: March 11-Stuttgart, March 12-Essen, March 29-Berlin, April 2-Lorient, April 3-Essen, April 8-Duisburg, April 10-Frankfurt, April 14-Stuttgart, April 16-Pilsen, April 20-Stettin, April 26-Duisburg and April 27-Mining.

During February and March 1943, the squadron flew 152 sorties on 22 raids, with the loss of only 3 aircraft, a loss rate of 2%. However, during the months of April, May and June 1943, when the squadron carried out 356 sorties on 29 raids, 19 aircraft went missing and 2 were lost in take-off accidents. The average loss rate was 5.8% which meant that only about 1 crew in six could be expected to complete a tour of 30 operations.



On the night of April 30/May 1, 1943, Ted Parsons was a member of the crew of seven (5 British and 2 Canadian) aboard Halifax II aircraft JB803 (markings KN-G) on its thirteenth mission. Five of the seven crew members of JB803 flew on all thirteen missions, including Ted Parsons, Thomas Scharff, Ian Crawford, Leon Hannam and Gordon Watson. William Louth flew the last six, and Raymond Shepherd flew the last four missions. Weighing almost 30-tons, the aircraft departed at 23:53 hours (April 30) from RAF Elvington. The night mission, consisting of 305 heavy bombers, was an operational sortie targeting the city of Essen, in the Ruhr Valley of Germany. Crossing the North Sea was relatively uneventful but after crossing the Dutch coast it did not take long before the flight was picked up by German Radar operators at their Zander station near Zandvoort. German pilot Feldweibel Heinz Vinke, in his twin-engine Messerschmitt Bf110, was one of the many night fighters sent out to intercept the bombers. Nothing was heard from Halifax JB803 after take-off, and it was later reported missing.

With a high concentration of German anti-aircraft guns in north Holland, especially around Amsterdam, Allied bombers tended to avoid this area. With British operations being carried out at night, most of their losses in this area was not due to anti-aircraft fire, but were the result of German night fighters. On this night, soon after 02:00 hours (May 1), Vinke's German night fighter caught up with JB803 above North Holland and started his attack at an altitude of 6,300 meters. It is most likely Vinke started his attack from the rear, a common tactic. The attack damaged the Halifax significantly and was forced to start its descent into the thick cloud layer below them. The conditions over Holland that pitch black night were not the best, with drizzle and a low, thick cloud base. Now engulfed in flames, the Halifax circled around the villages of Muiden, Muiderberg and IJsselmeer Lake, likely in an effort to establish their position in order to bail out over land instead of water.

During the perilous descent, twenty-year-old pilot Gordon Watson gave the order to jump. Five of the seven crewmen bailed out of the bomber exit, including Ted Parsons. Tragically, the strong winds pushed them over nearby IJsselmeer Lake. Four of the parachuters, including Parsons, landed in the ice-cold waters of the lake where they drowned. Pilot Watson remained on board in order to give the crew the time to jump. Gunner Thomas Scarff also remained on board, either because he was wounded or he was trying to assist Watson in an emergency landing. We will never know. The aircraft crashed at approximately 02:26 hours (May 1) between Muiden and Muiderberg (about 15 km east of Amsterdam). It exploded instantly and fires at the crashsite were observed for the rest of the night.

The next day, the bodies of Sgts. Watson and Scarff were found outside the aircraft. It was determined that they had died instantly in the crash. The two victims were quickly coffined by the Germans on the Saturday morning (May 1), and Frans Nell brought the bodies by horse and wagon to the community cemetery in Muider Woods. Doctor Hakman, who cared for the two bodies, recalled years later that the Canadian Scarff had an ID bracelet on his wrist and a small bible in his pocket, plus a photograph of a young woman. The two airmen were buried that night

after 8 o'clock, with the mayor of Muiden present at the burial.

In the days following, the bodies of four of the airmen who parachuted out of the aircraft washed ashore, with no signs of life vests on any of them: F/O Ted Parsons, Sgts. Ian Crawford, Leon Hannam and Raymond Shepherd. Ted Parsons was the first drowned victim found, by the 15-year-old son of the Stoop family from Muiden, on Sunday, May 2, a good 24 hours after the crash. The next day, on May 3, the three other bodies washed up. By May 4, the bodies of Ted Parsons, Ian Crawford, Leon Hannam and Raymond Shepherd were buried in the presence of Muiden mayor Coops, by the German authorities in Muiden General Cemetery. The body of the seventh airman, Sgt. William Louth, was initially not recovered.

For missing airman Sgt. William Louth, it was determined later that an airman with no means of identification on him was found severely wounded on the day of the crash. He was taken to hospital where he died of his injuries on May 13 without ever waking up. Louth's body was buried in Amsterdam in a grave inscribed with the words; AN AIRMAN OF THE 1939-1945 WAR, A SERGEANT, ROYAL AIR FORCE 13TH MAY 1943 KNOWN UNTO GOD.

Perishing with Navigator F/O Arthur Ted Parsons were Sgt. Thomas Deuel Scarff (RCAF, born and raised in Winnipeg, age 23, tailgunner); and Sgts. Ian Douglas Crawford (RAF, age 21, flight engineer), Leon Hannam (RAF, age 22, bomb aimer/air gunner), Raymond Shepherd (RAF, age 21, top gunner), William Robert Louth (RAF, age 29, wireless operator, and the only married crew member) and Gordon Watson (RAF, age 20, pilot). In England, British High Command considered the Essen mission a success, for of the 305 aircraft that took part in the raid, only twelve were lost.



The crew of Halifax JB803
Arthur Parsons (kneeling front right)



The graves of crew JB803 in Muiden Cemetery
(photo taken soon after the war)

Halifax JB803 was shot down by German Luftwaffe night fighter ace Heinz Vinke, his 19th kill since joining flying as a night fighter. Awarded the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross in September 1943, he was credited with shooting down 54 enemy aircraft, all at night, and is ranked as the eighteenth most successful night fighter pilot in the history of aerial warfare. At age 23 while flying a Messerschmitt Bf110, he was shot down by two British Typhoons and killed on February 26, 1944 while on a search and rescue mission over the English Channel. His body was never found.

On May 2, 1943, Olive Parsons, then living at 170 Proctor Street, Sarnia, received the following telegram from the RCAF Casualties Officer: REGRET TO ADVISE YOU THAT YOUR SON FLYING OFFICER ARTHUR EDWARD PARSONS J ONE ONE SIX THREE SIX IS REPORTED MISSING AFTER AIR OPERATIONS OVERSEAS MAY FIRST STOP LETTER FOLLOWS. Later, Ted Parson's death was officially recorded as, *Previously reported missing after air operations, now for official purposes, presumed dead.*

In August 1945, widowed mother Olive Parsons, then residing on Vidal Street, received a War Service Gratuity of \$317.79 for the loss of her son. Many years later, Ted's sister Shirley (McKenzie) would say, "When mother got the news, she was heartbroken". For the rest of her life, Olive never believed that her son was dead. She always held out hope that someday her "Tedums" would return home and come through the front door.

Following are five accounts from eyewitnesses of the events on the night of April 30/May 1:

Sake van Huissteden is 12 years old and on his way home with his father. They are in the Noordpolder (a hamlet on a low-lying tract of land enclosed by dikes). Behind them they drag a cart with a slaughtered sheep. They hear a strange, thunderous sound. When they reach the Echobos (a wooded site on the western edge of Muiderberg), they hear a great explosion, but do not know what is going on.

The four Heynis sisters are in bed in their house on the Herengracht in Muiden. Hetty is awake. She hears the sound of an airplane and leaves her bed. When she looks out the window, she sees a burning plane flying over the barracks. It scatters light bullets. She opens the window and just at that moment someone jumps out of the plane with a parachute... Later the sisters heard that the plane crashed in the Noordpolder when it wanted to make an emergency landing. Two crew members are found at the wreck, but the rest are lost. The Germans begin house searches the next day.

Gerrit Wegman is 12 years old and lives on the Zuidpolderweg. He also wakes up from the noise of the bomber and the explosion. From his bedroom window, he sees a sea of fire on the other side of the canal, a few hundred meters away from him. Not long after, the Germans do a house search.

Ben Hottentot lives on the farm at the Hakkelaar and is woken up by the explosion. He looks out the window and sees a red glow. He can not determine the distance in the dark. He thinks the Kruitfabriek (gunpowder factory) or a factory is bombed somewhere in Amsterdam-North and goes back to bed. An hour later, a pounding on the door. The farm is surrounded by Germans. They ask for English fliers, but it soon becomes clear that they are not on the farm. The next morning, Hottentot sees how close the wreck is in the pasture. It was guarded by the Germans. On 2 and 3 May, the bodies of the dead crew members who had jumped out of the plane with their parachutes and drowned in the IJsselmeer, are washing up.⁹¹

Frans Nell and his brother on the Slothoeve farm on the northpolder road in Muiden, after hearing the huge bang and seeing a sea of fire in the meadows just east of the road, got dressed to investigate the area. On the third meadow along the waterway, they saw a huge piece of the bomber which did not burn. The entire area was full of wreckage pieces and there was still evidence of fire on places where the 800 kg Rolls-Royce engines were sunken into the ground. They came across the still bodies of two crewmen laying next to each other (Watson and Scharff) beside the wreckage, not pinched in the remains. Frans Nell recalled years later that neither of the bodies was burnt, mutilated or bloodied, but appeared to have had serious head wounds.

Note: The bomber crashed on land owned by the Nell family.

In the spring of 1946, the RAF Missing Research and Enquiry Unit (MREU), conducted an investigation into the crash of Halifax JB803, and the burial of its crew. Following are portions of the Investigating Officers report:

2. ... *I called at the Town Hall at Muiden on March 7th, 1946, and interviewed the burgomaster, a Mr. Koops a very helpful man. Mr. Koops told us he remembered the crash. No one of the police had been allowed near it. It occurred at 0230 hrs. on the morning of May 1st, 1943, in Polderland near the IJsselmeer (Zuider Zee). The aircraft burnt furiously for several hours, but there was no explosion. The burgomaster stated that all remains of the aircraft were taken away by the Germans.*

3. *The bodies of Sgt. Scraff and Sgt. Watson were found near the aircraft. A doctor who visited the aircraft after it had burned out stated that he could not find the remains of any more bodies in the wreck. A couple of days later the body of F/O Parsons was washed ashore from the IJsselmeer at Muiden and the bodies of Sgts. Crawford, Shepherd and Hannam were washed ashore at Diemen, about 3 miles westwards.*

4. *The burgomaster had not heard of a seventh body, that of Sgt. Louth, being found. It is possible that he baled out, as apparently the other members of the crew did, and that he came down in the IJsselmeer and has either never been discovered or was washed ashore some considerable time afterwards, having no remaining means of identification.*

5. *Next day, we called at the Oosterbegraafplaats, Amsterdam GSGS Sheet 2A Z 095203, as many airmen, who were found in the IJsselmeer have been buried there, and we discovered that there is an unknown who was buried in May 13, 1943, in grave 49, topmost coffin, Section 69. The body was brought from the IJsselmeer. This body will be exhumed. There are many unknowns buried in the period of 3 months after the crash, at this cemetery, who one of which might be Sgt. Louth...*

6. *It was the custom of the Germans to take wounded airmen and the bodies of the killed to the Wilhelmina Gasthuis at Amsterdam, a large hospital. Thinking that it might be possible to find out something about Sgt. Louth there, we next called on the doctor in charge, but perusal of the books did not provide any enlightenment.*

7. *Further efforts will be made to discover the fate and burial place of Sgt. Louth.*

In July 1946, Olive, then residing at 263 North Vidal Street, received the following letter from the R.C.A.F. Casualty Officer, for Chief of the Air Staff in Ottawa:

Dear Mrs. Parsons:

A report has now been received from a Missing Research and Enquiry Unit on the Continent which contains additional information concerning the death and place of burial of your son, Flying Officer Arthur Edward Parsons, of which, although it is of a distressing nature, it is felt you would wish to be advised.

According to local inhabitants who were interrogated by a representative from the Missing Research and Enquiry Unit, the aircraft of which your son was a member of the crew crashed at approximately 2:30 A.M. on May 1st, 1943, near the IJsselmeer, (Zuider Zee) near Muiden, 6 ½ miles East South East of Amsterdam, Holland. The bodies of Flight Sergeant Scarff and Sergeant Watson were recovered near the wrecked aircraft and the body of your son was recovered from the IJsselmeer at Muiden. The bodies of Sergeant Crawford, Sergeant Shepherd and Sergeant Hannam were also recovered from the sea about three miles distant, at Diemen. The six members of the crew were buried by the German Authorities in the General Cemetery at Muiden, Holland, and your son was buried in Grave No. 85, Row 1, rather than Grave No. 80 as previously advised.

The reverent care of the burial places of all who served in the Forces of the British Empire is the task of the Imperial War Graves Commission. Already eminent architects are at work planning the construction of beautiful cemeteries and each individual grave will be supported and sustained by the nations of the Empire. I hope it may be of some consolation to you to know that your gallant son's grave is in sacred care and keeping.

May I again offer you and the members of your family my deepest sympathy in your great loss.

In March 1947, Olive received the following letter from the Wing Commander for Chief of the Air Staff in Ottawa:

Dear Mrs. Parsons:

It is a privilege to have the opportunity of sending you the Operational Wings and Certificate in recognition of the gallant services rendered by your son, Flying Officer A.E. Parsons. I realize there is little which may be said or done to lessen your sorrow, but it is my hope that these "Wings", indicative of operations against the enemy, will be a treasured memento of a young life offered on the altar of freedom in defence of his Home and Country.

Arthur Ted Parsons, 27, is buried in Muiden General Cemetery, Netherlands, Row E, Grave 85. On his headstone are inscribed the words, GOD'S GREATEST GIFT, REMEMBRANCE. Since 1943, the municipality of Gooise Meren along with the Commonwealth War Grace Commission have maintained the six war graves. Since 1946, every May 4 is Hollands national Remembrance Day, a solemn occasion and one the Dutch mark with ceremonies at the Canadian War Cemeteries. On that day, people all over the country observe two minutes of silence at 8:00 p.m. In Muiden, the citizens attend church and then walk in silence to the Muiden Cemetery to pay their respects to the six airmen of Halifax JB803 buried there. Schoolchildren lay flowers before the headstones and candles are placed on the graves of the six fallen.



Much of Halifax JB803 was salvaged in 1943 by the Germans (it took about a week), including one of the four engines, however some bits and pieces remained at the crash site. After the war, collectors found two engines to salvage, but the fourth engine sat in the ground for 60 years. In the summer of 2003, the son of Frans Nell kindly

Guus Kroon of Muiden remembered as a child in 1964 cycling with his parents along the dyke through the Noordpolder when his father pointed at a white house in the direction of the polder and told him that a plane had crashed over there during the war. Guus was immediately fascinated and so began his search for more information. Also, over the years as he rode his bicycle throughout the Netherlands he noticed several monuments for other Allied aircraft that had crashed and he wondered why there was no monument in his hometown. So in 2017, Guus Kroon founded the Workgroup Halifax Monument Muiden. He and his group of volunteers, that included David van Coolwijk, Wouter Wormhoudt, Willem Kroon and Frans-Jan Ter Beek, developed plans to erect a monument to honour of the crew of Halifax JB803 at the crashsite in Muiden.

The group established a foundation and a website in 2018, advertised nationally, and began fundraising through crowdfunding and accepting public and personal donations. They needed to raise €4000 to finance the construction and the maintenance of the monument. In January 2019, the group began construction of the monument. They also ran special fundraising events, for example, on April 28, 2019, the group ran a “Ted Parsons Look Alike Contest.” In early 2020, the group received approval at a new site on the Zuidpolderweg, on the curve of a bicycle path, about 150 metres from the crash site.

The monument is an impressive structure standing three metres tall. The pedestal is a concrete base covered in red bricks and affixed to it is the plaque from 2018. Atop the pedestal is an airplane propeller that is attached to the base by a steel tube. The propeller is an original blade from a Halifax bomber acquired from the Aircraft Recovery Group in Heemskerk, Netherlands, but not the Halifax JB803.



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Using a metal detector, historian and Monument Muiden group member David van Coolwijk had recovered pieces of the Halifax JB803. A number of these pieces were sent to family members of the seven crewmen around the time of the monument unveiling. Family members had been invited to the monument unveiling ceremony but COVID travel restrictions prevented them from attending. Sharon McDonald of Sarnia, Ted Parsons' niece, was one of those unable to attend. Sharon's mother Gwendolyn (Parsons-Waite) was Ted Parsons' sister. Gwen and Ted were very close to each other growing up. Gwen passed away in 2009 and was cremated. In September 2020, around the time of the monument unveiling, some of Gwen's ashes were sent to David van Coolwijk so that he could scatter them on the grave of her brother Ted. A wonderful website has been created by the Halifax Monument Muiden volunteers: www.halifaxmonumentmuiden.nl

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, J, K, L, M, N, 2C, 2D, 3J, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 9I, 9J, 10B, 10U, 2q, 3f, 3g

POLE, Douglas Campbell (#J/35541)

Douglas Campbell Pole had just finished high school when he enlisted with the RCAF at age eighteen. An outstanding athlete and husband to Ivy Mae Logan, Douglas planned to further his education when he returned from the war. One year and one day after getting married, Douglas, 21, was killed in a bombing mission over Essen, Germany. He has no known grave.

Douglas Pole was born in Sarnia on October 15, 1923, the middle son of Willard Harford and Muriel Grace (nee Proctor) Pole. Willard Harford Pole, the son of Charles and Mary Pole, born August 4, 1892 in Strathroy, Ontario, had served in WWI. At the age of twenty-four, Willard enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force on February 19, 1917 in London, Ontario. He stood five feet nine and a half inches tall, had blue eyes and light brown hair, was single and was living with his parents at 440 Wellington Street, Sarnia at the time. He recorded his next-of-kin as his mother, Mary Pole on Wellington Street (later 194 Kathleen Avenue), and his trade or calling as druggist. He was appointed the rank of Sergeant, with Canadian Army Medical Corps (C.A.M.C.) Training Depot, No. 1, CEF. Less than two months later, on April 12, 1917, he embarked overseas from Halifax, arriving in Liverpool on April 29.

One month later, on May 31, 1917, Sergeant Willard Pole arrived in Havre, France, a member of the CAMC. He served as a medic initially with the 5th Canadian Field Ambulance and in late August 1917 was transferred to the 29th Company, Canadian Forestry Corps. In the early part of 1919, he returned to England and was attached to No. 9 Canadian Stationary Hospital. He was discharged on July 17, 1919 in Halifax, based on "demobilization consequence upon cessation of hostilities".

Willard Pole graduated from the College of Pharmacy the same year and returned to Sarnia. Willard married Sarnia-born Muriel Grace Proctor Pole on October 11, 1919 in Sarnia. Muriel Grace went by her middle name Grace. Willard and Grace Pole were blessed with three sons: Ross Norman, the eldest (see below); Douglas Campbell; and the youngest Neil Proctor (born June 13, 1927). The Pole family lived at 208 Essex Street and Willard was a druggist in Sarnia, operating the successful Pole's Drug Store.

Doug Pole attended George Street Public School in Sarnia from 1929 to 1936, and then Sarnia Collegiate from September 1937 until April 1942. At high school, he was extremely active in many sports; Douglas played basketball, rugby, baseball, lacrosse, water-polo and football and was a member of WOSSAA hockey. He was also a badminton star, having received a championship cup while playing at the local Armouries. Outside sports, Doug was a member of Central United Church and its Central Century Club where, not surprisingly, the athletic Pole played hockey, softball and basketball. He also found time to indulge in his hobby of collecting old coins and in the summer of 1941, he worked at Imperial Oil Limited as a watchman on the *SS Iocolite*, an Imperial Oil tanker.

At age eighteen, Doug Pole enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force on March 27, 1942 in Sarnia (three months after his older brother Ross had enlisted). He stood five feet eight and a half inches tall, was single, and was residing at home with his parents on Essex Street at the time. He recorded his occupation as student and stated that he was planning to return to school after the war. He requested flying duties, with a preference to be a pilot or observer. From #9 Recruiting Centre in London and #5 Manning Depot in Lachine, Quebec, Doug received his air training at #13 Service Flying Training School (SFTS) in St Huberts, Quebec; at #5 Initial Training School (ITS) in Belleville; at #20 Elementary Flying Training School (EFTS) in Oshawa; and then at #1 Air Observer School (AOS) in Malton, Ontario. Doug was awarded his Navigators Badge and commission as Pilot Officer at #1 AOS in Malton on September 17, 1943.

On September 18, 1943 one day after his graduation, Doug married Miss Ivy Mae Logan, the youngest

daughter of Joseph A. and Jessie Logan of Sarnia Township at St. George's Anglican Church in Sarnia. At the wedding ceremony, the bride was given in marriage by her brother, Bert Logan. The maid of honour was Miss Jacqueline Davison and Neil Pole, the brother of the groom, served as the best man. Following the ceremony, a reception was held at Dell's for fifty guests. Afterwards, with Doug on his 14-day pre-embarkation leave, the newlywed couple left for a wedding trip to points east.



Doug & Ivy at SCITS



Doug & Ivy



Doug & Ivy



Douglas & Ivy – September 1943

One month after getting married, on October 22, 1943, Doug Pole embarked overseas from Halifax for the United Kingdom. While Doug was overseas, his wife Ivy Mae resided with her sister, Mrs. A.G. Knight, of 245 Stuart Street, Sarnia. In early November 1943, Ivy Mae received a cable from Doug telling her of his safe arrival overseas. In the U.K., Doug was initially posted to #3 Personnel Reception Centre before being transferred to #6 (Observer) Advanced Flying Unit (AFU) on January 4, 1944. In late February 1944, he was transferred to #24 Operational Training Unit (O.T.U.), and in mid-May 1944 was transferred to #1664 Heavy Conversion Unit (H.C.U.).

On April 6, 1944, Doug Pole wrote a letter to his friends in Sarnia--Lorraine Mara (Ivy Logan's best friend) and her boyfriend at the time Bert Logan (Ivy's brother). Lorraine and Bert later married, on June 21, 1947. Following is that letter, written on a Thursday evening at R.A.F. Station, Honeybourne:

Dear Bert & Lorraine,

The wonderful parcel I received the other day contained a note which was signed "Bert & Lorraine" so I'm addressing this letter that way. Gee but that sounds nice together doesn't it? In fact I won't be surprised if I get an invitation some of these weeks. HA HA. However I'm terribly sorry but I don't think I'll be able to make it so wait till I get home. How about it kids????

Well now to come down to earth again. Your parcel arrived in first class condition and boy was I ever glad to get it!! You folks have no idea how much boxes of food mean to us over here, but let me tell you it certainly is a lot. So thanks again for the swell parcel folks. Also, thank you Lorraine for the box you put in one of Sandy's parcels. [Doug's nickname for Ivy Logan was "Sandy"]. Gee but it's great to have a second best girl like you. P.S. Don't tell my wife (HA).

Gee but I hope we can soon get home again! Now that summer is coming on I'm beginning to think of other swell times we used to have together (the four of us). Gee but didn't we have fun! I'll certainly be glad when we can start all over again with our picnics, wiener roasts, etc. Oh how I long to be home again. I hope you folks are having a good time for me too, because I'm certainly leading a lonely old life over here. All I do is fly, eat and sleep. Not very exciting is it!

I hope I'm not asking too much but would you folks help me out by seeing that Sandy doesn't get down-hearted while I'm away. I know she worries a bit about me but I hope you will try to keep her smiling. Then I'll soon be home and we can resume our old partnership. Gee but when I think of coming home I really get excited.

I suppose you will be out home again now Bert. If so don't work too hard and mind all those late nights. I hope you still have all the gas you need to go to all the places I know you like to go to on the weekends. [Bert had a family farm in the community of "Blackwell". During the winter, he worked in Sarnia delivering oil to homes. The other three seasons, he worked on the family farm in Blackwell]. And Lorraine, I suppose are still busily engaged at the Imperial [Lorraine was employed at Imperial Oil]. From what Sandy tells me you two have some hectic "cat sessions" in bed till all hours of the morning. I only hope you leave a bit of me intact. Please say hello to all your folks for me Lorraine. I hope this little note finds you all well and having wonderful times at "Kenwick Gardens".

They have been working us like the dickens the last month or so, but as you know as well as I do something big is going to happen. It's a good thing we don't know where or when because if we did I'm afraid we wouldn't like it so much. But I hope "we" all come out on top okay. [the "something big" Doug refers to is D-Day].

I see I must close now so I'll say cheerio for now and take care of yourselves. I'll be seeing you before you know it. So long.

Doug

P.S. Thanks again for the swell parcel.



Doug Pole



Doug Pole (on right) with a flying comrade

Two months after writing the above letter, on June 12, 1944, Doug Pole became a member of RCAF #429 Bison Squadron "Fortunae Nihil" (Nothing to chance), part of **Bomber Command**, No. 6 Group. He was promoted to the rank of Flying Officer-Navigator while on operational duty in June of 1944. Also in June 1944, Doug would lose his brother, RCAF Flying Officer Ross Pole. In mid-June 1944, Willard and Grace Pole in Sarnia received a telegram from Ottawa informing them that their eldest son, FLYING OFFICER ROSS POLE WAS REPORTED MISSING ON JUNE 13 AFTER ACTIVE OPERATIONS OVER ENEMY TERRITORY. No other details were given. Four months later, Willard and Grace Pole would lose a second son, Douglas.

During the course of the war, one of this country's most significant contributions was the approximately 50,000 Canadians who served with the RCAF and RAF in Bomber Command operations. Next to Britain, Canada was the largest contributor to Bomber Command, making up more than a third of all of Bomber Command personnel. The men who served in Bomber Command faced some of the most difficult odds of anyone fighting in the war.

No. 429 Squadron was formed in November 1942 as a night bomber squadron, based at East Moor and was equipped with Vickers Wellington aircraft. In August 1943 the squadron converted to Handley Page Halifax aircraft and moved to RAF Leeming, Yorkshire remaining there for the rest of the war. In March 1945, the squadron converted to Avro Lancasters. At the end of the war, the squadron was used to transport troops and liberated POWs back to the U.K.

While on a bombing mission in August 1944, Doug Pole's Halifax aircraft was damaged by flak but was able to return safely to base. Between August 14 and September 21, 1944, Doug was in hospital recovering from painful leg wounds that he received on the flight when the bomber was hit by flak. He recovered nicely and returned to active duty.



Flying Officer-Navigator Douglas Campbell Pole

On October 4, 1944, Doug mailed a postcard from Scotland to Jessie Logan—Ivy's mother and his mother-in-law.

Dear Mom,

I was in Edinburgh to-day so I decided to see the famous Forth Bridge while I was here [the postcard featured a photo of the bridge]. I hope you like what I saw. It was a sunny but rather windy day. I enjoyed my visit to Edinburgh very much indeed. It certainly is a beautiful city. The nicest I've seen here so far. Hope this finds you all well & enjoying decent weather. Say hello to Bert for me. Cheerio & all the best.

Love - Doug

On October 23, 1944, one month after being released from hospital, Doug Pole was aboard Halifax Mk. III aircraft MZ906 (markings AL-H) that took off from RAF Leeming on a day bombing operation targeting Essen, Germany. It was one of 1055 aircraft involved in the operation—a record, and was the heaviest raid on Essen so far. Most of the bombs dropped were high explosives. There were only 8 aircraft lost, however one of them was Halifax

MZ906 that failed to return from the Essen operation. Perishing with F/O Douglas Pole were FS.s George Theodore Hallam and Lorne Joseph Moore; F/O. Norman Charles Muir; P/O.s Lloyd John Innes and Peter John Felix Mitchell; and Sgt. John Michael Wemyss (RAF).

Doug Pole was killed one year and one day after getting married in Sarnia. In late October of 1944, his parents Willard and Grace in Sarnia were advised by Squadron Leader Caufield of the St. Thomas R.C.A.F. station that their son, FLYING OFFICER DOUGLAS POLE HAD BEEN REPORTED MISSING ON OCTOBER 23 PRESUMABLY WHILE ON OPERATIONS OVER ENEMY TERRITORY.

In late October 1944, Ivy Mae received a letter from the Wing Commander, No. 429 Squadron, R.C.A.F. Following is a portion of that letter:

Dear Mrs. Pole,

Prior to the arrival of this letter you will have received a telegram informing you that your husband, Flying Officer Douglas Campbell Pole, has been reported missing as the result of air operations. I am sorry to have to confirm the fact that this is, at least temporarily, true.

Your husband and his crew were engaged in an operational flight over Essen, Germany, on the evening of October 23rd, and no news of them has yet been received. There is, however, every chance that they are prisoners of war, or with luck, among friends who will help them to evade capture and return to this country. Indeed, it is the sincere hope of all of us here that this is the case; in which event either you will hear from your husband directly, or will be advised by R.C.A.F. Headquarters, Ottawa, who will receive advice from the International Red Cross Society....

Any further news received in the meantime will be passed on to you by R.C.A.F. Headquarters at Ottawa with whom you may communicate if you wish.

It is desired to explain that the request in the telegram notifying you of the casualty to your husband was included with the object of avoiding his chance of escape being prejudiced by undue publicity in case he is still at large. This is not to say that any information about his is available, but is a precaution adopted in the case of all personnel reported missing.

It may give you some satisfaction to know that your husband was regarded as a particularly good navigator and that his loss is a severe blow, not only to ourselves as his colleagues, but to the Squadron as an operational unit. Please accept, on behalf of all his friends here, my most sincere sympathy in your present anxiety. We join you in hoping that Douglas and his crew are safe and well and that good news will not be long in coming through.

In late July 1945, Ivy Mae, still living on Stuart Street, received another letter, this one from the R.C.A.F. Casualty Officer, for Chief of the Air Staff in Ottawa:

Dear Mrs. Pole:

It is with deep regret that, in view of the lapse of time and absence of any further information concerning your husband, Flying Officer Douglas Campbell Pole, since he was reported missing, the Air Ministry Overseas now proposes to take action to presume his death for official purposes.

Will you please confirm by letter that you have not received any further evidence or news concerning him. The presumption of death will proceed after hearing from you, and on completion you will receive official notification by registered letter from Chief of the Air Staff.

May I extend to you and the members of your family my sincere sympathy in this time of great anxiety.

Doug Pole's death was later officially recorded as, *Previously reported missing after air operations, now for official purposes, presumed dead, overseas (over Essen Germany)*. The Wing Commander for Chief of the Air Staff in Ottawa sent this letter to Ivy Mae in February 1947:

Dear Mrs. Pole:

It is a privilege to have the opportunity of sending you the Operational Wings and Certificate in recognition of the gallant services rendered by your husband, Flying Officer D.C. Pole. I realize there is little which may be said or done to lessen your sorrow, but it is my hope that these "Wings", indicative of operations against the enemy, will be a treasured memento of a young life offered on the altar of freedom in defence of his Home and Country.

In July 1952, Grace, Doug's mother, received the following letter from the Wing Commander, R.C.A.F. Casualties Officer, for Chief of the Air Staff:

Dear Mrs. Pole:

It is with reluctance that after so long an interval, I must refer to the loss of your son, Flying Officer Douglas Campbell Pole. A report has, however been received from our Missing Research and Enquiry Service which states that their efforts to locate your son's grave have been unsuccessful. Under the circumstances, therefore, it must be regretfully accepted and officially recorded that he does not have a "known" grave.

Due to the extreme hazards attending air operations there are, unhappily, many thousands of British aircrew boys who do not have "known" graves and all will be commemorated on General Memorials that will be erected at a number of locations by the Imperial War Graves Commission (of which Canada is a member), each Memorial representative of a theatre of operations. One of these Memorials will be erected at Runnymede, England, and the name of your son will appear on that Memorial.

I realize that this is an extremely distressing letter and that there is no manner of conveying such information to you that would not add to your heartaches. I am fully aware that nothing I may say will lessen your great sorrow, but I would like to express to you and the members of your family my deepest sympathy.

Douglas Pole, 21, has no known grave. His name is inscribed on the Runnymede War Memorial, Surrey, United Kingdom, Panel 247. His name is also inscribed on the Sarnia Refinery Plaque. Unveiled in 1949, the plaque has the names of 24 Sarnia Imperial Oil employees who made the ultimate sacrifice in World War II. Douglas left behind his wife of just over one year, Ivy Mae Pole. Years later, Ivy Mae remarried, becoming Ivy Mae Palmer and residing at Oakwood Corners, R.R.#3 Sarnia. For parents Willard and Grace Pole, tragedy struck twice. Doug was their second son lost in the war; their oldest son Ross of the RCAF was killed only four months earlier when his Lancaster bomber was shot down over France.

For youngest son Neil Pole, the loss of his two older brothers was devastating. He was certainly successful in life in that he took over his father's business, Pole's Pharmacy in Sarnia. He married Fay Terry, and together, they had three children together: their first-born Ross Douglas, and Janet and Dianne Pole. But the loss of his brothers was something that affected him deeply for the rest of his life. Neil always remembered the day in June 1944 when his father closed up the drug store and walked over to SCITS to pick him up. When they got home, his mother Grace was distraught, sitting on her bed crying and praying, having just received the news of Ross' death. Four months later, they received the news of Douglas' death overseas.

Neil never talked about his brothers. Parents Willard and Grace were much the same. For Neil, every birthday, June 13, was a reminder of Ross' death, who was shot down over France on the same day. Even in his 90's, memories of his brother's evoke strong emotional responses for Neil. The Pole family's lives were forever changed by the loss of the two boys. Every birthday, every holiday, every Remembrance Day, and every anniversary of their deaths were perpetual reminders of what they lost.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, J, L, M, N, R, S, 2C, 2D, 4B, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10B, 10U, 3q, 3s



L-R: Ross, Neil and Doug Pole circa 1931



The Pole family. Back: Muriel and Willard
Front L-R: Doug, Neil, Ross circa 1931



Doug & Ross



L-R: Neil, Ross, Doug Pole



Ross & Doug

POLE, Ross Norman (#J/28873)

When Sarnian Ross Norman Pole decided to enlist in the RCAF during his final year of university, a recruiting officer described him as *splendid and officer material*. On June 12, 1944, a week after D-Day, Flying Officer-Navigator Ross Pole was on an operational night raid targeting the marshaling yards at Cambrai, France. Ross was killed when his Lancaster aircraft crashed during the return flight to its base in England.

Ross Pole was born in Windsor, Ontario on September 24, 1920, the eldest son of Willard Harford and Muriel Grace (nee Proctor) Pole. Willard Harford Pole, the son of Charles and Mary Pole, born August 4, 1892 in Strathroy, Ontario, had served in WWI. At the age of twenty-four, Willard enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force on February 19, 1917 in London, Ontario. He stood five feet nine and a half inches tall, had blue eyes and light brown hair, was single and residing with his parents at 440 Wellington Street, Sarnia at the time. He recorded his next-of-kin as his mother, Mary Pole on Wellington Street (later 194 Kathleen Avenue), and his trade or calling as druggist. He was appointed the rank of Sergeant, with Canadian Army Medical Corps (C.A.M.C.) Training Depot, No. 1, CEF. Less than two months later, on April 12, 1917, he embarked overseas from Halifax, arriving in Liverpool on April 29.

One month later, on May 31, 1917, Sergeant Willard Pole arrived in Havre, France, a member of the CAMC. He served as a medic initially with the 5th Canadian Field Ambulance and in late August 1917 was transferred to the 29th Company, Canadian Forestry Corps. In the early part of 1919, he returned to England and was attached to No. 9 Canadian Stationary Hospital. He was discharged on July 17, 1919 in Halifax, based on “demobilization consequence upon cessation of hostilities”.

Willard Pole graduated from the College of Pharmacy the same year and returned to Sarnia. Willard married Sarnia-born Muriel Grace Proctor Pole on October 11, 1919 in Sarnia. Muriel Grace went by her middle name Grace. Willard and Grace Pole were blessed with three sons: Ross Norman, the eldest; Douglas Campbell (see above); and the youngest Neil Proctor (born June 13, 1927). The Pole family moved to Sarnia when Ross was only a few months old. The Pole family lived at 208 Essex Street and Willard was a druggist in Sarnia, operating the successful Pole’s Drug Store.

Ross Pole attended Lochiel Street Public School from 1926 to 1933, and then Sarnia Collegiate from 1933 to 1938. While at school, he was active in track, basketball, hockey and swimming. At Sarnia Collegiate, he also achieved being Field Day Champion and was the business manager of the High School magazine. Ross was a member of both the Central United Church and of the Central Century Club.

After completing high school, Ross attended the University of Western Ontario in the Business Administration program beginning in 1938. He completed three years of the program and during his fourth year, while working on his Honours degree, he enlisted to serve. While at Western, Ross took the Canadian Officer

Training Course (COTC), from 1940 until he enlisted, passing his 1st and 2nd Lieutenant exams. He was not shy about working and had an industrious spirit. During his summers, Ross worked a number of jobs to earn some extra money. He was a clerk and deliveryman at his father's pharmacy, Pole's Drug Store, while he was in high school; a clerk and deliveryman at Dominion Stores in Sarnia, June-September 1939; a sheet metal worker at H.H. Robertson Company in Arvida, Quebec, June-September 1940; and a deck steward at Canadian Steamship Lines in Sarnia, aboard the passenger steamship *SS Hamonic*, June – September 1941 (Historical Note: ship was destroyed by fire on July 17, 1945 while docked in Point Edward).



18-year-old Ross
SCITS yearbook manager 1938



Ross aboard *SS Hamonic* 1941



Ross Pole UWO



Ross & Douglas Pole circa 1942

Twenty-one-year-old Ross Pole enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force on December 19, 1941 in London, Ontario (his younger brother Douglas would enlist three months later). Ross stood five feet nine inches tall, had brown eyes and medium brown hair, was single, and was a student at the time residing at 1040 Patricia Street, London (he recorded his permanent address as 208 Essex Street, Sarnia). After the war, he planned to complete his education, and then seek employment in accounting or selling. He requested flying duties, with a preference to be a pilot or observer. The Recruiting Officer recorded Ross as being, *Clean cut, alert, intelligent, young man, amiable & well poised. Sr. Matriculation, will complete four year Business Administration course at University of Western Ontario in Jan. 1942. Splendid aircrew & officer material.*

From #9 Recruiting Centre in London and #1 Manning Depot in Toronto, Ross received his air training at #1

Initial Training School (ITS) in Toronto; at #9 Elementary Flying Training School (EFTS) in St. Catharines; at #16 Service Flying Training School (SFTS) in Hagersville, Ontario; and then at #4 Air Observer School (AOS) in London, Ontario. Ross Pole was awarded his Air Navigators Badge and commission as Pilot Officer on August 6, 1943, graduating from the #4 AOS in London. After his 14-day pre-embarkation leave, he was posted to #1 Y Depot in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

On August 26, 1943, Ross Pole embarked overseas from Halifax for the United Kingdom. There, he was initially posted to #3 Personnel Reception Centre before being transferred to #9 (Observer) Advanced Flying Unit (AFU) on October 19, 1943. On December 28, 1943, he was transferred to #24 Operational Training Unit (O.T.U.), and in late May 1944, was transferred to #1659 Heavy Conversion Unit (H.C.U.). On May 19, 1944, Ross became a member of RCAF #419 Moose Squadron "Moosa Aswayita" (written in Cree, not Latin, means Beware the moose-a ferocious fighter), part of **Bomber Command**. Ross was also promoted to the rank of Flying Officer Navigator.

During the course of the war, one of this country's most significant contributions was the approximately 50,000 Canadians who served with the RCAF and RAF in Bomber Command operations. Next to Britain, Canada was the largest contributor to Bomber Command, making up more than a third of all of Bomber Command personnel. The men who served in Bomber Command faced some of the most difficult odds of anyone fighting in the war.

RCAF #419 Squadron was formed at RAF Mildenhall, England in December 1941, and named after its first commanding officer, Wing Commander John "Moose" Fulton. The unit moved to various bases throughout the war, including Leeming, Topcliffe, Croft and Middleton St. George. Initially operating Wellington bombers, in November 1942 the squadron converted to Handley Page Halifax bombers, and in March 1944 to Avro Lancasters.

The **Battle of Normandy** began for the Canadians with the June 6, 1944 D-Day landings at Juno Beach. After breaching the "Atlantic Wall" of "Fortress Europe", Allied armies, supported by the Navy and Air Force, began their break out from the narrow Normandy bridgehead to carve out a foothold on the French mainland. It would take a whole summer of tenacious fighting, pushing against fierce and ruthless German forces to advance east across France.



Flying Officer-Navigator Ross Norman Pole

On June 12, 1944, one week after the invasion of Europe and in the breakout from Normandy, Flying Officer-Navigator Ross Pole was aboard Lancaster Mk. 10 aircraft KB714 (markings VR-Y) that took off from its Middleton St. George base at 21.35 hours. It was one of a 671 aircraft force that was tasked with further hampering lines of communications leading to the Normandy area that night. Ross Pole's Lancaster KB714 was targeting the marshaling yards at Cambrai, France. This was Flying Officer Ross Pole's sixth operation.

After take-off, no further word was received from the aircraft that was scheduled to return to base at approximately 02.35 hours. It was determined later that the aircraft had been shot down by a night-fighter near Courcellette, France. Along with F/O Ross Pole, also killed were Flying Officer's Russel Nelson Wilson, Charles

Robert McOrmond, Douglas James McMullen, Pilot Officer's Max Ennis Gates, Richard William Francis, and Sgt. Captain Clayton White. It was a costly raid for 419 Squadron, with the loss of three Lancaster aircraft: KB714, KB731 and KB726 (the latter included P/O A.C. Mynarski, who was awarded the Victoria Cross for his actions in the damaged aircraft). Of the 671 aircraft involved in the operation, 23 aircraft were lost.

In mid-June of 1944, Willard and Grace Pole on Essex Street received a telegram from Ottawa informing them that their son, FLYING OFFICER ROSS POLE WAS REPORTED MISSING ON JUNE 13 AFTER ACTIVE OPERATIONS OVER ENEMY TERRITORY. No other details were given. Days later, Willard received the following letter from the Wing Commander of No. 419 (R.C.A.F.) Squadron:

Dear Mr. Pole:

I deeply regret the necessity of confirming the information, which you have already received, that your son, Flying Officer Ross Norman Pole, is missing from operations on the night of 12/13th June, 1944. This operation was an attack on a very important objective in enemy occupied territory, which has since proved to have been very effective. Unfortunately, nothing has been heard of your son's aircraft since time of take-off and its loss can only be attributed to enemy action. There is still quite a possibility that all or part of the crew may have escaped or, at worst, be prisoners of war, but news of this could not be expected for some considerable time.

Your son was with us for a period of three weeks, during which time he took part in five successful attacks on the enemy. He was a cheerful, quiet, hard-working Navigator who produced very good results and certainly had the complete confidence of his crew and was invariably trying to improve his knowledge.

If any further news comes to hand, you may rest assured you will be notified immediately. F/O Pole's kit and personal effects have been collected and forwarded to the Central Depository, Colnbrook, Slough, Bucks. who, after completion of necessary details, will communicate with you as to their disposal. May I convey my sincere sympathy to you in your great loss and hope with you that better news may follow.

In mid-July of 1944, Flying Officer Ross Pole's name appeared on the Department of National Defence for Air casualty list as, *Missing on active service after air operations overseas*. Ross Pole's death was later officially recorded as, *Previously reported missing after air operations, now for official purposes, presumed dead, overseas (over Cambrai France)*.

After the war, the RAF Missing Research and Enquiry Unit (MREU) conducted an investigation into the crash of Lancaster KB714. Following are portions of the investigator's reports from August and October 1946:

...It was evidently the custom of the Germans at Rosieres to send out crash parties to bring back bodies etcetera after crashes occurred possibly for checking by intelligence sections, then bury them at Meharicourt...

Place of Crash: 1 kilometre South of Courcellette

Place of Burial: Believed Communal Cemetery of Meharicourt

1. I checked details of this crash as given in your letter..., with inhabitants of Courcellette, and also went to the scene of the crash. All debris was gone, having been removed by the Germans.

2. Monsieur HENRIEUX, Secretary to the Mayor of Courcellette, told me that six bodies were collected by the Germans about two days after the crash and taken away, it was believed, to ROZIERES EN SANTERRE.

3. The seventh body was found on about 21st June 1944 by PIERRE JONSE, Courcellette, Somme. From this body, which was about 300 yards from the crash in a cornfield JONSE took a pair of underpants marked "WILSON" This body was again taken away by the Germans to ROZIERES

4. A helmet marked "POLE" was also found at the crash but this has since been lost.

5. At the Communal Cemetery of Meharicourt close to ROZIERES EN SANTERRE the Germans buried in Graves Nos. 41-48 inclusive eight airmen who were killed on 13/6/44...

(After later exhuming the graves, the MREU determined that Grave 44 was that of Ross Pole, as the identity disc of F/O R.N. Pole was in the coffin).

Casualty Enquiry of Lancaster KB726 and Lancaster KB714

1. Canadian officer P/O A.C. Mynarski (of Lancaster KB726) has recently been awarded the Victoria Cross. It is essential that final burial details for this officer be ascertained immediately, and you are therefore requested to investigate this case under the highest possible priority...

2. Both the above aircraft were missing on the night of 12/13th June, 1944. KB726 was airborne from Middleton-St-George at 2144 hours, and KB714 from the same station at 2135 hours. The target in each case was Cambrai.

3. German documents report two crashes on the 13th June in the vicinity of Albert, situated on the River Ancre, 25 kilos. N. of Amiens. Unfortunately the German documents confused the two crashes, and it is not possible to sort

them out with any certainty, or gain from them exact information....

KB726 crashed at 0035 hours, near Acheux. This aircraft is known to have been on the outward journey when shot down by a night fighter, as it was still carrying bombs, one of which exploded when the aircraft crashed in flames.... The body of a Canadian airman was recovered 10 days after the crash on the 23rd June, and was reported to have been buried in the cemetery at Meharicourt near Rosieres....

4. The second aircraft (KB714) crashed between 0130 and 0200 hours, when returning from the attack, which was evidently successfully completed. The location of this crash is given as one kilometer south of Courcellette. The body of Sgt. White was identified by his identity discs and together with six unknown he was buried in the cemetery at Meharicourt....

In December 1946, Willard received the following letter from the Wing Commander for Chief of the Air Staff in Ottawa:

Dear Mr. Pole:

It is a privilege to have the opportunity of sending you the Operational Wings and Certificate in recognition of the gallant services rendered by your son, Flying Officer R.N. Pole. I realize there is little which may be said or done to lessen your sorrow, but it is my hope that these "Wings", indicative of operations against the enemy, will be a treasured memento of a young life offered on the altar of freedom in defence of his Home and Country.

In August 1948, Willard received the following letter from the Wing Commander, R.C.A.F. Casualties Officer, for Chief of the Air Staff in Ottawa:

Dear Mr. Pole:

I would like to refer please, to my letter of June 27, 1947 concerning the resting place of your son, Flying Officer Ross Norman Pole, whose grave was located in Meharicourt Communal Cemetery, Meharicourt, Department of Somme, France.

A report has been received from our Overseas Headquarters that the re-arranging of the cemetery has been completed and your son's grave is numbered 44. The members of his crew are resting beside him, Sergeant C.C. White in Grave No. 43, Flying Officer C.R. McOrmond Grave No. 45, Flying Officer R.N. Wilson Grave No. 47 and Flying Officer D.J. McMullen, Pilot Officer R.W. Francis and Pilot Officer M.E. Gates (who could not be individually identified) are resting in collective graves numbered 48 and 49.

The resting place of your son and his crew will be reverently and perpetually maintained by the Imperial War Graves Commission (of which Canada is a member). The Commission will also erect a headstone at your son's grave. Unhappily, there are great numbers of these headstones to be erected and it will quite naturally take considerable time. It is not necessary to write to the Imperial War Graves Commission as you will be contacted by them before the stone is prepared.

May I take this opportunity of again extending to you and the members of your family my deepest sympathy in the loss of your gallant son.

Four months after the death of their son Ross, Willard and Grace Pole received news that they lost another son, RCAF Flying Officer Douglas Pole, who was shot down in a Halifax bomber over Germany. Ross Pole, 23, is buried in Meharicourt Communal Cemetery, Somme, France British Plot, Grave 38.

For youngest son Neil Pole, the loss of his two older brothers was devastating. He was certainly successful in life in that he took over his father's business, Pole's Pharmacy in Sarnia. He married Fay Terry, and together, they had three children together: their first-born Ross Douglas, and Janet and Dianne Pole. But the loss of his brothers was something that affected him deeply for the rest of his life. Neil always remembered the day in June 1944 when his father closed up the drug store and walked over to SCITS to pick him up. When they got home, his mother Grace was distraught, sitting on her bed crying and praying, having just received the news of Ross' death. Four months later, they received the news of Douglas' death overseas.

Neil never talked about his brothers. Parents Willard and Grace were much the same. For Neil, every birthday, June 13, was a reminder of Ross' death, who was shot down over France on the same day. Even in his 90's, memories of his brother's evoke strong emotional responses for Neil. The Pole family's lives were forever changed by the loss of the two boys. Every birthday, every holiday, every Remembrance Day, and every anniversary of their deaths were perpetual reminders of what they lost.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, J, L, M, N, R, S, 2C, 2D, 4B, 6G, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10B, 10U, 3q

POWELL, Stephen Bruce (#N/3333)

Stephen “Bruce” Powell had a strong desire to join the Royal Canadian Navy, even before he was of age to do so. He finally succeeded in becoming a member at the age of seventeen, several months before war was declared. He would become Sarnia’s first casualty of the Second World War.

Stephen Bruce Powell was born at Royal Victoria Hospital in Barrie, Ontario on January 23, 1922, the eldest son of Ernest John “Ernie” Powell Jr., a railroad switchman at the time, and Cora Irene (nee Court) Powell. Stephen Bruce Powell went by his middle name Bruce, and was known as “Buster” to his family and friends. Bruce’s story can be linked to his father, for Ernest or “Ernie” served in the Great War when he was a teenager.

Ernie Powell was born on August 3, 1899 in Waltham Abbey, Essex, England, but was living in Barrie, Ontario when the Great War started. Weeks before his seventeenth birthday, on July 21, 1916, Ernie enlisted in the Canadian Expeditionary Force, 177th Overseas Battalion at Camp Borden. Ernie was residing in Barrie at the time, and recorded his birthplace as Reading, England, his occupation as expressman, and his next-of-kin as his father Ernest Powell (Sr.) in Barrie, Ontario. Approximately three months later, Ernie was discharged from the 177th, CEF at Camp Borden.

On September 4, 1917, when he was eighteen years old, Ernie Powell enlisted again in the Canadian Expeditionary Force, this time at the Railway Construction & Forestry Depot in Toronto with the York and Simcoe Foresters, CEF. He was residing in Barrie, Ontario at the time, and recorded his birthplace as Middlesex, England, his occupation as chauffeur, and his next-of-kin as his father Ernest Powell (Sr.) at 147 Peel Street, Barrie, Ontario. He also recorded that he had prior military experience, serving for three months with the 177th Battalion. He stood five feet seven and three-quarter inches tall, had blue eyes and light brown hair, and was single. It was also recorded that his mother was no longer alive. Though it was recorded on his file that he was, “not to be sent overseas until 19 years of age”, eighteen year-old Private Ernie Powell embarked overseas from Halifax aboard the *SS Metagama* on December 4, 1917.

Private Powell of the Canadian Forestry Corps (CFC) arrived in Liverpool, England on December 14, 1917, and was initially posted at C.F.C. base depot at Sunningdale. The CFC established its English headquarters at Smith’s Lawn, Sunningdale, Berkshire, in the midst of Windsor Great Park. The Canadian Forestry Corps cut trees in England’s forests, where the timber was squared, sawed and transported. The cut wood was used on the Western Front including for duckboards, trench construction, railway ties, corduroy roads, ammunition crates, and barracks and hospitals. In mid-July 1918, Ernie Powell was hospitalized at Beech Hill, Englefield Green for eight days as a result of influenza. Private Powell’s entire service was in the United Kingdom. Seven months after the Great War ended, on June 7, 1919, he embarked for Canada, where he would be discharged on demobilization on June 18, 1919 in Toronto.

In early 1921, Ernie Powell, 22, was residing at 147 Peel Street in Barrie, Ontario with his thirteen year-old sister Ellen Laura and their forty-seven-year-old widowed father Ernest Powell Sr. Living in the Powell household was their twenty year-old servant Cora Irene Court (she had been a house maid since the age of fourteen). In that same year, on August 2, 1921, Ernie Powell married Woodstock native Cora Irene Court (born September 1, 1901) at The Rectory in Barrie, Ontario. Ernie was employed with the railroad at the time. Cora and he were blessed with five children together: the eldest Bruce; Allan John (born October 28, 1924); Robert Grant (born October 28, 1926); and twins Ernest James and Mary Ann (born October 1, 1933) Powell. During the war, both of Bruce’s younger brothers also served: Allan with the Royal Canadian Air Force in Newfoundland; and Robert served as a “Boy Soldier” in Canada.

The Powell family moved to Sarnia in 1929, when Bruce was seven years old. They lived at 462 Cromwell Street, and later 433 Lydia Street. Ernie had come to Sarnia to work with the Canadian National Railroad, and later found work with Canada Customs as a Customs Officer at the Post Office. When World War II began, Ernie, now 40, was eager to enlist; however, being a Customs Officer, the government refused to allow him to join.

One of the things he did during the war was on Sunday nights at the Imperial Theatre – he led sing-songs to help raise money for the war effort. During the war, Cora was also active with the local Navy Mother’s Auxiliary and the local Red Cross – knitting Afghans and squares of cloth for the inside of soldiers’ helmets; wrapping up bandages; and collecting milkweed pods (the silk was used to stuff into life vests or to provide insulation for flight suits). Ernie and Cora Powell also billeted sailors at their home, who were in town to build the sub-chasers at Mac-Craft.

After the war, Ernie Powell spoke to children in their schools about the war. Every year on the Sunday closest to Remembrance Day, Ernie read the list of soldiers who had been killed in action at Canon Davis Church where he was a parishioner. Ernie was one of the originators of the local Sarnia Air Cadets – he was a Flying Officer with the Air Cadets from 1942 – 1955, and was a member of the Royal Canadian Legion, Branch #62, and for a time was on the Board of Directors. He would retire from Canada Customs after 35 years of service. Undoubtedly Bruce, his oldest child, was influenced by his father's service in the military.

Stephen "Bruce" Powell was educated in Sarnia public schools and then at Sarnia Collegiate for two and a half years, where he completed a course in electricity. Bruce was a responsible student who did well in school and he was also a successful runner. He was a member of the Servers' Club of St. George's Anglican Church and was active in much of the young people's work in the church. He was a member of the 26th Lambton Field Battery, Royal Canadian Artillery, Non-Permanent Active Militia in Sarnia from April 12, 1937 to April 19, 1939. At one point during his militia training in 1938, he was stationed at Petawawa. While there, he wrote the following on a postcard with a two-cent stamp attached, to his grandfather Ernest Powell Sr., in Orillia:

Dear Grampa

This is a typical soldier. Having a good time. Fired the guns for the first time today and fell off the gun seat. I'll be home Monday. Write.

Bus

Even at fifteen years old, Bruce was eager to join the Navy. In January 1937, his father Ernie wrote the following letter to the Naval Secretary, Department of National Defence in Ottawa:

Dear Sir:

Will you please send me a list of age limitations, educational qualifications and physical requirements necessary for enlistment in the Canadian Navy. If you have application forms will you also send me a set?

In August 1938, Sarnia M.P. Ross W. Gray, wrote the following letter (on House of Commons stationery with its distinctive letterhead) to the Department of National Defence, Naval Service:

Dear Sirs,

I am writing on behalf of Stephen Bruce Powell, a young man of this City who is anxious to join the Royal Canadian Navy. The recommendations from his teachers and all others who have known him intimately are very fine and I desire to add my own recommendation that he be given every possible consideration as soon as his name is reached. Circumstances prevent his being able to return to school this Fall and I am wondering if you can give me any encouragement as to his name being reached before he becomes seventeen in January.

Following is the Assistant Naval Secretary's reply to Sarnia M.P. Ross W. Gray:

I am directed to acknowledge your letter of 23rd August regarding the application of Mr. Stephen Bruce Powell of Sarnia, Ontario, candidate for entry in the Royal Canadian Navy as a Boy (Seaman Class). As Mr. Powell does not reach the minimum age limit of 17 years required for entry until the 23rd January, 1939, consideration cannot be given to his application until after that date. I assure you, however, that your recommendation of the above-mentioned candidate has been noted and same will be borne in mind when his name is reached and he is being considered for entry.

On February 4, 1938, sixteen year-old Bruce Powell ("Buster" or "Bus" to his family), standing five feet seven and a half inches tall, completed his "Application for Entry in the Royal Canadian Navy" forms. The application required a written consent paper to be signed by a parent, which his father Ernie provided. More than a year later, on April 24, 1939, seventeen year-old Bruce Powell became an official member of the Royal Canadian Navy. It was more than four months before Canada declared war on Germany. Bruce stood five feet eight and three quarter inches tall, had blue eyes and blonde hair, was single, and was a student residing at home on Cromwell Street with his parents at the time. Initially given the rank of Boy Seaman, he received his Navy training in Halifax at HMCS Stadacona base, and on HMCS Venture (a three-masted schooner). On August 27, 1939, while still in Halifax, Bruce wrote the following on a postcard to his father Ernie at 462 Cromwell Street, Sarnia:

Dear Dad,

I won't be writing for a while as it will be impossible.

Love to all, Bus

On November 1, 1939, Bruce attained the rank of Ordinary Seaman. Two months later, on January 11, 1940, Ordinary Seaman Bruce Powell became a member of the crew of HMCS Fraser.



Photo of the Powell family (taken at 462 Cromwell St., Sarnia, in late 1939)
 BACK L to R: Ernest Powell Sr., Ernie Powell Jr., Cora Powell, Bruce Powell
 MIDDLE L to R: Robert and Allan
 FRONT L to R: Mary Ann and Ernest James

Beginning on the opening day of the Second World War, the **Battle of the Atlantic** would be the longest continuous campaign of the war, and one in which Canada played a central role. The Royal Canadian Navy, along with the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) and Canada's Merchant Navy, played a vital role in defending the country's eastern coast and escorting convoys of ships carrying men and essential machinery, arms, fuel and basic resources between North America and Europe.

Even with the protection of armed escorts, it was always a treacherous voyage for the dozens of merchant ships traveling in a zig-zag fashion across enormous tracts of ocean. Captains had to manoeuvre in crowded ranks, without lights, wireless or navigational aids and using haphazard communication. Not to mention the constant risk of fierce attacks by German U-boats or air attack; the danger of collision; underwater mines; rough water; and the hazardous weather—the fog, gales and ice conditions--in the North Atlantic.

The *HMCS Fraser (H48)* was a C-class destroyer built for the Royal Navy launched in September 1931, originally named the *HMS Crescent*. In late 1936, it was sold to the Royal Canadian Navy and renamed the *HMCS Fraser*. Initially stationed on the Canadian west coast, with the outbreak of war, she was transferred to the Atlantic coast for convoy escort duties.

On June 25, 1940, the *HMCS Fraser* was proceeding to Bordeaux, France in the Gironde River estuary to help in the rescue of an estimated 4000 refugees trapped in the area by German military forces. Bruce Powell was an Ordinary Seaman aboard the *Fraser*. Accompanying the *HMCS Fraser* were Canadian destroyer *HMCS Restigouche* and the British cruiser *HMS Calcutta*. At 10:30 pm, in rough seas and in poor visibility, the captain of the *Fraser* decided that the three ships should move closer together and ordered a turn to port to bring his ship behind *HMS Calcutta*. In doing so, the two ships collided, the bow of the heavier *Calcutta* slicing into the side of the lighter *Fraser* and cutting it into three pieces. Forty-five members of the *Fraser* crew and nineteen men on the *Calcutta* lost their lives. Bruce Powell survived this incident.

Following the sinking of the *Fraser*, back in the U.K., Bruce took a course in anti-aircraft gunnery. He had a close call from death on one occasion when the ship he was on was bombed at a London dock and a number of the crew were killed. On September 6, 1940, Bruce and many of the *Fraser* survivors were transferred to duty aboard the *HMCS Margaree*. In October 1940, only one month into her service as the *HMCS Margaree*, the ship met the same fate as the *Fraser*.

The *HMCS Margaree (H49)* was a D-class destroyer launched as the *HMS Diana* in June 1932, originally with the Royal Navy, where she spent most of her career as part of the Mediterranean Fleet. She was transferred to the Royal Canadian Navy September 6, 1940 and renamed the *HMCS Margaree*, to serve as a River class destroyer. She was transferred to the RCN to replace the *HMCS Fraser*, the RCN C-class destroyer, which had been lost in the tragic accident on June 25, 1940.



Seaman Bruce Powell with his mother Cora
(photo taken at 462 Cromwell Street)



River Class Destroyer *HMCS Margaree H49*

On October 20, 1940, the *HMCS Margaree* left Londonderry, Northern Ireland as escort of Convoy *OL8* bound for Canada. She was the sole escort for a small, fairly fast *OL8* convoy of five ships heading for Halifax. The five-ship convoy was disposed in two columns: freighters *MV Port Fairy* and *Jamaica Planter* on the port side and the other three vessels in column to starboard. At over 14 knots, the speed of the convoy was comparatively fast and for that reason *OL8* did not zig-zag. On the evening of October 21, *Margaree* was 1 ½ miles ahead of the convoy's port column and the weather had started to deteriorate. By midnight, in rough squalls and poor visibility, *Margaree* and the convoy had lost track of each other.

Then, at 1:00 a.m. on October 22, as the *Margaree* veered to port, she suddenly appeared crossing *Port Fairy's* bow, much too close for the freighter to avoid her. So only two days at sea, in the mid-Atlantic 450 miles northwest of Iceland, the *Port Fairy* collided with the *Margaree*. The *Port Fairy's* bow sliced through *Margaree* just under the bridge, severing the forward section of the ship. The whole bow and bridge portion of the *Margaree* sank almost immediately, taking virtually everyone in the forward section, 142 seamen, swallowed by the sea in an instant. Of those, 86 of them were survivors of the *HMCS Fraser* collision of just four months earlier. For Ordinary Seaman Bruce Powell, this was the second sea disaster in which he had been involved.

When Lieutenant Bill Landymore, who was off duty in the wardroom during the collision, came forward he heard only the whistling of the wind and the slam of the sea against *Margaree's* hull. He later reported, "There was no noise at all. No shouts even in the after part. Not even the sound of escaping steam." Others recalled the grinding of steel on steel, as what was left of *Margaree* rubbed against the towering sides of *Port Fairy*. Only six officers and 28 ratings survived the collision. The thirty-four survivors were all aboard the aft section, which remained afloat until the men were rescued by the *Port Fairy*. Thirty-two of them scrambled safely up the side of *Port Fairy*, the two others slipped from the ropes and were crushed between the vessels. By dawn, the stern of *Margaree* was still afloat, despite attempts by *Port Fairy's* little four-inch gun to sink it. The wreck was last seen adrift and sinking slowly by the stern.

The survivors were dropped off by the *Port Fairy* at Bermuda. No reason for the collision has ever been determined since all the officers who were in a position to know were in the bridge or bow. Ordinary Seaman Bruce Powell was one of the 142 who were lost in the tragedy. Although the official casualty list cited him as an Ordinary Seaman, he had received his Able Seaman papers while on the *Fraser*, but these records were lost with that ship.

Bruce's parents Ernie and Cora Powell in Sarnia were notified of the loss of their son by telegram from the Minister of National Defence for Naval Affairs, just prior to the release by the Canadian naval authorities of the public announcement of the sinking of the destroyer. A day later, they received a dispatch from Ottawa that drew attention to the fact that errors were possible in the naval list of survivors and the missing, owing to the difficulties of wireless communication at sea in wartime. The Powells hoped that their son had survived, but felt the chances were remote in view of the fact that only 31 survivors (at that time) were reported accounted for.

Bruce Powell had been home the previous Christmas. In two letters received by his parents days after learning of his death, Bruce had expressed the hope that he might get a trip home to Sarnia soon. It was indicated in dispatches that many of the crew of the *Margaree* were looking forward to spending Christmas with their families. Bruce Powell left behind his parents Ernie and Cora, and his younger siblings Allan, Robert and twins Ernest and Mary Ann. Able-Bodied Seaman Bruce Powell was Sarnia's first casualty of the Second World War.

In early November 1940, Ernie Powell received the following letter from the Naval Secretary at his home on Lydia Street:

Dear Sir:

It is with deep regret that I must confirm the telegram sent out by the Minister of National Defence, reporting that your son, Stephen Bruce Powell, Ordinary Seaman, O.N. 3333, R.C.N., was missing, believed killed.

Few details are available, but it is known that H.M.C.S. "MARGAREE" was sunk in collision in the North Atlantic whilst steaming without lights, on convoy duty, and in the submarine zone. 142 Officers and ratings are missing and must be presumed lost at sea.

I am requested to express to you the sincere sympathy of the Minister of National Defence for Naval Services and the Chief of the Naval Staff in your bereavement. Any further information, which is received, will be at once communicated to you.

One month after Bruce's death, a memorial service was held at St. George's Anglican Church, where he had been active in the organizations for the young people in the church. At the memorial service, Rev. F.G. Hardy said, *We will remember Stephen Bruce Powell because of his uprightness and splendid physical, mental and spiritual characteristics.* After speaking of the fact that it is often the youngest and best who are taken from the world, Rev. Hardy quoted from "In Flanders Fields" and urged the congregation to hold the torch high and go out to establish God's Kingdom in society so that war might not happen again.

Even decades later, Bruce's sister, Mary, could still recount the details of her parents learning of Bruce's fate. In the summer of 1940, Mary recalled as a young girl, aged six, the children all out on the street playing when a telegraph boy, in uniform, rode his bike down their street. All the children stopped playing and became silent as they watched the boy go down the street. They waited expectantly to see at which house he would stop. He pulled into the Powell house, and delivered the news that the *Fraser* had been damaged, and that Bruce was O.K.

Mary recalled the events months later when another telegraph boy rode his bike down their street and pulled into their Lydia Street home. Mary entered her home to find her mother Cora slouched in a chair, clenching the telegram and sobbing. Cora ordered Mary to cross the Gordon Street Park and to get Mrs. Worsley, a neighbour. Mrs. Worsley came and saw the telegram that informed Cora that the *Margaree* had been sunk, and that her son Bruce was missing. For the next week, Mary and her twin brother, Jim, were sent to live with the Baldwin family, friends from their church.



Ernest John Jr. and Cora Powell



Ernest John Powell (Jr.)



Cora Irene (Court) Powell

A few months later, around Christmas, Ernie and Cora Powell went out to a local movie theatre. Preceding the movie, as was customary, were a newsreel and a cartoon. On this particular night, the newsreel showed a series of war clips, one of them being a scene of three young sailors in their pea coats (wool outer jackets) on the deck of a bobbing ship in stormy weather, walking toward the camera. One of those sailors was Bruce Powell. Cora Powell

fainted right there. The next night, a Sunday in which the theatre was always closed, the theatre manager invited the Powell's back for a private viewing of the newsreel footage and movie.

In July 1941, a Memorial Cross was issued by the Government of Canada to Cora Powell on Lydia Street for the loss of her son. Also referred to as the Silver Cross, it was engraved with Bruce's name, rank and service number. The card accompanying the Memorial Cross read: *This Memorial Cross is forwarded to you by The Minister of National Defence for Naval Services, on behalf of the Government of Canada, in memory of one who died in the service of his Country.* In April 1945, Ernie and Cora Powell received a War Service Gratuity of \$196.42 for the loss of their son.

In the years after the war, British born father Ernie Powell evinced the "stiff upper lip" approach and never talked about the war or his son Bruce. Cora Powell spent much of her time compiling a scrapbook of memories of her son. Until she passed away in 1978, Cora always held out hope that her son would someday return home and walk through their front door.

Cora Irene (Court) Powell passed away at the age of seventy-seven on September 10, 1978 in Sarnia. Ernie John Powell passed away at the age of eighty-six on July 22, 1986 in Sarnia. At the time of his death, Ernie left behind his four children (Mary, Robert, Allan and James), and fourteen grandchildren and twelve great grandchildren. Both Cora and Ernest Powell were interned at Grandview Memorial Gardens. Stephen Bruce Powell, 18, has no known grave. His name is inscribed on the Halifax Memorial, Nova Scotia, Canada, Panel 4.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, J, L, N, P, T, U, X, 2A, 2C, 2D, 2E, 6O, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 2r

POWELL, Thomas Edward (#R/78675)

Thomas Edward Powell, 24, received consistently strong endorsements from others as he trained to become a pilot with the RCAF. One superior noted that Thomas was *bright and shrewd [with] quick and sound reactions*. Another observed that Powell was *Serious and responsible. [A] conscientious worker*. In October 1942, Thomas' Wellington aircraft was shot down over The Netherlands. All the crew were killed in the crash.

Thomas Powell was born in Sarnia on April 21, 1918, the only child of Edward Scott (born December 6, 1889 in London, England) and Annie May (nee Dobbie, born September 16, 1893 in Halton, Ontario) Powell. Edward Powell was a British Home Child, sent by Barnardo Homes, who arrived in Canada from Liverpool in 1900. In 1901, Edward, now eleven, was recorded as being a domestic who was residing with the Morton family in Plympton Township. The Morton family consisted of parents Evan, a farmer, and Elizabeth Morton, as well as their two young children George (age 3) and Alice (age 2). In 1911, Edward was rooming at 171 Victoria Street, Sarnia, and was employed as a sailor on a steamer.

On December 25, 1916, twenty-seven-year-old Edward Powell, then a teamster residing in Sarnia, married twenty-three-year-old Annie May Dobbie in Kitchener, Ontario. They had only the one child, Thomas Edward Powell. In 1921, Edward was working as a labourer at Imperial Oil to support Annie and their three year-old son Thomas Edward. The Powell family were residing at 160 Bright Street and later moved to 218 Proctor Street, Sarnia.

Edward's two brothers were also British Home Children who found homes in Canada. Their sister, Ada Louisa Powell, born 1896, immigrated to Canada (and Lambton) in 1911, along with their widowed mother Fanny (nee Bennett) Powell. Years later, on May 22, 1935, thirty-eight-year-old Ada Powell, then a cook, residing at 109 N. MacKenzie Street, married thirty-three-year-old Nelson Roy Yeates, a farmer in Sarnia Township, in Sarnia. Ada Louisa (nee Powell) Yeates is buried in Blackwell Cemetery, Sarnia.

Edward Powell's two brothers were Henry John (born 1894 in England; arrived in Canada in 1902) and Thomas Edwin (born 1892 in England; arrived in Canada in 1904). Both brothers served with the Canadian Expeditionary Force in World War I – and both died in action. Henry Powell, 23, was killed in action on August 15, 1917 during an attack on the Lens in France. Thomas Edwin Powell, also age 23, was killed in action on April 30, 1915 during an attack on St. Julien in Belgium. His story is included in the WW I section of this Project on page 352.

Thomas Edward Powell was educated at Confederation Street and Johnston Memorial Public Schools in Sarnia from 1923 to 1931. He then attended Sarnia Collegiate from September 1931 until June 1938. At Sarnia Collegiate he was a member of the Cadet Corps and was very active in athletics, especially gymnastics. He also participated in track, basketball, tennis, rugby, hockey and marksmanship (was Senior All-round champion). His life wasn't only sports though. He graduated with Honour standing in English Composition and Literature, Algebra, Geometry and Trigonometry, Physics, Chemistry and French. Thomas also worked part time as a delivery boy for

seven years for Pralls Flower Shop in Sarnia from 1931 to 1938. From October 1938 until he enlisted in late 1940, Thomas worked as a chemist's laboratory assistant at Imperial Oil Limited Research Lab in Sarnia.

Thomas Powell had originally applied to join the R.C.A.F. in 1938 in London, Ontario before the war began. He was accepted then but turned it down. In September 1940, he started his studies in maths and physics at the University of Toronto; however, after being there for a month and a half, he was called by the R.C.A.F. On November 7, 1940, Thomas Powell, 22, enlisted with the Royal Canadian Air Force in London, Ontario. He stood five feet seven and a half inches tall, had hazel eyes and brown hair, was single, and was residing at home on Proctor Street with his parents at the time. He requested flying duties, with a preference to be a pilot. After enlisting, his co-workers at Imperial Oil presented him with a wallet.

From the Recruiting Centre in London, #1 Manning Depot in Toronto, and then #22 Manning Depot in Debert, Nova Scotia, Powell began his air training at #3 Initial Training School (ITS) in Victoriaville, Quebec. His Commanding Officer at #3ITS had this to say about the Sarnian: *This man is bright and shrewd. He saved enough money working to put himself through University and interrupted his freshman year to join R.C.A.F. Quick and sound reactions.* Thomas continued his training at #17 Elementary Flying Training School (EFTS) in Stanley, Nova Scotia and at #8 Service Flying Training School (SFTS) in Moncton, New Brunswick. He was awarded his Pilot's Flying Badge at #8SFTS in Moncton on September 13, 1941, where he stood seventh in the class of 31 students. His Squadron Leader at #8SFTS remarked that Thomas was, *Very intelligent and [had a] keen sense of humour. Serious and responsible. Conscientious worker.* In mid-September 1941, Thomas Powell was transferred to #13 Operational Training Unit (OTU) and weeks later was posted to #1 Y Depot in Halifax.



W/O II-Pilot Thomas Edward Powell

Thomas Powell embarked overseas from Halifax for the United Kingdom on October 7, 1941. Initially posted to #3 Personnel Reception Centre, he received further training in the U.K., including at #3 Service Flying Training School (SFTS), based at RAF South Cerney; and at #23 Operational Training Unit (OTU), based at RAF Pershore; and then at #1651 Heavy Conversion Unit (CU) based at RAF Wrattling Common. On July 24, 1942, Thomas became a member of RCAF #419 Moose Squadron "Moosa Aswayita" (written in Cree, not Latin, means Beware the moose—a ferocious fighter), part of **Bomber Command**, with the rank of Warrant Officer Class II-Pilot.

During the course of the war, one of this country's most significant contributions was the approximately 50,000 Canadians who served with the RCAF and RAF in Bomber Command operations. Next to Britain, Canada was the largest contributor to Bomber Command, making up more than a third of all of Bomber Command personnel. The men who served in Bomber Command faced some of the most difficult odds of anyone fighting in the war.

RCAF #419 Squadron was formed at RAF Mildenhall, England in December 1941, and named after its first commanding officer, Wing Commander John "Moose" Fulton. The unit moved to various bases throughout the war, including Leeming, Topcliffe, Croft and Middleton St. George. Initially, the squadron was equipped with Vickers Wellington bombers—twin engine, long-range, medium bombers. In November 1942 the squadron would convert to Handley Page Halifax bombers, and in March 1944 to Avro Lancasters.

Approximately ten weeks after becoming a member of #419 Moose Squadron, on October 5, 1942, Thomas Powell was part of a crew aboard Wellington III aircraft BJ729 (markings VR-R) that set off from Croft at 1821 hours on a Nickels (Leaflets) raid with other #419 Squadron aircraft targeting Aachen, Germany. A total of 237 aircraft were involved in the operation. The conditions for taking off, let alone flying, were less than ideal. Wartime operations, however, continued in spite of the weather.

The squadron ran into very heavy cloud cover over the south of England that forced back a number of the Wellingtons. Severe icing had been reported by the four aircraft returning to base after encountering an electrical storm. Not only icing but damage to electrical equipment forced the aircraft to return early to base. One of the Wellingtons forced back fell 2,000 feet because of the loss of control due to icing. Its rear turret became completely frozen and was inoperable so it returned to base. The returning aircraft also experienced electrical problems with intercoms, wireless sets and the Gee system after passing through these electrical storms.

Warrant Officer Thomas Powell and his crew aboard BJ729 continued on to the target after passing through the severe icing conditions. The bad weather continued into Germany. Their aircraft was only one of four Moose Squadron Wellingtons to continue on. Sometime before 2230 hours, BJ729's crew came under attack from enemy night fighters. The attack brought down Powell's aircraft at Maastricht (Limburg) Netherlands at 2230 hours. The entire crew was killed. The Squadron summary records show that of the eight aircraft assigned to the Aachen operation, only two aircraft took part in bombing runs - one on the primary target, and one on the secondary target. Four aircraft returned due to damaged electrical equipment and/or mechanical problems due to icing. Of the 237 aircraft that took part in the operation, there were 10 lost and a further 6 lost on take-off from England due to the severe weather.

Perishing in BJ729 with Warrant Officer Class II-Pilot Thomas Powell were FS.s Joseph Leonard O'Grady, Guy James Herman McElroy, and Howard Broom; and P/O. Francis Lionel Todd. Originally the crew were buried at Venlo, and were later carefully exhumed and reverently reburied in Jonkerbos War Cemetery, Nijmegen. In late October of 1942, Edward and Annie Powell on Proctor Street in Sarnia received information that their son and only child Thomas was reported missing as the result of air operations. Months later in June of 1943, Thomas Powell's death was officially recorded as, *Previously reported missing after air operations, now for official purposes, presumed dead, overseas*. Thomas Powell, 24, is buried in Jonkerbos War Cemetery, Netherlands, Coll grave 20.C.1-3.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, J, L, M, N, 2C, 2D, 4B, 6G, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10B, 10U, 10V

QUINN, James Edward (#R/90077)

James Edward Quinn led an active life before he enlisted in the RCAF in January 1941. He impressed officers with his confidence and knowledge and was assessed as being *bright and very enthusiastic*. The Air Gunner from Sarnia lived up to their words. He flew many missions over enemy territory until his Lancaster was shot down nearly two years after he enlisted. James, 21, perished in the crash and Sarnia honoured him fifty years later by naming Quinn Drive in his honour.

James Quinn was born in Sarnia General Hospital on December 6, 1921, the eldest son of William Edward (born in Mooretown, Ontario) and Marjorie Jean (nee Raeburn, born in Port Franks, Ontario) Quinn. William and Marjorie Quinn were blessed with nine children together: daughters Dorothy Isabella (born 1913); Marjorie Jean (born 1916); Mary Louise (born 1931); Katherine Ann (born 1935); and Frances Emma (born 1938). They also had four sons: James Edward; David Gerald (born 1924); William Donald (born 1927); and Maurice Allen (born 1929). The Quinn family lived at 364 Shepherd Street, and William supported his large family working as a boilermaker at Imperial Oil in Sarnia.

James attended Wellington Street public school in Sarnia from 1927 to 1935, and then Sarnia Collegiate from 1935 to 1940-41. His high school years were busy. He took general technical courses and specialized in drafting and was very active in tennis, basketball and baseball. James participated in hockey and sport shooting and found time to enjoy such hobbies as model building, woodworking and hunting. While at Sarnia Collegiate, he was also a member of the Cadet Corps for five years with the rank of Sergeant-Major. He was at one time a carrier boy for the *Canadian (Sarnia) Observer* and, before enlisting, was employed at the Imperial Theatre in Sarnia as a doorman (night duty, as he was still a student) for a year and a half in 1939 to 1941.

Nineteen year-old James Quinn enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force on January 28, 1941 in London, Ontario. He stood five feet eight and a half inches tall, had blue eyes and dark brown hair, was single, and was

residing at home with his parents on Shepherd Street at the time. He requested flying duties with a preference to be an air gunner. After the war, he planned to take up drafting. The Recruiting Officer in London wrote of James, *Smart country youth, very quick and keen... Will develop rapidly under training and should make excellent air gunner material. Well dressed, clean, bright and very enthusiastic, will measure up I'm sure.*

From #2 Manning Depot in Brandon, Manitoba, James Quinn received his air training at #3 Service Flying Training School (SFTS) and then at #2 Wireless School (WS), both in Calgary, Alberta. He was then stationed at #7 Bombing and Gunnery School (B&GS) in Paulson, Manitoba and later at Composite Training School (KTS) in Trenton, Ontario. The Chief Instructor at #7B&GS wrote of James, *Confident and alert, keenly interested and thinks for himself. Has a good basic knowledge of subject.* From November 11th to 23rd, 1941, James spent his 12-day pre-embarkation leave with his parents and friends in Sarnia. In early December 1941, he was posted to #1 Y Depot RAF Trainees Pool in Halifax, where he celebrated his 20th birthday.

James Quinn embarked overseas from Halifax for the United Kingdom on December 9, 1941. From #3 Personnel Reception Centre, James continued his air training in the U.K., at #7 Air Gunnery School (AGS) at RAF Stormy Down and then at #19 Operational Training Unit (OTU) at RAF Kinloss. On June 4, 1942, he became a member of RAF #106 Squadron "Pro Libertate" (For freedom), part of **Bomber Command**, with the rank of Warrant Officer Class II, Air Gunner.

During the course of the war, one of this country's most significant contributions was the approximately 50,000 Canadians who served with the RCAF and RAF in Bomber Command operations. Next to Britain, Canada was the largest contributor to Bomber Command, making up more than a third of all of Bomber Command personnel. The men who served in Bomber Command faced some of the most difficult odds of anyone fighting in the war.

When the war began, RAF #106 Squadron was a training unit, based at RAF Cottesmore, and equipped with Handley Page Hampden and Avro Anson aircraft. In September 1940, the squadron became an operational bomber squadron which was carrying out mine-laying duties, before joining the strategic bombing campaign over Germany. The squadron operated from a number of bases over the course of the war, including RAF Finningley, Coningsby, Syerston and Metherringham. Early in 1942, RAF #106 became one of the small number of squadrons equipped with the flawed Avro Manchester. By May 1942, the much superior Avro Lancaster began to arrive that the squadron used until the end of the war.



Warrant Officer II-Air Gunner James Edward Quinn

James flew in seventeen bombing operations in a number of Lancaster Bombers as a tail gunner. The majority of the missions took place at night and ranged from seven to ten hours of flying time. Targets included locations mostly in Germany--Bremen, Wismar, Aachen, Osnabruck, Cologne, Hamburg and Mannheim; however, Le Creusot, France was targeted as were Genoa, Milan, Turin in Italy. In a collection of letters James wrote to his father, he indicated that he took part in almost thirty raids over enemy territory and was slated for furlough to Canada

soon. He described raids over Italy and Germany, including the historic raid in late May 1942 that blasted the historic city of Cologne. The attack on the night of May 30/31, 1942 on Cologne was the first ever “Thousand Bomber Raid.”

Nearly eight months later, on January 13, 1943, Warrant Officer II-Air Gunner James Quinn took part in what would be his final mission. He was aboard Lancaster I aircraft W4261 (markings ZN-C) that took off from RAF Syerston. The Lancaster was on a night bombing raid targeting Essen, Germany. Unfortunately, the aircraft was shot down over Dusseldorf, Germany and the entire crew was killed. Perishing with James Quinn were Warrant Officer’s Maurice Andrew Phair, Russell C. Zavitz, and Joseph Aleo; and Pilot Officer Duncan Hugh Alexander Dewar. Two of the crew, not Canadians, were initially reported missing but later killed in action: F/S Leslie William Cronk (RAFVR) and Sgt. George Ernest Patrick O’Connor (RAFVR).

Not long after the crash, William and Marjorie Quinn in Sarnia received a telegram from the R.C.A.F. Casualty Officer informing them that their son, WO JAMES EDWARD QUINN WAS REPORTED MISSING AFTER AIR OPERATIONS. He had been reported missing a few days after British and Canadian air forces staged a devastating raid on Essen, Germany. Several days later, the Quinns received another telegram from the Casualties Officer of the R.C.A.F. in Ottawa with a message that the International Red Cross Society received information from German sources indicating that Flight Sergeant Quinn had been killed in the Essen raid. German information had stated that Flt. Sgt. Quinn was shot down over Essen on January 13 and was buried at Military Burial Field in North Dusseldorf, Germany, on January 18. The R.C.A.F. Casualty Officer said that further information would follow in a letter.

After a time when no further information was received, William and Marjorie continued to live in the hope that their son James was still alive, that he may have escaped and was confined as a prisoner of war in Germany. Some time later, William and Marjorie received a telegram informing them that their son James, PREVIOUSLY REPORTED MISSING AFTER AIR OPERATIONS NOW FOR OFFICIAL PURPOSES PRESUMED DEAD OVERSEAS.

In mid-November of 1944, William and Marjorie Quinn received word that their son James Edward was promoted from Flight Sergeant to Warrant Officer in the autumn of 1942. Six months later, in May 1945, they received a War Service Gratuity of \$344.92 for the loss of their son James. James Quinn, 21, was originally buried in Grave No. 202, Section 111, in the Military Cemetery at Dusseldorf, Germany. His remains were later carefully exhumed and reverently reburied in the Reichswald Forest War Cemetery, Kleve, Germany, Grave 8.G.13. Quinn Drive in Sarnia is named in his memory.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, J, L, M, N, 2C, 2D, 7C, 7Y, 8X, 8Y, 10B, 10U, e

RAMESBOTTOM, Edward (#A/2858)

Edward Ramesbottom had a younger brother who served in the Great War and died as a result of his service. Approximately twenty years later, fifty year-old Edward, with a son serving in the navy, decided to serve his country. He would die less than three years later of natural causes while serving in the Royal Canadian Naval Reserve during the longest continuous campaign of the war.

Edward Ramesbottom was born in Byng Inlet, Parry Sound, Ontario on March 25, 1888, the son of Jonathan and Mary Jane (nee Pilon) Ramesbottom. [Note: The 1891 census records Edward’s birth year as 1883. However his Death Certificate, Circumstances of Casualty Card and gravestone record his birth year as 1888]. Jonathan (born 1846 in Weston, Ontario, a mill labourer) and Mary Jane (born 1860 in Algoma, Ontario) Ramesbottom were blessed with twelve children together: Robert (born 1875); John (born 1876); James (born December 1877, died 1938, buried Lakeview Cemetery, Sarnia); Mary-Margaret (born 1881); Percival (born 1885); Jennie (born March 1890, died 16 days later); Edward; Leah (born 1891); Harvey (born 1893); Earl Ernest (born March 28, 1896); Lola (born 1899); and Gertrude (born 1900). In March 1911, when Edward was 23 years old, he lost his father to heart disease. Seven years later, in 1918, he suffered the loss of his mother Mary Jane. Both Jonathan and Mary Jane Ramesbottom are buried in Byng Inlet, Parry Sound.

Edward’s younger brother Earl Ramesbottom served in the Great War. At the age of twenty, Earl (born in Parry Sound) enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force on July 27, 1916 in Parry Sound, becoming a member of the 162 Battalion. He recorded his next-of-kin as his mother, Jane, in Byng Inlet. He stood five feet five and a half inches tall, had gray eyes and dark hair, was single and living in Byng Inlet at the time. He was employed as a lumber inspector in the lumbering trade. He was transferred to the 234th Battalion in Toronto in November 1916. Nine months after enlisting, he sailed from Halifax in mid-April 1917, arriving in Liverpool on April 29.

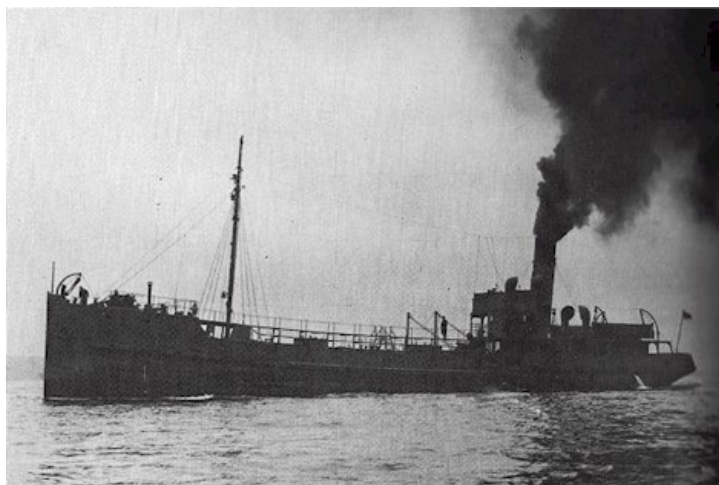
Five weeks later, on June 7, 1917, Earl Ramesbottom arrived in France becoming a member of the Infantry, 75th Battalion with the rank of Private. On several occasions in the latter part of 1917 he was treated for a painful, chronic ear infection. Nine months into the new year, on September 30, 1918, he was seriously wounded during the Battle of Cambrai. He was unconscious lying on the field for 24 hours before being admitted to #33 Casualty Clearing Station “dangerously wounded” by a gun shot wound to the head (frontal region of his skull). He was operated on the first time in France and then sent to England. He was operated on again, treated and remained in various hospitals there until being invalided back to Canada in February 1919. On arrival, he was admitted to Spadina Military Hospital in Toronto and was eventually discharged from St. Andrew’s Military Hospital in mid-September 1919. He was discharged from the CEF as “medically unfit” on September 18, 1919 in Toronto. Only one-and-a-half years later, on March 17, 1921, Earl Ramesbottom died in Davisville Hospital, Toronto, the result of his military service. He is buried in Byng Inlet, Parry Sound.

On September 29, 1913, twenty-five-year-old Edward Ramesbottom, a marine engineer residing in Kenora at the time, married twenty-three-year-old Marion Hutchinson in Kenora, Ontario. Marion, the daughter of Frank and Annie (nee Heslop) Hutchinson, was born in Southport, England, and had immigrated to Canada in 1911, initially residing in Ottawa. Edward and Marion Ramesbottom had only one child together, a son, John Edward, born in 1915. At some point, the Ramesbottoms moved to Sarnia. In 1921, the Ramesbottom family were living at 192 Lochiel Street, and later moved to 150 Talfourd Street, Sarnia.

Years later, their son John Edward, would be employed for a time on Great Lakes ships. John Edward also served in World War II, joining the Royal Canadian Navy, and attaining the rank of Chief Stoker. In October 1940, Petty Officer John Edward Ramesbottom was transferred from *HMCS St. Francis* to *HMS Eyebright*. So for a time, both father Edward and his son John Edward were serving in the Royal Canadian Navy at the same time.

Prior to enlisting, Edward Ramesbottom was employed as a marine engineer on a Standard Oil tanker, and before that, he had been on the *SS Maplecourt*, which operated out of Sarnia for a time. The *SS Maplecourt* was well known in this city--it was owned by United Towing and Salvage Company Limited which had a branch in Sarnia. In May 1940, the 3,388 ton steam merchant vessel left Sarnia for overseas service. In early February 1941, on its way from Montreal to Preston, England, the *Maplecourt* was torpedoed and sunk by a German submarine in the North Atlantic. Her entire crew of 37 was lost. Though none of the crew on board were from Sarnia, the attack on the *Maplecourt* made big news in Sarnia.

Edward Ramesbottom joined the navy, becoming a member of the Royal Canadian Naval Reserve. Beginning on the opening day of the Second World War, the **Battle of the Atlantic** would be the longest continuous campaign of the war, and one in which Canada played a central role. The Royal Canadian Navy, along with the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) and Canada’s Merchant Navy, played a vital role in defending the country’s eastern coast and escorting convoys of ships carrying men and essential machinery, arms, fuel and basic resources between North America and Europe.



HMCS Moonbeam

Edward was in the navy for 2 ½ years, and at sea all that time. His last post was as Chief Engine Room Artificer, Third Class, aboard the *HMCS Moonbeam*. The Quebec-built ship, originally the *M & F Hopper Barge No. 1*, was launched in 1913, later becoming the Department of Transport *D.M. Hopper Barge No. 1*. Early in the war,

she was acquired by the Royal Canadian Navy and renamed. The RCN acquired two Department of Transport hopper barges in December 1940, converting them to fuel oil carriers, commissioning them *HMCS Moonbeam* and *HMCS Sunbeam*. Based out of Halifax, they carried fuel oil for use on the east coast and at St. John's, Newfoundland. After the war, the *HMCS Moonbeam* would be sold in 1946 becoming the *Oakbranch*, and would be sold again in 1960, becoming the *B.L.L. 24*. It was eventually scrapped in 1971.

On December 25, 1942, Christmas Day, fifty-four-year-old Edward Ramesbottom of the RCN Reserve, died of natural causes aboard ship in St. John's, Newfoundland. Only days later, his wife Marion in Sarnia received a telegram from Ottawa informing her that her husband Edward had died suddenly. No particulars were given of the circumstances of his death, but the message stated that a letter would follow. When the message was received, their son John Edward of the R.C.N. was home in Sarnia on convalescent leave as the result of an injured hand.

Edward Ramesbottom, 54, is buried in Forest Road Anglican Cemetery, St. John's, Newfoundland, Plot 24 Section D, Grave 25. On his headstone are inscribed the words, EDWARD RAMESBOTTOM E.R.A. 3RD CLASS, RCNR A/2858 H.M.C.S. "MOONBEAM" 25TH DECEMBER 1942 AGE 54 SADLY MISSED BY WIFE AND SON. REST IN PEACE.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, N, U, X, 2C, 2D, 7C, 8X, 8Y

RAMSAY, Melvin Henry (#J/9904)

Melvin Henry Ramsay was a promising young barrister-at-law in Sarnia when he made the decision to serve his country. He would go on to serve in Ferry Command, delivering essential aircraft to the front line squadrons overseas. Thirteen months after marrying, and on his final trip before taking his Christmas leave and reuniting with his wife and family, his aircraft crashed in Iceland.

Melvin Ramsay was born in Sarnia on April 1, 1914, the youngest son of Percival (Percy) Earl and Jean Frances (nee Burr) Ramsay. Both born in Wanstead, Ontario, Percy and Jean were married on September 14, 1910, in Wyoming, Ontario. Percy and Jean were blessed with four children together: sons Robert Drummond (born March 20, 1912); and Melvin Henry; and daughters Dorothy Jean (born 1915); and Marion Earline Ramsay (born 1918). Percy supported his family working as a C.N.R. locomotive fireman, and the family lived at 147 Kathleen Street, and later 294 Mitton Street, Sarnia.

Tragedy struck the Ramsay family when Melvin was three years old—his father Percy was killed in a railway collision east of Hamilton on December 18, 1917. Melvin's older brother Robert would also serve in the war, becoming a Major in the Canadian Army and would also lose his life in service (see below). Melvin's sisters Dorothy Jean later became Mrs. Allan Douglas, of London, Ontario; and Marion Earline Ramsay became a teacher at Johnston Memorial School.

Melvin was educated at Lochiel Street Public School from 1921 to 1929 and then Sarnia Collegiate from 1929 until 1934. In his upper school year, he took courses in English literature and composition, history, algebra, geometry, physics, Latin, trigonometry and French. He was very active in athletics, particularly tennis and badminton, along with bowling, skating and swimming. He spent five years training in the Sarnia Collegiate Cadet Corps, and in the last year he was second in command of the corps. While at Sarnia Collegiate, he was also president of the Debating Club shortly after its inception, which then won the WOSSA Championship in 1933-34. Later he became president of the Alexander MacKenzie Club, an organization of young liberals interested in politics. From 1930 to 1934, Melvin worked part-time after school as a clerk, employed by W. Sole, druggist at Poles Drug Store in Sarnia.

After graduating high school in December 1934, Melvin Ramsay began his work to become a promising young "barrister-at-law". He was employed as a student-at-law with the firm Pardee, Gurd, Fuller and Taylor Barristers in Sarnia from 1934 to 1939. He attended Osgoode Hall Law School, Toronto for three years where he graduated with Honours in Law in 1939. While at Osgoode, he was also the president of the Gladstone Liberal Club. Melvin was called to the bar on September 21, 1939. He then joined the staff of the same law firm he had articulated with, as a barrister-at-law, continuing to practice law with them until he enlisted. H.M. Taylor, of H.M. Taylor, Barrister and Solicitor, Crown Attorney and Clerk of the Peace for the County of Lambton, wrote the following reference letter on behalf of Melvin, as part of his RCAF application:

The bearer of this letter Melvin H. Ramsay of Sarnia, Ontario, is well-known to me and I can recommend him as a proper man for enlistment in the Royal Canadian Air Force. He is a barrister practicing in the City of Sarnia and has been practicing here for one year and at this date is the Acting Crown Attorney of the County of Lambton.

He was born at the City of Sarnia and at the present time is twenty-six years of age, and has a splendid record as to character.

Following is a portion of another reference letter, this written by Harold Fuller, of Pardee, Gurd, Fuller and Taylor Barristers and Solicitors, on behalf of Melvin:

... During his employment here (1934 to 1939) he has always carried out his work in a proper and efficient manner. He is a man of the highest character, conscientious and with a good deal of ability and I have no hesitation whatever in giving him the very highest recommendation possible as a fit and proper person to become a member of the Royal Canadian Air Force.

Twenty-six-year-old Melvin Ramsay enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force on December 18, 1940 in London, Ontario. He stood five feet nine and a half inches tall, had brown eyes and brown hair, was single, and was living at home with his mother on Kathleen Street at the time. He requested flying duties, with a preference to be a pilot. The Recruiting Officer wrote the following in reference to Melvin, *This chap has everything, fine physique, splendid appearance, poise, culture, highly intelligent, forceful personality, aggressive fighter type, will make splendid Air Crew and has all qualifications for commissioned rank. Highly recommended.*

From #1 Manning Depot in Toronto and Auxillary Manning Depot in Picton, Melvin Ramsay received his air training at #31 Air Observer School (AOS) in Mount Hope; then at #1 Initial Training School (ITS) in Toronto; and at #6 Elementary Flying Training School (EFTS) in Prince Albert; followed by RCAF Station Trenton; then #5 Air Observer School (AOS) in Winnipeg; continuing at #7 Bombing and Gunnery School (B&GS) in Paulson, Manitoba; and then at #1 (Advanced) Air Navigation School (ANS) in Rivers, Manitoba. At #1 ANS on December 20, 1941, Melvin was awarded the A.W. Starrett Memorial Award for Proficiency in Navigation, along with his Air Observers Badge and commission as Pilot Officer. In mid-January 1942, Melvin received a 10-day leave. In February 1942, he continued his training at an advanced Navigation Reconnaissance Course at #31 General Reconnaissance School (GRS) in Charlottetown, PEI.



Flying Officer-Navigator Melvin Henry Ramsay

In mid-March 1942, Melvin Ramsay was transferred to #31 Operational Training Unit (OTU) in Debert, Nova Scotia. Three months later, he was attached to **RAF Ferry Command** at Dorval, near Montreal, Quebec. RAF Ferry Command formed in July 1941 to “ferry” aircraft from American and Canadian factories to the front line squadrons overseas. Aircraft were first transported to Dorval, and then flown to RCAF Station Gander in Newfoundland for the trans-Atlantic flight to the United Kingdom. The Command’s operational area was the north Atlantic, bringing the larger planes, the twin-engine and four-engine aircraft that had the range to fly over the ocean. This was pioneering work in 1940: the distance, inadequate navigation instruments, and frequent bad weather over the Atlantic were considered too much of a risk. The program became so successful that in 1941 a second route was created for smaller-range aircraft that called for re-fueling at bases in Labrador, Greenland and Iceland. A third route, the South Route, would link the U.S. to Egypt.

In March 1943, Ferry Command was reorganized when all ferrying functions were grouped under a single command, so Ferry Command became No. 45 (Atlantic Transport) Group of the RAF's Transport Command, still headquartered in Dorval. Once the planes were delivered overseas, the crews were flown back to Canada for the next run. Trans-Canada Airlines (TCA) bought a few Lancasters and modified them to carry passengers and freight. This was the forerunner of Air Canada and the company's first transatlantic flights. During the war, over 9,000 aircraft were ferried across the Atlantic to Allied fighter, bomber, maritime patrol and transportation squadrons.

Melvin Ramsay made his first trip across the Atlantic in mid-July 1942. In one of his August 1942 trips flying new bombers across the Atlantic, he was able to meet up with his older brother Robert in England.

During his annual 14-day leave in late October-early November 1942, Melvin Ramsay married Dorothy Lorraine Brittain in London, Ontario on October 31, 1942. Dorothy Lorraine, was the only daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Frank Brittain, of London, formerly of Sarnia. Dorothy was employed at Canada Trust Company in London. In order to receive the required "military permission" to marry, Melvin submitted the following reference letter written by the Canada Trust Company on behalf of Dorothy Brittain: *Miss Dorothy Brittain has been in the employ of this Company for several years, and at all times has been very highly regarded. I have always been impressed with the fine moral character of Miss Brittain, and have no hesitation in recommending her as a young lady of the highest standards in every respect.*

After their marriage, Melvin and Dorothy lived in an apartment on Queen Mary Rd. in Montreal. Melvin soon returned to duty, ferrying aircraft across the ocean. In mid-September 1943, on another 14-day leave, Melvin was able to visit his family and friends in Sarnia. On October 10, 1943, he attained the rank of Flying Officer-Navigator, as a member of the newly reorganized Ferry Command RAF No. 45 Group (Atlantic Transport). Late in 1943, Dorothy Ramsay joined her parents at their home at 181 Devonshire Avenue in London, Ontario. She was there to celebrate Melvin's upcoming Christmas homecoming.

On December 18, 1943 in Iceland, Melvin Ramsay was the navigator in a Mitchell aircraft FW165. This was Melvin's final trip before taking his Christmas leave. At the end of the flight, the Mitchell aircraft crashed into marshy ground two miles north-west of the airfield at Reykjavik, Iceland. Perishing with Melvin Ramsay was Captain W.V. Walker of Ingersoll and another occupant.

Several days later, his widowed mother Jean Ramsay in Sarnia received an official telegram from Ottawa informing her that her son, FLYING OFFICER MELVIN H RAMSAY WAS REPORTED MISSING WHILE FLYING FROM CANADA TO ENGLAND AS A MEMBER OF THE RAF FERRY COMMAND. One day later, Melvin's wife Dorothy in London received a telegram from Ottawa informing her that her husband, MELVIN RAMSAY HAS BEEN OFFICIALLY REPORTED KILLED AND THE BOMBER IN WHICH HE WAS FLYING AND THE BODIES OF THE CREW HAVE BEEN FOUND WHERE THEY CRASHED IN ICELAND ON DECEMBER 18.

In December 1943, a few days before Christmas, Dorothy received the following letter from a Flight Lieutenant, Personnel Staff Officer:

Dear Mrs. Ramsay,

It is with very deep regret that a telegram was sent to you yesterday informing you that your husband Flying Officer Melvin Henry Ramsay had been listed as missing believed killed. Please let me express the very sincere sympathy that all the personnel of this Group feel with you in your sorrow.

The aircraft on which your husband was navigator crashed near Reykjavik, Iceland at 3.10 p.m. Greenwich Hour Time on the 18th December 1943. It crashed into marshland and I am very sorry to say that there is no doubt that your husband and his companions were killed instantly. The forepart of the fuselage was buried in the marshland and despite all the efforts that have been made it has not so far been possible to recover your husband who has therefore been listed as missing believed killed. Immediately any further information is received a telegram will be sent to you giving all the information available.

The cause of the accident has not so far been ascertained and this is being investigated by an official Court of Inquiry. If there are any other matters of any description of which I can be of assistance to you please do not hesitate to write.

Flying Officer-Navigator Melvin Ramsay's death was later officially recorded as, *Killed in flying accident, overseas (Iceland)*. Melvin died three years to the day he enlisted in the air force and twenty-six years to the day after the death of his father Percy in a tragic railway accident. In February 1945, Dorothy Ramsay in London, Ontario,

received a War Service Gratuity of \$610.56 for the loss of her husband. Melvin Ramsay, 29, is buried in Reykjavik (Fossvogur) Cemetery, Iceland, Grave C48.6. On his headstone are inscribed the words, HUSBAND OF DOROTHY L. BRITAIN, SON OF PERCY & JEAN RAMSAY, SARNIA, CANADA.

At the time of Melvin's death, his widowed-mother Jean Ramsay was living at 147 Kathleen Avenue, Sarnia. Eight months after Melvin's December 1943 death, she would lose her second son, Major Robert Ramsay, who was killed while serving with the Canadian Army in France in August 1944. In November 1944, Jean Ramsay offered a Sarnia Collegiate Institute scholarship in memory of her two sons who lost their lives in the war. The Sarnia Board of Education gratefully accepted the gift of \$50, to be an annual scholarship in memory Robert and Melvin Ramsay. Both young men had graduated from the Collegiate Institute and both had belonged to the Central United Church. Mrs. Jean Ramsay expressed that she would like the annual gift to be awarded to the boy attaining the highest standing in any nine Sarnia Collegiate departmental exams.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, J, L, M, N, S, 2C, 2D, 3F, 7C, 8X, 8Y

RAMSAY, Robert Drummond (#1805)

Robert Drummond Ramsay had graduated as a mechanical engineer and was two years into his career with Canadian General Electric when he made the decision to serve his country. He achieved rapid promotions in the Army in recognition of his talent and duty. He sacrificed his life in action against the enemy during the battle to liberate France.

Robert Ramsay was born in Sarnia on March 20, 1912, the oldest son of Percival (Percy) Earl and Jean Frances (nee Burr) Ramsay. Both born in Wanstead, Ontario, Percy and Jean were married on September 14, 1910, in Wyoming, Ontario. Percy and Jean were blessed with four children together: sons Robert Drummond and Melvin Henry (born April 1, 1914); and daughters Dorothy Jean (born 1915); and Marion Earline Ramsay (born 1918). Percy Ramsay supported his family working as a C.N.R. locomotive fireman, and the family lived at 147 Kathleen Street, and later 294 Mitton Street, Sarnia.

Tragedy struck the Ramsay family when Robert was five years old— his father was Percy was killed in a railway collision east of Hamilton on December 18, 1917. Robert's younger brother Melvin would also serve in the war, becoming a flying officer-navigator in the Royal Canadian Air Force and would also lose his life in service (see above). Robert's sisters Dorothy Jean later became Mrs. Allan Douglas, of London, Ontario; and Marion Earline Ramsay became a teacher at Johnston Memorial School.

Robert Ramsay was educated at Lochiel Street Public School from 1918 to 1925 and then Sarnia Collegiate in 1925 until he graduated in 1930. Robert then worked at Imperial Oil Limited in Sarnia for four years. In 1934, he attended Queen's University at Kingston, Ontario where he obtained his Bachelor of Science degree, graduating as a Mechanical Engineer in 1938. While in Kingston, Robert was a member of the militia, Queen's University Contingent, Canadian Officers Training Corps--Artillery, attaining the rank of Second Lieutenant. Robert took a position with the Canadian General Electric Company in Peterborough and was employed there for two years as the assistant to chief engineer. He continued in the militia, a member of the 4th Field Battery, Royal Canadian Artillery with the rank of Lieutenant.

Twenty-eight-year-old Robert Ramsay enlisted in the Canadian Army on April 17, 1940 in Ottawa, Ontario. He stood five feet ten and a quarter inches tall, had blue eyes and dark brown hair, was single, and was living at 234 Reid Street, Peterborough, Ontario at the time. He began his training in Ottawa as a member of the No. 1 Artillery Holding Unit, Royal Canadian Artillery, with the rank of Lieutenant. After training there for less than two months, he embarked overseas from Halifax for the United Kingdom on June 9, 1940.

Initially posted to #1 Canadian Army Reinforcement Unit (CARU), and then #2 CARU, Robert continued his army training in the U.K. at Bordon Military Camp. He earned qualifications as a driver (motorcycle) and trained with #3 Anti-tank Regiment, where he was promoted to Captain. In July 1942, he was attached the 1st Canadian Army Head Quarters. In August of 1942, Captain Robert Ramsay was able to visit with his younger brother Melvin of the RCAF while he was also in England.

In March 1943, Captain Ramsay was a member of 7th Army Field Regiment, Royal Canadian Artillery. In May 1943, he attended a 16-week staff course at Camberly Military College. Standing highest among the Canadians, he received First Class honours while at the college in September 1943. He was promoted to the rank of Acting Major on October 8, 1943, becoming Chief of Staff to the Commander of the Royal Canadian Artillery (RCA) attached to Head Quarters 2nd Canadian Division.

Acting Major Robert Ramsay embarked from the U.K. on July 3, 1944, arriving in France two days later (one month after D-Day). The **Battle of Normandy** had begun for the Canadians with the June 6, 1944 D-Day landings at Juno Beach. After breaching the “Atlantic Wall” of “Fortress Europe”, Allied armies began their break out from the narrow Normandy bridgehead to carve out a foothold on the French mainland. It would take a whole summer of tenacious fighting, pushing against fierce and ruthless German forces to advance east across France. In a brutal campaign of attrition, the Canadians faced fierce battles and vicious counterattacks as they clawed their way forward liberating villages and towns including Bretteville, Carpiquet, Caen and Falaise.

After the Allied breakout from Normandy, Canadian forces were assigned the “**Long Left Flank**”. This offensive included the less glamorous but vital tasks of clearing coastal areas in the north of France and Belgium of German occupiers; opening the English Channel ports for supplies essential to the Allied advance; and capturing the launching sites of German V-1 rockets. In a series of stop-and-start advances against stiff resistance in fortified positions, the Canadians liberated ports and villages including Rouen, Dieppe, Dunkirk, Boulogne and Calais.

In mid-August 1944, Robert Ramsay was promoted to the rank of Major. He served with the 7th Army Field Regiment, Royal Canadian Artillery as they advanced through Normandy and into the Long Left Flank of France. Less than three months after arriving in France, Major Robert Ramsay lost his life in battle. On August 31, 1944, he was killed in action during the fighting in Rouen, France. Robert Ramsay’s remains were originally buried at a location recorded on the Army Field Service Card as “France M.R. 223089 near Rouen”. His remains were later carefully exhumed and reverently reburied in Calais Canadian War Cemetery.



Major Robert Drummond Ramsay



His original burial location near Rouen

In early September 1944, his widowed mother Jean Ramsay in Sarnia received a telegram from Ottawa informing her that her eldest son, MAJOR ROBERT RAMSAY WAS KILLED IN ACTION IN FRANCE ON AUGUST 31. Beyond the fact that her son went to France early in July, she had no further indication of where he might have met his death. Eight months prior to Robert’s August 31, 1944 death, Jean Ramsay lost her first son, RCAF Flying Officer Melvin Ramsay, who had been killed in a flying accident in Iceland in December 1943. Major Robert Ramsay’s death was later officially recorded as, *Overseas casualty, killed in action, in the field (France)*.

In October 1944, Jean received the following letter from the Major-General, Adjutant-General:

Dear Mrs. Ramsay:

It was with deep regret that I learned of the death of your son, Major Robert Drummond Ramsay, who gave his life in the Service of his Country in the Western European Theatre of War, on the 31st day of August, 1944.

From official information we have received, your son was killed in action against the enemy. You may be assured that any additional information received will be communicated to you without delay.

The Minister of National Defence and the Members of the Army Council have asked me to express to you and your family their sincere sympathy in your bereavement. We pay tribute to the sacrifice he so bravely made.

In November of 1944, Jean Ramsay offered a Sarnia Collegiate Institute scholarship in memory of her two sons who lost their lives in the war. The Sarnia Board of Education gratefully accepted the gift of \$50, to be an annual scholarship in memory Robert and Melvin Ramsay. Both young men had graduated from the Collegiate Institute and both had belonged to the Central United Church. Mrs. Ramsay expressed that she would like the annual gift to be awarded to the boy attaining the highest standing in any nine Sarnia Collegiate departmental exams.

In July 1945, Jean Ramsay received a War Service Gratuity of \$1512.07 for the loss of her second son to war, Robert. In May 1946, she received a letter from the Colonel, Director of Records, for Adjutant-General. Following is a portion of that letter:

Dear Madam:

Information has just been received from overseas that the remains of your son, Major Robert Drummond Ramsay, have now been carefully exhumed from the original place of interment and reverently reburied in grave 7, row C, plot 8, of Calais Canadian Military Cemetery, St. Inglevert, France. Marked map is enclosed. This is a recognized military burial ground and will receive care and maintenance in perpetuity.

The grave will have been marked with a temporary cross which will be replaced in due course by a permanent headstone suitably inscribed. While it cannot now be stated when this work of permanent commemoration will begin, before any action is taken you will be communicated with and an opportunity will be given you to submit a short personal inscription of your own choice for engraving on the headstone...



Major Robert Drummond Ramsay

Major Robert Ramsey was posthumously awarded the decoration: Mention in Despatches, the award stating, *The King has been graciously pleased to approve the award of Mentions in Despatches in recognition of gallant and distinguished services.* In September 1946, Jean Ramsay wrote the following letter to the Director of Records, Department of National Defence in Ottawa:

Dear Sir,

I would like to acknowledge receiving the Certificate denoting that my son, Major Robert D. Ramsay, was mentioned in despatches. Thank you for forwarding this certificate to me. I also want to take this opportunity to thank the Department of National Defence for the fine way they looked after my late son's effects. Also all the letters of sympathy from the Department, and those that came through the Department, also photographs sent to me at different times. I do appreciate all this.

Robert Ramsay, 32, is buried in Calais Canadian War Cemetery, Leubringhen, France, Grave 8.C.7. On his headstone are inscribed the words, THEY SHALL RECEIVE A GLORIOUS KINGDOM.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, J, L, N, S, 2C, 2D, 7C, 8X, 8Y

RICHARDS, Charles Valentine (#A/20124)

Just shy of his 24th birthday and leaving his job at Imperial Oil, Charles Valentine Richards enlisted to serve his country one week before it officially entered the war. He served for 4 ½ years in Canada, the United Kingdom and across the Northwestern European theatre of war. He lost his life while fighting during the liberation of Holland, just two months before the war in Europe ended.

Charles Richards was born in Sarnia on September 12, 1915, the youngest child of William and Maud Charlotte (nee Punchard) Richards, both born in Devonshire, England. William, a farmer, immigrated to Canada in 1905, and Maud immigrated to Canada in 1906. William and Maud were married in Cathcart, Brant County, Ontario on August 30, 1906. They had four children together: Charles Valentine; Edith Kathleen (born 1907); William George (born 1909); and Harry John (born 1913). The Richards family moved to Sarnia sometime between 1911 and 1913 and lived at 152 John Street. William Richards supported his family working as a brakeman. On August 4, 1930, one month before Charles' fifteenth birthday, he lost his mother Maud, who died at the age of fifty.

Charles graduated from Sarnia Collegiate in 1934. He was very active in the work of St. John's Anglican Church, Devine St., being secretary of the Sunday school for some years and being an active member of the Dramatic Club. Charles was also an active member of the old Sarnia Drama League in its heyday before the war. Prior to the war, Charles was employed for several years at Imperial Oil Company as a laboratory assistant. He was also a member of the Non-Permanent Active Militia (N.P.A.M.) for six years, and was qualified as a Sergeant, Infantry and Engineering.

One week before his twenty-fourth birthday, Charles Richards enlisted for active service in the Canadian Army on the first day of mobilization, September 4, 1939, in Sarnia. One week later, Canada officially entered the war against Germany. Charles stood five feet eight and a half inches tall, had blue eyes and light brown hair, was single, and was living at home with his widowed father on John Street at the time. As a member of the 11th Field Company, Royal Canadian Engineers (R.C.E.), Charles trained in Sarnia and London, attaining the rank of Acting Lance Sergeant.

Charles embarked overseas from Halifax bound for the United Kingdom on August 8, 1940. He continued his training in Aldershot as a member of the 11th Field Company, R.C.E., Canadian Army. In mid-February 1940, he attained the rank of Lance Sergeant. In November 1942, Charles returned to Canada for further training, first to #1 District Depot in London. In December 1942, he was transferred to A6 Canadian Engineering Training Center (CETC) in Chilliwack, British Columbia, where he was appointed to the rank of Acting Sergeant. He continued his training in the new year at CETC Chilliwack and then Canadian Small Arms School (CSAS) in Nanaimo, British Columbia. In early July 1943, now with the rank of Sergeant, Charles was posted to No. 1 Transit Camp in Windsor, Ontario.

On August 28, 1943, Sergeant Charles Richards again embarked overseas from Canada bound for the United Kingdom. He was initially posted with #1 Canadian Engineers Reinforcement Unit (CERU), where he continued his training. By late September 1943, he was again a member of the 11th Field Company, Royal Canadian Engineers (RCE). In late June 1944, Charles Richards of the 11th Field Company, R.C.E. sailed from the U.K. to France and arrived there on June 27, 1944.

The **Battle of Normandy** had begun for the Canadians with the June 6, 1944 D-Day landings at Juno Beach. After breaching the "Atlantic Wall" of "Fortress Europe", it would take a whole summer of tenacious fighting, pushing against fierce and ruthless German forces to advance east liberating villages and towns across France. After the Allied breakout from Normandy, Canadian forces were assigned the "**Long Left Flank**". This offensive included the less glamorous but vital tasks of clearing coastal areas in the north of France and Belgium of German occupiers; opening the English Channel ports; and capturing the launching sites of German V-1 rockets (late August-early October 1944).

In early October 1944, the Canadians were entrusted with grueling task of liberating the Belgian-Dutch border estuary connecting Antwerp to the North Sea. The **Battle of the Scheldt** (early October-early November 1944) was among the most difficult and grueling struggles of the war. After that Battle, over the winter of 1944-1945, the weary Canadians were given a "rest", stationed along the **Nijmegen sector** in the Netherlands. However, the front was never quiet, with patrols and large-scale raids remaining constant.

In March 1945, the 1st Canadian Corps (which had been fighting in Italy) joined their comrades of the 2nd Canadian Corps (which had fought through France, Belgium, and Germany). For the first time in history, two Canadian Army corps fought together. The two Canadian Corps were tasked with the **Liberation of the Netherlands**, on two fronts--northeastern Holland and northern Germany, and Western Holland. This offensive was never easy, and many Canadians were killed in the Liberation.

Sergeant Charles Richards served with 11th Field Company, Royal Canadian Engineers as they moved across the Northwestern European theatre of war. The RCE troops enabled the army to move--they repaired and built

roads, airfields and bridges; cleared mines and road blocks; and filled in craters and anti-tank ditches; all while working alongside combat troops at the front and often under fire.

On March 18, 1945, Sergeant Charles Valentine Richards of the Royal Canadian Engineers, lost his life while fighting in Germany, during the Liberation of the Netherlands. Charles' remains were buried on the day he was killed at a location recorded on the Army Field Service Card as "Germany Canadian Temporary Cemetery at Bedburg, 932527 Calcar 4203 1/25,000". His remains were later carefully exhumed and reverently reburied in Groesbeek Canadian War Cemetery.

On March 22, 1945, Charles' father William in Sarnia received the following telegram from the Director of Records in Ottawa: REGRET DEEPLY A20124 SERGEANT CHARLES VALENTINE RICHARDS HAS BEEN OFFICIALLY REPORTED KILLED IN ACTION EIGHTEENTH MARCH 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. In late March 1945, a short memorial service for Charles Richards was held during the regular evening service at St. John's Church, Devine Street, Sarnia.

In early April 1945, William received the following letter from the Major-General, Adjutant-General:
Dear Mr. Richards:

It was with deep regret that I learned of the death of your son, A20124 Sergeant Charles Valentine Richards, who gave his life in the Service of his Country in the Western European Theatre of War on the 18th day of March, 1945.

From official information we have received, your son was killed in action against the enemy. You may be assured that any additional information received will be communicated to you without delay.

The Minister of National Defence and the Members of the Army Council have asked me to express to you and your family their sincere sympathy in your bereavement. We pay tribute to the sacrifice he so bravely made.

In September 1945, William received the following letter from the Colonel, Director of Records, for Adjutant-General:
Dear Sir:

Information has now been received from the overseas military authorities that your son A20124 Sergeant Charles Valentine Richards, was buried with religious rites in a temporary cemetery located at Bedburg, approximately one and a half miles South-East of Cleve, Germany. Marked map is enclosed.

The grave will have been temporarily marked with a wooden cross for identification purposes and in due course the remains will be reverently exhumed and removed to a recognized military burial ground when the concentration of graves in the area takes place. On this being completed the new location will be advised to you, but for obvious reasons it will likely take approximately one year before this information is received.

In August 1946, William received another letter from the Colonel, Director of Records, for Adjutant-General. Following is a portion of that letter:
Dear Sir:

Information has just been received from overseas that the remains of your son, A20124 Sergeant Charles Valentine Richards, have been carefully exhumed from the original place of interment and reverently reburied in grave 11, row D, plot 5, of Nijmegen Canadian Military Cemetery, four miles South-East of Nijmegen, Holland. Marked map is enclosed. This is a recognized military burial ground and will receive care and maintenance in perpetuity.

The grave will have been marked with a temporary cross which will be replaced in due course by a permanent headstone suitably inscribed. While it cannot now be stated when this work of permanent commemoration will begin, before any action is taken you will be communicated with and an opportunity will be given you to submit a short personal inscription of your own choice for engraving on the headstone...

Charles Richard's death was later officially recorded as, *Overseas casualty, killed in action, in the field (Germany)*. Almost two months after Charles Richards' death, the war in Europe ended. In January 1948, widowed father William Richards received from the Director, War Service Records in Ottawa, a photograph of the grave and marker over the burial place in Holland of his youngest son Charles. Charles Valentine Richards, 29, is buried in Groesbeek Canadian War Cemetery, Netherlands, Grave V.D.11. His name is also inscribed on the Sarnia Refinery Plaque. Unveiled in 1949, the plaque has the names of 24 Sarnia Imperial Oil employees who made the ultimate sacrifice in World War II.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, J, L, N, 2C, 2D, 7C, 8X, 8Y

RIDDOCH, George (#R/259938)

Days before his 19th birthday, George Riddoch made the decision to serve his country. In November 1944, his parents in Sarnia received a letter from him in which he spoke of plans for Christmas and the difficulties he was experiencing in finding suitable presents for his relatives. His final line was, "Oh, I lead a good life now." Tragically, he had lost his life a week earlier, while training for one of the most dangerous postings of the war.

George Riddoch was born in Aberdeen, Scotland on August 19, 1924, the second son of Andrew and Georgina (nee Harrison) Riddoch. Both born in Aberdeen, Scotland, Andrew Riddoch (born July 1889) and Georgina Harrison (born May 1899) were married in Aberdeenshire, Scotland on August 18, 1917. Andrew and Georgina Riddoch had nine children together: sons Andrew Jr. ("Andy", born 1918); George; John McKenna (born 1929); Gilbert Harrison (born 1931); Robert T. (born 1933); and daughters: Elsie McRae (born 1919, later Mrs. Neil Chalmers, 265 Cobden Street); and Jessie C. (born 1922, became a Corporal with the RCAF in Toronto). There were two other Riddoch children, but they died at an early age: James, born in Scotland in March 1920, died less than three months later; and Douglas, born in Sarnia in October 1934, was stillborn.

The Riddoch family immigrated to Canada when George was just nine months old. They departed from Glasgow, Scotland aboard the passenger ship *Letitia* and arrived at a port in Quebec on May 31, 1925. Patriarch of the family Andrew Riddoch recorded his occupation as farmer. The Riddoch family moved to Sarnia, living at 187 Cobden St., where Andrew supported his large family working as a labourer.

George Riddoch was educated at S.S. #17 Public School in Warwick, Ontario from 1930 to 1938, leaving after completing grade eight. He was active in hockey, rugby and swimming, and was a member of the Sea Cadets for one year. He then worked at a farm in Watford (B. McKay) in 1938-39, and then a farm in Sarnia (H. McEwen) in 1939-40. Finally, he worked as a service station attendant from 1940 to 1943, at Rakirk Service Station on the corner of Russell and Wellington Streets.

Just days before his 19th birthday, George Riddoch enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force on August 16, 1943 in London, Ontario. He stood five feet eight inches tall, had brown eyes and black hair, was single, and was living with his parents on Cobden Street at the time. He requested flying duties, hoping to be a pilot, but realizing his limited education, was willing to serve in any capacity with an air crew.

From #1 Manning Depot in Toronto, and then Technical Training School (TTS) in St. Thomas, George received his initial air training at #4 Bombing and Gunnery School (B&GS) at Fingal, Ontario; and then at #9 B&GS at Mont Joli, Quebec where he was awarded his Air Gunners Badge on February 25, 1944. He graduated as a Sergeant-Air Gunner. His Commanding Officer recorded that George was a, *Good type of student, states what he means clearly, has no difficulty in understanding. Willing to help others, shows good initiative.* In March, George continued his training at #3 Aircrew Graduate Training School (AGTS) in Three Rivers, Quebec. In April 1944, he was posted to #1 Y Depot in Lachine, Quebec.



Sergeant-Air Gunner George Riddoch

Nine months after enlisting, on May 3, 1944, George Riddoch embarked overseas from Halifax bound for the United Kingdom for further air training. Initially posted to #3 Personnel Reception Centre, he continued his training with #82 Operational Training Unit (OTU). On September 6, 1944, he was transferred to #61 (Training Base) with RCAF #1659 Heavy Conversion Unit at R.A.F. Station Topcliffe, England. With the introduction of new heavy bombers, the four-engine Stirling, Lancaster and Halifax, the Royal Air Force introduced heavy conversion units (HCU) in late 1941 to qualify crews trained on medium bombers to operate the heavy bombers before final posting to operational squadrons. Along with training recruits, some of the heavy conversion units carried out roles that included planting mines, patrolling for submarines, and bombing enemy targets.

RCAF #1659 Heavy Conversion Unit (HCU) formed at RAF Leeming in October 1942 as a Canadian conversion unit with the Handley Page Halifax, a four-engine heavy bomber. In March 1943, it moved to RAF Topcliffe. In November 1944, the unit received some Avro Lancasters.

During the course of the war, one of this country's most significant contributions was the approximately 50,000 Canadians who served with the RCAF and RAF in **Bomber Command** operations. Next to Britain itself, Canada was the largest contributor to Bomber Command, making up more than a third of all of Bomber Command personnel. The men who served in Bomber Command faced some of the most difficult odds of anyone fighting in the war. There was no easy way to learn how to fly the heavy bombers, and training crews suffered a litany of disasters, crashes and deaths. By the end of the war, Bomber Command lost over 8,000 Allied airmen who were killed in training or by accidents alone.

Only five months after arriving overseas, on October 22, 1944, Sergeant-Air Gunner George Riddoch was part of a crew aboard a Halifax Mark V Bomber LL505 that was on a navigation cross-country training exercise. The aircraft took off from its base at Topcliffe, Yorkshire at approximately 1402 hours. The estimated time of arrival was 1909 hours, but at approximately 1900 hours, the aircraft was heard calling "DARK". The bomber had run into thick cloud and lost its bearings. Instructions were passed on to the aircraft to maintain 4000' and fly 090°. Though the message was received and acknowledged, the directions were not carried out. The aircraft was observed circling at very low altitude before it crashed into the hillside of Carris Hill at approximately 2015 hours (Carris Hill was near RAF Station Millom, Cumberland, Scotland).

A fighter was dispatched but arrived only in time to observe the crash. The Halifax aircraft burned and disintegrated on impact near Haverigg, Cumbria, England--the entire crew was killed. Sergeant-Air Gunner George Riddoch sustained multiple injuries and died. His remains were buried on October 28, 1944 in Chester Cemetery, Cheshire. Perishing with George Riddoch were F/O.s Robert Newton Whitley and John Armstrong Johnston; P/O. Frank Aubrey Bell; Sgt.s Calvin George Whittingstall, Harvey Ellsworth Pyche, and Donald Fraser Titt; and Sgt. William Brisbane Ferguson (RAF).

In late October 1944, Andrew and Georgina Riddoch on Cobden St., received a telegram from the Casualty Officer in Ottawa informing them that their son, SERGEANT GEORGE RIDDOCH HAS BEEN KILLED ON ACTIVE SERVICE ON OCTOBER 22. No other details were given. Andrew and Georgina presumed that their son was killed in an accident. In a letter that they had received the previous week from their son, George told them of flying in a Halifax bomber and intimated that he had not completed his training.

In early November 1944, Andrew and Georgina received the particulars of the flying accident in Britain that had cost their son's life. In a letter written by Air Vice Marshall J.A. Sully, he confirmed, with regret, that the Sarnia boy had been killed on active service. He revealed that George Riddoch was a member of the crew in an R.C.A.F. plane that crashed into a hillside near Millon, Cumberland County, England, during flying operations. The R.C.A.F. Officer stated; *I realize that this news has been a great shock to you and I offer you my deepest sympathy. May the same spirit which prompted your son to offer his life give you courage. You may be assured that any further information received will be communicated to you immediately.*

In the same week that they received the above letter from Vice Marshall Sully, the Riddochs also received a letter from their son George, dated October 20, and posted the next day, only 24 hours before he flew on the fatal mission. In it, George referred to mail from home, and spoke of plans for Christmas and difficulties he was experiencing in finding suitable presents for his relatives. He closed with the observation that it was about ten minutes to 10 p.m. and time for him to be heading for bed and a final line, "Oh, I lead a good life now. So-long for now."

In November 1944, Andrew received a letter from the Group Captain, Commanding No. 1659 RCAF

Conversion Unit. Following is a portion of that letter:

Dear Mr. Riddoch,

Before you receive this letter you will have had a telegram informing you of the very sad loss of your son, Sergeant George Riddoch.

Your son, along with a full crew, took off on a normal training exercise at 2.0 o'clock on the afternoon of October 22nd. They had been airborne and carrying out the exercise for over six hours when a message was received that the aircraft had crashed into a hillside. It has not yet been ascertained what caused the accident - death was instantaneous to your son and the rest of the crew.

Owing to the time taken to communicate under present conditions, it was not possible to ascertain your wishes regarding the funeral in the time available, and arrangements were, therefore, made for his burial without reference to you. I thought that you would like your son to be buried beside his comrades, who were buried at the same time, and I arranged accordingly. I am sure that you will understand the necessity for the action that was taken, and I sincerely trust that the arrangements we were able to make were what you would have wished.

The funeral took place at 1100 hours on Saturday October 28th at the R.A.F. Regional Cemetery in the City of Chester, county of Cheshire. The service was conducted by S/L E.L. Curry, Protestant Padre of R.C.A.F. 'R' Depot. Full Service honours were accorded. Officers and airmen were in attendance and the coffin was carried by aircrew personnel. A wreath was sent by the officers of this Unit as well as by the Sergeant's Mess. Your son's grandmother, Mrs. A. Riddoch, of New Machar, Aberdeenshire, was immediately contacted and notified of the funeral arrangements but she was unable to attend the ceremony. Photographs of the service are enclosed.

You will wish to know that all War Graves are taken care of by the Imperial War Graves Commission, who will erect a temporary wooden cross, pending provision of a permanent memorial. I am instructed to explain that the question of reinterment, if this were desired, could be considered only at the conclusion of hostilities...

May I now express the great sympathy which all of us feel with you in the sad loss which you have sustained. Your son, along with his crew, was just about to join an Operational Squadron. I sincerely believe that he had the makings of an excellent Air Gunner and I have no hesitation in saying that the crew as a whole, the members of which came from all parts of Canada and Scotland would have been outstanding.

Please believe me when I say that the sense of loss which you feel is shared by all of us. George was very popular with the other members of this Unit, and highly regarded by all. I can only say, in closing, how extremely sorry I am to have to write this letter to you. I hope you will find consolation in the fact that your son has sacrificed his life in the cause of Freedom, and in the service of his Country. If there is anything that I can do for you at any time, please do not hesitate to advise me.

George Riddoch's death was later officially recorded as, *Killed in flying accident, overseas (England).*

George Riddoch's funeral was held on October 28, 1944 at the R.A.F. Regional Cemetery in Cheshire, England. At the same time as George's funeral in England, a private service was held for relatives and close friends at his parents' Cobden Street home. Rev. James Milroy of Rogers Memorial Presbyterian Church, Toronto and the Rev. Charles E. Ficher of Corunna conducted the service. George Riddoch's citations include: Defence Medal, Canadian Volunteer Service Medal and Clasp, and War Medal 1939-1945.

A permanent memorial to the crew is set up at the crash site, where all eight crew members died. George Riddoch, 20, is buried in Chester (Blacon) Cemetery, Cheshire, United Kingdom, Section A, Grave 1028. On his headstone are inscribed the words, HE WILL NOT AGE HIS SONG IS SUNG AND HE REMAINS FOR EVER YOUNG. REST IN PEACE.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, J, L, M, N, 2C, 2D, 6O, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10U

RIGBY, Robert Charles (#V/41295)

Robert Charles Rigby enlisted in the Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve (RCNVR) on July 2, 1942. One year after enlisting, he became an Ordinary Telegraphist aboard the Canadian destroyer *HMCS St. Croix*. On September 20, 1943, a torpedo from a U-boat sank the *St. Croix*. Only one crew member survived; the 147 men who perished on the *St. Croix*, including Robert Rigby, made it the heaviest single loss suffered by the R.C.N. in the war.

Robert Charles Rigby was born in St. Andrew's, Charlotte, New Brunswick on April 3, 1915, the only child of Robert Desbrisay Rigby Sr. and Charlotte Elvada (nee Worrell) Rigby. Robert Sr. and Charlotte Worrell were both born in New Brunswick, and were married in St. Andrew's, New Brunswick on September 18, 1907. In 1927, when Robert Jr. was twelve years old, the Rigby family moved from New Brunswick to Ontario.

Prior to enlisting, Robert Jr. completed his high school education at age eighteen and worked for six years as a builder's hardware salesman with Aikenhead Hardware on Temperance Street in Toronto. In 1942, the same year that Robert Jr. enlisted, his mother Charlotte passed away at the age of sixty-six in St. Andrew's, New Brunswick. Robert Rigby Sr. was employed by Anglin-Norcross Ontario Limited in Sarnia during the time his son Robert Jr. was serving in the war.

Twenty-seven-year-old Robert Charles Rigby enlisted in the Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve (RCNVR) on July 2, 1942 in Toronto. He stood five feet eight and a half inches tall, had blue eyes and fair hair, was single, and recorded his permanent address as St. Andrew's, New Brunswick. His post-war ambition was to either return to the hardware store in Toronto or become involved in marionette entertainment. Taken on at Divisional Strength at *HMCS York* (Toronto), Robert Jr. entered Active Service on October 10, 1942, where he received training at *HMCS York* until February 1943. He continued his training at *HMCS St. Hyacinthe* (Quebec) until mid-June 1943 where he advanced from Ordinary Seaman to Ordinary Telegraphist in March 1943. On June 16, 1943, he was transferred for further training to *HMCS Stadacona* where he was stationed until early July 1943. On July 8, 1943, one year after enlisting, Ordinary Telegraphist Robert Rigby became a member of the Canadian destroyer *HMCS St. Croix*.

Beginning on the opening day of the Second World War, the **Battle of the Atlantic** would be the longest continuous campaign of the war, and one in which Canada played a central role. The Royal Canadian Navy, along with the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) and Canada's Merchant Navy, played a vital role in defending the country's eastern coast and escorting convoys of ships carrying men and essential machinery, arms, fuel and basic resources between North America and Europe.



Town Class Destroyer *HMCS St. Croix 181*

The Canadian Town Class destroyer *HMCS St. Croix (181)* operated in the North Atlantic. Aboard the same ship was Coder Joseph Griffiths Bell of Sarnia (included in this Project), and Stoker Second Class William Norman Roder of Arkona. The *St. Croix* was one of the "four-stacker" destroyers acquired by Great Britain from the United States Navy in September 1940, in exchange for sites for air and naval bases on British territory in the Atlantic area (she was formerly the *U.S.S. McCook*). The *St. Croix* and six other destroyers, transferred to the Royal Canadian Navy at the time, were manned immediately by Canadian crews and performed invaluable service on Atlantic convoy duty. Of note, one of those transferred destroyers was the *St. Clair*.

Despite repeated problems with minor equipment failures, the *HMCS St. Croix* had put to sea time and time again and distinguished herself in the early days of the Battle of the Atlantic. Guarding vital convoys and patrolling for German submarines, she was credited with two U-boat kills (*U-90* in late July 1942 and *U-87* in early March 1943) and picked up many survivors of German U-boat attacks on Allied ships. The *St. Croix* was to be the first of the destroyers to be lost. Not long prior to the sinking of the *St. Croix*, Robert Rigby was in Sarnia on leave visiting his father and friends.

In August 1943 *St. Croix* was transferred from the Mid-Ocean Escort Force (MOEF) to the Royal Navy's Western Approaches Command. Along with the RCN Town Class destroyer *St. Francis* and the RCN corvettes

Chambly, *Morden* and *Sackville*, the *St. Croix* became part of Escort Group 9, a support group of North Atlantic convoys. The support groups were designed to reinforce the close escort of endangered convoys or to hunt submarines in mid-ocean and kill them.

In mid-September 1943, Escort Group 9 was ordered to reinforce Escort Groups B 3 and C 2, which were guarding the westbound convoys ONS-18 and ON-202, respectively. ONS-18, the slower convoy, had sailed from the United Kingdom on September 13; the faster ONS-202 had departed several days later on a similar track and was now approaching the south of Iceland, just behind the first convoy. At sea, a patrol line of U-boats awaited.

On September 20, after the Admiralty picked up increasing signs of a German submarine concentration, they ordered the two convoys to merge, a combined assemblage of 63 merchant ships. As the convoys closed their gap, the escorts were picking up U-boat signals. Undoubtedly, the U-boats were gathering in large numbers and the wolf pack was maneuvering into position for a night attack. They were about to measure the success of their newest "secret weapon", the Gnat acoustic torpedo. Fired in the direction of the intended victim, the Gnat was designed to circle until it picked up the appropriate propeller noise, then hone in on it.

Escort Group 9 took up outer screening positions ahead and astern of the merchant ships, on the port (south) side of the convoy. Unfortunately, as the collection of escorts and merchant vessels headed west, fog and rain engulfed them. On the night of September 20, *St. Croix* was on station to the rear of the merging convoys when it was ordered to proceed farther astern to check out a possible U-boat sighting reported by an orbiting Coastal Command aircraft. In the gathering gloom, *St. Croix* turned eastward and headed back along the convoy track, zigzagging at 24 knots. As it approached the spot where the sighting was reported, her captain ordered the *St. Croix* to begin an asdic sweep.

At 9:51 pm, the German U-boat *U-305* struck the *HMCS St. Croix* with two Gnat torpedoes near her port propellers. With the two massive explosions, the ship glided to a stop and listed immediately and uncontrollably. To the British frigate *HMS Itchen*, a few miles away, *St. Croix* sent the cryptic message, "*Am leaving the office.*" It was the last word from the *St. Croix*. Seconds later, a third electrically directed torpedo, the final blow, hit the stern of the *St. Croix*. A tremendous explosion occurred, flames shot into the air, and within three minutes, the *St. Croix* was gone. Eighty-one members of her crew remained on life rafts and Carley floats, clinging to whatever they could.

Two RN ships from the escort force, the *HMS Itchen* and the RN corvette *Polyanthus*, rushed to the area, to see what had taken place and what could be done. The frigate *HMS Itchen* signaled: "*St. Croix torpedoed and blown up. Forecastle still afloat. Survivors in rafts and boats. Torpedoes fired at me. Doing full speed in vicinity. Will not attempt to P.U. survivors until Polyanthus arrives.*" But the RN corvette *Polyanthus* was herself torpedoed by *U-952* just after midnight. It sank rapidly with the loss of all hands save one. *Itchen* then had to become involved in attempting to locate the attacking U-boat. Later, in the foggy daylight of September 21, the *Itchen* was eventually able to pick up one *Polyanthus* survivor and 81 *St. Croix* survivors, but only after they had been in the very cold water for thirteen hours. Most of those lost had perished in the sea after abandoning the ship.

The few hours of rescue came to an ironic and bitter end two days later. On September 23, 1943 at approximately 2:00 am, the German U-boat *U-666*, using a Gnat torpedo, struck the *HMS Itchen*. Apparently hit in its magazine, the *Itchen* exploded with an ear-splitting roar and a spectacular display of pyrotechnics and then vanished into the sea. Only three men survived this time: two from the *Itchen* and one from the *St. Croix*, 23-year old Stoker William Allan Fisher of Black Diamond, Alberta. In total, 147 lives were lost from the *St. Croix*, including Ordinary Telegraphist Robert Rigby.

In October 1943, the sole survivor of the *St. Croix*, Stoker William A. Fisher, told his story in a newspaper account. Following is a portion of his account:

We were part of an escort detailed to a large convoy. We received a signal that submarines were about. We stayed astern of the convoy, but on September 20, we had come up and take on oil from a tanker in the convoy. On our way back to our position we saw a Canadian four-motored Liberator signaling us. We were told that they spotted a submarine and dropped depth charges. We flashed two boilers and made for the spot at 24 knots. As we neared, we had to reduce speed. As we slowed up we were hit in the screws. Fisher said there was no panic and no one thought of abandoning ship. But in two minutes another torpedo struck, this time near the mess deck, and water began to pour in. The captain, Lieutenant Commander Dobson, then issued orders to abandon ship.

Some men were injured by the explosions which followed the torpedoes; some were burned and cut. They were put in the motor launch before it was lowered over the side. The motor boat pulled away. Meanwhile attempts

were made to lower a 60-passenger oar-driven whaler... Carley floats were dumped over the side and the men began jumping into the water. *No one seemed worried then, many of the crew laughed that they would be due for 29 day survivors' leave.* The rowboat pulled away from the sinking destroyer, and picked men out of the water. *Even then I thought the ship would be saved. Then I saw the captain dive off the boat. I knew everyone was off then and that the captain had given up hope.*

Fisher was in charge of the motor boat. *No one in the boats died during the night. It was morning that everything happened. Men on the Carley floats insisted on getting into the rowboat. As the men got in, it settled lower in the water. Just before the rescue ship came along, it sank. The whaler did not have any injured men aboard. They were oil-grimed and cold. I saw men who were tough, big men. They hung out all night in the hope a boat would pick them up. Then when the boat did not come into view they died. I guess they couldn't hang out any longer. We dropped them into the sea.*

Sixty men were still alive on the whaler. The ship that headed to their rescue was the Royal Navy frigate *Itchen*, completed last September. As the frigate steamed through the lifting morning mist, the men in the whaler received the signal that the *Itchen* would come directly to their rescue. As the *Itchen* neared, a torpedo was seen to explode 30 yards to her stern. A message was flashed to the *Polyanthus*, a corvette of the Flower class, to come out of the convoy escort and circle the *Itchen* while the men were taken aboard. *The Polyanthus was just coming in and she was struck. I guess she went down in about 10 minutes. We rescued 10 men in our whaler. The Itchen headed for the convoy.... On September 2, two days after we were rescued, we were ordered to our action stations because submarines were around. We had three orders. The first started at 6 at night. There was another one at 7 and again at 9. At 9 o'clock I was standing beside the funnel when a torpedo struck. I was knocked 30 feet and landed against a gun platform. As I crawled toward the rail I kept yelling for my pal... He didn't answer and I jumped over the side. As I hit the water there was another explosion and I felt that my stomach was being squeezed through my ears. The water just cracked. When he reached down to tug off his boots, his left boot was missing. It had been blown off. Fisher grabbed a board and looked to see other men jumping from the ship. Most of them drowned. A Carley float drifted by and Fisher jumped on. During the night others jumped on, but most of them died.*



Last known photograph of the *St. Croix* ship's company
St. John's, Newfoundland May 30, 1943



Toronto Daily Star October 1, 1943

In late September 1943, widowed father Robert Rigby Sr. received a cable from the Navy informing him that his son, ROBERT CHARLES RIGBY, R.C.N., HAS BEEN REPORTED MISSING AT SEA. Soon after, Robert Rigby Sr., c/o Anglin Norcross Company, Sarnia, received a letter from the Secretary, Naval Board. Following is a portion of that letter:

Dear Mr. Rigby:

I deeply regret that I must confirm the telegram of the 28th of September, 1943, from the Minister of National Defence for Naval Services informing you that your son, Robert Charles Rigby, Ordinary Telegraphist, Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve, Official Number V-41295, is missing on war service.

According to the report received, your son is listed as missing, due to enemy action, while serving on Convoy duty in the Atlantic. For reasons of security further details of this incident of war cannot be released at this time. It is requested that you will regard as confidential anything beyond the fact of your son's loss on war service until such time as an official announcement is made, as this information might prove useful to the enemy....

While your son is listed as missing and virtually no hope can be held out for his having survived, Canadian Naval Authorities are unable to make an official presumption of death until a period of not less than three months has elapsed. If further information has not been received at that time, it is probable that official certification of death will then be made and you will be informed accordingly.

Please allow me to express sincere sympathy with you on behalf of the Minister of National Defence for Naval Services, the Chief of the Naval Staff, and the Officers and men of the Royal Canadian Navy, the high traditions of which your son has helped to maintain.

It was not until October 1, 1943 that the Honourable Angus L. MacDonald, the Minister of National Defence for Naval Services officially announced the sinking of the destroyer *St. Croix*. No details of the sinking were released, other than the list of names of 147 men who lost their lives, which included Surgeon-Lieutenant William Lyon MacKenzie King, nephew of the prime minister; Stoker Second Class William Norman Roder of Arkona; Coder Joseph Griffiths Bell of Sarnia (included in this Project); and Ordinary Telegraphist Robert Charles Rigby.

In late December 1943, Robert Sr. in c/o Anglin Norcross Co., Sarnia received the following letter from the Secretary, Naval Board:

Dear Mr. Rigby:

Further to my letter of the 27th of September, 1943, in view of the length of time that has elapsed since your son, Robert Charles Rigby, Ordinary Telegraphist, Official Number V-41295, Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve, was reported "missing" after the sinking of H.M.C.S. "ST. CROIX", and as no information has since been received of his having survived, the Canadian Naval Authorities have now presumed his death to have occurred on the 20th of September, 1943. May I again express the sincere sympathy of the Department in your bereavement.

Robert Rigby would later be officially recorded as, *Missing, presumed dead. He was serving on H.M.C.S. "St. Croix" which was lost on Convoy duty in the Atlantic, due to enemy action.* In September 1945, widowed Robert D. Rigby received a War Service Gratuity of \$106.00 for the loss of his only child, Robert Charles Rigby, in the sinking of the *HMCS St. Croix*.

The sinking of the *St. Croix* was the heaviest single loss suffered by the R.C.N. in the war. Within weeks of this incident, the Royal Navy and the Royal Canadian Navy began to equip their escorts with towed decoy devices to counter the homing torpedoes – the British used Foxer, and the Canadians utilized the simpler and lighter CAT gear – thus effectively neutralizing one of Germany's most important new innovations.

Robert Charles Rigby, 28, has no known grave. His name is inscribed on the Halifax Memorial, Nova Scotia, Canada, Panel 10. In November 2019, his name along with 25 others was added to the Sarnia cenotaph, engraved in stone to be remembered always.

SOURCES: C, D, E, F, L, N, P, T, U, X, Z, 2A, 2C, 2D, 6Z, 7C, 8X, 8Y

ROBERTS, Maurice James (#A/28520)

While overseas with the Royal Canadian Artillery, 3rd Anti-Tank Regiment, Gunner Maurice James Roberts met a young Englishwoman, fell in love and was engaged to be married. Sadly, the nuptials would never happen. Maurice was killed in a freak training accident in May 1944. Maurice, 23, left behind his grieving mother in Toronto and a distraught fiancée in England.

Maurice James Roberts was born in Brantford, Ontario on June 16, 1920, the only child of Herbert James and Doris May (nee Jefferies) Roberts. Herbert and Doris were married in Collingwood, Ontario on December 24, 1919, but things became unsettled between them by 1929. After ten years of marriage, Herbert left Doris and his nine-year-old son, Maurice. Herbert Roberts, a salesman, moved to Wolverly Bld. in Toronto, while Doris Roberts and Maurice resided at Cambridge Avenue and later Dearbourne Avenue in Toronto. Doris raised her son by herself. Maurice received his schooling in Collingwood, 1933-37 and Welland, 1937-39 Ontario, completing two years of technical school in 1939. Soon after, Maurice Roberts moved to Sarnia where he was employed as a grocery store clerk at Loblaw's Groceteria on North Christina Street (he recorded that he had been employed there for two years). He was helping to financially support his mother.

Twenty year-old Maurice Roberts enlisted in the Canadian Army on March 19, 1941 in London, Ontario. He stood five feet eleven and three-quarter inches tall, had brown eyes and dark brown hair, was single, and was residing at 176 ½ Front Street, Sarnia at the time. He recorded his next-of-kin as his mother Doris, on Cambridge Avenue in Toronto. After the war, he planned to return to his job at the grocery store in Sarnia, and possibly to undertake draughting (drafting).

From #1 District Depot in London, Maurice received his army training at #10 Basic Training Centre (BTC) in Kitchener, and at A2 Canadian Artillery Training Centre (CATC) at Camp Petawawa. In July 1941, Gunner Maurice Roberts was posted to Debert, Nova Scotia. He continued his training there as a member of the 3rd Anti-Tank Regiment, 94th Battery. Approximately seven months after enlisting, in early October 1941, Maurice embarked overseas from Halifax bound for the United Kingdom.

Maurice Roberts disembarked in Liverpool, England on October 6, 1941, as a member of the Royal Canadian Artillery, 3rd Anti-Tank Regiment, with the rank of Gunner. He continued his training and service in the U.K. and by November 1942, had risen in rank to Bombardier, stationed near Ringwood.

While in the U.K., Maurice met and fell in love with a British girl, who was in her early twenties. By the spring of 1944, they had even made plans to marry. Maurice applied to the military for permission to marry her, but the marriage, tragically, would not come to be.

During training that mid-spring of 1944, Bombardier Maurice Roberts was involved in a tragic vehicle accident and was killed while trying to save a comrade. On May 13, 1944, Maurice was killed in Romsey, Hampshire, England in a Mortar Carrier tracked vehicle accident that happened at approximately 13.30 hours.

An enquiry was held into the circumstances of the crash afterwards. Investigators determined the following facts about the accident: Maurice Roberts was the passenger in the tracked vehicle #C.T. 163562 (like a Bren Gun carrier) driven by another soldier (Gunner Doucett) travelling along the Southampton Road; the vehicle was part of a convoy that was travelling at a moderate speed of 15 to 20 m.p.h.; the qualified driver was a good driver but hadn't much experience in this type of vehicle; the road was clear and dry; about one mile out of Romsey while driving down a long fairly steep hill and taking a right hand bend, the driver saw a truck coming from the opposite direction; the driver applied the brakes causing the vehicle to swerve a little to the right; the driver steered to the left and the vehicle left the road on the left; the vehicle went through a hedge and momentarily balanced on the crest of a hidden steep embankment, before tipping over and falling down the slope, a drop of 20 feet; Maurice Roberts shouted to the driver to jump when the vehicle crashed through the hedge; Maurice Roberts went to jump out but came back for the driver as the carrier rolled over; the carrier rolled over twice and the two men were thrown out; an unconscious Maurice Roberts was brought by ambulance to the Camp Reception Station, Halterworth, Romsey in the Parish of Romsey Extra; he was bleeding, with weak pulse, and not breathing; Maurice Roberts died about forty minutes later (between 1410 and 1420 hours), evidence of cerebral hemorrhage and internal injuries consistent with his having been crushed by the heavy vehicle; death was due to loss of blood and shock subsequent to his internal injuries; the driver suffered a fracture of the right arm, dislocation of the right shoulder and other injuries; cause of accident was determined to be unknown.

One of the witnesses who gave testimony was the driver of the vehicle. Following is a portion of Gunner Regis Doucett's own words:

...I was driving a Carrier down a long fairly steep hill,, near Romsey. I was almost half way down the hill when I saw a truck coming from the opposite direction. I brought the carrier into my near side of the road and applied the brakes which caused the carrier to swerve a little to the right. I brought it back to the side of the road, but it went through the hedge and came to a standstill before it tipped over. Bombardier Roberts (the deceased) who was with me, shouted for me to jump when we crashed through the hedge.

He went to jump but came back for me and at the same time the carrier rolled over. It rolled over twice, we were thrown out the first time...

On May 14, 1944, Doris Roberts, then on Dearbourne Avenue in Toronto, received the following telegram from the Director of Records: REGRET DEEPLY A28520 BOMBARDIER MAURICE JAMES ROBERTS OFFICIALLY REPORTED DIED THIRTEENTH MAY 1944 DUE TO MORTAR CARRIER ACCIDENT WHILST ON DUTY STOP FURTHER INFORMATION FOLLOWS WHEN RECEIVED.

Maurice Roberts remains were buried on May 19, 1944 in Brookwood Cemetery, England. In late May 1944, Doris received the following letter from the Major-General, Adjutant-General:

Dear Mrs. Roberts:

It is with deep regret that I learned of the death of your son, A28520 Bombardier Maurice James Roberts, who gave his life in the Service of his Country in the United Kingdom on the 13th day of May, 1944.

You may be assured that any additional information received will be communicated to you without delay. The Minister of National Defence and the Members of the Army Council have asked me to express to you and your

family their sincere sympathy in your bereavement. We pay tribute to the sacrifice he so bravely made.

In late January 1945, the Colonel, Acting Director of Records, for Adjutant-General mailed a letter to the grieving Doris. Following is a portion of that letter:

Dear Madam:

With reference to the regretted death of your son, the marginally named, as you are probably aware his remains have been buried in grave 3, row B, plot 49, of Brookwood Military Cemetery, near Woking, Surrey, England.

The grave will have been marked with a temporary wooden cross which will be replaced in due course by a permanent headstone suitably inscribed. While it cannot now be stated when this work of permanent commemoration will begin, you may rest assured that before it is carried out you will be communicated with and given an opportunity of submitting a short personal inscription for engraving at the foot of the memorial...

Maurice Robert's death was later officially recorded as, *Overseas casualty, accident, crushed by a mortar carrier vehicle when it left the highway and rolled down an embankment. Cause of death was loss of blood and shock from internal injuries (England)*. Soon after Maurice's death, Miss Pitt, his fiancé, learned that she was pregnant with their child. The twenty-three-year-old was devastated at the loss of her future husband and her condition.

Among the items Maurice left behind were two diaries, a New Testament, 40 snapshots and two letters addressed to him yet unopened. In February 1946, Doris Roberts received from the Colonel, Director of Records, for Adjutant-General, a photograph of the grave and marker over the burial place in England of her only son. Maurice Roberts, 23, is buried in Brookwood Military Cemetery, Surrey, United Kingdom, Grave 49.B.3.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, 2C, 2D, 7C, 8X, 8Y

ROGERS, William John (#J/10753)

Anson and Ethel Rogers knew pain in their lives as the parents of two children. Their only daughter died when she was twelve and their only son, RAF pilot William John "Jack", was killed in an aircraft crash in January 1944.

William John (Jack) Rogers was born on November 1, 1918 in Galt (Waterloo County), Ontario, the only son of Anson Percival and Ethel (nee St. Clair) Rogers. Anson Rogers and Ethel St. Clair were both born in Galt, Ontario, and were married there on September 14, 1910. They had two children together: Helen Margaret, born in Galt in 1914 who was the older sister to William. Anson supported his family with his job as a knitter of textiles, but in the fall of 1926 tragedy struck the Rogers family. Jack's sister, Helen, passed away at the age of twelve on September 28, 1926.

Jack Rogers attended Fairfield Public School in Aldershot, Ontario from 1923 to 1931 and then Waterdown High School from 1931 to 1935. He was an avid sportsman who was active in skiing, rugby, baseball, tennis, swimming and basketball. His hobby was playing the piano. Jack was obviously a well-rounded individual who was adept in different disciplines and activities. At Bishop University in Lennoxville, Quebec, Jack obtained his three-year Bachelor of Science degree in 1938, where he majored in physics and chemistry. While at Bishop's, he was a member of the McGill University Contingent of the Canadian Officers' Training Corps (C.O.T.C.), 1936 to 1937 with the rank of Private.

Jack then attended the University of Toronto for two years where he obtained a Master of Arts degree in Chemistry in 1940. Shortly after, he became a member of the Canadian Institute of Chemistry and the American Chemical Society. While at U. of T., he enlisted with the Non-Permanent Active Militia and was a member of the U. of T. C.O.T.C. from October 1939 to March 1940. After successfully obtaining two university degrees, he went to work as a chemist from 1940 to 1941 with the Technical and Research Department of Imperial Oil Limited Refinery, Sarnia.

Twenty-two-year-old Jack Rogers enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force on July 21, 1941 in London, Ontario. He stood five feet eight inches tall, had blue eyes and brown hair, was single, and was residing at 256 London Road in Sarnia at the time (he recorded his permanent address as 160 Baldwin Ave., Coaticook, Quebec). From #4 Manning Depot in St. Hubert, and then #5 Auxiliary Manning Depot in Valcatier, Quebec, Jack received his air training at #3 Initial Training School (ITS) in Victoriaville, Quebec; at #17 Elementary Flying Training School (EFTS) in Stanley, Nova Scotia; and at #8 Service Flying Training School (SFTS) in Moncton, New Brunswick, where he finished first in a class of fifty-one. He was awarded his Pilot's Flying Badge on March 27, 1942 at SFTS in Moncton.

In April 1942, Jack was training at #1 General Reconnaissance School (GRS) in Charlottetown, PEI. The Chief Instructor at GRS Charlottetown recorded that Jack was, *Above the average. A very keen and conscientious pupil who has worked hard to obtain exceptional results. This Officer has been outstanding on the Course, due to his keenness and ability, strongly recommended for Flying Boats... A good Officer who will make a sound and reliable G.R. Pilot.* In early July 1942, Jack was posted to #31 Personnel Depot in Moncton for two weeks before being transferred to #31 (Coastal) Operational Training Unit (OTU) in Shelburne, and later Debert, Nova Scotia. In late October-early November 1942, Jack received his 14-day pre-embarkation leave. In mid-November 1942, he was posted to #1 Y Depot in Halifax.



Flying Officer-Pilot William "Jack" Rogers

In late November, Jack Rogers embarked overseas from Halifax and arrived in the U.K. on November 30, 1942 at RAF Station Feltwell. From #3 Personnel Reception Centre, Jack continued training and serving with a number of units and at a number of bases over the following fourteen months: at #1 (Coastal) Operational Training Unit (OTU) at RAF St. Thornaby; at #421 Squadron, RAF Redhill; at RAF Gosport, #48 Squadron; at 1509 Beam Approach Training Flight (1509 Bat Flt); at RAF Valley; and at RAF #3 General Reconnaissance School (GRS) at Squires Gate, Lancashire, England.

General Reconnaissance Schools trained pilots and air observers in the techniques required for ocean patrol, as conducted by **RAF Coastal Command**. Coastal Command played a pivotal role in the Allied war effort, most notably against U-boats during the Battle of the Atlantic, along with sinking enemy warships and merchant vessels, protecting Allied shipping from aerial attacks, reconnaissance and carrying out air-sea rescue.

General Reconnaissance Schools were the equivalent to an Operational Training Unit (OTU) and was the last stop before aircrew were assigned to operations. No. 3 GRS was equipped mainly with Blackburn Botha and Avro Anson aircraft and was concerned with maritime reconnaissance training. The Avro Anson was a British twin-engine, multi-role aircraft. There was no easy way to learn how to fly the heavy bombers and training crews suffered a litany of disasters, crashes and deaths. By the end of the war, over 8,000 Allied bomber airmen were killed in training or by accidents alone.

On January 22, 1944, Flying Officer-Pilot William "Jack" Rogers was the pilot of a crew aboard RCAF Anson I aircraft #EG321 that was on an air/sea rescue search. When returning to base, at approximately 12.50 hours, the aircraft crashed into a drainage dyke at Warton, Lancashire, England. The major part of the aircraft was submerged in the dyke and all three airmen aboard were killed, including Jack Rogers who sustained multiple injuries. Perishing with Flying Officer-Pilot Jack Rogers were Wireless Operator W.S.T. Wardrope (RAF) and Pupil Navigator R.M. Belpaire (Belgian). In the enquiry that followed into the circumstances of the crash, investigators determined that bad weather contributed to the crash and the aircraft went in under power with the starboard wing slightly down.

In late January 1944, Anson P. Rogers in Coaticook, Quebec, received the following letter from the Squadron Leader, R.C.A.F. Casualties Officer, for Chief of the Air Staff in Ottawa:

Dear Mr. Rogers:

It is my painful duty to confirm the telegram recently received by you which informed you that your son, Flying Officer William John Rogers, was killed on Active Service.

Advice has been received from the Royal Canadian Air Force Casualties Officer, Overseas, that your son, who was a member of the crew of an aircraft, lost his life during flying operations near Warton, Lancashire, England, at 12:50 P.M. on January 22nd, 1944. His funeral took place at 2:00 P.M. on January 26th at Sealand, Chester, England.

You may be assured that any further information received will be communicated to you immediately. May I take this opportunity to offer you and the members of your family my deepest sympathy.

Jack Roger's death was later officially recorded as, *Killed as a result of a flying accident (Overseas) near Warton, Lancashire, England.* In July 1944, Anson and Ethel Rogers in Coaticook, Quebec, received a letter from the Squadron Leader, Chaplain, R.C.A.F. "R" Depot, Warrington, Lancashire. The letter was in response to the Roger's request for photographs of their son's funeral, which had been sent previously, but they had not received them. The Chaplain was sending a second set, and added:

.... It is with deep regret that I learned that Jack (William) was your only child and having lost your daughter only a few years ago will, I am sure, only make it more difficult for you at this time.

Our Canadian boys are doing a very good job over here and I hope as you do that out of their sacrifice will come a world of peace and decency which will enable us to look back on them with thankfulness for what they are doing for us we can indeed be proud of the part they are playing. One thing is certain, they are giving us an opportunity to make a better world and the fault will be ours if we do not have it.

I trust the knowledge that Jack did his part will be a matter of satisfaction and consolation to you both.

In June 1945, Anson and Ethel Rogers received a War Service Gratuity of \$472.35 for the loss of their only son. William "Jack" Rogers, 25, is buried in Chester (Blacon) Cemetery, Cheshire, United Kingdom, Section A, Grave 946. On his headstone are inscribed the words, HE IS NOT DEAD BUT LIVES ON IN THE HEARTS OF HIS LOVED ONES. His name is also inscribed on the Sarnia Refinery Plaque. Unveiled in 1949, the plaque has the names of 24 Sarnia Imperial Oil employees who made the ultimate sacrifice in World War II.

SOURCES: C, D, E, F, L, M, O, 2C, 2D, 7C, 8X, 8Y

ROSS, John Douglas Carlisle (#J/41679)

John Douglas Carlisle Ross was Sarnia born and educated, the only brother to six sisters. He was killed two weeks before the war ended when his Halifax bomber collided with another Halifax bomber en route to a mission in Germany. John, 21, has no known grave. His name is inscribed on the Runnymede War Memorial, Surrey, United Kingdom.

John Douglas Carlisle Ross was born in Sarnia on September 1, 1923, the only son of John James and Martha Anne (nee Maxwell) Ross. John James Ross and Martha Anne Maxwell, both born in Durham, England, were married there on December 15, 1901. At some point the Ross family immigrated to Canada and resided at 252 Emma Street, Sarnia. John supported his family with his work as an electrical machinist in Sarnia. He had many mouths to feed, for Martha and he had seven children together--John Douglas and six daughters. The six girls later became Mrs. W. Walker (Wallaceburg); Mrs. E. Rowe (Detroit, Michigan); Mrs. W.R. McNeil (Detroit, Michigan); Mrs. D. Abrams (Toronto); Miss L. Ross (Sarnia); and Miss Jean R. Ross (Sarnia). Jean Ross also served during the war. She joined in July 1942 and became a Sergeant with the Canadian Women's Army Corps (CWAC). She embarked overseas on the same transport as her brother.

John Douglas Ross was educated at Devine Street Public School from 1929 to 1935 and then at Sarnia Collegiate from 1935 to 1942. He was an avid sportsman who was active in baseball, volleyball, tennis, bowling, basketball and swimming. After completing high school, John found work in Sarnia as a part-time clerk at Agnew Surpass shoe store from 1939 to 1942. He then worked as a carman's helper at C.N.R. for six months in 1942 and later as a Lab Helper (student) at Imperial Oil Company in 1942 for six months until he enlisted.

Nineteen year-old John Ross enlisted with the Royal Canadian Air Force on November 12, 1942 in Sarnia, Ontario. He stood six feet tall, had blue eyes and light brown hair, was single, and was residing at home with his parents on Emma Street at the time. After the war, his ambition was to attend college to become an apprentice in Tool and Dye making. He requested flying duties, eager to be part of an air crew. From #9 Recruiting Centre in London and then #2 Manning Depot in Brandon, Manitoba, John Ross received his air training at #20 P/A E.D.; and

at #7 Initial Training School (ITS), both in Saskatoon; at #7 Air Observer School (AOS) in Portage la Prairie; and then at #1 Aircrew Graduate Training School (AGTS) in late February 1944. In mid-June 1943, he was able to spend part of a 7-day leave visiting his parents and sisters on Emma Street in Sarnia before returning to duty. Eight months later, on February 11, 1944, John was awarded his Navigator Badge. Days later, he received his 14-day pre-embarkation leave.



John Douglas C. Ross



Sgt. Jean Ross, CWAC

On April 10, 1944, Flying Officer John Ross embarked overseas from Halifax bound for the United Kingdom. From #3 Personnel Reception Centre in the U.K., he continued his training at #8 (Observer) Advanced Flying Unit (AFU); at #86 Operational Training Unit (OTU) at RAF Gamston; and then at #22 Operational Training Unit (OTU) at RAF Wellesbourne Mountford. On March 8, 1945, John Ross became a member of RCAF #426 Thunderbird Squadron “On Wings of Fire”, part of **Bomber Command**, with the rank of Flying Officer-Navigator.

During the course of the war, one of this country’s most significant contributions was the approximately 50,000 Canadians who served with the RCAF and RAF in Bomber Command operations. Next to Britain, Canada was the largest contributor to Bomber Command, making up more than a third of all of Bomber Command personnel. The men who served in Bomber Command faced some of the most difficult odds of anyone fighting in the war.

No. 426 Squadron was established at RAF Dishforth, Yorkshire, on October 15, 1942, as part of No. 4 Group. In January 1943, it was transferred to No. 6 (RCAF) Group. The squadron was equipped with Vickers Wellington aircraft to deliver bombs and mines to the enemy. In June 1943, the squadron transferred to RAF Linton-on-Ouse and switched to Avro Lancaster bombers. Later, in April of 1944, the squadron began to convert to Handley Page Halifax aircraft, four-engine heavy bombers that they used until the end of the war in Europe. The thunderbird crest used by the squadron originates from North American natives and, according to myth, signifies disaster and death to anyone on the ground who perceives it. No. 426 Squadron took part in many daring raids over enemy territory, including raids on Berlin, Leipzig and Frankfurt.

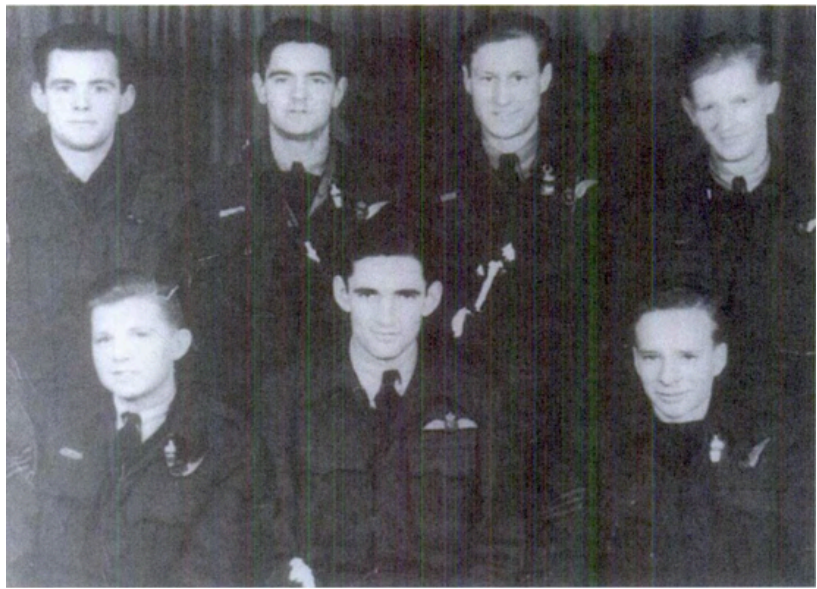
On April 25, 1945, John Ross was part of a crew aboard Halifax Mk. VII aircraft NP820 (markings OW-W) that took off at 15.04 hours from RCAF Station Linton-on-Ouse, Yorkshire. Circling the airfield for the last time, Halifax NP820 climbed to its designated flight altitude, and from there, followed the navigator’s course to Wangerooge. Along with some 482 aircraft (twenty from #426 Squadron), it was part of an operation to carry out a bombing mission on Wangerooge, Germany, intended to destroy coastal batteries that controlled the approaches to Bremen and Wilhelmshaven. During the flight to their target, the crew may have been preoccupied with rumours that were making the rounds that #426 Squadron might be back in Canada before summer was out. They were excited about the prospect of going home and seeing their families again.

Unfortunately, nothing further was heard from Halifax NP820 after it left its base. Airmen who returned from the mission reported that, about one hour from the target, Halifax NP820 was in a mid-air collision over the

North Sea with #408 Squadron Halifax aircraft NP796. F/L Mercer of #426 Squadron, an eyewitness flying in Halifax NP824 who saw the collision and watched the aircraft crash into the sea said of Jim Tuplin's aircraft (NP820), *When the plane over Jim's hit that air pocket, it crashed Tupp's kite into the North Sea. His Halley was on my right side, but we had to keep going to drop our bombs on Wangerooge. On the way back to England, we dropped low over the crash area and saw no survivors.*



F/O-N John Douglas Carlisle Ross



Crew of Halifax NP820

Back L/R: Reg Evans, Dennis Curzon, **John Ross**, Ronald Roberts
Front L/R: **Stanley Teskey**, James Tuplin, Earl Hicks

F/L Mercer who safely returned to base later wrote, *The accident on April 25 happened about 3:30 (p.m.). We went in and bombed and turned around, coming straight back to the accident. We were the first to notify air-sea rescue about it. There was nothing to be seen but two little rubber dinghies and bits of two aircraft. The flying boat (air-sea rescue) arrived about an hour and a half after the accident and whether they landed (on the North Sea), I am not in a position to say as they were not from our station.*

Less than two weeks after the crash, the Wing Commander of #426 Squadron wrote a letter to the wife of Jimmie Tuplin, one of the airmen of NP820. A portion of the letter read, *Your husband and his crew were detailed, along with other members of the squadron, to carry out an attack on enemy installations at Wangerooge, Germany. Before reaching their objective, other crews from the squadron saw your husband's aircraft collide with an aircraft from another squadron that also operates from this station. Both aircraft were seen to disintegrate in the air and crash into the sea. From the information obtained from other crew participating in this operation, I cannot hold very much hope for the survival of your husband and the members of his crew.*

Perishing with Flying Officer-Navigator John Douglas Ross were P/O.s Stanley James Teskey (also of Sarnia, and is included in this Project), James Chester Tuplin, Dennis Rupert Humphrey Curzon and Earl William Hicks; F/Sgt.'s Ronald Roberts (RAF) and Reginald Gordon Evans (RAF). All seven airmen in Halifax aircraft NP796 were also lost. Seven aircraft were lost on this operation and six of them were due to collisions, despite weather conditions being almost perfect. This was the last operation of the war for RCAF #426 Squadron.

On April 26, 1945, John Ross Sr. on Emma Street in Sarnia received the following telegram from the RCAF Casualties Officer; REGRET TO ADVISE THAT YOUR SON FLYING OFFICER JOHN DOUGLAS CARLISLE ROSS J FOUR ONE SIX SEVEN NINE IS REPORTED MISSING AFTER AIR OPERATIONS OVERSEAS APRIL TWENTYFIFTH STOP LETTER FOLLOWS. Two weeks after John's death, the war in Europe ended. John Ross' death was later officially recorded as, *Previously reported missing after air operations, now for official purposes, presumed dead, overseas (Germany).*

In mid-June 1946, John Sr. and Martha Ross received a War Service Gratuity of \$411.80 for the loss of their only son. In mid-February 1947, Martha received the following letter from the Wing Commander for Chief of the Air Staff in Ottawa:

Dear Mrs. Ross:

It is a privilege to have the opportunity of sending you the Operational Wings and Certificate in recognition of the gallant services rendered by your son, Flying Officer J.D.C. Ross. I realize there is little which may be said or done to lessen your sorrow, but it is my hope that these "Wings", indicative of operations against the enemy, will be a treasured memento of a young life offered on the altar of freedom in defence of his Home and Country.

John Douglas Carlisle Ross, 21, has no known grave. His name is inscribed on the Runnymede War Memorial, Surrey, United Kingdom, Panel 279. His name is also inscribed on the Sarnia Refinery Plaque. Unveiled in 1949, the plaque has the names of 24 Sarnia Imperial Oil employees who made the ultimate sacrifice in World War II.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, J, L, M, N, 2C, 2D, 3J, 4B, 7C, 7E, 8X, 8Y, 10B, 10U, 10V

RUSSELL, Ernest Frederick (#A/57044)

Ernest "Ernie" Frederick Russell, Sarnia born and raised, was a terrific athlete who planned to pursue gold mining when he returned from the war. Unfortunately, Ernie was killed in action during fighting on the "long left flank" on the border of France and Belgium. He was 24 when he died, five days shy of his 25th birthday. On his headstone in France are inscribed the words, ASLEEP IN JESUS.

Ernie Russell was born in Sarnia on September 12, 1919, the son of James Ernest and Annie May (nee Benstead) Russell. James Ernest Russell, a Providence, Rhode Island native, married Annie May Benstead, born in Deep St. Nicholas, England, on April 12, 1905 in Strathroy, Ontario. At some point, the Russell family moved to Sarnia and resided at 240 Essex Street. James Russell found work as a trainman here and fortunately he did, for Annie and he had ten children together. Joseph William (born 1906); James Herbert (born October 1917); and Ernie Russell were their sons. The birth of their seven daughters was spread out over fourteen years: Marion Marguerite (born 1907); Grace Adeline (born 1909); Agnes Jean (born 1910); Lillian Loreen (born 1913); Helen Louise (born 1915); Ruth A. (born 1916); and Anna Lois (born 1921). At the time of Ernie's death, six of his sisters were married and residing in Sarnia. They were known individually as Mrs. Joseph Simmons, Mrs. Ivan Wise, Mrs. Frederick Gray, Mrs. Maurice Edginton, Mrs. Orville Whitsitt, Miss Anna Russell, and Mrs. Robert Doyon who lived in Collingwood. Perhaps because she was only 23 when Ernie died, Anna was single in 1944.

Ernie's brother, James Russell, also served in the war. He enlisted in Sarnia in September of 1939, three days after the outbreak of war with the 26th Battery. James Russell married Kathleen Pascoe of Camlachie who served as a WREN stationed at Cornwallis, Nova Scotia. James Russell embarked overseas in September of 1940. At the time of Ernie's death, James was a Sergeant in the Canadian Army, Royal Canadian Artillery, 26th Battery serving in France. During his time overseas, James was wounded once and also served in Germany. James Russell returned to Sarnia on furlough in May of 1945 after five years of overseas service. Ernie would not be as fortunate.

Ernie Russell attended Central United Church and was educated in Sarnia until he completed grade eight. After completing his education, he was employed by B. Neal as an assistant manager of a bowling alley in Sarnia from 1937 to 1939. Anything to do with sports, especially bowling, suited Ernie just fine. According to the *Sarnia Observer*, Ernie was one of the best bowlers that the city had ever produced. He was also well known in the local rugby circle as he played City League rugby. Ernie was also active in swimming, softball, golf and he enjoyed hunting and fishing. From 1939 to 1940, he was employed in Kirkland Lake as a pipefitter. He returned to Sarnia in 1940 and found work as a machine operator at Electric Auto-Lite until he enlisted.

Twenty-one-year-old Ernie Russell enlisted in the Canadian Army on June 5, 1941 in London, Ontario. He stood five feet ten inches tall, had hazel eyes and dark brown hair, was single, and was residing at home with his parents on Essex Street at the time. After the war, he planned to get into gold mining. Ernie was initially posted to the 62nd Light Anti-Aircraft Battery, Royal Canadian Artillery in London, Ontario for training. Just over two months later, on August 23, 1941, Ernie embarked overseas from Halifax bound for the United Kingdom as a member of the 4th Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment (4LAA).

Disembarking in Glasgow on September 2, 1941, he continued his army training in the U.K.. In February 1943, he was transferred to the 11th Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment. During his training in England, he won the tabloid sports championship medal in 1943. In January 1944, he was transferred to #3 Canadian Army Reinforcement Unit (CARU) and then in March 1944 to #2 CARU. On April 1, 1944, he was transferred to 8th Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment (8LAA), Royal Canadian Artillery (RCA).

Almost three years after arriving overseas, on July 22, 1944, Gunner Ernie Russell arrived in France. The **Battle of Normandy** had begun for the Canadians with the June 6, 1944 D-Day landings at Juno Beach. After breaching the “Atlantic Wall” of “Fortress Europe”, Allied armies began their break out from the narrow Normandy bridgehead to carve out a foothold on the French mainland. It would take a whole summer, into late August, of tenacious fighting, pushing against fierce and ruthless German forces to advance east across France. In a brutal campaign of attrition, the Canadians faced fierce battles and vicious counterattacks as they clawed their way forward liberating villages and towns including Bretteville, Carpiquet, Caen and Falaise.

After the Allied breakout from Normandy, Canadian forces were assigned the “**Long Left Flank**”, the less glamorous but vital tasks of clearing coastal areas in the north of France and Belgium of German occupiers; opening the English Channel ports for supplies essential to the Allied advance; and capturing the launching sites of German V-1 rockets. In a series of stop-and-start advances against stiff resistance in fortified positions, the Canadians liberated ports and villages including Rouen, Dieppe, Dunkirk, Boulogne and Calais.



Gunner Ernest Frederick Russell

Gunner Ernie Russell served with the 8th Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment, RCA, as they advanced through Normandy and northern France towards Belgium. Less than two months after arriving in France and just five days before his birthday, Gunner Ernie Russell was killed in action on September 7, 1944, during fighting on the “long left flank” on the border of France and Belgium. His remains were buried on September 8, 1944, at a location recorded on the Army Field Service Card as “Cemetery in village of Quaedyre France 281725 sheet 40”. His remains were later carefully exhumed and reverently reburied in Calais Canadian War Cemetery.

On September 16, 1944, Annie May Russell on Essex Street received the following telegram about her son, MINISTER OF NATIONAL DEFENCE DEEPLY REGRETS TO INFORM YOU THAT A57044 GUNNER ERNEST FREDERICK RUSSELL HAS BEEN OFFICIALLY REPORTED KILLED IN ACTION SEVENTH SEPTEMBER 1944 STOP IF ANY FURTHER INFORMATION BECOMES AVAILABLE IT WILL BE FORWARDED AS SOON AS RECEIVED. On that same day, James and Annie Russell received another telegram – this one informing them that their other son, SGT JAMES HERBERT RUSSELL WAS WOUNDED AUGUST 23 WHILE IN FRANCE WITH THE ARTILLERY UNIT.

In early October 1944, the Brigadier, Vice Adjutant-General mailed this letter to the grieving mother;
Dear Mrs. Russell:

It was with deep regret that I learned of the death of your son, A57044 Gunner Ernest Frederick Russell, who gave his life in the Service of his Country in the Western European Theatre of War on the 7th day of September, 1944.

From official information we have received, your son was killed in action against the enemy. You may be assured that any additional information received will be communicated to you without delay.

The Minister of National Defence and the Members of the Army Council have asked me to express to you and your family their sincere sympathy in your bereavement. We pay tribute to the sacrifice he so bravely made.

Ernie Russell's death was later officially recorded as, *Overseas casualty, killed in action, in the field (France)*. In October 1945, James and Annie May Russell received a War Service Gratuity of \$628.24 for the loss of their son. In mid-October 1947, the Director, War Service Records in Ottawa, sent Annie Russell a photograph of the grave and marker over the burial place in Calais France of her late son Ernest. Ernie Russell, 24, is buried Calais Canadian War Cemetery, Leubringhen, Pas de Calais, France, Grave 4.A.11. On his headstone are inscribed the words, ASLEEP IN JESUS.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, J, L, N, S, 2C, 2D, 7C, 8X, 8Y

SCHILDKNECHT, Arnold Charles

Arnold Charles Schildknecht gave his life while serving with the fourth arm of service of the Royal Canadian Navy. While making the treacherous journey across the Atlantic delivering the vital supplies necessary for the Allied cause, his ship was lost to what British Prime Minister Winston Churchill said was "... the only thing that ever really frightened me during the war..."

Arnold Schildknecht was born in Sarnia on April 4, 1914, the son of Henry Anton and Grace Ellen (nee Smith) Schildknecht. Henry Schildknecht (born in London, England) and Grace Ellen Smith (born in Lambton) were married in Sarnia on June 17, 1914 and resided at R.R. #3, Sarnia. Henry supported his family working as a labourer. Arnold's grandfather was Charles J.H. Smith, and his Uncle Hubert H. and Aunt Agnes M. all lived in Port Franks. Arnold's brother was Henry Doring Schildknecht (born December 1917), who during the war, served aboard the *SS Calgarian*. When Arnold was twelve years old, he lost his father Henry, who passed away in Sarnia in March 1926 at the age of thirty-two. Grace Ellen remarried in April 1927, to Angus Malcom Martell, in Sarnia. Arnold's half-brother was James Edward Martell (born June 1935).

Arnold Schildknecht attended Sarnia Collegiate from 1927-1930. At wartime, he joined the **Canadian Merchant Navy**, recording his occupation as a labourer and his residence as Port Franks, Ontario.

Canada's Merchant Navy was the "fourth arm of service" of the Royal Canadian Navy. It played a vital role in carrying men and essential machinery, arms, fuel and basic resources between North America and Europe in the **Battle of the Atlantic**, the longest continuous campaign of the war and one in which Canada played a central role. Cargo was also shipped to and from ports in the Caribbean, the Mediterranean, the Indian Ocean, the Pacific, the Arctic, and in European waters.

Even with the protection of armed escorts it was always a treacherous voyage for the dozens of merchant ships travelling in a zig-zag fashion across enormous tracts of ocean in convoys. The ships maneuvered in crowded ranks, without lights, wireless or navigational aids and using haphazard communication. The many risks included the constant threat of fierce attacks by German U-boats or air attack, the danger of collision, underwater mines, rough water and the hazardous weather, along with fog, gales and ice conditions in the North Atlantic.

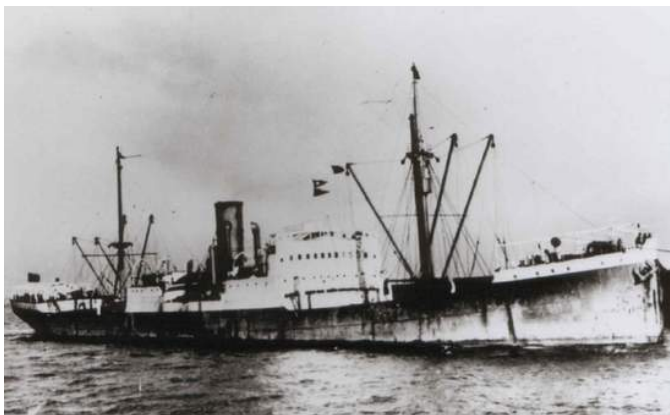
Canadian mariners served in the Canadian merchant fleet and in all manner of vessels from other nations. By the end of the war, an estimated 12,000 Canadian and Newfoundland men and women served in the merchant navy. More than 1,600 Canadian and Newfoundland Merchant Navy men and women lost their lives in the war.

Arnold Schildknecht served aboard the Belgian cargo ship *SS Indier* as Able Seaman. The WWI B-class standard cargo ship was completed in Southwick, Britain in August 1918. Originally named *War Redcap*, it was built for British Shipping Controller, one of many merchant ships built to supply the United Kingdom with materials, especially in the Great War. In 1919, it was transferred to a company based out of Antwerp, Belgium, and renamed the *SS Indier*. Made of steel and powered by steam, it was a transport carrier of 5409 tonnes. It continued its role as a merchant carrier in World War II.

In mid-March 1941, the *SS Indier* left ports in Philadelphia and New York, before departing from Halifax on March 20 bound for Glasgow. With its cargo of 6300 tons of steel and general cargo, it was part of convoy SC-26, bound for Liverpool and Glasgow. North Atlantic convoy SC-26 was made up of 22 ships, leaving North America with a single escort, the armed merchant cruiser *HMS Worcestershire*. As the convoy sailed across the Atlantic, it was first sighted by a U-boat on April 1. A patrol line of eight U-boats soon formed and by April 2nd, began to shadow and target the convoy for the next several days.

The first U-boat assault was made during the night of April 2/3, 1941 in the mid-Atlantic, south-southwest of Iceland. Just after midnight, a single U-boat fired on three different ships in the convoy, sinking one immediately. Just after 4:00 a.m. several other U-boats joined in the attacks on the convoy. In the early morning hours of April 3,

at 5:08 a.m., German U-boat *U-73* hit the British steam cargo ship *SS Westpool* with one torpedo and one minute later, missed a presumed armed merchant carrier with another torpedo. The *SS Westpool* sank in less than one minute. Thirty-five of a crew of forty-five aboard the *Westpool* were lost.



SS Indier

At 5:12 am, *U-73* fired a third torpedo, which struck the *SS Indier* under the bridge, causing the ship to sink within one minute. Forty crew members and two gunners on the *Indier* were lost. Four survivors were picked up later and landed at Liverpool. Arnold Schildknecht was one of the crew of the *SS Indier* lost at sea, one day before his 27th birthday.

Through the night of April 2/3, four U-boats attacked the convoy, sinking 6 ships, including the *Indier*. The next day, as ships in the convoy begin to scatter, escort ships from the U.K. arrived. However, during the following night of April 3/4, three more ships were sunk. The next day, one more ship was sunk. In total, nearly half of *SC-26* had been lost; 10 ships were sunk and 3 ships were damaged, including one warship, while only one U-boat was destroyed.

Merchant mariner and Able Seaman Arnold Schildknecht, 26, has no known grave. His name is inscribed on the Halifax Memorial, Nova Scotia, Canada, Panel 19. Arnold Schildknecht's name is also inscribed on the Thedford cenotaph in the Village of Thedford and is inscribed in the *Merchant Navy Book of Remembrance* located in the Peace Tower on Parliament Hill, Ottawa. In November 2019, his name along with 25 others was added to the Sarnia cenotaph, engraved in stone to be remembered always.

SOURCES: C, D, E, G, L, N, P, 2C, 2D, 7C, 8X, 8Y

SHANKS, James Roger (#J/14860)

James (Jimmy) Shanks was an exceptional athlete whose sports prowess led him to successes on and off the field. His skills and abilities transferred to the air force where he became an *exceptionally popular and a splendid* [pilot] *instructor*, described as *energetic, dependable...* [a] *good leader type who instills considerable confidence*. When he lost his life in a training accident, he did so in order to save the life of his student flier.

James Roger Shanks was born in Sarnia on February 9, 1918, the only son of John Harrison and Christina Taylor (nee Rogers) Shanks. John Shanks (born in Detroit, Michigan) and Christina Rogers (born in Glasgow, Scotland) were married in Chatham, Ontario on September 28, 1915, and were blessed with two children together: James and his sister Betty Gene Shanks. The family moved to Sarnia and lived at 125 Cameron Street. John Shanks supported his family working in the contracting business, and was prominent in local sports activities, including serving as the president of the Midget-Juvenile Baseball League.

James Shanks was educated in Sarnia, attending Durand Street Public School from September 1924 to June 1928, and then London Road Public School from September 1928 to June 1931. He then attended Sarnia Collegiate from September 1931 to June 1937. James was a well-rounded young man who was active in the community and in sports. He was a Boy Scout for one year, a member of the Cadet Corps for three years, and a member of St. Andrew's Young Men's Club. James was especially active football, baseball, basketball and rugby, and also participated in hockey, tennis and badminton. He played quarterback for the Sarnia Collegiate football team the year it won the WOSSAA championship. James was also an outstanding quarterback and halfback for the Sarnia Imperial Football Club in the late 1930s, and an all-Canadian selectee in pre-war competition. He was also coach of the Sarnia Junior O.B.A. team that won a provincial baseball title and was the catcher for Sarnia's senior M.O. baseball team. Active in

so many local sports, James Shanks was described as, *A hard, clean player, he was the kind of chap athletes liked to compete with or against. Always gentlemanly and clean in sports endeavors, he nevertheless was an aggressive player with the true fighting heart of a great athlete.*

From September 1937 to June 1938, James attended North Bay College, where he coached teams of Scollard Hall to a Northern Ontario football championship and to a Dominion interscholastic hockey title. By October 1938, James was back in Sarnia, employed with Imperial Oil Limited in Sarnia. He worked there as a chemist's assistant in the Research Department laboratory until he enlisted. In October 1940, the Minister at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Sarnia wrote a reference letter to the RCAF Recruiting Officer on behalf of James Shanks. Following is a portion of that letter; *...he is a young man of excellent moral character. He is of good habits, a conscientious and altogether trustworthy young man; a leader among the youth of this city interested in good clean sports. Since it is his desire to join the RCAF, it is a pleasure for me to bear this testimony to his genuine worth.*

Twenty-two-year-old James Shanks enlisted with the Royal Canadian Air Force on November 26, 1940 in London, Ontario. He stood six feet tall, had blue eyes and medium brown hair, was single, and recorded his address as 125 Cameron Street, residing with his younger sister and parents. He also resided for a time at 398 Davis Street, Sarnia. James requested flying duties, expressing his preference to be a pilot or observer. After the war, his ambition was to enter the field of engineering.

From the Recruiting Centre in London and #1 Manning Depot in Toronto, and then #1 Technical Training School (TTS) in St. Thomas, James received his air training at #1 Initial Training School (ITS) at Eglington Hunt Club in Toronto; followed by #12 Elementary Flying Training School (EFTS) in Goderich; and at #1 Service Flying Training School (SFTS) at Camp Borden. He was awarded his wings as a Pilot at Camp Borden on August 20, 1941. His parents came from Sarnia to attend the ceremonies and witnessed the presentation of the coveted wings to their son. While training at Camp Borden, James starred as a baseball player with the Camp Borden Fliers team that won the district honours from the Trenton Air Base Nine.

The Commanding Officer of #1 ITS recorded that James was an *Energetic, dependable Airman with considerable enthusiasm for his work. Very calm under pressure and will apply himself to the best of his abilities. Has ability to size up situations and act accordingly. Good leader type who instills considerable confidence. Recommend for Commission.* The Chief Flying Instructor at #12 EFTS recorded the following about James: *This man thinks quickly and flies well, should make a good service pilot.* The Commanding Officer of #1 SFTS recorded that James was an *excellent pupil who is keen and conscientious and has proven himself to be a good pilot. Recommended for Bomber.*



Pilot Officer-Pilot James Roger Shanks

In October 1941, James Shanks began an RCAF Flying Instructor's course at Central Flying School (CFS) in Trenton, Ontario. Graduating in late November 1941, the Chief Instructor and the Commanding Officer at CFS Trenton both recorded that James *is a steady capable student, high average ability as a pilot, should make a good instructor.*

During his training, James Shanks had flown in Fleet Finch, Yale, Harvard, Fairey Battle, Bolingbroke and Anson aircraft. In late November 1941, he was posted to Conversion Training School (CTS) at RCAF Station Rockcliffe near Ottawa, with the rank of Warrant Officer II-Pilot Officer. James became a Pilot-instructor at RCAF Station, Rockcliffe. This air station was opened in 1918 and underwent several name changes before taking the name RCAF Station Rockcliffe in 1940 as part of the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan. As the nearest airport to the centre of the capital, many training schools sprang up during the war at Rockcliffe and many kinds of activities took place here, including different kinds of testing, training, and transport operations.

Approximately ten months after arriving at Rockcliffe, James Shanks was killed during a training exercise. On September 13, 1942, James was one of four RCAF men who lost their lives when two training planes collided in mid-air, crashing to the ground approximately five miles west of Richmond, Ontario. The mid-air accident occurred between Oxford aircraft BG297 and Harvard trainer aircraft 3106. James Shanks was in the slower Oxford aircraft that collided with the speedy Harvard trainer aircraft. The Oxford (nicknamed the 'Ox-box') was a twin-engine aircraft manufactured in England by Airspeed Limited that saw widespread use for training aircrews for RAF Bomber Command in navigation, radio-operating, bombing and gunnery roles. The North American Harvard was a single engine aircraft, known as "the pilot maker" because of its important role in preparing pilots for combat.

James died as a result of his injuries that included a fractured skull, crushing injuries to his chest and a fractured left femur. Perishing with Pilot Officer-Pilot James Shanks in the Oxford aircraft were Sgt. Stanley Victor Patterson and LAC. Franklin Leroy Rash. Pilot Officer C.E. Cuisson of Quebec managed to parachute to safety. Killed in the Harvard aircraft was LAC Walter Kenneth Dean.

John and Christina Shanks in Sarnia received the news of the death of their only son the next day. In the investigation that followed, officials asserted that had Pilot Officer James Shanks not elected to "stick with the ship", in the hope of landing it and thereby saving the life of a student flier, he might have saved his own life by parachuting.

Squadron leader Doug Macklin arrived in Sarnia to assist the family in making the funeral arrangements. He said, *James was to have been recommended for a commission. He was exceptionally popular and a splendid instructor. It was the first accident of the kind my men have had.*

James Shanks was accorded full military honours at his funeral held at a packed St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Sarnia and at a graveside service attended by an estimated crowd of 1,000 people. Among those in attendance were several members of the Imperial football teams of other years. The ceremony included a 26-piece band, a firing party of fourteen, an escort and attending party of fifty. At the church service, Reverend Dr. Macgillivray expressed his sympathy to the parents and relatives and said that the death of Warrant Officer Shanks *would strengthen our resolve to see this thing through to victory.* He added, *Jimmy Shanks was one of the finest lads I ever knew. He lived a clean life and played hard, yet fair and never violated the rules of sportsmanship. He was straightforward, modest and highly esteemed by all who knew him. Although young in years, had attained a fine Christian manhood.* The air force blue casket draped with the Union Jack was carried to the gravesite escorted by six R.C.A.F. warrant officers who marched beside it. Three volleys were fired at the graveside, the band playing snatches of a hymn between each volley. After bayonets had been fixed, the "Last Post" was sounded.

James Shanks, 24, is buried in Lakeview Cemetery, in Sarnia, Ontario, Section E. Lot 131. In late October 1942, John and Christina Shanks received from the R.C.A.F. the wings that had been taken from the uniform of their only son. On James Shanks' headstone are inscribed the words, REST IN PEACE. His name is also inscribed on the Sarnia Refinery Plaque. Unveiled in 1949, the plaque has the names of 24 Sarnia Imperial Oil employees who made the ultimate sacrifice in World War II.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, J, L, M, N, O, 2C, 2D, 7C, 8X, 8Y

SHEA, Edward Thomas (#A/17019)

Edward Shea was only 17 years old and his mother's sole support when he enlisted to serve in the Canadian Expeditionary Force in World War I. He survived the horrors of France and Belgium and returned home after the war. Twenty years later, the 41 year-old Edward joined the army again. Soon after marrying he embarked overseas where he took part in the invasions of Sicily and Italy. He survived another World War, but two years after V-J Day, Edward lost his life to what officials determined were related to his military service.

Edward Thomas Shea was born in Toronto on November 28, 1898, the only son of Thomas Patrick (O'Shea,

born in Kilarney, Ireland) and Mary (nee Hynes, born in Ireland) Shea, of 54 Palmerston Avenue, Toronto, Ontario. Thomas and Mary Shea had four children together: Edward, the youngest, and three daughters: Mary Bertha, Margaret and Annie. Edward was baptized on December 24, 1898 in St. Mary's Church, Toronto. At the time of Edward's death, his sisters Mary resided in Toronto; Annie in Midland; and Margaret resided at 314 Bright Street in Sarnia, married to Ernest Latour.

When Edward Shea was only three years old, he lost his father Thomas, who passed away around 1901. Edward attended Toronto Separate Schools from age six to twelve, completing grade five. When he was twelve years old in 1910, he left school to support his widowed mother. From 1910 to 1916, Edward worked as an apprentice at Sheppard & Sons harness mountings business.

On April 1, 1916, seventeen year-old Edward Shea enlisted with the Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF) in Toronto to serve in the First World War. On his Attestation Paper, he recorded his birth year as 1896 (not 1898), so the recruiter believed that he was nineteen years old. Underage, he stood only five feet and three quarters of an inch tall, had brown eyes and brown hair, was single and lived with his mother on Palmerston Avenue in Toronto at the time. Also recorded at his enlistment paper was that Edward was his widowed mother's "only son" and her "sole support", giving her \$40 per month. Later, after he arrived overseas, Edward assigned \$20 per month of his pay to his mother (as a Private, he earned just over \$30 per month). Edward recorded his occupation as brass finisher and was initially a member of the 216 Battalion. In early January 1917, still in Canada, Edward spent eight days at the Base Hospital in Toronto recovering from influenza.

Private Edward Shea embarked overseas from Halifax bound for the United Kingdom aboard the *SS Scandinavian* on April 18, 1917. Arriving in England eleven days later, he was transferred to the 3rd Canadian Reserve Battalion at West Sandling. More than fifteen months later, on August 9, 1918, he was transferred to the 2nd Regiment, Canadian Mounted Rifles at Camp Witley, and the next day he arrived in France with that unit. Within a week, he was on the front lines taking part in the Hundred Days Campaign.

The **Hundred Days Campaign** (August 8 – November 11, 1918 in France and Belgium) was the "beginning of the end" of the Great War. Canadians were called on again and again over the three-month period to lead the offensives against the toughest German defences. As part of the Canadian Mounted Rifles, Private Edward Shea participated in Hundred Days offensives including the Battle of Amiens, the Battle of Arras and Breaking the DQ Line, the Battle of Canal-du-Nord and Cambrai, and the Pursuit to Mons. The greatest victories of the Canadian Corps took place in this critical period, but it came at a high price, approximately 46,000 Canadian casualties.

Edward Shea celebrated with the rest of the Allies when the war ended on November 11, 1918. Three months later, in mid-February 1919, he departed France and returned to England. One month after that, he embarked from Liverpool aboard the *RMS Baltic*, and returned to Canada. He was discharged on demobilization on March 24, 1919, and returned to live with his mother, then at 84 Dundas Street, Toronto.

Following the Great War, from 1920 to 1931, Edward worked as a labourer at various jobs in Toronto, including the pressing of clothing and road construction. From 1931 to 1937, he was self-employed, running his own tobacco and confectionary shop in Toronto. From 1937 to 1940, he worked at various jobs, including farming. It was sometime between 1937-1940 that Edward Shea lived with his sister Margaret Latour at 314 Bright Street in Sarnia. Edward was a member of Our Lady of Mercy Catholic Parish.

On June 25, 1940, forty-one-year-old Edward Shea enlisted in the Canadian Army in London, Ontario. He stood five feet three inches tall, had brown eyes and dark brown hair, was single, and lived at 314 Bright Street at the time. He recorded his occupation as labourer. He planned to re-open his own cigar store in Toronto after the war. From #1 District Depot in London, he was posted to the Royal Canadian Army Medical Corps (RCAMC) in Ottawa in July 1940 with the rank of Private.

Less than four months after enlisting, on October 15, 1940, Edward Shea married Anne Carmel Watters, of Russell Avenue, Ottawa, the daughter of Patrick Henry Watters and Johanna (nee Murdoch) Watters. The wedding took place at St. Joseph's Church in Ottawa, Ontario. They couple lived at 260 Laurier Avenue, and later 205 Charlotte Street, Ottawa. Edward and Anne Shea had one child together, daughter Joan Maureen Shea, born in Ottawa on September 5, 1941 (while Edward was overseas in the U.K.).

On December 21 1940, two months after getting married, Edward Shea embarked overseas from Halifax bound for the United Kingdom. He arrived in Liverpool on December 31, 1940. Initially with the RCAMC at

Borden, on January 21, 1941, he would be attached to the No. 4 Canadian Field Ambulance (4CFA) with the rank of Private. During his service in the Second World War, Edward did not carry out medical work, but instead carried out general labour duties, that included serving as a steward in a Sergeant's mess, and serving as a driver and a batman (personal servant to a commissioned officer).

On June 13, 1943, Private Edward Shea of the 4CFA, embarked from Glasgow, Scotland for the Italian Theatre. The **Italian Campaign**, the first sustained Canadian Army operation of the War, began with the invasion of Sicily on July 10, 1943. The fierce fighting on the island would last more than four weeks, during which the Canadians advanced through difficult mountainous terrain, against an ever-stiffening German resistance. By August 17, the Germans had evacuated the island to the Italian mainland. In early September, Canadian and Allied forces invaded Italy. Though Italy surrendered shortly after, the occupying Germans made it clear their fight was not over. Liberating Italy would be a painstaking northward crawl, lasting 20 months, over a range of landscapes, through challenging weather, and against a series of well-protected defences held by some of the German army's best troops.

Edward Shea disembarked in Sicily on July 10, 1943, on the day of the island invasion. On September 3, 1943, he disembarked at Reggio, Italy, on the day of the invasion of Italy. Edward served in Sicily and Italy for thirteen months, with the No. 4 Field Ambulance. In June 1944, still in Italy, Edward was attached to the X-9 List--a Base Reinforcement Unit, where he was not available as a reinforcement. On July 31, 1944, due to health issues, he was evacuated from Italy, disembarking in the U.K. on August 13, 1944.

Once back in the U.K., Edward was attached to the Canadian General Reinforcement Unit (CGRU). In mid-February 1945, he was returned to Canada, attached to No. 3 District Depot in Ottawa. In early May 1945, he was attached to #32 Company, Veterans Guard of Canada. On May 8, VE Day was celebrated after Germany's unconditional surrender. In June 1945, Edward was awarded two Good Conduct Badges, and in July 1945, was awarded the 1939-45 Star, the Defence Medal and the Italy Star. In March 1946, Private Shea continued his military service at the National Defence Headquarters in Ottawa, attached to the Royal Canadian Army Pay Corps (RCAPC).

On August 31, 1947, two years after V-J Day, Edward Shea lost his life. He died at approximately 20:45 hours at his home on Charlotte Street in Ottawa at the age of forty-eight. The cause of death was listed as coronary thrombosis, and officials determined that "his death was related to his military service". Edward Shea's remains were buried on September 3, 1947 at Notre Dame Cemetery in Ottawa, with a full military funeral. In early September 1947, Anne Shea received the following letter from a Brigadier, Acting Adjutant-General in Ottawa:

Dear Mrs. Shea:

It is with deep regret that I learned of the death of your husband, A17019 Private Edward Thomas Shea, who died in Canada on the 31st day of August, 1947, after having served his country Overseas. The Minister of National Defence has asked me to express to you and your family his sincere sympathy in your bereavement.

In mid-November 1947, Anne received the following letter from the Director, War Service Records in Ottawa:

Dear Mrs. Shea:

The Honourable, the Minister of Veterans Affairs, wishes to extend his sincere sympathy on learning of the death of your husband which has recently been reported to this Department.

As the death of your husband was related to his service in the Canadian Army (Active), you will shortly receive a Silver Memorial Cross given by the Canadian Government as a slight token of appreciation of the sacrifice you have made.

Also in November 1947, Anne Shea received a War Service Gratuity of \$1289.55 for the loss of her husband, a veteran of two world wars. Edward Shea, 48, is buried in Ottawa (Notre Dame) Roman Catholic Cemetery, Ottawa, Soldiers plot 4, Grave 9. He left behind his wife of less than seven years, Anne, and their daughter Joan, who was one week shy of six years old.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, 2C, 2D, 7C, 8X

SMITH, Alexander Gordon (#J/3118)

Alexander Smith was 25 years old and working as an agricultural engineer when he made the decision to serve his country. As a member of the Royal Canadian Air Force, he took part in the North African Campaign. In December 1941, while on a navigational night exercise over Egypt, his Blenheim bomber disappeared without a trace. The aircraft and crew were never located. Alexander Smith has no known grave.

Alexander Gordon Smith was born in Vancouver, British Columbia on September 20, 1914, the son of Alexander Smith Sr. and Jeanie (nee Giffen) Smith. Scottish-born parents Alexander Smith Sr. (born Aberdeen) and Jeanie Giffen (born Strathaven) were married on November 10, 1909 in Vancouver, British Columbia. Alexander Sr. and Jeanie Smith had four children together: daughters Margaret Craig and Jane Ross Gordon Smith, and sons: Alexander Jr. and James Giffen. James also served during the war, as a Leading Aircraftman with the R.C.A.F. The Smith family moved to Ontario when Alexander Jr. was nine years old, and lived at 277 Kathleen Avenue, Sarnia. Alexander Sr. supported his family working as a draughtsman in Sarnia.

Alexander Jr. was educated in Vancouver, Rossland, B.C. and Sarnia public elementary schools from 1920 to 1928. He then attended Sarnia Collegiate School from 1928 until 1933. He was very active in swimming and rugby, and participated in boxing, wrestling and soccer. He was a member of the Sarnia Collegiate orchestra in which he played violin and was a member of the Cadet First Aid Team in 1931. His hobbies included photography and horticulture.

After graduating high school, Alexander attended Ontario Agricultural College in Guelph in 1933, and graduated in 1937, specializing in Agricultural Science (Agricultural Engineering degree). During the summers of 1934, '35 and '36, he was employed at Imperial Oil Refinery in Sarnia in the greenhouse. From April to December 1938, he was employed as a tractor mechanic with Massey Harris in Toronto. From December 1938 to May 1939, he was employed at the Agricultural Engineering Department, O.A.C. in Guelph as a physics demonstrator. From May 1939 until he enlisted, he was employed as a field supervisor for Greenmelk Company in Wallaceburg.

Twenty-five-year-old Alexander Smith Jr. enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force on May 10, 1940 in London, Ontario. He stood six feet tall, had blue eyes and light brown hair, and was single at the time. He recorded his occupation as engineer, his present address as c/o Greenmelk Co. Wallaceburg, and his permanent address as 277 Kathleen Avenue, Sarnia. Alexander requested flying duties with a preference to be an observer.

From the Recruiting Centre in London, and then #1 Manning Depot in Toronto, Alexander received his air training at #1 Initial Training School (ITS) in Toronto; followed by #1 Air Observers School (AOS) in Malton, Ontario; and at #1 Bombing and Gunnery School (B&GS) in Jarvis, Ontario. He was awarded his wings as an Air Observer at B&GS in Jarvis on October 28, 1940. He continued his training in late-October through November 1940 in a four-week course at #1 Air Navigation School (ANS) in Trenton, Ontario and Rivers, Manitoba. From December 1 to 10, 1940, he was able to spend a few days of his leave at his home in Sarnia on his way from Rivers to Ottawa where he was stationed next.

Alexander Smith Jr. embarked overseas bound for the United Kingdom on December 15, 1940. He continued his training there for approximately one year before he departed the U.K., arriving in Egypt on December 5, 1941. Upon arrival in the Egypt/Sudan frontier, he served as a member of RAF #72 Operational Training Unit (OTU), Middle East, with the rank of Pilot Officer-Observer.

Alexander arrived more than a year into the **North African Campaign**. The campaign had begun in June 1940 and continued for almost three years, as Allied and Axis forces pushed each other back and forth across the desert. Battles between British Commonwealth, U.S. and French forces against Italian-German Axis and Vichy France forces took place across Libya, Egypt, Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia. Canadians fought as part of British army units, as members of the RAF or the Royal Canadian Air Force and served in the Royal Canadian Navy.

No. 72 OTU was formed in June 1941 at RAF Carthago, Port Sudan, to train light bomber crews in tropical conditions. One of the aircrafts used here to train crews was the Bristol Blenheim, a twin engine British light bomber. During the early years of the war, the Blenheim was the mainstay of the RAF's light bomber forces. There was no easy way to learn how to fly the bombers, and training crews suffered a litany of disasters, crashes and deaths. By the end of the war, over 8,000 Allied airmen were killed in bomber training or by accidents alone.

Approximately one year after arriving overseas, and less than two weeks after arriving in Egypt, Pilot Officer-Observer Alexander Smith lost his life. On December 17, 1941, Alexander Smith was the Air Gunner-Observer in a crew of five aboard Blenheim Mk. IV aircraft Z7628 on a navigational night exercise. After almost two hours into their night flight, the aircraft ceased transmitting and was not heard from or seen again. It was later learned that the aircraft crashed in the Red Sea Hills area in Egypt. All five airmen onboard were lost and presumed dead. Perishing with RCAF Pilot Officer Alexander Gordon Smith were; Sgt's C. Freeman, P.P. Hussey, W. Armour (all RAF), and Sgt. P.W. Wheeler (RAAF).

Approximately one week after the aircraft disappeared, Alexander Sr. and Jeanie Smith in Sarnia received a cable informing them that their son, ALEXANDER SMITH HAS BEEN REPORTED AS MISSING OVERSEAS.

A Royal Air Force investigation was held into the circumstances of the “accident to Blenheim Z7628”, and following are portions of the results of that investigation:

1. *The above crew was detailed to carry out a cross-country exercise at night, from Wadi Gazouza to Sollum Junction, to Ras Asis, to Wadi Gazouza. The crew consisted of a staff pilot, observer, and wireless operator, together with an observer and wireless operator/air gunner under training.*
2. *The aircraft left the ground at 21.15 hours, and established communication with the base, and exchanged strength of signals at various times. At 21.49 he asked for a bearing and was given 185° which was approximately correct. He maintained two-way communication until 22.14 hours, when he sent the following message originated by him at 22.01 hours: ‘POSN SALLUM JUNCTION, TR 134° G/S 196 NEXT POSN RAS ASSIS E.T.A. 22.29’. At 22.35 hours, he again exchanged signals with base and was given strength ‘6’ which was acknowledged. No further contact was made after this signal. An extensive search has been carried out for three days without any results.*
3. *The weather conditions during the night were good for this area, there being only the usual belt of low cloud over the range of hills to the East of this aerodrome. It was a dark night, but with brilliant starlight, and at no time was there more than three tenths low cloud over the aerodrome, although there was a belt of ten tenths low cloud within 5 miles to the East....*
5. *The pilot (Sgt. Freeman) of this aircraft was well experienced in night operational work, flying Hampdens in England. The navigator, P/O A.G. Smith, had also had previous experience as an observer in Wellingtons.*
6. *From the wireless communications, it is apparent that the flight proceeded normally until the last message was received, and I am unable to suggest any reason for the failure of this aircraft to return.*
7. *An air search over a wide area for three days has provided no success.*

In mid-January 1942, Alexander Sr. received the following letter from Group Captain, Commanding No. 72 O.T.U., Royal Air Force, Middle East:

Dear Mr. Smith,

I regret very much that I must confirm the sad news which you will already have received that your son, Pilot Officer A.G. Smith did not return from a flight carried out from this Unit on active service, on the 17th December, 1941. Together with four other members of the crew, your son started off on a night flight at 21.15 hours, and the aircraft signals were heard up to 22.59 hours after which all trace was lost and it cannot be hoped that the aircraft and its crew are safe. Extensive search has been made and any further news will be forwarded to you at once.

Your son had been with me only a short time, but I had begun to appreciate his good qualities and he was popular with his brother officers. He was one of a number of young Dominion Officers who are serving with me, all of whom are doing their utmost in the cause for which we are all fighting.

His kit has been carefully packed and sent to the President of the Standing Committee of Adjustment, Royal Air Force, Middle East, and you will be hearing from this Officer in due course.

In July 1942, the Smiths received the news that their son Alexander was now officially listed as, *Previously reported missing after air operations, now for official purposes presumed dead, overseas*. In August 1945, they received a War Service Gratuity of \$353.30 for the loss of their son.

In December 1952, Alexander Sr. received a letter from the Wing Commander, R.C.A.F. Casualties Officer, for Chief of the Air Staff. Following is a portion of that letter:

Dear Mr. Smith:

It is with reluctance that after so long an interval, I must refer to the loss of your son, Flying Officer Alexander Gordon Smith, but due to the lack of any information concerning him since he was reported missing, it must be regretfully accepted and officially recorded that he does not have a “known” grave.

Due to the extreme hazards attending air operations there are, unhappily, many thousands of British aircrew boys who do not have “known” graves and all will be commemorated on General Memorials that will be erected at a number of locations by the Imperial War Graves Commission (of which Canada is a member), each Memorial representative of a theatre of operations. One of these Memorials will be erected at El Alamein, and the name of your son will appear on that Memorial....

I realize that this is an extremely distressing letter and that there is no manner of conveying such information to you that would not add to your heartaches. I am fully aware that nothing I may say will lessen your great sorrow,

but I would like to express to you and the members of your family my deepest sympathy.

Alexander Smith, 27, has no known grave. His name is inscribed on the Alamein War Memorial, Column 245, Egypt.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, J, L, M, N, R, 2C, 2D, 4B, 6O, 7C, 8X, 8Y

SMITH, Mitchell (#J/18222)

Mitchell Smith was 19 years old when he made the decision to serve his country. Two and a half years later, he was a member of a crew aboard a Wellington bomber that took off from Yorkshire, England on a night “gardening” operation. Nothing further was heard from the crew after it took off, and the aircraft was not heard from or seen again. All five airmen onboard were lost and presumed dead. Mitchell Smith has no known grave.

Mitchell Smith was born in Toronto, Ontario on May 2, 1921, the son of Roy and Bessie (nee Dillon) Smith, of 2006 Bathurst Street, Toronto. Roy Smith (born in Russia) and Bessie Dillon (born in London, England) were married in Toronto on January 27, 1914, and were blessed with two children together: Mitchell and his brother Murray. Murray Smith also served in the war overseas, as a member of the RCAF. Roy Smith supported his family as a partner in the London Clothing Company in Toronto.

Mitchell Smith grew up in Toronto, attending Grace Public Elementary School, 1929-1935, and then Central Technical School in Toronto, 1935-1937. He was active in skating, badminton, tennis and swimming, and his hobbies were model airplane building and stamp collecting. From 1938 to 1940 when he enlisted, Mitchell was employed at London Clothing Company in Toronto, as a salesman and in charge of shipping. At some point early in the war, his parents Roy and Bessie Smith moved to Sarnia, living at 512 Wellington Street.

Nineteen year-old Mitchell Smith enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force on December 27, 1940 in Toronto. He stood five feet ten and three-quarter inches tall, had brown eyes and black hair, was single, and was living with his parents on Bathurst Street in Toronto at the time. Of the Hebrew religion, he was fluent in both English and Jewish. After the war, his ambition was to enter the field of aeronautics. Mitchell also recorded his desire to live in Sarnia after the war. He requested flying duties, with a preference to be an air gunner.

From the Recruiting Centre, then #1 Manning Depot in Toronto, and then #1 Auxillary Manning Depot in Picton, Mitchell Smith received his air training at #1 Equipment Depot (ED) in Toronto; followed by #1 Wireless School in Montreal; and at #4 Bombing and Gunnery School (B&GS) in Fingal. On October 13, 1941, he graduated as a Sergeant-Wireless Air Gunner from #4B&GS at Fingal. He then received his 11-day pre-embarkation leave. On November 3, 1941, Mitchell Smith embarked overseas from #1 Y Depot in Halifax bound for the United Kingdom.

Initially posted to #3 Personnel Reception Centre, Mitchell continued his training in the U.K. at #1 Signals School, and in March 1942 as a member of #19 Operational Training Unit (OTU). He served with a number of units based in the U.K., including #158 Conversion Flight (from August 6, 1942); #158 Squadron (from September 17, 1942); #405 Squadron (from December 8, 1942); 427 Squadron (from May 8, 1943); #22 Operational Training Unit (from June 2, 1943); and with #1659 Conversion Unit (from July 7, 1943). On July 23, 1943, Mitchell Smith became a member of RCAF #432 Leaside Squadron “*Saevitir Ad Lucem*” (Ferociously towards the light), part of **Bomber Command**, with the rank of Pilot Officer-Bomb Aimer.

During the course of the war, one of this country’s most significant contributions was the approximately 50,000 Canadians who served with the RCAF and RAF in Bomber Command operations. Next to Britain, Canada was the largest contributor to Bomber Command, making up more than a third of all of Bomber Command personnel. The men who served in Bomber Command faced some of the most difficult odds of anyone fighting in the war.

RCAF #432 Leaside Squadron was formed on May 1, 1943 around a nucleus of eighteen crews provided by No. 427 Squadron. Part of No. 6 Group of RAF Bomber Command, the town of Leaside officially “adopted” the squadron and it took the town’s name as its nickname. The squadron crest displays a cougar leaping down in front of a full moon, symbolizing the many night-bombing operations and the fight for the “light of freedom against the darkness of oppression.” Based at RAF Skipton-on-Swale, Yorkshire, it was equipped with Vickers Wellington aircraft, a twin-engine, long-range medium bomber. In September 1943, the squadron moved its base to RAF East Moor, and later converted to Avro Lancasters and then Handley Page Halifax aircraft.

Approximately three weeks after joining #432 Squadron, Mitchell Smith lost his life in action. On the night of August 12, 1943, Pilot Officer-Bomb Aimer Mitchell Smith was part of a crew aboard Wellington X aircraft HE348 (markings QO-P) that took off at 20:23 hours from RAF Station Skipton-on-Swale, Yorkshire. The aircraft

was on a night mission to carry out a “gardening” operation off Brittany ports and was scheduled to return at 02:36 hours on August 13, 1943. Nothing further was heard from the crew after it took off, and the aircraft was not heard from or seen again. All five airmen onboard were lost and presumed dead. Perishing with Pilot Officer Mitchell Smith were Pilot Officer Steven Noble; FS. Kenneth Reid Bourne; and Sgt.s James William Neal (RAF), and Donald Ruston (RAF).

Mitchell Smith’s death was later officially recorded as, *Previously reported missing after air operations, now for official purposes, presumed dead, overseas*. In September 1945, Roy and Bessie Smith in Sarnia received a War Service Gratuity of \$588.63 for the loss of their son Mitchell.

In October 1946, Bessie received the following letter from the Wing Commander for Chief of the Air Staff in Ottawa:

Dear Mrs. Smith:

It is a privilege to have the opportunity of sending you the Operational Wings and Certificate in recognition of the gallant services rendered by your son, Pilot Officer M. Smith. I realize there is little which may be said or done to lessen your sorrow, but it is my hope that these “Wings”, indicative of operations against the enemy, will be a treasured memento of a young life offered on the altar of freedom in defence of his Home and Country.

Mitchell Smith, 21, has no known grave. His name is inscribed on the Runnymede War Memorial, Surrey, United Kingdom, Panel 178.

Mitchell Smith and thirteen other local men had their names engraved on a plaque honouring fourteen Jewish members of the armed services from Sarnia. The plaque was unveiled in the Ahavas Isaac Synagogue, Davis Street, Sarnia on March 30, 1945. The men, all from Sarnia, honoured on the plaque were; M. Berger, S. Bernard, R. Heller, I. Haber, M. Kirk, Dr. I. Mann, A. Rosen, G. Shabsove, M. Skosov, Mitchell Smith, Murray Smith, L. Swartz, I.B. Zierler, Isaac Zierler. Three of the men--Mitchell Smith, Max Berger and Isaac Buck Zierler--made the supreme sacrifice. Mitchell Smith is also honoured in the memorial book “Canadian Jews in World War II”.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, M, N, 2C, 2D, 4B, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10B, 10U

STEVENS, Ross Edward

In 1943, Ross Edward “Buddy” Stevens enlisted with the Canadian Merchant Navy when he was only sixteen. Unfortunately, while serving as a 4th Engineer aboard the Imperial Oil tanker *SS Sunset Park*, Buddy was critically injured at sea during a storm. He died in a hospital in Barbados, a day before he turned eighteen.

Ross (who went by his nickname “Buddy”) Stevens was born in Petrolia on March 21, 1927, the son of Mr. and Mrs. Hubert Stevens. The Stevens family moved to Sarnia around 1936 when Buddy was nine and resided at 407 London Road. Ross’ grandmother was Mrs. Edward Shannon of Petrolia. Buddy had one sister who, at the time of his death, was Mrs. S. Round of Sarnia. After beginning his education at Central School in Petrolia, Buddy attended Johnston Memorial School in Sarnia. In 1943, Ross Stevens joined the Canadian Merchant Navy on his 16th birthday, becoming a member of the crew of the Imperial Oil tanker *SS Sunset Park*, with the rank of Oiler. He later obtained the rank of 4th Engineer.

Canada’s Merchant Navy was the “fourth arm of service” of the Royal Canadian Navy. It played a vital role in carrying men and essential machinery, arms, fuel and basic resources across the Atlantic in the **Battle of the Atlantic**, the longest continuous campaign of the war. Cargo was also shipped to and from ports in the Caribbean, the Mediterranean, the Indian Ocean, the Pacific, the Arctic, and in European waters. When the war began, Canada had only 38 ocean-going merchant ships, including 10 tankers of Imperial Oil Limited, and about 1,500 sailors. By war’s end, Canadian shipyards had manufactured 403 merchant ships.

The Allied merchant fleet suffered significant losses in the early years of the Battle of the Atlantic as a result of U-boat attacks. In the face of the now urgent need, Canada embarked on a massive shipbuilding program to help replace the lost vessels and to administer the movement of materiel. Two main types of cargo ships were produced under the Canadian program: “Fort ships” and “Park ships”. Park Steamship Company was created by the Canadian government in April 1942. The *Sunset Park* was one of the “Park ships”. Built as a tanker by Foundation Maritime Limited in Pictou, Nova Scotia, it was completed on November 24, 1944, as a modified Scandinavian-class cargo ship of 2894 tonnes. After the war, the *Sunset Park* would become *Siderurgica Cinco* and was scrapped in 1965.

Even being protected by armed escorts and even by traveling in zig-zag patterns, the merchant ships in convoys usually had a treacherous voyage across enormous tracts of ocean. Maneuvering in crowded ranks without

lights and wireless or navigational aids and using haphazard communication added to the risks the ships faced. They were under the constant threat of fierce attacks by German U-boats or air attack; the danger of collision and underwater mines; and the natural dangers of rough water, hazardous weather, fog, gales and ice conditions.

Canadian mariners served in the Canadian merchant fleet and in all manner of vessels from other nations, and by the end of the war, an estimated 12,000 Canadian and Newfoundland men and women served in the merchant navy. More than 1,600 Canadian and Newfoundland Merchant Navy men and women lost their lives in the war.

Buddy Stevens had been home on furlough the Christmas before his death in December of 1944. Three months later, in March of 1945, he was critically injured in a storm while at sea on board the Imperial Oil tanker *SS Sunset Park*. On March 20, 1945, Merchant Marine Ross Stevens lost his life in St. Michael's Hospital in Bridgetown, Barbados, British West Indies. He died one day before his eighteenth birthday.

On March 21st 1945, parents Mr. and Mrs. Hubert Stevens in Sarnia received word on their son's 18th birthday that he had died in the Barbados, British West Indies while serving with the Imperial Oil marine department. In late April of 1945, the Rev. J.F. Anderson of St. Paul's United Church, Sarnia conducted a memorial service in memory of Ross Edward Stevens. Eighteen year-old Ross Stevens is buried in the Barbados. His name is inscribed on the Sarnia cenotaph and on the Petrolia cenotaph and is also inscribed in the *Merchant Navy Book of Remembrance* located in the Peace Tower on Parliament Hill, Ottawa.

SOURCES: A, B, D, E, N, Q, X, Y, 7C, 8Y, k

STOKES, Edward Samuel

Edward Samuel "Sammy" Stokes was born in Petrolia on July 26, 1921, the only son of Lieutenant-Colonel Samuel Gladstone Stokes and Jennie Louise (nee Pollard) Stokes. To fully understand Sammy's story and background, one has to look at the life of Sammy's father. Born in Petrolia on July 29, 1893, Lieut-Col Samuel Stokes served with distinction during the Great War and was decorated with the Volunteer Officers' Decoration and the Military Cross.

Samuel Gladstone Stokes completed his Officers' Declaration Paper with the Canadian Expeditionary Force on September 8, 1916 at Camp Borden and was given the rank of Lieutenant with the 149th Battalion. Residing in Petrolia at the time, age 23 and single, he had been a member of the 27th Militia Regiment and recorded his next-of-kin as his mother Margaret Stokes in Petrolia and his occupation as oil refiner. He also recorded that as the only son, he supported his widowed mother Margaret with \$50 per month prior to enlisting. He would continue to support her during his service, allocating \$30 per month of his pay.

Lt. Samuel Stokes embarked overseas from Halifax aboard the *SS Southland* on March 28, 1917. On his arrival in Liverpool, he became a member of the 25th Reserve Battalion stationed at Bramshott where he continued his training. More than eight months later, on December 11, 1917, he arrived at Canadian Corps Reinforcement Camp in Etaples, France as a member of the 18th Battalion. He joined the 18th Battalion at the front on March 20, 1918 and soon found himself taking part in the **Hundred Days Campaign**, August 8 – November 11, 1918 in France and Belgium. This campaign was the "beginning of the end" of the Great War. Canadians were called on again and again over the three-month period to lead the offensives against the toughest German defences.

During his time in France, Lt. Samuel Stokes was granted 14-day leaves in the U.K. on two occasions in 1918, one in late July and another in late December (the latter, one month after the Great War ended). His actions on the day before the armistice were recognized with him being awarded the Military Cross. The award reads; *For conspicuous gallantry and initiative on 10th of November 1918. He went forward as scout officer through the enemy's line, entered the village which was occupied by the enemy, locating their positions and strength and brought back information which enabled the battalion to attack and capture the village with slight casualties.*

In mid-February 1919, Lt. Samuel Stokes proceeded to England attached to Western Ontario Regimental Depot for a course at Khaki University. Six months later, in late August 1919, he began his journey home aboard the *SS Celtic* and arrived in New York on September 4, 1919. He was struck off strength on September 13, 1919 in Ottawa on general demobilization and returned to the U.K. one more time. This visit had nothing to do with the war. On May 19, 1919, Samuel Stokes married Jennie Louise Pollard in Ripon, Yorkshire, England. The couple moved to Petrolia and later moved to Sarnia where they resided at 294 Wellington Street. Samuel worked at Imperial Oil and also gave his services during World War II as an officer commanding the 11th Field Company, local reserve army Royal Canadian Engineers Unit.

Samuel and Jennie Stokes had two children together: Edward Samuel “Sammy”, born 1921 and Nancy Louise, born in 1931. Sammy Stokes was educated at Sarnia public schools and then Sarnia Collegiate in 1934, graduating in 1939. He was an active man and loved most sports. While in high school, he played WOSSAA rugby, hockey and baseball and was also on the Sarnia Collegiate rifle team. Sammy was a member of the Central Century Club and, while there, played basketball, hockey and softball for the club teams. After completing high school, Sammy proceeded to prepare himself for a military career by entering the Royal Military College (RMC) in Kingston, in August 1939. During his two years of military training at Kingston, he held the rank of Corporal. Sammy was captain of the basketball team in his second year and also managed the Royal Military College rugby team.

In mid-May 1941, Sammy Stokes graduated from the Royal Military College in Kingston with a commission in the Royal Canadian Dragoons at the age of nineteen. A total of 32 cadets graduated from the College that day and the ceremony was attended by the Governor-General, the Earl of Athlone, and Princess Alice. On June 10, 1941, Sammy completed his Officer’s Declaration Paper at Camp Borden and joined the Royal Canadian Dragoons with the rank of Gentleman Cadet. Nineteen years old, he stood five feet seven and three-quarter inches tall, had hazel eyes and dark brown hair, and was single at the time. Sammy received further instructional work there, and by July 1941, had attained the rank of Lieutenant.



Lieutenant Edward “Sammy” Stokes

Sammy Stokes embarked overseas for the United Kingdom on November 11, 1941. He was posted with No. 1 Canadian Armoured Corps Reinforcement Unit (CACRU), with the rank of Lieutenant. He continued his training and instructing in the U.K. with the CACRU at a number of schools, taking courses including mechanics, armoured warfare, battle tactics, small arms and anti-tank warfare. In February 1943, he was transferred to the 1st Armoured Car Regiment, Royal Canadian Dragoons.

On October 24, 1943, Sammy Stokes departed the U.K., and arrived in the Italian theatre in early November 1943. The **Italian Campaign**, the first sustained Canadian Army operation of the war, had begun with the invasion of Sicily on July 10, 1943. The fierce fighting on the island would last more than four weeks, during which time the Canadians advanced through difficult mountainous terrain, against an ever-stiffening German resistance. By August 17, the Germans had evacuated the island to the Italian mainland. In early September, Canadian and Allied forces invaded Italy. Though Italy surrendered shortly after, the occupying Germans made it clear their fight was not over. Liberating Italy would be a painstaking northward crawl, lasting 20 months, over a range of landscapes, through challenging weather, and against a series of well-protected defences held by some of the German army’s best troops.

Lieutenant Sammy Stokes served in the Italian Theatre as a member of the Royal Canadian Dragoons, Royal Canadian Armoured Corps (R.C.A.C.), “C” Squadron, 1st Armoured Car Regiment.

Seven months after arriving in Italy, in June 1944, Sammy Stokes was wounded when he was blown up by a

German mine while in action there. His regiment, the Royal Dragoons, was participating in a crossing of the Melfa River at the time. In a letter he had written home to his parents three days later, he said that he had escaped with slight cuts over one eye. He also described how he had visited Rome on June 14, 1944. He spoke with regret of the death of "Mickey" McBride, one of his classmates at the Royal Military College, Kingston, who had succumbed to wounds. He also mentioned how he had been listening with considerable amusement to a German woman radio announcer, whom the Canadians in Italy have dubbed "Axis Sally." She invited the first Allied soldier reaching Berlin to call on her, but said that he would never live to accept. Sammy also sent a handkerchief home as a gift to his younger sister, Nancy. His mother, Jennie Louise, was grateful not only for his frequent letters home, but for snapshots which showed her son with his best pals in their winter quarters in "sunny" Italy, surrounded by snow which probably reminded them of Canada.

In July of 1944, Lieutenant Sammy Stokes was mentioned in a report sent by Bill Boss, a Canadian correspondent reporting from one sector of the Italian front. His report states:

With the Canadian Corps in Italy

Operations of a squadron of the Royal Canadian Dragoons, commanded by Major Bill Veitch, Montreal, were in two phases of the Italian campaign after they were committed to the pursuit battle which followed the break-through of the Adolf Hitler line. The first phase saw them chase the Germans from Pontecorvo where they entered the battle, to the crossing of the Melfa river. Later, the squadron was asked to find a suitable ford across the river, one which might be developed as a divisional axis of advance. Lt. Peter Crerar, Ottawa, leader of the regiment's Engineer Troop, was given the task.

While troops commanded by Lt. Sammy Stokes, Sarnia, Ontario and Lt. Dick Rigby, St. Catharines, Ont., placed themselves in position to give covering fire, Crerar and his section camouflaged themselves for the job. They crawled 1,000 yards on hands and knees through a mined area before reaching a spot from which to make a detailed reconnaissance. They were engaged with small-arms fire, but they completed the task. On the way out the group was mortared and suffered casualties.



Lieutenant Edward "Sammy" Stokes

Six weeks after Boss' report, Sammy Stokes lost his life on September 3, 1944, while fighting during the Italian Campaign near Rimini on the northern Adriatic coast of Italy. Approximately one week later, Samuel and Jennie Stokes on Wellington Street in Sarnia received a telegram from Ottawa informing them that their only son, LIEUT. EDWARD SAMUEL STOKES WAS OFFICIALLY REPORTED KILLED IN ACTION. The dispatch gave no other details on where or how he met his death. In late September 1944, Col. Samuel Stokes received the following letter from the Major-General, Adjutant-General:

Dear Sir:

It was with deep regret that I learned of the death of your son, Lieutenant Edward Samuel Stokes, who gave his life in the Service of his Country in the Mediterranean Theatre of War, on the 3rd day of September, 1944.

From official information we have received, your son was killed in action against the enemy. You may be assured that any additional information received will be communicated to you without delay.

The Minister of National Defence and the Members of the Army Council have asked me to express to you and your family their sincere sympathy in your bereavement. We pay tribute to the sacrifice he so bravely made.

Edward Samuel Stokes' death was later officially recorded as, *Overseas casualty, killed in action, in the field (Italy)*. He was recommended for the Military Cross at the Melfa River action and was awarded the decoration Mention in Despatches posthumously. The award stated, *The King has been graciously pleased to approve the award of Mentions in Despatches, in recognition of gallant and distinguished services*. On May 16, 1945, Sammy Stokes' remains were reverently exhumed from their original burial location, and reburied in Gradara British Empire Cemetery in Gradara, Italy.

In February 1946, Samuel and Jennie Stokes received a War Service Gratuity of \$808.44 for the loss of their only son. Fifteen months later, in mid-May 1947, they received from the Director of Records, for Adjutant-General, a photograph of the grave and marker over the burial place of their son in Gradara, Italy. Edward Sammy Stokes, 23, is buried in Gradara War Cemetery, Italy, Grave I, H, 57. On his headstone are inscribed the words, ROYAL MILITARY COLLEGE ROYAL CANADIAN DRAGOONS TRUTH, DUTY, VALOR.
SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, J, L, N, S, 2B, 2C, 2D, 7C, 8X, 8Y

STONE, Geoffrey William (#R/205656)

Geoffrey William Stone had so much to look forward to when his mother gave him permission to enlist underage with the RCAF. He was not yet eighteen, but planned to make the Air Force his career after the war. In England, he had met a girl and they talked of marriage and a member of his crew, Clarence Britton, had become his best friend. Cruelly, Geoffrey's life and dreams were shattered when his crew and he were killed in a training flight over England on November 8, 1944. He was only 19.

Geoffrey Stone was born in Sarnia on April 10, 1925, the son of George William and Enfield Ellen (nee Butler) Stone. George and Enfield, both born in Sussex, England, were married at Waltham Abbey, Essex, England on December 31, 1918. Their union blessed them with five children: sons Geoffrey and George Ronald; and three daughters, who at the time of Geoffrey's death were Mrs. Peggy Barnes (500 George Street, Sarnia); Mrs. Phyllis Kerwin (165 Mitton Street, Sarnia); and Miss Beverley Stone (165 Mitton Street, Sarnia). When Geoffrey was younger, his father had abandoned the family to serve in the Canadian Army overseas. Enfield Ellen Stone was solely responsible for raising and supporting their children.

Geoffrey's brother George Ronald, who was employed on the Polymer Corporation construction, also served in the war. He enlisted in October 1942 and became a Guardsman with the Canadian Infantry.

Like many others in his generation, Geoffrey had much energy. He attended Johnston Memorial Public Elementary School from 1931 to 1939 and then Sarnia Collegiate from 1939 to 1942. He was an excellent student, a member of the Air Cadets for one year, and was very active in athletics, including rugby, swimming, basketball, softball and especially hockey. In the summer of 1942, Geoffrey worked as a labourer with Union Gas Company in Sarnia. His plan was to return to school in the fall.

Geoffrey Stone was eager to enlist in the RCAF; however, he was not the official legal age to do so. His mother supported and respected his decision, so she gave him her permission to enlist. At the age of seventeen and a half, Geoffrey joined the Royal Canadian Air Force on November 17, 1942 at No. 9 Recruiting Centre in London, Ontario. He stood five feet ten inches tall, had blue eyes and dark brown hair, was single, and was residing at home at 165 South Mitton Street with his mother at the time. Geoffrey requested flying duties and to be part of an aircrew. After the war, his ambition was to stay on in the Air Force.

From #9 Recruiting Center in London, and then #2 Manning Depot in Brandon, Manitoba, Geoffrey Stone received his air training at #4 Initial Training School (ITS) in Edmonton; at #7 Initial Training School (ITS) in Saskatoon; and at #6 Elementary Flying Training School (EFTS) in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan. In late September 1943, while stationed at No. 6 E.F.T.S., Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, Geoffrey was able to return to Sarnia on a short 6-day leave to visit his family and friends. On his return to Sarnia, he accompanied the body of Sarnian LAC Leonard Raymond Meere, who had been killed in a flying accident at Prince Albert, Saskatchewan (Leonard Meere is included in this Project).

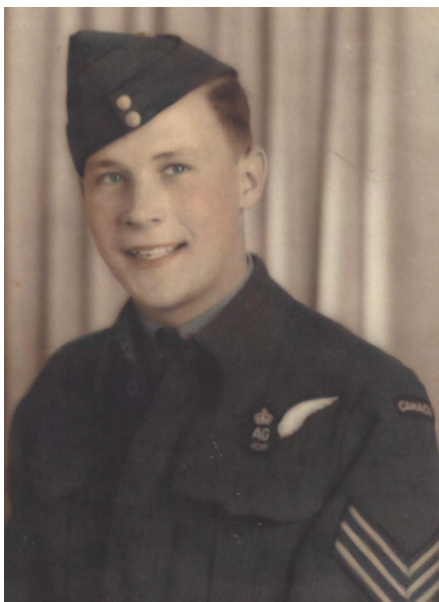
In October 1943, Geoffrey was again posted to #2 Manning Depot in Brandon before continuing his air

training at #1 Air Gunners Ground Training School (AGGTS) in Quebec City, and then at #3 Bombing and Gunnery School (B&GS) in MacDonald, Manitoba. Geoffrey was awarded his Air Gunner's Badge on January 28, 1944 at #3 B&GS in Macdonald, Manitoba. After graduating, he was again able to return to Sarnia to visit his family and friends while on his two-week pre-embarkation leave. It would be the last time they saw one another.

In mid-February 1944, Geoffrey continued his training at #3 Aircrew Graduate Training School (AGTS) in Quebec. In mid-March 1944, he was posted to #1 Y Depot in Halifax. He embarked overseas from Halifax bound for the United Kingdom on March 25, 1944. Upon arrival, he was initially posted to #3 Personnel Reception Centre (3PRC) in Bournemouth, before being transferred in late April 1944 to #10 Operational Training Unit (OTU) at RAF Abingdon.

Stone became a member of an RCAF crew flying Halifax Mk. III aircraft HX356 (markings NP-G). The flying crew of Sgt. Geoffrey Stone, along with P/O Clarence Britton, F/Sgt. Gerald Patterson, F/O William Cook, F/Sgt. William (Bill) Freeman and F/O Andrew Sharp, had received an award as "Best Crew" against 13 other crews, during their training course that concluded in July 1944. Geoffrey and Clarence Britton (of Windsor), who was three years older than Geoffrey and had been in the RCAF since May 1942, became best friends while serving together. Clarence's mother had hoped that once the war was over, the boys would come to Windsor for a visit. Also while overseas, Geoffrey Stone met a special lady and the two of them talked of getting married to one another following the war.

On October 28, 1944, Geoffrey Stone was promoted to the rank of Flight Sergeant, but in his letters home to his mother, he had not revealed to her whether he was serving in a bomber or a fighter squadron. On November 3, 1944, nineteen year-old Flight-Sergeant-Air Gunner Geoffrey Stone became a member of RAF #158 Squadron "Strength in Unity" stationed at RAF Lissett, flying Handley Page Halifax Mk. III aircraft, part of **Bomber Command**.



Flight Sergeant-AG Geoffrey William Stone

During the course of the war, one of this country's most significant contributions was the approximately 50,000 Canadians who served with the RCAF and RAF in Bomber Command operations. Next to Britain, Canada was the largest contributor to Bomber Command, making up more than a third of all of Bomber Command personnel. The men who served in Bomber Command faced some of the most difficult odds of anyone fighting in the war. There was no easy way to learn how to fly the heavy bombers, and training crews suffered a litany of disasters, crashes and deaths. By the end of the war, Bomber Command lost over 8,000 Allied airmen who were killed in training or by accidents alone.

No. 158 Squadron had been formed in February 1942, originally flying Vickers Wellington aircraft based at RAF Driffield. In June 1942, the squadron converted to Handley Page Halifax, a four-engine heavy bomber, retaining that aircraft for the rest of the war. As part of the strategic bomber force, the squadron changed its base a number of times during the war, including at RAF East Moor, Rufforth, Lissett and Stradishall. Five days after being posted to #158 Squadron, Geoffrey Stone lost his life.

On November 8, 1944, Geoffrey Stone and his crew lifted off at 8:17 p.m. from Lissett, East Yorkshire, U.K. Their Halifax Mk. III Bomber HX356, bore the distinctive name and noseart "Goofy's Gift". It was a night bombing training flight and they headed for the local bombing ranges, probably their last training flight before regular operational bombing duties. Two to three minutes after take-off, after climbing slowly to 400 feet, the aircraft went into a shallow dive and crashed, two miles west of the runway, killing all seven on board instantaneously by the force of the impact. Perishing with Flight Sergeant-Air Gunner Geoffrey Stone were his best friend P/O. Clarence William Arthur Britton; F/S.s William (Bill) Max Freeman and Gerald William Henry Patterson; F/O.s Andrew Sharp (of Point Edward, Ontario), and William Wilfred Cook; and Edwin Sampson Powell (RAF).

All were laid to rest on November 13 in Harrogate (Stonefall) Cemetery, Yorkshire, United Kingdom. Their average age was 22, with Sgt. Stone being the youngest at nineteen. Geoffrey Stone, who had been overseas for only seven months, was officially recorded as, *Killed as a result of a flying accident, overseas (England)*.

On the morning of November 13, 1944, his mother in Sarnia received a letter from her son Geoffrey. Only a few hours later, she would receive a telegram from the Director of Records at Ottawa informing her that her son, FLIGHT SERGEANT GEOFFREY WILLIAM STONE HAS BEEN KILLED IN ACTION OVERSEAS WHILE SERVING WITH THE RCAF. The message also promised that further particulars would be forwarded as they become available.

Three months earlier, in late-August 1944, Enfield Ellen Stone had received a telegram from Ottawa informing her that her other son, GUARDSMAN GEORGE RONALD STONE WAS WOUNDED ON AUGUST 14 ON ACTIVE SERVICE IN FRANCE. The message also stated that further details as to the nature and the extent of the wounds would be forwarded as soon as they were ascertained. When she received the November telegram, son George Ronald was still in a British hospital recovering from his wounds. Geoffrey's father, who had abandoned the family years earlier to serve in the Army, was overseas when his son Geoffrey was killed.

Not long after, Mrs. Stone received another telegram from the R.C.A.F. Casualties Officer:
MRS GEORGE STONE,
DEEPLY REGRET TO ADVISE THAT YOUR SON R TWO NOUGHT FIVE SIX FIVE SIX SERGEANT
GEOFFREY WILLIAM STONE WAS KILLED ON ACTIVE SERVICE OVERSEAS NOVEMBER EIGHTH
STOP HIS FUNERAL TAKES PLACE AT 10.30 AM NOVEMBER THIRTEENTH AT REGIONAL CEMETERY
HARROGATE YORKSHIRE ENGLAND STOP PLEASE ACCEPT MY PROFOUND SYMPATHY STOP
LETTER FOLLOWS.

RCAF CASUALTIES OFFICER

In mid-November 1944, Enfield Ellen Stone of 165 S. Mitton Street received the following letter from the Wing Commander, Commanding No. 158 Squadron, R.A.F.:

Dear Mrs. Stone,

Before you receive this letter you will have been notified by R.C.A.F. Headquarters, Ottawa, of the very sad loss of your son, Sergeant Geoffrey William Stone.

Unfortunately it was not possible for Service reasons to ascertain your wishes regarding the funeral in the time available, and I had therefore to arrange for his burial without reference to you. You will, I am sure, understand the necessity for this action, and I sincerely trust that the arrangements we were able to make were what you would have wished.

Your son's funeral took place at the R.A.F. Regional Cemetery, Harrogate, Yorkshire, at 10.30 a.m. on 13th November, the service being conducted by a Canadian chaplain. Owing to war operations it was not possible to accord full Service honours, but the coffin was carried by men of the Royal Canadian Air Force and was covered with the Union Jack. The Last Post was sounded at the end. Two wreaths were sent from the officers and men of this Squadron, and I hope to send a photograph of the grave, together with its number.

You will wish to know that all war graves are taken care of by the Imperial War Graves Commission, Wooburn House, Wooburn Green, Buckinghamshire, whose duty it is to arrange both for the temporary marking of the grave by a wooden cross and ultimately for the erection of a permanent headstone. I am instructed to explain, also, that questions of re-interment, if this were desired, could only be considered at the conclusion of hostilities.

You will, of course, be anxious to know further details of this accident, which occurred at twenty minutes past eight on the evening of 8th November, 1944. The aircraft had just taken off on a training flight when it crashed about two or three minutes later. There was no fire, but your son and all the crew were killed instantaneously by the force of the impact. I am afraid I cannot tell you the cause of this tragic accident, as this is unknown. The matter will,

of course, be investigated, but it is very unlikely that the exact cause will ever be established in view of the death of the entire crew and the complete destruction of the aircraft.

Your son and his crew only arrived on this Squadron a few days before the accident, but they impressed me as very keen and enthusiastic and I had anticipated that they would have developed into an excellent operational crew. It is the more tragic that this accident should have occurred just as they had completed their training and were about to start on operational duties. Your son's personal belongings have been carefully collected and forwarded to the R.A.F. Central Depository and in due course you will receive a further communication concerning these from the Administrator of Estates, Ottawa.

I should like to assure you how much we all honour the unselfish sacrifice your son has made so far from home in the cause of freedom and in the service of the British Commonwealth of Nations. May I now express the great sympathy which all of us feel with you in the sad loss you have sustained.

In mid-November of 1944, a memorial service to honour Flight Sergeant Geoffrey Stone was held during a morning service in St. George's Church, Sarnia. Three months later, on February 13, 1945, Enfield Ellen received the following letter from the RCAF Casualty Officer:

Dear Mrs. Stone,

I have been directed to inform you that your son, Geoffrey William Stone, has been promoted to the rank of Flight Sergeant with effect from October 28th, 1944. May I again express my deepest sympathy to you and the members of your family in the loss of your son whose qualities and ability have thus been recognized.

Ten months later, in December 1945, Enfield Ellen received a War Service Gratuity of \$256.11 for the loss of her son Geoffrey. Geoffrey Stone, 19, is buried in Harrogate (Stonefall) Cemetery, Yorkshire, Section H. Row B. Grave 14. On his headstone are inscribed the words, SAFE IN THE ARMS OF JESUS.

At Lissett Airfield, there is an impressive Memorial to RAF 158 Squadron that was unveiled and dedicated in May 2009. Created by artist Peter Naylor, it is in the form of seven airmen and stands as part of a wind farm at the aerodrome. At the unveiling, Adrian Hammond of the 158 Squadron Association said, "We are pleased the 851 men and women who lost their lives while based at the site are to be honoured. The 158 Squadron had members from all over the Commonwealth who took part in bombing raids almost every day. The sculpture is a fantastic tribute to the memory of all the crew and personnel who kept our shores safe."

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, J, L, M, N, R, 2C, 2D, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10B, 10I, 10U

STRONACH, James Gatherum (#J/5665)

James Gatherum Stronach was the adopted son of Scottish parents who immigrated to Sarnia in 1930, when James or "Jimmie" was twelve. By all accounts, Jimmie was a popular and efficient airman. *Exceptional. A pupil whose work has the hallmark of hard work and intelligence* was one senior officer's assessment of the Sarnian. On June 14, 1943, Jimmie was piloting a twin-engine medium bomber on an anti-submarine patrol in the Sea of Biscay area. After leaving its base in England in 13:30 hours, neither the plane nor its four-man crew was ever seen again. James "Jimmie" Stronach, 24, has his name inscribed on the Runnymede War Memorial, Surrey, England.

James Stronach was born in Dundee, Scotland on December 21, 1918. He was the adopted son and only child of Henry Bullion Stronach and Margaret (nee Gatherum) Stronach. Henry Stronach and Margaret Gatherum were born in Scotland, in Dundee and St. Andrew's respectively, and when James was 12, the Stronach family immigrated to Canada around 1930. They ended up residing at 198 Bright Street in Sarnia and Henry supported his family by working as a Guard Inspector in the Electrical Department at the Sarnia Imperial Refinery.

James Stronach was a busy young man in and out of the classroom. He was educated in the Dundee, Scotland public school from 1923 to 1930 but from 1930 to 1932 he attended George Street Public School. He then spent five years at Sarnia Collegiate School before graduating in 1937. For a number of years he was a carrier for the *Canadian Observer* in Sarnia. He was active in sports, including tennis, hockey, football, baseball, golf and swimming, and his hobbies included model aircraft building, automobile racing mechanics and scouting work.

After graduating high school, James worked as a Laboratory Assistant with the Technical and Research Department at the Sarnia Imperial Refinery from September 1937 until he enlisted. Following are portions of two reference letters that his bosses, research chemists at Imperial Oil, wrote for the RCAF Recruiting Officer on behalf of James' application: *I have found him to be capable and trustworthy at any task he has been asked to perform. He has a good personality and is well liked by his fellow workers.; and During his time he has shown himself to be conscientious and capable in all classes of routine testing that has been assigned to him. We have great pleasure in*

recommending him for service.

Twenty-one-year-old James Stronach enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force on September 12, 1940 in London, Ontario. He stood five feet five and a half inches tall, had blue eyes and light brown hair, was single, and was residing at home with his parents on Bright Street in Sarnia at the time. After the war, his plan was to return to Sarnia and work as a chemist. He requested flying duties, with a preference to be a pilot or observer.

From #2 Manning Depot in Brandon, Manitoba, he received his initial air training at #2 Initial Training School (ITS) in Regina, Saskatchewan; at #8 Elementary Flying Training School (EFTS) in Vancouver (Sea Island), British Columbia; and at #3 Service Flying Training School (SFTS) in Calgary, Alberta. On May 28, 1941, James was awarded his Pilot's Flying Badge, when he received his wings at Calgary, Alberta, with the rank of Sergeant-Pilot.

In early June 1941, James spent a three-week leave at home in Sarnia, before transferring to an Operational school in Eastern Canada. He spent three months taking a Navigation Reconnaissance Course at #31 General Reconnaissance School (GRS) in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, until mid-September 1941. The Chief Instructor at #31 GRS wrote that James was *Exceptional. A pupil whose work has the hallmark of hard work and intelligence. He should be a valuable man in a G.R. Squadron.*

James was then posted to #1 Y Depot in Halifax. In early October 1941, he embarked overseas bound for the United Kingdom. Initially posted to #3 Personnel Reception Centre, on November 4, 1941 James became a member of RCAF #415 Swordfish Squadron "Ad Metam" (To the mark), with the rank of Sergeant-Pilot.

RCAF #415 Squadron was formed in August 1941 as a torpedo-bomber squadron at RAF Thorney Island, Hampshire, England operating a mix of Bristol Beaufort, Bristol Blenheim and Handley Page Hampden aircraft over the next two years. **RAF Coastal Command** played a pivotal role in the Allied war effort, most notably against U-boats during the Battle of the Atlantic, along with sinking enemy warships and merchant vessels, protecting Allied shipping from aerial attacks, reconnaissance and carrying out air-sea rescue.

As part of Coastal Command, #415 Squadron carried out anti-submarine patrols and shipping strikes in the English Channel and the Bay of Biscay, initially with bombs but later with torpedoes. While Stronach was with #415, the squadron moved its base a number of times, including at RAF St. Eval, North Coates, Wick, Leuchers, and Predannack. In September 1943, the squadron converted to Vickers Wellington and Fairey Albacore aircraft, attacking German E-boats, enemy merchant ships and larger warships. In July 1944, the squadron converted to Handley Page Halifax aircraft and joined No. 6 (RCAF) of Bomber Command.



"BULLY" is the aristocratic and well-favored mascot of an RCAF Coastal Command Squadron overseas. Here he is in an off-duty moment with four officers of the squadron. Left to right they are: FO. R. P. U. VAUGHAN, Montreal, the engineering officer; FO. JIM STRONACH, Sarnia, Ont.; FLT. LT. R. A. PATTERSON, Lindsay, Ont., the adjutant and (standing) FO. TOM FISHBOURNE, Montreal, the intelligence officer. R.C.A.F. Photo.

PO. James Stronach holding
the squadron mascot "Bully"
Montreal Gazette, August 11, 1942



G.K. Crummy, A.B. Clegg, W.A. Trask, J.G. Stronach

In June 1942, James was promoted from Sergeant-Pilot to Pilot Officer. In August, his parents received a cablegram in Sarnia informing them that their son had been promoted again, this time to the rank of Flying Officer in the R.C.A.F. While overseas, on various short leaves, James was able to visit some of his relatives in Scotland. In February 1943, Henry and Margaret Stronach received the news that their son James had been promoted to Squadron Leader, one of the youngest squadron leaders with the R.C.A.F. While overseas, aside from his official duties, he gave much of his time to executive work in the management of air force sports.



James Stronach October 1942



The Handley Page Hampden was a twin-engine medium bomber with a crew of four: pilot, observer, gunner/wireless operator and air gunner. It was often referred to by aircrews as the "Flying Suitcase" because of its cramped crew conditions. On June 14, 1943, Squadron Leader-Pilot James Stronach was part of a four-man crew aboard RCAF Hampden aircraft X2961. The aircraft took off from R.A.F. Station St. Eval at 13.30 hours. The bomber was on an anti-submarine patrol in the Bay of Biscay area. No word was received from the aircraft after it was airborne and it failed to return. Neither the crew or aircraft were ever recovered. Perishing with Squadron Leader James Stronach were Warrant Officer Woodrow Arnold Trask; Flying Officer George Kenneth Crummy; and Pilot Officer Alan Bernard Clegg.

Not long after, Henry and Margaret received a telegram from Royal Canadian Air Force headquarters at Ottawa advising them that their son, SQUADRON LEADER JAMES STRONACH WAS REPORTED MISSING AFTER AIR OPERATIONS ON JUNE 14. In the third week of June 1943, Henry received a letter from the Flight Lieutenant, R.C.A.F. Casualties Officer, for Chief of the Air Staff in Ottawa. Following are portions of that letter: *Dear Mr. Stronach:*

It is my painful duty to confirm the telegram recently received by you which informed you that your son, Squadron Leader/James Gatherum Stronach, is reported missing on Active Service.

Advice has been received from the Royal Canadian Air Force Casualties Officer, Overseas, that your son was a member of the crew of an aircraft which failed to return to its base after air operations, due to enemy action on June 14th, 1943. There were three other members of the Royal Canadian Air Force in the crew and they also have been reported missing. Since you may wish to know their names and next-of-kin, we are listing them below...

This does not necessarily mean that your son has been killed or wounded. He may have landed in enemy territory and might be a Prisoner of War. Enquiries have been made through the International Red Cross Society and all other appropriate sources and you may be assured that any further information received will be communicated to you immediately.

Your son's name will not appear on the official casualty list for five weeks. You may, however, release to the Press or Radio the fact that he is reported missing, but not disclosing the date, place or his unit. May I join with you and Mrs. Stronach in the hope that better news will be forthcoming in the near future.

At the end of June 1943, Margaret received the following letter from the Wing Commander, Officer Commanding, No. 415 R.C.A.F. Squadron:

Dear Mrs. Stronach:

It is with deep regret that I confirm that your son Squadron Leader James Gatherum Stronach is missing on air operations since the afternoon of Monday June 14th.

On that particular day Jimmie piloting his regular crew took off from the aerodrome at 1.30 p.m. on anti submarine patrol in the Bay of Biscay. Warrant Officer Woodrow Trask of Hanley, Saskatchewan was his navigator, and Flying Officer Kenneth Crummy of Grand Prairie, Alberta, and Pilot Officer Alan Clegg of 222 Aldine Street, St. James, Manitoba, were his wireless operator air gunners. They were due back at 8.30 p.m. but failed to return. Other crews of this squadron who were on a similar patrol had seen nothing of them nor were any wireless messages received from their aircraft.

Your son had filled a most important position in our squadron as flight commander. His sound judgement, tact in dealing with men, and his experience on air operations, particularly qualified him in this respect. His service with our unit was exemplary. Efficiency and harmonious relations with his men were characteristic of Jimmie. On air operations he had established a long record of effective sorties against the enemy. He possessed great courage and determination and pressed home his attacks in spite of fierce opposition.

Jimmie was very popular in or mess and with all members of the squadron. Officers and other ranks respected him highly and airmen felt free to seek his advice. His off handed manner and genial smile made him a welcome member of any group. His loss is a severe experience and is being keenly felt by all who knew him.

Jimmie's belongings and personal effects have been taken care of and will be forwarded to the Central Depository at Colnbrook for safe keeping in accordance with Air Ministry's instructions. May I now on behalf of the squadron express our very great sympathy to you in the distressing and uncertain word which you have received of your very dear son.

Also at the end of June 1943, Margaret received the following letter from the Flight Lieutenant, for Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief, RCAF, Overseas in London, England:

Dear Mrs. Stronach,

It is with deep regret that I must confirm the information which you already received from Air Force Headquarters, Ottawa, which stated that your son, Squadron Leader James Gatherum Stronach, was reported missing as the result of air operations on the 14th June, 1943.

Your son was Pilot of a Hampden aircraft, which took off at 1.30 p.m. on the 14th June on an anti-submarine patrol in the Bay of Biscay area and failed to return. No information has since been received concerning him, however, enquiries are continuing through the International Red Cross Committee and all other available sources, and any news which may be forthcoming will be communicated to you at once by Air Force Headquarters, Ottawa.

Please accept my deepest sympathy with you in your great anxiety.

In late July 1943, the Air Marshal in London, England, sent a response to Margaret's query for any information about her only son:

Dear Mrs. Stronach,

As soon as your letter of the fourth of July was received I made enquiries regarding your son, Squadron Leader James Stronach, whose present status of missing after air operations must have brought you great sorrow and anxiety.

Unfortunately there is nothing I can add to the information already given to you and no official advice has yet been received from enemy sources that your son is a prisoner of war. No one in No. 415 Squadron can make any observations which might be connected with the loss of the aircraft of which he was the captain. The aircraft failed to return from operations over the Bay of Biscay and I can assure you that there was a feeling of genuine regret when your son, whose fine leadership and valour had gained for him the honour of being Flight Commander of "A" Flight, did not return to his squadron. His loss to the Service at the present time is being keenly felt, as is his absence by his comrades who loved, respected and admired him.

The uncertainty will be hard to endure until you receive more definite word and you have my sincere sympathy. I earnestly hope you will receive good news as early as possible and that you will write to me if you think there is anything I can do at any time.

In January 1944, seven months after James Stronach had disappeared, the Stronachs received official notification from Ottawa stating that their son, *Squadron Leader James Stronach is now reported as missing, presumed dead.* James Stronach's death was later officially recorded as, *Previously reported missing after air operations, now for official purposes, presumed dead, overseas (Bay of Biscay).* In August 1945, Henry and

Margaret received a War Service Gratuity of \$670.74 for the loss of their only child. In mid-August 1946, Margaret received the following letter from the R.C.A.F. Records Officer in Ottawa:

Dear Mrs. Stronach:

It is a privilege to have the opportunity of sending you the Operational Wings and Certificate in recognition of the gallant services rendered by your son Squadron Leader J.G. Stronach. I realize there is little which may be said or done to lessen your sorrow, but it is my hope that these "Wings", indicative of operations against the enemy, will be a treasured memento of a young life offered on the altar of freedom in defence of his Home and Country.

In May 1952, Henry and Margaret Stronach received the following letter from the Wing Commander, R.C.A.F. Casualties Officer, for Chief of the Air Staff:

Dear Mrs. Stronach:

It is with reluctance that after so long an interval, I must refer to the loss of your son, Squadron Leader James Gatherum Stronach, but due to the lack of any information concerning him since he was reported missing, it must be regretfully accepted and officially recorded that he does not have a "known" grave.

Due to the extreme hazards attending air operations there are, unhappily, many thousands of British aircrew boys who do not have "known" graves and all will be commemorated on General Memorials that will be erected at a number of locations by the Imperial War Graves Commission (of which Canada is a member), each Memorial representative of a theatre of operations. One of these Memorials will be erected at Runnymede, England, and the name of your son will appear on that Memorial.

I realize that this is an extremely distressing letter and that there is no manner of conveying such information to you that would not add to your heartaches. I am fully aware that nothing I may say will lessen your great sorrow, but I would like to express to you and the members of your family my deepest sympathy.

James Stronach, 24, has no known grave. His name is inscribed on the Runnymede War Memorial, Surrey, United Kingdom, Panel 172. His name is also inscribed on the Sarnia Refinery Plaque. Unveiled in 1949, the plaque has the names of 24 Sarnia Imperial Oil employees who made the ultimate sacrifice in World War II.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, J, L, M, N, O, 2C, 2D, 4B, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10B, 10J

SUTHERLAND, Leslie Gordon (#R/99732)

Leslie "Les" Sutherland lived most of his life in Corunna before enlisting with the RCAF at age 22. One RCAF official assessed him as *Bright, enthusiastic type, calm and reserved personality. Very good material for Aircrew*. Leslie was eventually assigned to 426 Squadron as a pilot. After almost completing a tour of operations in the hope of becoming an instructor and receiving his commission, Leslie and his crew were killed when his aircraft was shot down after a night attack on Dortmund, Germany. The Royal Canadian Legion, Branch 447 in Corunna, is named in Leslie Sutherland's honour. He was the first known "killed in action" serviceman from Moore Township during World War II.

Leslie "Les" Sutherland was born in London, Ontario on November 26, 1918, the only son of Donald Gordon and Maude Louise (nee: Lossing) Sutherland. He was also the step-son of Arthur Stanley Turnbull of Corunna, Ontario.

Donald Gordon Sutherland, known by his middle name, was born on October 9, 1878 in Wallaceburg. On August 18, 1902, twenty-three-year-old Gordon Sutherland, then a brakeman, married twenty-one-year-old Watford born Maude Lossing (born June 1881), a domestic at the time in St. Thomas, Ontario. Gordon later worked as a steamfitter. The Sutherlands had three children together: daughters Maura Jean, born in 1908; and Sarah Ruth, born July 22, 1915, and their youngest, Leslie. Both girls were known by their middle names, and Ruth later married Captain George Boulton Albinson of Mooretown on December 19, 1936 in Corunna.

On December 30, 1915, thirty-seven-year-old Gordon Sutherland enlisted in the Canadian Expeditionary Force in London, Ontario. He was residing on Wilson Avenue in London at the time, with his wife Maude and their two children Jean, age 7, and Ruth, age 5 months. He stood five feet five inches tall, had grey eyes and dark brown hair, was working as a steamfitter and recorded his next-of-kin as his wife Maude Sutherland. He became a Private with the 135th Overseas Battalion.

Gordon did not have the opportunity to serve overseas. During his service in Canada he experienced periods of aggravated asthma and periods of relief. Treatment included anti-asthmatic medication, fresh air in tents and tonics. On August 18, 1916, he was transferred to the 111th Battalion at Camp Borden, and the following day the transfer was amended to Casualties Manning Depot #1, London—in hospital. In early September 1916, Gordon

underwent a medical assessment at #2 Manning Depot in Toronto. There he was diagnosed with chronic asthma.

Medical officials determined that Gordon “had asthma almost constantly from 1900 until about 1910 when he went west where he was more or less free from it. Came back to London 1913 and since then has had frequent attacks, only able to work about half of the time. Between attacks feels well. Felt well at time of enlistment, had first attack since enlistment in July, this attack severe and lasted until last of August, during the attack quite unable to carry on... Will probably always be subject to attacks and will never become an efficient soldier.” His asthma was determined to be a chronic disease, a permanent condition with periods of aggravation and periods of relief that had merely undergone a natural course during his service. They recommended him for discharge as medically unfit. So with less than one year of service and only in Canada, Gordon was struck off service on October 16, 1916 in Toronto. Just over two years later, Maude gave birth to their third child, Leslie.

Tragedy struck the family on June 5, 1920, when Leslie was about one-and-a-half years old. At the age of 41, his father, Gordon, died in London due to “exhaustion from chronic mental disease”. His Veterans Death Card records his death as “Died at hospital for insane, London, Ont. on 5th June 1920 of paralysis”. After Gordon’s death, widowed Maude Sutherland lived on Marantete Avenue in Windsor for a time. One of the people to visit Maude after the loss of her husband was Arthur Stanley Turnbull. Arthur, a World War I veteran, was very connected to the men who served and visited families of those who did not return and those who died as a result of their experiences.

On May 17, 1922 in London, Maude Sutherland, a 40 year-old widow and a housekeeper who was residing on Duchess Avenue in London, married Arthur Turnbull, age 35, a farmer living in Corunna. Arthur, Maude and their children--Jean, Ruth and Leslie--made their home in Corunna. Arthur later became a customs officer on Stag Island.

Arthur Turnbull was no stranger to serving his country and was a veteran of the Great War. Born May 12, 1887 in Strathroy, Arthur was the adopted son of James and Isabella (nee Harris) Turnbull. James and Isabella had no sons of their own. Since they needed help on their farm, located on the south side of the creek in Froomfield, they adopted Arthur from another family. This was a common practice at the time. In 1901, James, a farmer, and Isabella Turnbull were living in Lambton West, Moore Township, with their adopted daughter Jessie, 22, and adopted son Arthur, 13. Arthur’s early military career was with the Moore Mounted Infantry (his uniform from that time is in the Moore Museum in Mooretown).

Arthur Turnbull enlisted in the Canadian Expeditionary Force on January 11, 1915 in London, Ontario. A farmer at the time, he recorded that he had 11 years militia experience and was a Sergeant-Major. The twenty-seven-year-old stood five feet seven and a half inches tall, had grey eyes and light brown hair, was single and recorded his next of kin as his father, James Turnbull, in Corunna. Arthur became a member of the 7th Canadian Mounted Rifles (CMR).

On June 22, 1915, he arrived in the United Kingdom aboard the *S.S. Caledonian*. His trip overseas must have been an unpleasant one – he was dealing with measles for 13 days. On July 1, 1915, he was promoted to Sergeant at Dibgate Camp, a member of the 2nd Canadian Divisional Cavalry.

On September 15, 1915, he arrived in France. In January 1916, he became a member of the 1st Canadian Hussars, Special Service Squadron. He was hospitalized twice while in France: in late February 1916 for four days due to myalgia; and in early March 1916 for sixteen days due to influenza. In May 1916, he became a member of the Canadian Corps Cavalry Regiment (later renamed the Canadian Light Horse). In November 1916, he was promoted in rank to Squadron Sergeant-Major (Warrant Officer Class 2).

On August 17, 1918, he was awarded the “Medaille Militaire by the President of the French Republic for distinguished service rendered during course of campaign”. He served in France for more than three years, until the Great War ended on November 11, 1918.

He was discharged on demobilization in late April 1919 in Toronto. Arthur returned to his parents’ home in Moore Township and resumed working on the farm. In 1921, the 34 year-old was living with his parents, James and Isabella, in Moore Township and the other member of the Turnbull household was a 50 year-old lodger, Eva Bailey. The following year, Arthur Turnbull married widowed Maude Sutherland and, along with her children Jean, Ruth and Leslie, settled in Corunna. Years later, Regimental Sergeant Major (WO2) Arthur Turnbull of the 1st Hussars was awarded the Colonial Auxiliary Forces Long Service Medal.

Leslie Sutherland received his education at Corunna Public School from 1928 to 1934 and then Sarnia

Collegiate from September 1934 to April 1939. Records show that Leslie was a well-rounded individual who found time to pursue many interests. He took a variety of senior courses at SCITS ranging from Canadian History, Ancient History, and algebra to chemistry, physics and geometry. He was an avid sportsman who enjoyed playing football, hockey, baseball, swimming and golf. Leslie's passion was golf and he played as often as he could although he found time for his hobbies of stamp collecting, wireless radio, boating and woodcraft. He also spent many summers on one of his favourite places, Stag Island. He was a very good swimmer, received a Certificate in Life Saving from the Humane Society, and was also a member of the Central Century Club. His nephew, John Albinson, recalls that his uncle being described as "gregarious and outgoing" by other family members.

After graduating high school, Leslie worked as a deckhand with Sarnia Steam Ship Company for one full season, from June to December 1939. From January to March 1940 he was unemployed for those months. On March 1, 1940, he began employment with Sarnia Imperial Oil Refinery as a pipefitter, where he worked until the time he enlisted. He was also a member of the 2nd-11 Royal Canadian Engineers (Reserve) in Sarnia where he had military training as a Sapper from August 15, 1940 until May 12, 1941.

Twenty-two-year-old Leslie Sutherland underwent his Royal Canadian Air Force medical and completed his Attestation Paper on May 3, 1941, in London Ontario. He was sworn in and formally accepted into the RCAF on May 16, 1941. He recorded his occupation as pipefitter with Imperial Oil and his next of kin as his mother, Maude Louise Turnbull in Corunna. He also recorded that his father, Donald Gordon, a steamfitter, was deceased.

He requested flying duties, with a preference to be a pilot. Two of his references included Mr. W. Lyford, a foreman at Imperial Oil, and Dr. R. MacGregor, a dentist in Corunna. In a reference letter written for the RCAF Recruiting Officer, Bryan Cathcart, a merchant in Corunna wrote, *I have known Leslie from boyhood and can recommend him as a young man very highly respected in this community. He has good morals, character, temperate, steady and reliable in his work. I am sure you will have no regrets for anything you may be able to do for him.*

Leslie stood five feet eight inches tall, weighed 144 pounds, had brown eyes and dark brown hair, was single, and was residing at home with his parents in Corunna at the time. He requested flying duties, with a preference to be a pilot or observer. At his interview, the Recruiting Officer recorded that Leslie was *Clean, courteous, intelligent looking, rather shy, well mannered. Pleasing personality. Necessary qualifications for pilot. Well recommended. Splendid pilot material.* The Medical Board described Leslie as *Bright, enthusiastic type, calm and reserved personality. Very good material for Aircrew.*

From the Recruiting Centre in London and then #1 Manning Depot in Toronto, Sutherland began his training at RCAF Station Trenton on May 28, 1941. He continued his air training at #1 Initial Training School (ITS) in Toronto beginning on July 15, 1941; at #7 Elementary Flying Training School (EFTS) in Windsor beginning on September 1 (flying in Finch Fleet aircraft); and at #14 Service Flying Training School (SFTS) at Aylmer, Ontario beginning on October 25. Leslie was awarded his Pilot's Flying Badge on January 16, 1942. On February 14, 1942, he was posted to #1 Y Depot in Halifax. From February 14 to 23, 1942, he received his 10-day pre-embarkation leave. On March 12, 1942, Leslie embarked overseas from Halifax bound for the United Kingdom.



Arriving in the U.K. on March 23, 1942, he was initially posted to #3 Personnel Reception Centre. On May 1, Sutherland was transferred and continued his training at RAF Station Colerne before being posted to #2 (Pilots) Advanced Flying Unit (2AFU), based at RAF Brize Norton, on June 24, 1942. Approximately three weeks later, on July 15, he was posted to #3 (Pilots) Advanced Flying Unit (3AFU), based at RAF Cranwell. On August 11, 1942, Leslie became a member of #22 Operational Training Unit (O.T.U.), based at RAF Station Wellesbourne Mountford. On November 7, 1942, Leslie became a member of RCAF #426 Thunderbird Squadron "On Wings of Fire", part of **Bomber Command**, with the rank Warrant Officer Class II – Pilot.

During the course of the war, one of this country's most significant contributions was the approximately 50,000 Canadians who served with the RCAF and RAF in Bomber Command operations. Next to Britain, Canada was the largest contributor to Bomber Command, making up more than a third of all of Bomber Command personnel. The men who served in Bomber Command faced some of the most difficult odds of anyone fighting in the war.

No. 426 Squadron was established at RAF Dishforth, Yorkshire, on October 15, 1942, as part of No. 4 Group. In January 1943, it was transferred to No. 6 (RCAF) Group. The squadron was equipped with Vickers Wellington aircraft (nicknamed "Wimpey"), a twin-engine medium bomber, to deliver bombs and mines to the enemy. In June 1943, the squadron transferred to RAF Linton-on-Ouse and switched to Avro Lancaster bombers. Later in April of 1944, the squadron began to convert to Handley Page Halifax bombers that they used until the end of the war in Europe. The thunderbird crest used by the squadron originates from North American natives, and according to myth, signifies disaster and death to anyone on the ground who perceives it. No. 426 Squadron took part in many daring raids over enemy territory, including raids on Berlin, Leipzig and Frankfurt.

In mid-May 1943, Leslie Sutherland and his crew were able to avoid near disaster. On the night of May 13, 1943, their Wellington bomber HE320 took off from Dishforth airfield at 23.38 hours to undertake an operational flight to bomb Bochum, Germany. Just after approaching the last turning point before reaching the target, the aircraft was held in searchlights for fifteen minutes and damaged by flak at the same time. Pilot Leslie Sutherland took evasive action and descended to 12,000 feet. Due to the damage, the crew jettisoned all of their bomb load live in the Krefeld area at 02.15 hours from 13,000 feet and made for home. Despite the damage, the crew were able to make a safe return to Yorkshire and land safely at Catfoss airfield at 05.25 hours on May 14, 1943.



WO II-Pilot Leslie Gordon Sutherland

Ten days later, after almost completing a tour of operations in the hope of becoming an instructor and receiving his commission, the pilot from Corunna was killed. On the night of May 23/24, 1943, Leslie Sutherland and his same five-man crew were aboard Vickers Wellington X aircraft HE281 (markings OW-) of 426 Squadron that left its base at Dishforth. It was part of a group of 826 bombers from different squadrons that joined together on a night attack on Dortmund, Germany, an industrial centre in Germany's Ruhr region. It was the largest operation since the 1000 bomber raids, and was to be the last sizeable raid on Dortmund for exactly one year.

The Pathfinder Force met with clear conditions and marked the target accurately, leading to a good raid. After successfully dropping its 4,500 pound payload and confirming the strike, Sutherland and the crew of Wellington HE281 headed northwest towards RAF base Dishforth, England 1,000 kilometres away. Wellington HE281 failed to return to its base. The aircraft had been shot down by a Messerschmitt Bf 110 night-fighter, reportedly by Wolfgang Thimmig, a German Luftwaffe night fighter ace who by the end of the war, had achieved 24 aerial victories and reached the rank of Oberstleutnant (equal to Lieutenant Colonel). Wellington HE281 crashed in Haaksbergen, Holland, killing all on board. Perishing with Leslie Sutherland were WO.s Kenneth Howard Masterson and Levie Afrien Rivest; and Sgt.s William Dunkerley (RAF) and Sydney Jepson (RAF). There were 38 aircraft lost in the raid.

Not long after, his mother, Mrs. Maude Turnbull, received official notification in Corunna that her son, SERGEANT LESLIE GORDON SUTHERLAND WAS REPORTED MISSING AFTER AIR OPERATIONS OVERSEAS. At least five weeks later, she learned that her son had been pronounced dead on May 25, 1943. In October 1943, Leslie was officially listed on the R.C.A.F. casualty list as, *Previously reported "missing" after air operations (overseas), and subsequently reported "missing believed killed" now "presumed dead" for official purposes*. In late-May 1946, Maude Turnbull received a War Service Gratuity of \$383.71 for the loss of her only son. Leslie Sutherland's medals included the 1939-45 Star, the A/C Europe Star, the Defence Medal, the AMR and CVSM Medal and clasp.

Locals in the area of the charred Wellington bomber initially buried the crew members including Leslie Sutherland, 24, who was buried as an unknown soldier. After the war, his body was exhumed, identified and re-buried in Haaksbergen General Cemetery, Netherlands, Plot 4, Row 2, Grave 11. On Leslie Sutherland's headstone are inscribed the words, THE LORD GIVETH AND THE LORD TAKETH AWAY BLESSED BE THE NAME OF THE LORD. His name is also inscribed on the Sarnia Refinery Plaque. Unveiled in 1949, the plaque has the names of 24 Sarnia Imperial Oil employees who made the ultimate sacrifice in World War II. Leslie's name is also inscribed on two memorial plaques in Corunna: one on a brass altar in Christ Anglican Church in Corunna; and one in the entrance foyer of Branch 447 Corunna of the Royal Canadian Legion. In November 2019, his name along with 25 others was added to the Sarnia cenotaph, engraved in stone to be remembered always.

The Royal Canadian Legion, Branch 447 in Corunna, is named in Leslie Sutherland's honour. He was the first known "killed in action" serviceman from Moore Township during World War II. The Corunna Legion branch was chartered on December 4, 1946 and the Charter President was Arthur Turnbull, World War I veteran and Leslie Sutherland's stepfather. The Corunna Legion was named the Honourable Leslie Sutherland Branch from its beginning. The first meetings of the branch were held in the Anglican Church Hall and moved to its Bereford Street location in 1948. In April 1988, Branch 447 held the official opening of its current location on Albert Street.

Many years later in 1977, a nephew of Leslie's, John Albinson, visited a friend in Holland. While there, John happened to mention that his uncle had been killed in the war when his aircraft had been shot down in Haaksbergen. The friend stated that it wasn't far away from where they were, so the next day, John and his friend visited Haaksbergen. Somehow, they located the property on which Leslie's aircraft had crashed. Despite the fact that 34 years had passed, they met the farmer who owned the property and who witnessed the crash. He was still living in the same house and tending the same farm in 1977. The farmer vividly remembered the circumstances of the crash.

He stated that in the early morning darkness he heard the aircraft and the noise of the engines getting louder. When he looked through the farmhouse window, he saw the aircraft engulfed in flames and heading towards the house as it plummeted from the dark sky. Fearing that the aircraft was going to hit the house, the farmer got his wife and two young girls out of the house. They watched in horror as the aircraft overshot the house and crashed in a copse of trees about 300 meters past the house but still on the farmer's property.

After John asked the farmer where the aircraft had crashed, the farmer escorted him and his friend to the copse of trees on his property. Thirty-four years later, the charred aircraft was still lying in the trees in the exact spot where it had crashed. To honour his uncle, John took a small piece of the aircraft, a turnbuckle perhaps.

Sometime around 2008, Marg Emery, a long time member and volunteer with the Legion, took on the project of recognizing and paying tribute to the Corunna Branch namesake. Thanks to her efforts, the Honourable Leslie Sutherland Royal Canadian Legion Branch in Corunna proudly keeps alive the memory of its namesake. In the foyer hangs a photo of Leslie and a large plaque bearing his name. The Legion's main room features other memorabilia, a

photo album of Leslie's life and his medals mounted on the wall, including his mother's Silver Cross. Thanks to John Albinson, behind a piece of Plexiglas is the small charred turnbuckle he picked up in 1977, which is an original piece of the Wellington HE281. Thirty-four years had passed but still lying in a copse of trees on the farmer's property was the burnt wreckage of the bomber.

SOURCES: C, D, E, F, G, L, M, N, O, R, S, 2C, 2D, 4B, 7C, 7F, 7G, 8X, 8Y, 10B, 10U, 2a, 2e, 3u

TESKEY, Stanley James (#J/95517)

So much of Stanley James Teskey's short life had to do with timing. He was only seventeen when he enlisted, so he needed written permission from his parents to do so. On an April 1945 bombing mission that claimed his life, his Halifax bomber collided with another en route to Germany and all crew members of both planes were killed. Ironically, Stanley Teskey, 19, of Russell Street, died two weeks before the war in Europe ended.

Stanley Teskey was born in Sarnia on December 15, 1925, the son of Charles Joseph and Mary Elizabeth (nee Peers) Teskey. Sarnia born Charles Teskey married Wallaceburg born Mary Peers in Sarnia on May 8, 1921 and they had three children together: Douglas Charles (born Nov. 4, 1922), Stanley James and Gordon Wilfred. Gordon was born at Sarnia General Hospital on March 8, 1932, but unfortunately, he was a stillborn birth. The Teskey's lived at 334 North Russell Street and Charles supported his family by working as a toolmaker in Sarnia. George Teskey, Charles' brother and Stanley's uncle was living nearby at 558 Confederation Street.

Before Stanley enlisted in the service, his older brother, Douglas, joined the RCAF. In June 1943, Doug graduated from the #1 Service Flying Training School at Camp Borden and the next month married Frances Mary (nee Warwick). Later that July, Doug Teskey arrived overseas. He was posted to an R.A.F. Bomber Command squadron, where he participated in raids on Leipzig, Ludwigshaven, Anheim, Cologne, Essen and other Nazi industrial centres. Of these, he thought the "toughest" target was Leipzig, where the gunners of the plane that he piloted shot down one German fighter and damaged another.



F/Lt. Douglas C. Teskey

It was a tribute to his ability to "stickhandle" with a heavy bomber that neither the plane nor any member of its crew was hit while Douglas Teskey was at the controls. While overseas, Douglas was twice promoted, from Pilot Officer to Flying Officer, and again to the rank of Flight Lieutenant. At the time of Stanley's death in April of 1945, Douglas was a Flight Lieutenant, serving in England. In May 1945, Douglas Teskey, a veteran of thirty bombing raids over Germany, returned home to Sarnia on leave to be with his parents and his wife Frances. Stanley's experience, unfortunately, differed from his older brother's.

After receiving his education at Confederation Street Public School from 1931 to 1939 and then Sarnia Collegiate from September 1939 to March 1943, Stanley Teskey worked at Sarnia Imperial Oil as a laboratory assistant for four months from March 1943 until he enlisted. His hobbies were hunting, fishing and camping, and he was a member of the Sarnia 44th Air Cadets from September 1942 to June 1943.

Now seventeen, Stanley Teskey enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force on June 22, 1943 in London, Ontario. He stood five feet eight inches tall, had blue eyes and light brown hair, was single, and was residing at home on Russell Street with his parents at the time. Being only seventeen-and-a-half years old when he enlisted, he was required to bring a note signed by both his parents giving their permission for him to join the RCAF. The note he received from his parents read, *We the undersigned do give permission for our son Stanley James Teskey to join the Royal Canadian Air Force*. Stanley requested flying duties, keen to serve as part of an aircrew. After the war his plan was to remain with the RCAF as an airman.

From #9 Recruiting Centre in London and #1 Manning Depot in Toronto, Stanley began his air force training at #1 Air Gunners Ground Training School (AGGTS) in Quebec City and then at #4 Wireless School (WS) in Guelph before being posted in early December 1943 to RCAF Station Trenton. He received a five-day Christmas leave between December 24-28, 1943. In the new year, he continued his training at #6 Initial Training School (ITS) in Toronto and at #9 Bombing and Gunnery School (B&GS) in Mont Joli, Quebec. He was awarded his Air Gunner's Badge on June 2, 1944 at #9B&GS at Mont Joli. He then received a 14-day pre-embarkation leave. On June 17, 1944, he continued his training at #3 Aircrew Graduate Training School (AGTS) in Three Rivers, Quebec. In mid-July, he was posted to #1 Y Depot in Lachine, Quebec. On July 20, 1944, Stanley Teskey embarked overseas from Halifax bound for the United Kingdom.

Disembarking in the U.K. on July 27, 1944, Stanley was initially posted to #3 Personnel Reception Centre. On August 22, 1944, he continued his air training in England at #86 Operational Training Unit (OTU) at RAF Gamston. On October 13, 1944, he was transferred to #22 Operational Training Unit (OTU) at RAF Wellesbourne Mountford, and in early December 1944 was transferred to 76 Base, RAF Topcliffe. In mid-December 1944, the *Canadian (Sarnia) Observer* reported that Stanley was celebrating his 19th birthday in England, while his brother Douglas had celebrated his second wartime birthday overseas on November 4th. It also reported that the brothers had recently spent three leaves together while in England.



Pilot Officer-Air Gunner Stanley James Teskey

In mid-January 1945, Stanley was serving with #1659 Conversion Unit at RAF Topcliffe. On March 8, 1945, he became a member of RCAF #426 Thunderbird Squadron "On Wings of Fire", part of **Bomber Command**, with the rank of Pilot Officer-Air Gunner.

During the course of the war, one of this country's most significant contributions was the approximately 50,000 Canadians who served with the RCAF and RAF in Bomber Command operations. Next to Britain, Canada was the largest contributor to Bomber Command, making up more than a third of all of Bomber Command personnel. The men who served in Bomber Command faced some of the most difficult odds of anyone fighting in the war.

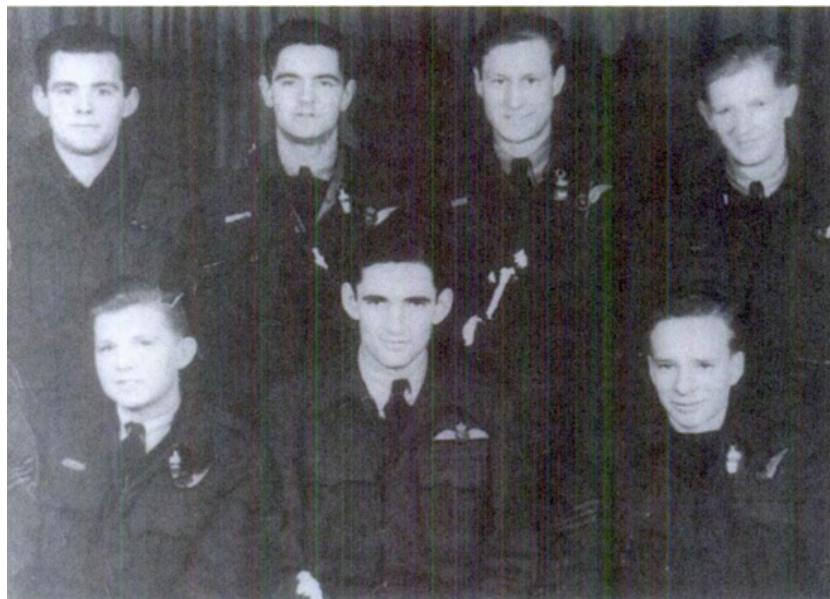
No. 426 Squadron was established at RAF Dishforth, Yorkshire, on October 15, 1942, as part of No. 4 Group. In January 1943, it was transferred to No. 6 (RCAF) Group. The squadron was equipped with Vickers

Wellington aircraft to deliver bombs and mines to the enemy. In June 1943, the squadron transferred to RAF Linton-on-Ouse and switched to Avro Lancaster bombers. Later in April of 1944, the squadron began to convert to Handley Page Halifax aircraft, four-engine heavy bombers that they used until the end of the war in Europe. The thunderbird crest used by the squadron originates from North American natives, and according to myth, signifies disaster and death to anyone on the ground who perceives it. No. 426 Squadron took part in many daring raids over enemy territory, including raids on Berlin, Leipzig and Frankfurt.

On April 25, 1945, Stanley Teskey was part of a crew aboard Halifax Mk. VII aircraft NP820 (markings OW-W) that took off at 15.04 hours from RCAF Station Linton-on-Ouse, Yorkshire. Circling the airfield for the last time, Halifax NP820 climbed to its designated flight altitude and from there, followed the navigator's course to Wangerooge. Along with some 482 aircraft (twenty from No. 426 Squadron), it was part of an operation to carry out a bombing mission on Wangerooge, Germany, intended to destroy coastal batteries that controlled the approaches to Bremen and Wilhelmshaven. During the flight to their target, the crew may have been preoccupied with rumours that were making the rounds that #426 Squadron might be back in Canada before summer was out. They were excited about the prospect of going home and seeing their families again.

Unfortunately, nothing further was heard from Halifax NP820 after taking off from its base. Airmen who returned from the mission reported that, about one hour from the target, Halifax NP820 was in a mid-air collision over the North Sea with #408 Squadron Halifax aircraft NP796. F/L Mercer of #426 Squadron, an eyewitness flying in Halifax NP824 who saw the collision and watched the aircraft crash into the sea said of Jim Tuplin's aircraft (NP820), *When the plane over Jim's hit that air pocket, it crashed Tupp's kite into the North Sea. His Halley was on my right side, but we had to keep going to drop our bombs on Wangerooge. On the way back to England, we dropped low over the crash area and saw no survivors.*

F/L Mercer who safely returned to base later wrote, *The accident on April 25 happened about 3:30 (p.m.). We went in and bombed and turned around, coming straight back to the accident. We were the first to notify air-sea rescue about it. There was nothing to be seen but two little rubber dinghies and bits of two aircraft. The flying boat (air-sea rescue) arrived about an hour and a half after the accident and whether they landed (on the North Sea), I am not in a position to say as they were not from our station.*



Crew of Halifax NP820

Back L/R: Reg Evans, Dennis Curzon, **John Ross**, Ronald Roberts
Front L/R: **Stanley Teskey**, James Tuplin, Earl Hicks

Less than two weeks after the crash, the Wing Commander of #426 Squadron wrote a letter to the wife of Jimmie Tuplin, one of the airmen of NP820. A portion of the letter read, *Your husband and his crew were detailed, along with other members of the squadron, to carry out an attack on enemy installations at Wangerooge, Germany. Before reaching their objective, other crews from the squadron saw your husband's aircraft collide with an aircraft from another squadron that also operates from this station. Both aircraft were seen to disintegrate in the air and*

crash into the sea. From the information obtained from other crew participating in this operation, I cannot hold very much hope for the survival of your husband and the members of his crew.

Perishing with Pilot Officer Stanley Teskey in the Halifax were Flying Officer John Douglas Carlisle Ross (of Sarnia, included in this Project); Pilot Officer's James Chester Tuplin, Dennis Rupert Humphrey Curzon and Earl William Hicks; F/Sgt.'s Ronald Roberts (RAF) and Reginald Gordon Evans (RAF). All seven airmen in Halifax aircraft NP796 were also lost. Seven aircraft were lost on this operation and six of them were due to collisions, despite weather conditions being almost perfect. This was the last operation of the war for RCAF #426 Squadron.

In late April 1945, Charles and Mary Teskey on Russell Street in Sarnia received a telegram from Ottawa informing them that their son, FLIGHT SERGEANT STANLEY JAMES TESKEY HAS BEEN REPORTED MISSING ON AIR OPERATIONS OVERSEAS ON APRIL 25. Approximately two weeks after Stanley's death, VE Day was declared, ending the war in Europe.

In early May 1945, Mary received the following letter from the Wing Commander, Officer Commanding, 426 Squadron, R.C.A.F. Overseas:

Dear Mrs. Teskey:

Before you receive this letter you will have been informed by telegram that your son, Flight Sergeant Stanley James Teskey, is missing as the result of air operations. I deeply regret that I have not been able to write to you sooner to give you such details as are available.

Your son and his crew were detailed along with other members of the Squadron, to carry out an attack on enemy installations at Wangerooge, Germany. They took off at 3.00 P.M. on the afternoon of the 25th April 1945 and set course for the target. Approximately forty minutes before reaching their objective, other crews from this Squadron saw your son's aircraft collide with an aircraft from another Squadron which also operates from this Station. Both aircraft were seen to disintegrate in the air and crash into the sea. From the information obtained from other crews engaged in this operation, I cannot hold very much hope for the survival of your son and the other members of the crew. For official purposes, and because of the lack of concrete evidence, the members of the crew are still listed as missing.

The personal effects of your son have been gathered together and forwarded to the Royal Air Force Central Depository where they will be held for a period of at least six months before being forwarded to you through the Administrator of Estates, Ottawa, Ontario.

The loss of your son was sustained with great regret by the members of this Squadron, for although he had only been with us a short time, he was rapidly developing into a very capable Air Gunner. He was fast becoming popular with the members of the Squadron and was particularly admired by his own crew mates. I can say personally that he set a splendid example to all ranks and his loss is being felt very keenly.

On behalf of the entire Squadron I would like to take this opportunity to tender to you our sincere sympathy in your great anxiety. In closing I would like to assure you that if any further information should be received it will be immediately communicated to you.

Stanley Teskey's death was later officially recorded as, *Previously reported missing after air operations, now for official purposes, presumed dead, overseas (Germany)*. In March 1946, Charles and Mary Teskey received a War Service Gratuity of \$311.65 for the loss of their son.

In mid-February 1947, Mary received the following letter from the Wing Commander for Chief of the Air Staff in Ottawa:

Dear Mrs. Teskey:

It is a privilege to have the opportunity of sending you the Operational Wings and Certificate in recognition of the gallant services rendered by your son, Pilot Officer, S.J. Teskey. I realize there is little which may be said or done to lessen your sorrow, but it is my hope that these "Wings", indicative of operations against the enemy, will be a treasured memento of a young life offered on the altar of freedom in defence of his Home and Country.

In April 1952, Charles received the following letter from the Wing Commander, R.C.A.F. Casualties Officer, for Chief of the Air Staff:

Dear Mr. Teskey:

It is with reluctance that after so long an interval, I must refer to the loss of your son, Pilot Officer Stanley James Teskey, but due to the lack of any information concerning him since he was reported missing, it must be regretfully accepted and officially recorded that he does not have a "known" grave.

Due to the extreme hazards attending air operations there are, unhappily, many thousands of British aircrew boys who do not have "known" graves and all will be commemorated on General Memorials that will be erected at a number of locations by the Imperial War Graves Commission (of which Canada is a member), each Memorial representative of a theatre of operations. One of these Memorials will be erected at Runnymede, England, and the name of your son will appear on that Memorial.

I realize that this is an extremely distressing letter and that there is no manner of conveying such information to you that would not add to your heartaches. I am fully aware that nothing I may say will lessen your great sorrow, but I would like to express to you and the members of your family my deepest sympathy.

Stanley Teskey, 19, has no known grave. He is memorialized on the Runnymede War Memorial, Surrey, United Kingdom, Panel 281. His name is also inscribed on the Sarnia Refinery Plaque. Unveiled in 1949, the plaque has the names of 24 Sarnia Imperial Oil employees who made the ultimate sacrifice in World War II. SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, J, L, M, N, 2C, 2D, 3J, 4B, 7C, 7E, 8X, 8Y, 10B, 10U, 10V

THAIN, Clare Kenneth (#J/17937)

To lose one family member in war is terrible, but for John Thain WWII must have been horrible and tragic. Already a widower, John lost two of his three sons eleven months apart. Clare, 23, his middle son, died in May 1944 during a flight which crashed in a remote, hilly region of India.

Clare Thain was born in Sarnia on June 18, 1920, the middle son of John and Isabella (nee Miller) Thain. Born in Birmingham, England, John Thain married Belfast, Ireland born Isabella Miller in Toronto on October 17, 1914. John and Isabella Thain had four children together: daughter Myrtle (later Myrtle James), and sons Jack Alexander (see below), Clare and Donald B. John Thain supported his family working as a bricklayer with Imperial Oil in Sarnia, and the Thains lived at 200 Bright Street. All three Thain brothers were newspaper carriers for the *Canadian Observer* in Sarnia for a time. When Clare was fourteen years old, his mother, Isabella, died in 1934 at the age of forty-five from cancer.

All three Thain brothers served during the war and all three were members of the RCAF. At the time of Clare's death, oldest brother Jack Thain, a Flying Officer- Navigator/Bomb Aimer, had already been reported missing over the Bay of Biscay since early June of 1943. It was believed that Jack had been on an anti-submarine operation at the time. Clare's younger brother, Flight Sergeant Donald Thain, had enlisted in the R.C.A.F. on August 2, 1943 and trained at Toronto; Winnipeg; and Paulson, Manitoba where he received his wings in June of 1944.

Donald's graduation was a bittersweet moment for widowed-father John Thain. He was proud of Donald's success, yet his other two sons, also R.C.A.F. flying officers, were already casualties of war at the time. Donald was stationed at Patricia, Vancouver Island for a time and returned to Sarnia in September 1946, after serving in the RCAF in Newfoundland. Like Jack, he was also involved in anti-submarine warfare. After the death of the two Thain boys, the RCAF would not allow Donald to serve overseas.

Clare Thain was an active young man. Clare was educated at Devine Street Public School from 1927 to 1934 and then Sarnia Collegiate from September 1934 until June 1939. His senior courses included English Composition, English Literature, Canadian History, mathematics, chemistry and French Authors. He was active in many sports, including swimming, hockey, baseball, rugby, gymnastics, weight-lifting and track and field. Outside of school and sports, Clare was very busy: he completed four years of cadet training; he was involved in scouting; his hobby was photography; and he attended St. John's Anglican Church.

During his high school years, he worked for the *Canadian Sarnia Observer* as a paper carrier and wrapper from 1935 to 1939. In a reference letter as part of his RCAF application, the Circulation Manager at the *Observer* wrote of Clare; *He is thought very highly of by this department and by all his customers. He is personable, ambitious, courteous, honest... He was one of the best boys on our list of carriers.* In 1939-1940 Clare worked as a messenger and clerk for Ligett's Drug Store in Sarnia. In 1940 he was employed as an assistant manager and clerk at the National Club Building (Harris Brothers - Tobaccos, Confections, 168 North Front Street), working there until he enlisted.

On May 17, 1941, Clare Thain served as best man at his older brother Jack's wedding (Jack had joined the RCAF in July 1940) to Miss Rhoda Leona Westlake in Wyoming, Ontario. Eleven days after serving as best man, twenty year-old Clare Thain enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force on May 28, 1941 in London, Ontario. He stood five feet six inches tall, had hazel eyes and brown hair, was single, and was residing at home with his father on

Bright Street at the time. Clare requested flying duties, specifically wanting to be a pilot. His post-war ambition was to enter the field of commercial advertising. The Recruiting Officer wrote this of Clare: *Calm, painstaking, pleasing personality and appearance, courteous, honest and ambitious. Already has a brother in the R.C.A.F. as an Observer and is most anxious to join the same service.*

From the Recruiting Centre in London and #1 Manning Depot in Toronto, Clare received air force training at #1 Technical Training School (TTS) in St. Thomas; at #1 Initial Training School (ITS) in Toronto; at #1 Wireless School (WS) in Montreal; and at #1 Bombing and Gunnery School (B&GS) in Jarvis. He was awarded his Air Gunners Badge on March 30, 1942 at B&GS at Jarvis. The Chief Instructor and Commanding Officer at B&GS had the following remarks about Clare: *A bright, enthusiastic student, can be relied upon to carry any job through, and a pleasant chap, good humoured at all times. Very popular with his classmates.* Clare then received a 15-day pre-embarkation leave, before being posted to #1 Y Depot in Halifax. Clare Thain embarked overseas from Halifax bound for the United Kingdom on April 30, 1942.

Initially posted to #3 Personnel Reception Centre, Clare continued his training in the U.K. at #4 Signals School (SS) at RAF Madley and then at #3 Radio Direction Finding (RDF) School at RAF Prestwick. In June 1942, while in Scotland, Clare unexpectedly met his brother. Clare had just arrived at an unnamed railway station terminal with a detachment of R.C.A.F. men en route to the south of England when outside the coach window, he saw standing on the station platform his brother Jack. Jack was waiting on the platform for another train and Clare was fortunate enough to hail Jack from the train window. The two brothers were able to meet up for a happy reunion during a 10-minute stop. On August 18, 1942, Clare became a member of #1 (Coastal) Operational Training Unit (OTU) at RAF Silloth.

On October 25, 1942, Clare was transferred to **RAF Eastern Air Command** in India. He was initially a member of RAF #217 Squadron. He received a 14-day leave during the first two weeks of April 1943. In mid-July 1943, Clare became a member of RAF #194 Squadron “*Surrigere colligere*” (To arise and to pick up), with the rank of Flying Officer-Wireless Operator/Air Gunner.

No. 194 Squadron was formed in October 1942 based at Lahore, India. It began its existence as a Transport Squadron equipped with Lockheed Hudson aircraft. Its role was to provide mail and passenger flights in India with destinations including Lahore, Colombo, Cairo, Chittagong, Bombay, Delhi, Calcutta and Columbo (Ceylon). In May 1943, the squadron began to convert to Douglas Dakotas, a twin-engine transport aircraft. In September 1943, the squadron was reclassified as an Airborne Forces Squadron. RAF #194 operated from a number of bases over the course of the war including at RAF Lahore, Palam, Basal, Comilla and Agartala.

In June 1943, John Thain in Sarnia received news that his eldest son, Flying Officer Jack Thain, was reported missing during air operations overseas. Two months later, in August 1943, John received a cable informing him that his middle son Sgt. Clare Thain had been promoted to Pilot Officer, and in March 1944, John was informed that Clare had been given the promotion to Flying Officer from Pilot Officer. It was soon after that RCAF officials declared that eldest son Jack Thain, who had been previously reported missing after air operations, was now for official purposes presumed dead overseas.

For Clare, in January 1944, RAF #194 Squadron moved to the Burma front. **The Burma Campaign** had begun in December 1941 when the Japanese moved through Thailand and invaded the British colony of Burma. The Japanese saw Burma as a stepping-stone to India as well as protection for their troops fighting in the Malayan peninsula and in Singapore. It would be one of the longest campaigns of the war, fought primarily by British Commonwealth, Chinese and U.S. forces against the forces of Imperial Japan and their allies.

The campaign had a number of notable features that included dense jungles, mountainous terrain, lack of roads for transport, prevalent disease, and weather conditions that included severe heat and monsoon seasons. Approximately 8,000 Canadians, including Sarnians, served in the Burma Campaign. Many of them were part of RAF squadrons carrying out duties that included; reconnaissance, convoy protection, dropping supplies and troops, escort operations, patrol and bombing missions, and as part of fighter squadrons.

In February 1944, the Japanese began their last major offensive in Burma--the attack led to the battles of Kohima and Imphal. RAF #194 Squadron immediately switched to the role of **Air Support**, dropping supplies and paratroopers into battle zones (often behind enemy lines) and carrying casualties out. Most of the sorties in February were flown over the Arakan, but in March the squadron played a major part in the Allied victory at Imphal. In April the squadron flew fighter aircraft and supplies into Imphal and casualties out.

On the night of May 5/6th, 1944, Clare Thain, along with three crew members, was aboard Dakota aircraft FZ599 that was on an operation dropping paratroopers behind the Japanese lines in India. Along with the four crew members, ten army passengers and four mules were on board. The aircraft reportedly left "Broadway" at 23.40 hours on route to Chandina. After its take off from base, no further signal was received from the aircraft. The aircraft failed to return from its operation on this stormy night and was later found in a remote, hilly area. It had crashed, killing all on board. Crew members perishing with F/O Clare Thain were F/L P.W. Wood, Sgt. R. Roberts (RAF) and W/O R.W. Jefferies (AUS).

In mid-May 1944, John Thain in Sarnia received an official announcement informing them that his son, FLYING OFFICER CLARE THAIN HAS BEEN REPORTED MISSING IN ACTION SINCE MAY 5. The last word the family had from him was from India and they presumed he was flying in Burma. At the time, John was still dealing with the news of his eldest son Jack Thain, who was reported missing in early June of 1943 over the Bay of Biscay and had since been reported presumed dead. His other son, LAC Donald Thain was stationed at Paulson, Manitoba at the time.

In late May 1944, John received the following letter from the Squadron Leader, Commanding No. 194 Squadron, South East Asia:

Dear Mr. Thain,

Before you receive this airgraph you will have been informed by R.C.A.F. Headquarters, Ottawa that your son has been reported missing as the result of air operations.

Clare, or Tarzan as he was affectionately known to all the Squadron and his crew were engaged in landing the personnel and equipment of the late General Wingate's forces far behind the Jap lines in Burma. It was from a trip of this nature on the night 5/6th May that Tarzan and his crew failed to return. Every effort has been made and is still being made to obtain some definite information and you may rest assured that any further information that may be received will be passed on to you immediately.

The absence of Tarzan and his crew is a sad blow to the Squadron. Tarzan was extremely popular with everyone and is greatly missed in the Officer's Mess. His personal effects have been carefully gathered together and forwarded to the R.A.F. Central Depository, and in due course you will receive a further communication concerning these from the Administrator of Estates, Ottawa.

May I now express the great sympathy which all of us feel with you in your great anxiety and I should like to assure you how greatly we, his comrades in the Royal Air Force admire Tarzan's gallant sacrifice made so far from home in the service of the British Commonwealth of Nations. By his continued absence I feel I have lost one of my most valuable Air Gunners, a fine Officer, and a good friend.

In June 1944, five weeks after the crash, a party of officers from RAF #194 Squadron Air Command, South East Asia, visited the site of the crashed aircraft presumed to be Dakota aircraft FZ.599. Their purpose was to identify the remains of the personnel killed in the crash; to bring away the remains for interment; and to salvage any small useable parts. The crash site was in an isolated and remote area near Ampu, Tripura. The terrain was both hilly—featuring peaks ranging in height from 3,000 feet to 6,000 feet—and covered by jungles. The RAF officers required the aid of local police, a guide, four bearers for their gear and an interpreter to make the long arduous trek.

Following are portions of the RAF officers report on their findings:

It is a complete wreck. The wings had been torn off; the outer portion of the starboard wing, one engine and undercarriage, and both propellers had fallen elsewhere and could not be found. The bulk of the fuselage lay at the head of a gulley. The tail portion from the aft of the main door was laying some 25 yards below... Fire had destroyed all the fabric, even on the tail Unit. The nose and the cabin was a mass of fused and torn metal. The starboard wing centre section lay a little way from the fuselage on the right. To the left were the port wing and undercarriage and near them the port engine. Everything was torn, buckled, twisted and burnt.

The O.C. Police told me that the bones of eight human bodies had been found in a heap at a point near the port wing and another some five yards away. He said the bodies had been buried in the hillside by Tripura State Levies... We erected a cross made of bamboo, on the place where the remains had been buried and F/O. Forrester offered an appropriate prayer to the departed.

It was impossible to determine the cause of the crash, but the following assumption was made. The starboard wing struck a tree, the wing breaking off and falling onto another hill, the undercarriage and engine probably breaking away. The aircraft swung and crashed into the gulley, the port wing breaking off with the undercarriage

and the engine fell out. From the thickness of the remaining stump of the tree which was struck it was probably 60 to 70 feet tall. Fire followed the crash, trees all around being scorched.

The tail portion was broken away by the impact and fell lower down the gulley. The bodies of the crew and passengers were either thrown out by the force of the shock which also ripped open the side of the fuselage or hillmen may have removed the bones and placed them outside. The latter was not admitted and since natives are loath to handle dead bodies it must be assumed that they were thrown out. Death must have been instantaneous.

The hillmen at the tiny village of Milchi declare that they neither heard nor saw anything of the crash or ensuing fire at the time, and did not discover the crash until some days after the incident. Since the aircraft was missing after the storm on the night of May 5th, this is understandable, as storms in these hills are very heavy. Our party reached the crash about five weeks after it occurred and mud was already covering parts of it. There is a perpendicular wall to the gulley going straight up from the aircraft for a further 15 feet which is crumbling away and it is likely that this, encouraged by the rains, will soon fall and completely bury the aircraft and the site of the grave.

The extreme damage which the aircraft has sustained, the absence of all land communications during and after the rain, the difficult river journey with many complete blockages across narrow places and the difficult terrain in the country around the crash makes me venture to suggest that no further effort be made to visit this crash as such journeys entail some considerable risk of injury and even loss of life except those intimately acquainted with the hill country.

In late July 1944, John received a letter from the R.C.A.F. Casualty Officer, for Chief of the Air Staff in Ottawa. Following is a portion of that letter:

Dear Mr. Thain:

Further to my letter of June 22nd a reply has now been received to my inquiry despatched Overseas regarding the other members in your son's crew. We are listing their names and next-of-kin below and you may address correspondence as shown in the example... You may be assured that as soon as further information becomes available regarding your son it will be forwarded to you immediately. May I express my sincere sympathy in this very anxious time.

In mid-March 1945, the RCAF completed an internal investigation into the circumstances of the downed aircraft. Following is a portion of the findings:

- 1. B.P.O. Bombay reported that Dakota FZ.599, with a crew of four and ten army passengers, failed to return from air operations. It was detailed to evacuate equipment from Central Burma to India, after which no further news was received.*
- 2. Later information received from Personnel Bombay, stated that a search party found Dakota aircraft FZ.599, in the hills near Ampu, Tripura, India. The bodies of eight human remains were found in a heap near the aircraft, and another some five yards away. Two revolvers were recovered from the wreckage and were identified as the property of P/O Thain and F/Lt. Wood (RAF)...*
- 3. The crash occurred in Allied territory, and as far as is known the aircraft was never over enemy territory, which eliminates the possibility of the occupants being taken Prisoners of War, had they bailed out...*

In the early part of 1946, John Thain had still not received any further information about the fate of his son Clare. Frustrated and anxious, he wrote a letter to J.W. Murphy, M.P. House of Commons in Ottawa asking if he could use his influence in helping him obtain some information about his son. John wrote a similar letter to the Wing Commander, R.C.A.F. Casualties Officer. Following is a portion of the Wing Commander's response:

Dear Mr. Thain:

I wish to acknowledge your letter concerning your son... and I regret indeed that no further information has been received than was conveyed to you in previous correspondence.

I can well understand the distress that you and the members of your family have undergone but difficulties were experienced in the Far East owing to the Japanese Government not observing the Geneva Agreement in communicating to the International Red Cross Committee information that might be known to them to our personnel who were missing and on that account the Air Ministry deferred all action to officially presume the death of personnel reported missing in Japanese occupied territory. As in practically all instances Royal Canadian Air Force personnel were attached to the Royal Air Force, it was necessary for this Service to observe the same procedure and the Royal Australian Air Force and Royal New Zealand Air Force also followed the same procedure.

It was obvious that after the cessation of hostilities with the Japanese some information would be received

and a certain amount has been received, but it is far from complete. The Royal Air Force, Royal Australian Air Force and Royal New Zealand Air Force, as well as this Service, have in all thousands missing in the Far East and this matter has received the greatest possible attention, but it is still felt that until all available sources of information have been tried and exhausted, official Presumption of Death should be deferred. There may be information disclosed from Japanese casualty records and there may be isolated cases of survival in scattered islands brought to light and when all available documents have been examined and all sources of information available exhausted, authorities on the spot in the Far East are being consulted as to the possibility of survival of any personnel still unaccounted for.

The investigations that I have noted are in process and have been for some time, and it is altogether likely that these investigations will be completed in the not too far distant future, when those who are to be officially presumed to have died will then, unhappily, be actioned.

While I must regretfully advise you that there is no information that would indicate that your boy may have survived, I do trust that you will appreciate the extreme care and caution that is being taken... I would like to express my sincere sympathy in the anxiety that has been yours for so long.

Clare Thain's death was later officially recorded as, *Previously reported missing after air operations, now for official purposes, presumed dead, overseas (India)*. In November 1946, widowed-father John Thain received a War Service Gratuity of \$686.35 for the loss of his second son to war, Clare. In mid-March 1947, he received the following letter from the Wing Commander for Chief of the Air Staff in Ottawa:

Dear Mr. Thain:

It is a privilege to have the opportunity of sending you the Operational Wings and Certificate in recognition of the gallant services rendered by your son, Flying Officer C.K. Thain. I realize there is little which may be said or done to lessen your sorrow, but it is my hope that these "Wings", indicative of operations against the enemy, will be a treasured memento of a young life offered on the altar of freedom in defence of his Home and Country.

Clare Thain, 23, has no known grave. His name is inscribed on the Singapore War Memorial, Malaya, Column 443.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, J, L, M, N, 2C, 2D, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10B, 3o

THAIN, Jack Alexander (#J/8431)

Married just over two years, John Alexander Thain, 24, was killed in action in the Bay of Biscay in June 1943. His Halifax aircraft was attacked by enemy aircraft on an anti-submarine patrol. Less than a year later, his younger brother, Clare, was killed in action in India. Both losses were devastating for their widowed father in Sarnia.

Jack Thain was born in Sarnia on September 20, 1918, the eldest son of John and Isabella (nee Miller) Thain. Born in Birmingham, England, John Thain married Belfast, Ireland born Isabella Miller in Toronto on October 17, 1914. John and Isabella Thain had four children together: daughter Myrtle (later Myrtle James), and sons Jack, Clare Kenneth (see above) and Donald B. John Thain supported his family working as a bricklayer with Imperial Oil in Sarnia, and the Thains lived at 464 Devine Street, and later 200 Bright Street. All three Thain brothers were newspaper carriers for the *Canadian Observer* in Sarnia for a time. When Jack was sixteen years old, his mother, Isabella, died in 1934 at the age of forty-five from cancer.

All three Thain brothers served during the war and all three were members of the RCAF. At the time of Jack's death, middle brother Clare Thain, a Flying Officer- Wireless Operator/Air Gunner was serving in Europe. Clare was later to lose his life, on an operation dropping paratroopers behind enemy lines in India. Jack's younger brother, Flight Sergeant Donald Thain, had enlisted in the R.C.A.F. on August 2, 1943 and trained at Toronto; Winnipeg; and Paulson, Manitoba where he received his wings in June of 1944.

Donald's graduation was a bittersweet moment for widowed-father John Thain. He was proud of Donald's success, yet his other two sons, also R.C.A.F. flying officers, were already casualties of war at the time. Donald was stationed at Patricia, Vancouver Island for a time and returned to Sarnia in September 1946, after serving in the RCAF in Newfoundland. Like Jack, he was also involved in anti-submarine warfare. After the death of the two Thain boys, the RCAF would not allow Donald to serve overseas.

Jack Thain was educated at Devine Street Public School from September 1923 to June 1930; at Wellington Street Public School from September 1930 to June 1931; and then at Sarnia Collegiate from September 1931 to June 1936. His Upper School Honour courses included English Composition and Literature, trigonometry, biology, physics and chemistry. He was very active in gymnastics (a member of the Dominion Championship team); wrestling

(won the 125 lb. championship at the Assault at Arms); weightlifting, boxing, swimming and rugby. His hobbies were reading and physiology.



1936 – SCITS – Gym Team

Back: Rodolfo Mendizabal, Bill Lester, **Jack Thain**, Doug Simpson

Middle: Mr. O'Donhue, Mr. A. Mendizabal

Front: Gordon Perry, Walker Humphrey

Note: Rodolfo Mendizabal is also included in this Project

He also completed Cadet training for four years. He worked for the *Canadian Sarnia Observer* as a paper carrier and press-worker from August 1936 to February 1937, and then at the Canadian Bank of Commerce in Sarnia as a clerk from February 1937 to October 1938. He worked as an instructor of physical training at the Kiwanis Boys Club in Sarnia during evenings from October 1937 to March 1938, and again from October 1938 to March 1939. After leaving the Bank of Commerce, he was employed as a salesman and manager at the United Cigar Store at Lochiel and Christina Streets in Sarnia from October 1938 until October 1940.

Twenty-one-year-old Jack Thain enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force on July 1, 1940 in London, Ontario. He stood five feet seven inches tall, had brown eyes and light brown hair, was single, and was residing at 136 North Front Street in Sarnia at the time. He requested flying duties, specifically wanting to be a Pilot or Observer. The Recruiting Officer recorded that Jack Thain was, *Excellent material. This boy has everything, splendid physique, keen mind, smart, alert, very strong personality, the determined aggressive type. Will make good in any classification. Recommended for Pilot or Observer.*

In early October 1940, Jack Thain completed his RCAF Attestation Papers and underwent his medical examination in London, Ontario. From #1 Manning Depot in Toronto and then in Trenton, Jack received his air training at #1 Initial Training School (ITS) in Toronto; at #12 Elementary Flying Training School (EFTS) in Goderich; and at #2 Service Flying Training School (SFTS) in Uplands, Ontario, before being posted again to #1 Manning Depot in Toronto in late April 1941. While in Toronto, and after obtaining permission from the military, and a brief leave, Jack Thain was able to do something special in May 1941.

On May 17, 1941, Jack Thain married Miss Rhoda Leona Westlake (born in Exeter, Ontario), the eldest daughter of Mrs. W.J. Westlake and the late Mr. Westlake of Wyoming, Ontario. The wedding was held at the home of the bride's mother in Wyoming, officiated by Rev. D.M. Guest. The bride was given in marriage by her uncle, Mr. A. Parsons. Serving as bridesmaid was Miss Wilma Westlake, the sister of the bride, and serving as best man was Jack's younger brother, Clare. Following the ceremony, a wedding dinner was held at the Wyoming Hotel for twenty-five guests. After the reception, the newlywed couple left for points east on a wedding trip. On their return, Jack and Rhoda resided at 136 North Front Street, Sarnia. Later, when Jack went overseas as a member of the RCAF, his wife resided with her mother in Wyoming.

The newly married Jack Thain continued his air training in late May 1941 at #1 Air Observers School (AOS) in Malton, Ontario and then at #1 Bombing and Gunnery School (B&GS) in Jarvis, Ontario where he was awarded his Air Observer's Badge on September 27, 1941. He then attended an advanced air navigation course at #2 Air

Navigational School (ANS) at Pennfield Ridge, New Brunswick, and graduated second in the class. He received a 3-week pre-embarkation leave until November 21 1941 and was then posted to #31 Operational Training Unit (OTU) in Halifax, Nova Scotia. In early December 1941, he was posted to #1 Y Depot in Halifax. On December 8, 1941, Pilot Officer Jack Thain, married less than seven months, embarked overseas from Halifax bound for the United Kingdom.

Disembarking in the U.K. on December 18, 1941, Jack was initially posted to #3 Personnel Reception Centre. He continued his training as an RCAF Officer in the U.K., and in March 1942, was transferred to #1 (Coastal) Operational Training Unit (OTU). In late May 1942, he became a member of RCAF #407 (Demon) Squadron, part of RAF Coastal Command. RCAF # 407 Squadron's wartime history is divided into two parts: from mid-1941 to January 1943, equipped with Lockheed Hudson twin-engine light bombers, it operated as a "strike" (bombing) squadron attacking enemy shipping; and in late January 1943, it was re-designated #407 General Reconnaissance Squadron, protecting friendly shipping from the U-boat threat operating Vickers Wellington aircraft.

In June of 1942, while in the U.K., Jack unexpectedly met his brother Clare. Jack was standing on an unnamed station terminal in Scotland waiting for a train. While waiting on the station platform, Jack was hailed from a troop train window by his brother Clare. Clare had just arrived at the Scotland station en route to the south of England with a detachment of R.C.A.F. men. The two brothers were able to meet up for a happy reunion during a 10-minute stop.

Later that month, Jack was in the *Sarnia Observer* news for his part in a Nazi raid. The *Observer* report described how, as part of the "Demon Squadron" of the R.C.A.F., Pilot Officer Jack Thain and his fellow crew members on Coastal Command, had bombed a medium-sized enemy vessel in the face of "heavy opposition", bringing their Hudson bomber home unscathed. In the latter part of 1942, father John Thain in Sarnia was informed that his son Jack, had been promoted to Flying Officer while overseas.

On April 14, 1943, Jack Thain became a member of RAF #58 Squadron "Alis Nocturnis" (On the wings of the night), with the rank of Flying Officer-Navigator/Bomb Aimer. At the start of the war, #58 Squadron was part of RAF Bomber Command, equipped with Whitley bombers. In April 1942, the squadron was transferred permanently to **RAF Coastal Command**. Like RCAF #407 Squadron, RAF #58 Squadron as part of Coastal Command played a pivotal role in the Allied war effort, most notably against U-boats during the Battle of the Atlantic, along with sinking enemy warships and merchant vessels, protecting Allied shipping from aerial attacks, reconnaissance and carrying out air-sea rescue.

In April 1942, RAF #58 Squadron was based at RAF St. Eval, tasked primarily with anti-submarine duties over the Western Approaches. Later that year, the squadron converted to Handley Page Halifax aircraft—four-engine heavy bombers.

On June 1, 1943, Jack Thain was part of a 7-man crew aboard Halifax aircraft BB257 that took off from RAF Station St. Eval at 1518 hours on an anti-submarine patrol. At 1911 hours, a signal was received from the Halifax that it was being attacked by enemy aircraft. No further signals were received, and at 2330 hours, the estimated time of arrival back at base, "overdue action" was taken, but without result. The aircraft failed to return from operations and was reported missing over the Bay of Biscay. Perishing with Flying Officer Jack Thain were Pilot Officer Joseph Roy Bickerton and Sgt. Laurence Edward Daw (RCAF), F/Lt. F.W. Gilmore and Sgt's C.W.H. Makin and B.W. Wyatt (RAF) and F/Sgt. S.F. Miller (RAAF).

A few days later, Jack's father John on Bright Street in Sarnia, and Jack's wife Rhoda in Wyoming, received the news that, FLYING OFFICER JACK THAIN HAS BEEN OFFICIALLY REPORTED MISSING SINCE JUNE 2 DURING AIR OPERATIONS OVERSEAS. Jack Thain's death was later officially recorded as, *Previously reported missing after air operations, now for official purposes, presumed dead, overseas.*

In January 1944, Rhoda received the following letter from the Air Marshal, Chief of the Air Staff:
Dear Mrs. Thain:

I have learned with deep regret that your husband, Flying Officer Jack Alexander Thain, is now for official purposes presumed to have died on Active Service Overseas on June 1st, 1943. I wish to offer you and the members of your family my sincere and heartfelt sympathy.

It is most lamentable that a promising career should be thus terminated and I would like you to know that his loss is greatly deplored by all those with whom your husband was serving.

In February 1945, Rhoda received a War Service Gratuity of \$584.83 for the loss of her husband of two years, Jack Thain. In mid-August 1946, Rhoda received the following letter from the R.C.A.F. Records Officer in Ottawa:

Dear Mrs. Thain:

It is a privilege to have the opportunity of sending you the Operational Wings and Certificate in recognition of the gallant services rendered by your husband Flying Officer J.A. Thain. I realize there is little which may be said or done to lessen your sorrow, but it is my hope that these "Wings", indicative of operations against the enemy, will be a treasured memento of a young life offered on the altar of freedom in defence of his Home and Country.

Years later, Rhoda re-married, becoming Rhoda Davidson and residing in Wyoming, Ontario. Less than a year later, widowed-father, John Thain, would lose another son, Clare, a Flying Officer with the R.C.A.F.

In February 1952, John received the following letter from the Wing Commander, R.C.A.F. Casualties Officer, for Chief of the Air Staff:

Dear Mr. Thain:

It is with reluctance that after so long an interval, I must refer to the loss of your son, Flying Officer Jack Alexander Thain, but due to the lack of any information concerning him since he was reported missing, it must be regretfully accepted and officially recorded that he does not have a "known" grave.

Due to the extreme hazards attending air operations there are, unhappily, many thousands of British aircrew boys who do not have "known" graves and all will be commemorated on General Memorials that will be erected at a number of locations by the Imperial War Graves Commission (of which Canada is a member), each Memorial representative of a theatre of operations. One of these Memorials will be erected at Runnymede, England and the name of your son will appear on that Memorial.

I realize that this is an extremely distressing letter and that there is no manner of conveying such information to you that would not add to your heartaches. I am fully aware that nothing I may say will lessen your great sorrow, but I would like to express to you and the members of your family my deepest sympathy.

Jack Thain, 24, has no known grave. His name is inscribed on the Runnymede War Memorial, Surrey, United Kingdom, Panel 175.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, J, L, M, N, 2C, 2D, 4B, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10B, 3o

THOMPSON, Arthur Cameron (#J/85408)

Arthur Cameron Thompson was the first member of his family to enlist and he made a terrific impression on the Recruiting Officer who recorded this about Arthur: *Very good appearing young man. Well spoken, good athlete, very likeable. Manly.* The airman from Sarnia also made a wonderful impression on Edwina Toms, a young English woman he married in February 1942 while stationed in England. Thirteen months later, the young couple celebrated the birth of their son.

That happy event was preceded by the death of Arthur's older brother, Fraser, who was killed in action with the RCAF in June 1942. More tragic news occurred when Arthur, 22, was killed in late January 1944, in a bombing mission on Berlin.

Arthur Cameron Thompson was born in Sarnia on July 22, 1921, the middle son of Picton, Ontario born Howard Bell and Margaret (nee McDonald, born in Embro, Ontario) Thompson. Howard and Margaret had three sons together: Arthur Cameron; Howard Fraser, who also served in the RCAF (see below); and the youngest son, Robert Brock. The Thompson family lived at 292 North MacKenzie Street, and father Howard supported his family working on the staff of Sarnia Refinery Engineering Department as a Mechanical and Electrical Engineer.

Arthur attended Lochiel Public School from 1926 to 1934 and then Sarnia Collegiate from 1934 to 1937, and again from 1939 to 1940. In 1937-1938, he attended Pickering College in Newmarket, Ontario and in 1938-1939, he attended Assumption College. Arthur was very active in football and hockey and also participated in swimming, golf and skiing, and his hobby was model aircraft building.

Eighteen year-old Arthur became the first Thompson boy to join the war when he enlisted with the Royal Canadian Air Force on June 4, 1940 in London, Ontario. His older brother, Howard Fraser, enlisted three months later. Arthur stood five feet nine and a quarter inches tall, had blue eyes and dark brown hair, was single and was still a student at Sarnia Collegiate when he enlisted. He was residing at home with his parents on MacKenzie Street at the time. He requested flying duties, with a preference to be an air gunner.

The Recruiting Officer recorded the following about Arthur: *Very good appearing young man. Well spoken, good athlete, very likeable. Manly.* From #1 Manning Depot in Toronto, Arthur received his air training at #1 Initial Training School (ITS) in Toronto; at #2 Air Observer School (AOS) in Edmonton, Alberta; at #2 Bombing and Gunnery School (B&GS) in Mossbank, Saskatchewan; and at #1 Air Navigation School (ANS) in Rivers, Manitoba. Arthur was awarded his Air Observer's Badge on December 9, 1940 in Rivers, Manitoba.

In late January 1941, Arthur was posted to #3 Manning Depot in Rockcliffe, Ontario. On February 15, 1941, he embarked overseas from Halifax bound for the United Kingdom. Later that month, parents Howard and Margaret in Sarnia received a cablegram from Arthur, informing them that he had arrived safely in England. Arthur was initially posted to #3 Personnel Reception Centre at Uxbridge before being transferred in early March 1941 to #3 (Coastal) Operational Training Unit (OTU) at RAF Chivenor.

In late April 1941, he became a member of RAF #217 Squadron, part of Coastal Command, an anti-shipping squadron based at St. Eval. In February 1942, the squadron was split with most of its aircraft at St. Eval, while a detachment was at RAF Thorney Island. In May 1942, the squadron moved to Malta, carrying out attacks on enemy shipping across a wide section of the Mediterranean. After two months, the squadron then moved to Ceylon where it carried out anti-submarine patrols.

Approximately one year after arriving in the U.K., on February 28, 1942, Arthur married an English girl - Edwina Joyce Toms (of Cornwall, England) in the Parish Church of St. Merryn, Cornwall, England. Sadly for Arthur, four months later in late June 1942, he would learn that his older brother (Howard) Fraser was reported missing on operations. A few months later, Fraser Thompson would be reported killed during air operations overseas.

In the early part of 1943, Arthur was scheduled for a leave to return to Canada, but because his wife was pregnant, he had it cancelled. On March 13, 1943, Arthur and Edwina Thompson had a son together, whom they named Richard Fraser Thompson. Arthur, Edwina and Richard resided near Padstow, Cornwall, and later Three Banks Terrace, Croft near Darlington, Durham, England.

On December 5, 1942, Arthur Thompson became a member of RCAF #431 (Iroquois) Squadron, part of **Bomber Command**. In March 1943, his father Howard in Sarnia wrote a letter to Honourable Charles Power, Minister of National Defence for Air in Ottawa. Following is a portion of that letter:

Dear Sir,

On behalf of Mrs. Thompson and myself I wish to thank you for your words of sympathy and gratitude on the loss of my oldest and dearest son Fraser R68407 RCAF who was missing and lost in the Middle East Bomber Command. His loss is dearly felt by us all here but I trust that his life so freely given has not been sacrificed in vain.

I hesitate to make a request but as you no doubt know my second son Flt Sgt. A Cameron Thompson RCAF has been in the Air Force since June 1940 when he enlisted and took his training in Canada going overseas in Jan 1941 and arrived in England early in February. He was immediately connected with the R.A.F. Coastal Command and after some training there was stationed at St. Eval...

He married a young fine English girl in Cornwall and now just recently has been connected with No. 431 Squadron located in Yorkshire England. Early this year he was posted to be returned to Canada but on account of his young wife's condition he had it cancelled. HE is an Observer in the Command and I am writing you that you may have this before you and to request that he be posted for Canada within the next two or three months when conditions are favourable.

It would be a great boost and relief to Cameron's mother who has been ailing a great deal particularly since Fraser's loss. Also I feel that he has done a real service to his country with the ten or 12 months of actual operational flying and now he should have sufficient experience so that he would be valuable as an instructor in Canada.

If I am not asking too much may this humble request have your consideration.

On July 1, 1943, Arthur became a member of RAF #22 Operational Training Unit (OTU) based at RAF Wellesbourne. In August 1943, Member of Parliament for Lambton West Ross W. Gray, in Sarnia, made a written request in regard to his nephew, Arthur Thompson, to the Wing Commander (James Sharpe), Air Secretary in Ottawa. Following is a portion of that request:

I am taking this opportunity of writing you in regard to one of my nephews who has been in England since 1940, being on coastal command, bombing operations, grounded due to sinus trouble, hospitalized and operated on for sinus, acted as warrant officer, married in England with one baby and wife to take care of, now, I understand, in the North of Scotland taking a further course...

...He is a brother of Fraser Thompson who was reported missing in Egypt and whose body was later found there and buried by the Royal Engineers.

It would appear to me that seeing that leaves are in order for a great number of the Air Force boys that this young fellow might be given an opportunity of returning to Canada to visit his parents.

This airman's mother has not been well for several months and the loss of her son Fraser has affected her health greatly.

In view of the above may we be advised as early as possible whether consideration has been given to the possibility of this N.C.O. being repatriated for employment in Canada and if so, the approximate date he might be expected to arrive.

Ross Gray was unsuccessful in arranging Arthur Thompson's return to Canada.

In mid-September 1943, Arthur was transferred again, becoming a member of #1664 Heavy Conversion Unit (HCU) at RAF Croft. One month later, on October 18, 1943, he returned to RCAF #431 Iroquois Squadron "The Hatiten Ronteriios" (Warriors of the Air), part of **Bomber Command**, with the rank of Pilot Officer-Bomb Aimer.

During the course of the war, one of this country's most significant contributions was the approximately 50,000 Canadians who served with the RCAF and RAF in Bomber Command operations. Next to Britain, Canada was the largest contributor to Bomber Command, making up more than a third of all of Bomber Command personnel. The men who served in Bomber Command faced some of the most difficult odds of anyone fighting in the war.

RCAF #431 Squadron had formed in Britain in November 1942, based at RAF Burn and was equipped with Vickers Wellington aircraft. In July 1943, it moved to RAF Tholthorpe and converted to Handley Page Halifax aircraft—four-engine heavy bombers. In December 1943, the squadron moved again, to RAF Croft. The squadron remained at Croft for the remainder of the war, and in October 1944 began to convert to Avro Lancasters.



P/O-BA Arthur Cameron Thompson

On the night of January 28/29th, 1944, Arthur Thompson was a member of a 7-man crew aboard Halifax V aircraft LL181 (markings SE-Q) that was on a night operation targeting Berlin, Germany. It was the third day of a heavy aerial offensive on Germany. Just after midnight, at 00.12 hours, the aircraft took off from Squadron 431's Croft base, part of a group of 677 aircraft involved in the raid. No news was received from Halifax LL181 after take-off and it failed to return to base. It was learned later that Pilot Officer-Bomb Aimer Arthur Thompson and the crew of Halifax LL181 were shot down by an enemy aircraft east of Zinndorf, Germany, near their target Berlin, Germany. Perishing with Pilot Officer Arthur Cameron Thompson were Flying Officer Roy MacLean, Pilot Officer William Russell Hewetson, and Sgt. Norman Andrew Bell (all RCAF), and F/S George Thomas Moody, and Sgt's George Frederick Carter and James McIver (all RAF). There were 46 aircraft lost in this raid.

Several days later, Howard and Margaret Thompson in Sarnia received a telegram from Ottawa informing them that their son, SGT ARTHUR CAMERON THOMPSON HAS BEEN REPORTED MISSING FOLLOWING AN ALLIED RAID OVER BERLIN. Another set of Sarnia parents, John and Mary Ellen McKeown, received the

same information on the same day about their son, Victor Herbert McKeown, who was also listed as missing in the same bombing raid over Berlin (he is included in this Project).

Arthur's wife Edwina Joyce Thompson and ten-month old son Richard Fraser were in England at the time of Arthur's death. For parents Howard and Margaret Thompson, Arthur was their second son they had lost to war. Approximately one year earlier, on New Year's Day 1943, they had received news that their eldest son, Howard Fraser Thompson of the RCAF, had been killed during air operations overseas (Egypt).

In early-February 1944, Edwina, residing in Croft, Durham, England, received the following letter from the Wing Commander, for Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief, R.C.A.F. Overseas:

Dear Mrs. Thompson,

It is with deep regret that I must confirm the communication you have recently received which stated that your husband, Sergeant Arthur Cameron Thompson, was reported missing as a result of air operations on the 28th/29th January, 1944.

Your husband was a member of the crew of a Halifax aircraft, which took off for an attack on Berlin and failed to return. This does not necessarily mean that he has been killed or wounded as it is possible he may be a prisoner of war or even free, which I hope may prove to be the case.

The request that no information be given to the press is made in order that your husband's chances of escape will not be jeopardized, by undue publicity, if he is still at large. This does not mean that information is available concerning him but is a precaution adopted in the case of all personnel reported missing.

I can assure you that enquiries are being made through every available source and any information which may be forthcoming will be communicated to you at once. Please accept my sympathy with you in your great anxiety.

In mid-February 1944, Howard received a letter from the Squadron Leader, R.C.A.F. Casualties Officer, for Chief of the Air Staff. Following is a portion of that letter:

Dear Mr. Thompson:

It is my painful duty to confirm the telegram recently received by you which informed you that your son, Sergeant Arthur Cameron Thompson, is reported missing on Active Service.

Advice has been received from the Royal Canadian Air Force Casualties Officer, Overseas, that your son was a member of the crew of an aircraft which failed to return to its base after a bombing raid over Berlin, Germany, on the night of January 28th and the early morning of January 29th, 1944. There were three other members of the Royal Canadian Air Force in the crew and they also have been reported missing. Since you may wish to know their names and next-of-kin, we are listing them below....

This does not necessarily mean that your son has been killed or wounded. He may have landed in enemy territory and might be a Prisoner of War. Enquiries have been made through the International Red Cross Society and all other appropriate sources and you may be assured that any further information received will be communicated to you immediately.

Your son's name will not appear on the official casualty list for five weeks. You may, however, release to the Press or Radio the fact that he is reported missing but not disclosing the date, place, or his unit. May I join with you and the members of your family in the hope that better news will be forthcoming in the near future.

Also in mid-February 1944, Howard received the following letter from the Wing Commander, Commanding RCAF No. 431 Squadron, Overseas:

Dear Mr. Thompson,

Before you receive this letter, you will have had a signal informing you that your son R63728 Sergeant Arthur Cameron Thompson is missing as a result of air operations.

At approximately 12:30 P.M. on the night of the 28th January, Tommy, and members of his crew took off from this aerodrome to carry out operations over BERLIN, but unfortunately failed to return. He, and his crew were due back at this aerodrome on completion of the sortie, but no news has been received from either the crew or aircraft since the time of take-off.

There is always the possibility that your son may be a prisoner of war, in which case, you will either hear from him direct, or through Air Ministry, who will receive advice from the International Red Cross Society. To be a prisoner of war is not the happiest thought in one's mind, particularly for you, who are so fond of your son, but on the other hand, I hope you will bear with me that it carries a certain gratifying thought in knowing that our loved ones are alive, and well, and will some day return home safely.

May I offer my most sincere sympathies as well as those of my Officers, and men in your anxiety.

In late May of 1944, Howard and Margaret Thompson were advised by R.C.A.F. Headquarters at Ottawa that their son, *Flight Sergeant Arthur Cameron Thompson, had been promoted to pilot officer as of January 25, 1944.* This was the first word from Ottawa about their son since he had been reported missing on January 28, 1944.

Ten months later, Howard was still waiting for more information about the fate of his son. In a November 1944 letter to the Office of Air Ministry in Ottawa, Howard wrote *I thought you might give us some information as regards P.O. A.C. Thompson No. J85408 who was reported missing Jan. 28th over Berlin... We have heard very little of anything since. One of the crew, P.O. Roy MacLean, Glace Bay, N.S. body was reported to have been found and identified. Other than this very meagre information, nothing has come through to us, and as far as I know little has been received by his wife Joyce. If you could obtain any information about Cameron, I would appreciate it very much.* In early January 1945, one year after his aircraft was shot down, an R.C.A.F. casualty list was released listing Pilot Officer Arthur Cameron Thompson as, *now for official purposes presumed dead, after previously being reported missing.*

Arthur Thompson left behind his parents in Sarnia, Howard and Margaret (who had already lost one son in the war), his "British bride" of less than two years, Edwina Joyce, and their ten-month old son, Richard Fraser Thompson. In late May of 1945, Edwina and two-year old son Richard Fraser arrived in Sarnia to spend some time with Howard and Margaret Thompson. The *Sarnia Observer* described Edwina Thompson as a slim, blue-eyed rather shy and extremely attractive young English girl.

Edwina spoke highly of the reception given her by the Red Cross, V.A.D. nurses and other organizations on her arrival in Canada. Her son and she had made the cross-Atlantic crossing aboard the liner *Brittany (Brittanic)*, in the company of 600 other brides and 400 children. Edwina was the daughter of Commander E.E. Toms, Royal Navy Fleet Air Arm of Cornwall, England. She had one sister who was preparing to return to New Zealand with her serviceman husband; another, who was engaged to an Australian; and a third sister, who was to go to India with her husband on British government business. For a time during the war, Edwina and husband Arthur had resided in Portsmouth, where he was stationed, during a period when the city was under heavy and constant air raid attack.

Edwina described training schools for Canadian war brides that were set up in London and other large metropolitan areas, but were not available in the smaller centres; however, invitations to attend were sent to prospective candidates in outlying areas. Although she was "instructed" by her husband Arthur about Canada, she found it different from what she expected. Shop windows full of clothes and shoes, the abundance of food and the luxury of bananas and ice cream were difficult to comprehend after the sparse fare of England. She described the diet as adequate, though plain and uninteresting; and the fuel shortage of the last winter as rather grim, but they managed somehow. Edwina said that she was quite prepared to like Canada and things Canadian and was looking forward with pleasure to becoming acquainted with her Sarnia relatives. In August 1945, Edwina, now residing at 292 North MacKenzie Street in Sarnia, received a War Service Gratuity of \$982.60 for the loss of her husband Arthur.

In July 1947 the RAF Missing Research and Enquiry Service released their findings on the investigation of the crash of Halifax aircraft LL181 on January 28/29th, 1944. Following is a portion of those results:

Herr Rothschuh, burgomaster of Zinndorf stated that on the night of the 29th Jan., 1944 a British bomber crashed in the fields, East of the village of Zinndorf, after having been shot down by a German night fighter. It was believed that the bomber was still carrying its full bomb load as on crashing there was a terrific explosion, consequently wreckage and even limbs etc. of several of the crew were strewn over a wide area.

The following morning after the crash a Luftwaffe detachment and the Fire Brigade from Straussberg collected together all the remains of the crew and the aircraft. Before the wreckage was removed, the Oberleutnant i/c Luftwaffe detachment reported that the a/c was a British four engined bomber. No positive identification was found as to type of a/c and no. However, as one of the crew of this a/c, namely J/21633 R. MacLean was identified at the scene of the crash, this a/c must be Hal. V. LL.181.

Six members of this crew were found, according to Herr Rothschuh. As stated previously several of the crew were more or less blown to pieces, none of the six bodies were complete. The Luftwaffe detachment searched through the papers etc. found on the bodies but only one member was identified (MacLean). After having a Mil. Funeral the crew were buried in two large boxes, 3 bodies in each, in Zinndorf Gemeinde Friedhof on the 2.2.1944.

It appears that the seventh member of this crew was blown to pieces and the Luftwaffe not knowing how many airmen there were in the crew buried what little remained of the seventh crew member with another smashed deceased...

The exhumation of this crew were carried out on the 14th May, 1947... Unfortunately only one member of

the crew was identified, the navigator... F/O R. MacLean. The bodies are now reinterred in Brit. Cem. Berlin Heerstrasse.

CONCLUSION

... The aircraft concerned in this Cas. Enq. was shot down by night fighters on the night of 28/29th Jan. 1944. The aircraft crashed, exploding on impact, in the fields, East of the village of Zinndorf. The aircraft was believed to be carried a full bomb load when shot down. Naturally therefore, only small pieces of wreckage remained which was removed by a Luftwaffe detachment to Straussberg airfield.... At daybreak on the morning of the 30th Jan 44, the Luftwaffe detachment recovered six badly smashed members of this crew from the scattered wreckage. One of the six, R. MacLean was identified.

Unfortunately from the exhumations only one member of the crew can be identified, i.e. the navigator namely F/O R. MacLean. Therefore it is suggested that F/O R. MacLean have a cross erected over his grave and the remainder have a collective grave made with the six names written on one cross.

From the information given... it is reasonably certain to state that the seventh member of this crew was blown to pieces in the fierce explosion when the Halifax crashed...

The crew is now reinterred in the Brit. Mil. Cem. Heerstrasse, Berlin.

In July 1950, Edwina, then residing at Three Banks Terrace, Croft near Darlington, Durham, England, received the following letter from RAF officials:

Dear Mrs. Thompson,

I regret having to refer again, after so long an interval, to the loss in action of your husband, Sergeant A.C. Thompson, Royal Canadian Air Force, but I am sure you will wish to know the result of investigations undertaken by the Royal Air Force Missing Research and Enquiry Service in Germany.

These investigations have established that his aircraft was shot down near Zinndorf, south of Berlin, and the seven members of the crew, who must have been killed instantly, were buried by the Germans in the local cemetery. Unfortunately, upon exhumation, it was only possible to individually identify the navigator, Flying Officer McLean.

Your husband and the other five crew members have been re-interred in a communal group of graves numbered 33-37, Row G, Plot 8, in the British Military Cemetery at Berlin (Heerstrasse), and these graves have been registered collectively with the Imperial War Graves Commission in the names of all six airmen. Flying Officer MacLean lies in an adjacent grave.

This reburial is in accordance with the policy agreed upon by His Majesty's and the Commonwealth Governments, that our fallen should be transferred to specially selected military cemeteries, where graves will be maintained, for all time, by the Imperial War Graves Commission.

I am sorry that owing to the formidable task of our search teams it has not been possible to let you have this information earlier, but I do hope this news, belated as it is, will afford you a small measure of comfort in your sad loss.

In August 1950, Howard of 292 N. MacKenzie Street, Sarnia, received a letter from the Wing Commander, R.C.A.F. Casualties Officer, for Chief of the Air Staff. Following is a portion of that letter:

Dear Mrs. Thompson,

It is with regret that I refer to the loss of your son, Pilot Officer Arthur Cameron Thompson. A report has however been received from our Missing Research and Enquiry Service concerning your son and the members of his crew.

Our Investigating Officers on visiting Zinndorf were informed by the Burgomaster that your son's aircraft had crashed in a field just east of the village after being shot down by a German night fighter. The remains of the crew were recovered from the wreckage by a German Air Force Detachment and the fire brigade from Strausberg which is situated 5 ½ miles north of Zinndorf. They were given a military funeral and buried in Zinndorf Cemetery. The burial details conveyed to you in our letter of 20th October, 1945 which were obtained from captured German documents were incorrect and apparently a German clerical error. Although German documents have on the whole been of great assistance in locating missing airmen they often proved inaccurate. One can appreciate that even with a desire to be accurate, the chaotic conditions which existed in those days could easily lead to inaccuracies. Exhumation was carried out but unhappily, Flying Officer MacLean was the only one who could be individually identified....

In accordance with the agreed policy of the Nations of the British Commonwealth that all British aircrew buried in Germany would be moved to British Military Cemeteries located in Germany, your son and the members of

his crew were moved to the permanent British Military Cemetery in Berlin. The cemetery is known as the Berlin (Heerstrasse) British Military Cemetery. Your son and the other five members of the crew who could not be individually identified were laid to rest in multiple graves 33/37 in Row G, Plot 8 and these graves will be registered collectively with their names. Flying Officer MacLean was laid to rest in Grave No. 32.

This British Military Cemetery and the graves will be reverently cared for and maintained in perpetuity by the Imperial War Graves Commission (of which Canada is a member). The Commission will also erect a permanent headstone at your son's resting place.

It is my earnest hope that you will be comforted with the knowledge that your son's resting place is known, and that it will be permanently maintained, and I would like to take this opportunity of expressing to you and the members of your family my deepest sympathy in the loss of your gallant son.

In early February 1954, Howard and Margaret Thompson, then residing on Highland Road in London, Ontario, wrote a letter to the Wing Commander, R.C.A.F. Casualties Officer, for Chief of the Air Staff in Ottawa. They informed him that in the spring, they were hoping to visit their son Arthur's grave in Berlin and possibly Howard Fraser's grave in Egypt. They were seeking his advice on whom to contact and on possible safety matters in these parts of the world. Following is a portion of the response letter from the Wing Commander:

Dear Mr. Thompson,

I wish to acknowledge your letter of February 11, and note your intended visit to Europe this coming spring, and the possible visit to the resting place of your son, Pilot Officer Arthur Cameron Thompson. Since my letter of August 15, 1950, the name of the cemetery has been changed from Berlin (Heerstrasse) British Military Cemetery to the Berlin 1939-1945 War Cemetery.

As far as I am aware there is no difficulty in going to Berlin. Your travel agent can advise you, passports are necessary and can be secured through the Department of External Affairs... You should also write to the Imperial War Graves Commission... informing them of your visit and asking for full information...

I had the privilege of visiting the Berlin 1939-1945 War Cemetery last October. The first permanent headstones 250 had arrived and the foundations for the stones were underway... The cemetery is in a beautiful location and of course with construction going on, was not at its best when I was there, as all flowers and shrubs had been removed to make way for the Headstones. The flowers and shrubs will be replaced when the stones are erected, so I hope that by the time of your visit many of the stones will be erected and the blooms back in their regular places... I trust that your visit to the resting place of your gallant son, will be of comfort and solace.

In the spring of 1954, Howard and Margaret Thompson travelled to Western Europe to visit the grave of Arthur Cameron. Their son, 22, is buried in the Berlin 1939-1945 War Cemetery, Germany, Coll. Grave 8.G.33-37. On his headstone are inscribed the words, NEVER HAVE SO FEW GIVEN SO MUCH FOR SO MANY, TO THE UTMOST, TO THE END.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, J, L, M, N, 2B, 2C, 2D, 4B, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10B, 10U

THOMPSON, Howard Fraser (#R/68407)

Howard Fraser Thompson, who always went by his middle name, enlisted in the RCAF in September 1940, three months after his younger brother, Arthur. The Dean of Western University wrote of Fraser that *There is absolutely nothing that for which we can criticize Mr. Thompson's character, personality, initiative, ability to mix with his fellows. His personality rating would be high.*

Unfortunately, in late June 1942, only six days after arriving in the Middle East and becoming a member of RAF #40 Squadron, Fraser was killed in a bombing mission during the North African campaign. Fraser, 23, left behind a young daughter in England and his parents in Sarnia. Sadly, little more than a year later, Fraser's younger brother, Arthur, was killed in a bombing mission over Berlin.

Howard Fraser Thompson, who went by "Fraser" most of his life, was born in Sarnia on December 16, 1918, the eldest son of Picton, Ontario born Howard Bell and Margaret (nee McDonald, born in Embro, Ontario) Thompson. Howard and Margaret had three sons together: Fraser; Arthur Cameron, who also served in the RCAF (see above); and the youngest son, Robert Brock, who was age 13 at the time of Fraser's death. The Thompson family lived at 292 North MacKenzie Street, and father Howard supported his family working on the staff of Sarnia Refinery Engineering Department as a Mechanical and Electrical Engineer.

Fraser attended Lochiel Street Public School from 1925 to 1932 and then Sarnia Collegiate School from September 1932 to June 1936. Like many other young men and women, he had a variety of interests that grabbed his

attention. Fraser was active in sports, including track, hockey, rugby, swimming and fencing; his hobby was wood carving; and he was a member of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church. He then attended Pickering Collegiate in Newmarket from September 1936 to June 1938. In September 1938, he attended the University of Western, and at the end of the 1938-39 session, he had secured credit in six and a half credits of the first year College of Arts Chemistry program. While at Western, he also attended Canadian Officer Training Corps (C.O.T.C.) from September 1938 to June 1939. In a reference letter written by the Dean of Western University to the RCAF Recruiting Office on behalf of Fraser, the Dean wrote, *There is absolutely nothing that for which we can criticize Mr. Thompson's character, personality, initiative, ability to mix with his fellows. His personality rating would be high.*

Beginning in September 1939, Fraser was employed by Imperial Oil Limited in Sarnia as an assistant in the Technical and Research Laboratories. The Chief Research Chemist at Imperial Oil, R.K. Stratford, wrote a reference letter to the RCAF Recruiting Officer on behalf of Fraser. His comments included, *he has shown himself to be conscientious and capable in all classes of routine testing that have been assigned to him. The young men who work in this department as laboratory assistants are all very carefully chosen before being employed, and we feel confident that providing they pass their medical examination they will be above the average for their age and experience. We, therefore, have great pleasure in recommending this young man.*

Major W.P. Doohan, Canadian Officers Reserve, who supervised Fraser at Imperial, also wrote a reference letter on behalf of Fraser. Major Doohan wrote of Fraser that *I have always found him a painstaking and dependable assistant. I can recommend this man as suitable for enlistment, he has initiative and a keen sense of duty, and should make an efficient soldier.*

Twenty-one-year-old Fraser Thompson enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force on September 12, 1940 in London, Ontario three months after his younger brother, Arthur, had enlisted. Fraser stood five feet six and a half inches tall, had brown eyes and dark brown hair, was single, and was residing at home with his parents on North MacKenzie Street at the time. He requested flying duties, with a desire to be a pilot. His plan for after the war was to return to College with the intent of becoming a geologist.



Flt-Sgt-Nav. Howard Fraser Thompson

From #2 Manning Depot in Brandon and then #2 Training Command in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Fraser Thompson received his air training at #2 Initial Training School (ITS) in Regina; and then at #5 Elementary Flying Training School (EFTS) in Lethbridge, Alberta. In February 1941, he returned to #2 Manning Depot in Brandon, before continuing his training in April 1941 at #3 Air Observer School (AOS) in Regina; and then at #5 Bombing and Gunnery School (B&GS) in Dafoe, Saskatchewan. Sergeant-Observers Fraser Thompson was awarded his Air Observers Badge on September 1, 1941, along with two other Sarnians, Sergeant-Pilot Wesley K. McDermid and Sergeant-Pilot Robert A. McCallum (McCallum is included in this Project). In September 1941, Fraser continued his training at #1 Air Navigation School (ANS) in Rivers, Manitoba. On October 1, 1941, he was posted to #1 Y Depot in Halifax.

On October 20, 1941, Fraser embarked overseas from Halifax bound for the United Kingdom. Initially

posted to #3 Personnel Reception Centre at Bournemouth, he continued his training with #20 Operational Training Unit (OTU), and in February 1942 with #15 Operational Training Unit (OTU). At some point during his time in England, Fraser met Amy Bapty at a Royal Air Force base in the country's south. They would fall in love and have a daughter together, Marlene Weaver, who was born on December 16, the same date as her father Fraser. Sadly, Marlene would never get to know her father.

After training and serving in Britain for some time, in early June 1942 Fraser Thompson was transferred to the **Middle East Command**, with #2 Middle East Training School (METS), Royal Air Force. He became a member of RAF #40 Squadron "Hostem A Coelo Expellere" (To drive the enemy from the sky), part of Bomber Command, with the rank of Flight Sergeant-Navigator.

During the course of the war, one of this country's most significant contributions was the approximately 50,000 Canadians who served with the RCAF and RAF in Bomber Command operations. Next to Britain, Canada was the largest contributor to Bomber Command, making up more than a third of all of Bomber Command personnel. The men who served in Bomber Command faced some of the most difficult odds of anyone fighting in the war.

RAF #40 Squadron had begun the war as part of the Advanced Air Striking Force, one of the first squadrons to be sent to France. In November 1940, the squadron converted to Vickers Wellington aircraft—twin-engine, long-range medium bombers--and spent the next two years operating as a night bomber squadron with Bomber Command. In October 1941, the squadron moved to Malta, where they operated against targets in Italy and North Africa until May 1942. The surviving aircraft were then transferred to Egypt. There, it began to fly operations against the Axis forces in North Africa. In December 1943, the squadron moved to Italy where it carried out Bomber Command duties during the Italian Campaign.

As part of #40 Squadron, Fraser took part in the **North African Campaign**. The campaign had begun in June 1940 and continued for almost three years, as Allied and Axis forces pushed one another back and forth across the desert. Battles between British Commonwealth, U.S. and French forces against Italian-German Axis and Vichy France forces took place across Libya, Egypt, Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia. Canadians fought as part of British army units, as members of the RAF or the Royal Canadian Air Force and serving in the Royal Canadian Navy.

Fraser's parents, Howard and Margaret in Sarnia, received two cables from him not long before he was lost in action. In the first cable, dated June 10, 1942, he informed them of his safe arrival by air in Gibraltar. In the second cable, dated June 22, 1942, he informed them that he had been sent to the headquarters of the Middle East Command.

Only days after arriving in the Middle East and becoming a member of RAF #40 Squadron, Fraser Thompson lost his life near Hohalfa, Egypt. On June 27, 1942, at 4:05 a.m., his RCAF station received the last word from Fraser Thompson's Wellington aircraft after bombing operations during the North African Campaign. Flight Sergeant-Navigator Fraser Thompson was part of a crew that crashed just south-east of the Siwa Road near the railway line, at El Alamein, Egypt. Perishing with Flight Sergeant-Navigator Fraser Thompson were FS.s Stanley Gregory and Orville Martin Kileen; one RNZAF, and one RAF member of the crew. In his report following the crash, the Wing Commander of RAF #40 Squadron wrote of Fraser Thompson, *This airman was only on the strength of this Unit for three days. During that time, however, his qualifications, character and general conduct appeared to be eminently satisfactory.*

Fraser Thompson was reported *Missing on operational duties* on June 27, 1942 by military officials. More than a week later, his parents received a cable from the Chief of Air Staff in Ottawa, informing them that their eldest son Fraser had been, REPORTED MISSING FOLLOWING A FLIGHT PRESUMABLY IN LIBYA. His remains were later found and initially buried on December 28, 1942 at a location recorded on the Burial Return Card as "Missing 27th June 1942. Body found by 58 R.S.U. and identified by papers on his body. Buried on the spot. Exact location of grave Latitude 30 degrees, 39 minutes, 40 seconds North, Longitude 29 degrees, 8 minutes, 30 seconds East."

On New Year's Day, January 1943, Howard and Margaret Thompson received a telegram from the R.C.A.F. Casualties Officer in Ottawa that read, DEEPLY REGRET TO INFORM YOU FURTHER ADVICE HAS BEEN RECEIVED FROM THE ROYAL CANADIAN AIR FORCE CASUALTIES OFFICER OVERSEAS THAT YOUR SON FLIGHT SERGEANT HOWARD FRASER THOMPSON PREVIOUSLY REPORTED MISSING ON ACTIVE SERVICE ON JUNE 27 1942 IS NOW REPORTED TO HAVE LOST HIS LIFE HIS BODY HAVING BEEN RECOVERED. ACCEPT MY PROFOUND SYMPATHY. LETTER FOLLOWING. Fraser Thompson's death was later officially recorded as, *Killed during air operations, overseas.*



Ftl-Sgt-Nav. Howard Fraser Thompson

In January 1943, St. Andrew's Church in Sarnia held a memorial service for three parishioners, all members of the Royal Canadian Air Force, who had paid the supreme sacrifice in the previous year—George William Knowles, Donald Cameron MacGregor and Howard Fraser Thompson. The service was arranged at the request of family members with Rev. Dr. J.M. Macgillivray officiating. In his brief address, Dr. Macgillivray's words expressed the sentiment of many at the time:

These men, as well as others like them, went forth possessed, perhaps, of a spirit of adventure not unnatural in young men. But it was not only the call of adventure that led them to the King's service in the clouds. There was a deeper motive than that. They had a vision of a new and better world; a world free of tyranny, oppression, injustice and fear. They knew that the only way to secure such a world was by overthrowing forever the forces of evil now threatening mankind; and to that holy task they dedicated their lives. They have entered into the larger life; and to God's keeping we commend them in the Easter hope of a final resurrection to eternal life.

It is my personal conviction that they are not now far away from us, and I read to you as suggestive and appropriate some words written by a French soldier killed in 1915 during the First Great War: 'I believe the dead live close to the living, invisible but present; and perhaps it is they whom God sends to us in answer to our prayers, so that their spirit, which is His, may continue to guide us and inspire us.'

In August 1945, Howard and Margaret Thompson received a War Service Gratuity of \$262.70 for the loss of their son Fraser. Howard Fraser Thompson, 23, was initially buried near the Hohalfa Railway Station and later exhumed and reburied in the Halfaya Sollum War Cemetery, Egypt, Coll. Grave 15. B. 2-3. On his headstone are inscribed the words, GIVING ALL, DARING ALL TO THE UTMOST, TO THE END, HE DIED THAT WE MIGHT LIVE. His name is also inscribed on the Sarnia Refinery Plaque. Unveiled in 1949, the plaque has the names of 24 Sarnia Imperial Oil employees who made the ultimate sacrifice in World War II.

Fraser's younger brother, RCAF Flight-Sergeant Arthur Cameron Thompson, had seen two years of service at the time of Fraser's death. About a year and a half after Fraser's death, Pilot Officer Arthur Thompson of RCAF #431 Squadron would also lose his life, shot down over Germany. Parents Howard and Margaret Thompson in Sarnia lost two of their three sons in the war. On the Sarnia cenotaph, Howard Fraser Thompson's name is inscribed as F.F. Thompson.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, J, L, M, N, O, 2C, 2D, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10B, 2x

THURLOW, Jack Alvin (#J/11980)

You wanted Jack Thurlow in your corner—a competent pilot and a large and popular man, affectionately nicknamed "Tiny". The Woodstock native came to Sarnia from Woodstock to work at Imperial and played for the Sarnia Imperials in 1939 before he enlisted in the RCAF in 1941. Weeks before the war ended, Thurlow was killed in action when his plane exploded over France. His body was never found, but his quick actions saved the lives of the seven crew members under his command. His name is inscribed on the Runnymede War Memorial in Surrey, England and on the Sarnia Refinery Plaque.

Jack Alvin Thurlow was born April 25, 1918 in St. Catharines, Ontario, the eldest son of Alfred Andrew and Olive Blanche (nee Davis) Thurlow. Alfred Thurlow and Olive Davis were married on July 3, 1912 in Woodstock,

Ontario, where they would reside and raise their one daughter and two sons. Their first child was daughter Irene Elizabeth, born in January 1914. Tragically, baby Irene Elizabeth Thurlow passed away in Woodstock on March 5, 1914, at only two months of age, the result of the bacterial infection erysipelas. The two boys were Jack Alvin and Robert Charles Thurlow, born April 1924. Tragedy struck the Thurlow family again when Jack was only seven years old. On July 30, 1925, Alfred, his father, a machinist by trade, passed away at the age of thirty-three in Woodstock. Olive Thurlow later remarried, to R.A. Heymes, and they had one child together, Ronald Heymes, a step-brother for Jack.

Jack attended Woodstock Public Schools from 1925-31 and then Woodstock Collegiate from September 1931 to June 1935. He left school at the age of seventeen and then went to work, employed at Thomas Organ and Piano Company in Woodstock as a finisher and doing office work from 1935-39. In 1939, Jack Thurlow moved to Sarnia, where he was employed as a pipefitter and did construction at Imperial Oil Limited. He worked at Imperial for 2 ½ years. While in Sarnia, he gained some military experience as a Gunner with the 26th Reserve Field Battery, Royal Canadian Artillery from August 1940 to June 1941. For a time, Jack also played football with the Sarnia Imperials.

On June 27, 1941, Jack Thurlow, now twenty-three years old, enlisted with the Royal Canadian Air Force at the RCAF Recruiting Centre in London, Ontario. He stood six feet three inches tall, had an athletic build of just over 200 pounds, had brown eyes and brown hair, was single, and was residing at 150 Crawford Street in Sarnia at the time. He was active in rugby, baseball, basketball, swimming and track and field and recorded his hobby as physical training. His plan was to remain in the RCAF after the war.

Jack Thurlow received his air force training at #3 Initial Training School (ITS) in Victoriaville (Quebec); at #4 Elementary Flying Training School (EFTS) in Windsor Mill (Quebec); at #13 Service Flying Training School in St. Hubert (Quebec); and then at #4 Bombing and Gunnery School (BG&S) in Fingal (Ontario). He was awarded his Pilot Flying Badge on June 5, 1942. When Air Commander Billy Bishop, V.C., pinned on Jack Thurlow's wings, he asked for a box to stand on to reach the chest of the six foot, three inch, 200-pound-plus airman. From #1 "Y" Depot in Halifax, he embarked overseas bound for the United Kingdom on November 16, 1943. After arriving, from #3 Personnel Reception Centre, he continued his training at #18 (Pilot) Advanced Flying Unit (AFU) at Church Lanford; and #12 Operational Training Unit (OTU) at Chipping Wardley; and then at #1657 Heavy Conversion Unit (CU) at Stradishall. On November 13, 1944, Flight Lieutenant Jack Thurlow became a member of RAF 199 Squadron (Let Tyrants Tremble), part of No. 100 Group with **Bomber Command**.

During the course of the war, one of this country's most significant contributions was the approximately 50,000 Canadians who served with the RCAF and RAF in Bomber Command operations. Next to Britain, Canada was the largest contributor to Bomber Command, making up more than a third of all of Bomber Command personnel. The men who served in Bomber Command faced some of the most difficult odds of anyone fighting in the war.

RAF No. 199 Squadron was formed on November 7, 1942, based at RAF Blyton equipped with Vickers Wellington aircraft, as a standard night bomber squadron within Bomber Command. By July 1943, the squadron was based at RAF Lakenheath and was re-equipped with Short Stirling III four-engine heavy bombers. In May 1944 the squadron was transferred to No. 100 Group to become a radio counter-measures group, based at RAF North Creak. The squadron aircraft were equipped with advanced radar jamming equipment to disrupt the German air defences, supporting the heavy bomber raids over Germany.

Thurlow was well-liked and being a big man, was affectionately nicknamed "Tiny" by members of 199 Squadron. On the night of March 5, 1945, F/L Jack Thurlow was the Pilot and captain aboard Stirling III aircraft LJ617 (markings EX-E) with its seven other crew members. His aircraft was one of a part of the 199 squadron that took off to provide support for a night bombing mission to an unknown location in Germany. Thurlow's aircraft took off for France from RAF North Creak, Norfolk at 1642 hours, during a continuous light drizzle and low cloud mist. As part of a Bomber Support Operation, LJ617 was tasked with orbiting a specific position over France for a period from 1855 hours to 2050 hours, at no less than 15,000 feet – to deploy a Mandrel screen. That night, there was cloud up to and above this height, and the majority of aircraft in the vicinity, including Thurlow's Stirling LJ617, flew at approximately 18,000 feet.

After completing four orbits and at approximately 1930 hours, Thurlow's aircraft was fired on and hit by anti-aircraft gunfire (90 mm guns) while completing its fifth orbit. The starboard outer engine was hit and fire spread along the mainplane. The Captain of the aircraft, Pilot Jack Thurlow, ordered the crew to bail out and all the crew,

with the exception of the Captain Thurlow, obtained their parachutes. They were in the process of abandoning the aircraft when it exploded and disintegrated in mid-air, throwing seven members of the crew clear. Thurlow had stayed at his station to allow the other members of the crew to bail out, and he was unable to put on his parachute before the explosion took place.

No escape hatch had been opened and the time from the first hit to the final disintegration was approximately twenty seconds. None of the airmen escaped out of the hatches--all were blown out when the aircraft exploded and disintegrated in mid-air. Seven airmen parachuted safely to the ground and landed in friendly territory approximately 15 miles in front of the German lines. The aircraft crashed to the ground in the vicinity of Thionville, France, where parts were scattered far and wide in the midst of a large forest. The remnants of the aircraft burned for four hours. No traces of F/L Jack Thurlow were ever found. Surviving crew members were F/O's R.G. Noonward and R.A. Twaddle; P/O J.R. Nichols; F/Sgt's J.G.A.G. Evans and L.G. Phillips; F/Lt F. Fenning; and Sgt. A. Plumtree.



Pilot Jack Alvin Thurlow

Days later, the Mid Upper Gunner, F/L F. Fenning, recalled his final moments in the aircraft; *The starboard outer burst into flames and a large hole was also made in the centre of the mainplane between the outer and inner engines. Captain Thurlow immediately ordered 'Bale out'. I vacated my turret, donned parachute, retained helmet on and made for the rear escape hatch. The Special W/AIR was immediately in front of me and the rear gunner was coming from his turret and dropping on his knees preparatory to opening the hatch. I plugged in the intercom at the hatch in order to advise the captain that three had gone out of the rear exit. Immediately on plugging in I heard the captain say 'Quick give me my chute' almost simultaneously a tremendous explosion occurred behind me and I opened my eyes to find I was descending and that my parachute was open. I should mention that there was a very pronounced smell of petrol inside the aircraft... I have since verified with the Bomb Aimer that he got as far as getting his hands on the captain's parachute when the explosion took place.*

An ensuing investigation determined that Thurlow's Stirling LJ617 aircraft had been hit by a U.S. Army anti-aircraft shell. Investigators concluded the American A.A. Battery had made a serious mistake. The following day after the crash, Lt.-Col. Sam C. Russell of the 38th A.A.A. Brigade, A.P.O. 403 US Army, called the hospital and expressed his deepest sympathy with the crew at what he termed a *regrettable accident which should never have taken place.*

In expressing regret and accepting responsibility at the mistake the Americans made, Brigadier C. Hines, Commander of the 38th A.A.A. Brigade wrote the following in a letter to the Air Officer Commanding No. 100 Group: *I wish to express my deepest sympathy for an avoidable (sic) loss of an aircraft of your Command, and the probable loss of one of the crew. Units of this Brigade have been extremely proud of their record since 1st August, 1944, and have been particularly careful in their I.A.Z. duties. This unfortunate misunderstanding of a message by our battalion is regretted. One of the other conclusions of the RAF investigation into the accident was that, Once again it is proved that pilots of heavy bomber type aircraft should be equipped with parachute that can be worn permanently in the cockpit.*

The October 1945 Official RCAF Casualty Notification recorded Pilot Jack Alvin Thurlow as *Previously reported "missing" 5-March-45 after air operations (overseas). Aircraft abandoned near Thionville France and subsequently reported "missing believed killed" (Bomb aimer could find no trace amongst aircraft wreckage). Now "presumed dead" 5-March-45 for official purposes.*

In March 1945, the Wing Commander of 199 Squadron wrote to Jack's mother, Mrs. Olive Heymes at 584 George Street in Woodstock: *Tiny was one of the most popular members of the Squadron, held in high esteem by all. Always cheerful and happy-go-lucky, he was one of our best pilots. He is greatly missed by his comrades and his loss is deeply regretted by all of us.* In January 1946, Olive received a War Service Gratuity of \$627.72 for the loss of her son. A year later, the Wing Commander for Chief of the Air Staff sent her the Operational Wings and Certificate in recognition of the gallant services rendered by her son. In May 1952, she received a letter from the Wing Commander, RCAF Casualties Officer for Chief of the Air Staff. Following is a portion of that letter:
Dear Mrs. Heymes:

It is with reluctance that after so long an interval, I must refer to the loss of your son, Flight Lieutenant Jack Alvin Thurlow, but due to the lack of any information concerning him since he was reported missing, it must be regretfully accepted and officially recorded that he does not have a "known" grave...

RCAF Flight Lieutenant Jack Alvin Thurlow, 26, has no known grave. His name is inscribed on the Runnymede War Memorial in Surrey, England on Panel 278. His name is also inscribed on the Sarnia Refinery Plaque. Unveiled in 1949, the plaque has the names of 24 Sarnia Imperial Oil employees who made the ultimate sacrifice in World War II.

SOURCES: C, D, F, L, M, 2C, 2D, 3J, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10B, 10U

TOTTEN, Walter Frederick (#A/57816)

Walter Frederick Totten was 21 when he joined the army, and planned to return to farming after the war. After training in the U.K., he served in France and Belgium in the fight to rid those countries of the German oppressors. He was wounded in twice while in action. The second wounding proved to be fatal. His commanding officer wrote of Walter that, *he was an inspiration to the rest of us. His gallantry and devotion to duty did not go unnoticed... he will not be forgotten by those who fought beside him...*

Walter Frederick Totten was born in Sarnia on January 24, 1920, the son of Isaac and Charlotte Totten who were married in Norwich, Norfolk, England. At some point, the Totten family immigrated to Canada, and lived at 499 George Street in Sarnia. Isaac supported his family working in the Process Department at Plant No. 2, with the Sarnia Imperial Refinery. Isaac and Charlotte had five children together: Edward (the oldest), Walter, Clarence, and Clifford (both younger than Walter). Their fifth child, Ernest, died on April 12, 1923. At the time of Walter's death, his three brothers were all serving in the war: Clarence was a Private with the Canadian Army in British Columbia; Clifford was a seaman/gunner with the Canadian Navy; and Edward was a gunner with the Canadian Army who was in a hospital in London, Ontario recovering from frostbite that he had received while on duty in the Arctic.

Walter Totten completed his schooling at the age of sixteen. He worked as a farm hand for various farmers throughout Southwestern Ontario from 1936 to 1940. For a short time prior to enlisting, Walter worked as a yardman at Imperial Oil Limited in Sarnia.

Twenty-one-year-old Walter Totten enlisted in the Canadian Army on July 3, 1941 in Chatham, Ontario. He stood five feet five inches tall, had blue eyes and medium brown hair, was single, and lived with his parents on George Street at the time. He recorded his occupation as farmer. He planned to return to farming after the war. He had joined #12 Canadian Army (Basic) Training Centre in Chatham several weeks prior to enlisting. From #1 District Depot in London, Ontario, Walter began his army training at #12 Basic Training Centre (BTC) in Chatham. In late August 1941, he began his advanced training at A17 Canadian Machine Gun Training Center (CMGTC) in Three Rivers, Quebec. On December 13, 1941, Walter embarked overseas bound for the United Kingdom.

Disembarking in the U.K. on December 26, 1941, Walter Totten became a member of the Canadian Machine Gun Holding Unit (CMGHU). In May 1942, he became a member of the Cameron Highlanders of Ottawa (CHofO), Royal Canadian Infantry Corps (RCIC). Walter continued to train in the United Kingdom for two and a half years, including mortar training and time with a machine gun reinforcement unit. In late March 1944, he was attached to #6 Canadian Infantry Reinforcement Unit (CIRU), and in mid-May 1944, was returned to the Cameron Highlanders. Walter embarked from the UK and sailed across the English Channel on July 10, 1944.

On July 12, 1944, one month after D-Day, Private Walter Totten disembarked in France with the Cameron Highlanders. The **Battle of Normandy** had begun for the Canadians with the June 6, 1944 D-Day landings at Juno Beach. After breaching the “Atlantic Wall” of “Fortress Europe”, Allied armies began their breakout from the narrow Normandy bridgehead to carve out a foothold on the French mainland. It took a whole summer of tenacious fighting, pushing against fierce and ruthless German forces to advance east across France. In a brutal campaign of attrition, the Canadians faced fierce battles and vicious counterattacks as they clawed their way forward liberating villages and towns including Bretteville, Carpiquet, Caen and Falaise.

Only ten days after arriving in France, on July 22, 1944, Private Walter Totten was wounded in action. He was returned to the United Kingdom on July 30, 1944, where he would recover from his wounds in an English hospital. While recovering, he was attached to the #6 Canadian Infantry Reinforcement Unit (CIRU).

One month after being wounded, Walter was returned to his unit, disembarking in France on August 26, 1944. After the Allied breakout from Normandy, Canadian forces were assigned the “**Long Left Flank**”, which included the less glamorous but vital tasks of clearing coastal areas in the north of France and Belgium of German occupiers; opening the English Channel ports for supplies essential to the Allied advance; and capturing the launching sites of German V-1 rockets. In a series of stop-and-start advances against stiff resistance in fortified positions, the Canadians liberated ports and villages including Rouen, Dieppe, Dunkirk, Boulogne and Calais. Walter Totten served with the Cameron Highlanders as they advanced along the “long left flank” from late August to early October 1944 towards Belgium and the Netherlands.

In early September 1944, Allied forces had captured the inland port of Antwerp, Belgium, the second greatest port in Europe at the mouth of the Scheldt River. However, German forces still controlled the 45-mile-long Scheldt estuary (the Belgian-Dutch border area) that connected the port of Antwerp to the North Sea. In early October 1944, the Canadians were entrusted with liberating the estuary. The **Battle of the Scheldt** was among the most difficult and grueling struggles in the war. The bitter fighting against a well-fortified and heavily entrenched enemy took place in a bleak environment made worse by the winter cold in a flooded and freezing muddy quagmire.

Less than two months after rejoining his unit, Private Walter Totten was wounded again. On October 18, 1944, he was wounded in action in Antwerp, Belgium, during the Battle of the Scheldt. Succumbing to his injuries, he lost his life four days later on October 22, 1944. Walter Totten was buried on October 23, 1944, at a location recorded on the Army Field Service Card as “Belgium Eccloo Notre Dame de L’Epire 087948 Plot 1-Row3-Grave 8”.

Five days after their son’s death, on October 27, 1944, Isaac and Charlotte Totten in Sarnia received information from Ottawa informing them that their son, PTE WALTER FREDERICK TOTTEN WAS INJURED IN ACTION IN FRANCE ON OCTOBER 18. The message informed them that Walter had suffered a compound fracture of the tibia when wounded in action on October 18, 1944. One week later, Isaac and Charlotte received a telegram from the Director of Records in Ottawa informing them that their son, PRIVATE WALTER FREDERICK TOTTEN HAD SUCCUMBED TO HIS INJURIES ON OCTOBER 22. Isaac and Charlotte later received a letter from Hon. Capt. (Rev.) Gordon Walker who officiated Walter’s funeral in the military cemetery in Eccloo, Belgium.

In mid-November 1944, Charlotte received the following letter from the Major-General, Adjutant-General:
Dear Mrs. Totten:

It was with deep regret that I learned of the death of your son, A57816 Private Walter Frederick Totten, who gave his life in the Service of his Country in the Western European Theatre of War on the 22nd day of October, 1944.

From official information we have received, your son died as the result of injuries received in action against the enemy. You may be assured that any additional information received will be communicated to you without delay.

The Minister of National Defence and the Members of the Army Council have asked me to express to you and your family their sincere sympathy in your bereavement. We pay tribute to the sacrifice he so bravely made.

Walter Totten’s death was later officially recorded as, *Overseas casualty, died of injuries, in the field (Belgium)*. In late January 1945, Charlotte wrote a letter to the Estates Branch. She had sent her “darling son” a new watch in May 1944, and two “expensive and valuable parcels” in early September and early October 1944. In her letter, she wrote, *...I would very much like to receive something of His; but realise that it takes time I have lost a wonderful kind good loving son. But wars always take the Best only a mother knows that heart-ache believe me.*

In early February 1945, Isaac and Charlotte received the following letter from Major R.G. Armstrong, the Commanding Officer of their son Walter’s unit, D Company, Cameron Highlanders of Ottawa:

On behalf of your son's friends in this company I write you this letter. We hope that you will not grieve too much for him but rather be proud that you have had such a man as your son. To say that we are proud of him is an understatement for he was an inspiration to the rest of us. His gallantry and devotion to duty did not go unnoticed. We assure you that he will not be forgotten by those who fought beside him for so long, and it remains to us who are left to carry on his splendid work. Again may I express my regrets.

In September 1945, Isaac and Charlotte received a War Service Gratuity of \$668.82 for the loss of their son. In early January 1946, Charlotte received a letter from the Colonel, Director of Records, for Adjutant-General. Following is a portion of that letter:

Dear Madam:

Information has just been received from overseas that the remains of your son, A57816 Private Walter Frederick Totten, have been carefully exhumed from the original place of interment and reverently reburied in grave 12, row A, plot 5, of Adegem Canadian Military Cemetery, Adegem, Belgium. Marked map is enclosed. This is a recognized military burial ground and will receive care and maintenance in perpetuity.

The grave will have been marked with a temporary cross which will be replaced in due course by a permanent headstone suitably inscribed. While it cannot now be stated when this work of permanent commemoration will begin, before any action is taken you will be communicated with and an opportunity will be given you to submit a short personal inscription of your own choice for engraving on the headstone...

Walter Totten, 24, is buried in Adegem Canadian War Cemetery, Belgium, Grave V.A.12. On his headstone are inscribed the words, GOD'S KINGDOM THE HOPE OF THE WORLD. His name is also inscribed on the Sarnia Refinery Plaque. Unveiled in 1949, the plaque has the names of 24 Sarnia Imperial Oil employees who made the ultimate sacrifice in World War II.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, N, O, 2C, 2D, 6O, 7C, 8X, 8Y

VAIL, Donald (#R/99576)

Donald Vail had been a teacher, principal and salesman prior to making the decision to serve his country. He was also 34 years old, married and had three young children at home. He gave his life for the Allied cause while serving in one of the most dangerous postings of the war.

Donald Vail was born in London, Ontario on January 6, 1907, the son of Newbury, Ontario born Charles Wesley and Watford, Ontario born Laura Winnifred (nee Jones) Vail. Charles and Laura Vail had four children together, all boys: Cecil Victor (born 1890); Wilfred Barrie (born 1899); Donald, and Allan Douglas (born 1908). The Vail family lived in Middlesex County until about 1911, and then moved to Watford, Ontario. Donald's father, Charles Vail, a former C.N.R. station agent and operator, passed away in December of 1935. Donald's mother, Laura Vail, later moved to 480 King William Street in Hamilton, Ontario.

Donald Vail attended Watford Public School from 1912 to 1920, then Watford High School from 1920 to 1924, and then London Central Collegiate in 1926-1927. He attended the University of Western Ontario (UWO) in 1927-1928, obtaining 11 credits, and then London Normal School in 1930-1931. While attending the University of Western, Donald played hockey there, as well as with the Strathroy team. He was also very active in track and field, boxing and baseball in Sarnia. Once employed, he continued to take UWO Faculty of Arts extension courses between 1935-1938, including in psychology, economics, English and history. Donald began his teaching career at S.S. #3 Wolfe Island in 1931-1932, and then #2 Oneida in 1932-1933. From 1933 to 1938, Donald was the principal at Wyoming Public School in Wyoming, Ontario.

On December 31, 1932, Donald Vail married Vera Doreen Miller (of Watford, Ontario) in Ilderton, Ontario. The couple were blessed with three children: Patricia Anne (born September 2, 1934 in Petrolia); Nancy Jane (born June 24, 1936 in Petrolia); and Donald Paul (born July 13, 1939 in Sarnia). In the latter part of 1938, Donald joined the London Life Insurance Company in Sarnia, where he worked as a bookkeeper and insurance salesman for two and a half years until he enlisted in 1941. From July 30, 1940 to April 12, 1941, Donald served with the 2-11th Field Company, Royal Canadian Engineers (RCE) in Sarnia, attaining the rank of Lieutenant-Corporal.

Thirty-four-year-old Donald Vail enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force on April 15, 1941 in London, Ontario. He stood five feet nine and a half inches tall, had blue eyes and brown (greying) hair, and lived at 532 Devine Street, Sarnia at the time with his wife and three children. He requested ground duties, specifically as a radio mechanic. In a reference letter written by Horace Palmer (a C.N.R. conductor and veteran of the Great War) for the RCAF recruiter on behalf of Donald, Mr. Palmer wrote, *This is to certify that I have known members of the Vail*

family for a number of years and I consider Mr. Donald Vail a young man of very fine character not only in a business capacity but also in home life. I have always found him industrious, sober and reliable. He has been a Schoolmaster, is a fine athlete, and while employed as Schoolmaster he had sufficient ambition to learn the telegraph. I served four years in the army during the last war and I have no hesitation in saying that I think Mr. Donald Vail would be an asset to any branch of the R.C.A.F. to which he may apply...

From the Recruiting Centre in London, and then #1 Manning Depot in Toronto, Donald received training at the RCAF Detachment at Western University in London (Fundamental and Applied Theory) and #31 Radio School in Clinton, Ontario. Upon completion of an RCAF radio mechanics course in December 1941 at Western University, the course instructor wrote of him, *Lab work excellent. Thoroughly reliable and conscientious. Is superior in maturity of judgement. Assessment – Exceptional.* In mid-February 1942, Donald was posted to #31 Personnel Depot in Moncton, New Brunswick.

In late February-early March 1942, Donald enjoyed his two-week pre-embarkation leave. On March 12, 1942, Donald embarked overseas from #1 Y Depot in Halifax bound for the United Kingdom. Initially posted to RAF #3 Personnel Reception Centre, he was transferred on May 5, 1942 to RAF #15 Operational Training Unit (OTU), based at RAF Harwell, with the rank of Corporal, where he was a radio technician/mechanic.



Corporal Donald Vail

RAF #15 Operational Training Unit (OTU) was formed in April 1940 as part of No. 6 Group RAF Bomber Command at RAF Harwell. Instructors trained night bomber crews on the Vickers Wellington aircraft, a twin-engine, long-range medium bomber.

During the course of the war, one of this country's most significant contributions was the approximately 50,000 Canadians who served with the RCAF and RAF in **Bomber Command** operations. Next to Britain, Canada was the largest contributor to Bomber Command, making up more than a third of all of Bomber Command personnel. The men who served in Bomber Command faced some of the most difficult odds of anyone fighting in the war. There was no easy way to learn how to fly the heavy bombers, and training crews suffered a litany of disasters, crashes and deaths. By the end of the war, Bomber Command lost over 8,000 Allied airmen who were killed in training or by accidents alone.

Two months after arriving at RAF #15 OTU, on July 9, 1942, Donald Vail was a passenger aboard Wellington IC aircraft DV932 that took off from RAF Harwell on a day training exercise. At approximately 1630 hours, on its return approach to Harwell, the pilot overshot the landing and attempted a take-off to go around again. The aircraft failed to gain sufficient height and stalled when the pilot tried to turn away from some trees. The Wellington aircraft accidentally crashed in a field adjacent to the aerodrome at Harwell, Didcot, Berkshire, England. Donald suffered abdominal injuries and fourth degree burns and died in the crash. Perishing with Corporal Donald Vail were LAC Gordon Stewart Miller and RAF airmen P/O Herbert Edward James Giles and Sgts Donald Bradshaw and John Simon DaSilva Haley.

Just days after the crash, his wife Vera Vail in Watford received the cablegram informing her that Donald

was listed as, KILLED DURING AIR OPERATIONS OVERSEAS. Upon his death, Donald Vail left behind his wife Vera, their two daughters, Patsy (age 7 1/2), Nancy (age 6), and their son Paul (age 3). In February 1945, Vera Vail received a War Service Gratuity of \$144.89 for the loss of her husband Donald.

Donald Vail, 35, is buried in Brookwood Military Cemetery, Surrey, United Kingdom, Grave 32.G.4. On his headstone are inscribed the words, HE IS NOT DEAD WHILE HIS MEMORY LIVES IN THE HEARTS OF THOSE WHO LOVED HIM.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, M, N, 2C, 2D, 6O, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10U

VOKES, Myles Keith (#A/99627)

Myles Keith Vokes was only eighteen years old when he was called to serve his country. He never had the opportunity to serve overseas. He died as a result of a tragic accident while serving with the Military Staff Clerks in London, Ontario.

Myles Vokes was born in London, Ontario on August 23, 1922, the youngest son of William (born in Peel County) and Alice May (nee Mason) Vokes who were married on July 24, 1912 in Forest, Ontario. The Vokes family moved to Sarnia only weeks after Myles' birth, and lived at 137 John Street. William supported his family working as a stationary engineer in Sarnia. William and Alice Vokes had three children together: Martha Eva (born 1913); William Mason (born July 11, 1914); and Myles. Myles' brother William also served in the war, as a member of the Royal Canadian Air Force. Myles Vokes was educated in Sarnia including four years of high school, and eleven months at a Sarnia Business College.



William Mason Vokes, RCAF



Myles Keith Vokes

Eighteen year-old Myles Vokes was called out under General Orders (GO) on September 5, 1940, and was attached to #11 Non-Permanent Active Militia Training Centre in Woodstock, Ontario as a Private. From August 14, 1940 to April 15, 1941, Myles served in the 26th Field Battery, Royal Canadian Artillery (RCA) in Sarnia, with the rank of Gunner. On April 16, 1941, Myles completed his Canadian Active Service Force (CASF) Attestation Papers in London, Ontario, becoming a member of the Active Force (AF). He stood five feet seven and three-quarter inches tall, had blue eyes and brown hair, was single, and lived at home with his parents on John Street at the time. He recorded his occupation as stenographer, an occupation he planned to pursue after the war. Myles became a member of the #1 Detachment Corps of Military Staff Clerks (CMSC), based in London, Ontario. In mid-July 1941, he was made a Lance Corporal, and in October 1941 he advanced in rank to Corporal.

On January 9, 1942, Myles Vokes lost his life in London, Ontario, the result of a motorcycle accident. The tragic mishap occurred at the corner of Piccadilly and Colborne Streets on the night of January 8, 1942. The motorcycle, with sidecar attached, was involved in a collision with an automobile. Driving the motorcycle was Petrolia soldier Gunner Robert F. Burns, 18, and in the sidecar were passengers Private Frederick R. Heatherly, 18, of London and Corporal Myles Vokes. All three soldiers were on duty at the time--Burns and Heatherly were employed as dispatch riders, stationed at No. 1 District Depot, Wolsely Barracks.

The motorcycle was proceeding along Piccadilly Street at about 30 m.p.h. and at the corner of Colborne Street there was a manhole covered by a windlass over it in the centre of the intersection. A car approached up Colborne Street from the south, on the wrong side of the road. As the road was slippery from frozen snow and ice, and thinking the driver of car was slowing down, the motorcycle driver thought there was enough room to pass the automobile. The civilian car struck the right front of the motorcycle side-car.

Out of control, the motorcycle careened into a curb and the impact hurled Myles Vokes twenty feet through the air onto the roadway. When police and an ambulance arrived, Myles was lying face down on the road. Both Burns and Heatherly were lying conscious beside the completely wrecked motorcycle. They were all taken to Trafalgar Hospital. Gunner R. Burns suffered a fractured right radius, and Private F. Heatherly suffered shock and contusion, and skin abrasion of the left hip. Corporal Myles Vokes was dead upon arrival.

Myles Vokes, 19, is buried in Sarnia (Lakeview) Cemetery, Sarnia, Ontario, Canada, Sec. E. Lot 154. On his headstone are inscribed the words, AT THE GOING DOWN OF THE SUN AND IN THE MORNING WE WILL REMEMBER HIM.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, J, L, 2C, 2D, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10V

WADE, John Robert (#A/105041)

John Wade was working hard and saving money to buy his own farm when, at age 19, he made the decision to serve his country. Two years later, after being wounded a second time, he lost his life for the Allied cause during the fierce fighting to liberate Italy.

John Robert Wade was born in Sarnia on May 4, 1923, the eldest son of John William and Evelyn Maude Wade who were married in Sarnia on March 24, 1913. John Sr. and Evelyn Wade had six children together: sons John Jr. and Frederick (the youngest in the family); and four daughters: (who at the time of John's death were) Mrs. Edith Mae Waghorne (residing in Edmonton); Mrs. Grace Annie (Robert) Ferguson and Mrs. Evelyn Maude (Donald) May (both at R.R. #1, Sarnia); and Mrs. Marion (Joe) Soper (residing on Stuart Street, Sarnia). John Wade Sr. supported his family working as a carpenter, and the Wade family lived at R.R. #1, 6th Concession, Sarnia Township.

Growing up on a farm, John Wade Jr. attended school for eight years and completed his grade eight at the age of fourteen in 1936. He was a member of his church choir, and was active in rugby, softball and hockey. He started his first year of high school at Sarnia Collegiate in 1937 but quit on his own accord to go to work. He worked as a carpenter's helper for one year, and then on his father's 30-acre market garden and dairy farm for a couple of years. He was employed for two years at Electric Auto-Lite plant in Sarnia as a press operator prior to enlisting.

Nineteen year-old John Wade Jr. enlisted in the Canadian Army on October 28, 1942 in London, Ontario. He stood five feet nine and a half inches tall, had hazel eyes and brown hair, was single, and lived at home with his parents at R.R.#1 in Sarnia at the time. He planned to have a farm of his own after the war. The Recruiting Officer notes on John Wade included, *Liked working at Auto-Lite Mfg, was making 80 cents per hour. Has been saving money...war bonds so as to set himself up in a farm... Excellent health all his life... goes to theatre, parties, reads a lot of light fiction. Tall, well-built chap... Good stability. Good personality.*

From #1 District Depot in London, John Wade received his army training at #13 Basic Training Centre (BTC) in Listowel; followed by #6 Basic Training Center in Stratford; and then at #8 Canadian Armoured Corps (Advanced) Training Centre (CACATC) at Camp Borden. While at CACATC, he attained the rank of Trooper in February 1943, and he qualified as a Dispatch Rider. In mid-May 1943, he was transferred to #1 Canadian Armoured Corps Training Regiment (CACTR). In late May-early June 1943, John received a 14-day pre-embarkation furlough.

On June 11, 1943, Trooper John Wade embarked overseas bound for the United Kingdom, where he became a member of #3 Canadian Armoured Corps Reinforcement Unit (CACRU). He continued his training in the U.K., including a period with the 21st Armoured Regiment and with the firefighters at #1 Canadian Army Reinforcement Unit (CARU). In May 1944, he was transferred to #3 Canadian Infantry Reinforcement Unit (CIRU), reverting to the rank of Private.

On June 8, 1944 Private John Wade departed the U.K. bound Italy. He disembarked in the Italian Theatre on June 22, 1944, as a member of the 48th Highlanders. The **Italian Campaign**, the first sustained Canadian Army operation of the war, had begun with the invasion of Sicily on July 10, 1943. The fierce fighting on the island would last more than four weeks, during which the Canadians advanced through difficult mountainous terrain, against an

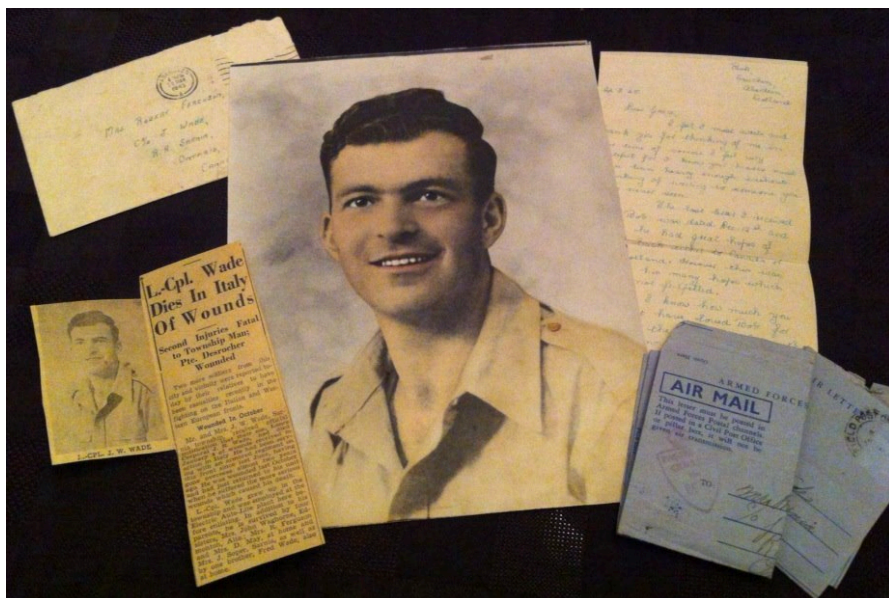
ever-stiffening German resistance. By August 17, the Germans had retreated to the Italian mainland. In early September 1943, Canadian and Allied forces invaded Italy. Though Italy surrendered shortly after, the occupying Germans made it clear their fight was not over. Liberating Italy would be a painstaking northward crawl, lasting 20 months, over a range of landscapes, through challenging weather, and against a series of well-protected defences held by some of the German army's best troops.

John Wade served with the Canadian Forces as they advanced northwards through Italy--first with the 48th Highlanders, and in mid-July 1944, he was transferred to the Light Anti-Aircraft (LAA) Battery.

Four months after arriving in Italy, on October 11, 1944, John Wade was wounded in action, after a bazooka shell exploded close to him. Injuries recorded on the Field Medical Card included: blast trauma, rupture of both tympanic membranes, haemorrhaging into both tympanic, traumatic perforation in both, considerable diminished hearing.

On October 18, 1944, Evelyn Wade of R.R. #1, Sarnia, received the following telegram from the Director of Records in Ottawa: MINISTER OF NATIONAL DEFENCE SINCERELY REGRETS TO INFORM YOU A105041 PRIVATE JOHN ROBERT WADE HAS BEEN OFFICIALLY REPORTED SLIGHTLY WOUNDED IN ACTION ELEVENTH OCTOBER 1944 NATURE OF WOUNDS NOT YET AVAILABLE STOP WHEN ADDRESSING MAIL ADD WORDS IN HOSPITAL IN BOLD LETTERS AFTER NAME OF UNIT FOR QUICK DELIVERY STOP IF FURTHER INFORMATION BECOMES AVAILABLE IT WILL BE FORWARDED AS SOON AS RECEIVED.

On November 1, 1944, Evelyn received another telegram from the Director of Records in Ottawa: MINISTER OF NATIONAL DEFENCE WISHES TO INFORM YOU THAT A105041 PRIVATE JOHN ROBERT WADE PREVIOUSLY REPORTED SLIGHTLY WOUNDED IN ACTION NATURE OF WOUNDS NOW REPORTED AS PERFORATION BOTH EAR DRUMS DUE TO BLAST STOP IF ANY FURTHER INFORMATION BECOMES AVAILABLE IT WILL BE FORWARDED AS SOON AS RECEIVED. John spent almost three weeks in November recovering from his wounds at #15 Canadian General Hospital.



Pvt. John Wade, along with; letters he wrote to his mother Evelyn and sister Grace Ferguson;
a letter to Grace from John's girlfriend Isabel in Aberdeen, Scotland;
and the death announcement from the newspaper.

On December 28, 1944, Private John Wade returned to Italy, as a member of the Lanark and Renfrew Scottish Regiment, Royal Canadian Infantry Corps (RCIC). Only days later, on New Year's Eve (December 31, 1944/January 1, 1945), he was wounded again, this time more seriously. Injuries recorded on the Field Medical Card at #5 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station included; *hit 0015 hours (Jan 1), large penetrating wound right flank, considerable shock, plasma started, considerable pain, given morphine and blood.*

John was admitted to #4 Canadian Field Surgical Unit at 0400 hours and operated on at 0545 hours (January 1, 1945). Doctor reports included: *two foreign bodies (shrapnel) penetrated the abdomen through the diaphragm,*

right side, which took different courses in the belly, lacerating organs including the liver, gall bladder, pancreas, colon and small intestine. Doctors continued to care for him over the next couple of days, but on January 4, 1945, while being moved to a theatre for further operations, he died at 2200 hours. John Wade's body was buried on January 5, 1945, at a location recorded on the Army Field Service Card as "Ravenna Military Cemetery sh 89 1/100000 MR 564388 Grave H 1".

On January 3, 1945, Evelyn received the following telegram from the Director of Records in Ottawa: MINISTER OF NATIONAL DEFENCE SINCERELY REGRETS TO INFORM YOU A105041 PRIVATE JOHN ROBERT WADE HAS BEEN OFFICIALLY REPORTED AGAIN SERIOUSLY WOUNDED IN ACTION FIRST JANUARY 1945 NATURE OF SECOND WOUND REPORTED AS SEVERE SHELL FRAGMENT WOUND RIGHT SIDE ABDOMEN STOP WHEN ADDRESSING MAIL ADD WORDS IN HOSPITAL IN BOLD LETTERS OVER NAME OF ADDRESSEE FOR QUICK DELIVERY STOP IF FURTHER INFORMATION BECOMES AVAILABLE IT WILL BE FORWARDED AS SOON AS RECEIVED STOP TO PREVENT POSSIBLE AID TO OUR ENEMIES DO NOT DIVULGE DATE OF CASUALTY OR NAME OF UNIT.

On November 7, 1945, Evelyn received another telegram from the Director of Records in Ottawa: REGRET DEEPLY A105041 PRIVATE JOHN ROBERT WADE HAS NOW BEEN OFFICIALLY REPORTED TO HAVE DIED OF WOUNDS FOURTH JANUARY 1945 STOP YOU WILL RECEIVE FURTHER DETAILS BY MAIL DIRECT FROM THE UNIT IN THE THEATRE OF WAR.

In mid-January 1945, Evelyn received the following letter from the Major-General, Adjutant-General:
Dear Mrs. Wade:

It was with deep regret that I learned of the death of your son, A105041 Private John Robert Wade, who gave his life in the Service of his Country in the Mediterranean Theatre of War on the 4th day of January, 1945.

From official information we have received, your son died as the result of wounds received in action against the enemy. You may be assured that any additional information received will be communicated to you without delay.

The Minister of National Defence and the Members of the Army Council have asked me to express to you and your family their sincere sympathy in your bereavement. We pay tribute to the sacrifice he so bravely made.

In late January 1945, she received the following letter from the Colonel, Acting Director of Records, for Adjutant-General:
Dear Mrs. Wade:

With reference to the regretted death of your son, A.105041 Private John Robert Wade, I am directed to advise that official information has now been received from Canadian Military Headquarters, Overseas, stating that it has been ascertained that he was wounded in action for the second time on the 31st December, 1944, and became seriously ill on the following day, suffering from severe shell fragment wounds to the right side of the abdomen which caused his death on the 4th January, 1945.

Please accept my sincere and heartfelt sympathy for the irreparable loss you have suffered.

In early February 1945, London Road West United Church in Sarnia held a Sunday afternoon memorial service for two members of the church who had lost their lives recently in the war. Rev. P.S. Banes presided over a ceremony honouring Lance Corporal Robert John Wade, who lost his life January 4, 1945 in Italy; and Private Horace Humble (also included in this Project), who lost his life December 10, 1944 in Italy.

John Wade's death was later officially recorded as, *Overseas casualty, died of wounds received in action, in the field (Italy)*. In April 1946, John Sr. and Evelyn Wade received a War Service Gratuity of \$393.88 for the loss of their eldest son. Twenty-one-year-old John Wade's remains were later carefully exhumed from their original place of internment and reverently reburied in Argenta Gap War Cemetery, Italy, Grave IV, G, 10. While Canadians did not fight in the area of this cemetery, north of Ravenna, the cemetery contains the graves of 77 Canadian soldiers and airmen who were brought here from battlefields farther south. On John Wade's headstone are inscribed the words, FOR HIM LIFE MORE ABUNDANT, FOR US A GUIDING STAR. LOVED AND REMEMBERED.
SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 6O, 7C, 8X, 8Y

WALKER, Wilford Russell (#A/108651)

The son of a Great War veteran, Wilford Walker was 27 years old and married with two very young children at home when he made the decision to serve his country. He served in France, Belgium and the Netherlands, losing his life while fighting in horrid conditions in one of the most difficult and grueling struggles in the war.

Wilford Russell Walker was born in Dawn Township on August 18, 1916, the son of Franklin Russell and Stella May (nee Brewer) Walker. Franklin “Frank” Walker was born November 30, 1891 in Sombra Township. In 1911, nineteen year-old Frank Walker was residing in Lambton West with his parents, Christopher and Patience, along with his sister Emma and brother Kenneth. Three years later, on March 9, 1914, Frank Walker married and Stella May Brewer in Sarnia. Less than two years later, Frank Walker made the decision to serve his country in World War I.

Frank Walker enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force in Sarnia on January 22, 1916, becoming a member of the 149th Battalion. The twenty-four-year-old Walker stood five feet eight and a half inches tall, had blue eyes and sandy hair, and recorded his occupation as machinist, and his present address as Point Edward (later 269 Vidal Street, Sarnia). His next-of-kin was his wife Stella Walker, and they had one child at the time, son Roy Sylvester, age one. Seven months after Frank enlisted, Wilford was born. Tragedy struck the Walker family only two weeks before Frank departed for overseas. On March 12, 1917, two-year-old Roy Sylvester passed away in Sarnia due to broncho pneumonia.

On March 28, 1917, Frank Walker leaving behind his wife and surviving son, embarked overseas from Halifax aboard *SS Southland* bound for the United Kingdom. After arriving in Liverpool, he was originally made a member of the 25th Reserve Battalion at Bramshott. One month later he was appointed Lance Corporal, and a month after that, he was taken on strength into the 161st Battalion at Camp Witley. Nine months later, in early March 1918, he reverted to the rank of Private at his own request, and his battalion was absorbed into the 4th Canadian Reserve Battalion returning to Bramshott.

On March 28, 1918, Private Frank Walker embarked for France as a member of the 47th Battalion. One and a half months later, in mid-May, he arrived at the front with the 47th Battalion. He soon found himself part of the **Hundred Days Campaign** (August 8 – November 11, 1918 in France and Belgium). This campaign was the “beginning of the end” of the Great War. Canadians were called on again and again over the three-month period to lead the offensives against the toughest German defences. The greatest victories of the Canadian Corps took place in this critical period, but they came at a high price, approximately 46,000 Canadian casualties.

On August 12, Frank Walker of the 47th Battalion, was appointed Lance Corporal in the field, and on September 3, he was promoted to Corporal in the field. On October 22, 1918, during the Battle of Canal-du-Nord and Cambrai in France, Corporal Frank Walker was wounded in action. He was admitted to #2 Casualty Clearing Station suffering a “gun shot wound left leg and compound fracture tibia and fibula.” Three weeks later, the Great War would end.

Frank Walker underwent treatment and operations in France and then England and was finally released from hospital (No. 4 Canadian General Hospital Basingstoke) on March 8, 1919. He returned to Canada and was finally discharged on demobilization on May 31, 1919.

By the time Frank returned home, his marriage to Stella had dissolved, and Wilford was living with his grandparents. In 1921, Frank, a labourer, was living with his son Wilford at 256 Cobden Street, Sarnia. Frank Walker, employed as a hoisting engineer, later remarried to Agnes Walker, who became Wilford’s step-mother. Wilford’s step-siblings included; step-sister Betty Marie Elliot, and step-brothers Lorne Phillip and Russell Leonard Walker. Frank and Agnes Walker and family resided at 349 South Mitton Street, Sarnia. At the time of Wilford’s death, brother Russell was serving in the Royal Canadian Air Force, as a Leading Aircraftmen, having been in England since June 1944.

Wilford Walker attended public school in Sarnia, completing grade eight in 1931 at the age of fifteen. He worked as a farm labourer for six years for several employers and then worked as a machine operator at Insulation Manufacturing Company for 3 ½ years. He then worked as a lathe operator at Mueller’s Brass Works in Sarnia for 1½ years. Prior to enlisting, Wilford was employed as a constable (guard) in the security office of the Polymer Corporation plant in Sarnia for a year and three months. In his spare time, he worked for a taxi company in Sarnia.

On August 19, 1938, Wilford Walker married Beatrice May Weiss of Sarnia, the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Guy Weiss, who lived just outside the city in the vicinity of Perch Creek. Wilford and Beatrice May Walker lived at 257 Brock Street and had two children together: Franklin Arthur and Shirley May Walker.

Twenty-seven-year-old Wilford Walker enlisted in the Canadian Army on October 28, 1943 in London, Ontario. He stood five feet six and a quarter inches tall, had blue eyes and brown hair, and lived on Brock Street with

his wife and two children at the time. He stated a preference to be a driver in the army or to do artillery work. He planned to take up transport driving after the war.

From #1 District Depot in London, Wilford received his army training at A-2 Canadian Army Training Centre (CATC) in Petawawa; at Canadian Driving and Maintenance School (CD&MS) in Woodstock (qualified as a Driver/Mechanic Group C); and at Canadian Army Training School (CATS) in Hamilton. In mid-June 1944, he returned to A-2 CATC in Petawawa before embarking overseas.

On July 20, 1944, Wilford embarked overseas bound for the United Kingdom. Arriving in the U.K. on July 27, 1944, he was initially made a member of the Canadian Army Reinforcement Unit (CARU). On August 12, 1944, he was transferred to the Winnipeg Grenadiers. He continued to train for only a brief time before departing the United Kingdom to cross the English Channel on September 11, 1944.

On September 18, 1944, Private Wilford Walker disembarked in France, where he was first a reinforcement attached to X-4 Canadian Infantry Corps (CIC). In early November 1944, he became a member of the Lincoln and Welland Regiment, Royal Canadian Infantry Corps (RCIC). He served with the Lincoln and Welland Regiment as they advanced through northern France and into Belgium and the Netherlands.

In early October 1944, the Canadians were entrusted with liberating the 45-mile-long Scheldt estuary (the Belgian-Dutch border area) that connected the port of Antwerp to the North Sea. The **Battle of the Scheldt** was among the most difficult and grueling struggles in the war. The bitter fighting continued into November against a well-fortified and heavily entrenched enemy, taking place in a bleak environment made worse by the winter cold in a flooded and freezing muddy quagmire.

Over the winter of 1944-1945 most of the weary Canadians were given a rest, although the front was never quiet, with patrols and large-scale raids remaining constant. Canadian troops were stationed along the **Nijmegen sector** in the Netherlands. They were tasked to hold and defend the Nijmegen salient and a small piece of Allied-held territory north of the Maas River. This bridgehead would be used as a starting point for crossing the Rhine (in February 1945). The Allies had to give the enemy the impression that an assault was imminent to force it to leave troops in that area. The Germans did their best to push the Canadians out of "the island" by flooding the area and constantly harassing them with mortar fire, artillery and aggressive patrols. Constantly vigilant, the men dug deep slit trenches, covered them with whatever was handy, and tried to keep warm from the snow and cold during one of the most frigid winters on record in northern Europe. During this supposedly quiet period, between November 9 and December 31, 1944, approximately 1,239 Canadians were killed or wounded.

In January 1945, after failed Polish and British attacks, the First Canadian Army received the order to clear a small island north of the Maas River in the Netherlands where German Paratroopers had established a bridgehead. Known as Kapelsche Veer, the flat low-lying island offered no cover aside from deep dykes and was notoriously cold, windy and water-logged in the winter. As part of *Operation Elephant*, the Lincoln and Welland Regiment, with the support of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders and the South Alberta Regiment, were to clear the island by January 31. The **Battle of Kapelsche Veer** lasted from January 26-31, 1945. The fierce fighting in horrid conditions and poor weather resulted in a Canadian victory but at a cost. In only six days of fighting, the Lincoln and Welland Regiment suffered more than 183 casualties, including 50 dead--one of those was Wilford Walker.

Approximately four months after arriving in France, on January 28, 1945, Private Wilford Walker lost his life during Battle of Kapelsche Veer, a continuation of the **Battle of the Scheldt**. His remains were buried on February 1, 1945, at a location recorded on the Army Field Service Card as "Holland 4th Canadian Armoured Division Cemetery S'Hertogenbosch sheet M.R. 319479 Plot 2 Row A Grave 1".

A week prior to Wilford's death, his wife Beatrice May Walker had undergone an appendectomy in Sarnia General Hospital and was still a patient there when the telegram arrived at her home informing her of her husband's death. On February 5, 1945, Beatrice Walker received the following telegram from the Director of Records in Ottawa: REGRET DEEPLY A108651 PRIVATE WILFORD RUSSELL WALKER HAS BEEN OFFICIALLY REPORTED KILLED IN ACTION TWENTYEIGHTH JANUARY 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. No other information was provided. At the time, Wilford's family only knew that he had been serving in Belgium and Holland.

Upon leaving the hospital, Beatrice May returned to the couple's Brock Street address, with their two children, Frankie (age 4) and Shirley (age 2), and her sister, Mrs. Gatecliff. In mid-February 1945, Beatrice received the following letter from the Brigadier, Acting Adjutant-General:

Dear Mrs. Walker:

It was with deep regret that I learned of the death of your husband, A108651 Private Wilford Russell Walker, who gave his life in the Service of his Country in the Western European Theatre of War on the 28th day of January, 1945.

From official information we have received, your husband was killed in action against the enemy. You may be assured that any additional information received will be communicated to you without delay.

The Minister of National Defence and the Members of the Army Council have asked me to express to you and your family their sincere sympathy in your bereavement. We pay tribute to the sacrifice he so bravely made.

Wilford Walker's death was later officially recorded as, *Killed in action, in the field (Holland)*. In June 1945, Beatrice Walker received a War Service Gratuity of \$195.37 for the loss of her husband. In July 1945, she received the following letter from the Colonel, Director of Records, for Adjutant-General:

Dear Madam:

Information has now been received from the overseas military authorities that your husband, A-108651 Private Wilford Russell Walker, was buried with religious rites in grave 1, row A, plot 2, of a temporary Cemetery located at 'S Hertogenbosch, Holland.

The grave will have been temporarily marked with a wooden cross for identification purposes and in due course the remains will be reverently exhumed and removed to a recognized military burial ground when the concentration of graves in the area takes place. On this being completed the new location will be advised to you, but for obvious reasons it will likely take approximately one year before this information is received.

In August 1946, Beatrice received another letter from the Colonel, Director of Records, for Adjutant-General. Following is a portion of that letter:

Dear Madam:

Information has just been received from overseas that the remains of your husband, A108651, Private Wilford Russell Walker, have been carefully exhumed from the original place of internment and reverently reburied in grave 5, row H, plot 15, of Nijmegen Canadian Military Cemetery, four miles South-East of Nijmegen, Holland. Marked map is enclosed. This is a recognized military burial ground and will receive care and maintenance in perpetuity.

The grave will have been marked with a temporary cross which will be replaced in due course by a permanent headstone suitably inscribed. While it cannot now be stated when this work of permanent commemoration will begin, before any action is taken you will be communicated with and an opportunity will be given you to submit a short personal inscription of your own choice for engraving on the headstone...

In January 1948, the Director, War Service Records in Ottawa, sent Beatrice a photograph of the grave and marker over the burial place of her late husband Private Wilford Walker. At some point, Beatrice remarried, becoming Beatrice Barrie, residing in Sarnia. Wilford Walker, 28, is buried in Groesbeek Canadian War Cemetery, Netherlands, Grave XV.H.5. On his headstone are inscribed the words, SOME DAY, WE KNOW NOT WHEN, WE HOPE TO MEET IN THE BETTER LAND, NEVER TO PART AGAIN.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 3G, 7C, 8X, 8Y

WATSON, Elliott Courtney (#J/48690)

Elliott Watson was only eighteen years old when he made the decision to serve his country. As a member of RAF Coastal Command, he protected Allied convoys and carried out reconnaissance and air-sea rescue, all in the mid-ocean of the North Atlantic. In July 1944, flying in poor weather, the aircraft that he was in crashed killing seven of its eight-member crew.

Elliott Courtney Watson was born in Belfast, North Ireland on April 23, 1924, the eldest son of James Elliott and Mary Elizabeth (nee Courtney) Watson, both born in Belfast, who were married in Newtownards, County Down, Northern Ireland on September 12, 1922. When Elliott was two years old, he and his sister along with their mother Mary immigrated to Canada. They left Belfast aboard the passenger ship *Montcalm* and arrived in Montreal, Quebec on May 3, 1926. They soon reunited with husband/father James Elliott, who was then living at 284 King Street, Hamilton, Ontario. The Watson family lived in Hamilton until 1931 and then moved to Toronto. In 1941, the Watson

family moved to Sarnia and lived on 115 Proctor Street. James supported his family working as a salesman in Sarnia. Elliott had one sister, Marilyn Elizabeth, and one brother, Gerald Todd, who also served in the war as a Sergeant with the R.C.A.F.

Elliott was educated at Withrow Public Elementary School in Toronto from 1931 to 1938; then at Eastern High School of Commerce, 1938-1939; and then at Danforth Technical High School, September 1939-June 1940. Elliott was active in hockey, football, baseball and basketball, and enjoyed building model aircraft and radio. He was employed at Murtons Bakery in Toronto, 1940-1941, as a driver and salesman. After that, he was employed at Percy Waters Florist in Toronto during 1941, as a delivery driver, until his family moved to Sarnia. In 1942, prior to enlisting, Elliott was employed at Helen Simpson Limited (retail store on Yonge Street in Toronto) as a truck driver.

Eighteen year-old Elliott Watson enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force on June 26, 1942 in Toronto, Ontario. He stood five feet seven inches tall, had blue eyes and fair hair, was single, and was living at 730 Woodbine Avenue in Toronto at the time (though he recorded his permanent address as 115 Proctor Street, Sarnia). He requested flying duties with no specific preference for a specific role.

From the #11 Recruiting Centre then #1 Manning Depot in Toronto, Elliott received his air training at #16 Service Flying Training School (SFTS) in Hagersville; at #3 Wireless School (WS) in Winnipeg, Manitoba; and at #2 Bombing and Gunnery School (B&GS) in Mossbank, Saskatchewan. He graduated from #2 B&GS in Mossbank as a Wireless Air-Gunner (4th in the class of 45), and was awarded his Air Gunner's Badge on May 31, 1943. After graduating, Elliott returned to Sarnia on a 14-day leave during the first two weeks of June 1943, spending it with his friends and family. In mid-June 1943, he was posted #1 Y Depot, and then to Eastern Air Command (EAC) Headquarters in Halifax. In mid-July 1943, he was posted to #160 Squadron, Bomber Reconnaissance stationed in Yarmouth, Nova Scotia.



Pilot Officer-WAG Elliott Courtney Watson



RCAF #162 Squadron, Canso aircraft #11062

Back: A. Hildebrand, W. H. Lloyd, G. G. Bradshaw, J. E. Bowler
Front: R. D. Harvey, **Elliott C. Watson**, J. H. Knight (survivor), R.W.E. Townsend

In late-September 1943, Elliott Watson became a member of RCAF #162 Squadron "Sectabimur Usque Per Ima" (One time, one purpose), with the rank of Wireless Operator/Air Gunner. RCAF No. 162 Squadron was formed as a **Bomber Reconnaissance** squadron on May 19, 1942 at RCAF Station Yarmouth, Nova Scotia. Equipped with Consolidated Catalina aircraft (also known as the Canso), #162 was part of Coastal Command that played a pivotal role in the Allied war effort, most notably against U-boats during the Battle of the Atlantic. Other vital contributions included the sinking enemy warships and merchant vessels and the protection Allied shipping from aerial attacks. The squadron also provided reconnaissance and carried out air-sea rescue.

In October 1943, the squadron moved to Dartmouth, Nova Scotia where #162 Cansos carried out anti-submarine duties on the East Coast and the Gulf of St. Lawrence. In January 1944, #162 Squadron was seconded to **RAF Coastal Command** and stationed at RAF Reykjavik, Iceland. Here #162 Cansos covered the mid-ocean

portion of the North Atlantic convoy routes. In May 1944, the squadron moved east to RAF Wick, Scotland to support the invasion of Normandy. Their task was to intercept U-boats operating from Norwegian ports. No. 162 sank four German U-boats and shared in the sinking of a fifth that tried to break through the North Transit Area (Shetland Islands) to attack the Allied D-Day invasion fleet. No. 162 returned to Camp Maple Leaf at RAF Reykjavik later in the summer of 1944 and remained there until it returned to Canada in June 1945.

From June 3 to June 16, 1944, Elliott enjoyed a 14-day leave in which he was able to return to Sarnia, spending time with his parents, family and friends. He was even able to see his brother Gerald, who had been on furlough from the RCAF in late May 1944. As Gerald was returning to Three Rivers, Quebec in early June, and Elliott was just beginning his furlough, the two brothers were able to spend a few hours together between trains. After his leave, Elliott returned to #162 Squadron which continued to operate at its base in Iceland.

On July 29, 1944, Elliott Watson was with his crew aboard Vickers Consolidated Canso aircraft #11062 that took off from Reykjavik Iceland on an anti-sub patrol. The Canso aircraft was scheduled to land at RAF Wick, but stormy weather and heavy fog had moved into the area. The flight destination was moved from Wick to RAF Stornoway on the island of Lewis in the Outer Hebrides, but the heading they were given was faulty. The aircraft took the turn to the new destination, but never arrived. In the thick fog, it flew on a course towards Foula Island, in the Shetland Islands north-west of Scotland. Foula's barren landscape is dominated by Hamnafield Hill, a 1,100-foot high hill of rock and moss. The Canso's altimeter was at 920 feet when it slammed into the hill. The aircraft burst into flames, fuel tanks and ammunition exploded. Wreckage tumbled down the mountain. Seven of the eight crew members were killed.

Perishing with Pilot Officer-WAG Elliott Watson were F/O.s Willis Hilson Lloyd, Abram R. Hildebrand, and George Gordon Bradshaw; P/O. James Edwin Bowler; FS. Robert Wilford Ernest Townsend; and WO. Robert Densmore Harvey. FS. John H. Knight was the only survivor.



Elliott Watson's death was later officially recorded as, *Killed as a result of a flying accident (overseas), at Foula Island, West of the Shetland Islands (anti-submarine patrol)*. In September 1944, James on Proctor Street in Sarnia received the following letter from the R.C.A.F. Casualty Officer, for Chief of the Air Staff in Ottawa:

Dear Mr. Watson:

Advice has been received from the squadron of your son, Flight Sergeant Elliott Courtney Watson, which states that he was buried in the Lerwick Cemetery, Shetland Islands on August 3rd, 1944. The service was conducted by the Royal Canadian Air Force Chaplain, Squadron Leader Davidson. May I extend to you and the members of your family my deepest sympathy.

In December 1944, James received another letter from R.C.A.F. Casualty Officer, for Chief of the Air Staff in Ottawa:

Dear Mr. Watson:

I have been directed to inform you that your son, Elliott Courtney Watson, has been commissioned with the rank of Pilot Officer with effect from July 20th, 1944. His Officer's number is J48690. May I again express my deepest sympathy to you and the members of your family in the loss of your son whose qualities and ability have thus been recognized.

In September 1945, James and Mary Watson received a War Service Gratuity of \$399.85 for the loss of their eldest son. More than a year later, in mid-October 1946, Mary received the following letter from the R.C.A.F.

Records Officer in Ottawa:

Dear Mrs. Watson:

It is a privilege to have the opportunity of sending you the Operational Wings and Certificate in recognition of the gallant services rendered by your son, Pilot Officer E.C. Watson. I realize there is little which may be said or done to lessen your sorrow, but it is my hope that these "Wings", indicative of operations against the enemy, will be a treasured memento of a young life offered on the altar of freedom in defence of his Home and Country.

Pilot Officer-Wireless Operator/Air Gunner Elliott Watson, 20, is buried in Lerwick New Cemetery, Shetland, United Kingdom, Terrace 7B. Grave 20. On his headstone are inscribed the words, THE LAST PRIVILEGE OF LOVE IS MEMORY.



Funeral for Canso 11062 crew



Source: <http://www.canso11062.mikeharvey.ca/funeral.htm>

The lone survivor of Canso aircraft #11062 crash, FS John H. Knight, always remembered the "fallen 7". After the crash, he spent most of the next year recovering from his injuries at various hospitals in England and Canada. He returned to Canada, raised six children, and worked with the Department of Veterans Affairs, and on hydro projects in Northern Manitoba and Newfoundland. He helped First Nations locals land jobs at these project sites and was elected councilor. John Knight passed away in 2006. After John Knight's funeral, his son Joe was

bequeathed his father's framed photo of Foula Island and the barren Hamnafield Hill, which had always been kept in a place of prominence in the Knight family home. Joe hung the faded colour photo in the den of his home, unaware of the photo's significance. He found himself wondering why that cliff of rock and moss meant so much to his dad.

Growing up in Winnipeg, the Knight children only knew that their father John was the lone survivor of a plane crash, and he did not wear shorts or short-sleeved shirts because of the scars from his injuries. Joe said of his father, "He didn't complain, he didn't brag about himself." A few years after John Knight's death, his family learned the full story of their father's survival and life-long dedication to his fallen crewmates. They learned the details of the crash including the fact that just before the crash, John Knight had gone to one of the dome blisters along the fuselage of the bomber to smoke a cigarette; the weather was so foggy that John could not see the end of the plane's wings; when the plane crashed into the hill, he was knocked unconscious by the impact; when he came to, he was able to push open the blister and drop to the ground where he crawled behind a rock to shield himself from the flames and flying shrapnel; three local men hiked up the hill and found John badly injured, his pelvis was broken, and his arms and legs seared from the flames; and that the locals loaded John Knight onto a stretcher and descended the steep hill saving his life.

In 1995, John Knight and his wife travelled to Scotland to pay their respects to the fallen aircrew who were all buried at the Commonwealth Cemetery in Lerwick. After his death, Joe Knight said of his father's public service, "I now think Dad felt he had to pay back for the fact he survived and his comrades didn't." John Knight's family commissioned a brass plaque memorializing the crash and the heroics of the Foula citizens in saving John's life. The bronze plaque is mounted on a cairn atop Hamnafield Hill.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, J, L, M, N, 2C, 2D, 6O, 7C, 7H, 7I, 8X, 8Y

WILCOX, Robert Joy (#7012597)

His mother's job at the American Consulate in this city brought Robert Wilcox to Sarnia. After graduating from SCITS, the eighteen year-old began the process of joining the U.S. Naval Reserve. He successfully completed two and a half years of flight, radio and gunnery training. He lost his life aboard a Navy torpedo-bomber over the Gulf of Mexico during a night navigation flight, three weeks after VE Day.

Robert Joy Wilcox was born on May 18, 1924 in Vigo, Spain, the youngest child of Henry Tabor and Agnes Winona (nee Johnson) Wilcox. Henry (born April 1888 in Asheville, North Carolina) and Agnes (born March 1886 in Bonn, Germany) were married on January 7, 1913 and were blessed with three children together: daughter Inez W., born December 11, 1915 in Jamaica; Henry Tabor Jr., born October 29, 1919 in Vineland, New Jersey; and Robert. Years later, Robert's brother Henry Jr. resided on Calhoun Street in Battle Creek, Michigan.

Henry Sr. worked as a Consul of the United States of America and Agnes worked for the American Consulate. In 1900, the Wilcox family was living in Vineland, New Jersey where Henry Sr. was employed at a Trust Company. By 1912, Henry Sr. was employed as an American consular agent in Port Maria, Jamaica. He later worked as a consul in Port Antonio, Jamaica, then Guadeloupe, French Guiana and then Vigo, Spain (where Robert was born). When Robert Wilcox was less than one year old, he lost his father who passed away on June 21, 1925 in Vigo, Galicia, Spain at the age of thirty-seven. After Henry Sr.'s death, the U.S. asked Agnes Wilcox where she wanted to go. She said that she wanted to go as close as possible to home (Vineland, New Jersey). She would be stationed in Canada.

In 1925, thirty-nine-year-old Agnes Wilcox travelled from Cherbourg, France aboard the *SS America*, arriving in New York on July 8, 1925 with her daughter Inez (age 9) and her sons Henry Jr. (age 5) and Robert (age 1). The family moved to London, Ontario where Agnes and her three children resided at 14 Craig Street, and where she worked for the U.S. Government, American Consulate as a clerk. Robert attended Victoria Public Elementary School in London, graduating in June 1937, and then attended London South Collegiate from September 1937 until the summer of 1940. At London South, Robert played tennis and was a very valuable member of the school football team as the first string centre for two years. In a reference letter written by the Principal (T.H. Graham) on Robert's behalf in order to join the service, the Principal wrote *during his time here, Robert was studious, intelligent and quite dependable with considerable athletic ability, and was quite popular with the student body.*

After 14 years in London, the Wilcox family moved to Sarnia, residing at 270 North Brock Street. Agnes was employed at the American Consulate in Sarnia. Robert attended Sarnia Collegiate beginning in September 1940. His grade 12 courses included English Composition, English Literature, French Authors, Ancient History, Geometry, Chemistry and Latin Authors. He graduated grade 12 in June 1941. In the summer of 1941, Robert worked for a

construction company and Webster Air Equipment Company in London. In the fall of 1941, Robert returned to SCITS for grade 13, taking courses that included English, French, Modern History, Biology and Latin. He graduated from SCITS in May 1942. He played centre on the SCITS football team and was also a member of St. George's Anglican Church. Throughout, he worked part-time on Saturdays at the A&P store in Sarnia.

On June 25, 1942, eighteen year-old Robert Wilcox began the process of enlisting in the U.S. Naval Reserve by filling in an "Application for Aviation Cadet Training in the United States Naval Reserve" at the Naval Aviation Cadet Selection Board (NACSB) in Detroit, Michigan. Because he was a minor under 21 years of age, he was required to complete a "Consent and Declaration of Parent or Guardian" form that his mother Agnes signed on June 19, 1942 on his behalf. Robert signed up as a Seaman, 2nd Class, to serve for a period of four years.

The NACSB considered Robert Wilcox to be *superior material for flight training leading to commission in the Naval Reserve*, and remarked that Robert was *attentive, serious, well-mannered*. On August 18, 1942, Robert completed his "Application for Aviation Cadet Training in the United States Naval Reserve" at the NACSB in Detroit. He provided one employer's reference--George Lewis of National Grocers Co., Cromwell Street, Sarnia, and three character reference letters from other adults that thought highly of him: Principal T.H. Graham of London South Collegiate; his math teacher/football coach A.M. Freeman at London South Collegiate; and Mr. T. Fawkes, the manager of W. McPhillips Electrical Appliance at 170 N. Christina Street, Sarnia. Eighteen years old, he stood five feet six inches tall and had brown hair and blue eyes. He recorded his occupation as clerk, his citizenship as United States, his home address as 270 N. Brock Street, Sarnia, and his next-of-kin as his mother Agnes Wilcox in Sarnia. Officially becoming a member of the U.S. Naval Reserve, he was given the rank of Aviation Cadet, V-5, with a pay of \$75 per month. He was ordered home to "inactive duty status", and returned to Sarnia awaiting orders to active duty.



Robert Joy Wilcox, USNR

On December 28, 1942, Robert was called to active duty, and ordered to report to the Officer-in-Charge at the Naval Aviation Cadet Selection Board no later than January 5, 1943 in Detroit. On January 5, 1943, eighteen and a half year-old Robert crossed the Blue Water Bridge at Sarnia to Port Huron on his way to Detroit to report to the Naval Aviation Cadet Selection Board (NACSB). Aviation Cadet V-5 Robert Wilcox was first posted to U.S. Naval Flight Preparatory (NPF) School at Wooster College in Wooster, Ohio. He trained there until April 14, 1943 when he returned to NACSB in Detroit, remaining there until July 15, 1943. During that time, he satisfactorily completed CAA-WTS Elementary Pilot Training at Highland Park Jr. College, Highland Park, Michigan. He was then posted to U.S. Navy Pre-Flight School (USNPS) in Iowa City, Iowa, training there until October 5, 1943. The next day, he was transferred for Primary Flight training at Pre-Flight Naval Air Station (NAS) in Memphis, Tennessee, where he remained until January 29, 1944. On January 30, he was posted to Naval Air Training Centre (NATC) in Pensacola, Florida for Intermediate Flight training, remaining there until June 29, 1944.

He spent the summer, June 30-August 22, 1944, training at U.S. Naval Air Training Station (NATS) Great Lakes, Illinois. During that period, on July 3, 1944, he was upgraded in rating from AvCad V-5 to Apprentice

Seaman (A.S.) V-6, and on August 3, 1944, he was upgraded in rating to Seaman Second Class (S2c) V-6. His next training post was NA Tech Training Centre in Memphis, Tennessee, from August 23 to December 25, 1944. There he passed his Naval Aviation Swim Test, completed an 18-week course at Aviation Radioman School (final mark of 90), and a 2-week course at Airborne Radar OP's School (final mark 96). On December 9, 1944, he was upgraded in rating from S2c V-6 to S1c (ARM) V-6 [Seaman First Class--Aviation Radioman]. Robert was next posted to Naval Air Gunners (NAG) School in Miami, Florida, from December 25, 1944, until February 6, 1945 where he satisfactorily completed a ground course in Naval Air Gunnery and was designated a Naval Air Gunner. He was then transferred to VTB-2, Operational Training Unit (OTU)-NAS in Miami, training there from February 6 to April 20, 1945. On April 5, 1945 at VTB-2, OTU in Miami, Robert completed Aircrew Operational Training in VTB (TBF-1 and TBM-1) combat type aircraft and was designated a Combat Air-crewman.

Notes on a few of the above codes:

U.S. Naval Reserve classifications: V-5 = Aviation Cadet vs. V-6 = General Service and Specialists

VTB = Torpedo-bombing plane. Two types are;

TBF = "Avenger", single engine Navy torpedo-bomber manufactured by Grumman

TBM = "Avenger", single engine Navy torpedo-bomber, manufactured by General Motors

*The TBF/TBM Avenger torpedo-bomber was the main torpedo bomber used in the Pacific during WWII.

On April 20, 1945, Seaman First Class (ARM) Robert Wilcox was posted to VT(N), OTU #1, Naval Auxillary Air Station (NAAS) in Kingsville, Texas to begin a 3-month course on night torpedo training. In early May 1945, with approximately 287 hours of total flying time in his two and a half years service, Robert submitted his formal request for training as a Naval Aviation Observer (Navigation) to the Chief of Navy Personnel at NAAS in Kingsville, Texas. Robert passed the physical examination for flying and on May 28, 1945, the Commanding Officer (C.H.B. Morrison) forwarded his approval to the Chief of Naval Personnel recording: *During the limited time in this unit WILCOX has established officer-like qualities. It is recommended that favourable consideration be given his application for training as Naval Air Observer (Navigation).*

Only three days later, on May 31, 1945, and three weeks after VE Day, Seaman First Class Robert Wilcox of the U.S. Naval Reserve, lost his life in a plane crash over the Gulf of Mexico. During that night, five torpedo-bombing planes took off from Northfield, USNAAS, Kingsville, Texas in a scheduled overwater Navigation flight. Robert Wilcox was part of a 3-member crew aboard TBF-1 #24189, an "Avenger" single engine Navy torpedo-bomber. During the flight, the TBF-1 aircraft that Robert was aboard was involved in a mid-air collision, striking the starboard wing of another plane. The TBF-1 aircraft lost control and fell into the ocean. The accident occurred at approximately 11:10 p.m., 100 miles, 110° from Yarbrough Pass, Kingsville, Texas. On June 1, 1945, the U.S. Navy reported Robert Wilcox as, *Missing from routine flight, presumably dead, on May 31, 1945. Last contact about eighty-one miles, bearing 121° True, from U.S. Naval Air Station, Corpus Christi, Texas.* Robert Wilcox and two others were aboard the aircraft that crashed into the ocean, and their bodies were never found. Also killed in the crash were twenty-two-year-old Richard Joseph Chouinard, Naval Aviator and nineteen year-old Floyd Haskel Clark, Aviation Machinist.

On June 2, 1945, the *Sarnia Canadian Observer* had the following report on his death:

Mrs. Agnes Wilcox, 270 north Brock Street, received word today that her son, Robert J. Wilcox, who is serving with the American Navy Air Force is missing and presumed dead, as the result of an aircraft crash in the Gulf of Mexico on Thursday, May 31. He was a well-known Sarnian and received his education at the local schools and was graduated from the Collegiate Institute and Technical School. His mother is attached to the American Consulate in this city. A brother, Captain Henry T. Wilcox, is serving with the American Military Forces and is stationed at Colorado Springs, Colorado, and a sister, Mrs. McLean Bradford, resides with her mother.

On July 8, 1945, Agnes Wilcox on Brock Street in Sarnia received the following letter from the U.S. Navy:

My dear Mrs. Wilcox:

I extend to you my personal condolence in the death of your son, Robert Joy Wilcox, Seaman first class, United States Naval Reserve, which occurred on 31 May 1945. There is little that I can say to lessen your grief, but I want you to know that the Navy shares in your sense of bereavement.

In late August 1945, the U.S. Navy Department in Washington, D.C. Board of Investigation completed their report on the incident. Following are portions of their report:

Re: Mid-air collision between TBF-1 airplane Bu. #24189 and TBF-1D airplane, Bu. #47974

Bodies of: Richard J. Chouinard, Naval aviator, late ensign, A1, USNR

Robert J. Wilcox, late seaman first class, USNR

Floyd H. Clark, aviation machinist's mate third class, USNR

were not recovered, the circumstances attendant upon the plane crash at sea in this case justify a conclusion that they are dead and the deaths occurred on 31 May 1945, not as the result of their own misconduct.

Finding of Facts:

1. On May 31, 1945, Ens. Richard J. Chouinard, A1, USNR; was pilot of a TBF-1 airplane, Bu. #24189, equipped with a Wright engine and said plane was assigned to VT(N) OTU #1, NAAS, Kingsville, Texas; and that Ens. Chouinard was assigned to duty and undergoing instruction as a night torpedo pilot with this OTU.
 2. On May 31, 1945, Robert J. Wilcox, S1c, USNR was the regularly assigned aircrew of Ens. Chouinard; was listed as a passenger on the airplane, and was temporarily certified for flight orders for the month of May 1945; he was regularly assigned to duty and training with VT(N), OTU #1 at the time.
 3. Flight took off from Northfield, USNAAS, Kingsville, Texas on May 31, 1945, a scheduled overwater Navigation flight.
 4. The flight was composed of five planes. The flight was authorized. The actual collision was not observed by any member of the flight, but immediately thereafter the chase pilot, Lt. Batten, saw the plane in 3 or 4 pieces and observed what he thought to be the fuselage and one wing of plane Bu. #24189 dive into the water.
 5. Since TBF-1 airplane, Bu. #24189, and its occupants Ens. Richard J. Chouinard, Robert J. Wilcox, S1c, and Floyd H. Clark, AMM3c, were seen to plunge into the sea and have not been seen or heard from since that time, the occupants are presumed to be dead.
- The collision resulted when some portion of TBF-1, piloted by Ens. Richard J. Chouinard struck the starboard wing of TBF-1D airplane, Bu. #47974, piloted by Ens. George H. Traylor.
6. The ensuing crash was due to the loss of control resulting from the collision.

Robert Wilcox, 21, is memorialized in the Arlington National Cemetery, Virginia, and in the family plot in Vineland, New Jersey. On the memorial headstone in Arlington are inscribed the words, IN MEMORY OF ROBERT JOY WILCOX US NAVY WORLD WAR II MAY 18 1924 – MAY 31 1945. On the memorial headstone at Siloam Cemetery in Vineland, New Jersey are inscribed the words, ROBERT JOY WILCOX DIED IN NAVAL AIR SERVICE 1924 – 1945.

SOURCES: A, B, N, 2D, 8V, 8W, 8X

WILLIAMS, Floyd George (#A/69366)

Floyd William's father was a World War I veteran whose death in 1941 was attributed to his war service. One year after his father's death, Floyd was successful in joining the Canadian army. He embarked overseas only four months after getting married. He sacrificed his life in the fight to liberate Italy, but not before he risked his own life to save a wounded comrade.

Floyd George Williams was born in Sarnia on March 9, 1922, the son of Captain Arthur David Williams and Letitia Belle (nee Corcoran) Williams. Arthur Williams was born on March 11, 1880 in Sarnia, and at age 23, married eighteen year-old Letitia Corcoran (born in Iowa) in Sarnia on June 25, 1903. Arthur and Letitia Williams had six children together: Ernest (born 1905, later resided in Philadelphia); Earl (became a Reverend in Brantford); Dorothy Patricia (born 1915, later became Mrs. Robert Koehler of Petrolia); Frederick Arthur (born 1921, and at the time of Floyd's death was a Private serving with the Army in Italy); Floyd; and Randall.

In January 1915, thirty-four-year-old Arthur Williams, married with two children, joined the Royal Canadian Regiment (RCR). In early June 1915, he underwent his medical examine in London. On September 20, 1915, Arthur enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force becoming a member of the 34th Battalion with the rank of Lieutenant. He had been with the 27th St. Clair Borderers Regiment for four years and recorded 13 months of prior military experience--with U.S. Expeditionary Force in the Spanish-American War and in the Philippines and in Cuba. He stood five feet five inches tall, had brown eyes and hair and was employed as a contractor. He and Letitia lived at 360 Maria Street at the time. Arthur Williams embarked overseas bound for the United Kingdom in mid-October 1915.

After arriving in England, Lieutenant Williams spent time at Bramshott, then Shorncliffe Camps receiving Officer's training and gaining qualifications in Signalling and the Lewis Machine Gun. In March 1916, he became a member of the 17th Reserve Battalion. On June 4, 1916, he was transferred to the 7th Brigade Machine Gun

Company and arrived in France. In early September 1916, while in the Ypres Salient, Arthur Williams reported sick with severe myalgia (muscle pain). He was treated in hospitals in France and then England. He was later diagnosed with sciatica (back pain due to problem with sciatic nerve) and acute articular rheumatism. He remained in hospital until early November 1916.

On November 10, 1916, Lieutenant Williams, again a member of the RCR, sailed for Canada on a one-month sick leave. In Canada, medical officials determined Arthur had sciatica; treatment continued, and his leave was extended to April 6, 1917. Health problems persisted, and by April, doctors in London, Ontario determined that he had valvular disease of the heart. He continued to receive treatment and his leave was extended twice into August 1917. The Medical Board ultimately determined that he was no longer fit for service, and his disability was permanent. He was struck off strength on December 19, 1917 by reason of being medically unfit. Arthur returned to his family and home in Sarnia, then at 167 North Brock Street.

Including his pre-war experience, Arthur Williams was a painting contractor and decorator in Sarnia for 30 years. On May 26, 1941, at age 61, Arthur passed away in Sarnia (Floyd was nineteen years old). The Canada War Graves Register (Circumstances of Casualty) record Arthur's death as due to "Cerebral haemorrhage, arterio-sclerosis, etc. Death was due to service." Arthur Williams is buried in Lakeview Cemetery.

Floyd Williams completed his grade 10 and part of grade 11 at Sarnia Collegiate, leaving school at age 16. He was a well-known, all-round athlete in Sarnia, having played lacrosse, hockey, baseball, golf, rugby and tennis. He played the trumpet and euphonium and was a member of the Sarnia Boys Band and Pressy's Transport Band that played at the C.N.E. in Toronto and on tours in the United States. He worked one summer in a sheet metal factory in Sarnia as a checker and shipper. He then worked as a store clerk for three years with the Sarnia Sport Shop on Christina Street, where he earned \$20.00 per week.



Floyd 1942



1941



Pressey's Band 1941

When father Arthur died in 1941, widowed Letitia and their sons Floyd, Fred and Randall were living at their home at 167 North Brock Street, Sarnia. Years later, Letitia lived at 165 North Vidal Street. Approximately fifteen months after Arthur's death, the Williams family experienced a joyful event. On August 14, 1942, Floyd's brother Frederick Williams married Miss Jean Anna Kemsley, the only daughter of Mr. and Mrs. George Kemsley of Sarnia. The wedding took place in the White Street Gospel Mission in Sarnia, the first wedding solemnized there. Floyd served as best man for his brother, Bombardier Frederick Williams of the 48th Light Anti-Aircraft Battery, Petawawa.

When war broke out in 1939, seventeen year-old Floyd Williams had tried to enlist in the R.C.A.F., but was not accepted because he was under-age. From May 1942 until the date he enlisted, Floyd served with the 2-26th Field Battery, Royal Canadian Artillery (RCA) in Sarnia, with the rank of Gunner.

On August 24, 1942, twenty year-old Floyd Williams enlisted in the Canadian Army in Petawawa, Ontario. He stood five feet eight and a quarter inches tall, had brown eyes and dark brown hair, was single, and was living at home with his widowed mother on Brock Street at the time. He planned to become a sheet metal draftsman or to

operate his own sporting goods store after the war. Gunner Floyd Williams began his army training in Petawawa as a member of the 48 Light Anti-Aircraft (LAA) Regiment, Royal Canadian Artillery (R.C.A.). In December 1942, he was posted to the 9 Light Anti-Aircraft (LAA) Regiment, R.C.A. in Vancouver, where he advanced to Acting Lance Bombardier. In early January 1943, he returned to the 48 LAA in Terrace, British Columbia. He continued his army training in Wainwright, Nanaimo, Prince Albert and again in Terrace where he attended a Mountain Warfare Course in January 1944. He rose to the rank of Bombardier with the 48 LAA. That spring, he experienced a big change in his life.



Wedding of Jean Kemsley & Frederick Williams Aug 1942
Right: Brother & Best Man to Groom Floyd Williams



Floyd & friend Lena Maccio 1941
(Norine Demeray would be Lena's bridesmaid)

In December 1907, Pleneus Wellington Demeray married Alice Mabel Bissell in Sarnia. Pleneus and Alice Demeray lived at 226 Napier St. and raised a large family together that included sons; Ervin Wellington, Lloyd Royden Frederick, Norman Leslie, John Elmer, Donald, Norris Allen, Orville, Ronald Veil; and daughters Verna Gertrude, Margurite Oril, Grace and Averial Norine. Four of the Demeray boys would serve in World War II: Ervin, Lloyd, Donald and Norris. Gunner Norris Demeray was one of at least 36 young men from Sarnia that took part in the fateful Dieppe Raid on August 19, 1942. Norris was among a number of them who was captured there, and spent the duration of the war as a POW.

Averial Norine Demeray was born around 1925 and went by her middle name, Norine. She and Floyd Williams had been dating since sometime in 1941. They enjoyed spending their time together and socializing with their many friends. At age 16, light-brown haired Norine was living at the Demeray Napier St. family home and working at Auto Lite in Sarnia. She was a bridesmaid for one of her close friends, Lena Maccio, when she married John Devereau at Our Lady of Mercy Church in Sarnia.

In the spring of 1944, after being granted permission to marry and obtaining a 25-day leave from April 6 – 30, 1944, the then Sergeant Floyd Williams married Averial Norine Demeray, the daughter of Mrs. Alice Demeray, on April 22, 1944. The wedding ceremony was held at the Parker Street United Church in Sarnia and was performed by the bridegroom's brother Rev. Earl Williams of Port Colborne, who was assisted by Rev. J.N. Gould. The bride entered the church on the arm of her brother, LAC Leslie Demeray. Her maid of honour was Miss Eileen Walker, while Doris Walker acted as bridesmaid and Diane Martin, niece of the bride, was junior bridesmaid. Floyd's best man was Bob Koelher, brother-in-law of the groom, while Bill White and Neil McArthur were the ushers. Following the ceremony, a reception was held in the church basement for approximately 50 guests. Afterwards, the young couple left on a short honeymoon before Sgt. Floyd Williams returned to his duties on the west coast. The newlywed couple's home address was 167 North Brock Street, Sarnia.

In mid-July 1944, Floyd was stationed at #2 Training Brigade Group in Debert, Nova Scotia. Floyd, along with his brother Fred, embarked overseas on August 4, 1944 (less than four months after he got married). They disembarked in the United Kingdom on August 10, 1944. Not long after, Letitia Williams in Sarnia received a telegram from her sons informing her that they had both arrived safely in France with a Canadian army unit.



Aerial "Norine" Demeray 1941



Golfing in Brights Grove



Floyd and Norine 1942



Norine and Floyd April 22, 1944



Floyd Williams on his wedding day

Gunner Floyd Williams was initially posted to #2 Canadian Army Reinforcement Unit (CARU). In early September 1944, he was transferred to #1 Canadian Signals Reinforcement Unit (CSRU) where he continued his training in the U.K. In late September 1944, he became a member of the Winnipeg Grenadiers, reverting to the rank of Private. One month later, he was transferred to #3 Canadian Infantry Reinforcement Unit (CIRU). On November 3, 1944, Private Floyd Williams departed the U.K., arriving in Italy on November 18, 1944. He became a member of the Canadian Army Irish Regiment of Canada, Royal Canadian Infantry Corps (R.C.I.C.).

The **Italian Campaign**, the first sustained Canadian Army operation of the war, began with the invasion of Sicily on July 10, 1943. The fierce fighting on the island lasted more than four weeks, during which the Canadians advanced through difficult mountainous terrain, against an ever-stiffening German resistance. By August 17, the Germans had evacuated the island to the Italian mainland. In early September, Canadian and Allied forces invaded Italy. Though Italy surrendered shortly after, the occupying Germans made it clear their fight was not over. Liberating Italy would be a painstaking northward crawl, lasting 20 months, over a range of landscapes, through challenging weather, and against a series of well-protected defences held by some of the German army's best troops. Floyd Williams served with the Irish Regiment of Canada as they advanced northward. He would serve in Italy for only a month and a half.

In December 1944, Floyd sent a Christmas card/letter from Italy to his mother-in-law Mrs. Alice Demeray in Sarnia. On the front of the card were the words, Christmas Greeting; Canadian Army-Central Mediterranean Forces-Italy 1944. Inside the card were the words, Buon Natale; Sincere Christmas Greetings and best wishes for the New Year. He signed the inside with, Love Floyd. On the back of the card he wrote the following;

Dear Mother-in-Law,

I guess I sure owe you a letter, Mrs. Demeray so I shall fulfill two birds with one stone. I am trying to seek Ian and Lloyd but no luck so far. I hope that this Christmas and New Year you will have joy and happiness Mrs. Demeray and next Christmas may we all spend it together in rejoicing. I hope the boys are all okay and soon be home but I guess these are the things we pray for and must continue to... Well now, love and look after that sweet wife of mine and watch her goo goo eyes. (ha, ha)

Floyd

Not long before he was killed in action, Floyd Williams was awarded the Medal of Honour for his heroic actions. In a letter written by Pte. W.E. LeRoy (after Floyd's death) to Floyd's wife Aerial, he described how Floyd had risked his own life to rescue a wounded comrade in his unit. Pte. W.E. LeRoy and Floyd Williams had become close friends during their time together with the Irish Regiment while fighting in Italy. On this occasion, their section was moving from a house under German shell and mortar fire to another house 175 yards away, when Pte. LeRoy was wounded in the stomach and arm.

"I didn't pass out, but I couldn't get up," Pte LeRoy's letter said. "Floyd and the others were okay as they were still going for the house. I think I had just about given up all hope of getting anywhere when I saw Floyd turn his head and look back. I guess he realized I was hit because the next second he was coming across that open field. I tried to holler to him to get the hell into the house, but my voice was no more than a whisper. Even if I could have yelled it, I doubt if he'd have heard me; the mortars and shells exploding all around made too much noise. When he reached me I told him to scram but it was no use talking. He got me on my feet and by half-carrying me we got back across the field to the house. I'll never know how but we did. I was laid on a mattress and Floyd helped to put on the shell dressings. That was the last time I saw Floyd, as they moved on and I was taken out to hospital. I don't think I need tell you how I felt when they told me Floyd didn't come back. And I'll never forget how he looked coming back across that field to get me. People like him never really die, Mrs. Williams. Perhaps they live only in the memory of those who knew them, but they live".

On January 2, 1945, Private Floyd Williams was killed in action while fighting in Italy. In mid-January 1945, widowed Letitia Williams in Sarnia received a telegram from Ottawa informing her that her son, PTE FLOYD WILLIAMS HAS BEEN KILLED IN ACTION IN ITALY. At the time of Floyd's death, his wife Norine was residing with her mother, Mrs. Alice Demary at 226 Napier Street, Sarnia. In mid-January 1945, Norine received the following letter from the Major-General, Adjutant-General:

Dear Mrs. Williams:

It was with deep regret that I learned of the death of your husband, A69366 Private Floyd George Williams, who gave his life in the Service of his Country in the Mediterranean Theatre of War on the 2nd day of January, 1945.

From official information we have received, your husband was killed in action against the enemy. You may be assured that any additional information received will be communicated to you without delay.

The Minister of National Defence and the Members of the Army Council have asked me to express to you and your family their sincere sympathy in your bereavement. We pay tribute to the sacrifice he so bravely made.

Floyd William's death was later officially recorded as: *Overseas casualty, killed in action, in the field (Italy)*. In August 1945, Aerial Williams received a letter from the Colonel, Director of Records, for Adjutant-General. Following is a portion of that letter:

Dear Madam:

Information has just been received from overseas that the remains of your husband, A69366 Private Floyd George Williams, have been buried in grave 2, row A, plot 2, of 5th Canadian Armoured Division Cemetery, Villanova, seven miles West of Ravenna, Italy. Marked map is enclosed. This is a recognized military burial ground and will receive care and maintenance in perpetuity.

The grave will have been marked with a temporary cross which will be replaced in due course by a permanent headstone suitably inscribed. While it cannot now be stated when this work of permanent commemoration will begin, before any action is taken you will be communicated with and an opportunity will be given you to submit a short personal inscription of your own choice for engraving on the headstone...



Floyd Williams - Scotland 1944



Silver Cross awarded to Norine Williams

In October 1945, Norine Williams received a War Service Gratuity of \$265.05 for the loss of her husband Floyd. In May 1947, the Lt.-Colonel, Director of Records, for Adjutant-General, sent Norine a photograph of the grave and marker over the burial place of her late husband. Floyd Williams, 22, is buried in Villanova Canadian War Cemetery, Italy, Grave II, A, 2. On his headstone are inscribed the words, HE WALKS WITH THEE AN ANGEL KIND FOR GOD IS LOVE AND SERVES MANKIND.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, J, L, N, R, 2C, 2D, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 4a

WILLIAMS, Harley James (#A/110154)

Harley Williams, a Chippewa First Nations from the Sarnia Reserve, was eager to follow his cousin and brother who were both serving in the Canadian Army. At the age of eighteen, Harley left his job and his girlfriend to serve his country. He became a member of the Essex Scottish Regiment, Royal Canadian Infantry and sacrificed his life for the Allied cause during a great offensive into Germany.

Harley James Williams was born on the Sarnia Indian Reserve on April 13, 1925, the son of James Bryon and Florence (nee Bressette) Williams of the Sarnia Indian Reserve. James Williams, born on the Sarnia Reserve, supported his family working as a carpenter employed by the Canadian Oil Company. He was also a member of the Native Council. Florence Bressette (born on the Kettle Point Reserve) had a son prior to Harley's birth, Irvine Bressette, a half-brother of Harley. In 1930, when Harley was only five years old, he lost his mother Florence who passed away that year. James later re-married to Mrs. Loveday Williams. Harley had one brother: Floyd Francis, and three half brothers: Reynold Alton, Calvert Vincent and Warren Eric. Harley also had two sisters: Bernice Bula and Virginia Ruth, and one half sister, Verda June.

Harley completed grade seven and attended grade eight, but did not complete the final examinations, finishing his schooling at age sixteen in 1941. He was able to speak and read in both English and Chippewa. He was active in hockey and baseball and enjoyed hunting and reading. Harley worked on a 48-acre farm for five months, then as a labourer for a little over a year at Synthetic Rubber Company in Sarnia. He continued to work as a labourer for three months at Mueller Brass Company in Sarnia, and then two months with Morton Salt Company in Port Huron.

Harley Williams had a first cousin, Lloyd Henry Bressette, who also served in the war. Lloyd Bressette, born June 20, 1924 at Kettle Point, the son of Archibald and Alma Bressette of Ravenswood, Ontario, enlisted in the Canadian Army on August 12, 1943 in Toronto. Nineteen year-old Lloyd trained in Brantford, Camp Borden, and Camp Debert before going overseas in early April 1944. As a member of the Stormont, Dundas & Glengarry Highlanders, Lloyd Bressette's first action against the enemy was on June 6, 1944--the D-Day landings in France. Two days later, he was transferred to the Queen's Own Rifles of Canada, with the rank of Rifleman. One and a half months later, Rifleman Lloyd Bressette was killed in action in France during the Battle of Normandy. Twenty year-old Lloyd Bressette is buried in Beny-sur-Mer Canadian War Cemetery, Calvados, France, Grave XV.E.10. On his

headstone are inscribed the words, "MY HEAVENLY HOME IS BRIGHT AND FAIR AND NO PAIN OR DEATH CAN ENTER THERE" MOM.

One of Harley William's brothers was also in the Army, so Harley was eager to join as well. Eighteen year-old Harley Williams enlisted in the Canadian Army on March 24, 1944 in London, Ontario. He stood five feet six and a quarter inches tall, had brown eyes and black hair, was single, but had a steady girlfriend at the time. He planned to return to Morton Salt Company in Sarnia for employment after the war.

From #1 District Depot in London, Harley received his army training at #12 Canadian Army (Basic) Training Centre (CIBTC) in Chatham, and then at A-29 Canadian Infantry (Advanced) Training Centre (CICTC) at Camp Ipperwash. The Basic and Advanced Training Army Examiner's evaluation comments about Harley included: *Williams is a rugged lad, good natured and strong... has an excellent Army attitude and has made a good adjustment to Army routine. He knows his work well... Williams is above the average in field work... Should make a good rifleman.* After completing his training at CICTC, Harley was granted a 14-day furlough and embarkation leave. By mid-September 1944, he was transferred to #2 Training Brigade Group in Debert, Nova Scotia. On October 12, 1944, Harley Williams embarked overseas from Debert, Nova Scotia bound for the United Kingdom.

Harley was initially posted in the U.K. with #2 Canadian Infantry Reinforcement Unit (2CIRU). In late October 1944, he was transferred to #2 Canadian Infantry Training Regiment (2CITR) where he continued his training. On January 29, 1945, Private Harley Williams sailed from the U.K. bound for the Northwestern Europe Theatre of War, where he was initially posted as an X-4 Reinforcement, Canadian Infantry Corps (CIC).

Over the winter of 1944-1945, most of the weary Canadians were given a rest, although the front was never quiet, with patrols and large-scale raids remaining constant. Canadian troops were stationed along the **Nijmegen sector** in the Netherlands. They were tasked to hold and defend the Nijmegen salient and a small piece of Allied-held territory north of the Maas River. This bridgehead would be used as a starting point for crossing the Rhine (in February 1945), and the Allies had to give the enemy the impression that an assault was imminent to force the Germans to leave troops in that area. The Germans did their best to push the Canadians out of "the island" by flooding the area and constantly harassing them with mortar fire, artillery and aggressive patrols. Constantly vigilant, the men dug deep slit trenches, covered them with whatever was handy, and tried to keep warm from the snow and cold during one of the most frigid winters on record in northern Europe.

In February 1945, the Allies launched a great offensive, the **Battle of the Rhineland** that was designed to drive the Germans eastward back over the Rhine River. There would be two formidable thrusts: one by the Ninth U.S. Army; and one by the First Canadian Army, strengthened by the addition of Allied formations. The resilient Germans had spent months improving their defences. Winter rains and thaw had turned the ground into a thick, muddy quagmire, and the enemy fought fiercely to defend their home soil. During one month of fighting, the Canadians succeeded in clearing the Reichswald Forest, in breaking the Siegfried Line, and in clearing the Hochwald Forest. But victory came at a high cost.

Private Harley Williams served with the Essex Scottish Regiment, Royal Canadian Infantry Corps (R.C.I.C.) as it advanced into Germany. Approximately five weeks after arriving in the NW European Theatre, he lost his life. On March 8, 1945, Private Harley Williams was killed in action while fighting in Germany, during the Battle of the Rhineland. His remains were buried at a location recorded on the Army Field Service Card as "MR 097/411 Xanten sh. Germany". In late March 1945, Mr. and Mrs. James Williams of the Sarnia Reserve received a telegram from Ottawa informing them that their son, PRIVATE HARLEY JAMES WILLIAMS HAS BEEN KILLED IN ACTION ON THE WESTERN FRONT. Exactly two months after Harley Williams' death, the war in Europe ended.

In April 1945, James received the following letter from the Major-General, Adjutant-General:
Dear Mr. Williams:

It was with deep regret that I learned of the death of your son, A110154 Private Harley James Williams, who gave his life in the Service of his Country in the Western European Theatre of War on the 8th day of March, 1945.

From official information we have received, your son was killed in action against the enemy. You may be assured that any additional information received will be communicated to you without delay.

The Minister of National Defence and the Members of the Army Council have asked me to express to you and your family their sincere sympathy in your bereavement. We pay tribute to the sacrifice he so bravely made.

Harley William's death was later officially recorded as, *Overseas casualty, killed in action, in the field (Germany)*. In February 1946, James Williams received a War Service Gratuity of \$130.07 for the loss of his son

Harley. In August 1946, James received a letter from the Colonel, Director of Records, for Adjutant-General. Following is a portion of that letter:

Dear Sir:

Information has just been received from overseas that the remains of your son, A110154 Private Harley James Williams, have been carefully exhumed from the original place of internment and reverently reburied in grave 9, row G, plot 3, of Nijmegen Canadian Military Cemetery, four miles South-East of Nijmegen, Holland. Marked map is enclosed. This is a recognized military burial ground and will receive care and maintenance in perpetuity.

The grave will have been marked with a temporary cross which will be replaced in due course by a permanent headstone suitably inscribed. While it cannot now be stated when this work of permanent commemoration will begin, before any action is taken you will be communicated with and an opportunity will be given you to submit a short personal inscription of your own choice for engraving on the headstone...

In January 1948, the Director, War Service Records, sent James Williams a photograph of the grave and marker over the burial place of his late son. Harley Williams was the first Native Canadian from the Sarnia Reserve to pay the supreme sacrifice in the Second World War. Harley Williams, 19, is buried in Groesbeek Canadian War Cemetery, Netherlands, Grave III.G.9.

There is also a memorial plaque to honour him on one of the entrance pillars of the Chippewas of Sarnia Cemetery, which reads: "In memory of Harley Williams, April 13, 1925-March 8, 1945, who was killed in action during World War II." Harley Williams' name is also inscribed on the Aamjiwnaang First Nations cenotaph in Sarnia. The central column of the Aamjiwnaang cenotaph is inscribed: "To our glorious veterans who have served our nation and its' allies for peace and freedom – Lest We Forget." One of the side columns is inscribed: "World War II – In memory of the young men and women who loyally served throughout the world 1939-1945 – Harley Williams".

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, N, 2C, 2D, 4D, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 3o, 3p

WILLIAMS, William Patrick Logie (A/50442)

William Patrick Williams, the son of a Great War veteran, was twenty years old when he enlisted, and just over four months later he married the love of his life. As a member of the Royal Canadian Regiment he fought with them in the arduous northward crawl to liberate Italy. Five months after recovering from shrapnel wounds, Williams sacrificed his life during the Allied advance to Rome.

William Patrick Logie Williams was born in Sarnia on March 17, 1920, the son of Charles Herbert and Zillah (nee: Worsley) Williams. In 1891, nineteen year-old Charles Herbert Williams, born June 16, 1873 in Sarnia, was residing in Sarnia with his parents David and Melissa (nee: Finch) and his six brothers and one sister. Ten years later in 1901, Charles was a soldier, residing with his mother and six brothers in Sarnia. On April 20, 1905, Charles Williams married Zillah Worsley (born October 1884 in Sarnia) in Port Huron, Michigan (they were residing in Sarnia at the time). Charles and Zillah had six children together: sons Clarence Elmer (born 1908); William Patrick, and Edward Albert (born around 1922); and daughters Beatrice Doris (born 1910); Gladys Pearl (born 1913); and Madeline (born 1914). In 1910, Charles was supporting his family working as a sawmill employee.

At the age of forty-two, and married with four children at the time, Charles Williams enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force on October 8, 1915 in Sarnia. He stood five feet six inches tall, had blue eyes and brown hair, and lived with his family at 273 Cameron Street at the time (it was later changed to 481 George St., then 215 Water St., and then 360 Nelson St.). He recorded his occupation as "acid stiller" and recorded having prior military service--six years with the U.S. Army in the Spanish American War. The recruitment officer recorded Charles' "apparent age" as 35. Charles became a member of the 70th Battalion, CEF. During his training in Canada, he rose in rank from Private to Lance Corporal, to Corporal, and to Sergeant in January 1916.

Charles embarked overseas from Halifax bound for the United Kingdom aboard the *SS Lapland* on April 24, 1916. He arrived in Liverpool on May 5 and trained at Shorncliffe and later West Sandling where he was transferred to the 39th Battalion. Less than four months after disembarking in the U.K., Charles reverted to the rank of Private at his own request in order to proceed overseas. He arrived in France on August 27, 1916, a member of the 18th Battalion, Canadian Infantry. Approximately two weeks later, he joined the 18th Battalion "in the field" at the front lines. In mid-November 1916, he joined the 4th Field Company, Canadian Engineers, serving with them for one month before rejoining to the 18th Battalion.

Charles survived the war that ended in November 1918. He returned to England in April 1919, and to Canada

in mid-May. Charles Williams, age 45, was discharged on demobilization on May 24, 1919, returning to his home in Sarnia, then at 215 Water St.

In 1921, Charles and Zillah, and their children at the time: Clarence (13), Beatrice (10), Gladys (8), Madeline (7), and William Patrick (1) lived at 360 Nelson Street in Sarnia, with Charles supporting his family employed as a pipefitter. He later worked at Imperial Oil where he eventually retired. The Williams family later lived at East Talfourd St., Sarnia.

Another of Charles Williams' sons, Edward, also served in the Second World War, becoming a Corporal with the Canadian Army in England. The Williams' daughters, after marrying, were Mrs. James E. Logan of Port Huron (Beatrice); Mrs. James K. Hamilton, Telford Street, Sarnia (Gladys); and Mrs. Alfred E. Hutcheson, Brock Street, Sarnia (Madeline).

William Patrick Logie Williams, who went by Patrick, was educated in Sarnia, including two years at Sarnia Collegiate, and was a member of the 2-11th Field Company, Royal Canadian Engineers for two and a half months. Prior to enlisting, Patrick was employed as a labourer (rigger) for a year and a half at the Sarnia Elevator Company.

Twenty year-old Patrick Williams enlisted in the Canadian Army on October 22, 1940 in Chatham, Ontario. He stood five feet seven inches tall, had grey eyes and fair hair, was single, and lived with his parents on Talfourd Street at the time. He planned to enter the field of tool and die making after the war. Patrick became a member of the Kent Regiment, and began his training in Chatham. In March 1941, he had advanced in rank from Private to Lance Corporal, and continued his training in London, Ontario. He had to be admitted to London Military Hospital on two occasions: in January 1941 for 10 days with influenza, and in May 1941 for 6 days with colonic stasis.

Just over four months after enlisting, on March 8, 1941, Patrick Williams married Maxine Thelma McGill of London, Ontario, the eldest daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas W. McGill of 311 George Street, Sarnia. At the ceremony held in the manse of Paterson Memorial Church, Miss Edna Allen of Sarnia served as bridesmaid and Private Donald Cranmer of the Kent Regiment R.C.I. of London served as the best man. After the ceremony, a reception and dinner was held at the home of the bride's parents on George Street. The young couple took up residence at 251 Hyman Street in London where Patrick was stationed. By March 1943, Maxine Williams had moved to 122 South Brock Street, Sarnia.

Seven months after marrying, on October 17, 1941, Patrick began his 7-day embarkation leave. In early November 1941, Patrick Williams of the Kent Regiment was transferred to Halifax, Nova Scotia. On November 13, 1941, he embarked overseas bound for the United Kingdom. Initially posted to #1 Canadian Division Infantry Reinforcement Unit (CDIRU), Lance Corporal Williams was transferred to the Royal Rifles of Canada (R.R.C.) in early December 1941 where he continued his training until March 1942.

On March 3, 1942, Patrick was promoted to the rank of Corporal, attached to the Kent Regiment, and returned to Canada attending Canadian Small Arms Training School (C.S.A.T.S.) in Terrace, British Columbia. He continued his training in Canada for just over one year. In February 1943 he was promoted to the rank of Acting Sergeant, and in late April 1943, he was back in London, Ontario, a Corporal in the Kent Regiment.

On May 13, 1943, Corporal Patrick Williams again embarked overseas bound for the United Kingdom. After disembarking, he sent a telegram to Maxine, then residing at 122 South Brock Street, letting her know of his safe arrival overseas. Patrick was initially attached to the #3 Canadian Infantry Reinforcement Unit (3CIRU). In June 1943, still in the U.K., Patrick learned that his father Charles, a Great War veteran, had passed away on June 12, 1943, four days before his 70th birthday.

On September 10, 1943, Patrick completed his Will, bequeathing his entire estate to his wife Maxine on East Talfourd St., Sarnia. The next day, Patrick reverted to the rank of Private at his request in order to proceed on draft. He then embarked from the U.K, arriving in the Italian Theatre on September 13, 1943, as a member of the Royal Canadian Regiment (RCR).

The **Italian Campaign**, the first sustained Canadian Army operation of the War, began with the invasion of Sicily on July 10, 1943. The fierce fighting on the island lasted for more than four weeks, during which the Canadians advanced through difficult mountainous terrain, against an ever-stiffening German resistance. By August 17, the Germans had evacuated the island to the Italian mainland. In early September, Canadian and Allied forces invaded Italy. Though Italy surrendered shortly after, the occupying Germans made it clear their fight was not over. Liberating Italy would be a painstaking northward crawl, lasting 20 months, over a range of landscapes, through

challenging weather, and against a series of well-protected defences held by some of the German army's best troops.

Patrick Williams served with the RCR's as it advanced north through Italy. Three months after arriving in Italy, on December 19, 1943, Patrick was wounded in action by shrapnel. On December 26, 1943, Maxine Williams in Sarnia received the following telegram from the Director of Records in Ottawa: SINCERELY REGRET INFORM YOU A50442 PRIVATE WILLIAM PATRICK LOGIE WILLIAMS OFFICIALLY REPORTED WOUNDED IN ACTION NINETEENTH DECEMBER 1943 STOP NATURE AND EXTENT OF WOUNDS NOT YET AVAILABLE STOP FURTHER INFORMATION FOLLOWS WHEN RECEIVED.

Patrick was hospitalized for three weeks, given a brief furlough, and then returned to action as Acting Lance Corporal with the Royal Canadian Regiment in January 1944. On February 5, 1944, Maxine received another telegram from the Director of Records: A50442 PRIVATE WILLIAM PATRICK LOGIE WILLIAMS PREVIOUSLY REPORTED WOUNDED IN ACTION NATURE OF WOUNDS NOW REPORTED ABRASIONS AND CONTUSION LEFT THIGH STOP FURTHER INFORMATION FOLLOWS WHEN RECEIVED. In mid-April 1944, Patrick Williams advanced to the rank of Acting Corporal.

Four months after returning to action, on May 17, 1944, Corporal Patrick Williams lost his life during fighting in Italy during the battle of the Hitler Line and the advance to Rome. His remains were buried on May 18, 1944 at a location recorded on the Army Field Service Card as "MR-805132, Sheet 160 Cassino, 100 yards north on side road west side of road. Italy". On May 24, 1944, Maxine received the following telegram from the Director of Records in Ottawa, REGRET DEEPLY A50442 PRIVATE WILLIAM PATRICK LOGIE WILLIAMS OFFICIALLY REPORTED KILLED IN ACTION SEVENTEENTH MAY 1944 STOP FURTHER INFORMATION FOLLOWS WHEN RECEIVED. In late May, Zillah Williams in Sarnia, who had lost her husband less than a year earlier, received a telegram from the Casualty Officer at Ottawa, informing her that her son, LANCE CORPORAL WILLIAM PATRICK LOGIE WILLIAMS WAS REPORTED AS OVERSEAS CASUALTY KILLED IN ACTION ON MAY 17 IN THE FIELD (ITALY).

In June 1944, Maxine received the following letter from the Major-General, Adjutant-General:

Dear Mrs. Williams:

It is with deep regret that I learned of the death of your husband, A 50442 Acting Corporal William Patrick Logie Williams, who gave his life in the Service of his Country in the Mediterranean Theatre of War on the 17th day of May, 1944.

From official information we have received, your husband was killed in action against the enemy. You may be assured that any additional information received will be communicated to you without delay.

The Minister of National Defence and the Members of the Army Council have asked me to express to you and your family their sincere sympathy in your bereavement. We pay tribute to the sacrifice he so bravely made.

Among Patrick's personal items that were returned to his family were two ties, a dress shirt, a snapshot album, a notebook, a personal letter, greeting cards, a shoe charm and a Bible. In early April 1945, Maxine, then residing on Wyman Street in London, received the following letter from the Colonel, Director of Records, for Adjutant-General:

Dear Madam:

Further to correspondence in connection with the regretted death of your husband [though the letter said son], the marginally named, I am directed to inform you that according to information received from overseas military authorities, the remains of Corporal Williams were buried on May 18th, 1944, in a temporary isolated grave located at a point approximately 6 miles South-West of Cassino, Italy, in the immediate vicinity in which his death occurred.

The grave will have been temporarily marked with a wooden cross for identification purposes and in due course the remains will be carefully exhumed and removed to a recognized military burial ground when the concentration of graves in the area takes place. After this has been done, the new grave will be photographed and a print of the picture will be forwarded to you as soon as it is available. It should be borne in mind, however, that for obvious reasons it may be some considerable time before this photographic work can be completed.

Some time after Patrick William's death, Maxine remarried, becoming Mrs. Maxine Thelma Brown, residing on Simcoe Street in London, Ontario. In August 1945, Maxine Brown received a letter from the Colonel, Director of Records, for Adjutant-General. Following is a portion of that letter:

Dear Madam:

Information has just been received from overseas that the remains of your husband, A50442 Corporal William Patrick Logie Williams, have now been carefully exhumed from the original place of interment and reverently reburied in grave 10, row A, plot 5, of Cassino Military Cemetery, Cassino, Italy. Marked map is enclosed. This is a recognized military burial ground and will receive care and maintenance in perpetuity.

The grave will have been marked with a temporary cross which will be replaced in due course by a permanent headstone suitably inscribed. While it cannot now be stated when this work of permanent commemoration will begin, before any action is taken you will be communicated with and an opportunity will be given you to submit a short personal inscription of your own choice for engraving on the headstone...

In mid-February 1948, the Director, War Service Records, sent Maxine a photograph of the grave and marker over the burial place in Cassino, Italy of her late husband Patrick. William Patrick Logie Williams, 24, is buried in Cassino War Cemetery, Italy, Grave V.A.10.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, J, L, N, 2C, 2D, 7C, 8X, 8Y

WILSON, John Everette Stanley (#B/144418)

John Wilson had been married just over a year-and-a-half when he enlisted to serve his country. Six months later, he was able to witness the birth of his son. Soon after, he embarked overseas where he became part of the Allied fight to drive the Germans from Italy. When he was killed in action near the Lamone River only days before Christmas, among his personal effects were a lock of his son's hair, and the souvenir icing and candle from his son's first birthday cake.

John Everette Stanley Wilson was born in McIrvine Township (Fort Frances suburbs), Ontario on July 7, 1921, the youngest son of Edward (born in Beechburg, Ontario) and Rose Biddeson (nee Standish, born in Liverpool, England) Wilson. Edward Wilson (a bridgeman) and Rose Standish were married on October 7, 1903 in Fort Frances, Ontario, where they resided. Edward and Rose Wilson had seven children together: sons Edward Standish (born 1905); Walter William (born 1914, who served during the war with the R.C.A.F.); and John Everette; and daughters: Mabel Grace Priscilla (born 1904); Dorothy May (born 1908); Mary Ellen ("Nellie", born 1910); and Ruby Pearl Irene (born 1912, died only 3 months later). John Wilson attended school in Fort Frances completing most of grade eight, leaving school at age sixteen. Growing up in northern Ontario, he was active in baseball and hockey and enjoyed hunting, fishing, skiing and swimming.

John was employed as a maintenance worker with Canadian National Railways in Port Arthur, Ontario from 1938 to 1942. On July 3, 1941, only days before his twentieth birthday, John Wilson married Ellen Ottilia Wilson (of Athabaska, Alberta) in Fort Frances, Ontario. For two months in 1942, he worked with Ontario Sulphide Pulp and Paper Mill in the grinding room in Fort Frances.

In October 1942, the young couple moved to Sarnia, residing at 500 Confederation Street. From October 1942 until he enlisted in March 1943, John was employed with Pigott's Construction Company in Sarnia, as a truck driver and receiver. John lived in Sarnia when he enlisted, and not long after he went to war, Ellen moved back to Fort Frances, and later Bergland, Ontario. The couple later had a son together, James Stanley Wilson, born September 21, 1943 in Fort Frances.

Twenty-one-year-old John Wilson enlisted in the Canadian Army on March 18, 1943 in Toronto, Ontario. He stood five feet five and a half inches tall, had brown eyes and red hair, was married and lived at 500 Confederation Street in Sarnia at the time. He recorded his occupation as truck driver. He planned to become a machinist after the war. Initially attached to #2 District Depot, Infantry, #7 Company in Toronto, he began his army training at #20 Canadian Army (Basic) Training Centre (BTC) in Brantford, Ontario. In June 1943, he was transferred to A-10 Canadian Infantry Training Center (CITC) at Camp Borden for advanced infantry training. In late September-early October 1943, he received a 14-day furlough, in time to witness the birth of his newborn baby son.

On November 25, 1943, John Wilson embarked overseas bound for the United Kingdom. Arriving on December 2, 1943, he was initially posted to the #4 Canadian Infantry Reinforcement Unit (CIRU), where he continued his training. In mid-February 1944, Private John Wilson left the U.K. and arrived in Italy on February 18, 1944. Initially posted to the X-4 Reinforcement List, he became a member of the 48th Highlanders of Canada, Royal Canadian Infantry Corps (R.C.I.C.).

The **Italian Campaign**, the first sustained Canadian Army operation of the War, began with the invasion of

Sicily on July 10, 1943. The fierce fighting on the island lasted for more than four weeks, during which the Canadians advanced through difficult mountainous terrain, against an ever-stiffening German resistance. By August 17, the Germans had evacuated the island to the Italian mainland. In early September, Canadian and Allied forces invaded Italy. Though Italy surrendered shortly after, the occupying Germans made it clear their fight was not over. Liberating Italy would be a painstaking northward crawl, lasting 20 months, over a range of landscapes, through challenging weather, and against a series of well-protected defences held by some of the German army's best troops. Private John Wilson served with the 48th Highlanders as they advanced north through Italy.

Ten months after arriving in Italy, on December 21, 1944, John Wilson lost his life while fighting during the Italian Campaign. His remains were buried at a location recorded on the Army Field Service Card as "Lamone River Cem (48 Highrs) Russi Cemetery sheet 1/50,000 MR 414348". John's death was later officially recorded as, *Overseas casualty, killed in action, in the field (Italy)*. Among John Wilson's personal effects collected and sent home was a copy of the New Testament, some snapshots, a Canadian Legion card, a package with a lock of hair, and the souvenir icing and candle from his son's first birthday cake.



Ravenna Cemetery, Grave V.G.12

In early January 1945, Ellen Wilson in Bergland, Ontario received the following letter from the Major-General, Adjutant-General:

Dear Mrs. Wilson:

It was with deep regret that I learned of the death of your husband, B144418 Private John Everette Stanley Wilson, who gave his life in the Service of his Country in the Mediterranean Theatre of War on the 21st day of December, 1944.

From official information we have received, your husband was killed in action against the enemy. You may be assured that any additional information received will be communicated to you without delay.

The Minister of National Defence and the Members of the Army Council have asked me to express to you and your family their sincere sympathy in your bereavement. We pay tribute to the sacrifice he so bravely made.

In August 1946, Ellen received a letter from the Colonel, Director of Records, for Adjutant-General. Following is a portion of that letter:

Dear Madam:

Information has just been received from overseas that the remains of your husband, B144418 Private John Everette Stanley Wilson, have been carefully exhumed from the original place of internment and reverently reburied in grave 12, row G, plot 5, of Ravenna British Empire Cemetery, five miles West of Ravenna, Italy. Marked map is enclosed. This is a recognized military burial ground and will receive care and maintenance in perpetuity.

The grave will have been marked with a temporary cross which will be replaced in due course by a permanent headstone suitably inscribed. While it cannot now be stated when this work of permanent commemoration will begin, before any action is taken you will be communicated with and an opportunity will be given you to submit a short personal inscription of your own choice for engraving on the headstone...

John Wilson left behind his mother Rose and father Edward, his two brothers and three sisters, Ellen, his wife of a little over three years, and his 15-month old James Stanley Wilson. In June 1945, Ellen received a War Service Gratuity of \$318.90 for the loss of her husband. Ellen later remarried, becoming Ellen Locher, residing in Meanook, Alberta.

John Everette Stanley Wilson, 23, is buried in Ravenna War Cemetery, Italy, Grave V.G.12. On his headstone are inscribed the words, FOR EVER REMEMBERED BY WIFE AND SON.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, L, 2C, 2D, 6O, 7C, 8X, 8Y

WILSON, Richard Norman (#CDN/664)

When Richard "Dick" Wilson left university in his second year to enlist in the Officer Training Corps (OTC), he instantly made a good impression. A recruiting officer recorded that Dick "has superior ability and a winning personality." Dick was subsequently posted overseas for further training. Lieutenant Wilson arrived in France and, after less than three action packed months of combat, died in action. As a member of the Queen's Royal Regiment 7th Armoured Division, known as the "Dessert Rats", Dick was killed on October 2, 1944 during the early stages of the liberation of the Netherlands.

Richard "Dick" Wilson was born in Sarnia on December 21, 1920, the son of Norman John (born 1886) and Vera Hannah (nee: Lobb, born 1896) Wilson. Norman and Vera Wilson were blessed with two daughters and two sons and, in 1921, when Dick was a year old, the Wilson family was living at 158 Richard Street. Norman's salary as a teacher supported his family and they later moved to 135 Penrose Street. In 1933, when Dick was thirteen, tragedy struck the Wilson family when Norman Wilson died at the age of forty-seven.

Dick attended Sarnia public schools and Sarnia Collegiate and was in the Boy Scouts for two years. He was very active in sports, playing junior and senior WOSSAA Rugby at Sarnia Collegiate and was also active in hockey, softball, badminton and tennis. He enjoyed swimming, fishing and reading, and was very interested in music, as he was a piano player in a local orchestra. One year while at Sarnia Collegiate, he was on the Editorial Staff for the Collegiate Magazine. He was member of Our Lady of Mercy Catholic Parish, and a member of the Central United Church Century Club, where he played softball for the club.

After graduating from Sarnia Collegiate, Dick worked for two and a half years at Imperial Oil Limited, before going to the University of Western Ontario in September 1941. At Western, he took an Honours Art course, specializing in French and English, and he also played on the football team. At Western, he also received Canadian Officer Training Corps (COTC) training, with the rank of Cadet, from September 22, 1941 until January 1943. After completing his COTC training, he requested a Commission with the Artillery. The COTC Officer Commanding wrote that *Cadet Wilson is highly recommended by his company commander as alert and as a good soldier.*

Dick Wilson, at age 22, enlisted in the Canadian Army on February 10, 1943 in London, Ontario. He stood six feet one and three-quarter inches tall, had grey-brown eyes and brown hair, was single, though he had a steady girlfriend, and was residing at 208 Huron Street in London. He was a second year student at Western but left university hoping to be recommended for Officers Training Corps (OTC). He had little to worry about in this regard. The Army Recruiting Officer, in recommending Dick for OTC, wrote this about Dick: *A tall, loosely built man, with a very pleasant, easy-going manner... This man has superior ability and a winning personality. While his dress is sloppy, this is probably due to his democratic outlook on life, and University custom. He states a preference for R.C.A. but has no particular reason for doing so.*

From #1 District Depot in London, Dick Wilson attended Officers Training Corps (OTC) at Brockville, Ontario beginning on February 19, 1943. After graduating in mid-June 1943, he attended A-4 Canadian Army Training Centre (CATC) in Brandon, Manitoba as a Second Lieutenant, Royal Canadian Artillery (RCA). In August 1943, he was qualified as a Lieutenant, allocated to RCA Anti-Tank Artillery in Brandon, Manitoba. In April 1944, Dick was attached to OTC in Brockville for a Special Infantry course. He volunteered for transfer (on loan) to the British Army, part of the CANLOAN scheme. In early June 1944, Dick was attached to A-34 Special Officers Training Centre (SOTC) in Sussex, New Brunswick before proceeding overseas.

Dick Wilson served as part of the CANLOAN scheme. In the fall of 1943, with the Canadian Army only fighting on one front at the time (Italy), the Canadian Army had a surplus of officers. The Canadian Government offered to loan Canadian Infantry junior officers to the British Army on a voluntary basis, under the code name "CANLOAN". A total of 673 Canadian officers, including Dick Wilson, volunteered and served under the

CANLOAN scheme. Each was given a special serial number with the prefix “CDN”, and once overseas, each was posted immediately to British regiments, where the majority took part in the bitter fighting in North-West Europe in 1944-45.⁷¹



Lieutenant Richard Norman Wilson

On June 16, 1944, Dick Wilson embarked overseas from Sussex, New Brunswick bound for the United Kingdom. He arrived on June 24, 1944, and was attached to the Queen’s Royal Regiment, 1/7th Battalion, a Lieutenant in the Infantry with the British Army. He was stationed at Barnard Castle in England for six or seven weeks, where he took an Advanced Armoured Infantry Course and was in charge of a tank.

On August 17, 1944 Lieutenant Dick Wilson departed from the U.K. and disembarked the next day in the **North-West Europe Theatre** in France (during the Battle of Normandy). He served with the Queen’s Royal Regiment (West Surrey), 1/7th Battalion – 7th Armoured Division. The 7th Armoured Division was an armoured division of the British Army. Prior to Wilson joining them, the 7th Armoured Division had fought in most major battles during the North African Campaign (where it gained the nickname “The Desert Rats”). Later, the 7th Division landed and fought in the Italian Campaign during the early stages of the invasion of Italy, and began its fight in North-West Europe by landing in Normandy during the afternoon of D-Day, June 6, 1944.

After breaching the “Atlantic Wall” of “Fortress Europe” on D-Day, Allied armies began their break out from the narrow Normandy bridgehead to carve out a foothold on the French mainland. It took a whole summer of tenacious fighting, pushing against fierce and ruthless German forces to advance east across France. As part of the Allied force, the 7th Armoured Division was equipped with Cromwell cruiser tanks and Sherman Firefly tanks. The Division took part in operations that liberated villages and towns including Caen, Villers-Bocage and Falaise, and by late August 1944 most of the German Army in Normandy had been destroyed.

Dick Wilson served with the Queen’s Royal Regiment, 1/7th Battalion – 7th Armoured Division in the final days of the Battle of Normandy and then as they advanced across France through Belgium and the Netherlands in months of bitter fighting against a tenacious enemy.

In mid-September 1944, the *Canadian (Sarnia) Observer* printed portions of two letters that Dick had written home to his widowed mother, Vera. Following is a portion of the first letter received:

We left camp in England and marched about 2 ½ miles to the station, with something like 60 pounds on our backs. It’s a bit tiring at first, but you get numb and don’t notice it. A band played for us at the depot and as we pulled out they played, ‘In the Mood’. The quarters on the ship were excellent and the meals wonderful. The next day we saw Normandy. At first all you could see were hundreds of ships and barrage balloons which really says a lot for our superiority when you realize the Allies can leave that much shipping riding at anchor unmolested. We went from the ship to landing craft and then marched another seven or eight miles to the first position. The British Tommies are small and some were just about whipped. In this section of the country there was not much in ruins. It was all in good shape and the army has made new roads.

In his second letter, he described a section of the country 70 miles inland. One morning, he observed 20 Germans from a local prison camp heading out as a work party.

They were a scruffy looking lot, most of them about 15 years old. They seemed very happy though. The Germans left this area just six days ago. On our way in we passed towns where there was absolutely nothing standing except the odd bit of jagged wall lurching into the air. The remainder was nothing but brick and rubble. You have to see this to know what I mean by rubble-it is sort of dust. I saw a few rather peculiar things such as a bombed house with nothing in it but a silly looking yellow chandelier, undamaged, hanging precariously from a split timber.

Among the roads and in the fields, are blown-up tanks and armored cars and vehicles of every type. Occasionally I saw a German grave and the Iron Cross on its marker. The roads are clear of mines, but in most cases they guarantee no safety anywhere more than three feet either side of the road. Many fields are pock-marked with huge bomb craters and I often saw many abandoned positions where Jerry had dug in. Along the roads there is an incessant stream of traffic. Besides army traffic, there are hundreds of French families returning to their homes, although I fear most of them won't find any. They have two-wheel cars loaded high with every domestic article. Two or three horses pull these carts, and others are behind cows and goats. Baby prams and bicycles are also used for transportation.

Dick Wilson took part in fighting around Arnhem in the Netherlands in September 1944, where Allied Paratroopers had been trapped. *Operation Market Garden* was a mission to capture eight bridges that spanned a network of canals and rivers on the Dutch/German border. The plan, devised by British Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery, comprised two operations: "Market" – airborne forces tasked with seizing bridges and other terrain-- and "Garden" – British ground forces tasked with moving northward. The Operation began on September 17, 1944 when British and American airborne divisions descended from the sky by parachute drops and glider landings behind enemy lines.

The operation failed at a bridge over the Rhine River at Arnhem, 'a bridge too far', where British forces encountered far stronger resistance than anticipated. By September 20, the bridge at Arnhem could no longer be defended, and the remaining British forces, with dwindling supplies, sought refuge within the town itself. On September 25, small assault boats manned by British and Royal Canadian Engineers were used to evacuate whatever battered troops they could out of the area. Of a total force of 35,000 Allied soldiers involved in Operation Market Garden, 1,400+ were killed and more than 6,000 were taken prisoner.

CANLOAN officer Dick Wilson of the Queen's Royal Regiment, 7th Armoured Division served in the North-West Europe Theatre for approximately two and a half months as the Allies advanced through northern Belgium and southwestern Netherlands.

In early September 1944, Allied forces had captured the inland port of Antwerp, Belgium, the second greatest port in Europe at the mouth of the Scheldt River. However, German forces still controlled the 45-mile-long Scheldt estuary (the Belgian-Dutch border area) that connected the port of Antwerp to the North Sea. In early October 1944, a series of military operations began led by the First Canadian Army, with Canadian, Polish and British units attached, to open up the shipping route to Antwerp so that its port could be used to supply the Allies in north-west Europe. The operation to liberate the estuary in Northern Belgium and the Netherlands, known as the **Battle of the Scheldt** (October 1 – November 8, 1944), was among the most difficult and grueling struggles in the war. The bitter fighting against a well-fortified and heavily entrenched enemy took place in a bleak environment made worse by the winter cold in a flooded and freezing muddy quagmire.

On October 2, 1944, Lieutenant Dick Wilson was killed in the Battle of the Scheldt during the early stages of the Liberation of Belgium and the Netherlands. After originally being reported as "missing in action", he was later recorded as "missing, now for official purposes presumed killed in action".

In mid-October of 1944, Vera, his widowed mother in Sarnia, received a telegram from Ottawa informing her that her son, LIEUTENANT R.N. WILSON WAS REPORTED MISSING ON OCTOBER 2. No other details were given. Vera suspected that whatever happened to her son likely occurred in Belgium, as she had received a recent letter from him telling of some of his experiences in Belgium.

In late July 1945, more than two months after VE-Day, Dick Wilson's name was mentioned in a newspaper story on the 7th Armoured Division (Desert Rats) and he was described as "missing presumed dead". Vera had not received any notification of her son's death at that point but received the news later that her son was officially recorded as, *For official purposes, presumed killed in action, in the field (Western Europe).*

Of the 673 Canadian officers that served in the CANLOAN scheme, approximately 75% were either wounded, killed or taken prisoners of war. In peaceful Stanley Park on the banks of the Rideau River in Ottawa stands a simple memorial, unveiled on June 3, 1961 by the Governor General of Canada, the Right Honourable Georges P. Vanier. On the memorial are recorded the names of 128 fatal CANLOAN casualties.⁷¹ Lieutenant Richard Norman Wilson is one of those names on the memorial.

Lieutenant Richard “Dick” Wilson, 23, has no known grave. His name inscribed on the Groesbeek Memorial, Netherlands, Panel 10.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, J, L, N, S, 2C, 2D, 7C, 7J, 8X, 8Y

WISE, Frederick Ervine (#R/78865)

Sarnia born Frederick Wise, a former employee of the *Canadian Sarnia Observer*, died in Egypt at age 26. After serving in the desert campaign for almost nine months, Frederick, a Sergeant-Pilot with the RCAF, was killed on November 4, 1942. His Hurricane aircraft failed to return from a mission around Alala, in North Africa. Adding to his parents’ grief was that neither their son’s body nor his plane was ever recovered.

Frederick (“Freddie”) Wise was born in Sarnia on June 4, 1916, the son of Adam and Margaret May (nee Cridland) Wise. In Walsingham in Norfolk County on February 18, 1903, Adam Wise (born in Welland County) married Margaret Cridland (born in Norfolk County), a union that would produce six children: daughters Ethel Winnifred and Jennie Agnes; and sons Frank Edwin, Norman Earl and Frederick. Their other son, Herman Allan Wise, died in infancy due to cholera on September 3, 1912. The Wise family lived at 415 Nelson Street, Sarnia. Their son Norman also joined the services, enlisting in August 1942 and becoming a Trooper with the Canadian Army. Norman Wise would serve in England, Italy, France and Germany.

Frederick Wise attended Durand Street and London Road public elementary schools in Sarnia from 1924 to 1930 and then Sarnia Collegiate Institute from September 1930 until June 1937. He was very active in hockey and also enjoyed playing baseball and swimming, and his hobby was mechanics. In 1940, he took an International Correspondence course in advertising. Frederick was an employee of the *Canadian Observer* in Sarnia, working in the circulation department as a clerk for a number of years, until he enlisted. In that time, he had also done some sales and repair work on small motors for Hoover Company.

Twenty-four-year-old Frederick Wise enlisted with the Royal Canadian Air Force on December 20, 1940 in London, Ontario (his father Adam was retired by then). Frederick stood five feet ten inches tall, had blue eyes and fair hair, was single and residing at home with his parents on Nelson Street at the time. He recorded his occupation as “clerk” and preferred to be a pilot, and if not that, then an observer or air gunner.

In a reference letter written for the RCAF Recruiter on behalf of Frederick Wise, P.T. McGibbon of McGibbon’s Drug Store in Sarnia wrote, *I have known Fred E. Wise since he was a child and I have much pleasure in recommending him to any person or corporation requiring his services. He has always been a very industrious, diligent and willing worker and liked by every person who has ever come in contact with him. I also know the rest of the Wise family and they command the respect of every person who has the pleasure of knowing them.*

From a portion of a reference letter written by the Circulation Manager of the Canadian (Sarnia) Observer, R.J. Knowles wrote, *When publisher asked me to supply a boy to fill an office vacancy, I recommended him and for the past two years he has been making himself of real value to this company. He maintains a good appearance, is punctual, courteous, honest and in addition has shown willingness to ‘pull more than his weight’.* The Recruiting Officer wrote this of Frederick: *A smart clean cut chap, good appearance and personality, keen, alert and observant, the determined aggressive type, will respond to training, excellent material for Air Crew.*

From #1 Manning Depot in London and then from #1 Auxillary Manning Depot (AMD) in Picton, Frederick began his air training at #6 Service Flying Training School (SFTS) in Dunnville, followed by #1 Initial Training School (ITS) in Toronto. The Commanding Officer at #1 ITS wrote that Frederick was *Cool, reliable, steady type of Trainee, with fine service spirit. Applied himself well at the school.* Frederick continued his training at #19 Elementary Flying Training School (EFTS) in Virden, Manitoba; and at #10 Service Flying Training School (SFTS) in Dauphin, Manitoba. The Commanding Officers in Manitoba wrote this of Frederick: *Hard worker and keen. Punctuality and deportment good. Flying above average... Very good student. Recommended for Fighter Squadron.* On October 24, 1941, Wise was awarded his wings as a qualified Pilot in the Royal Canadian Air Force, graduating at Dauphin, Manitoba. Following his graduation, he received a 14-day leave in which he was able to return home to visit his parents, siblings and friends in Sarnia.

Frederick embarked overseas from Halifax bound for the United Kingdom on November 11, 1941. He travelled overseas with fellow Sarnian James L. Wright (also included in this Project), who had attended the same training centres as Frederick. Both Sarnians reunited later as members of the R.C.A.F. in the Middle East.

From #3 Personnel Reception Centre in early December 1941, Frederick was posted to #59 Operational Training Unit (59 O.T.U.) at RAF Turnhouse, receiving further training to fly single-seat fighters. In late February 1942, he was transferred to the Middle East where he continued his training. In June 1942, he was posted to #22 Personnel Transit Centre (P.T.C.), RAF Almaza, Egypt, and then to No. 25 P.T.C. In mid-July 1942, Frederick became a member of RAF #238 Squadron "Ad Finem" (To the end), with the rank of Flight Sergeant-Pilot.

No. 238 Squadron, a fighter squadron formed in mid-May 1940, was originally equipped with Spitfire fighters, but converted to Hawker Hurricanes in June. During its first year, the squadron was posted to several RAF bases in England and took part in the Battle of Britain. In May 1941, the squadron began to move to the Middle East, part of No. 258 Wing, Western Desert, Middle East Command. Here, the squadron was used for bomber escort missions and fighter patrols.

In September of 1942, a letter from Fred Wise arrived at the *Sarnia Observer* and the former employee, described his life in the Middle East. The following is a portion of that letter dated August 21, 1942:

On Sunday I was in Alexandria and had a dip in the Mediterranean, but this salty water isn't good for swimming when one is used to Lake Huron. I have been here three weeks, and feel fairly settled after travelling nearly all over Egypt. So far I have made five trips, mostly patrols over Alamein. It was only last Sunday that I saw my first Jerry hits.

Today we had a rather important job and came out of it with flying colors. On this particular we were top cover for a Hurricane bomber squadron, and watched the boys pull off and "drop their eggs." On the way home over Alamein we were attacked by four Messerschmidts. They came down on us like a bat out of hell. We fixed them again, and in the dog fight which followed one of the beggars got in front of me for a second, so yours truly got a good burst in. However I'm afraid I missed, though by mighty little. It was good to get home again, but I'm ready to go back at them anytime.

The **North African Campaign** began in June 1940 and continued for almost three years, as Allied and Axis forces pushed each other back and forth across the desert. Battles between British Commonwealth, U.S. and French forces against Italian-German Axis and Vichy France forces took place across Libya, Egypt, Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia. Canadians fought as part of British army units, as members of the RAF or the Royal Canadian Air Force and serving in the Royal Canadian Navy.

As part of **Middle East Command**, RAF #238 Squadron took part in the Second Battle of El Alamein (October 23 – November 11, 1942). Taking place near the Egyptian railway halt of El Alamein, the battle was won by the Allies and marked the beginning of the end for the Axis in North African Campaign (the campaign would end in May 1943).

After serving in the desert campaign for almost nine months, Frederick Wise was killed in action. On November 4, 1942, Flight Sergeant-Pilot Frederick Wise's Hurricane aircraft failed to return from a ground strafing mission against the enemy around Alala, in North Africa.

In mid-November 1942, his parents received a telegram informing them that their son, Frederick Ervine Wise, was reported missing, and that he had not returned from an operational flight in the Middle East. Days later, they received the following letter from the Flight Lieutenant, R.C.A.F. Casualties Officer, for Chief of the Air Staff: *Dear Mr. Wise:*

It is my painful duty to confirm the telegram recently received by you which informed you that your son, Sergeant Frederick Ervine Wise, is reported missing on Active Service.

Advice has been received from the Royal Canadian Air Force Casualties Officer, Overseas, that your son was the sole occupant of an aircraft which failed to return to its base due to enemy action on November 4th, 1942.

I desire to point out that this does not necessarily mean that your son has been killed or wounded. It might be that he is a prisoner of war and inquiries have been made through the International Red Cross Society and all other appropriate sources. Official announcement that your son has been reported missing will not be made through the Press for at least five weeks, and until then, you are requested not to give any information to the Press or Radio. It is possible that he has landed in enemy territory and in that event publicity at this time might imperil his chance to escape.

This is all the information that we have at these Headquarters but your son's Commanding Officer is writing you a letter which you should receive shortly which will give you all available details. Please be assured that any further information received will be communicated to you immediately. May I join with you and Mrs. Wise in the hope that better news will be forthcoming in the near future.

About the same time that Adam and Margaret Wise in Sarnia received the above letter, they received the following letter from R.C.A.F. Records Officer, for Chief of the Air Staff in Ottawa:

Dear Mr. Wise:

I am directed to advise you that your son, Frederick Ervine Wise, has been promoted to the rank of Warrant Officer Second Class with effect from October 24th, 1942.

This promotion follows a procedure adopted by the Royal Canadian Air Force, that all aircrew members of the service if recommended by their Commanding Officer should at the end of the required lapse of time from their last promotion be promoted to higher rank. This promotion procedure has been made retroactive in order to extend the same recognition to those who have unhappily lost their lives.

It is my sincere hope that you may find sustaining comfort in the knowledge that the qualities of your gallant son are thus recognized, and it is regretted that this information could not be passed to you at an earlier date but the delay in notifying you was unavoidable. May I express to you and the members of your family my profound sympathy.

In early December 1942, the staff of the *Canadian (Sarnia) Observer* received Christmas greetings via telegraph from Frederick Wise, the former member of the *Observer* circulation department. The greeting had been sent from the Middle East, dated October 31, 1942, only a few days before he was reported missing.

In late December 1942, the Royal Canadian Air Force Casualty List still recorded Frederick Wise as, *Missing after air operations in North Africa*. Seven months later, in July 1943, Frederick Wise was officially recorded as, *Previously reported "missing" after air operations (overseas), now for official purposes, presumed dead*.

In August 1945, Adam received the following letter from the R.C.A.F. Casualty Officer, for Chief of the Air Staff in Ottawa:

Dear Mr. Wise:

The Director of Estates has asked me to reply to your recent enquiry concerning your son, Warrant Officer Class II Frederick Ervine Wise. It is indeed regretted that despite all possible efforts no further information has been received concerning your son since he was reported missing.

There are several Services set up in an endeavor to find all particulars possible of crashed aircraft. Some information is available concerning a great many aircraft which crashed or were shot down by the enemy and every possible effort on an organized basis is being put forth to secure all information available. It is the duty of the Graves Registration Units, which are under the control of the Military Authorities to enquire for and locate the graves of all personnel known or believed to have crashed and to have been buried in occupied areas.

A Royal Air Force and Dominion Air Force Missing Research and Enquiry Service has been organized for the purpose of research and enquiry in liberated territories into the circumstances of aircrews reported as casualties. This Service endeavours to obtain additional information to supplement that already received. The civilian population of these areas is being contacted by Radio, Press, and Proclamations through the various civic authorities to centralize through this Service any information or concrete evidence they may have about Air Force personnel or crashed aircraft. Similar instructions have been issued to all Service personnel in these areas.

I wish again to assure you that when any additional information is received concerning your son, it will be forwarded to you. I am sure you will realize that owing to the conditions existing in Europe at the present time and the great number of enquiries confronting these enquiry services, some time may pass before more information is received. May I extend to you and the members of your family my most sincere sympathy.

By February 1946, Adam and Margaret had still not received any further information about their son. Margaret wrote the following letter to the RCAF Estates Branch in Ottawa; *It is 3 years and 3 months and a half today since he was reported missing, but his plane, nor him, nor his grave have ever been found, so we are at a loss to know what did happen to our dear son.*

In late March 1946, she received the following reply letter from the R.C.A.F. Casualty Officer, for Chief of the Air Staff in Ottawa:

Dear Mrs. Wise:

The Director of Estates has asked me to reply to your recent enquiry concerning your son, Warrant Officer Class II Frederick Ervine Wise. It is indeed with regret that I must advise you that despite all possible efforts no

information has been received regarding the fate of your son since the night he was reported missing.

Please be assured that the Missing Research and Enquiry Service and the Graves Registration Units are doing everything in their power to secure definite information regarding the fate of your son and just as soon as any word is received, you will be at once advised. I am sure you will realize, however, that in view of the vast number of enquiries confronting these enquiry services some considerable time may elapse before more information is received. May I again extend to you and the members of your family my most sincere sympathy.

In mid-June 1946, Margaret received the following letter from the R.C.A.F. Records Officer in Ottawa:
Dear Mrs. Wise:

It is a privilege to have the opportunity of sending you the Operational Wings and Certificate in recognition of the gallant services rendered by your son Warrant Officer Class II F.E. Wise. I realize there is little which may be said or done to lessen your sorrow, but it is my hope that these "Wings", indicative of operations against the enemy, will be a treasured memento of a young life offered on the altar of freedom in defence of his Home and Country.

In late November 1952, more than ten years after the loss of their son, Adam and Margaret received a letter from the R.C.A.F. Casualties Officer, for Chief of the Air Staff in Ottawa. Following is a portion of that letter:

Dear Mrs. Wise:

It is with reluctance that after so long an interval, I must refer to the loss of your son, Warrant Officer Class II Frederick Ervine Wise. A report has, however, been received from our Missing Research and Enquiry Service which states that their efforts to locate your son's grave have been unsuccessful. Under the circumstances, therefore, it must be regretfully accepted and officially recorded that he does not have a "known" grave.

Due to the extreme hazards attending air operations there are, unhappily, many thousands of British aircrew boys who do not have "known" graves and all will be commemorated on General Memorials that will be erected at a number of locations by the Imperial War Graves Commission (of which Canada is a member), each Memorial representative of a theatre of operations. One of these Memorials will be erected at El Alamein, and the name of your son will appear on that Memorial....

I realize that this is an extremely distressing letter and that there is no manner of conveying such information to you that would not add to your heartaches. I am fully aware that nothing I may say will lessen your great sorrow, but I would like to express to you and the members of your family my deepest sympathy.

Frederick Wise, 26, has no known grave. His name is inscribed on the Alamein War Memorial, Egypt, Column 264.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, J, L, M, N, 2C, 2D, 6O, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10C

WRIGHT, James LeNoury (#J/19602)

James LeNoury Wright, who preferred to be called "Jim", had the opportunity to be discharged from service in mid-August 1944. As a pilot with the RCAF, he had amassed more than 800 hours to his credit and had completed his duties in Africa, the Middle East and other theaters of war. Yet the 28 year old much decorated Sarnian chose to return to service. Nine months later, Jim was killed in a flying accident in Wales.

James Wright, who always referred to himself as Jim, was born as a fraternal twin on August 19, 1916 in Sarnia. Both of his parents were born in England--Thomas William Wright was born in April 1881 in Isle of Guernsey; and Margaret (nee Wisby) Wright, was born in Harston, Cambridgeshire. Thomas Wright had been married previously (in February 1905) to Harriet "Hattie" Wisby, Margaret's younger sister, but tragically Hattie passed away from tuberculosis in February 1912.

Thomas and Hattie had three children together: Herbert Wisby Wright (born February 1906); Ellis John Wright (born December 1910); and Florence Wright (born October 1911). Tragedy struck the Wright family a second time in February 1912 when their infant daughter Florence passed away from meningitis a few days after Harriet had passed away.

Two years later in March 1914, widower Thomas Wright married Margaret Wisby, his sister-in-law who had immigrated to Forest, Ontario from Harston, Cambridgeshire, England around 1905. Margaret Wisby also had a previous marriage. She married Charles Kershaw in June 1910, but he died in August 1911, around the time their daughter, Mary, was born.

Thomas Wright married Margaret Kershaw (nee Wisby) in Forest, Ontario on March 5, 1914. At the time, Thomas recorded his address as Port Huron, Michigan, but their family later resided at 240 Bright Street in Sarnia.

Thomas and Margaret Wright had three children together: Clifford Wright (born September 1914); and twins Edith Selena and James (Jim) Wright, born on August 19, 1916, in Sarnia. Jim was given the middle name Le Noury, which was his grandmother's maiden name (Julia Le Noury of Mount Durand, Guernsey).

In February 1916, 34 year-old father Thomas Wright enlisted to serve in the First World War with the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force (CEF) in Sarnia and became a member of the 149th Battalion. Employed as a grocer, Thomas and wife Margaret along their six children--Herbert Wisby (11 yrs.); Ellis John (7 yrs.); Mary Umfreville Kershaw Wright (5 yrs.); Clifford Wisby (2 yrs.); and twins James LeNoury and Edith Salina (4 months)--were residing at 128 Penrose Street at the time.

In April 1917, fourteen months after enlisting, Thomas Wright arrived in England and three months later he disembarked in France. He rose to the rank of Acting Lance Corporal, with the 11th Battalion, Canadian Railway Troops. In the final days of the Great War, Thomas Wright lost his life in France. Acting L/Cpl. Thomas William Wright passed away at No. 56 Casualty Clearing Station on November 9, 1918 (two days before the Armistice). The cause of death was the result of the Spanish flu (influenza and broncho-pneumonia).

Many years later, his two former wives, sisters Harriet (nee Wisby, passed away in Forest 1912) and Margaret (nee Wisby, passed away in Sarnia 1964), were both buried in Beechwood Cemetery in Forest. An empty spot lies between them, for their husband Thomas William Wright. The space will always be there, as Thomas is buried in France with his fallen brothers in arms. Thomas Wright, 37, is buried in Grevillers British Cemetery, Pas de Calais, France, Grave XVII.E.8. Thomas William Wright's name is also inscribed on the Sarnia cenotaph on the World War I section. His story is included in this Project in the World War I section on page 406. *Thomas and James (Jim) Wright are the only father and son combination from Sarnia to both lose their lives while serving Canada in two different World Wars.



Jim's mother Margaret Wright (nee Wisby)



Jim's twin sister Edith Wright

So Margaret raised Jim all on her own, along with his other five siblings--Herbert, Ellis, Mary Kershaw, Clifford and Jim's twin sister Edith--at 240 Bright Street, Sarnia. Jim was educated at Russell Street, George Street, and Lochiel Street public elementary schools from 1922 to 1929. He then attended Sarnia Collegiate from 1929 to 1935, where he specialized in drafting and completed two years commercial. Jim loved sports, especially swimming, hockey, football, rugby, softball and tennis, and he had a keen interest in photography. After completing high school, Jim worked as a bookkeeper at Head Laundry Limited in Sarnia for one year in 1935-1936. From 1936 until he enlisted, Jim was employed at Electric Auto-Lite Limited in Sarnia, first as an inspector, and then was promoted to office clerk in 1939.

Twenty-four-year-old Jim Wright enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force on December 16, 1940 in London, Ontario. He stood five feet six inches tall, had blue eyes and light brown hair, was single and was living at home on Bright Street with his family at the time. He requested flying duties, with a preference to be a pilot or an observer. His plan for after the war was to possibly go back to school. A reference letter for the RCAF Recruiter on behalf of James Wright was written by the President of Brown & Urquhart Limited (Front Street, Sarnia). In it, he

wrote, *I have known him personally and have had business dealings with him and have always found that he was honest and conscientious and of good character.*

His employer at Electric Auto-Lite also penned a reference letter. Again, he had a sterling recommendation for Jim: *James L. Wright has been in the employ of the Electric Auto-Lite Limited, Sarnia for approximately three and one half years and during that period the writer has known the above to be a steady, conscientious worker, of excellent character, and I am pleased to provide this recommendation of Mr. Wright's qualifications.* After the interview, the Recruiting Officer wrote that Jim Wright, *Has a good knowledge of photography, drafting and mechanical drawing. We recommend him because he is very frank in conversation, honest and conscientious.*

From the Recruiting Centre in London and then from #1 Manning Depot in Toronto and from #1 Auxillary Manning Depot (AMD) in Picton, Jim Wright received his air training at #6 Service Flying Training School (SFTS) in Dunnville; at #1 Initial Training School (ITS) in Toronto; at #19 Elementary Flying Training School (EFTS) in Virden, Manitoba; and at #10 Service Flying Training School (SFTS) in Dauphin, Manitoba. The Chief Instructor at #10 SFTS wrote this of Wright: *First class student has a quiet way about him that is quite attractive. Student type, deportment good. Recommended for Fighter Squadron.*

Graduating on October 24, 1941 in Dauphin, Manitoba, Jim Wright was awarded his wings as a qualified Pilot in the Royal Canadian Air Force. During his training, Jim flew in a variety of planes, mostly Hurricanes, but also Spitfires, Hudsons, Dakotas, and Marauders. Following his graduation, he received his 14-day embarkation leave and was able to return home to visit family and friends. On November 11, 1941, Jim embarked overseas from #1 Y Depot in Halifax bound for the United Kingdom. He travelled overseas with fellow Sarnian Frederick E. Wise (also included in this Project), who had attended the same training centres as Jim. Both Jim Wright and Frederick Wise would be reunited later as members of the R.C.A.F. in the Middle East.

Initially posted to #3 Personnel reception Centre on November 23, 1941, Jim Wright was transferred to #55 Operational Training Unit (O.T.U.) at RAF Usworth on December 9, 1941. There he received further training as a fighter pilot. In early March 1942, he was transferred to the Middle East where he continued his training at #22 Personnel Transit Centre (P.T.C.), RAF Almaza, Egypt. In late June 1942, he was posted to No. 1 Aircraft Delivery Unit (A.D.U.) in Cairo. Jim served overseas in North Africa and the Middle East until August 1944.

Overseas for almost three years, Jim was part of aircraft delivery--flying planes to areas that included North Africa, Egypt, the Middle East and India. This included flying aircraft from the West African coast to the Middle East during the Tunisian Campaign, as well as piloting planes to Iran and transports and fighters to India. In August 1942, James celebrated his 26th birthday somewhere in the Middle East. In November 1942, while stationed in Africa, he was hospitalized for close to two weeks, after contracting malaria. One year later, in November 1943, he received his commission and was promoted to Flight Officer.

In April 1944, the *Sarnia Observer* featured a story on Mrs. Margaret Wright's three children who were serving at the time—Mary, Clifford and James. Her daughter, Flying Officer Mary Kershaw of the R.C.A.F. (W.D.), had attended public school and Sarnia Collegiate Institute. She trained at Strathroy General Hospital and was at the Charlotte Eleanor Englehart Hospital in Petrolia for four years. Prior to enlisting, she nursed for 1 ½ years at the Sanitorium in Weston. She enlisted in the R.C.A.F. sixteen months prior to the newspaper story. Stationed at Trenton during that time, Mary had recently been appointed to the Radio Station Hospital in Clinton where she was in charge of the 25-bed hospital.

Margaret's son, Clifford Wright, who had been employed with Mueller Brass Company of Port Huron, enlisted in January 1944 in the United States Navy (USN). Clifford was stationed at Scott Field, Farragut, Idaho, from where he graduated in February of 1944. Following a 21-day leave in Sarnia, Petty Officer Clifford Wright of the USN was transferred to Santiago, California. Her other son, Jim Wright, was also featured in the story. At the time, Pilot Officer Jim Wright of the R.C.A.F. had been overseas for two years and had been stationed for some time in the Middle East where he had received his commission.

In mid-August 1944, Jim returned home from overseas and made what turned out to be his last trip to Sarnia, a 30-day leave to visit his mother Margaret, twin sister Edith and the rest of his family. Jim had completed his duties in Africa, the Middle East and other areas and had been sent back to Canada with the privilege of taking his discharge if he so elected. He had more than 800 flying hours to his credit; yet, he chose to continue in the service.

While in Sarnia, when asked what things had impressed him on his return to Canada, Jim stated, *There*

certainly is no serious shortage of food in Canada. It is wonderful to be able to go into a restaurant and order a steak, and to see a menu with so many choices on it. In England there are no menus now such as there are here, while in Africa, on the ferry command, food was often pretty grim. On choosing not to take his discharge, he expressed his eagerness to return to the battlefield. *The leave is fine, but I'm not used to having nothing to do, and hope to be sent back overseas again.* He expressed that this time, he wanted to use his training as a fighter pilot to get into the thick of things.

In describing the “grim” accommodations and food to which he became accustomed, he stated that in some of the R.A.F. stations along the ferry routes, native cooks were used with R.A.F. personnel supervising: *We frequently used a native set-up with mud and straw huts, and wooden frames with ropes for mattresses.... The R.A.F. considered it more important to bring in war material first and accommodations later if there was time. The Americans, on the other hand, brought in their equipment first, including prefabricated huts, real beds, complete refrigeration, and so on.*

He was unimpressed with Cairo and Alexandria; in fact, Jim was quite disgusted with the lack of proper sanitation he found, even in new Cairo. He said that the old city was dirty and full of disease spread by flies. Nor was he impressed with the Egyptians he found in his travels there, claiming to have lost many articles to pickpockets. He described Alexandria as cooler than Cairo in the summer, with a breeze from the Mediterranean Sea: *The heat on the West African coast was oppressive with a high humidity, while it was 125 degrees in Iran falling to 100 degrees at night.*



Flying Officer-Pilot James Lenoury Wright

After his 30-day leave at home, Jim Wright reported to Ottawa for posting and returned overseas on September 27, 1944. Part of his new posting was taking a course on Spitfires equipped both as fighters and for photographic work. In late September 1944, the mother of another Sarnia R.C.A.F. officer showed Jim's mother Margaret a letter that her son had written to her. The officer praised Jim Wright's splendid record. The letter said that F/O Wright had earned his month's leave at home by taking part in a particularly hazardous undertaking with two colleagues. It also revealed that Jim, despite three attacks of malaria, had made 46 flights in single-engine fighter planes from the west coast of Africa to Burma and Russia, and had spent 10 days in the desert after being forced down by engine trouble.

In the spring of 1945, Jim Wright was at RAF Hawarden, Wales attached to RAF #41 Operational Training Unit (O.T.U.), part of No. 12 Group **Fighter Command**. No. 41 OTU was formed in September 1941 to train tactical reconnaissance pilots using Lysanders and Tomahawks. By April 1942, the Lysanders were retired and Mustangs arrived to supplement the Tomahawks. In November 1942 the unit moved to RAF Hawarden. In September 1944, it was transferred to No. 12 Group, by which time it was using aircraft that included Hurricanes, Spitfires, and Masters Harvards. In February 1945, the unit was split into two with No. 41 OTU Day Fighter Wing moved to RAF Poulton where it was re-designated No 58 OTU, while the Hawarden element became No. 41 Fighter Reconnaissance Wing and moved to RAF Chilbolton. This latter unit is where Flying Officer Jim Wright was posted.

On March 15, 1945 in Wales, Jim Wright was killed while flying. He was flying low in his Spitfire BM636 when at approximately 18.45 hours, while carrying out low aerobatics, Jim attempted a roll at a low height. He did so with insufficient speed and hit the ground as he was coming out of the roll. The aircraft crashed in a field at Paper Mill Lane, Oakenholt, Flintshire, Wales. A local farmer who witnessed the crash, rushed over and pulled Jim out of the plane, but Jim was already dead. His death was the result of multiple injuries and extensive burns.

Approximately one week later, Margaret Wright on Bright Street in Sarnia received a telegram from Ottawa informing her that her son, PILOT OFFICER JAMES WRIGHT WAS KILLED RECENTLY ON ACTIVE SERVICE WITH THE RCAF OVERSEAS. No further particulars were given in the official message. James Lenoury Wright's death was later officially recorded as, *Killed in flying accident, overseas (Wales)*.

Shortly after receiving the above telegram, Margaret received the following letter from the Air Commodore, Acting Air Member for Personnel in Ottawa:

Dear Mrs. Wright:

It is with deep regret that I must confirm our recent telegram informing you that your son, Flying Officer James Lenoury Wright, was killed on Active Service.

Advice has been received from the Royal Canadian Air Force Casualties Officer, Overseas, that your son lost his life during flying operations at 6:55 P.M. on March 15th, 1945. The aircraft, of which he was the sole occupant, crashed at Paper Mill Lane, Oakenholt, Flint, Wales.

You may be assured that any further information received will be communicated to you immediately. I realize that this news has been a great shock to you, and I offer you my deepest sympathy. May the same spirit which prompted your son to offer his life give you courage.

Shortly after receiving the news of Jim's death, Rev. F.G. Hardy of St. George's Church, Sarnia, spoke in sympathetic terms at a morning service at the church. The rector said that in peace times, before his enlistment, Jim had taken an active part in the young people's work and older members of the Boy Scouts would remember his activities and his talent for leadership. Rev. Hardy added that it was a sad duty to make the announcement of the supreme sacrifice of this young boy.

In May 1945, Margaret received the following letter from E. Plumtree, the RAF Wing Commander, No. 41 R.A.F. Station, Chilbolton, Stockbridge, Hants:

Dear Mrs. Wright,

Before you receive this letter you will have had information of the very sad loss of your son James. He was flying a Spitfire aircraft which was seen to dive into the ground at very high speed, and there is no doubt that he was killed instantly. A searching inquiry has been made in order to try and find any possible cause of the accident, but no real conclusion can be arrived at. There is no evidence of any technical fault in the aircraft which was flying perfectly a few moments before. Your son was an extremely competent pilot and there is certainly no question of it being due to anything within his control. In view of the above, it is considered probable that your son may have lost consciousness due to an unknown reason, causing the aircraft to dive out of control into the ground. I am afraid that it was one of the unfortunate, unexplainable accidents that are part and parcel of the normal risks of flying a fast fighter aircraft.

Owing to the time taken to communicate under present conditions, it was not possible to ascertain your wishes regarding the funeral in the time available and I had therefore to arrange a burial without reference to you. You will, I am sure, understand the necessity for this action and I sincerely trust that the arrangements we were able to make were such as you would have wished.

Your son's funeral took place at the Regional Cemetery, Chester, the service being conducted by a Canadian Padre. Full service honours were accorded, the coffin being carried by men of his own squadron who also provided a firing party. The coffin was covered with the Union Jack and Last Post was sounded. Photographs have been sent to you which I hope you have received.

You will wish to know that all war graves are cared for by the Imperial War Graves Commission, which will erect a temporary wooden cross pending the provision of a permanent memorial by them. Your son's effects have been gathered together and sent to the Royal Air Force Central Depository, by whom they will be forwarded to the Administrator of Estates, Ottawa, who will be writing to you in this regard in due course.

May I now express the great sympathy which all of us in the Unit feel with you in the sad loss which you have sustained. Your son was a most popular and well liked officer throughout the Unit and he could always be depended on to do his work and his flying with great keenness. We all miss him very much indeed.

The chaplain in England that presided over Jim Wright's funeral wrote the following in a letter to his family: *Blacon Cemetery, just outside the ancient walled city of Chester, is a beautiful spot. The heavy mist that has hung over the countryside has lifted, but the sky was clouded over during the funeral; overhead, two aircraft hovered around as though in tribute to your son.*

An inquiry into the circumstances of the flying accident was held in the spring of 1945. Following are some of the findings of that investigation:

F/O J.L. Wright took off in Spitfire aircraft BM636 from R.A.F. Hawarden and completed a combat exercise with F/L Kusel at 5,000 feet. Having completed the exercise F/O J.L. Wright decided to "beat-up" the house of some friends, where he had been to dinner previously, even though he had read Station Flying Station Orders forbidding the practice. F/O J.L. Wright made an attack on the house, at a height of about 50 feet, and as soon as he had gone over the house, he completed a slow roll, as soon as he was level again, he attempted a second roll and flew straight into the ground.

To the witnesses, the aircraft appeared to be gradually but consistently losing height all the time during these slow rolls and did not dive into the ground but flew in his line of flight. The aircraft passed between two trees and struck the ground with its starboard wing tip, falling down on to its nose, it then bounced about 30 yards, disintegrating as it did so. The fuselage burst into flame and began to burn fiercely. Mr. Herbert Ward Hughes fought his way into the flames and extricated the burning body of the pilot. This must have taken Mr. Hughes several minutes as he had only just recovered the body when other witnesses arrived at the scene. The accident is a typical example of the effects of low aerobatics and "showing off" and shows that even experienced Pilots are not immune from this practice.

F/O Wright had total solo flying experience of 745 hours on all types including 95 hours on Spitfire aircraft. The investigating Officer recommends that some form of recognition be awarded to Mr. Herbert Ward Hughes of Oakenholt Farm, Flint, for his bravery in extricating the body of the pilot (F/O Wright), an action which might have saved the Pilot's life had there been any hope.

In March 1946, Margaret received a War Service Gratuity of \$1060.12 for the loss of her son. Jim Wright's well-deserved awards include the Africa Star with 42-43 bar; a Defence Medal; a War Service Medal; and a Canadian Volunteer Service Medal with bar. Flying Officer-Pilot James LeNoury Wright, 28, is buried in Chester (Blacon) Cemetery, Cheshire, United Kingdom, Section A, Grave 97. On his headstone are inscribed the words, BE THOU FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH AND I WILL GIVE THEE A CROWN OF LIFE. REV.2.10.
SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, J, L, M, N, R, 2C, 2D, 6O, 7C, 8X, 8Y, j

WRIGHT, John David

The last moments of John "Jack" David Wright's life defined his character. While he was in England during the Blitz, a group of officers and nurses was dancing at a popular nightclub. When a high explosive German bomb ripped through the roof of the building, Jack acted instinctively. He shielded his dancing partner from the explosion, saving her life but sacrificing his own. Lieutenant Jack Wright, 28, was buried in Brookwood Military Cemetery, Surrey, United Kingdom on March 12, 1941.

John "Jack" David Wright was born in Petrolia on March 29, 1912, the only son of David and Florence Ellen (nee Crozier) Wright. David Wright, a liveryman at the time, and Florence Crozier were married on January 18, 1909 in Marthaville, Ontario and they had two children together: John, who went by "Jack" and Elizabeth Mary, who years later married Howard Vince and they resided at 409 Devine Street, Sarnia.

David Wright was an oil-drilling superintendent in Trinidad for a time, so his son, Jack, lived in Trinidad, British West Indies for six years, where he received part of his early schooling. The Wright family returned to Sarnia in 1924, where David was employed with a local automobile sales group. The Wright family lived at 320 Davis Street in Sarnia.

Jack completed his public school education in Sarnia and then attended Sarnia Collegiate from September 1926 to June 1930. While there, he was a member of the high school rifle team. He was also a member of Central United Church. Following his Sarnia Collegiate graduation, Jack began his employment at Imperial Oil Limited in Sarnia as an assistant in the engine-testing laboratory. It was during this time period that tragically, Jack would lose both of his parents in a six-month period: his mother Florence on December 5, 1934 (age 51); and his father David on June 30, 1935 (age 53).

In September 1935, Jack began a five-year education co-operative program with Imperial Oil Limited. The

program involved him spending six months in college and six months working at Imperial Oil. Jack attended college at Lawrence Institute of Technology in Detroit where he studied Mechanical Engineering to obtain his Bachelor of Science Degree in Mechanical Engineering. During this period, Jack, who was always interested in military matters, served for one year in the Non-Permanent Active Militia (NPAM), with the First Field Park Company, Royal Canadian Engineers (RCE) in Sarnia. Initially a Private, he advanced to the rank of Second Lieutenant on October 1, 1938. Jack was in his final year of his Mechanical Engineering co-op program, when the outbreak of war caused him to leave his duties with the chemical staff of the Imperial Oil Limited to enlist for overseas duty.

On September 3, 1939, twenty-seven-year-old Jack Wright was mobilized into service with the Canadian Active Service Force (CASF) of the Canadian Army in Sarnia. He stood six feet tall, had hazel eyes and brown hair, was single and recorded his occupation as engineer. He was residing at 409 Devine Street with his sister at the time. Completing his Officer's Declaration Paper on September 3rd in Sarnia, he was given a commission as Second Lieutenant with the 11th Field Company, Royal Canadian Engineers, headquartered in Sarnia. That day, Britain declared war on Germany, and one week later, Canada and Newfoundland declared war on Germany.

Wright received his army training in Sarnia and London, Ontario as a member of the Royal Canadian Engineers (RCE). He was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant with the RCE on November 27, 1939. In February 1940, he was interviewed by a Major of the 11th Field Company with regard to his offer of active service with the Royal Canadian Engineers overseas. Jack was evaluated based on his previous military service, his education, his civil employment and his references. A portion of the Major's remarks included, *This officer has gained excellent education, both in theory and practical engineering. He is industrious and very keen, and sound in handling men. He has proven himself to be a leader and to be very popular with his associates and men working under him. His habits of living are of a very high standard, also his character and reputation. I desire to highly recommend him for an appointment with a Field Company in the R.C.E., where in my opinion, he would prove himself to be a most capable officer.* In July of 1940, Jack Wright spent his last furlough in Sarnia.



Lieutenant John "Jack" David Wright

Jack Wright embarked overseas from Halifax bound for the United Kingdom on August 22, 1940, as a member of the 11th Field Company, Royal Canadian Engineers (RCE), with the rank of Lieutenant. Upon arrival at Greenock, Scotland in the U.K., he was posted to Badajos House in Aldershot, England. In the spring of 1941, he was still serving in England. It was during the time of the German Blitz—the nightly indiscriminate bombing of major British cities. At one point, London, England was bombed for 57 nights in a row. On a Saturday night, March 8, 1941, Lieutenant John "Jack" David Wright lost his life while in London, during a German bombing raid, a nightly occurrence at that time.

Jack was visiting the popular Café de Paris jazz nightclub, in Leicester Square, London, with a group of Canadian friends, including Canadian Nursing Sisters Thelma Stewart and Helen M. Stevens, and Lieutenant Jack C. Clunie, son of Mr. and Mrs. H. Clunie of 218 Davis Street, Sarnia. During the Blitz, the Café de Paris was considered

to be one of the safest places in the West End of London, due to the fact that the bulk of the club was located several floors underground. Though it was *twenty feet below ground*, in reality it was no safer than any other building in the neighbourhood. The club had an ordinary ceiling and, above that, only the glass roof of the Rialto theater. Built in 1924 in the basement below the theater, with a luxurious interior modeled on the ill-fated ocean liner *RMS Titanic*, the Café de Paris was a famous landmark. It featured performers like Marlene Dietrich, Cole Porter, Dorothy Dandridge, Aga Khan and was where the Charleston was introduced to Londoners. On that tragic night, both Sarnians would display acts of heroism.

On that Saturday night of March 8—the official start of London’s social season—the clear weather under a moon that was three-quarters full, enticed well-dressed young ladies and their gentlemen escorts in suits and uniforms to leave their homes to get out dancing and socializing. The excellent weather was promising for German bombers too. The club was already busy at eight-fifteen when the air raid sirens began to sound. Mary Churchill at a nearby club (the daughter of PM Winston Churchill), could make out the muffled sounds of anti-aircraft bursts and exploding bombs, which she described as “odd bumps and thuds above our chatter and the music.”

At 9:55, with popular bandleader Ken “Snakehips” Johnson in his sleek tux and a red carnation conducting, the band began to play the rousing jazz piece, “Oh Johnny, Oh Johnny, Oh!” Jack Wright and his partner, twenty-three-year-old Canadian nursing sister Thelma Stewart of Toronto, liked the song and continued dancing in the throng. Jack Clunie and his partner, nursing sister Helen Stevens of Dunnville, Ontario, either didn’t care for the song or didn’t care to dance to it, so had left the dance floor and were sitting down at a table on the balcony overlooking the dance floor.

At 9:59, one bomb, weighing 110 pounds, fell through the thin roof of the Rialto theater, penetrated all the way to the basement dance floor of the Café de Paris, and exploded. Survivors later reported seeing a bright blue flash and then a cloud of dust and cordite in the coal-black darkness.

Jack Wright’s last actions were both instinctive and heroic—he threw his body across his dancing partner and took the brunt of the blast, and was killed as a result. Nursing sister Thelma Stewart was saved by his actions, suffering a hand injury that required hospitalization.

Amid the ensuing chaos, Jack Clunie and his partner Helen Stevens, both dazed and injured themselves, administered first aid and helped to extricate the dead and injured. They moved about the debris pouring champagne on the wounds of the injured as an antiseptic, bound gaping wounds with tablecloths and clothing and put broken limbs in makeshift splints. Nursing sister Helen Stevens later described what happened: *The crash sounded like a bunch of firecrackers and stunned me for a few minutes. The whole place filled with smoke fumes. I thought at first it was gas. Lieutenant Wright shielded Miss Stewart as soon as he heard the bomb screaming. He died protecting the Canadian nurse.*

Miss Helen Stevens, 23, not a nurse, but a physiotherapist at a Canadian Military hospital disregarded her own injuries to tend to others. Afterwards, she said she had no thought of doing anything heroic: *I did what any Canadian nurse would be proud to do.* As Jack Clunie moved through the glimmering light, seeking injured under the debris, he found John Wright’s body. According to Helen Stevens, *Jack and those who helped were as cool as a Canadian spring breeze. They worked with might and main. It seemed to give me courage too.* Jack Clunie was “mentioned in dispatches” for his work in the rescue operations.

Nursing Sister Helen Stevens, who lost several of her friends in the bombing, was given official recognition by the Canadian Army. Hailed by the press as a “Canadian heroine in London,” the military recorded her distinguished conduct with these words: *Miss Stevens, who was dining in the restaurant at the time, was slightly injured and considerably shaken by the explosions. However, she unhesitatingly proceeded to render first aid to the injured amidst the scene of confusion and continued to do so for nearly an hour and a half. She was the last woman to leave the building and then only after other services had the situation in hand. Her conduct throughout merited the highest praise and is fully in accordance with the best traditions of the service.* Miss Helen Stevens was the second Canadian woman to be mentioned in military orders.

Following is a story on Miss Helen Stevens published in the *Ottawa Citizen* on March 11, 1941, under the headline *London Newspapers Praise Canadian Nurse’s Heroism*:

A smiling Canadian brunette, Nursing Sister H.M Stevens of Dunnville, Ont., was hailed by London’s press today as a “Canadian heroine of London.” Miss Stevens distinguished herself Saturday night by rendering first aid to victims of the bombing of the Café de Paris by Nazi raiders.

Pictures of the smiling nurse appeared in all papers. The Daily Telegraph carried the story of her heroism under a heading: "Heroic Nurse in Restaurant" and told of the "devoted courage of a party of Canadians who were dancing at a London restaurant which was struck by a high explosive bomb Saturday night.

The Mirror ran a two-column story under the heading: "Nurse Was Bomb Heroine." The Daily Herald called her "A Heroine of Restaurant Bombing." The Daily Mail spoke of her as the "Last Dance Heroine."

An initial casualty count recorded that thirty-four people were killed and at least eighty were wounded in the bomb explosion of the Café de Paris. In the days following, London civil defense authorities cited March 8 as "the worst raid since January." London newspapers gave accounts and pictures of the bombing. The papers gave great credit to the valour of Lieutenant John Wright in giving his life in an effort to shield from injury Nursing Sister Thelma Stewart. Credit was also given to Lieutenant Jack Clunie and Nursing Sister Helen Stevens, who attended the wounded.

Jack Wright and three others (Captain Philip Seagram of Toronto; Corporal G.W. Quinn of Pembroke; and Sergeant R.A. Bradshaw of Ottawa) were killed in the cabaret explosion, and many others were wounded. Captain Philip Seagram, who was killed in the tragedy, was well known to a number of Sarnians. He was a member of Lieutenant-General MacNaughton's headquarters staff and a particular friend of Lieutenant M.J. Chilton and Mrs. Chilton of Sarnia.

On March 9, 1941, Jack Wright's sister, Elizabeth Mary (Mrs. Howard Vince) at 409 Devine Street in Sarnia, received the following telegram from the Officer of Records in Ottawa: REGRET DEEPLY LIEUTENANT JOHN DAVID WRIGHT OFFICIALLY REPORTED KILLED ENEMY ACTION MARCH EIGHTH FURTHER INFORMATION FOLLOWS WHEN RECEIVED. Jack's aunt, Mrs. Margaret Crozier, was also residing at 409 Devine Street at the time of his death. The Commanding Officer of the local garrison, Lieutenant-Colonel S.G. Stokes of the 2-11th Field Company, (Reserve) Royal Canadian Engineers, organized a local memorial service for Lieutenant Wright, "because of the heroic aspects of his death." Jack Wright's death was later officially recorded as, *Overseas casualty, killed due to war operations (enemy action), Charing Cross Hospital, London, England.*

In mid-March 1941, Elizabeth Mary Vince received the following letter from the Major, District Chaplain, Headquarters in London, Ontario about her brother:

Dear Mrs. Vince:

The District Officer Commanding, Brigadier D.J. MacDonald, has asked me to convey to you his sincere sympathy in the death of your brother, Lieut. D.J. Wright, as the result of a bombing raid on London, England.

I would also add to the Brigadier's sympathy that of all the staff of this military headquarters. We had a high regard for your brother and his loss is keenly felt by us all. May I add my personal sympathy to you.

In early April 1941, Jack Wright's relatives in Sarnia received a letter from Lieutenant Arthur Hueston of a Western Ontario Regiment. Hueston had witnessed the large military funeral accorded Jack Wright in England on March 12, 1941. His flag-draped casket was borne on a gun carriage hauled by a military truck. After a church service that was attended by virtually all the officers and men from Sarnia who were in the area, Jack's remains were buried in Brookwood Military Cemetery. Among those there were Lieutenants Jack Clunie, Howard Stuart, Colin Hunter, Jack Williams, Walter Claxton, Tom Richardson, Bill Craig, Charles Kennedy, Tom Doherty, Bill Ewener and Ken Hunter; Captains Frank Payne, Charles Wrenshall, Charles Kindersley; and Major Eric Harris. The cemetery for Canadian war dead contained graves marked by the conventional simple white crosses at that time.

In September 1946, the Colonel, Director of Records, for Adjutant-General sent Elizabeth a photograph of the grave and marker over the burial place in Brookwood Cemetery in Surrey, England of her late and only brother. Lieutenant John "Jack" Wright, 28, is buried in Brookwood Military Cemetery, Surrey, United Kingdom, Grave 30.C.1. His name is also inscribed on the Sarnia Refinery Plaque. Unveiled in 1949, the plaque has the names of 24 Sarnia Imperial Oil employees who made the ultimate sacrifice in World War II.

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, J, L, N, O, S, 2C, 2D, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 11G

YORKE, John Haswell (#R/90160)

Like his father and his brother, John Haswell Yorke, 22, served his country in war. When John was killed in action in the Azores in December 1943, the airman became the first casualty from Sombra in World War II.

John Yorke was born at St. Joseph's Hospital in London, Ontario on August 10, 1921, the younger son of Robert Dagmyer and Margaret Amanda (nee Haswell) Yorke, of Sombra. Like his two sons who followed his example, Robert served Canada in war.

Born August 20, 1881 in Wardsville, Middlesex, Ontario, Robert was the son of a farmer. In 1901, nineteen year-old Robert Yorke was residing with his parents Edward and Susannah, and his four siblings on the family farm in Brooke Township, Lambton East. On April 10, 1916, Robert Yorke, 34, enlisted in the Canadian Overseas Expeditionary Force in Sioux Lookout. He stood five feet nine inches tall, had grey eyes and light brown hair, was single and working as a brakeman there at the time. He recorded his next-of-kin as his father Edward, then residing in Strathroy, Ontario. Robert became a member of the 94th Overseas Battalion and served overseas in the Great War for three years.

In October 1918, Robert Yorke married Margaret Haswell in Lewisham, England and the following year, Robert and his British bride were living Canada. Robert and Margaret Yorke had two children together: Oscar Dagmyer, born June 1920, and John Haswell the following year. In 1921, the Yorke family was residing in London, Ontario, where Robert supported the family working as a barber. In 1927, when John was five years old, Oscar and he visited England with their mother Margaret, who was originally from Wales. They returned to Canada in April 1927, arriving in New York from London, England aboard the passenger ship *Minnekahda*. The Yorke family moved to Alvinston for several years before moving to Sombra in 1928, and later to 555 Confederation Street, Sarnia. Oscar Yorke also served during the Second World War, as a Sergeant with the Canadian Dental Corps in Italy.

John Yorke was educated at S.S. No. 7 elementary school in Sombra from 1928 to 1936 and then Sarnia Collegiate from 1936 to 1940. He was active in many sports, including baseball, swimming, basketball, volleyball, rugby, tennis, badminton, boxing and wrestling. While at Sarnia Collegiate, he also received Cadet training for four years. John worked part-time in 1937-1938 as a ferry driver for Frank Johnson in Sombra; and then in 1938-1940 as a farm labourer in Sombra. Prior to enlisting, he worked for several months as a labourer at Wallaceburg Brass Works.

At age nineteen, John Yorke, followed in his father's footsteps and joined the military when he enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force on February 7, 1941 in London, Ontario. He stood five feet seven and a half inches tall, had hazel eyes and light brown hair, was single, and residing in Sombra at the time. He recorded his occupation as labourer. His plan for after the war was to enter radio work. He requested flying duties, with a preference to be an air gunner or wireless operator. The Recruiting Officer in London wrote that John was a, *Clean cut boy, smart and intelligent, good appearance, composed and manly bearing, keen and alert, will develop under training into first class material for air crew.*

From the Recruiting Centre in London, John Yorke was initially posted to several Manning Depot's (MD): #2 MD in Brandon, Manitoba; #1 MD in Toronto; and #4 MD in Quebec City. In June 1941, he began his air training at #3 Training Command in Montreal; and then at #4 Wireless School (WS) in Guelph, Ontario. In May 1942, he continued his training at #3 Bombing and Gunnery School (B&GS) in MacDonald, Manitoba where he was awarded his Air Gunner's Badge on June 8, 1942. He continued his training at #33 Air Navigation School (ANS) in Hamilton; and then at #5 Bombing and Gunnery School (B&GS) in Dafoe, Saskatchewan. In late October he received a 14-day pre-embarkation leave. In mid-November 1942, he was transferred to #31 Operational Training Unit (OTU) in Debert, Nova Scotia. He received another 14-day leave during the first two weeks of February 1943 and was then posted to #1 Y Depot in Halifax.

John Yorke embarked overseas from Halifax bound for the United Kingdom on March 8, 1943. Arriving on March 17, he was first posted to #3 Personnel Reception Centre in Bournemouth. On June 1, 1943, he was transferred to #1 (Coastal) Operational Training Unit (OTU), based at RAF Thornaby. Just over two months later, on August 12, 1943, he was transferred again and became a member of RAF #233 Squadron "Fortis et Fidelis" (Strong and faithful), with the rank of Warrant Officer Class I and Wireless Operator/Air Gunner.

No. 233 Squadron was formed in May 1937 as a general reconnaissance squadron equipped with the Avro Anson. In August 1939, the squadron moved to Scotland and began to convert to the Lockheed Hudson, a twin-engine light bomber. After the German invasion of Norway in April 1940, the squadron began to fly anti-shipping sweeps off Norway and to attack enemy airfields. This continued until December 1940 when the squadron moved to Northern Ireland and began patrolling in the North Atlantic. In August 1941, the squadron moved to RAF St. Eval in Cornwall, England to carry out patrols over the Bay of Biscay. In December 1941, a detachment was sent to Gibraltar (British territory on Spain's south coast) and the rest of the squadron joined it in July 1942.

Joining RAF #233 Squadron in Gibraltar in August 1943, John Yorke took part in anti-submarine operations in the Mediterranean area. Part of **Mediterranean Air Command** and still flying Lockheed Hudson aircraft, the

squadron moved its base to Lagens in the Azores in October 1943. Just months earlier, the British had negotiated with the Portuguese government for the rights to have bases in the Azores islands, though Portugal remained neutral throughout the war. John Yorke went to the Azores with the first planes to be assigned to duty there after Portugal gave rights to bases there for the Allies.

Only four months after becoming a member of RAF #233 Squadron, Warrant Officer John Yorke was killed in action. On December 13, 1943, Yorke and his crew were aboard their Hudson FK 735 aircraft that was returning from an anti-submarine patrol. On that day, at approximately 16.45 hours, their Hudson aircraft flew into high ground in very low clouds five miles west of RAF Station Lagens, on the island of Terceira in the Azores. John Yorke received multiple injuries and was killed instantly in the crash. His body was brought to 247 Group (Unit) Hospital on that day. His remains were buried on December 17, 1943 in the Allied Forces Cemetery in Terceira, Azores, his grave marked by a wooden cross with a painted inscription. Perishing with John Yorke were WO. Willis Elnor Ross Machan; and FS.s G.F. Handel (RAF), and A.H. Severn (RAF). John Yorke's death was later officially recorded as, *Killed during air operations, overseas (Azores)*.

In mid-January 1944, a memorial service for John Yorke was held at the United Church in Sombra. The church was filled to capacity as well as the adjoining Sunday school room. The service was conducted by Rev. J.B. Batten of the Anglican Church, assisted by Rev. J.R. Peters, pastor of the church. The service opened with the singing of "Onward Christian Soldiers" during which the school mates of the young airman marched into the church. A former pastor, Rev. R.E. Southcott of Rodney, who knew the young airman personally also paid tribute to him. The Reverend's talk was followed by the playing of "Reveille" and "The Last Post". John Yorke was Sombra's first casualty of the war.

In June 1945, Robert and Margaret in Sombra received a War Service Gratuity of \$392.52 for the loss of their younger son. John Yorke, 22, is buried at Lajes War Cemetery, Azores Region, Portugal, Row A, Grave 9. On his headstone are inscribed the words, GREATER LOVE HATH NO MAN THAN THIS, THAT A MAN LAY DOWN HIS LIFE FOR HIS FRIENDS.

SOURCES: C, D, E, F, G, L, M, N, 2C, 2D, 6O, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10B

ZIERLER, Isaac Buck (#J/40890)

Isaac "Bucky" Zierler had almost obtained a degree at the University of Toronto when he decided to enlist at age twenty in his fourth year of studies. He joined the RCAF in 1943, and his post-war plans were to resume his studies at university. Sadly, the athletic and academic Sarnian never got the chance. Approximately one month before the war in Europe officially ended, Isaac Zierler, 23, was killed in a bombing mission over Germany.

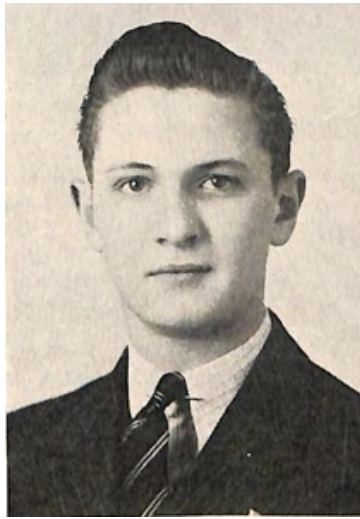
Isaac "Bucky" Zierler was born in Sarnia on March 20, 1922, the son of Abraham and Leah (nee Rathman) Zierler. Abraham and Leah Zierler were both born in Galicia, Poland and were married on June 11, 1911 in Kalusz, Poland. Thirty-two-year-old Abraham Zierler, born about 1889, and Leah immigrated to Canada aboard the SS *Canada* arriving in Quebec on September 18, 1921. They had no money but were determined to make a home in Canada. Abraham's brother had paid his passage over and he arrived with only \$20.00. Determined to reside with his brother, Max, in Sarnia, Abraham found work as a farm labourer and eventually made it to Sarnia to join Max at 145 Front Street.

Abraham eventually became a furniture merchant in Sarnia where Leah and he raised their three sons: Isaac, David Solomen, and Samuel. Tragically, Samuel drowned when he was fourteen. The Zierler family lived at 233 Davis Street and provided much for their children. Isaac was educated in Sarnia, attending Wellington Street (1927-1929); George Street (1929-1931); and Lochiel Street (1931-1934) public elementary schools. He then attended Sarnia Collegiate Institute from 1934 to 1939. Isaac was very active in sports, especially boxing, rugby and basketball, along with baseball, hockey, golf, lacrosse, tennis, swimming and riding. His hobby was music.

In 1939, Isaac attended the University of Toronto in the Commerce and Finance Program. At university, he was extremely busy. He played rugby, was the Athletic Director at the University College, and was the president of his Pi Lambda Phi Fraternity. He won the Reverend Cody Award for his athletic achievements and the Jewish Gold Key Award of the Jewish Inter-Fraternity Council for his "scholarship, leadership, character and games" and for being an outstanding scholar and athlete among the fraternity men on campus.

From September to November 1942, Isaac served with the Canadian Officers Training Corps (C.O.T.C.), the University of Toronto contingent, where he attained the rank of Sergeant. He had a number of jobs before enlisting,

including a porter on the *Noronic*, Canada Steamship Lines in the summer of 1940; an accounting clerk with Imperial Oil Limited in Sarnia in the summer of 1942; and other jobs during summer and Christmas vacations including being a store cashier/clerk and truck driver.



Isaac Zierler 1939
SCITS – Business Manager

In June 1943, Isaac, 20, was expected to earn his Bachelor of Commerce degree after four years at U of T, but he enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force on January 7, 1943 in Toronto. He stood five feet nine inches tall, had hazel eyes and dark brown hair, was single, and was residing at 158 St. George Street in Toronto at the time as a graduate student (though he recorded his permanent address as 233 Davis Street, Sarnia). He stated his motivators for serving included his friends and his eagerness to fly. He requested flying duties. His plan for after the war was to take post-graduate work at U. of T., leading to work in the field of personnel management.

From the Recruiting Centre in Toronto, he was posted to #1 Manning Depot in Toronto; and then #9 Pre-Aircrew Education Detachment (PAED) at McGill University. He began his air training at #3 Initial Training Centre (ITS) in Victoriaville, Quebec; and then at #4 Air Observer School (AOS) in London, Ontario. Isaac Zierler was awarded his Navigator's Badge and commission as a Pilot Officer on January 28, 1944 at #4AOS. Isaac then received a 14-day pre-embarkation leave. In mid-February 1944, he was stationed at #2 Aircrew Graduate Training School (AGTS) in Quebec. The next month, he was posted to #1 Y Depot in Lachine, Quebec.

Isaac embarked overseas from Halifax bound for the United Kingdom on April 29, 1944. Arriving on May 7, he was initially posted to #3 Personnel Reception Centre. In mid-May of 1944, Isaac sent his mother Leah a Mother's Day greeting from overseas. The next month, he was transferred to #8 (Observers) Advanced Flying Unit (AFU), and a month later in mid-July he was transferred to #24 Operational Training Unit (OTU). In October 1944, he was transferred to #1664 Conversion Unit (CU). Less than three months later, on January 6, 1945, Isaac became a member of RCAF #433 Porcupine Squadron "Qui S'y Frotte S'y Pique" (Who opposes it gets hurt), part of **Bomber Command**, with the rank of Flying Officer-Navigator.

During the course of the war, one of this country's most significant contributions was the approximately 50,000 Canadians who served with the RCAF and RAF in Bomber Command operations. Next to Britain, Canada was the largest contributor to Bomber Command, making up more than a third of all of Bomber Command personnel. The men who served in Bomber Command faced some of the most difficult odds of anyone fighting in the war.

RCAF #433 Squadron, part of No. 6 (RCAF) Group, was formed on September 25, 1943 at RAF Skipton-on-Swale, Yorkshire, England. The squadron acquired the nickname "Porcupine" because the unit was adopted by the Porcupine District of Northern Ontario. Originally equipped with Handley Page Halifax aircraft, in January 1945, the squadron converted to Avro Lancaster aircraft, the British four-engine heavy bomber.

In early March 1945, Isaac Zierler sent his mother Leah a bouquet of flowers. The following month, on April 10, Isaac Zierler was killed in action while a member of the crew aboard Lancaster MK. I aircraft PB903 (markings BM-F). The aircraft took off from Skipton-on-Swale at 13.13 hours to carry out a day bombing mission detailed to attack the Engelsdorf and Mockau railway yards in Leipzig, Germany. On that evening, their Lancaster was hit by

predicted flak as it approached the aiming point of their target over Leipzig. The starboard inner engine caught fire, but instantly being feathered, the crew extinguished the fire immediately. Witnesses saw the Lancaster lose height to starboard when an explosion flipped the aircraft on its back. The Lancaster then spiralled into the ground, whereupon the bomb load exploded, approximately 15 miles north of Leipzig. Witnesses saw no one parachute from the aircraft.



Flying Officer Isaac Buck Zierler

On April 13, 1945, Abraham and Leah in Sarnia received the following telegram from Ottawa; REGRET TO ADVISE THAT YOUR SON FLYING OFFICER ISAAC ZIERLER J FOUR NOUGHT EIGHT NINE NOUGHT IS REPORTED MISSING BELIEVED KILLED RESULTS AIR OPERATIONS OVERSEAS APRIL TENTH STOP PLEASE ACCEPT MY SINCERE SYMPATHY STOP LETTER FOLLOWS. Less than one month after the Zierlers received this disturbing telegram, the war in Europe ended. Perishing with Isaac Zierler were P/O.s Francis Gerald Seeley, Joseph Michael Hirak, and David William Roberts; F/O.s William Gordon McLeod and Robert James Grisdale; and Sgt. Walter Alfred James Thurston (RAF).

Isaac Zierler's death was later officially recorded as, *Previously reported missing after air operations, now for official purposes, presumed dead, overseas (Germany)*. In June 1947, Abraham and Leah Zierler received a War Service Gratuity of \$383.98 for the loss of their son. Isaac "Buck" Zierler, 23, is buried in Berlin 1939-1945 War Cemetery, Germany, Grave 8.F.9.

Isaac Buck Zierler and thirteen other local men had their names engraved on a plaque honouring fourteen Jewish members of the armed services from Sarnia. The plaque was unveiled in the Ahavas Isaac Synagogue, Davis Street, Sarnia on March 30, 1945. The men, all from Sarnia, honoured on the plaque were M. Berger, S. Bernard, R. Heller, I. Haber, M. Kirk, Dr. I. Mann, A. Rosen, G. Shabsove, M. Skosov, Mitchell Smith, Murray Smith, L. Swartz, I.B. Zierler, Isaac Zierler. Three of the men--Isaac Buck Zierler, Max Berger and Mitchell Smith--made the supreme sacrifice. Isaac Zierler is also honoured in the memorial book "Canadian Jews in World War II".

SOURCES: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, J, L, M, N, 2C, 2D, 3J, 4B, 6O, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 10B, 10U



Prayer for Victory (portion of)

*I stood upon a hill in the fall of the year,
A lovely hill, soft and still green
With the breath of summer.
And the sun reached long golden fingers
Into the valley floor,
And lighted the autumn painted trees
With the fires of God.
This was peace.*

*But over the ridge there was no peace,
Over the ridge was war...
Ghastly and bloody;
The quick and the dead,
Whirling in a mad blasting conflict...
Ripping the skies
And the earth,
And the churning sea...*

*And our men were there,
They were fighting and dying;
Sweating in the desert and the jungles;
Wheeling through the clouds;
Drawing their deadly beads
Under the choppy waves
Of a dozen seas...
This was war...*

Major Dick Diespecker, Canadian Army 1943

THE KOREAN WAR (1950-1953)

Following is a description of important historical events, people and key battles of the Korean War. As in the two World Wars, Sarnia-Lambton's sons participated in every major battle fought by Canadian troops. Some made the supreme sacrifice.

- **THE COLD WAR BEGINS:** The specter of international communism and its spread across the world were always alarming. The Red Menace threat appeared particularly ominous in the 1940s. For example, in Canada in September 1945, Igor Gouzenko walked out of the Russian Embassy in Ottawa carrying 109 documents that revealed the existence of a massive Soviet spy network in North America. Russian espionage activity had been of serious concern in Canada. Six months later, British PM Winston Churchill told the world in a speech that an “**iron curtain**” had descended across much of Europe.

The Cold War refers to a period of time that would begin not long after the end of the Second World War. It would last until the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989, and the collapse of the Soviet Union in December 1991. It marked a period of military tensions and distrust between the Western Bloc democratic nations (United States and NATO allies) and the Eastern Bloc communist nations (Soviet Union and its allies). It began with the collapse of the uneasy American-British-Soviet alliance that had won the Second World War, due to differences in ideologies and suspicions of the other side's world plans. Some of the major events that would occur during this time period include: the creation of the “Iron Curtain”; the Berlin blockade and airlift; the formation of NATO; the Korean War; the Warsaw Pact is formed; the Suez Crisis; communist Fidel Castro comes to power in Cuba; construction of the Berlin Wall; the Space Race; the Bay of Pigs (U.S. failed invasion of Cuba); the Cuban Missile Crisis; the Soviet invasion of Hungary and later Czechoslovakia; the Vietnam War; the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty was signed; the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan; and the reunification of Germany.

- **THE UNITED NATIONS:** The term “United Nations” was first used in January of 1942, during the Second World War, when representatives of 26 nations pledged to continue fighting together against the Axis Powers of Germany, Italy and Japan. The United Nations organization officially began in 1945, replacing its forerunner, the League of Nations that had been created at the conclusion of World War I. As the Second World War drew to a close, a United Nations charter was drawn up by 50 countries, including Canada. The United Nations officially came into existence on October 24, 1945 when the United Nations Charter was ratified. The UN was designed to promote co-operation among sovereign states in which each would give up some of its sovereignty in the common interest of all nations to promote peace, security, economic development, social justice and fundamental human rights and freedoms. The United Nations would first try to impose its will militarily in 1950, when it supported South Korea against North Korea in the Korean War.^{H, 2N, 3W}

- **NATO:** The NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) alliance was signed on April 4, 1949 and included 12 nations; Canada, United States, Iceland, Britain, France, Norway, Denmark, Belgium, Netherlands, Luxembourg, Portugal and Italy. At the core of the treaty was a collective security provision that stated, “an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all.” A primary purpose of the treaty was to unify and strengthen the Western Allies' military response to a possible invasion of western Europe by the Soviet Union and its allies.

- **PRELUDE TO WAR:** Korea, known to its people as the “Land of the Morning Calm”—so named because of the softness of the Korean mornings, which is due in part to the mists that cover its mountains at that time of day—became the flashpoint that turned the Cold War hot.

Korea had been a unified nation since the 7th century. Japan occupied it in 1905 and annexed it five years later as part of its empire, but the kingdom was still undivided. In late November 1943, while the Second World War was still raging, the **Cairo Conference** (codenamed *Sextant*) took place in Egypt. Attending the conference were British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, American President Franklin D. Roosevelt and Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek of the Republic of China. The tense four-day discussion focused on redrawing the world map in anticipation of the end of the war. Their joint declaration included, among other things, that following victory over Japan, “Korea shall become free and independent in due course.” President Roosevelt died in April 1945. His successor, Harry Truman, in August 1945 (as the war drew to a close) suggested that in Korea the Soviets receive the surrender of Japanese forces north of the 38th parallel, and that the Americans receive the surrender of Japanese troops to the south. That seemingly innocuous agreement sealed Korea's fate. The Soviets took the surrender arrangement as a

granting of territorial rights. Suddenly in 1945, there were two Koreas.^{9Y, 9Z}

So in 1945, the Soviet Union occupied North Korea, the United States took over control in South Korea, and the **38th parallel**, from coast to coast, was the dividing line. The split angered Koreans on both sides. It was assumed by both US and USSR governments that their occupation would be temporary and that a unified, independent country would eventually be formed. Over the next several years, the Russians in the north began building both an army and a government they could control, while in the south, the Americans were unable to make great strides in developing a stable form of government. All the while, attempts to negotiate Korean independence failed. Both the Soviet Union and the United States were active members of the UN, where each publicly accused the other of dragging its feet on withdrawal, while quietly training, fortifying and arming Koreans on its side of the divide.

By mid-1948, in the north, the Russians established, and armed, a communist regime—the **Democratic People’s Republic of Korea**; while in the south, the United States set up a shaky democratic state—the **Government of the Republic of Korea (ROK)**. The Soviet Union completed its troop withdrawal in December 1948, and the last American troops withdrew to Japan in June 1949.

Though the desire for a unified Korea remained strong, trouble soon flared up along the border as both sides claimed the right to rule all of Korea. Border fighting became nearly an everyday experience. North Korean patrols began to invade the southern Republic and the United Nations (UN) Commission repeatedly warned of impending civil war. In his New Year’s message for 1950, North Korea’s premier Kim Il Sung vowed to liberate the south, entreating his “People’s Army, frontier defence troops and the police to complete preparedness for war... Long live unified Korea!”^{9D, 2N, 6P, 6R, 9Y, 9Z}

In Canada: When World War II ended in 1945, Canadians looked forward to post-war reconstruction—with families to start, homes to establish, and new lives to be lived after enduring almost a decade of economic depression followed by the war. The wartime measure of rationing was finally abandoned in August 1947; the trade union movement had grown considerably resulting in increased salaries; in almost every city, new “sub-divisions” were created during the post-war housing boom; though radio was still the primary form of home entertainment (television broadcasting did not begin in Canada until September 1952).

The Canadian government introduced universal Mothers’ Allowances and a comprehensive program of veterans’ benefits from free education to generous pensions for the wounded. The government needed the funds to pay for the new programs and promises, and had to pay off the massive debt. One way to do that was to shut down military spending and ramp up social spending. The defence budget and the three armed services were cut to the bone between 1945 and 1947. From the over 400,000 men and women at the end of the war, Canada’s military shrank to 34,000 who were specially trained for the defence of Canada. Canadians, a nation of fourteen million, were in no mood for another war. It is doubtful if many Canadians in the early summer days of 1950 even knew where South Korea was.^{9Y}

• **THE KOREAN WAR BEGINS (also referred to as the Korean Conflict):** Only five years after the end of World War II, the Korean War broke out at four o’clock in the morning of June 25, 1950. Approved in advance by the Russian and Chinese governments, the Soviet-trained and equipped army of North Korea crossed the 38th Parallel invading South Korea, an overt attempt to unify Korea by force. The North Koreans launched a full-scale invasion pouring over 110,000 troops, 1,400 artillery pieces and 126 T-34 tanks across the 38th Parallel into South Korea toward the capital city of Seoul.

World reaction to this first act of aggression since the establishment of the United Nations Organization was swift. At the request of the United States, the UN Security Council met on the afternoon of June 25, and all members (by a 9-0 vote) called for an immediate cessation of hostilities, and a withdrawal of North Korean forces. The Soviet delegates, who were boycotting the meeting, challenged the authority of the UN Security Council to take action on the invasion in their absence. It was soon evident that the North Koreans had no intention of complying with the United Nations (UN) demands. US president Harry Truman stated, “I wasn’t going to let this attack on the Republic of Korea... go forward. Because if it wasn’t stopped, it would lead to a third world war. And I wasn’t going to let that happen... For the first time in history, an aggressor [was] opposed by an international police force [to] save the free world.”

By June 28, the UN had voted to endorse the action already taken by the United States (for their navy and air force to “support the Republic of Korea... but only south of the 38th parallel”), and for its members to “furnish such

assistance to the Republic of Korea as may be necessary to repel the attack and restore international peace and security in the area.” These words took Canada to war.

The UN responded with a call to its members to form a multinational “**police force**” under the command of the United States to restore the peace. A total of sixteen UN member nations would join forces to resist the aggression, under the command of World War II hero and five-star **General Douglas MacArthur** of the United States. Canada’s contribution, exceeded only by that of the United States and Britain, demonstrated her willingness to uphold the United Nations ideals and to take up arms in support of peace and freedom.

Meanwhile, the North Koreans were pushing rapidly forward through the valleys and rice paddies of the Korean peninsula armed with Soviet tanks, weapons and vehicles. They surprised and quickly overwhelmed the lightly armed, inadequately trained and under-strength South Korean forces. The South Korean capital, Seoul, was occupied on June 28, and by the first week of August the South Korean and initial United States forces had retreated and were confined within the “**Pusan Perimeter**,” a small area in the southeast of the peninsula. Here three U.S. divisions, along with five South Korean, attempted to hold out against 15 North Korean divisions and one armoured brigade, and were now in danger of being driven into the sea. Fierce battles took place in August and early September 1950 to hold a perimeter around Pusan.^{H, 4A, 6P, 6R, 9Y, 9Z}

Note: With changes in the Korean alphabet, Pusan now reads Busan.

• **CANADA RESPONDS:** In late June, it was a California senator who first used the phrase “**police action**” as it came to be applied to the Korean War. The senator felt that because North Korea had broken international law by invading the South, the actions of the U.S. were akin to the actions of a police officer who might follow a criminal after a crime had been committed. US President Truman and Canadian Prime Minister St. Laurent would use the phrase the same week.

By the afternoon of Sunday, June 25, news of the events in Korea had been picked up by radio stations across Canada, and listeners heard bulletins during the day that there was a war in a country that most knew nothing about. The June 26, 1950 *Sarnia (Canadian) Observer* front page read, “Korea Reds Push Near Capital – North Urges ‘Surrender’ In Broadcast.” Sarnians learned that North Korean Communist forces had pierced through two full divisions to the outskirts of Seoul and were demanding the surrender of the South Korean army. An estimated 6,000 had been killed or wounded on both sides, and the United States was immediately sending planes and material.

On June 30, 1950, Prime Minister Louis St. Laurent declared that Canada would not participate in any war against another state, but it would take “part in collective police action under the control and authority of the United Nations for the purpose of restoring peace.” The Canadian Government and Prime Minister St. Laurent, while agreeing in principle with the moves made to halt aggression, did not immediately commit its forces to action in Korea. The message that filtered down to many Canadians was that the country would soon be in the war. On June 29 in Toronto for example, local recruiting offices were swamped with men wanting to join the army and go off to Korea to fight.

On August 7, 1950, as the Korean crisis deepened, Prime Minister St. Laurent announced on CBC Radio that Canada would recruit an expeditionary brigade of 5,000 men for duty in Korea. In order to enlist, men had to be physically and mentally fit, preferably veterans, and between the ages of 19 and 35, although tradesmen and married men could be as old as 45. Many of the traditional motives for joining the forces were at play in Canada that summer of 1950, including: seeking adventure; seeing the world; securing work; making up for missing out on the previous war; feeling patriotic; a need to prove oneself; following in the footsteps of a relative from a prior war; escaping small-town life; fleeing debts, family or the law; and to fight communism. By August 18, recruitment had reached the 5,000 mark, and based on the recommendation of the chief of the general staff, Cabinet told recruiting depots they could take up to 10,000 men.

The brigade would become part of Canada’s active regular army (not reserve) and would be known as the **Canadian Army Special Force (CASF)**—later named the **25th Canadian Infantry Brigade Group**. It was to be “specially trained and equipped to be available for use in carrying out Canada’s obligations under the United Nations Charter or the North Atlantic Pact”. Since the ground action wasn’t expected to last very long, Canadian officials believed the troops should be signed for 18 months, allowing five months for training, 12 months in the combat zone and a month to kick about. Everyone who joined was given a bonus of \$50 on enlistment.

Before proceeding overseas, the citizen volunteers, a number of them veterans of Italy and Northwest Europe

had to be trained anew. Training stations were at Chilliwack, Shilo, Borden, Calgary, Wainwright (PPCLI), Petawawa (RCR), and Valcartier (R22ndR). Of the 8,000 who enlisted in the first two months of the Special Force recruitment, more than 2,000 were discharged and more than 1,500 deserted. In the earliest days of the Special Force, problems included: insufficient troop transport; barracks without blankets; shortages of equipment, uniforms and boots; and accommodations that were substandard.

As fall approached and the weather became cooler, defence headquarters in Ottawa started looking for alternative sites where the CASF could complete its preparations for war. Japan and the island of Okinawa were both suggested and rejected, before deciding on Fort Lewis, a large military camp in Washington state. By mid-November, over 5,000 ranks had arrived at the camp.

First Over: The first Canadian military aid was made by the Royal Canadian Navy less than two weeks after the outbreak of hostilities. Three Tribal Class destroyers, named after Native Canadian tribes—*HMCS Cayuga*, *Athabaskan* and *Sioux*, anchored at Esquimalt, B.C. had been slated to rendezvous with three ships in Halifax in late summer 1950, and cross the Atlantic for manoeuvres in Europe. The plan changed on July 5, when the Canadian government placed its Pacific fleet under UN command for duty in the waters off Korea. So on July 5, parents, families, wives and sweethearts gathered to bid tearful farewells to the men as the three ships slipped from their moorings and sailed away to war in the Far East. In the mid-afternoon of July 30, 1950, the three ships arrived into the port of Sasebo, Japan. Sasebo harbour, approximately 100 nautical miles from Korean waters, would be the RCN's home away from home for the next thirty-seven months of fighting.

Also in July, the Royal Canadian Air Force No. 426 (Thunderbird) Squadron, was assigned to air transport duties with the United Nations, ferrying troops and supplies to the Far East. The real demand from the UN was for ground troops. The difficulty for Canada was that in 1950, the army was small, they lacked modern equipment, and the soldiers still used Second World War tanks, artillery and machine guns. On July 27, the US government sent a message to the prime minister requesting a Canadian brigade join UN forces in Korea (Britain, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa had already announced plans to send troops and equipment).

Canada's contributions would grow to include more than 26,000 volunteers, including sailors from eight destroyers; airmen who took part in combat and transport missions; and army battalions that included the Royal Canadian Regiment, the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry and the Royal 22e Regiment, along with army artillery and service corps.^{D, H, 2E, 2N, 5W, 6P, 6R, 7A, 9Y, 9Z}

• **SARNIA RECRUITS:** In late July of 1950, the Sarnia Armory announced that following receipt of orders from Western Ontario Area Headquarters in London, intensive recruiting for the Canadian Army would begin. Recruits were needed for both the active force and for the reserve units of the Canadian army in response to the outbreak of war in Korea. When Staff Sergeant A.G. Spooner, in charge of the local recruiting drive, was asked if he expected many recruits in the area, he replied, "It certainly looks like it. I got inquiries one on top of the other, just as soon as the *Observer* got onto the street, last night and they started again this morning, almost as soon as I opened the doors at nine o'clock." The prospect of possibly going to Korea, Staff Sergeant Spooner felt, might attract a number of adventurous youngsters. He added, "Though goodness knows, a lad joining the permanent force and electing for a parachute unit would get about as much adventure as he'd ever need."

For their part, the Canadian Army was facilitating the enlisting of recruits. Potential recruits, for example, were being told that the standards for entry to the active force had been considerably reduced; for instance, where previously a recruit was required to have grade 10, and sometimes grade 12 educational qualifications, recruiting officers had now been ordered to take grade 8 qualifications. Sarnia recruits were sent to London for a medical examination, received a refund of their fare from Sarnia, and if they qualified, they were in. A number of Sarnia-Lambton youths also reportedly joined the United States forces at recruiting stations in Port Huron and Detroit, the idea being that there was a better chance of getting into the fray faster via the American forces.^N

In early August 1950 when Prime Minister St. Laurent announced that a special Canadian force of ground troops would be raised for service in Korea, the government stated that because of the world crisis, they would take "all the qualified men" they could get, with no set limitation on the number of men enlisted in the regular and reserve forces. On August 8, 1950, a full page ad appeared in *The Sarnia Observer* with the headline; THE CANADIAN ARMY NEEDS MEN NOW! – For the Canadian Army Special Forces. The special volunteer brigade was being raised "to meet aggression in accordance with the United Nations Charter and the North Atlantic Treaty." Enlistment standards were that recruits had to be physically fit, mentally alert, between the ages of 19 and 35 inclusive (19 to 45

for tradesmen), and either single or married. Preference would be given to veterans of the last war. Canada promised to provide pensions, care for the wounded, veterans' benefits and a guarantee that the men would get their jobs back. A private on entry into the army would receive \$122 monthly in basic pay and a subsistence allowance, with an additional \$30 monthly if married. Men were needed for the Infantry (Royal Canadian Regiment, Princess Patricia's and the "Van Doos" Royal 22 Regiment); Artillery (2nd Field Regiment Royal Canadian Horse Regiment); Army Service Corps; Electrical and Mechanical Engineers; and the Medical Corps.

In the first day following the publication of the above advertisement, the Sarnia Armory reported being besieged by applicants eager to join the Canadian Infantry Brigade. Staff Sergeant A.G. Spooner said he was "swamped." He added, "I think the majority of the men who came in here, went straight off to London after an interview." Canadian army headquarters in London stated that more than 60 Lambton district men were handled during the first two hours of recruiting, including forty from Sarnia.^N

In late August of 1950, the *The Sarnia Observer* featured a story on what was believed to be the first known Sarnian to have been in action in Korea. **Eddie Doyle**, whose parents, Mr. and Mrs. J.A. Doyle of 124 North Mackenzie Street, spent his 21st birthday, August 2, in action against the North Koreans with the 1st Cavalry Division, U.S. Army. Eddie Doyle was born in Detroit, but was educated at Lochiel Street School before working for Electric Auto-Lite and the Lambton Awning and Canvas Company. Eddie enlisted in the U.S. Army in January 1949. After training in Kentucky and being posted with the first Cavalry Division, Eddie and his division were hastily sent to Korea in May 1950. He landed at Taejong, May 16, and had gone into battle immediately. In a letter to his parents in Sarnia he wrote, *"We didn't know it but we were surrounded. I spent my 21st birthday in the thick of the fighting. I dug so many foxholes, I don't remember."* He didn't think much of the country he was in—it was terribly hot, *"Oh, for some blueberry pie and iced tea"* he wrote.

• **UNITED STATES INVADES KOREA:** In mid-September 1950, the military situation in Korea was dramatically reversed. The UN forces, confined within the Pusan Perimeter, were still being hard-pressed when a daring amphibious assault led by U.S. forces was launched at Inchon, the port of Seoul in the **Battle of Inchon**. Over 75,000 troops and 261 naval vessels, including Canada's three RCN destroyers, launched the amphibious invasion on September 15, 1950. The tactically brilliant amphibious landing was the largest since D-Day in 1944. US Marines quickly overcame all resistance in the seaport area, and secured Inchon from the North Koreans within twenty-four hours. By September 26, Seoul was re-captured. Meanwhile, other U.S. Army forces had broken out of Pusan through a series of landings in enemy territory, and by the end of the first week in October, they were driving the shattered enemy across the 38th parallel. By the end of October, UN and South Korean forces had advanced well into North Korea, and had taken many prisoners. With the UN successes, the end of the war in Korea seemed imminent, some predicting the war would be over by Christmas. General MacArthur was confident enough of victory to suggest that "Canada might prefer to send [a] small token force to show the flag."^{9Y, 9Z}

Effect on Canada: Following the Battle of Inchon and the UN successes in September and October 1950, with the tide turning in Korea, for a time it looked as if Canadian ground forces would not get to Korea before the war ended. It was decided that Canada would only send one battalion to the Far East, to be used for occupation duties. The unit chosen to go was the 2nd Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry (2PPCLI). The remaining units of the CASF would be sent for further training in Fort Lewis, Washington during the winter and, should they be needed, would embark on ships to Seattle for the Far East.^{D, H, 2N, 4A, 6P, 6R, 9Y, 9Z}

• **TRAGEDY AT HOME:** The move to Fort Lewis was marred by tragedy on November 21, 1950. On that morning, a troop train—seventeen cars long—was steaming its way west through the Rocky Mountains on one of the most remote sections of the CNR system, a little west of **Canoe River**, British Columbia. A railway communications error had directed the westbound troop train on to the same track as a speeding ten-car eastbound passenger express train. At 10:35 a.m., the westbound train carrying 338 troops of the 2nd Regiment, Royal Canadian Horse Artillery, collided head on with the passenger train. The modern and much heavier steel passenger train heaved the engine of the army train into the air and tossed it backwards and down on the coaches behind it. Several cars were thrown from the rails and the troop train wood coaches buckled like cordwood as steel cars smashed into them. In the carnage of shattered steel, splintered wood, broken glass, many of the soldiers were scalded when steam heating pipes broke in the coaches. Some were trapped in the wreckage, some were scattered about, and others had been dismembered. Trying to assist those crying for help was complicated by the 15 degree below zero Fahrenheit temperature, deep snow and there were no medical supplies on board the troop train. It took three hours before a hospital train arrived

from Jasper. Seventeen Canadian artillerymen were killed (four of the soldiers bodies were never recovered), the four engineers (two from each train) died, and another fifty-two soldiers and six CNR crew were injured in the train collision.^{D, H, 6P, 6R, 9Y, 9Z}

• **THE ENEMY’S TACTICS CHANGE:** After the successful invasion at Inchon, and the advance of UN and South Korean forces well into North Korea in October 1950, complete victory seemed imminent. However, the North Koreans were employing a tactic of withdrawal and retreat, to fortified positions in the mountains. A captured North Korean officer described the strategy this way: “We withdrew because we knew that UN troops would follow us... and spread their troops thinly all over the vast area... the time came for us to envelop and annihilate them.”

China enters the war: At the end of October 1950, with Soviet encouragement, Chinese armies crossed the Yalu River into North Korea, driving UN forces back south. Conducted at night, with great secrecy, these large-scale Chinese movements had gone undetected by UN forward troops and air reconnaissance units. Unsupported reports by prisoners of a massive build-up were not believed.

China, in support of North Korea, unexpectedly launched a major offensive in November as China’s **People’s Liberation Army**, a force with an approximate strength of 180,000 men, retook much of the lost territory within weeks as UN forces retreated to and below the 38th parallel. In western North Korea, the Eighth US Army was in full flight back to P’yongyang, the longest retreat in US military history, nicknamed the “**Big Bug Out.**”

The New Year would open with another crushing Chinese offensive, and by January 4, 1951, Seoul again fell to the communists.^{9Y, 9Z}

• **CANADIAN TROOPS ARRIVE OVERSEAS:** The first contingent of Canadians to leave for Korea was the 2nd Battalion of the Princess Patricia’s Canadian Light Infantry (2PPCLI), commanded by World War II veteran Lieutenant-Colonel Jim R. Stone (today, “Big Jim” Stone is revered by many in the PPCLI as the greatest Canadian soldier who ever fought). On a rainy Saturday, November 25, 1950, nine hundred plus members of the Patricia’s set sail from Seattle across the Pacific. At that time, the war looked to be nearing its end as the North Korean forces had been pushed back almost to the Chinese border. At first, it was uncertain whether or not Canadians, which had yet to do any serious advanced training, would see combat. It was estimated that the battalion would be ready for action, if needed, by March 15, 1951. It was on board the US built Liberty-class ships crossing the Pacific that average Canadian soldiers learned about some basic differences between themselves and their American counterparts. Most of the GIs were draftees, conscripted by US selective service legislation, while most of the Canadian servicemen were enlistees.^{9Y, 9Z}

After enduring a rough twenty-day voyage in a crowded ship across a heaving ocean, on December 14, 1950, the Canadian’s ship pulled into Tokyo Bay and tied up at the port of Yokohama. By the time the Canadian’s ship reached its destination, the war situation in Korea had completely changed. Instead of doing “occupational duty” or time to acclimatize and train, the emphasis had shifted to the speed with which the battalion could be thrown into action. Private Michael Czuboka recalled that on their voyage across the ocean, “*About halfway across the stormy Pacific, we were told that the Chinese had entered Korea in large numbers and that the United Nations forces were in retreat. We were going to a full-scale war and not occupation duties as previously announced.*”

On December 18, the PPCLI boarded trucks and travelled to the city of Mokto, an island on the edge of Pusan. In 1950, Pusan was the second-largest city in the country, though it consisted mostly of mud-huts and endless shacks, the roads were narrow and potholed, and the people were poor. By far the most powerful recollection soldiers had of their first contact with Pusan was “the smell”. Soldier’s descriptions included that human excrement was everywhere (it was used to fertilize the fields), and people were rooting through garbage. Many of the Canadian volunteers thought right then: “What in the world am I doing here?”^{9K, 9Y, 9Z}

The hills of Korea: Up and down the Korean peninsula were cone-shaped, rust-coloured hills that were not the least bit conducive to conventional warfare. Steep, jagged with rocky outcrops, and little natural vegetation except flat, dwarf pine trees, the hills chopped up the countryside. One ridge looked like every other ridge, and beyond each ridge was another, and another, and another. The endless monotony of hills, ranging from 250 to 500 metres and more, were nameless. The Canadians simply numbered them by using their **height in metres**, while the Americans tended to use descriptive names. Much of the Korean War was a “war of the hills”, against an enemy that was both ruthless and elusive, skillful and persistent, often silent and always deadly.

In troughs between the hills were endless winding tiers of rice paddies. Beyond every few ridges was a river

or creek bed that, depending on the season or the variable weather, could be a bone-dry gully one minute, a raging floodway the next, or frozen solid in winter. There was very little space for staging large-scale assaults. The hilltops left even less room from which to defend. A general lack of roads hampered rapid and significant movements of tanks, trucks and mobile artillery. The Korean landscape would dictate the way the war was fought.^{9Y, 9Z}

PPCLI move to the front: Two days after Christmas, the PPCLI battalion moved out of Pusan eighty kilometres north to begin their intensive training in weapons and tactics. Training included extensive hill-climbing, cross-country manoeuvres and battle exercises incorporating their own firearms—.303 Lee-Enfield bolt-action rifles, Bren guns, 81-mm mortars and Vickers medium machine guns.

By February 1951, the Patricias were on the move and had joined the 27th British Commonwealth Infantry Brigade (with two British and one Australian battalion) in a general advance against Chinese and North Korean forces fighting rearguard actions south of the 38th parallel. The Canadians travelled most of the way by truck, about 150 miles. Progress was difficult as hills rose on either side; the narrow up and down roads were terrible with many blind corners and makeshift bridges over gorges to cross; hill positions had to be dug through deep snow; and the weather was bitterly cold. Finally the trucks could go no further, so the troops clambered off, stretched their aching muscles and formed up for the five-mile march to the front lines. Uphill, downhill, through scrub brush, over half-frozen creeks, and over slippery, jagged rocks they advanced when, within a quarter mile of the front on February 19, they stumbled onto something none of them ever forgot.

On that morning, the Canadians came across a **grisly discovery**—littered along the side of the makeshift trail were the broken, bloody, grotesque-looking, half-frozen bodies of 68 black American soldiers. An entire company of American soldiers, ill-trained and ill-prepared, had been ambushed during the night. The Chinese had crept down the valley into the camp and slaughtered the entire company while it slept. Most of the dead were clothed in pajamas or long underwear and almost all were in sleeping bags. All had been shot, bayoneted, or both. From that point, Colonel Stone of the PPCLI ordered that there would be no sleeping bags when troops were in the line, and at night, soldiers were forbidden to pull parka hoods over their heads to hamper their hearing.^{9Y, 9Z}

Once the Canadians found themselves in the line, they began to understand the unpleasantness of war—living 24 hours a day, seven days a week, in hastily dug trenches, sloshing around in soggy snow, with the cold rains of winter pouring down your neck, was far from pleasant. Pierre Berton, a writer for *Maclean's*, described the scene: *“The trenches, waist high, two and a half feet wide, were dug in deep snow and frozen soil. The section was hardly dug in before rain mixed with sleet began to fall... The men's parkas, battledress, and underwear became soaked and then frozen. They crouched into a foot of ice water... Blankets turned to sopping rags.”*^{9Z}

The first battalion objectives for the Patricias included Hills 404, 444, 419 and 532 (while the Australian and British troops fought for Hills 523, 614, 484, and 450.). It was in this area that Canadians first saw **napalm** used against an enemy. This substance, later to gain so much notoriety in Vietnam, is gasoline that is chemically thickened, causing it to spread over the ground while burning. Dropped by attacking aircraft in containers of 100 or 150 gallons, its effects were horrendous and controversial.

In February and March of 1951, the Canadians were thrown into a series of skirmishes and battles chasing Chinese troops northward, not allowing them to break contact or regain strength. Pierre Berton described the advance as, *“slow remorseless plodding from ridge to ridge... clearing mud huts... firing round after round into apparently empty hills... long patrols by day and longer watches by night”*—(that) went on, regardless of weather, casualties, or an elusive, fleeting enemy.^{9Z}

By early April 1951, US forces and the Commonwealth Brigade, including the Patricia's, had reached the 38th Parallel. Later that month, in the valley of the Kapyong River, the communists would begin their spring offensive back into South Korea.^{D, H, 2E, 2N, 5W, 6P, 6R, 9Y, 9Z}

• **THE BATTLE OF KAPYONG, Hill 677:** [Note: With changes in the Korean alphabet, Kapyong now reads Gapyong]

Some of the heaviest fighting Canadian soldiers experienced in the war took place during the Battle of Kapyong in April 1951. The victory here was one of Canada's greatest, yet least-known, military achievements. Some historians feel the against-all-odds triumph by Canadians at Kapyong rivals those at Vimy Ridge and Juno Beach. For two days, a battalion of roughly 700 Canadian troops helped defend a crucial hill in the front lines against a force of about 5,000 Chinese soldiers.^{D, H, 2N, 5W, 6P}

In mid-April 1951, the Chinese withdrew just past the 38th Parallel as part of a plan to lure UN forces into a vulnerable position. On the night of April 22, more than 200,000 Chinese and North Korean soldiers began a major offensive on the UN line. Two regiments of South Korean forces were hurtled back, and when they realized the immensity of the army coming towards them, they simply turned on their heels and fled southward. Intent on recapturing Seoul, the Chinese army advanced south relentlessly preparing to march through the Kapyong Valley, 60 kilometres northeast of the city. About 20 kilometers south of the 38th Parallel, the valley was less than three kilometres across at its widest point, and was dominated by the surrounding hills.

Having arrived only days earlier, the 27th British Commonwealth Infantry Brigade—along with its Canadian contingent—was ordered to dig in and protect the South Korean withdrawal through the Kapyong River valley, and halt the oncoming Chinese offensive. Going up to the line, one PPCLI soldier remembered, *“There was a stream of (South) Koreans heading south and we were heading north. I began to think to myself, ‘Lord Jesus, I am over here supposed to be helping to defend these people and they’re running one way while I am going the other.’ ... I’ve never seen fear and disorganization like those guys going down the road. It was on for hours and it wasn’t all that encouraging.”*^{9Z}

With the Chinese breaking through the first line of defence, all that stood between the Chinese army and the South Korean capital of Seoul was the Canadian PPCLI battalion, an Australian regiment, a New Zealand artillery regiment and a U.S. tank regiment.

The 2PPCLI and the 3rd Battalion of the Royal Australian Regiment were assigned to forward hilltop positions; the Canadians on the west side of the valley on **Hill 677**, and the Australians on the east side, Hill 504. The 700 Canadian troops were ordered to dig in to the steep, rocky, scrub-covered Hill 677 as a large brigade of massing Chinese forces, estimated at nearly 5,000-strong, prepared to attack. Marked by gullies, woods, and uneven terrain, the snow-covered hill was wide making a co-ordinated defence impossible.

The battle of Kapyong began on April 23 shortly after 10:00 p.m. when the Chinese launched their offensive against the Australians and Canadians. The Australians on hill 504 bore the brunt of the initial attack that night. After battling waves of Chinese assault troops for more than sixteen hours, and running low on ammunition, the Aussies were forced to withdraw from Hill 504 in the mid-day of April 24, with 155 casualties. Now, the only infantrymen left to stop the Chinese advance through the Kapyong Valley were the Princess Patricia’s. The PPCLI were deployed in four Company’s across the north face of the hill. Colonel Stone’s specific orders were: “Be steady, kill and don’t give way!”^{9Y, 9Z}

On April 24 at about 10:00 p.m., the communists began their concentrated assaults on Hill 677. Out of the darkness, came the sounds of shrill whistles, bugle blasts, screams, shouts, gunfire and explosions as the enemy advanced up the hill toward the Patricia’s in their slit trenches and behind their parapets (the Chinese launched most of their attacks this way, at night, and in successive waves). Waves of enemy surged forward, outnumbering the 2PPCLI’s almost eight-to-one. Chaos ensued in the close contact fighting, with rifle and machine gun fire, grenades, mortars, and intense bayonet and hand-to-hand combat, some even using their rifles as baseball bats. The relentless human waves of Chinese soldiers surrounded and almost overran some of the Canadian positions. At one point in the battle, 400 Chinese soldiers descended on a single Canadian company of roughly 100 men, but the attack was repelled with numerous examples of valour. Another company of Canadians even called in an artillery strike (by a supporting New Zealand artillery regiment) on their own location to hit the enemy soldiers amongst them. The Canadians took cover while the attackers bore the brunt of 2,300 artillery shells fired in less than an hour. The risky move worked and the enemy was driven off. The desperate fighting continued all that night and into the next day. A Canadian who was there described the situation: *“We were surrounded on the hills of Kapyong and there was a lot of fire. We were pretty well out of ammunition and out of food too. We did get some air supplies dropped in, but we were actually surrounded... that was a scary moment, let me tell you.”*^{1D, H, 2N, 4A, 6R, 9Y, 9Z}

The danger was not yet over and the morning of the 25th, though the Chinese had withdrawn, there was an intermittent exchange of fire, exploding grenades, and bursts of the Chinese burp-guns. Even though the waves of Chinese infantry had stopped swarming the hilltops, the communist forces had nearly encircled the Princess Patricias. With their ammunition and ration supplies depleted, and their supply route cut off, the Patricia’s requested an airdrop. Later that morning, four U.S. Army Air Force C-119’s (flying boxcars) flew over the PPCLI positions at 200 feet and jettisoned pallets with parachutes bearing supplies. While waiting anxiously for a possible enemy re-attack, the 2PPCLI tended to their wounded and recovered their fallen. By the afternoon, American air strikes and patrols from the British Middlesex Regiment had helped to clear the enemy from one side of the Canadians. A supply line

was re-established, and they were eventually relieved on the front line by a battalion of the 1st US Cavalry Division.^{D, H, 2N, 4A, 6R, 9Y, 9Z}

PPCLI honoured: The holding action by the Canadians at Kapyong was vital for brigade defence, and allowed the UN forces to consolidate their troops for the next stage of operations. The Canadians had fought tenaciously against a Chinese army with a much larger force, and inflicted heavy casualties on the enemy (an estimated 1,000 Chinese killed). The heroic efforts of the 2PPCLI and the Royal Australian Regiment did not go unnoticed. Two weeks after Kapyong, the entire 2nd Battalion of the PPCLI was assembled in a field behind the front lines. American general James Van Fleet, the new commander of the Eighth US Army inspected the battalion and read out the United States Presidential Distinguished Unit Citation. The award was the first and only time a Canadian unit had been so honoured. The award reads in part, "...recognition of outstanding heroism and exceptionally meritorious conduct in the performance of outstanding services..." Holding the line at Kapyong was an impressive achievement of skill and courage that cost the Canadians 23 wounded and 10 lost their lives. Today there is a PPCLI memorial on Hill 677, in memory of the epic battle fought there between April 23 and April 25, 1951.^{D, H, 2N, 3O, 4A, 5W, 6P, 6R, 9Y, 9Z}

• **WILLIAM OLDALE (Sarnia):** William (Bill) Oldale was born in Port Arthur (Thunder Bay), Ontario in 1930, the son of Ernest and Ina Oldale. Father Ernest Oldale worked in the mines in Northern Ontario for a time, but when they shut down, he moved the Oldale family to Sarnia in 1941. Ernest Oldale found work at the railroad in Sarnia, and later Imperial Oil. One day in the summer of 1950, twenty year-old Bill Oldale, along with his cousin Paul Densmore, were doing landscaping at his parents home on Lakeshore Road, including the planting of bushes and of sod, using a heavy wheelbarrow with steel wheels. It was on that day that the two of them rationalized that joining the army would be easier. So on August 8, 1950, Bill Oldale, along with his cousin Paul, enlisted in London, Ontario with the infantry as riflemen. Bill's father Ernest was proud of the decision, for the Oldale men had a history of military service, though Ernest himself had been deemed too old to serve in WWII. Mother Ina Oldale was less impressed with Bill's decision.



Private Bill Oldale (1950)

Bill Oldale trained in Calgary, and then the hills of Wainwright, Alberta where they could simulate the hilly terrain of Korea. As part of the Canadian Army Special Force (CASF), his unit embarked overseas from Tacoma, Washington, travelling aboard ship for 28 days, arriving in Pusan, Korea before Christmas 1950. Private Bill Oldale, nicknamed "Red" for his thick, red hair, was a member of the 2nd Battalion, Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry (2PPCLI). They continued their intensive training on the hills at Maryang, Korea. During their acclimatization, one of the changes made was to their footwear. Their leather boots, with spiked cleats on both ends, would slip and skid on the shale, and even create sparks. So the men were issued tank boots, with rubber soles. It was during training in January 1951 that Bill was accidentally shot in the hand by another soldier. He almost lost his finger, but it was saved during his recovery in Japan. After their training, the 2PPCLI were in action, taking part in a series of skirmishes and battles for hill positions.

Then came Kapyong in mid-April 1951. When the 2PPCLI arrived at Hill 677, the steep, wide, snow-

covered hill was unoccupied by the enemy. On April 20, the 2PPCLI were ordered to move up, dig in and hold their positions atop the Hill. Using shovels, picks and spades, they dug their two-man slit trenches and parapets and settled in. Sitting there in the barren landscape, marked by gullies and woods, they couldn't see the enemy, but they knew they were there. Most of the men were in their early 20's, frightened but determined to hold the hill. The platoon sergeants and corporals were older, usually World War II veterans. Bill Oldale fondly remembered one in particular, Sergeant Rushton, who referred to the soldiers of his platoon as "his kids". Before the battle, Sgt. Rushton asked Bill if he was scared. When Bill replied yes, Rushton nodded and said, "Good, you'll be ready then. And anyone who says he isn't frightened, is a liar."

On the night of April 23, the battle began when Chinese troops attacked the Royal Australian Regiment on Hill 504, who bore the brunt of the initial force. After battling waves of Chinese assault troops for sixteen hours, and running low on ammunition, the Aussies were forced to withdraw in the mid-day of April 24. That left the Canadians alone on Hill 677 as a large brigade of massing Chinese forces prepared to continue their attack on them. Like the rest of the Canadians, Bill Oldale didn't wear a helmet, instead a hat and balaclava, and he was armed with his Lee-Enfield (9-pound single bolt action) rifle, five or six grenades, and about 200 rounds of ammunition. On the cold night of April 24, 1951, an anxious Bill Oldale waited in his slit trench, along with the other 700 2PPCLI's.

Suddenly, out of the darkness, came the sounds of shrill whistles, bugle blasts, screams and gunfire as the enemy approached Canadian-held Hill 677. Thousands of Chinese soldiers advanced towards them up the hill, forging into the Canadian lines. Backed by tanks, some of the enemy didn't even have weapons, but many carried Russian-made sub-machine guns. Chaos ensued in the close contact fighting, with rifle and machine gun fire, mortars, exploding grenades, bayonet and intense hand-to-hand combat, some even using their rifles as baseball bats. Waves of enemy continued to surge forward, outnumbering the 2PPCLI's almost eight to one. The Princess Pat's fought on, with no reinforcements, running low on ammunition and supplies. The situation became so desperate at one point that the overwhelmed Canadians ordered the supporting New Zealand artillery regiment to fire on their position. Bill Oldale remembers hearing, "Friendly fire incoming!", and hitting the deck. The Canadians hoped that more of the enemy would be hit than their own troops. Through the hellstorm and carnage that night and into the next morning, the Chinese would eventually withdraw by mid-day April 25. That day, the 2PPCLI tended to their wounded, recovered their fallen, and anxiously awaited another possible attack. It would be another day before they were able to retire back to a rest area, after being replaced by another unit.

Bill Oldale returned home to Sarnia at Christmas in 1952. Physically unscathed, he did have to deal with the mental wounds—suffering nightmares for a while, yelling for his fellow soldiers to be careful and to watch out. The nightmares disappeared and he got on with his life. He married Betty (nee Fyfe) in August 1953, started a family and worked at the railway for a short time before moving on to work as a millright for many years in Chemical Valley. Bill Oldale, like the rest of the 2PPCLI's (and its support groups), along with the Royal Australian Regiment, would be awarded the United States Presidential Unit Citation—the first and only time a Canadian unit had been so honoured. Bill Oldale passed away in Sarnia in April 2018.^{2y}

• **CHANGING UN TACTICS:** By the end of March 1951, the Chinese winter offensive had been stopped and the UN troops were pushing into North Korea. For the second time in the war, the question of how far north the UN armies should advance was debated. For U.S. President Truman and within the higher levels of command, and among most members of the United Nations Command, crossing the 38th parallel became an issue. If the UN forces were to remain in Korea, there were two courses of action open to them:

The first was to try for complete victory, which would require reinforcements, and authorization of operations beyond Korean borders, particularly air strikes against Chinese bases. This is the position that United Nations commander General Douglas MacArthur advocated, even extending the war to Communist China. In the early days of the war, MacArthur had devised some brilliant strategies and military maneuvers that helped save South Korea from falling. Now, MacArthur asked for more and more troops and the ability to bomb military targets so that he could "win the war."

The second option was to accept a "stabilization of the military position" —for the peaceful withdrawal of Chinese forces from Korea and re-establishing the 38th parallel as the stalemate line and hope that UN peace negotiations might end the conflict. United States President Harry Truman and the majority opinion in the United Nations, including Canada, favoured this latter option, the concept of a "limited war".

In mid-March 1951, General MacArthur openly contradicted the foreign policy of the President Truman and

called upon the Chinese to surrender unconditionally. This defiance played a key role in Truman's controversial decision to fire General MacArthur from his command on April 11, 1951. Reactions to the firing among politicians, military officers, business tycoons and leaders around the world was one of shock and contention. In Canada, "the general feeling in Parliament," wrote Lester Pearson, "was one of relief." In his broadcast shortly after to the American people, Truman explained his position against an all-out war in a radio broadcast, "... *by fighting a limited war in Korea, we have prevented aggression from succeeding and bringing on a general war... We are trying to prevent a world war – not to start one.*"^{6R, 9Y, 9Z}

• **REST OF CANADIAN TROOPS SET SAIL:** After the PPCLI had left for Korea in late November 1950, the remainder of the CASF, renamed the 25th Canadian Infantry Brigade Group, remained at Fort Lewis, Washington, and continued their training. On April 19, 20 and 21, 1951, the rest of the Brigade set sail from Seattle aboard troopships. The 25th Canadian Infantry Brigade was comprised of units that included the Second Battalion of the Royal Canadian Regiment (RCR), the Royal 22e Régiment (the "Van Doos"), the Royal Canadian Engineers, the Royal Canadian Dragoons and the Royal Canadian Horse Artillery. While at sea, among the bits of news that they would receive were the results of a new Canadian census reporting a population of just over 14 million; reports of the Princess Patricia's epic stand at Kapyong; and that US President Truman had fired the UN commander-in-chief, Douglas MacArthur.^{9Y}

The rest of the 25th Canadian Infantry Brigade arrived in Korea between May 4-6, 1951, with the fighting troops offloading at Pusan. Changing events at the front only allowed the Canadians only a short period of acclimatization and training—acquainting them with battle tactics in the hilly country and getting them used to some additional American weapons. After approximately a week of climbing the hills around Pusan, the brigade moved north to the front. By then, the communists spring offensive had collapsed and the Chinese had mostly withdrawn north of the 38th parallel, attacking only when their strength was replenished. The UN operation consisted of "a movement forward of regimental groups in line abreast against opposition."^{2D, 2N, 6P, 6R, 9Y}

• **THE ATTACK ON CHAIL-LI and HILL 467:** The Royal Canadian Regiment's first serious engagement was in the early morning of May 30, 1951—the attack on the village of Chail-Li and Hill 467 (Kakhul-bong), a critical feature for the Chinese. The operation began in a driving rainstorm, and initially, three of the four companies reached their objectives with relative ease. However "D" Company, climbing the steep slopes of the main objective, Hill 467, were met with strong resistance and heavy machine-gun fire, and suffered casualties. As the day progressed, all the RCR Company's were forced to withdraw from their positions due to enemy counter-attacks that included relentless small arms, machine-gun, mortar and artillery fire. Though they had failed to achieve their objectives, the Canadians acquitted themselves well in their first major action; their casualties testified to the sharp engagement that was fought—54 wounded and six killed, including one young soldier from Sarnia—**Patrick O'Connor**. All Canadian casualties were recovered and rescued from the scene, leaving no soldier behind.^{6D, 6P, 6R, 9Z}

Sarnia's first fallen soldier: In late May of 1951, the reality of the Korean War hit home in Sarnia with the May 31, 1951 *Sarnia Observer* front page headline, "Sarnia Man, 27, Father of Two, Dies in Korea." Private Patrick O'Connor, was the son of James Philip and Angela Loretta O'Connor of Cameron St., Sarnia, and the husband of Vera Irene O'Connor and father of two young children, both under the age of four, residing on Oak St., Sarnia. Patrick had an older brother, James Michael Barry O'Connor, who had been a member of the Royal Canadian Air Force during World War II. James Barry O'Connor, a member of Bomber Command, lost his life aboard a Halifax bomber in April 1943. James Barry O'Connor's story is included in the WW II section of this Project on page 904.

Private Patrick O'Connor, who was a World War II Navy veteran, enlisted to fight in Korea and became a member of the Second Battalion, Royal Canadian Regiment, "D" Company. Patrick O'Connor was killed in action on Hill 467 only one month after arriving in Korea. On the day of his death, May 30, 1951, while his company was pinned down by heavy enemy fire, Patrick ignored the danger and rushed forward in an attempt to render first aid to a wounded comrade. Patrick O'Connor's story is included in this Project on page 1097.

Ed Haslip (Sarnia): After he had obtained his discharge from an infantry battalion at the end of the Second World War, Ed Haslip had gone to work for Dow Chemical Company in Sarnia. When the Korean War started, he got his severance from Dow, packed his things, and drove the 60 miles to London to join the Royal Canadian Regiment. He would serve in Korea as a stretcher-bearer with "C" Company, 2nd RCR.

Describing his impression of Korea Haslip said, "*I was most impressed by the Korean people. They gave me a greater respect for humanity. After all, the fact that a little nation such as Korea could go through as much over the*"

years, and still refuse to be beaten down and give up, taught me a lot. We learned patience, honesty, and respect from the Koreans. They had nothing but they made do with what they had. Their villages were burnt around them, but they still hung on and never gave up. I loved the Korean kids."

Ed Haslip would never forget his friend Patrick O'Connor, fellow stretcher-bearer with the RCR. He remembered on that May 30th day on Hill 467 when O'Connor moved through the dead and dying, giving them comfort, bandaging wounds, occasionally praying with them, all while ignoring his own exposed position. Haslip saw O'Connor cut down by the enemy machine gun fire while trying to save the lives of the men with him. He felt that O'Connor should have received the Victoria Cross.^{9Z}

• **THE ROYAL CANADIAN ARMY MEDICAL CORPS (RCAMC):** The medics and doctors of the RCAMC were always on the move in order to stay in close proximity behind the front lines. The first point behind the front that wounded were brought by stretcher-bearers for immediate first aid was the Regimental Aid Post (RAP). Wounded were then carried to the Casualty Clearing Station (CCS), where another medical officer would remove dressings, perform minor surgery, administer splints and stabilize the men. Beyond the CCS, the wounded went farther back to the bigger Advanced Dressing Station (ADS), where they could be attended until they were stable enough to move by helicopter to a sixty- to seventy-bed Mobile Army Surgical Hospital (**MASH**) or flown to a hospital in Japan.

The mortality rate during the Korean War was 34 per 1,000 wounded (it had been 66 per 1,000 in the Second World War). A wounded soldier in Korea benefitted from greater accessibility to air-evacuation transportation (helicopters) —for the first time in history, severely wounded men could be moved from the front line of fire to the operating theatre, sometimes within a matter of minutes. Also helping the wounded was the advent of better drugs and antibiotics and quick access to surgical and medical treatment.^{9Y, 9Z}

• **THE NEXT PHASE OF THE WAR:** In the weeks that followed the attack on Hill 467, the 25th Canadian Infantry Brigade continued to advance. The RCR's, the Royal 22e Régiment and the Princess Patricia's were now all fighting together for the first time in the war. North of the Canadians lay territory that, according to the UN Command, had to be cleared of Chinese occupation because it left the capital, Seoul, vulnerable to attack. Through the month of June, UN forces moved the front line in North Korea (just above the 38th parallel) almost to the position it would occupy for the rest of the war.

Tactics changed during this period. Large frontal engagements, either offensive or defensive, were avoided. The advance consisted of establishing patrol bases that could be defended, then sending deep patrols ahead to reconnoiter, probe and seek out new defensive bases. Each new defensive position was dug in deeper, protected with more barbed wire and defended by more entrenched artillery and wider minefields than the last. Anti-personnel landmines, booby traps, sniper attacks, deep penetration patrols and skirmishes in no-man's-land were the new tactics that evolved.^{9Y}

The first phase—the "war for containment"—had attempted to stem the southwest advance of North Korean armies in the summer of 1950. The second phase—the "war for rollback"—had been General MacArthur's attempt to push the communists right out of Korea in the fall and winter of 1950-51. That had drawn the Chinese Communist Forces into the war and they pushed the UN armies below the 38th parallel in the spring of 1951. In the third phase—"stabilization"—UN Command had re-established the 38th parallel as a stalemate line in mid-1951. By then, the lines began to solidify and the two sides dug in with deep defensive positions around the 38th parallel.

• **PEACE TALKS:** Early in July 1951, at the Communists request, **cease-fire negotiations** began. The UN delegation was composed of five U.S. and one South Korean official, while the Communist delegation was composed of two Chinese and two North Koreans. Canada did not participate at any time. The talks began on July 10, but broke off August 23 due to distrust among the negotiators and manoeuvring on the battlefield. The suspicion prevailed that the Communists never intended truce talks to produce an early peace, but were using them to gain military advantage.

Like the war itself, the talks would drag on for the next two years. Over that time, the talks were never amicable, often bitter, and almost always interminably dull. For days, occasionally weeks, the same arguments were tossed back and forth, neither side wanting to concede, particularly when concession was often viewed as weakness. One of the stickiest points in the peace negotiations was the repatriation of prisoners of war; many North Korean POWs refused to be returned back to the north.

As the on-and-off peace talks continued, no one, least of all the soldiers in the front lines, knew where they might be, nor when a diplomatic breakthrough might come. One Canadian soldier wrote, *"I cannot avoid a tightening of the heart at the thought that this night I could be killed and that tomorrow the war would end with a sudden armistice."* Through the intermittent armistice talks, ironically, more Canadians were wounded or killed after, not before, the peace talks began. The reason is that while talks dragged on, UN front-line commanders were not allowed to mount any major offensives. Their orders were to dig in and to hold. One Canadian veteran wrote, *"Everything that occurred in Korea after the fall of 1951 was a waste of time and lives."* ^{D, H, N, 2E, 2N, 6P, 6R, 9Y, 9Z}

• **THE WAR DRAGS ON:** The overall aim of the new UN operation was to relieve pressure on the embattled sectors, force the enemy back behind the mountain barriers along the 38th Parallel, and to prevent the Communist armies from recovering their strength and launching another massive offensive. United Nations forces were not to carry out any major "set-piece" attacks where they "close with and destroy the enemy," like those of the two World Wars. The war was becoming positional and more static. While company-sized attacks were sometimes mounted to improve defences or to keep the enemy off balance, the war was mostly fought from trenches into no man's land with endless patrolling, night raids against hilltop trench positions, repulsing enemy attacks, digging tunnels and trenches, booby traps and minefields, barbed wire, long nights standing guard in slit trenches, and artillery barrages. The enemies faced each other across a no-man's-land ranging from a few hundred metres in width to several kilometres. During this phase of the war, bloody battles raged for strategic high ground. Of Sarnia's four Korean fallen soldiers, three were killed in battles over hilltop positions.

During this time, Canadian troops languished in hilltop defensive positions surrounded by mines and barbed wire, occasionally sending patrols out at night to test the enemy's defences. They subsisted on American C-Rations of ground meat, ham and eggs, hamburger patties, chicken stew, or lima beans with pork that somehow all looked and tasted the same, and the occasional bottle of *Asahi*, Japanese beer. One of the soldier's most trusted tools was his shovel; instead of surviving *on* the hills at the front line, a soldier was expected to survive *in* them. Canadian soldiers became persistent diggers—there were slit trenches, communication trenches, command post trenches, observation posts, ammunition pits, weapons pits, garbage pits, bunkers for living in, cubbyholes, and latrines. They ate cold army rations while dealing with roaches, spiders, snakes, ants, lice and other body diseases. Rats thrived in the bunkers—they chewed everything, crept into sleeping blankets and they carried mites that transmitted the lethal haemorrhagic fever (or Songo fever).

The Chinese still had as their aim the destruction of the opposing forces. The Chinese army's guns—a combination of their Russian-designed SU76 high-velocity assault guns, their 152-mm howitzers, their 122-mm artillery and their mortars—could deliver relentless fire across no-man's-land at any time. The UN soldiers were also subjected to a barrage of propaganda leaflets from the Chinese, showing turkey dinners, tropical climates and comfortable sleeping places, which could belong to the soldiers, if only they would throw down their weapons and utter "tow shong", the word for surrender in Chinese.

Chinese tactics were dominated by their chief asset, manpower. So they struck at will, often with waves of men, and at night (using the darkness for cover against Allied planes), inflicting casualties and wearing down Canadian morale. When a Chinese offensive failed to achieve its objective, they would break contact and withdraw, while reinforcements and supplies were brought forward, and then launch another massive attack. Partial cease-fires often proved one-sided and temporary as the enemy continued to shell UN forces, send out patrols, and carry out offensive attacks. ^{D, H, N, 2E, 2N, 6P, 6R, 9Y, 9Z}

Landmines: Anti-personnel landmines and booby traps were used extensively by both forces. The Chinese and North Koreans used a mixture of relics from the Second World War as well as those manufactured in Russia and China. Some had wooden bodies that made them impossible to find with metal detectors. Others were simply mud-covered grenades, their pins replaced with mud, so that when they were kicked, the exterior would break away, allowing the grenade to detonate. "Bounding Betsies" (used by both sides, also called "bouncing Betties") were the toughest to deal with. Each "Betsie" was about three inches in diameter, eight or nine inches in length, round like a can and buried in the ground. When tripped by wire or trap, a detonator would pop the mine several feet in the air before the mine exploded, scattering deadly shrapnel, waist-high, in every direction.^{9Y}

Patrols: As the war of attrition along the front lines continued, there were endless skirmishes between groups of soldiers in trenches and out in no-man's-land, with little exchange of land. The fighting resembled that of the battlefields of France and Belgium in World War I. Patrols into no-man's-land, especially at night, were the norm.

The South Korean army patrols philosophy was to advance, find the enemy and fight it out. Canadian patrols each had a different strength and a different mandate. A fighting patrol, usually platoon-size (about 30 men), would attack an outpost, capture a prisoner or create a diversion to keep opposing troops off balance. An ambush patrol of 15-30 men would set a trap in an area through which Chinese patrols were sure to operate. A recce patrol (about 5 men), would retrieve information on routes, enemy defences or its movement patterns. An escort patrol worked with engineers or pioneers while they carried out their tasks (eg. detecting and disarming mines and installing minefields). A standing patrol worked out in front of a company position to give early warning of any Chinese activity in the region.^{9Y}

Battle Cries: As in other wars, traumatic stress disorder, referred to as “**battle fatigue**” in the Korean War, began to take its toll on the soldiers as the war dragged on. Gordon Croucher, attached to the Princess Patricia’s, doing double duty as an infantryman and with the Royal Canadian Electrical Mechanical Engineers, wrote a letter home to his mother in September 1951. Following are portions of that letter:

Dear Mother

I hope my letters have been reaching you alright. I write as often as possible at least one a week. I’m just feeling homesick and blue right now. Homesick for civilization and Canada.

I’ve seen a lot here, enough to make a person different. I’ve seen human suffering at its peak. I hate it. This war is a war against common people and its not nice too see starving people on the roads and not being able to help.

A Korean farmer wants to know why his wife and kids were killed. can you tell him,? will he understand? I guess the answer is no! he can’t read or write, he don’t know politics, he just knows feeling and emotion. Its heartbreaking his home is destroyed. His land a battlefield no place too turn for food or shelter he’s one in millions.

Mother sometimes you can’t help crying and I’ve seen tough fighter soldiers do it. You get a different outlook on life here and war. My God but these people suffer.

I want to get home. just to get away from this. before I break down. A person can stand so much and then they call it nervous breakdowns or here they call it battle fatigue. it starts by being jumpy and headaches, which I got both, a continuous headache and I’m jumpy. So’s a lot of other guys... I should be getting to bed, I’m very tired.

Lots of Love Gordon

Sergeant Alex Sim, also of the Princess Patricia’s, had been feeling some of the same pressures arising from the futility of the war and the plight of the Korean civilians. Following is a portion of a letter he wrote to his wife in June 1951:

Hi Darling;

... there’s nothing to be Happy about over here except that I’m a member of the Cdn. Army, which makes me proud but as for being Happy, you can’t do it in this country, all we ever see are Refugees, Women & Kids half dead from Starvation – go into a Village & find Dead civilians everywhere some Shot or Killed by Shellfire others Burned by Napalm or killed by Land Mines, there’s really not much to be happy about over here...

All My Love Darling To You & the Kids

Love. Sonny

Both Gordon Croucher and Alex Sim would make it through the Korean War, and return to Canada.^{7A}

The Koje-Do Incident: Koje-Do (now Geojedo) is an island 40 kilometres southwest of Busan, South Korea. In the spring of 1952, a series of unfortunate events here resulted in the largely unknown island to appear on the front pages of newspapers around the world. It was on this 240-square kilometre island that the United States operated a prisoner of war (POW) camp during the war. There were 17 prisoner enclosures, each designed to hold about 1,000 men. By 1952, the US and its UN allies were taking large numbers of North Korean and Chinese prisoners of war. The island soon became home to 160,000 prisoners.

Discontent and trouble became inevitable with factors that included: extreme overcrowding; problems in the process of screening prisoners for possible patriation; U.S troops killing 77 POWs stemming a camp protest in February; a hardcore group of Communist agitators were part the camp; and rumours of beatings, kangaroo courts, intimidation and murder amongst the prisoners themselves. In late May 1952, the prisoners captured the American camp commandant and held him for four days, releasing him only after concessions were made. News of the concessions and camp conditions reached the world press and was interpreted by some as an “admission” by the U.S. of their inefficient and brutal POW operation.

The US military requested the help of British Commonwealth army units to deal with the rebellion—but did not consult with the governments of those units. On March 25, a company of the 1st Royal Canadian Regiment

(RCR) went into Koje-Do. Over seven weeks and without bloodshed, the 100 RCRs along with a company of British troops, helped to restore order to a portion of the camp and guard some of the prisoners (mostly North Korean officers). On June 10, US forces moved into one compound with infantry and tanks to re-establish control, but both sides suffered casualties. The Canadians left Koje-Do on July 10, but not before they had established peaceful rapport with the prisoners and an excellent reputation with the Americans.

But back in Canada, the politicians were not pleased. The deployment of Canadian troops at Koje-Do without its consent angered the Canadian government and resulted in a public diplomatic protest to the US government.^{2N, 9Z}

Korean Service Corps (KSC): Thousands of South Korean civilians were recruited into service with the UN forces from the early stages of the war. What began as an ad hoc arrangement, by 1951 was established as the Korean Service Corps that grew in strength to more than 100,00 people. Their role was of a non-combatant nature. With no pay, no uniform and no acknowledgement, these Korean men, women and children were put to work behind the lines acting as porters of food, water and ammunition; mess-men; stretcher-bearers; interpreters or translators; women, or mama-sans, served in the rear as laundresses; and boys ranging from mid-teens to mid-twenties served as houseboys for officers.^{9Y}

“Katcoms”: South Korean soldiers had served in American formations for many months. In July 1952, Commonwealth formations were asked to accept “a certain number of basically trained Koreans for service with infantry.” The United Nations command had undertaken the training of Korean nationals as infantry reinforcements. In the spring of 1953, the Commonwealth Division was reinforced by 1,000 Korean soldiers, known as “Katcoms” (Korean Augmentation to Commonwealth). In March 1953 the first of the Katcoms were integrated into the Canadian battalions to increase the fighting strength of the units. They were paid by the Korean government, but equipped, uniformed and armed by the units that accepted them. Although some difficulties were encountered due to differences in language, outlook, customs and pay problems, the scheme worked reasonably well and provided valuable additional manpower.^{D, 6R}

- **HILL 355:** The Canadians were often deployed on or near Hill 355—in fact, every Canadian battalion that served in Korea would spend time there at some point during the war. Known as “Kowang San” to the Koreans, it was nicknamed **“Little Gibraltar”** by UN troops because of its prominent size and many defensive positions. When the Canadians moved onto its heights they simply referred to it as “Three-five-five.” The hill was located about 40 kilometres north of Seoul and was highly valued because it was the highest ground overlooking the surrounding front lines and supply routes. This strategic importance meant it would be the scene of fierce combat as both sides wanted to have it. On two particular occasions, late November 1951 and late October 1952, Canadian troops would be engaged in desperate, fighting against heavy artillery and waves of Chinese soldiers. The Canadians held their positions in both battles, and no ground was yielded—the sacrifices and achievements in the area of Hill 355 would be a significant chapter in Canada’s Korean War history.^{D, 3O, 6R}

In the November 22-25, 1951 battle, the defense of Hill 355 was the responsibility of the 2nd Battalion of the US 7th Infantry Regiment and the Canadian Royal 22e Regiment (Vandoos) on the flank. The enemy began an intense artillery bombardment on the morning of November 22, which was followed by waves of Chinese soldiers storming the hill. The enemy’s frequent refusal to take cover from fire led to widespread belief that the attacking troops were drugged. It was desperate fighting day and night in the snow, bitter cold and mud. The Canadians would endure the same onslaught of shells from tanks, self-propelled guns, artillery pieces, mortars and waves of Chinese infantry. Hill 355 passed from Chinese to American to Chinese hands and back again, but each time, the Canadians held their position. After four days and nights of continual shelling in the rain and freezing temperatures, attacks and counterattacks, Hill 355 was again in American hands. For the Royal 22e Regiment, although in a state of near exhaustion, their resolve to hold their position turned the tide atop Hill 355. Sixteen Canadian Vandoos were killed, thirty-six were wounded, and two Canadians were taken prisoner by the Chinese during the fight, the first Canadian soldiers to suffer that misfortune in Korea. They were imprisoned in camps in North Korea administered by the Chinese.^{9Y}

Throughout October 1952, the Royal Canadian Regiment, then guarding the hill, had experienced periodic enemy bombardments. Between October 17 and 22, very heavy enemy bombardments badly damaged their defences, cutting telephone wires and caving in weapon pits. One RCR Captain said, “For four days they just laid the boots to us with every gun they had.” In the early evening of October 23, another heavy artillery barrage enemy barrage

opened up. Soon after, with bugles blowing and soldiers yelling and screaming, the Chinese launched their large assault force in waves. Under heavy assault and with communications cut off, some of the Canadians were forced to abandon their defensive positions to the surging enemy that overran them. From October 23 night until the early morning of October 24, Canadian artillery, tank and mortar fire on the captured areas halted the Chinese advance and prevented them from resupplying their front line, forcing the Chinese to withdraw. The Canadians counterattacked and succeeded in regaining control of Hill 355 by the early morning of October 24. UN Command estimated that about a hundred RCR troops had defended the base of Hill 355 against two Chinese battalions, or about 1,500 men. The action took a heavy toll on the Canadians with 18 killed, 14 taken prisoner and 35 wounded.^{D, 2N, 3O, 6P, 6R, 6T, 6U, 9Y, 9Z}

One of those who lost his life in the October 1952 Hill 355 battle was **Private Edward Joseph Knight** of Sarnia.

• **BATTLE OF HILL 187:** The 3rd Battalion of The Royal Canadian Regiment (RCR) arrived at the front lines, on Hill 187, on the night of April 19, 1953. Back in October 1951, **Corporal John Richard Toole** of Sarnia had lost his life on Hill 187. In the spring of 1953, the newly arrived 3rd Battalion RCR's immediately set about to improve defences and to increase patrolling in no man's land. Hill 187 held no strategic value, and there was no real warning of the attack that was coming.

Just three weeks after arriving at the front, on the night of May 2, 1953, several RCR platoons, while carrying out their routine patrols, were ambushed by an overwhelming number of Chinese troops. Miraculously, a few of the RCR survived the surprise attack, and made their way through barb-wire and landmines to the safety of Canadian-held positions. It was then that the enemy would launch their attack, beginning with an artillery and mortar barrage. Five separate Chinese forces then surged forward across no-man's-land towards the Canadian lines. The RCR's "C" Company withstood an unusually strong enemy assault on Hill 187. It began with a heavy artillery bombardment, then machine gun and grenade fire as waves of enemy infantry swarmed the Canadians. With ammunition being exhausted, and the enemy overrunning RCR positions, the battle degenerated into rifle fire, grenades, bayonets and hand-to-hand combat. Cursing, screaming, shouted warnings, and cries of agony, all added to the horror of those terrible moments. At the height of the battle, one of the RCR platoon commanders called down an artillery bombardment on his own trenches to disperse a Chinese offensive that may have numbered over 800 troops. Within minutes of the call, a concentrated hail of UN artillery and tank shells, mortar bombs and machine gun fire, rained down on the platoon's position. Continued fire on the infiltrated areas during the early morning hours of May 3 eventually drove the Chinese out of the Hill 187 area.

The attack was repulsed and the Canadians re-occupied their positions, but the RCRs lost more soldiers that night than any other Canadian battalion did in a single engagement during the Korean War—26 killed, 27 wounded and seven taken prisoner (and 4 Katcom soldiers were killed, 14 wounded and 4 missing). It was the Canadian Army's last major firefight of the Korean War. This unfortunate tragedy was not even properly reported in Canadian newspapers. Censors in Korea wanted to keep the enormity of the losses covered up during the last months of the peace talks, while much wrangling and sabre rattling was taking place in the conference hut at Panmunjom.^{D, 4A, 6T, 9Y, 9Z}

The RCRs who fought in the Hill 187 battle were not entirely forgotten. In the Afghanistan War, in 2002 when the base for the 2,000-strong Canadian contingent of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) was established in Kabul, Afghanistan, it was named **Camp Julien**. It honoured the memory of Corporal George Patrick Julien, who had fought with his section in the tragic Battle of Hill 187 on the night of May 2-3, 1953. Corporal Julien was one of three Royals who were awarded the Military Medal for bravery in the field.^{6T}

• **A BIT OF HOME:** Previous to the Korean War, civilian services including the Canadian Red Cross Society, the Royal Canadian Legion, the Knights of Columbus and the Salvation Army, had provided for the soldiers by sending such things as scarves, writing paper and cigarettes. During the Korean War, the armed services themselves had decided to take charge of the "welfare" of troops abroad. The Canadian government provided such services as current motion pictures; tape recordings of CBC radio programs; a daily ration of twenty free cigarettes; spot news delivered in cables, magazines, and newspapers; recreational facilities at the Commonwealth leave centre in Tokyo; and sports equipment for field games.

In the winter of 1952 on the frozen Imjin River, engineers had scraped the river's ice surface, and erected waist-high boards and goal nets. The first game at the impromptu "Imjin Gardens" featured a heated contest between a team from the Royal Canadian Regiment against a team from the Royal 22e Regiment. Games on the Imjin River weren't the smoothest, cleanest contests, but they sure helped Canadians forget the war.

Screenings of such annual sporting events as the Grey Cup final, the Canadian Open Golf Tournament and the Stanley Cup finals were flown in. A few sports celebrities even visited the troops, including Detroit Red Wing fan favourite Red Kelly and Regina Roughriders' star half-back Ken Charlton. Behind the lines, soldiers built venues to watch movies, and built volleyball courts, baseball diamonds and horseshoe pitches. There was a parade of entertainment celebrities that visited the troops behind the front lines—a who's who of entertainers from the 1950s. Some Canadian troops managed to attend shows sponsored by the USO featuring such performers as Bing Crosby, Bob Hope, Betty Hutton and Piper Laurie. Canadian positions were visited by a variety of entertainers, musicians and comedians including singer Lorraine McAllister, actor-singer John Pratt, country artist Hank Snow, and radio show performers Johnny Wayne and Frank Shuster along with their ensemble of musicians and performers.^{9Y, 9Z}

- **AIR SUPPORT:** Every phase of the Korean campaign was a combined operation in which United Nations forces on the sea and in the air played a prominent and vital role. From the very early stages of the war, the United Nations forces enjoyed complete supremacy in the air. After only two months of the war, all but 18 of North Korea's 130 combat aircraft had been put out of action. Even after Chinese forces entered the war, their short-range Russian-built MIG-15 fighters required airfields in Korea, and these were successfully destroyed by US bombers. Allied heavy bombers destroyed enemy airfields, railways, bridges, tunnels and troops. Fighters hammered enemy forward positions, while air reconnaissance aided UN ground troops in their operations.

No Canadian fighter squadron was ever sent from Canada, but between November 1950 and July 1953, 22 RCAF pilots were attached to the United States Fifth Air Force (USAF) and flew with Sabre-equipped jet fighter-interceptor squadrons. Pilots who flew jets in Korea went on sorties that usually lasted about an hour and a half. The Canadian pilots were credited with 20 Russian-made jet fighters destroyed or damaged, as well as the destruction of several enemy trains and trucks. A number of Canadians served with the Royal Air Force directing UN artillery fire at Chinese positions; and with the USAF Tactical Air Control Party that provided air strike support for ground troops.

The Korean War was the first conflict in history to use helicopters to deliver cargo to ground troops, land combat units, and evacuate wounded. But while the Americans used choppers widely, Canadians relied on planes, such as the single-engine Auster observation planes for reconnaissance. The Canadian contribution to the air effort began early in the war when No. 426 (Thunderbird) Transport Squadron, RCAF, was attached to the US Military Air Transport Service. By June 1954, the Canadian Transport Company had flown 600 round trips over the Pacific between McChord Air Force Base in the state of Washington and Tokyo, Japan, carrying more than 13,000 passengers, mostly soldiers, and 3,000,000 kilograms of supplies, equipment and mail without loss of life or cargo.

Another Canadian contribution, a means of rapid transit for politicians, diplomats and generals, was a single-engine airplane—the Beaver. Built in 1947 by Canadian manufacturer de Havilland, the Beaver was designed for use in the bush. In 1950, the aircraft caught the eye of those equipping the US Army, who were “looking for a tough short-takeoff-and-landing, utility aircraft capable of carrying six people for a radius of 200 miles and able to land anywhere.” In other words, they needed “a flying jeep.” Instead of the many competing American aircraft, officials of the US Army chose the Beaver. They would be used across the front for dropping food and ammunition in tight spots; for running communication wires from one position to another; for carrying wounded; and for flying military VIPs on their appointed rounds.^{D, 2N, 4A, 6R, 7A, 9Y, 9Z}

- **NAVAL SUPPORT:** The first military aid provided by Canada was made by the Royal Canadian Navy less than two weeks after the outbreak of hostilities. Three Tribal Class destroyers—*HMCS Cayuga*, *Athabaskan* and *Sioux* sailed out of Esquimalt, B.C. to the Far East, arriving on July 30, 1950 into the port of Sasebo, Japan, approximately 100 nautical miles from Korean waters. This would be the RCN's home away from home for the next thirty-seven months of fighting.

A total of eight tribal-class escort destroyers of the Royal Canadian Navy would join the United Nations in providing naval support over the course of the war. They performed a variety of tasks that included: maintaining a continuous blockade of the enemy coast; preventing amphibious landings by the enemy; escorting troop and cargo ships; screening carriers from the threat of submarine and aerial attack; supporting the United Nations land forces by bombardment of enemy-held coastal areas; supporting UN commando raid operations behind enemy lines; searching sampans, junks and coastal islands for infiltrators; clearing coastal waterways of mines; carrying out sea rescue work; and protecting the friendly islands and bringing aid and comfort to the sick and needy of South Korea's isolated fishing villages. They faced the ever-present danger of enemy mines and gun-fire from shore batteries, air and

submarine attacks, as well as the hazards contributed by the geography and climate of the area.

Another popular form of harassment used against the Communists was “train busting.” Running north-south along North Korea’s eastern coastline were the enemy rail lines. That made every supply train chugging down the coast to the 38th parallel a target for UN navy gunners. The activity took on such a high profile that any ship destroying or disabling a Communist Forces train earned membership in “**The Trainbusters Club.**” *HMCS Crusader* was the first Canadian ship admitted to the club, on October 26, 1952, hitting an enemy train from 10,000 yards offshore. *HMCS Haida* and *HMCS Athabaskan* would also join the club. Of the twenty-eight supply trains officially recorded in The Trainbusters Club, RCN ships and gunners accounted for eight.

In early December 1950, a UN naval flotilla, including RCN vessels *HMCS Cayuga*, *Athabaskan* and *Sioux*, traversed through treacherous conditions, successfully evacuated the 7,700 US troops and materiel, and civilians trapped in the North Korea key port of **Chinnampo**, on the west coast of the Korean peninsula. Some called this successful retreat “the most important and most dangerous naval mission of the Korean War”.

In October 1952, the Royal Canadian Navy suffered its first and only battle casualties of the war. While on an east coast patrol *HMCS Iroquois* received a direct hit from a shore battery. Three men were killed in action and ten were wounded. By the time the Armistice was signed in July 1953, approximately 3,621 officers and men of the Royal Canadian Navy had served in Korea.^{D, 2N, 4A, 6R, 7A, 9Y, 9Z}

The Great Imposter: The *HMCS Cayuga* was one of the first RCN destroyers to arrive in Korea in July 1950. In the fall of 1951, the ship became notorious for having one of the most unusual deceptions in Canadian naval history. Her ship’s doctor was an American con artist who was posing as a Canadian Lieutenant Surgeon.

Ferdinand Waldo (“Fred”) Demara Jr., the son of a French-Canadian father and an Irish-American mother, was born in Massachusetts in 1921. He ran away from home at sixteen and entered a monastery in Rhode Island. He failed as a monk, and tried at least two other religious orders but dropped out of both. Then for more than a decade, he held a number of positions in which he was qualified in none of them. At various times he was a doctor of psychology, university lecturer, dean of the school of philosophy at a Pennsylvania college, a law student, a zoology graduate, a teacher at a junior college in Maine, and a Texas prison assistant warden—all posts he had obtained and held on the basis of forged, stolen or nonexistent qualifications. After entering Canada, as a monk named Brother John, Demara had become friendly with Doctor Joseph C. Cyr, who was practicing medicine in Grand Falls, New Brunswick. Demara would disappear with the physician’s credentials.

In March 1951, Demara presented himself as Doctor Joseph Cyr at the naval recruiting office in Saint John, N.B., offering his professional services to the Royal Canadian Navy. With the desperate need for qualified medical officers, he was quickly processed, and his credentials accepted without verification. In fact, “Doctor Joseph Cyr’s” medical experience was limited to a few weeks as an unskilled hospital orderly in the United States.

“Doctor Cyr” worked in naval hospitals in Nova Scotia for three months and then for a short period on the aircraft carrier *Magnificent*. He was then assigned to duty in Korea and in June 1951, “Doctor Joseph Cyr” was assigned to join *HMCS Cayuga* for the destroyers second tour of duty in Korean waters.

“Surgeon-Lieutenant Cyr” managed to cope effectively with the routine illnesses, occasional accidents, a few minor injuries and ailments on board, and he had a capable sick berth attendant who handled most of the routine cases. His first big challenge came when he was forced to act as a dentist, treating an infected tooth from none other than the ship’s captain. After administering a hefty dose of local anesthetic, “Cyr” successfully removed the infected tooth, and by all reports, the ship’s captain had no further trouble with it.

In September 1951, the *Cayuga* took part in commando-type operations against enemy-occupied islands on the Korean west coast. Following one of these successful forays, three seriously wounded casualties (one with a rifle bullet through his lung) —all South Korean guerillas—were brought to “Doctor Cyr” on the *Cayuga*. On her after-canopy deck, “Cyr” did a triage of the wounded and requested an operating area to be readied for a soldier with a punctured lung. In the Captain’s cabin, “Cyr” opened up the soldier’s chest, extracted a bullet (that was close to the heart) from a lung, and sewed the man up and proceeded to deal with all the other wounded on deck. All three wounded men survived and Demara later bragged about the removal of the bullet.

A navy public relations man heard about “Doctor Cyr’s” skills and felt they should be publicized. When a war correspondent featured the story of the *Cayuga* doctor’s work in Canadian newspapers, the real Doctor Cyr, in New Brunswick, began asking questions. In late October 1951, the *Cayuga*’s Surgeon-Lieutenant Joseph Cyr was

uncovered as an unqualified imposter.

On arrival in Canada, Demara appeared before a naval board of inquiry. There is no record of disciplinary proceedings, and service records indicate that “Cyr” was given an honourable release out of the navy and \$1,000 in back pay. The real Dr. Cyr did not press charges saying that Demara “had done a good job and helped people and that’s all that is important.” Fred Demara was deported to the United States where he returned to the religious field, becoming a hospital chaplain. A book about his exploits came out in 1959 and two years later, a Hollywood movie with the same title as the book came out, *The Great Imposter*, starring Tony Curtis in the role of Ferdinand Demara.^{H, 7A, 9Y, 9Z}

• **THE WAR “ENDS”:** The Korean War “ended” on July 27, 1953 with the signing of the Korea Armistice Agreement at Panmunjom. It had been two years, two weeks and three days since the two sides began peace negotiations. On that morning, the UN and communist delegations filed into a newly constructed Peace Pagoda at Panmunjom. The senior UN delegate, Major General William Harrison, and the chief of staff of the Korean People’s Army, Nam Il, each entered the building at 10 o’clock, sat down and signed his name eighteen times to the armistice documents. Not a word was exchanged between them and just as swiftly the two exited. A ceasefire would go into effect twelve hours later. According to the terms of the armistice, opposing sides were given 72 hours to remove all their supplies, ammunition, and equipment from the “demilitarized zone.” They had to disassemble pickets and barbed-wire fences, remove mines and communication facilities, demolish trenches and bunkers and leave the area entirely.

As they set about the job on the day after the hostilities ended, the Canadians along the front noticed a phenomenon that to them was as chilling as it was unexpected. Out of the bunkers immediately opposite them appeared, not just a few, or even a few hundred, Chinese troops, but thousands and thousands of them, swarming through no-man’s land, across the trenches on the Chinese side, and up and over the hills leading back from the front. A captain with the PPCLI who was there that morning said, “No one will ever forget the psychological impact of seeing for the first time the ‘human sea’” of enemy troops opposing them.^{9Y, 9Z}

The *Sarnia Observer* front page headline on that day read, “SHOOTING ENDS IN KOREA – Armies to Retire, Form Buffer Zone.” Following is a portion of the main story:

SEOUL – Shooting stopped along the Korean battlefield at 10 p.m. tonight, 9 a.m. Monday EDT, bringing to an abrupt halt 37 months of death and destruction. While ground fighting was all but nil in the final hours, mounting Communist artillery fire took its toll of Allied soldiers up to the last minute. At 10 p.m., a hush fell over the front. The last man to die may never be named. Nor, perhaps will the last hero. The front, usually aflame at this hour of night, just grew dark. Men heaved sighs of relief, but with great caution. As the clock ticked off the seconds, they grew more brave.

Silence came after a smashing artillery duel between Allied and Red guns that began in mid-afternoon and built up a deafening crescendo shortly before 10 p.m. All day and into the night the Reds sent artillery and mortar barrages screaming into Allied lines east of Kumhwa on the central front... Allied artillery boomed back trying to silence the guns. Associated Press correspondent Randolph said all firing stopped at 9:43 p.m. A few seconds after 10 p.m. wild yells broke out from the U.S. troops. Even as the shooting ended, litter jeeps and ambulances wound down dusty hill trails from outpost ridges, bringing moaning, broken men to rear hospitals.

The July 27 *Sarnia Observer* also published comments from a number of prominent Sarnia citizens on the armistice in Korea. They spoke of having great joy with the signing of the truce and expressed a few cautionary words; for example, Mayor W.C. Nelson said, *Surely the world will welcome this step towards peace, and hope it holds to the day when our young people can plan their future free from the threat of war and its attendant destruction. However, there should be no lessening of our defence program. The policy of the United Nations should be one of unrelenting scientific research and development so that we may attain and never allow to weaken a defensive strength behind which we can feel reasonably safe and which none will dare challenge. Possibly then, some of our effort can be directed toward helping the unfortunate peoples and so assure our own continuing progress. This armistice may thus present a great opportunity for human achievement.*

Prisoners of War: Prisoners of War were a big part of the peace negotiations, and a large sticking point for the signing of the Armistice. The biggest issue with this topic was the potential repatriation of prisoners, specifically with North Korean and Chinese soldiers that didn’t wish to return to North Korea. The first exchange, “Operation

Little Switch” (April 20-May 3, 1953), was the exchange of sick and wounded prisoners at Panmunjom, a crossing point along the 38th parallel known as “Freedom Village.” Over the two weeks, 684 UN prisoners were swapped for 6,670 Chinese and North Korean POWs. On May 3, 1953, the day that Operation Little Switch was completed, Chinese forces overran “C” Company of the 3rd Battalion of the RCR on Hill 187, and seven new Canadian prisoners were en route to POW camps in North Korea.

After the signing of the July 27, 1953 Armistice, the task of exchanging prisoners began approximately one week later. “Operation Big Switch” (August 5-December 23, 1953) would extend over two months, and included the release of an estimated 14 Canadians, 922 British, 3,313 Americans and approximately 8,000 South Koreans, along with 74,000 North Korean and Red Chinese held by the UN Command. Many prisoners held by the UN chose to settle in South Korea, while a few hundred prisoners held by the Communists remained in North Korea.

A total of 33 Canadians were taken prisoner during the course of the war. Most of the Canadian prisoners-of-war were captured by Chinese, not North Korean troops. Neither North Korea or the Republic of China had signed the Geneva Convention of 1949, which guaranteed standards of treatment of prisoners. About 40 per cent of UN prisoners would die in captivity from starvation, disease and untreated wounds. Prisoners were treated harshly, enduring hardships that included solitary confinement, “sweat boxes”, retributive discipline, diets of minimal food and water, primitive medical treatment, and the Chinese applied their so-called “lenient treatment” policy, which considered POWs as “victims of the ruling classes—students who were to be educated and pointed towards the truth.” For the Chinese communists, prisoners-of-war had a distinct propaganda value when kept alive. Through interrogation and indoctrination, efforts were made by the Chinese to “brainwash” POWs in attempts to alter their political perceptions. Threats and torture were used to force prisoners to sign untrue statements including: that they had entered Chinese territory; that they thought the war unjust; and that UN forces were using germ warfare. All of the Canadians would return home after the war. The last Canadian to be released from imprisonment in China was fighter pilot Andy Mackenzie—he was released on December 5, 1954, a year and a half after the armistice.^{D, H, 2E, 2N, 6R, 9Y, 9Z}

Canadians Post-Armistice: Gradually, the Canadian soldiers departed from Korea. Most went by truck to the nearest railhead. From there they travelled in dusty, slow, terribly uncomfortable old rail cars with wooden seats to the port of embarkation. Then they boarded ships for their next stop—Japan. There they received medical checks, blood tests and so on, and many spent time sightseeing and souvenir-shopping prior to leaving for home. After the turmoil and deprivations they had experienced in Korea, Japan was a welcome change. Sergeant Clarence Fisher of London, Ontario, who was posted in Tokyo said, “As far as our soldiers who passed through Japan were concerned, I don’t care if they live to be a hundred, when they speak of Japan their eyes light up. They will always remember Japan as a different happening.”^{9Z}

Whether they were in Seoul, Pusan, Tokyo, or Kure, they then boarded ships for home. They were returning to a country that had grown increasingly tired of the war on the other side of the world. For the most part, they came home quietly. The ships arrived in Seattle generally, and the Canadians on board went by train to Vancouver, for transfer across the country. Occasionally a band played or there were a few “welcome home” speeches, but just as often there was nothing. The happiness the soldiers felt on returning to Canada was tinged with sadness as they saw their buddies leave the train as it travelled eastward. Their exultation turned to disappointment as they saw how little their country seemed to care about where they had been or what they had done.^{9Z}

After the war “ended”, approximately 7,000 Canadians continued to serve in the Korean theatre until the end of 1955, with some troops remaining until June of 1957. As the Koreans began to rebuild their country, Canadian troops remained in South Korea to help with reconstruction, logistics and security. The Canadian sector included some of their former battlegrounds such as Hill 355—a permanent monument to courage, battle and bloodshed. The troops contended with the same natural elements as that of their predecessors—summer heat, dust, torrential rains and the freezing cold of winter. They also lived with the knowledge that theirs was a dangerous mission, for if the North launched another full-scale invasion, the likelihood of their survival would be slim.^{D, H, 2E, 6R, 9Y, 9Z}

Peace in Korea: With the signing of the Korea Armistice Agreement by generals of the United Nations and North Korea on July 27, 1953, the nervous truce began with troops of each side pulling back 1 ¼ miles (2 km). Though the armistice was signed, a peace treaty was never signed—the war did not officially end, so technically the two Koreas are still at war. A buffer ‘demilitarized’ zone (DMZ) 2 ½ miles (4 km) wide and running the entire length of the 155-mile (250 km) front was established.

- **THE COST OF THE KOREAN WAR:** The casualty figures during the Korean War vary depending on what source is used. For example, the UN perspective and the North Korean/Chinese perspectives are different, and no doubt some propaganda is involved. It is generally agreed that more than three million people died in Korea between June 25, 1950 and July 27, 1953, and more than half of those killed would be civilians. The following are common estimates: South Korea had approximately 850,000 military casualties, including 113,000 killed; North Korea had an estimated 1.3 million military casualties, including 316,000 killed; China had an estimated 900,000 casualties, including 460,000 killed; and the United States, which sent over 1.3 million troops, had nearly 64,000 killed or missing in action and 103,000 wounded. South Korea had approximately 550,000 civilians killed, and North Korea had over one million civilian deaths. Sixteen nations participated in the Korean War, and others including the United Kingdom, Turkey, Australia, France, Thailand, Greece, Holland, Columbia, Belgium and Canada also suffered casualties, estimated to be nearly 5,900 killed and missing in action.^{D, H, 6R, 9Y, 9Z}

Canada's Sacrifices: The Korean War was the beginning of a new era of involvement in world affairs that saw Canadian troops deployed around the world in truce teams, peace commissions and emergency forces. Canada's contribution during the Korean War enabled South Korea to evolve into a free society, allowing its people to build a strong and prosperous democracy versus that of the completely totalitarian, impoverished North Korea. Three years of Korean War involved tough fighting on steep hills, across dangerous valleys and through dense jungle, with weather ranging from stifling heat to extreme cold, and with soldiers having to endure long marches, bugs, snakes, bad food and disease.

A total of 26,791 Canadian men and women served in the Korean War, including over 22,000 army soldiers and more than 4,000 sailors and airmen. Over 1,550 Canadians became casualties, including 516 who paid the ultimate sacrifice. Of those killed, 312 were killed in action during the war itself. The others died from various causes in training, in transit, or in the war theatre, between 1950 and 1956.^{D, H, 6R, 9Y, 9Z}

Sarnia's Korean War Sacrifices: It is estimated that more than 50 men from Sarnia-Lambton served in the Korean War theatre (the list of Sarnian's who served in the Korean War is page 1199).^N Four Sarnians lost their lives in Korea—their names are inscribed on the Sarnia cenotaph. Privates Patrick William O'Connor, Edward Joseph Knight and John O'Hara Wright have their remains buried in United Nations Memorial Cemetery in Pusan, South Korea. Corporal John Richard Toole has no known grave, his name is inscribed on the Commonwealth Memorial in Pusan, South Korea. All four Sarnians also have a plaque on Canada's Korean War Memorial Wall in Brampton, Ontario, and their names are inscribed on the Monument to Canadian Fallen in Pusan and Ottawa.

- **REMEMBERING THE FALLEN:** In January 1951, various battlefield cemeteries that had been set up behind the lines were concentrated at Tang-gok, a suburb of Pusan. The land for the cemetery was granted to the United Nations by the Republic of Korea as a tribute to all those who had laid down their lives in combatting aggression and in upholding peace and freedom. Of the almost 2,300 soldiers buried in the **United Nations Memorial Cemetery** in Pusan, 1,588 are Commonwealth soldiers, including 376 Canadians. The remaining Canadian fallen include 16 with no known grave; 24 buried in Yokohama, Japan; 93 buried in Canada (including the 17 killed in the Canoe River rail tragedy); and 5 missing at sea.

Like the military cemeteries in Normandy and Holland, local children regularly tend the graves of Canadian soldiers in South Korea. Also in the United Nations Memorial Cemetery, is a stone memorial with bronze panels, the **Commonwealth Memorial**, that honours the memory of soldiers from Britain, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa who died in the Korean War and have no known graves. There are 16 Canadians inscribed on it.

The **Canadian Korean War Memorial Garden** is situated in Naechon, northeast of Kapyong and just below the hills that were defended by Canadian Forces in the Battle of Kapyong in April 1951. Three monuments have been erected at this site: a stone cairn commemorating the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry (PPCLI); a stone tablet with three panels in Korean, English and French listing the units of the Canadian Forces that participated in the Korean War; and a larger memorial, unveiled in 1983, and dedicated by the people of Korea to the memory of the Canadians who served in Korea. A plaque at the front of the memorial reads;

Canadian Contribution to the Korean War

Between 1950 and 1953, Canada participated in the Korean War as part of a United Nations multinational force to protect South Korea from invasion by North Korea. When considered in proportion to the population of the country, Canada's army, navy and air force formed one of the largest contingents of the United Nations forces. Some 27,000 Canadians left behind the comforts of home in the interests of peace and security in a region far removed from their

own country. Five hundred and sixteen of them gave their lives in the name of this noble cause. Recognized for their military skills and the recipients of many military decorations, these valiant Canadians embodied their country's commitment to safeguard the fundamental principles of the United Nations.

In 2001, the **Monument to Canadian Fallen** was unveiled in the United Nations Memorial Cemetery in Pusan. A replica of the monument was also unveiled in Ottawa in September 2003. The monument features an unarmed Canadian soldier holding a young Korean girl and guiding a Korean boy. The children represent the generations of Koreans who live in freedom thanks to those who served and those who made the supreme sacrifice. The girl is holding a bouquet of 21 maple leaves, representing the 16 Canadians with no known grave and the five Canadian sailors lost at sea. The boy is holding a bouquet in which maple leaves are mixed with roses of Sharon, the national flower of Korea, as a symbol of the friendship between the two countries. The monument bears the inscription: "WE WILL NEVER FORGET YOU BRAVE SONS OF CANADA" in English, French and Korean, along with the inscribed names of the 516 Canadian soldiers who died serving in the Korean War.^{D, H, 2E, 3O, 6R}

• **SARNIA'S F-86 RCAF MEMORIAL:** Located in Germain Park is one of Sarnia's military landmarks, the Royal Canadian Air Force Memorial. Along with an RCAF memorial plaque, there is an F-86 MkV Sabre Golden Hawk fighter jet, serial number 23164. The aircraft was a surplus jet, one that had come to Sarnia when purchased by members of Sarnia's Air Force Association from a London, Ontario hanger in 1970 at a cost of \$800. Originally it had been stored in a warehouse and was almost burned beyond repair in a fire there in 1970. It was restored in 1971 by the 403 Wing Sarnia RCAF. In September of 1973, the restored F-86 Golden Hawk was put up on the mount over the Royal Canadian Air Force Memorial in Germain Park, as a memorial to honour the airmen who died in the Battle of Britain of World War II. In 1985, the Golden Hawk underwent a second on-site restoration.

The Germain Park jet is a Canadair CL-13 Sabre, a variant of the North American F-86 Sabre. In 1948, the Canadian government decided that the F-86 would be the next fighter jet of the RCAF. Canadair Limited in Montreal produced the Canadian Sabres, under project number CL-13. Six versions of the CL-13 were produced—from the Sabre Mk. 1 to Sabre Mk. 6. The Germain Park Sabre is a Sabre Mark. 5.

The first Canadair CL-13 Sabre flight took place in 1950. Production of the jet increased during the Korean War, and they were produced until 1958, with a total of 1,815 CL-13s built in Canada. They were used by the RCAF and also exported to several NATO allies. Canada did not send any fighter squadrons to Korea, but it did supply sixty F-86 Mk 2 Sabres to the United States Air Force. Canadian pilots were also sent there on "exchange" with the United States Air Force, where they flew in 1,036 sorties in Korea. For the United States Air Force, the F-86 was used very successfully as its primary air-to-air fighter jet against the Soviet-built MiG-15s. The F-86 was the RCAF's principal fighter during the first decade of the Cold War, with 12 squadrons based in Europe and several stations in Canada. The Royal Canadian Air Force retired the F-86 Sabre from fighter operations in 1963.^{2S, 3G, 4V, 4W}

The F-86 Sabre jet in Germain Park is painted in the metallic gold and red colours of the RCAF "Golden Hawks" aerobatics flying team. The "Golden Hawks" were a Canadian military aerobatic flying team established in 1959 to celebrate the RCAF's 35th anniversary and the "Golden" 50th anniversary of Canadian flight. The initial six-plane team flew Mk V aircraft, later the Mk VI, and the team was very popular, doing many shows a year across North America. The Golden Hawks were the predecessors of the modern-day Canadian Forces "Snowbirds" aerobatics flying team. The Golden Hawks team continued in operation until February 1964. The F-86 in Germain Park was never an active member plane of the Golden Hawks.^{2S, 3G, 4V, 4W}

In the fall of 2013, Sarnia's Golden Hawk was removed from its Germain Park pedestal to undergo an extensive third restoration thanks to the efforts of a volunteer team of aeronautic enthusiasts, including the 403 Wing Sarnia RCAFA, the Canadian Owners and Pilots Association (COPA Flight 7) and members of the Royal Canadian Air Cadets 44 Sarnia Imperial Squadron. The volunteer team dedicated thousands of hours to restore the aircraft to its original state, and support and donations were received from individuals and businesses across the community.

Sarnia's Golden Hawk was remounted on its pedestal in Germain Park in December 2014. The Sarnia F-86 Golden Hawk Memorial was rededicated in May 2015 as part of a tribute in honour of all of the RCAF pilots and personnel who have served for this country, past and present, and also in honour of the Golden Hawks aerobatic team, including the pilots, crew chiefs, and ground personnel. The Sabre jet's most notable Golden Hawk pilot, F/L Jim McCombe and his flight crew—LAC Harnum and LAC Campbell—were honoured by having their names lettered beneath the canopy trim in the tradition of the Golden Hawks. Among those in attendance at the May 2015 re-dedication ceremony were; Lt. Col (Ret) Joseph "Fern" Villeneuve, the first leader of the Golden Hawks

aerobatics team in 1959; Ferne and Karyn McCombe, the wife and daughter of F/L Jim McCombe; and Sarnia-born former Canadian astronaut Chris Hadfield, who remembered being inspired to dream big as a child, after watching the Golden Hawks aerobatic team in action.^N The RCAF Memorial and F-86 Sabre Golden Hawk Monument plaque inscriptions honouring the Golden Hawks aerobatics team is included in this Project on page 1166.



Sarnia F-86 Sabre RCAF Memorial

• **THE KOREAN WAR – “THE FORGOTTEN WAR”:** In the United States, even at the height of the conflict, President Harry Truman referred to it as a “police action” as it was an undeclared military action, conducted under the auspices of the United Nations. UN delegates and political leaders of the sixteen-member nations that contributed troops also described Korea as a “police action.” However, from the very beginning, UN Secretary General Trygve Lie described North Korea’s move across the 38th parallel as “war against the United Nations.”

The Korean War is more often referred to as “The Forgotten War” for three reasons: first, the virtual “stalemate” of the on-going war over time took the war off the front pages of newspapers and Canadians lost interest; secondly, it fell between the Second World War and the Vietnam War, the latter having media coverage which provided people with daily news reports; and lastly, the Korean War ended as an armistice, where there was no victor. Boundaries between North and South Korea were simply readjusted around the 38th Parallel. Even today, technically both North and South Korea are still at war, separated only by the Demilitarized Zone between them.^{D, H, 2E, 2N, 6P}

In Canada, Korean veterans returned to a rather indifferent country, one that was preoccupied with seemingly more important matters, among them: a national pipeline would soon bring Alberta oil to Sarnia; a canal system up the St. Lawrence would soon give Atlantic Ocean freighters access to the Great Lakes; and old-age security cheques were a reality. There were no ticker-tape parades, no brass bands, no civic receptions. Returning veterans were largely forgotten, and in many cases, never even acknowledged for their service despite the bravery shown during the war.

They were not formally recognized as war veterans until the late 1980s when the Canadian government decided that the war was, in fact, a war and not a “conflict”. It was not until 1991 that Korean War veterans were awarded the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal for their service in Korea. During the 60th anniversary of the armistice, the Canadian government designated 2013 as the Year of the Korean War Veteran and made every July 27 **National Korean War Veterans Day**.^{3O, 7A, 9Y, 9Z}

The Korea Veterans Association of Canada: This organization had its beginnings twenty years after the armistice at a small reunion of about 130 Korean War veterans and their wives at Camp Borden. Formed the following year in 1974, its membership would peak to 60-odd branches across Canada. Along with the social aspect, from the beginning, the association worked on behalf of those who served in Korea, including: campaigning to have local cenotaphs to include recognition of the Korean War; representing veterans applying for government support and disability pensions; and lobbying government officials to convince them that Korea was not a “conflict,” but a “war.”^{6T, 9Y}

• **CANADA'S KOREAN WAR MEMORIAL WALL OF REMEMBRANCE:** This memorial is located at Meadowvale Cemetery in Brampton, Ontario. A group of volunteers initiated the Wall Project, forming a committee that collected donations from Legion branches, military associations, service clubs, corporations, businesses, community organizations from across the country and Canadian veterans of the Korean War themselves (no provincial or federal funding was offered). The Wall of Remembrance was dedicated on July 27, 1997, on the forty-fourth anniversary of the Korean War armistice. The curved 61-metre long, 0.6-metre high polished granite wall contains 516 bronze plaques, one for each of the volunteer Canadian soldiers who died serving in the Korea War. The plaques are replicas of those gracing the graves in Busan, South Korea.

On one wall of the Memorial is a poem written by **Jack (John Edward) LaChance**. Jack LaChance was born November 11, 1931 and educated in Windsor, Ontario. He was a veteran of the Korean War, serving two tours of duty with the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry from August 1950 to September 1952. Jack LaChance was honourably discharged in September 1952. After serving in the war, Jack LaChance married Frances (nee Deschamps) in Windsor in June 1955, and together they raised five children: Wendy, Patti, Jack II, Thomas and James. In 1971, the LaChance family moved to Sarnia where Jack became a well-known and successful businessman. Jack LaChance was also an accomplished writer and poet who published poems and articles in many venues. As long as he was able, Jack LaChance participated in the "Dominion Institute's Memory Project" by speaking in schools on behalf of Veterans of all wars.

In the mid-1990's, when veteran Jack LaChance heard a branch of the Korean Veterans Association of Canada was planning to erect a wall of remembrance of the war, he was overcome with emotion. For many years he had shut his Korean experiences out of his life. He had never even talked to his family about them. As the recollections filled his head, LaChance began jotting them down. He wrote personal anecdotes about Korea, stories for veterans' periodicals and he began an autobiography. The day Jack LaChance received the Wall donation request, he sat down and composed a poem. His poem, entitled *The Korean Veterans Wall*, took him two days to complete. He then mailed it along with his donation to the Wall Committee. Five months later, LaChance was nearly knocked off his chair when he learned that his poem had been chosen to accompany the names on the wall. Jack LaChance would also spearhead a campaign in the Sarnia area to raise funds for the wall. As for his reasoning for getting involved, in 1996 he said, "The war in Korea has almost become a forgotten part of our history. This wall is not a government project but the dream of dedicated veterans who have seen their comrades fall in battle."^N His commitment to having the wall built was a way to honour his friends, who never returned to Canada, and so when the children of Canada see the wall, they will not forget the deaths or the Korean War.

Jack LaChance took part in the dedication of the Korean Wall of Remembrance ceremonies in Brampton in July 1997. Taking part in the ceremony were army cadets, dignitaries, the Queen's Own Rifles of Canada band, the Lorne Scots Pipes and Drums, families of the fallen (including Terri O'Connor, daughter of Patrick O'Connor of Sarnia) and nearly 600 Korean veterans, including Jack LaChance, who paraded to the memorial. As soon as the dedication of the wall was complete, the veterans in the parade broke ranks and removed the poppies they'd been wearing, pinning them on the wall. Some of the men bowed their heads before the plaques; some saluted smartly; others embraced surviving comrades; and many wept. One of the family members to lay a wreath at the memorial that day was Mary Robertson (part of the Wall Committee). Her brother Bernard "Tunny" MacDonald was killed in Korea. About the sense of closure at the wall, Mary said, "It brought me close to [Tunny] again... he was buried in Korea, but we could never go there to see him. But touching the wall, I felt he wasn't in Korea anymore. We have brought their spirits home."

The following is a portion of a story Jack LaChance wrote on his thoughts about that day he visited the wall;

The dedication of the Korean Veterans National Wall of Remembrance on July 27, 1997, was one of the most meaningful and solemn days of my life. Up until that day, I had-for personal reasons-not participated in any Korean War commemorations because I thought it best to bury my thoughts and feelings about the war. But the dedication ceremony at the Meadowvale Cemetery in the southern Ontario city of Brampton was an event I could not miss...

While on board the bus that took the veterans to the cemetery, Jack reflected back to his military training days in the fall of 1950 in Calgary; to his days as an 18-year-old falling in for parade and inspection for the first time 47 years earlier; and of the old rivalries between the different regiments. *My personal feelings were mixed during the short ride to the cemetery... Many of us had still not viewed the Wall, and because of that we were filled with apprehension. We wondered what our reaction would be. A good many of us had visited the United Nations*

Cemetery in Pusan, South Korea, and the cemetery at the Yokohama British Commonwealth War Cemetery in Japan. The visits had been traumatic, to say the least.

After disembarking the bus, participating veterans from all parts of Canada marched to the Wall... It was an absolute honour to be part of that historic event... My impression of Canadian veterans is and always will be awesome. Most of these guys would do it all over again if our country called. Many were fit and still healthy. Others marched to the Wall with canes, wheelchairs, bad backs or sore legs. Yet we all had one thing in common. When the drummer struck his first rat-a-tat, we all had smiles on our faces and enthusiasm and pride in our hearts. These-to me-were some of the emotions that carried us into battle on the desolate hills of Korea. Our gait and cadence may have been slower, but inside we were once again marching soldiers...

As we got closer I heard the songs and cadences we had sung while marching years before. There was the unmistakable click of heavy cleated boots on pavement, and the always present mumbling in the ranks. But most of all I envisioned once again hundreds of young Canadians in full marching order, in unity, and each one willing to put their lives on the line to make our country and this world a better place.

I remember looking around at the crowd to see if I could spot the faces of my wife and four of our five children and their spouses. Perhaps some of the other guys felt the same way I did because most of us had tears running down our cheeks. My thoughts at that moment were: How thankful I am to be alive and having experienced the privilege of having a family, watching our children and grandchildren grow, living in a country as great and as free as Canada. What a blessing it was to be able to say to the Canadian soldiers who never came back from Korea: "Thank you guys, for helping make my dreams come true. I pray you know how much you are appreciated." ...^{2E}

Jack LaChance passed away on September 9, 2018 in Sarnia. He left behind his wife Frances, their five children, thirteen grandchildren and ten great grandchildren. He is buried in Our Lady of Mercy Cemetery in Sarnia.

Following is Jack LaChance's poem that is engraved on the Korean War Memorial Wall of Remembrance:

The Korean Veterans Wall

*Each uniquely mounted nameplate
On this Korea Veterans' Wall
Tells the story of a Person
Who rallied to their country's call*

*With courage and with Vigor
They trained and went to war
And shielded us from danger
On the South Korean shores*

*They gave their lives for freedom
That we all share today
In a far-off foreign country
Where most of their bodies lay*

*We still hear the buglar sounding
Each stirring note of his "Last Call"
While viewing all the nameplates
On this Korea Veterans' Wall*



BIOGRAPHIES OF SARNIA'S KOREAN WAR FALLEN SOLDIERS

KNIGHT, Edward Joseph Michael (#SA2506)

Sarnia born Edward Knight enlisted in the Canadian Army in October 1951 and five months later was deployed to Korea. One year after he enlisted, Edward was killed during the vicious fighting to take control of Hill 355. Edward, age 21, is buried in the United Nations Cemetery in Busan, South Korea and also has a memorial plaque on the Korea Veteran's National Wall of Remembrance in Meadowvale Cemetery, in Brampton, Ontario.

Edward Knight was born in Sarnia on March 14, 1931, the son of William Walter Knight and Violet Winnifred Wynne, of 183 Water Street, Sarnia. Edward's siblings (and ages at the time of his death) were brothers Donald Lawrence (19); Clifford John (17); and Gerald (8); and sisters Mary (25); Charlotte (15); and Theresa (14). Raised in Sarnia, Edward attended Our Lady of Mercy Elementary School and was a member of St. Joseph's Catholic Parish, Sarnia.

Edward, age 20 and single, enlisted in the Canadian army on October 24, 1951 in London, Ontario. He arrived in the Korean theatre five months later and was due to return on rotation leave at Easter of 1953. Private Knight was a member of the Army, the Royal Canadian Regiment (RCR), 1st Battalion.

By mid-1951, UN Command had re-established the 38th parallel as a stalemate line--the two sides had begun to solidify and dig in with deep defensive positions around this line. The war was becoming positional and more static. While company-sized attacks were sometimes mounted to improve defences or to keep the enemy off balance, the war was mostly fought from trenches into no man's land with endless patrolling, night raids against hilltop trench positions, repulsing enemy attacks, digging tunnels and trenches, booby traps and minefields, barbed wire, long nights standing guard in slit trenches, and artillery barrages. The enemies faced one another across a no-man's-land ranging from a few hundred metres in width to several kilometres. During this phase of the war, bloody battles raged for strategic high ground.

In early August 1952, the Royal Canadian Regiment was positioned in areas around **Hill 355**. Through the course of the war, the Canadians were often deployed on or near Hill 355, also known as "Kowang San" to the Koreans, and nicknamed "Little Gibraltar" by UN troops. When the Canadians moved onto its heights, they simply referred to it as "Three-five-five." Located about 40 kilometres north of Seoul, this strategically important hill was highly valued because it was the highest ground overlooking the surrounding front lines and supply routes. This strategic importance meant it would be the scene of fierce combat as both sides wanted to have it.

On two particular occasions, in late November 1951 and in late October 1952, Canadian troops were engaged in desperate fighting against heavy artillery and waves of Chinese soldiers. The Canadians held their positions in both battles, and no ground was yielded. The sacrifices and achievements in the area of Hill 355 were a significant chapter in Canada's Korean War history.

Towards the end of August 1952 when the RCR's were there, torrential monsoon rains caused many bunkers to collapse and made many more unserviceable. In late September, when the skies cleared and the slime began to dry, the soldiers began to repair their positions. It was during this time that the enemy gradually became more aggressive. The Chinese moved into no-man's-land with more strength and proceeded to attack patrols, to raid forward positions with increased harassing fire, and to support raids with more powerful concentrations of mortar and artillery fire. In the first three days of October 1952, RCR positions were bombarded heavily by enemy artillery. The hostile guns and mortars slackened until the 17th, when it began again.

Between October 17 and 22, very heavy enemy bombardments badly damaged their defences, cutting telephone wires and caving in weapon pits. One RCR Captain said, "For four days they just laid the boots to us with every gun they had."

Dawn on the 23rd saw no let up in the heavy shelling and a number of the RCR bunkers were demolished. In the early evening of October 23, another enemy heavy artillery barrage began. Soon after, with bugles blowing and soldiers yelling and screaming, the Chinese launched their large assault force in waves and a firefight ensued. Under heavy assault and with communications cut off, some of the Canadians were forced to abandon their defensive positions to the surging enemy that overran them.

From the night of October 23 until the early morning of October 24, Canadian artillery, tank and mortar fire on the captured areas halted the Chinese advance and prevented them from resupplying their front line. The Chinese

were forced to withdraw. Through the chaos of small arms fire, grenades and mortar fire, and with the support of their own artillery, the Canadians counterattacked and succeeded in regaining control of Hill 355 by the early morning of October 24. The casualties sustained by the Royal Canadian Regiment on October 23 and 24 were eighteen killed, thirty-five wounded, and fourteen prisoners of war. One of those killed was Sarnian Edward Joseph Knight.



Private Edward Joseph Knight



One year after he enlisted, on October 23, 1952, Private Edward Knight was killed in action during fighting at Hill 355. Several days later, his mother Violet in Sarnia received word that her son, PRIVATE EDWARD KNIGHT, WAS KILLED IN ACTION IN KOREA ON THURSDAY OCTOBER 23. Edward Knight, 21, is buried in the United Nations Cemetery in Busan, South Korea, Plot 21, Row 8, Grave 1346. He also has a memorial plaque on the Korea Veteran's National Wall of Remembrance in Meadowvale Cemetery, in Brampton, Ontario. This memorial has plaques for each of the 516 Canadian service men who died while serving with the Canadian Forces in the United Nations operations in Korea. Edward Knight's name is also inscribed on the Monument to Canadian Fallen (Korean War Monument) in Busan and Ottawa. In November 2019, his name along with 25 others was added to the Sarnia cenotaph, engraved in stone to be remembered always.

SOURCES: B, D, E, H, L, N, 2D, 6R, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 9Y

O'CONNOR, Patrick William (#A/800440)

Patrick O'Connor, 26, wanted to do his duty to his country. Five years after fighting in WWII, he enlisted in the Korean War despite being a veteran with a new life as a married father of two young children. Affectionately named "Old Man" by the younger members of his unit, the "Old Man" died saving some of his fellow soldiers. He was the first Sarnian to die in the Korean War, and when his body was recovered, among his effects was a stirring twenty line poem on Korea that he had penned the day before his death. Patrick O'Connor is buried in Busan, Korea.

Patrick O'Connor was born in Sarnia on February 5, 1924, the son of James Philip and Angela Loretta (nee Barry) O'Conner. James (born in Oil Springs, Ontario) and Angela (born in St. Mary's, Perth, Ontario) were married on January 2, 1918 at Our Lady of Mercy Church in Sarnia. They had six children together: sons James Michael Barry (born 1919, went by Barry); John Edward (born November 1922); Patrick William; and Joseph Peter (born 1932); and daughters Mary Catherine (born 1921, later Mrs. Lloyd Mathers) and Margaret Lorraine. James supported his family by working as a contractor and the O'Connor family resided at 231 Harkness Street and later lived at 236 Proctor Street. At the time of Patrick's death, the family was living at 356 Cameron Street, Sarnia.

Two of Patrick's brothers served in the Second World War: John Edward, a Private in the Royal Canadian Army Corps, attached to National Defence Headquarters in Ottawa; and oldest brother James Barry O'Connor who, as a member of Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) Bomber Command, was killed in action against the enemy in April 1943 (James Barry O'Connor's story is included the World War II section of this Project on page 904).

Patrick O'Connor was born and raised in Sarnia. He was a member of St. Joseph's Catholic parish and was educated at Our Lady of Mercy Elementary School and St. Patrick's Catholic High School from which he graduated in 1941. Patrick was a veteran of World War II, where he served four and a half years with the Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve (RCNVR) on convoy duty from Newfoundland to Londonderry as a Stoker 1st Class. When Patrick enlisted in WWII, his brother Barry was already overseas serving with the RCAF. They never saw each other again.

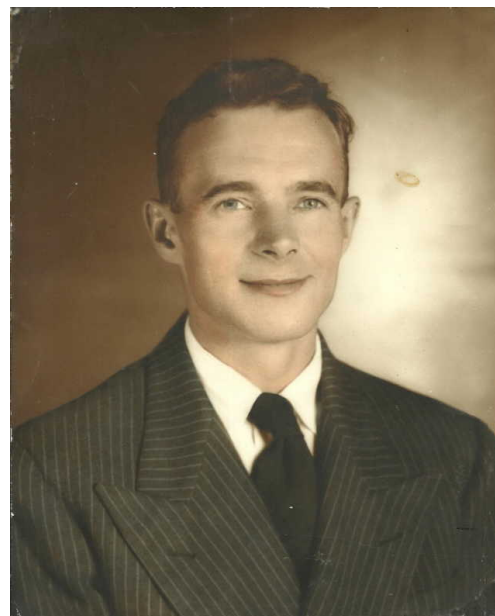
It was while patrolling the Atlantic that Patrick received word that Barry was missing in action. Warrant Officer Class II James Michael Barry O'Connor, along with the rest of his crew, lost their lives when the Halifax Bomber aircraft they were in failed to return from a night operation off the coast of Norway on April 28, 1943. The aircraft and crew were never found, and it was not until early 1944 that Barry O'Connor was officially listed as, *Previously reported missing after air operations, now for official purposes, presumed dead.*

One of the ships that Patrick O'Connor served on during WWII was the Royal Canadian destroyer, *H.M.C.S. Gatineau (H61)*, dubbed one of the "seagoingest" ships in the Canadian service. The ship had been tagged with this nickname because since being commissioned by the RCN in June of 1943, it had spent more than 80 percent of her time at sea. Besides Stoker Patrick O'Connor, other local men in the crew were Seaman Petty Officer A. Horley (son of Mr. and Mrs. C.W. Horley of 131 John Street, Sarnia); Able Bodied Seaman Arthur Forbes (of Forest); and Able Bodied Seaman A. Whitmarsh (of Dresden).

By August of 1944, the *Gatineau* had spent months carrying out convoy sweeps, anti-submarine patrols, forays with the enemy, strenuous rehearsals for D-Day and patrol operations in the English Channel during the assault on France. The *Gatineau's* experiences during that time included the probable destruction of an enemy E-boat in the English Channel; "assists" in successful attacks on two U-boats; and the shooting down of a number German robot bombs (V-1's). Lieutenant Commander Harold Groos said it was likely that the men of the *Gatineau* had seen the first of the V-1 bombs in use during their operations in the English Channel a few days after D-Day.



Patrick (L) and brother Edward (R)
(and sister Mary Catherine's oldest child, Brian Mathers)



Patrick William O'Connor

Patrick survived World War II and returned to Sarnia. On October 19, 1946, he married Vera Irene (nee Moore) O'Connor at St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Church at a noon ceremony. Vera was the daughter of Mrs. Janet Moore of 213 Cromwell Street and the late W.R. Moore. At the time of their marriage, Patrick's parents, James and Angela, were residing at 236 Proctor Street. Patrick and Vera O'Connor were blessed with four children: their daughter, Terri Patricia, was born August 16, 1947 at St. Joseph's Hospital in Sarnia; their first son, Michael Moore, was born January 14, 1949; and twin sons Jon and Gerald were born December 21, 1949 at St. Joseph's Hospital. Unfortunately, Jon and Gerald died at birth and never made it to the family home at 735 Oak Street. Prior to enlisting, Patrick worked as a driver-salesman with a local Sarnia bakery where he operated a horse-drawn delivery wagon.



Patrick O'Connor with
his bride Vera Irene



Patrick at the beach in Sarnia
with son Michael



Patrick on Oak Street, Sarnia
(the day he left for Korea)

Only five years after the end of World War II, the Korean War broke out on June 25, 1950. Approved in advance by the Russian and Chinese governments, the Soviet-trained and equipped army of North Korea crossed the 38th Parallel invading South Korea, an overt attempt to unify Korea by force. The United Nations responded with a call to its members to form a multinational “police force” under the command of the United States to restore the peace. It was on August 7, 1950, that Prime Minister St. Laurent announced on CBC Radio that Canada would recruit an expeditionary brigade of 5,000 men for duty in Korea, a force known as the Canadian Army Special Force.

Patrick O'Connor and Vera discussed his decision to enlist. Vera was supportive of her husband, but pointed out that they had two small children and only one income. She also reminded her husband he'd served four years as a stoker aboard RCN corvettes escorting North Atlantic convoys during the last war, and maybe it was up to someone else this time. But Patrick insisted that “somebody had to stop the communists.” A short time later, Patrick O'Connor packed up, said his goodbyes at home (the family didn't have the cab fare to get everybody to the train station) and left to join the army.^{9Y}

His plans for when he returned from Korea were to attend medical school. Patrick O'Connor, 26, enlisted for service in the Korean War with the Canadian Army on August 21, 1950 in London, Ontario. He became a member of the 25th Canadian Infantry Brigade, 2nd Battalion, The Royal Canadian Regiment (RCR) – “D” Company, serving as a company stretcher-bearer. He was a little older than the other members of his company. Following initial training with the regiment, the brigade was transferred to Fort Lewis, Washington for further training, before sailing for the Korean war-zone in April 1951. While at sea, among the bits of news that they received were the results of a new Canadian census reporting a population of just over 14 million; reports of the Princess Patricia's epic stand at Kapyong; and that US President Truman had fired the UN commander-in-chief, Douglas MacArthur.

Landing at Pusan in early May, the Canadians had a brief period of acclimatization and training—a time to acquaint themselves with the best battle tactics in the hilly country--before being moved to the front. Patrick carried a notepad with him, and in quiet moments wrote poems and rebus stories (stories with drawings) to his three year-old daughter Terri, and his infant son, Michael. Sometimes the rebus showed stick men or trees or the sun, but every note or story signed off “Love and kisses. Pat.”^{9Y}

By May 27, the 2nd Battalion, Royal Canadian Regiment, along with the Royal 22e Regiment, began an advance north of the 38th Parallel. It halted near the burnt-out North Korean village known as Chail-li, at the foot of a formidable mountain barrier named Kakhul-Bong (Hill 467). This area was a main supply gateway for war materials shipped down from Manchuria and was also an important Communist communications centre, thus was vigorously defended by a highly trained and well-equipped Chinese army. The Hill 467 peak offered a clear view northward some thirty kilometres, and to the south, one could see all the way to the 38th parallel. The Canadians didn't know it, but the Chinese troops on top of Hill 467 had been observing the Canadians' advance and had dug in

for the impending attack. RCR Platoon commander Lt. Don Stickland recalled, *"On May 30, the major [Harry Boates] told us we were moving north toward this huge Gibraltar-of-a-hill... And he says, 'You'll be covered first of all by artillery and then by aircraft. Nothing to it, just go to the top of the hill and occupy it.'"*

The RCR battalion's first full-scale action of the war was to attack **Hill 467** and the adjacent village of Chail-li that lay beyond it. The plan was for "A" Company to seize the village of Chail-li to the north of the hill; "B" Company was to secure the left flank by occupying Hill 162 to the west; and "C" Company was to capture the lower Hill 269 between Chail-li and Hill 467. The main assault on the twin peaks of Kakhul-bong (Hill 467) was assigned to "D" Company.

The operation began in the early morning of May 30, 1951 under a grey, misty and drizzly sky. The weather soon turned into a driving rainstorm making traction in the sloppy mud difficult. "B" Company would reach its objective, Hill 162, with relative ease. "A" Company would reach the village of Chail-li ahead of schedule, but would soon find itself nearly surrounded by approaching Chinese. "C" Company would reach Hill 269 just as quickly, but would soon be pinned down by enemy fire. The scene up Kakhul-bong (Hill 467) was much worse.

"D" Company met strong opposition while climbing the steep rocky slopes. Lieutenant Don Stickland, in charge of No. 12 Platoon in "D" Company recalled, "Our guys were pretty gung-ho when we started. I had one platoon ahead of me and a couple more behind... And there was no problem. Half way up the hill, approaching a small plateau, there was a sudden burst of firing." Stickland first heard moaning ahead of him. Then another machine-gun burst. More shouts. One man had been hit in the stomach, another nicked in the head. A third was hysterical and screaming, "I'm hit! I'm hit! Save me!" To his left, Stickland's corporal, R.A. Edmonds, had been hit and was crumpled over with his Sten gun slung awkwardly around his neck. Edmonds died moments later in the lieutenant's arms.

Meanwhile, the same light machine-gun fire from the Chinese had pinned down the two platoons that were following. They too had sustained wounded, and stretcher-bearer Patrick O'Connor had successfully removed several of the fallen. Fellow Sarnian and RCR stretcher-bearer Ed Haslip would never forget his friend Pat O'Connor. He remembered O'Connor moving through the dead and dying, giving them comfort, bandaging wounds, occasionally praying with them, all while ignoring his own exposed position. In a couple of cases, dying men held his hand and whispered their final words in his ear. To others who were wounded he gave support, told them they would be okay, and occasionally dried their tears of pain and fear that he saw on so many of the young faces around him.

In an attempt to silence the machine-gun fire, Stickland had a sergeant and two section leaders lay down covering fire, and he began a flanking move. When the gunfire from the Chinese position stopped momentarily, Stickland turned to see Patrick O'Connor dashing up toward him to assist in removing the wounded. There was another burst from the machine gun. It caught O'Connor in the body. He stumbled over his stretcher and rolled over dead. Patrick O'Connor and another stretcher-bearer, in their gallant desire to render first aid to a wounded comrade, were killed almost instantaneously.

Ed Haslip saw O'Connor cut down by the enemy machine gun fire. *"He died trying to save the lives of the men with him. In my opinion, he should have received the Victoria Cross. He was a completely selfless and dedicated soldier, as well as a wonderful human being."*⁹²

Patrick O'Connor was considered the "old man" of his platoon, being that he was 27 years old and a veteran of World War II. His fellow soldiers were teenagers, whom Patrick referred to as his "boys". On the day of his death, as the platoon was pinned down by heavy fire, Patrick approached his lieutenant, Lt. Don Stickland, and said, *"To the hell with it, I'm going after my boys"*. These were the last words he is known to have spoken.

Stickland later recalled that it was also about this time in the battle that he realized that none of the air strikes nor any of the artillery cover promised by Major Boates had ever materialized. To add to the discomfort and confusion, the farther up the peak Stickland's platoon moved, the heavier the rain and the muddier the ground became. All the while, Stickland's radio operator, Private Mancuso, kept sending messages and information to the rear where company headquarters was located. The only response heard was the calm voice of company commander Major Boates, saying, "Move on. Move on. They're not firing now!"

Stickland's platoon would win the skirmish for the western peak, but fighting for the eastern peak continued into the afternoon. Repeated attempts failed to dislodge the defenders who took advantage of an extensive trench system, mortar fire and a well placed machine-gun on the pinnacle of the hill. With all four companies in trouble—

“D” Company stuck on the western peak of Hill 467; “A” Company nearly surrounded at Chail-li; and “B” and “C” Companies becoming increasingly isolated from the two main battle areas—brigade headquarters ordered all companies to begin a fighting withdrawal. By 1900 hours, with the 2nd RCHA artillery laying down a screen of fire against the pressing Chinese, the last company had pulled clear of the hills. The Royal Canadian Regiment could not hold Chail-li or take Hill 467. The Canadian casualties that day were six killed (including Patrick O’Connor) and 54 wounded.^{D, 6R, 6S, 9Y, 9Z}

A week after the battle for Chail-li and Hill 467, when he was behind the lines, Don Stickland drew a cartoon in the sketch pad he always carried with him, of the RCR soldiers crawling up Hill 467. Bullets from the Chinese machine guns are ricocheting everywhere, including off the radio set from which the major’s words were still ringing: “Move on. Move on. They’re not firing now!” Following is the account by Lt. Don Stickland, second battalion of The Royal Canadian Regiment, whose platoon was ambushed by a Chinese machine gun group:

"We were given the task of replacing D Company. Half way up the hill we ran into a small enemy machine gun group. We were coming up a well-worn path, more or less spread out. We came just up to the halfway point, to a bit of an open area. When the machine gun opened up, I recognized it was Chinese. Some of our guys got under a rock. Some were left in the open; some were killed outright. I tried to organize a counter attack. Our third section had just disappeared. Seven were wounded in my platoon.

We tried to throw some grenades. There was not much you could do. I could hear all these voices below. Paddy (O'Connor) was the stretcher-bearer for the Company. He came running up with the stretcher over his shoulder and took cover beside me. After a few minutes, he said, 'To hell with it I'm going after my boys' and stood up. He was right beside me. All of a sudden he rolled over dead. We were all so close. He had been shot three or four times. The stretcher hit the ground and then the first aid kit. Corporal Edmunds had been hit, too. He had a Sten gun round his neck and he asked me to remove it because it was uncomfortable. It all happened so fast I can't remember the details. He died.

We went up to the top of the hill eventually. Some people say they saw hordes of Chinese. Apart from the two Chinese I saw dead in the trench, I never saw any. Rockingham ordered us back. Our men performed marvelously.^{6U, 9Y}

On that day of battle, 2nd Battalion RCR also learned something about its allies. Like all United Nations units, it had its attached details of the **Korean Service Corps**. “Our bearers”, wrote Lt. Stickland, “quickly came up, bringing our reserve ammunition. One of their lads, when we first came under fire, grabbed a rifle from one of our wounded and was quite ready to do his share in the fighting. The Koreans waved me aside and took over the task of laying out the three bodies and carrying them to the rear. This they did with a certain reverence, as though it were a privilege to look after our fallen.”^{6S}

Private Patrick O’Connor had been in Korea for only one month, and was in action just five days before losing his life on May 30, 1951, less than one year after enlisting. He was the first Sarnian to be killed in the Korean War. Patrick’s widow, Vera O’Connor, still residing at 735 Oak Avenue, learned of his death from officers of the Regiment. Reverend A.J. Ruth, Roman Catholic Chaplain with the Royals, wrote the following about Patrick: *He died as a soldier trying to help a wounded comrade and your children may be justly proud of their father.* Lt.-Col. Keane, Officer Commanding, Second Battalion, R.C.R.s also wrote Mrs. O’Connor: *Your husband was a very fine man, well-liked by all, and with a courage that can only be part of a fine moral character.* Vera also received a letter from Lt. Don Stickland. He praised the heroism of Patrick O’Connor: *On the day Pat was killed, my platoon was leading an attack on ‘Hill 467’. Half way up the mountain my forward section came under intense fire which killed two and wounded four others. Pat came running up the hill, ignoring the danger to himself in his desire to get to the wounded. A burst of fire hit Pat... He lived only long enough to reach for his missal... He died as he had lived, trying to aid others with his wonderful unselfishness.*

A short time later, Patrick O’Connor’s personal effects arrived at the family home in Sarnia, including that prayer book, a wallet, a bracelet, a comb, some snapshots, a tobacco pouch and a writing pad. Vera hid them from her children because they were splashed with his blood. In December, a letter arrived from the parents of Private Howard Root, a wounded soldier O’Connor had brought away from the battle of Hill 467. Enclosed was a slip of paper and a poem that Patrick O’Connor had written.

A few hours after O’Connor had been killed, Private Root was gathering up O’Connor’s personal belongings for shipment to his widow in Sarnia. While doing so, a sheaf of tattered paper fell to the mud floor of the bunker

where he had spent his last day on earth. On one of the pages was a poem, one that O'Connor was seen writing the night before he was killed. The paper was passed around the bunker, and a clutch of misty-eyed young soldiers with trembling hands read the heart-wrenching words that might well have been an epitaph not only for Patrick O'Connor, but for all the brave young men who lost their lives in Korea.

Following is Patrick O'Connor's poem written May 29, 1951:

Korea

*There is blood on the hills of Korea
T'is blood of the brave and the true
Where the 25th brigade battled together
Under the banner of red, white and blue
As they marched over the fields of Korea
To the hills where the enemy lay
They remembered the Brigadier's order
These hills must be taken to-day
Forward they marched into battle
With faces unsmiling and stern
They knew as they charged the hillside
There were some who would never return
Some thought of their wives and their mothers
Some thought of their sweethearts so fair
And some as they plodded and stumbled
Were reverently whispering a prayer
There is blood on the hills of Korea
It's the gift of the freedom they love
May their names live in glory forever
And their souls rest in heaven above*

The reality of the Korean War hit home in Sarnia with the May 31, 1951 *Canadian (Sarnia) Observer* front page headline, "Sarnia Man, 27, Father of Two, Dies in Korea". Following is a portion of that news article:

The Korea War came right into Sarnia today when it claimed the life of Private Patrick O'Connor, 27, husband of Mrs. Vera Irene (Moore) O'Connor, 735 Oak street (Eastview subdivision). Word of his death was received here last night. The young father of two, who had served his country in World War Two, answered the call for recruits last August when the Canadian Special Service Brigade for Korea was ordered as part of the United Nations Forces... He was in action on the quickly changing battlefield only five days when he was killed yesterday. It was yesterday that Red Chinese troops massed in attack against positions held by the Ontario regiment. Late reports indicated that the battle was still raging for possession of a key position on the central front...



Patrick O'Connor with Vera Irene

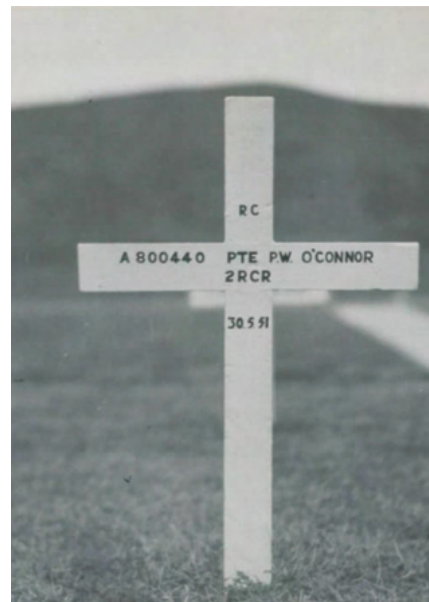
The following is a portion of an editorial from the June 1, 1951 *Sarnia Observer*:

The first Sarnian to make the supreme sacrifice in the Korean War has been Private Patrick William O'Connor... He has died, as did his brother, Warrant Officer Barry O'Connor and others in the Second World War, in an effort to preserve our way of life... Private O'Connor after having served during the previous hostilities and in consideration of the sacrifice of one life already made by his family in that struggle against German domination, might have been excused had he chosen to ignore the call for volunteers to combat the current Communist aggression and remain at home with his wife and young family. The fact that he did not do so but rather again answered his country's call should be an inspiration to others to emulate his patriotism and valor... The sympathy of the community goes out to those who are bereft by the scourge of war. Casualties among our fighting men bring home to us all the tragedy of such conflicts but they also emphasize that our freedoms are not cheaply bought or preserved.

A few days after receiving the news of Patrick O'Connor's death, the Rev. Father A.N. Nolan, pastor of St. Peter's Roman Catholic Church, led a memorial military mass at St. Peter's Church. The *Sarnia Observer* detailed some of the details of his death in early July 1951, under the heading, "Sarnia Veteran Sacrificed Life To Aid Wounded".



Private Patrick William O'Connor



Twenty-seven year old Patrick O'Connor is buried in the United Nations Cemetery in Busan, South Korea. He also has a memorial plaque on the Korea Veteran's National Wall of Remembrance in Meadowvale Cemetery, in Brampton, Ontario. This memorial has plaques for each of the 516 Canadian service men who died while serving with the Canadian Forces in the United Nations. Patrick's daughter, Terri, attended the unveiling of the National Wall of Remembrance in July 1997. Terri, who grew up feeling "I only had a father on Remembrance Day", had pursued legal channels to have his remains returned to Canada; however, she accepted her father being buried in Korea when she kept hearing other veterans say that her father's body belonged where he had fought. According to Terry, "he's where he's supposed to be and we can come here to the monument.

Patrick O'Connor's name is also inscribed on the Monument to Canadian Fallen (Korean War Monument) in Busan and Ottawa. Patrick has many well-deserved citations: 1939-1945 Star; France and Germany Star; Defence Medal; War Medal 1939-45; Canadian Volunteer Service Medal with Clasp; Korea Medal; and United Nations Service Medal Korea. For parents James and Angela O'Connor, they had now lost two sons: Barry of the RCAF in April 1943 and Patrick eight years later. On the November 11, 1952 Remembrance Day ceremony held in Victoria Park in Sarnia, over thirty wreaths were laid at the foot of the Sarnia cenotaph. The first wreath laid that day was by Vera O'Connor, now a widow with two young children--Terri Patricia, age five, and Michael, age three and a half.

Before she had lost the twins, Vera's mother, Janet Moore, and Elsie Moore, one of Vera's sister's, had been residing with Patrick, Vera, Terri Patricia, and Michael. After Patrick was lost in war, Grandma Janet and Aunt Elsie continued to reside with Vera and the two children. Janet Moore passed away in 1953, but Vera and Aunt Elsie

together raised Terri Patricia and Michael in a disciplined, loving environment. Vera supported her family by working at Autolite (later Prestolite) beginning in 1939 or 1940, where she worked for over 36 years.

At various times when she was laid off from Autolite, Vera worked at Patterson's restaurant, Woolworth Five and Dime, the YMCA, the Boulevard restaurant and the Chipican restaurant. Terri and Michael described Vera as an amazing mother and spectacular grandmother. Vera O'Connor passed away in August 2002 at the age of 80 and is buried in Lakeview Cemetery (the same location that Elsie Moore is buried). She wanted to be buried with the twins, but they were in the children's portion of Our Lady of Mercy Cemetery and it was not allowed. Vera O'Connor was, like Patrick, a loving parent and hero.



O.L.M. Cemetery, Sarnia

A memorial headstone in Our Lady of Mercy Catholic Cemetery in Sarnia is inscribed with the names of six O'Connor family members, including; parents James and Angela O'Connor, and their children: Joseph Peter, Mary Catherine, W.O. Barry R.C.A.F. and Pte. Patrick O'Connor R.C.R.

SOURCES: A, B, D, E, H, L, N, 2D, 6R, 6S, 6U, 7C, 8X, 8Y, 9Y, 9Z, 2d

TOOLE, John Richard (#B801850)

Born in Point Edward, John Toole moved to Hamilton with his family when he was twelve. At 21, he enlisted in the Korean War in August 1950 and was in action by February. On October 11, 1951, Corporal Toole was killed in fighting on Hill 187. His patrol engaged an enemy patrol early in the morning and John did not receive the signal to retire with the rest of his patrol. His fellow soldiers heard the firing of his Sten gun and then silence. His body was never recovered.

John Toole was born in Point Edward on March 30, 1929, the son of Charles Elgin (born in Sarnia) and Ellen Sadie (nee Foster, born in Hamilton) Toole of Hamilton. Ellen had formerly lived in Point Edward. Charles and Ellen Toole had five children together: sons John Richard; James Norman (born 1936); and Allan Charles; and daughters Elizabeth Jean and Linda May. John Toole attended Point Edward Public School. At the age of twelve, the Toole family moved to Hamilton. There, John attended high school for two years, after which he worked in the Steel Company of Canada until he enlisted.

Only five years after the end of World War II, the Korean War broke out on June 25, 1950. Approved in advance by the Russian and Chinese governments, the Soviet-trained and equipped army of North Korea crossed the 38th Parallel invading South Korea, an overt attempt to unify Korea by force. The United Nations responded with a call to its members to form a multinational "police force" under the command of the United States to restore the peace. It was on August 7, 1950, that Prime Minister St. Laurent announced on CBC Radio that Canada would recruit an expeditionary brigade of 5,000 men for duty in Korea, a force known as the Canadian Army Special Force.

John Toole, age 21 and single, enlisted in the Canadian Army on August 22, 1950 in Toronto. He trained in Calgary, becoming a member of the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry (PPCLI) R.C.I.C. – D Company, attaining the rank of Corporal.



Corporal John Richard Toole

Corporal Toole embarked overseas with the first contingent of Canadians to leave for Korea. On a rainy Saturday, November 25, 1950, nine hundred plus members of the Patricias set sail from Seattle across the Pacific. At that time, the war looked to be nearing its end as the North Korean forces had been pushed back almost to the Chinese border. At first, it was uncertain whether or not Canadians, who had yet to do any serious advanced training, would see combat. It was estimated that the battalion would be ready for action, if needed, by March 15, 1951. It was on board the US built Liberty-class ships crossing the Pacific that average Canadian soldiers learned about some basic differences between themselves and their American counterparts. Most of the GIs were draftees, conscripted by US selective service legislation, while most of the Canadian servicemen were enlistees.

After nearly twenty days at sea, on December 14, 1950, the Canadians' ship pulled into Tokyo Bay and tied up at the port of Yokohama. By the time the Canadians' ship reached its destination, the war situation in Korea had completely changed. Instead of doing "occupational duty" or having time to acclimatize and to train, the emphasis had shifted to the speed with which the battalion could be thrown into action.

On December 18, the PPCLI boarded trucks and travelled to the city of Mokto, an island on the edge of Pusan. In 1950, Pusan was the second-largest city in the country, though its inhabitants were impoverished and lived in mud-huts and shacks and travelled on narrow, potholed roads. By far the most powerful recollection soldiers had of their first contact with Pusan was "the smell". Soldiers' remembered the overpowering stench of human excrement which was used to fertilize the fields. They saw people rooting through garbage. And many of the Canadian volunteers remembered asking themselves, "What in the world am I doing here?"

Two days after Christmas, the PPCLI battalion moved out of Pusan eighty kilometres north to begin their intensive training in weapons and tactics. Training included extensive hill-climbing, cross-country manoeuvres and battle exercises incorporating their own firearms--.303 Lee-Enfield bolt-action rifles, Bren guns, 81-mm mortars and Vickers medium machine guns. By February 1951, the Patricias were on the move and had joined the 27th British Commonwealth Infantry Brigade (with two British and one Australian battalion) in a general advance against Chinese and North Korean forces fighting rearguard actions south of the 38th parallel.

Progress was difficult, as hills rose on either side; hill positions had to be dug through deep snow; and the weather was bitterly cold. In February and March of 1951, the Canadians were thrown into a series of skirmishes and battles chasing Chinese troops northward, not allowing them to break contact or regain strength. By early April, US forces and the Commonwealth Brigade, including the Patricias, had reached the 38th Parallel. Later that month, in the valley of the Kapyong River, the communists would begin their spring offensive back into South Korea.

Some of the heaviest fighting Canadian soldiers experienced in the war took place during the Battle of Kapyong in April 1951. The victory here was one of Canada's greatest, yet least-known, military achievements. For two days, a battalion of roughly 700 Canadian troops of the PPCLI helped defend a crucial hill in the front lines against a force of about 5,000 Chinese soldiers.

By mid-1951, UN Command had re-established the 38th Parallel as a stalemate line--the two sides had begun to solidify and to dig in with deep defensive positions around this line. The war was becoming positional and more static. While company-sized attacks were sometimes mounted to improve defences or to keep the enemy off balance, the war was mostly fought from trenches into no man's land. The fighting featured endless patrols; night raids against hilltop trench positions; booby traps, minefields, and barbed wire; artillery barrages; long nights standing guard in slit trenches; and repulsing enemy attacks and digging tunnels and trenches. The enemies faced one another across a no-man's-land ranging from a few hundred metres in width to several kilometres. During this phase of the war, bloody battles raged for strategic high ground.

On October 11, 1951, only a few weeks after returning to front line action, Corporal John Toole lost his life during fighting on **Hill 187** in South Korea. He had gone out on a patrol that night to guard a group of volunteers laying a communication line. At about 3 a.m., his patrol engaged an enemy patrol that was threatening the wiring party. He failed to get a signal to retire with the rest of the patrol and was left behind. Communist soldiers moved into the area and his Sten gun was heard firing until 3 a.m. followed by silence. Four of the Patricia's were wounded and one who had been killed in action was recovered. Corporal Toole was never located, despite a lengthy search.

In mid-October of 1951, Sarnia citizens would read in the *Sarnia Observer* that Corporal John Richard (Dicky) Toole, former Point Edward youth, was reported "missing in Korea". His Sarnia relatives included Mr. and Mrs. John M. Toole, grandparents on East Street; Mrs. John Foster, grandmother; Mrs. Thomas Prudence, Mrs. George Harris, Mrs. Harry Ireland and Mrs. Gordon Burgess, all aunts; and Orville Toole, an uncle.

In early May 1953, the 3rd Battalion of the Royal Canadian Regiment (RCR) took part in a fierce battle on this same Hill 187. The Canadians repulsed a massive attack by Chinese troops but the RCRs lost more soldiers that night than any other Canadian battalion did in a single engagement during the Korean War--26 killed, 27 wounded and seven taken prisoner. It was the Canadian Army's last major firefight of the Korean War.

On July 27, 1953, the day the armistice was signed, ending the Korean War, the Canadian Army issued a list of 45 personnel reported as missing in action or as prisoner-of-war. The air force reported one missing Canadian. Included on the Canadian Army's published "missing in action" list was Corporal John Richard Toole, Hamilton, Ontario. There was hope, although slim, that some soldiers in the missing category might prove to have been captured. Hope dwindled with reports from the Communists that they would return 14 Canadians they were holding as prisoners-of-war.

The task of exchanging prisoners began in early August of 1953 when the North Koreans released 400 Allied POWs, including Cpl. Joseph Pelletier of nearby Chatham, Ontario. Relatives of John Toole in Sarnia anxiously awaited word of his whereabouts. For 22 months, no word was heard from him. His name had been given out as a prisoner, but the U.N. had never been able to confirm the fact. Parents and relatives had received no letters from him, and the first definite word heard was the mention of his name in connection with a Red propaganda broadcast from North Korea. Early reports were that he had been captured and shot in the back. Initially reported as captured in October 11, 1951, it was not until March 5, 1952, that it was reported that he was a prisoner. In August of 1953, his mother, Ellen (Nellie) Toole, in Hamilton said, "Our thoughts were with him all the time. Somehow, I knew he would come back. His buddies on the patrol felt that he would have almost certainly been taken prisoner under the circumstances". Corporal John Toole would later be officially listed as, *Killed in action, October 11, 1951*.

John Toole was awarded several well-deserved citations: Canadian Volunteer Service Medal for Korea, Korea Medal, and the United Nations Service Medal Korea. John Toole, 22, has no known grave. He is commemorated on the Commonwealth Memorial in Busan, South Korea, Plot 21, Row 8, Grave 1346. The memorial is located in the United Nations Cemetery in Tanggok, a suburb of Busan. The stone memorial with bronze petals was erected to commemorate commonwealth soldiers who died and whose burial places are unknown.

Twenty-one Canadians are listed on the bronze plaques, including John Toole of Point Edward, Ontario. He also has a memorial plaque on the Korea Veteran's National Wall of Remembrance in Meadowvale Cemetery, in Brampton, Ontario. This memorial has plaques for each of the 516 Canadian service men that died while serving with the Canadian Forces in the United Nations. John Toole's name is also inscribed on the Monument to Canadian Fallen (Korean War Monument) in Busan and Ottawa. In November 2019, his name along with 25 others was added to the Sarnia cenotaph, engraved in stone to be remembered always.

SOURCES: D, E, H, L, N, 2D, 7C, 8X, 8Y

WRIGHT, John O'Hara (SB153358)

At age 19 and only two months into his stint in the Korean War, Sapper John Wright was killed in action. While engaged in clearing a road, John was fatally injured by an exploding land mine.

John O'Hara Wright was born in Sarnia on September 20, 1928, the only son of Daniel Dale and Laura Elizabeth (nee O'Hara) Wright. Daniel Wright, 20, the son of John (a farmer) and Jennie Coulter (born June 2, 1905 in Moore Township), married nineteen year-old Laura Elizabeth O'Hara on December 14, 1925 in Wallaceburg, Lambton County. Laura, born May 23, 1906 in Enniskillen, Lambton County, was the daughter of James O'Hara and Laura Smith. They had obtained their marriage license a few days earlier on December 11, 1925 in Sarnia.

Prior to marrying, Laura O'Hara had been residing at 512 Davis Street, Sarnia, while Daniel Wright was living at 109 North MacKenzie Street, Sarnia. Daniel was employed as an electrician, working first at Chambers Electric and later at Goodisons. By 1927, Daniel and Laura Wright were residing at 174 Bright Street, Sarnia where they remained for the next two decades. For many years, Daniel Wright worked at Union Gas.

Daniel and Laura Wright were blessed with four children: daughters Alice Laurine, Orva Jean and Ella May; and their only son John O'Hara. John attended public school in Sarnia, and Sarnia Collegiate Institute, and was a member of Canon Davis Memorial Church. In the mid-to-late 1940s, the Wright family moved to Stratford, Ontario.

Not long after the end of the Second World War was the beginning of the Cold War--a period of military tensions and distrust between the Western Bloc democratic nations (United States and NATO allies) and the Eastern Bloc communist nations (Soviet Union and its allies). The Red Menace threat appeared particularly ominous in the 1940s. Some of the major events that occurred during this period included the creation of the "Iron Curtain"; the Berlin blockade and airlift; and the formation of NATO. Nineteen year-old John O'Hara Wright enlisted for service in the Canadian Army on April 9, 1948 in Toronto, Ontario.

Two years after John enlisted, and only five years after the end of World War II, the Korean War broke out on June 25, 1950. Approved in advance by the Russian and Chinese governments, the Soviet-trained and equipped army of North Korea crossed the 38th Parallel invading South Korea, an overt attempt to unify Korea by force. The United Nations responded with a call to its members to form a multinational "police force" under the command of the United States to restore the peace. In early August, Canada began to recruit an expeditionary force of 5,000 men for duty in Korea. The first Canadian troops set sail for Korea in late November 1950. John Wright became a member of the Corps of Royal Canadian Engineers, with the rank of Sapper, and departed for Korea in June 1951.



Sapper John O'Hara Wright

Changing events at the front only allowed the Canadians only a short period of acclimatization and training--acquainting them with battle tactics in the hilly country and getting them used to some additional American weapons. After approximately a week of climbing the hills around Pusan, the brigade moved north to the front.

By mid-1951, UN Command had re-established the 38th Parallel as a stalemate line--the two sides had begun to solidify and to dig in with deep defensive positions around this line. The war was becoming positional and more

static. While company-sized attacks were sometimes mounted to improve defences or to keep the enemy off balance, the war was mostly fought from trenches into no man's land. The fighting featured endless patrols; night raids against hilltop trench positions; booby traps, minefields, and barbed wire; artillery barrages; long nights standing guard in slit trenches; and repulsing enemy attacks and digging tunnels and trenches. The enemies faced one another across a no-man's-land ranging from a few hundred metres in width to several kilometres. During this phase of the war, bloody battles raged for strategic high ground.

Only two months after arriving overseas, Sapper John Wright lost his life while in action. On August 28, 1951, while engaged in road clearing, he was fatally injured by an exploding mine.

Anti-personnel landmines and booby traps were used extensively by both forces. The Chinese and North Koreans used a mixture of relics from the Second World War as well as those manufactured in Russia and China. Some had wooden bodies that made them impossible to find with metal detectors. Others were simply mud-covered grenades, their pins replaced with mud, so that when they were kicked, the exterior would break away, allowing the grenade to detonate. "Bounding Betsies (used by both sides, also called "bouncing Betties") were the toughest to deal with. Each "Betsie" was about three inches in diameter, eight or nine inches in length, round like a can and buried in the ground. When tripped by wire or trap, a detonator would pop the mine several feet in the air before the mine exploded, scattering deadly shrapnel, waist-high, in every direction.

Following is the report of his death in the August 29, 1951 *Sarnia Observer*;
Sarnia Native Killed In Korea

Sapper John O'Hara Wright, 22, a native of Sarnia, yesterday died in Korea, of wounds received while on active duty with the 57th Independent Field Squadron, Royal Canadian Engineers.

Sapper Wright was born here and lived with his parents on Bright street. He attended Sarnia public schools and Sarnia Collegiate Institute and Technical School and was a member of Canon Davis Memorial Church. He enlisted at Owen Sound when he became 18 and served his basic training at Chilliwack, B.C., and in Montreal. He left for Japan in June, of this year, going from there to Korea.

Only son of Mr. and Mrs. Daniel Dale Wright, now of Stratford, he was interested in Scout and Cub work and liked to assist in camp duties while home on leave.

According to word received by his family, Spr. Wright, 22, was fatally injured by an exploding mine. The injury was suffered while he was engaged in road clearing, it is believed.

Surviving relatives are Mr. and Mrs. Daniel Dale Wright, parents, Stratford; three sisters, Mrs. Lloyd Davey, Sarnia; Jean Wright, Owen Sound; and Ella Mae Wright, Stratford; his grandparents, Mrs. Jennie Wright, Sarnia; and Mr. and Mrs. James O'Hara, Petrolia.

John O'Hara Wright, 22, is buried in the United Nations Cemetery in Busan, South Korea, Plot 20, Row 4, Grave 1153. He also has a memorial plaque on the Korea Veteran's National Wall of Remembrance in Meadowvale Cemetery, in Brampton, Ontario. This memorial has plaques for each of the 516 Canadian service men who died while serving with the Canadian Forces in the United Nations. His name is also inscribed on the Monument to Canadian Fallen (Korean War Monument) in Busan and Ottawa. John's citations include the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal for Korea and the United Nations Service Medal Korea. In November 2019, his name along with 24 others was added to the Sarnia cenotaph, engraved in stone to be remembered always.

His parents Daniel and Laura passed away in 1970 and 1972 respectively. They are buried together in Hillsdale Cemetery in Petrolia. On their headstone are inscribed the words, WRIGHT, D.DALE 1905-1970, HIS WIFE LAURA E. 1906-1972, SON JOHN KOREA 1951 22 YRS. In November 2019, his name along with 25 others was added to the Sarnia cenotaph, engraved in stone to be remembered always.

SOURCES: D, E, H, L, N, 2D, 7C, 8X, 8Y



THE VIETNAM WAR (1954-1975)

Following is a summary of important historical events and people of the Vietnam War. It is estimated that between 20,000 to 40,000 Canadians volunteered for service in Vietnam within the branches of the United States military.

The Vietnam War is also known as the **Second Indochina War**, 1954-1975, and the “American War” in Vietnam (1964-1975). Regarding the Vietnam War, no “official declaration of war” was ever made between North Vietnam (allies China and the Soviet Union) and South Vietnam (principal ally being the United States). Taking place in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, the Vietnam War would last until April 1975 with the fall of Saigon.

• **BACKGROUND:** In the late 1800’s, the area of Southeast Asia known as Indochina was under control of the French government. French Indochina included what is now Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam. After World War I, a young Vietnamese nationalist named Nguyen That Thanh (later Ho Chi Minh), attended the Paris Peace talks and hoped to negotiate a Vietnam free from colonial rule. The British and French refused to grant them sovereignty, the promised self-rule for their colonies. Ho Chi Minh (who went to the Soviet Union and China for training) later joined the Communist Party, returned to Vietnam and united, trained and prepared his people (the militant nationalist organization called the Viet Minh) for a revolution against French rule. Vietnamese resistance to French rule continued on and off to the start of World War II.

Early in World War II, after the fall of France to the Nazi’s in June 1940, Japan made demands on French Indochina in order to cut off supplies to China (Japan’s war against China had begun in 1937). On September 22, 1940, Japanese troops invaded Vietnam, and would remain there until the end of the war. The Viet Minh resisted these Japanese oppressors, and grew its base throughout Vietnam. For most of the occupation the Japanese left the French colonial government in place—though its authority was greatly diminished. Japan would receive Vietnam exports, use their transportation routes, and use it as a staging area for Japanese military operations.

Japan’s World War II surrender in August 1945 then raised the question of who would rule post-war Vietnam. The Japanese declared Vietnam independent and gave power to a puppet emperor. Yet Ho Chi Minh and the Viet Minh were confident that they would at last gain control of their country, announcing the creation of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV). However the British and Chinese were given control of Vietnam by the victorious Allies, and Allied leaders overruled Ho Chi Minh, agreeing that postwar Vietnam would be split in two. As a result, Minh’s nationalist forces didn’t gain control over either the North or the South, and no Western power recognized his Democratic Republic. What’s more, France wanted to reclaim its lost territory, and the British ceded control of the south back to the French, based in Saigon. But Ho Chi Minh and the Viet Minh were well prepared to resist those efforts, leading to the **First Indochina War** (also referred to as the Franco-Vietnamese War).

The First Indochina War, December 1946-August 1954, saw the Viet Minh (with aid from Communist China) and French colonial forces (with aid from the United States) battle for control of Vietnam. After a decisive Viet Minh victory at the battle of Dien Bien Phu in May 1954, French forces surrendered and agreed to a set of treaties. In these **Geneva Peace Accords**, signed in July 1954, the French accepted the Viet Minh’s demands to evacuate all troops from Vietnam. Though northern and southern regions remained “temporarily” divided, the Accords stated that in two years, unification would be possible through the implementation of nationwide free elections—the Vietnamese people would have a chance to decide whether they preferred to unite under a communist regime (based in the north) or under a pro-Western (pro-French) government.

The Geneva Peace Accords signed in July 1954 declared a cease-fire and gave Cambodia and Laos—which had been part of the French colony Indochina—their independence. Vietnam, however, was divided at the 17th Parallel: a communist government in the north, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) with its capital at Hanoi; and a new democratic government in the south, the Republic of South Vietnam (RVN) with its capital at Saigon. Communist rebels in the south, the National Liberation Front (Viet Cong), also fought against the South Vietnamese government. The division between north and south was supposed to be temporary, however failed elections to reunify the country in July 1956 and civil unrest ensued.

• **INTERNATIONAL CONTROL COMMISSION (ICC):** Canada’s role in Vietnam began in July 1954, as part of the three-member International Control Commission (predating Canada’s first official peacekeeping force, which was deployed two years later). Canada, Poland and India made up a force of about 1,400 troops and officers that were appointed to oversee the implementation of the Geneva Accords—to supervise the withdrawal of the French, and to

report on the progress of the ceasefires and any violations. The ICC's first responsibility was to implement Vietnam's division—with the communist North controlled by the People's Army of Vietnam, and the South controlled by the French Union. This daunting process included the mass relocation of nearly 900,000 people, all but 4,200 of them heading from north to south. As tensions between the two Vietnams escalated, the ICC members decided that it was the best interest of all involved for it to stay on. They remained until 1973, a poorly funded, under-manned and ultimately ineffectual force that could do little more than stand by as an undeclared proxy war developed between the forces of communism and western democracy.

When the **Paris Peace Accord** was signed in January 1973, the ICC was shut down and replaced with the four-member International Commission of Control and Supervision (ICCS)—Canada, Poland, Hungary and Indonesia. Canada was officially an ICCS member for about six months, until July 31, 1973, when Iran took its place. As a member of ICCS, Canada supervised the American withdrawal and arranged the release and exchange of thousands of prisoners of war.^{2E}

- **THE WAR ESCALATES:** In 1957, with North Vietnamese and the Viet Cong fighting South Vietnamese troops, the United States, hoping to stop the spread of communism in Southeast Asia, sent more aid and military advisors to help the South Vietnamese government. This was a time when U.S. Cold War foreign policy was dominated by the “domino theory”, which believed that the “fall” of North Vietnam to Communism might trigger all of Southeast Asia to fall.

North Vietnamese guerilla forces used the Ho Chi Minh Trail, a network of jungle paths and mountain trails, to send supplies and troops to the communist rebels in South Vietnam. Until 1960 the United States supported the Saigon regime with some 700 advisors for the training of the South Vietnamese army. The United States involvement in the war escalated in the early 1960's. By 1962, in the middle of the Cold War era, the U.S. military presence in South Vietnam had reached some 10,000 troops. By the fall of 1964, there were 23,000 Americans in South Vietnam (the Viet Cong had 35,000 troops in South Vietnam).

In early August 1964, the U.S. destroyer *Maddox* exchanged shots with North Vietnamese torpedo boats in the Gulf of Tonkin. Two days later, the *USS Maddox* and another destroyer reported once again coming under fire (years later, it was concluded that the second attack never occurred). As a result of the **Gulf of Tonkin Incident**, U.S. Congress passed a resolution authorizing a full-scale intervention in the Vietnam War. In early 1965, the United States escalated the war by commencing air strikes on North Vietnam (such as Operation Rolling Thunder) and committing increased ground forces to shore up the struggling South Vietnamese army. Meanwhile, the Soviet Union and China poured weapons, supplies, and advisors into the North. By November 1967, over 500,000 American troops were serving in Vietnam along with over 600,000 South Vietnamese troops. In addition to the United States, South Korea, Thailand, Australia and New Zealand also committed troops to fight in South Vietnam.

- **THE WAR DRAGS ON:** As the United States became increasingly mired in Vietnam, it pursued a strategy of attrition, attempting to bury the Vietnamese Communist forces under an avalanche of casualties. However, the Viet Cong's guerrilla tactics frustrated and demoralized U.S. troops, while its dispersed, largely rural presence left American bomber planes with few targets. The United States therefore used unconventional weapons such as napalm and the herbicide defoliant Agent Orange but still managed to make little headway.

In January 1968, the North Vietnamese Army launched a massive surprise campaign, the **Tet Offensive**, attacking about 100 cities and military bases in South Vietnam. The Offensive failed in its goal of overthrowing the South Vietnamese government, but it became a turning point in the war. Both sides suffered heavy casualties, and the offensive demonstrated that the war would not end soon or easily. It did persuade a large segment of the American population to become disillusioned with the war effort, despite the government's claims of progress toward winning it. Antiwar movements within the United States gained momentum as student protesters, countercultural hippies, and even many mainstream Americans denounced the war and the military draft.

The Vietnam War differed considerably from both World Wars in a number of ways: there was no formal declaration of war; there was no public raising of large military units, no large troop send-offs, and the soldier's return was often equally quiet and unnoticed; it was a war waged for the most part in dense jungles and underbrush; to counter overwhelming American firepower, the enemy usually resorted to hit-and-run battles, thus they controlled the pace of the war; the largely guerrilla war was fought in all areas of South Vietnam amidst the civilian population; the percentage of soldiers who suffered amputation or crippling wounds to the lower extremities was much higher than in previous wars, largely the result of the more extensive use of anti-personnel land mines; and it received large-

scale television coverage that brought the horrors of war to the home front—as one U.S. politician said, “This was the first struggle fought on television in everybody’s living room every day.”^{9X}

From 1968 to 1973, efforts were made to end the conflict through diplomacy, though the fighting continued. During this period, along with the news footage from the war zone broadcast on nightly television news, a number of events occurred that continued to effect public opinion in the United States: in March 1968, the My Lai Massacre; in April 1970, the U.S.-led invasion of Cambodia; in May 1970, U.S. National Guard kill four anti-war demonstrators at Kent State University; and in February 1971, the U.S.-led invasion of Laos.^{9X}

The U.S. Draft (conscription): During the Vietnam War, young American men faced the possibility of being involuntarily drafted into military service. All males between the ages of 18 and 26 were required to register for the draft. [In the U.S., the “Selective Service System” had been in almost continuous operation since before the U.S. joined World War II]. Draft notices were received in the mail, and simply read, “Greeting: You are hereby ordered for induction in the Armed Forces of the United States.”

Draftees had to report to their local draft board (made up of various community members) who evaluated their draft status. The draft board decisions were often seen as unfair, as there were many ways to avoid the draft with certain connections (eg. exemptions and deferments were especially granted to college students and those with wealth and privilege). Most of the men chosen were from poor and working-class backgrounds, people of colour and people from rural towns and farming communities. In December 1969, in an effort to make the draft more fair, the Selective Service System held its first draft lottery, which gave young men a random number corresponding to their birthdays—men with lower numbers were called first. The American draft laws applied to all aliens, including Canadian citizens, living in the United States. The Vietnam War was a major concern of Canadian families in the United States with draft-age sons.^{9X}

U.S. Draft Dodgers: One of the myths about the Vietnam War is that the American soldiers there were mostly draftees. In fact, almost two-thirds of American troops who fought in combat were volunteers. One true fact though is that during the Vietnam War, Canada gained more of a reputation as a haven for U.S. draft dodgers and army deserters than it did as a source of volunteers. “Draft dodger” was the nickname for Americans who were of age to get drafted but instead “Dodged the Draft” by moving into Canada where they didn’t have to go to war. It is estimated that 20,000-30,000 draft-age Americans fled to Canada during the war, in order to avoid military service. In addition, many deserters from the U.S. military made their way to Canada, hoping to find safe haven from military justice. As one U.S. Marine said, commenting on the draft dodgers and the Canadians volunteering to fight with the Americans, *“the worst of ours are going north, and the best of theirs are coming south”*. Estimates show that the total number of American citizens who moved to Canada due to their opposition to the war range from 50,000 to 125,000.^{2E, 2N, 6P}

• **THE WAR ENDS:** On January 27, 1973, after successful peace talks, a cease-fire was arranged—the **Paris Peace Accord**. Though it was signed by all parties, and allowed prisoners of war to be exchanged, the fighting continued. The last U.S. military personnel left Vietnam on March 29, 1973. North Vietnamese forces stepped up their attacks on the South and finally launched an all-out offensive in the spring of 1975. The capture of Saigon by the North Vietnamese Army on April 30, 1975 marked the end of the Vietnam War. North and South Vietnam were reunified the following year under Communist rule as the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, and Saigon was renamed Ho Chi Minh City.

The Cost of War: Some 2.7 million Americans served in some capacity in the Vietnam War zone between August 1964 and May 1975. Over 58,200 American soldiers were killed in the Vietnam War, and over 303,000 were wounded. The average age of Americans fighting in Vietnam was 19, compared with 26 for those who fought in the Second World War. Australia and New Zealand together had some 500 killed and over 2,000 wounded of the almost 50,000 who served. South Vietnam reported 220,000 of its military personnel killed and 500,000 wounded. North Vietnam and the Viet Cong suffered over 600,000 casualties. In North and South Vietnam combined, it is estimated that 400,000 civilians were killed and 1,000,000 were wounded in the war.^{2N, 9X}

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C., consisting of an expansive black granite wall (November 1982); a statue of three combat-weary servicemen (November 1984); and the Vietnam Women’s Memorial (November 1993), stands as a tribute to the members of the U.S. Armed Forces who fought in the Vietnam War, including those who died in service, and those who were unaccounted for. Etched on the black polished Vietnam Veterans Memorial wall are the names of over 58,200 American service personnel who lost their lives in

Vietnam, including approximately 1,200 who are listed as missing (MIA's, POW's).

Included in the record of 58,200+ is the name of every Canadian who died fighting for the U.S. in the war. Some are officially on record as being from Canada, while others are listed as being from the American town or city where they enlisted. In author Fred Gaffen's book *Unknown Warriors: Canadians in the Vietnam War* (1990), he documented the identities of eighty of those Canadians.^{9X}

• **CANADA'S ROLE IN THE WAR:** During the Vietnam War, the Canadian Government maintained that it was an impartial and objective peacekeeper, with the aim to help negotiate for peace and to administer aid to victims of the war; however, along with providing technical assistance, the Canadian government and Canadian industry did help the United States by sending medical equipment, military supplies, aircraft engines, ammunition, explosives, and raw materials for the manufacture of napalm and the defoliant herbicide Agent Orange. The herbicide was called "Agent Orange" because it was shipped to Vietnam in orange-striped barrels (some of this defoliant was produced at Elmira, Ontario).

Canadians in Vietnam: During the Vietnam War, the Canadian government did not discourage the enlistment of Canadians in the American forces. As a member of the ICC, Canada was not supposed to compromise its impartiality. Yet, the Canadian departments of External Affairs and Justice refused to prosecute anyone for violating the Foreign Enlistment Act in joining to fight in Vietnam.

During the Vietnam War, the American government followed the letter of the law and did not recruit Canadians on Canadian soil for American military service. It did however expand recruitment offices in towns and cities close to the border. At these offices, "letters of acceptability" for American military service were issued to potential Canadian recruits. These documents enabled the prospective enlistees to receive residency visas from U.S. immigration. The U.S. military then proceeded with induction. American cities, including Detroit, Buffalo, Fargo, Seattle, Maine, Bangor, and Plattsburgh, N.Y. were cities listed on their papers, with no mention of the fact that they were Canadian.

This cross-border enlistment was not unprecedented, for example; since the American Civil War, Canadians have served in the U.S. military (in the American Civil War, an indeterminate number of Canadians enlisted in the armies of both the North and the South); and both the First and Second World Wars saw thousands of Americans join the Canadian Forces before the United States officially declared war on Germany.^{2E, 2I, 3G, 6P, 6W, 6X, 9X}

The true number of Canadians who volunteered, fought and died in Vietnam will likely never be known. For many Canadians who went to Vietnam, the process of enlisting was just a matter of crossing the border and listing that town as their place of residence, or getting a post office box or using a friend's address. Others had dual citizenship or green cards (resided and were employed there so had a U.S. address) and were drafted or enlisted as "Americans", while others were already members of the U.S. military prior to the outbreak of war.^{9X}

It is estimated that between 20,000 to 40,000 Canadians volunteered for service in Vietnam within the branches of the United States military, serving in the army, navy, air force and marines. No Canadian contingent was ever formed—Canadian volunteer soldiers were simply interspersed among the American forces.^{6V, 9X}

Why Canadians joined: Canadians who found themselves fighting in Vietnam came from all social classes and from all parts of the country. Most joined the army, others the marines, the air force and the navy. A major proportion of the Canadians who enlisted were in their late teens or early twenties. A good number of volunteers from Canada had a personal connection with the United States—some had been born there and had moved to Canada as youngsters; others had one parent who had been born in the U.S. Some young Canadians were just seeking adventure, or a change from the boredom of school or a civilian job. Often, young Canadians joined because their father or their brother or uncle had served in the military, and they wanted to maintain the tradition. There was also a significant number of older men, largely army sergeants—career soldiers already in the regular U.S. Army who retained their Canadian citizenship. Those seeking a military career who could not meet the higher physical and educational requirements of the Canadian forces sought their opportunity with the U.S. forces. Some who had previously served in the Canadian forces joined the American forces in order to go to Vietnam. Some were drafted while residing in the U.S., and a good number were already serving in the American forces. Some Canadians joined out of a belief to fight communism, or for other political reasons. Others hoped joining the military might provide them with a trade or other job skills that they could use in future civilian life. Some joined with the attitude that America was our friend and we had to do our bit to help them. Some Quebecois and Acadians simply wanted to learn

English. A significant number of Canadian First Nations, especially those living close to the border, also enlisted to fight in Vietnam. Many young Canadian men simply wanted to experience honour and glory with the intention of returning to Canada as heroes.^{2E, 6P, 6W, 9X}

Reactions in Canada: During the years 1958-68, there was considerable Canadian support for the American cause in Vietnam. Many of the Canadians who joined the Americans in Vietnam did so before casualties began to mount and the anti-war movement gained momentum in the late 1960s and early 1970s. With the beginning of the sustained U.S. bombing of North Vietnam in 1965, the war came to occupy an increasing amount of Canadian newspaper space and television time. TV's coverage of the many protests against the war throughout the U.S. incited similar demonstrations in Canada. Flag-burning and protests at the U.S. embassy and at consulates across Canada, sit-ins, and marches for peace became commonplace. Canadians also crossed the border to join in massive demonstrations against the war. The majority of Canadians however remained silent. But there were some Canadians who strongly disagreed with the demonstrators—among them were those who enlisted to fight with the American forces.^{9X}

American's view of Canadians: Most Americans are unaware that Canadians served with U.S. Forces in Vietnam—Canada is better known as a haven for draft dodgers and deserters. Even in this country, some citizens accused those Canadians who served as mercenaries—yet no Canadian Vietnam veteran could rationally say that he risked his life only for the basic pay offered in the American military (the basic pay of a private in the U.S. Army in May 1968 was \$97.50 per month). Those critical citizens also fail to realize that Canadian companies supplied American firms with billions of dollars worth of materiel for the war, benefitting those businesses and the entire Canadian economy.

To those Americans (who knew about it), Canadians who served with the American forces in Vietnam were considered heroes because they came to America's side in order to fight against Communist aggression. An American Marine Corps Vietnam veteran wrote of the Canadians who served alongside him, *"Initially, I questioned the sanity of these men who, for ideological or frivolous reasons, volunteered to fight a war under a foreign flag that was unpopular and not formally declared. A war that did not directly concern them. I later came to understand that the Canadians shared the same ideals as myself; simply put 'that freedom isn't free' and they literally placed their lives on the line for that belief... I have nothing but respect and admiration for these men."*^{9X}

Canadian sacrifices: The Canadian Vietnam Veterans Association (CVVA) believes that at least 20,000 Canadians enlisted and an estimated 12,000 Canadians would serve in combat roles in Vietnam. Many of these Canadian-born men who served also won US military accolades, including the Purple Heart, the Air Medal, and the Bronze Star, and one Canadian in particular, Peter C. Lemon (a native of Toronto), won the Congressional Medal of Honor—the highest decoration awarded in the US Armed Forces. Of the Canadians who served in Vietnam, an estimated 4,000 were wounded, and estimates for those who lost their lives ranges from 120 up to 400. A number are still listed as "Missing in Action". The Canadian Vietnam Veterans Association has documented 134 Canadians killed in action with U.S. forces in Vietnam, and seven as declared missing in action.^{2E, 3G, 6P, 6V, 6W, 9X}

This author could not uncover any record of any Sarnia or Lambton individual who had lost his or her life while serving in the Vietnam War. There was certainly evidence, however, that a number of men from Sarnia and Lambton County did serve in the Vietnam War and returned to Sarnia/Lambton.

• **VIETNAMESE "BOAT PEOPLE":** For Canada, one positive outcome of the Vietnam War was an influx of Vietnamese refugees who later became Canadian citizens. Migration from Vietnam to Canada occurred in two waves. The first wave began in early 1975, after it became clear that South Vietnam would be taken by the Communists. Between 1975 and 1976, Canada admitted 5,608 South Vietnamese immigrants. Many were middle-class people with professional skills or they had family members in Canada to act as sponsors. Many spoke French, or sometimes English, as a second language.

The second wave came following the end of the Vietnam War in April 1975, when over one million refugees fled the war-ravaged countries of Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos. They were prepared to risk everything. Those Vietnamese who took to the ocean in tiny overcrowded boats and ships were dubbed the "boat people." Facing dangers from pirates, leaky boats, storms, and the hardships of over-crowded boats including starvation, dehydration and disease, many of the boat people perished at sea. The survivors sometimes languished for years in refugee camps in Southeast Asia.

The majority of refugee boat people were resettled in developed countries such as the United States, France, Germany, the U.K., Australia and Canada. Due to the public outcry in 1979, the Canadian government decided that the number of “boat people” brought to Canada should be dependent on public support. In July 1979, it introduced a matching formula: the government would sponsor one refugee for each one sponsored privately. Churches, corporations, and groups of five or more adult Canadian citizens were eligible to sponsor refugees directly.

In 1979 and 1980, Canada accepted more than 50,000 refugee “boat people” from Vietnam. They were a diverse group that included a variety of social classes; both urban and rural dwellers; the majority did not speak English or French; and they had no relatives in Canada. They settled in many places in Canada where there was previously no Vietnamese community. The largest groups settled in Toronto and Montreal, with significant communities in Vancouver, Calgary and Edmonton. Several Sarnia churches sponsored a number of Vietnamese families bringing them to the city.^{2E, 2N, 6B, 6C}

- **CANADA’S VIETNAM VETERANS:** Following the war, Canadian Vietnam veterans experienced much of the same hostilities from their own government as the Americans. Canadian volunteers were generally forgotten or looked upon in an unfavourable light for a number of reasons including, the unpopularity of the war and the negative image of the Vietnam veteran conveyed by the media. American veterans of Vietnam endured years of rejection and lack of support, as the anti-war sentiment of the period blamed them as much as American policy for the atrocities that occurred.

Fred Gaffen, author of *Unknown Warriors: Canadians in the Vietnam War* summarized the situation for Canadian Vietnam veterans as, “While American Vietnam veterans were not given sufficient recognition for their sacrifices, Canadian Vietnam veterans were forgotten.” There were no ‘welcome home’ parades or ceremonies. Michael Carroll, an associate professor of history at MacEwan University in Edmonton said, “Many of the Vietnam veterans who returned to Canada tended to live with their experiences in obscurity. There were relatively few Canadians who could understand what they had experienced, and most wouldn’t have even understood why they went to fight in Vietnam in the first place, especially as the war went on and things went from bad to worse after 1968.”^{9X}

The Canadian government refused to recognize their service, repeatedly rejected requests to erect a memorial to the fallen, and the Royal Canadian Legion denied Vietnam veterans membership until the mid-1990s. They were also prohibited from participating in Remembrance Day celebrations, which only recognize combatants in wars that Canada participated in. Finally, in 2005, the Canadian government officially recognized Canada's Vietnam Veterans. Recognition of these veterans has also been instituted at Remembrance Day ceremonies, and a permanent display was erected at Canada's War Museum.^{2E, 3G, 6P, 6V, 6W, 9X}

The Canadian Vietnam Veterans Memorial



Source: The City of Windsor

• **THE CANADIAN VIETNAM VETERANS MEMORIAL:** Also called the “**The North Wall**”, this memorial is located in Assumption Park, Windsor, Ontario. The wall was funded and built by American Vietnam veterans from Michigan, who wanted to honour the Canadians who fought alongside them. It was dedicated in July 1995, and has the names of approximately 138 known young Canadians who lost their lives or are MIA in the Vietnam War.

The Canadian Vietnam Veterans Memorial monument is made of black granite, and measures eleven feet tall by fourteen feet wide. At the base of the memorial, there is an enshrined Purple Heart, which belonged to Corporal Larry Semeniuk, of Windsor, who served with the U.S. Army's 101st Airborne, and who was killed in action in January 1968. The inscription below the Purple Heart reads:

"Here within this memorial is a symbol that America's first President George Washington fostered. 'The Purple Heart Medal.' Whether they wore the Maple Leaf of Canada or the Stars and Stripes of the United States, these memorialized veterans are heroes believing that freedom knows no borders, and must be defended whenever it is challenged."^{6P}

Following is a poem written by Richard Malboeuf, a Canadian who crossed the border volunteering to fight in Vietnam. He served with the US Army 101st Airborne Division, Vietnam, April 1969 - October 1970.^{6V}

*O' Canada, Our Home And Native Land
We Had Hoped You Would Understand
Why We Left The Safety of Our Land
To Fight For Freedom in Vietnam

Like Our Fathers Before
We Set Off For a Distant Shore
Heeding The Trumpet's Call To Fight
For A Cause We Believed Was Right

And Though We Served As Americans
In Our Hearts We Fought Like Canadians
Be Proud O'Canada, For We Served Well
In That Time We Spent In Hell

Lest We Forget Those Who Gave Their All
Their Names Are Now Engraved Upon This Wall
O'Canada, Our Home and Native Land
We Hope That Now You Understand*



CANADIANS AS PEACEKEEPERS and IN THE SERVICE OF CANADA

After World War II, and especially during the Cold War years, Canada was one of many countries looking for ways to prevent the recurrence of war around the world. Our country played a leading role in the peacekeeping movement from the outset, and for many ensuing years Canadians regarded UN peacekeeping as a national duty. Canadian Armed Forces members have also fulfilled and continue to perform duties for Canadians at home in many capacities. Following is a summary of Canadians in their role as peacekeepers around the world and in their role in the service of this country. Sarnia-Lambton's sons and daughters have served in both of these roles.

- **THE SUEZ CRISIS:** The Suez Canal in Egypt directly links the Mediterranean Sea to the Red Sea. It was built by Egyptian workers under the French and British-owned Suez Canal Company, and opened in 1869. On July 26, 1956, Egypt's President Gamal Abdel Nasser seized control of the Suez Canal—which had been run by the French and British governments. When diplomacy failed to produce a solution, Britain, France and Israel began plotting a military response. Egypt meanwhile, obtained military arms from the Soviet Union, who announced they would send troops if Egypt was attacked. The crisis created a major divide in British/United States relations, as the Americans opposed any use of force.

On October 29, 1956, Israel invaded the Gaza Strip and Sinai Peninsula of Egypt and advanced toward the Suez Canal Zone. Days later, Britain and France started a bombing campaign in order to reopen the Canal Zone. The Middle East was set to explode and there seemed to be a serious threat of a Third World War.

During the 1956 Suez Crisis, Canada's Minister of External Affairs **Lester B. Pearson**, who headed Canada's delegation to the United Nations (UN), proposed and helped develop a multinational UN peacekeeping force to be sent to Egypt to separate the Israeli, British and French troops from the Egyptian troops. On November 2, 1956, Pearson said, *"We need action not only to end the fighting, but to make peace... my own government would be glad to recommend Canadian participation in such a United Nations force, a truly international peace and police force."* These words are now inscribed on Canada's Peacekeeping Monument in Ottawa. On November 4, 1956, the United Nations voted overwhelmingly in support of Pearson's **United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF)** proposal.

First Canadian Peacekeepers: On November 24, 1956, the first Canadian Peacekeepers, as part of the first large international United Nations Emergency Force, set foot in Egypt. The Force included 6,000 men from ten countries under the command of a Canadian Lieutenant-General E.L.M. Burns. It was then that the term **'peacekeeping'** entered popular vocabulary. British and French forces completed their withdrawal from Egypt by the end of 1956; and Israeli forces withdrew in the spring of 1957. In 1957, Lester B. Pearson, who later became Prime Minister of Canada (1963-68), won a Nobel Peace Prize for his initiative in using the world's first, large-scale United Nations peacekeeping force to de-escalate the situation in Egypt. Following is a portion of his acceptance speech, *"I realize also that I share this honour with many friends and colleagues who have worked with me for the promotion of peace and good understanding between peoples. I am grateful for the opportunities I have been given to participate in that work as a representative of my country, Canada, whose people have, I think, shown their devotion to peace."*^{D, 2N, 3G}

Canadians in Egypt: Canadian Armed Forces members took part in the United Nations (UN) peace missions in the Gaza strip and the Sinai Peninsula of Egypt between 1956 and 1967, and again from 1973 to 1979. At times, the total size of the UN peace forces in Egypt was upward of 7,000 troops drawn from 20 countries. More than 150 UN troops died in their peace efforts for Egypt, including more than 50 Canadians. On the edge of the town of Gaza lies a well-tended cemetery filled with the graves of Allied troops who died while serving in the Middle East during the First World War. One small corner of this cemetery, reached through gates adorned with gilded maple leaves, is home to the graves of 22 Canadians who died in the course of the peace efforts to Egypt in the 1950s and '60s.^D

The "Blue Helmets" It was during their time in the Middle East that, in order to distinguish themselves from forces in conflict, it was decided that the UN troops would wear blue headgear (helmets and berets). This would make them easily identifiable as being there for a peaceful purpose and not as combatants. The blue berets and helmets worn by UN peacekeepers have become one of the most well known symbols of today's international peace support movement.^D

- **THE UNIFICATION OF THE CANADIAN ARMED FORCES:** There had been talk of this for years, even as far back as shortly after the Second World War—the merging of the three main military arms into one structure. In

1967, the Canadian Minister of National Defence, Paul Hellyer, introduced a bill for the reorganization and integration of the Royal Canadian Air Force, Royal Canadian Navy, and Canadian Army into a single force. The idea being to reduce duplication of services and the associated costs, and to streamline operations and create greater efficiency. The House of Commons passed the Canadian Forces Reorganization Act (Bill C-243) on April 25, 1967.

The unification of the Canadian Armed Forces officially took effect on February 1, 1968. On that date, the Royal Canadian Navy, the Royal Air Force and the Canadian Army ceased to exist. The Act did away with traditional distinguishing uniforms, rank structure; and the separate legal entities such that the three proud military services were now unified into one, known simply as the **Canadian Armed Forces** (later just Canadian Forces - CF). Six commands were established: Mobile Command (later Land Force Command), Maritime Command, Air Defence Command, Air Transport Command, Training Command and Materiel Command.

The move was met with great resistance and the government was accused of not understanding or respecting the particular heritage and traditions of the separate entities. There were other less pleasant allegations associated with the fact the term “Royal” would be eliminated. Even though all were wearing the same “green” uniform and rank structures, members still tended stubbornly to identify with their units and particular branches of service. Fighting amongst the services over ever-smaller budgets also kept the idea of separate entities alive if not openly, certainly not deeply hidden. By the mid-1980s the tide was being slowly turned back as members were permitted a return to distinctive colours to their uniforms. Also the term “Canadian Army” has since been re-instated, and in August 2011 the “Royal” was returned to the navy and air force. Thus the never popular Maritime Command, Air Command, and Land Force Command are now once again the Royal Canadian Navy, the Royal Canadian Air Force and the Canadian Army.

While still generally referred to as the Canadian Armed Forces, and bases are referred to merely as “Canadian Forces Base” (CFB) such and such, the pride in the individual service arms remained strong throughout the years, continues to be strong, and has to some extent resisted one of the greatest shakeups of Canada’s military.^{3G, 9H}

• **THE PERSIAN GULF WAR:** In August 1988, Iraq had just finished fighting an eight year war against neighbouring Iran which resulted in tremendous bloodshed, destruction and a stalemate. The U.S. had intervened in that war by supplying Iraq with military support when needed. In the late 1980’s, tensions grew between Iraq and Kuwait—another Arab country in the heart of the oil-rich Middle East—over disputed oil fields. On August 2, 1990, the situation came to a head when Iraq, with one of the largest military forces in the world, invaded its smaller neighbour Kuwait.

The United Nations condemned the aggressive act, leading to a number of UN resolutions that included the use of force to liberate Kuwait. The United States lead a 35-country international coalition, that included Canada, tasked with liberating Kuwait. On January 16, 1991, after a UN-set deadline for Iraqi withdrawal was ignored, the coalition forces began a devastating air campaign (*Operation Desert Storm*) against Iraq. This was followed by an armour and infantry offensive (*Operation Desert Saber*) that began on February 24, 1991.

Canada’s contribution to the Gulf War included more than 4,000 Canadian Armed Forces personnel serving in the tense Persian Gulf region, the first time Canadian forces went to war since the Korean War. The first Canadian Forces personnel dispatched to the area were the navy—three ships, the destroyers *HMCS Terra Nova* and *HMCS Athabaskan*, along with the supply ship *HMCS Protecteur*, were tasked with enforcing a United Nations trade embargo. Sea King helicopters were also attached to the Naval Task Group, performing reconnaissance, utility, and command-and-liaison tasks. The Canadian Air Force soon followed, deploying CF-18 Hornet fighters that performed combat air control, escort and reconnaissance missions. Air operations also included Canadian air-to-surface attacks, and Air Command Transport Group using CC-130 Hercules and CC-137 Boeing 707’s providing air transport of personnel and cargo. A Canadian field hospital from Petawawa operated with the British division, caring for both British and Iraqi wounded.

The UN coalition freed Kuwait, suspended the fighting, and Iraq accepted a cease-fire on March 3, 1991. The official end of the war left Iraq's leader, Saddam Hussein, and his military, defeated—but Hussein retained power in Iraq. He remained in control for more than 12 years until the second Gulf War of 2003 finally swept him from power.^{D, 3G, 4A}

After the Gulf-War ended and the Iraqis capitulated in April 1991, Canadian troops remained in the region as part of the UN peacekeeping mission (UNIKOM) along the Iraq-Kuwait border, monitoring the demilitarized zone

between the two countries, investigating cease-fire violations, serving on weapons-inspection teams, clearing land mines and offering humanitarian aid. Following is a portion of a letter written in April 1991, by a Canadian corporal serving there, to his parents;

... again a day to remember we went to Ummqasar [a small Iraqi town] to the hovercraft site. On the way there, we drove through the killing field, and it stunk to death a most terrible stench as you can imagine. The destruction was awesome close up. Tanks APCs [armoured personnel carriers] cars trucks full of holes, piled up, burned, upside down unreal!!... The battle field and destruction went from Kuwait City right to Iraq. I also got to see the burning oil fields even closer than before, it really makes you sick to see it. I counted 68 wells in one and 52 in another and those are just what you can see on the outside cause of the smoke!

We drove through one of the refugee camps and it was terrible. But all the little kids came running and waved. All the people seemed real happy to see us. The little kids run at top speed in bare feet! Over glass and rocks and metal! They wave and laugh hysterically, it's a good feeling... The kids in Iraq I felt more sorry for cause they are not in a good way, living in decrepit buildings with garbage everywhere and they are starving. We were throwing our rations to them. It was quite a sight as they would ask us for food point to their mouths or stomach but all smiles. They wanted our water as much as food...

I saw a little boy being pulled by his brother on a makeshift cart. The little boy had no legs. Also there were kids on crutches all over, and bandaged kids missing feet and arms. It's no wonder, a little boy about 8 years old came up to a guy when we were clearing an area and he was all smiles holding a live grenade! Buddy snatched it from him and told him as best he could not to touch anything.

We found a lot of ordnance I mean a lot and we only cleared a small area!...^{7A}

Canada also had a role in the special commission to seek out Iraq's biological, chemical and nuclear weapons production facilities. On the water, Canadian warships participated in Multinational Interception Force operations and helped to enforce the economic sanctions imposed against Iraq after the Gulf War. No Canadian Armed Forces members died in the course of the Gulf War, although many of the returning soldiers suffered from the anxiety disorder Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), characterized by reliving psychologically traumatic situation, through flashbacks and nightmares.^{D, 3G, 4A}

Women in combat: The Gulf War marked the first time that Canadian female enlisted soldiers operated in combat. It was especially challenging for these trail-blazing women because they were serving in orthodox Muslim countries in the Middle East where traditional gender roles are very different than in Canada.

• **CANADIAN PEACEKEEPERS:** As peacekeepers, Canadian Forces men and women put themselves in harm's way and have provided numerous roles: supervising cease-fires and withdrawal of opposing forces; delivering humanitarian aid; supervising elections; repatriating refugees; disarming warring factions; protecting citizens; restoring shattered landscapes (eg. clearing of mines); and nurturing stable governments and human rights.^D

Through years of commitment, Canada has played a prominent role and established itself as a nation of peacekeepers throughout the world. Canada has participated in the majority of peace support operations mandated by the United Security Council over the years, with Canadians serving in more than forty international peace support operations. This includes peacekeeping missions in Egypt, the Congo, Indonesia, West New Guinea, Yemen, the Dominican Republic, India, Pakistan, Iran-Iraq, Cyprus, Sarajevo, the Middle East, Israel, Syria, Lebanon, Angola, Iraq-Kuwait, Namibia, the Western Sahara, El Salvador, Cambodia, Bosnia, Mozambique, Somalia, Haiti, Uganda-Rwanda, Croatia, Kosovo, the Balkans, Guatemala, East Timor, Ethiopia, East Timor, Sudan, Darfur, the Persian Gulf, Afghanistan and Mali.

As peacekeepers, Canadian soldiers have demonstrated a long-standing willingness to put their lives on the line to help others achieve peace and security; to preserve and defend freedom; to protect human rights and help restore the rule of law. Many have given their lives, and many more have been wounded, their injuries to body and to mind lasting a lifetime. These brave Canadian peacekeepers include a number of men and women from Sarnia.

Canadian Armed Forces members have served and sacrificed in peacekeeping missions over the last six decades in more than thirty-five countries, fulfilling their duties against the constant background of danger. Following are two Canadian peacekeepers known around the world for their exceptional contributions & dedication.

Mark Robert Isfeld was born on August 14, 1962, the son of Brian and Carol Isfeld of Courtenay, British Columbia. He joined the Canadian Armed Forces in 1986, and became Master Corporal Mark 'Izzy' Isfeld, Field Engineer with No. 1 Combat Engineer Regiment, Royal Canadian Engineers. During his three peacekeeping tours in

Kuwait and Croatia, he worked clearing and defusing land mines, bombs and IEDs in these war-torn countries. On his tours, he would often see children who had been injured or were missing limbs because of the land mines. While in Croatia in the early 1990s, he was driving through a village and saw a figure lying prone on the rubble of a house that had been hit by artillery in the civil war there. When he got closer he realized it was not a child, as he feared, but was an abandoned doll. He thought of the need to re-connect a child with the joy that can come from a toy.

When he was home at Christmas, he showed his mom Carol a photo of the doll and said, “Some little girl has lost her doll, and a doll has lost her little girl.” Impacted by the sympathy of her son, Carol started knitting dolls from scrap wool, some with pigtails and floppy hats, some with blue berets, and she sent them along with Mark to give to children who had no toys. Isfeld became known as the soldier who received little handshakes and captured little hearts and made the children smile. Tragically, Mark Isfeld lost his life at age 31, in a landmine explosion near Kakma in Croatia on June 21, 1994. He was guiding a LAV III armoured personnel carrier along a lane when the LAV hit a trip wire setting off an explosion, fatally wounding him. After Mark’s death, his regiment asked Carol if she would continue to make the dolls. Carol Isfeld continued to make them, for more than a decade, for the members of his regiment to give out to children in Mark’s memory. The troops in his regiment named them “**Izzy Dolls.**”

Carol Isfeld recruited other women to make the dolls, and decided to copyright the name and pattern so that Izzy Dolls could only be given in charity and never sold for profit. The pattern for the Izzy Doll was made available to the public by the Isfeld family. After Mark Isfeld’s death, a grass-roots movement began where individual people and organizations from across Canada have continued to knit/crochete “Izzy” dolls. The dolls have been distributed by Canadian soldiers to children caught up in areas of conflict in different parts of the world. Canadian charities and humanitarian organizations (eg. ICROSS, HPIC, DART, Red Cross) providing relief to those suffering from poverty and natural disasters also distribute these dolls to children overseas and even here at home.

The Izzy dolls are about six inches long, knitted with different face colours, and stuffed with light polyester fiber fill so soldiers can easily carry them in their pockets. More than 1.3 million Izzy Dolls have been handed out around the world to children in war-torn and impoverished areas. There is a bronze statue of MCpl Mark Isfeld located in Peacekeeper Park, Calgary and a school in Courtenay, B.C. named in his honour. The book “*In the Mood For Peace – The Story of the Izzy Doll*”, by Phyllis Wheaton, tells the true story of Canadian Peacekeeper Mark Isfeld; his desire to bring joy and goodwill to the needy and the forgotten; how his family coped with the loss of their beloved soldier son; and how a soldier’s simple acts of kindness inspired Canadians to change the world.^{D, 9E, 9F}

Romeo Dallaire was born on June 25, 1946 in the Netherlands, the son of a Canadian military officer who married a Dutch nurse after the Second World War. Romeo grew up in Montreal and joined the Canadian military in 1964. He became a colonel twenty-two years later, but it was in the early 1990s that he came to the attention of the world.

In late 1993, Lieutenant-General Dallaire was appointed Force Commander of the **United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR)**, a small lightly armed force tasked to oversee the peace agreement ending a civil war in that country. Once deployed there, he was supposed to supervise a truce between the Hutus and the Tutsis, but his powers were tightly constricted. He warned UN headquarters that something catastrophic was brewing, and repeatedly pleaded for action and backup. But the world’s major powers failed to act or provide him with troops.

In April 1994, the genocide started. Rwandan military and extremist Hutu gangs armed with machetes, clubs, and guns cut a path of bloody chaos through the Tutsi minority, including torture, rape, mutilation and murder. Confronted with an impossible situation, Dallaire consolidated his troops in a few urban areas and was able to protect some civilians. He, along with a small contingent of Ghanaian and Tunisian soldiers and military observers, disobeyed the command to withdraw and remained in Rwanda to fulfill their ethical obligation to protect those who sought refuge with the UN forces. In the worst genocide since the Holocaust, more than 800,000 Rwandan men, women and children were slaughtered in less than one hundred days, and 2 million became refugees. Dallaire has been widely praised for ignoring the UN orders to pull out and is credited with saving some 32,000 lives.

Dallaire was haunted by the memories of what he saw and heard, by the men who died under his command, and by his inability to spur the UN to take action in Rwanda. His courage and leadership during this mission earned him the Pearson Peace Medal, the Meritorious Service Cross, the United States Legion of Merit, and the affection and admiration of people around the globe. His award-winning autobiography, *Shake Hands with the Devil: The Failure of Humanity in Rwanda*, is a searing account of incomprehensible horror of the genocide and his defiant

dedication to humanity. He is a celebrated advocate for human rights, especially in regards to child soldiers, veterans, and the prevention of mass atrocities.^{2N, 11E, 11F}

Following is Romeo Dallaire's description of how warfare changed after the last World War;

Until the end of the Cold War, in most cases, our military faced a recognizable enemy, fought a trained and willing soldier, on a set battlefield, over clear principles. And after the Cold War, we continued training for these classic wars. This was certainly the conventional warfare I was prepared for.

What I found in Rwanda was not. Neither was Afghanistan. Neither is Syria nor the Central African Republic. Often called "dirty wars," these are complex conflicts about which we know little and on which we impose outdated understanding and methods at our peril.

We may look to the Islamic State, al Qaeda or Boko Haram (or to the all-encompassing idea of terror) for a common enemy, but the majority of belligerents today are more enigmatic. In most post-Cold War conflicts, there have been no "redcoats," no "no man's land." In Rwanda, there was no set battlefield, no front line – or rather, there was nothing but a front line. In a hundred days, we saw almost a million civilians butchered – babies, mothers, elderly women, old men, young men. The trained soldiers we faced? Often children – boys and girls, delirious from booze and drugs and hate propaganda, wielding crude but lethal weapons. Such is warfare in the twenty-first century: no longer nation states spilling military blood, but innocent civilian populations being bled within their own border.

What we face today has not only caught us by surprise but is an assault on the world that makes sense to us. And it renders our resolve to fight, even to the point of the ultimate sacrifice, all the more complicated. The new breed of belligerents plays by no rule of law with which we are familiar, not the law of armed conflict, not humanitarian law. This, of course makes it easy for the general population to shirk from the idea of war, preferring self-protective ignorance to paying the cost of helping to secure human lives and rights in faraway lands. It is easy for those not in uniform to misunderstand the compulsion that drives soldiers to fight for what is right and good and not just hope and pray for it.^{6Q}

• **PEACEKEEPERS' SACRIFICES:** The following is a quote from Romeo Dallaire's father that appeared in *Shake Hands With the Devil*. In it, he describes the special quality of character of Canadian Peacekeepers, "You know, soldiers are very unusual people. On the outside they are the hardest, most demanding people, but underneath that, they are the most human, the most feeling, the most emotionally attached people who exist."

Over 125,000 Canadian military personnel have served in UN peacekeeping operations in countries all over the world since 1947. To acknowledge such service, the Department of National Defence issued a special medal, the Canadian Peacekeeping Service Medal, instituted in 2000. It is awarded to military and civilian personnel who have served for 30 days or more in UN or other peacekeeping operations.

Approximately 130 Canadian soldiers have made the supreme sacrifice while peacekeeping, and many more have suffered physical and mental injury.^{D, E, 2N, 3O}

Peacekeepers' Remembered: Canada's peacekeepers are honoured and remembered on **The Peacekeeping Monument** – titled *Reconciliation* – in downtown Ottawa. The monument, unveiled in October 1992, depicts three peacekeeping soldiers—two men and a woman—standing on two sharp, knifelike edges of stone, cutting through the rubble and debris of war and converging at a high point, which symbolizes the resolution of conflict. The base of the monument includes Lester Pearson's November 1956 quote, "*We need action not only to end the fighting but to make peace...*"^D

In addition to the *Reconciliation* monument, the names of those killed on peacekeeping missions since 1947 are inscribed in the *Book of Remembrance - In the Service of Canada* in the Memorial Chamber on Parliament Hill. More information on the *Book of Remembrance* is on page 1121.

National Peacekeepers' Day: In Canada, August 9 is designated as National Peacekeeper's Day, first established in 2008. It provides an opportunity for Canadians to express the pride and respect they have toward personnel of the Canadian Armed Forces, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, and provincial and municipal police forces, as well as Canadian diplomats and civilians who have worked in support of international peace and security operations.

This date was selected to recognize the largest single-day loss of Canadian Armed Forces lives on a

peacekeeping mission. On August 9, 1974, a Canadian Forces Buffalo 461 transport aircraft, was on a scheduled supply flight from Ismailia, Egypt to Damascus, Syria. There were nine Canadian peacekeepers aboard the aircraft, serving with the United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF II) in Egypt and Israel. Shortly after crossing the Lebanese-Syrian border into Syria, three anti-aircraft surface-to-air missiles were fired at the aircraft—all three struck it—resulting in the aircraft's destruction and the deaths of all nine Canadian Forces peacekeepers. In Canada, the attack—and the arrival soon after of nine military coffins—attracted little or no attention. It was overshadowed by historic news coming out of the United States—President Richard Nixon's impeachment over his role in the Watergate scandal was going on at the same time.^{D, 2N, 7M}

Warrant Officer William Munden, with Canadian 436 Transport Squadron, was aboard the Hercules aircraft despatched from Germany to Damascus to recover the remains of the nine Canadians. He would learn that day that the pilot of the downed Buffalo 461 was a close friend of his. Following is a portion of his recollection of events on the Damascus tarmac; *By the time the ceremony started, it was very dark. The airport had just a few lights, and we could see two lines of soldiers standing, waiting for the caskets. A few Syrian soldiers were lined up on one side, and Canadian peacekeeping soldiers from the Golan Heights were lined up on the other side. They began bringing the caskets one at a time through this column of opposing military soldiers... On that night, in Damascus, I was the proudest I'd ever been of those Canadian army peacekeepers. These were the soldiers that went out and picked up the bits and pieces of our fallen comrades in the Golan Heights. They found wooden ammunition boxes and fabricated caskets. They stole some wood-grain "mack-tack" and covered the boxes, then put on their best uniforms and stood at attention in that airport while the remains were brought onto the Hercules. I thought, 'Boy, how can you do that?'*^{9K}

• **THE PEACE TOWER and the BOOKS OF REMEMBRANCE:** The **Peace Tower** is the dominant feature on Parliament Hill in Ottawa. Nearly 98-metres in height, it features the Peace Tower clock, Peace Tower carillon (53 bells), and a copper-covered apex that is topped with the Canadian flag. The original "Victoria Tower" was completed in 1878 but in 1916, it crumbled to the ground during a fire that destroyed most of the Parliament Buildings. Reconstruction of the destroyed section began almost immediately, as the First World War raged in Europe. On September 1, 1919, the Prince of Wales laid the cornerstone of the tower and designated it "**The Tower of Victory and Peace.**" Commonly referred to as the "Peace Tower", it is dedicated to all Canadian men and women killed during wartime and the peace which they died to achieve.

Located within the heart of the Peace Tower is the **Memorial Chamber**, built as a tribute to the Canadians who lost their lives during the First World War. The walls of the Chamber display many stone carvings depicting the symbolic history of the Great War, and stained glass windows of heraldic symbolism soar on three walls. The floor is inlaid stone brought from various battlefields in France and Belgium, and laid in the form of a cross. Brass plates in the floor inscribed with the names of major WWI battles, such as the Somme and Passchendaele, were hand-crafted from spent shell casings from the war. The stone walls in the Chamber were originally to have been inscribed with the names of all Canadian war dead – but as the First World War's death toll mounted, it was realized that there were just too many names. The solution was to create a resting place for the names within carefully crafted books, handwritten on vellum parchment.

The centerpiece of the Chamber is a massive stone central altar that is surrounded by seven altars made of stone and bronze. Each altar holds one of the eight **Books of Remembrance** that together contain the names of more than 118,000 Canadians who fought and made the ultimate sacrifice in the service of Canada. The main altar, resting on steps made of stone quarried from Flanders, holds the *The First World War Book of Remembrance* (66,600+ names). Seven other Books of Remembrance are displayed open in glass cases on the other altars; *The Second World War Book of Remembrance* (44,800+ names), *The South African War-Nile Expedition Book of Remembrance* (almost 300 names), *The Korean War Book of Remembrance* (516 names), *The Newfoundland Book of Remembrance* (2,300+ names), *The Merchant Navy Book of Remembrance* (2,200 names), *In the Service of Canada Book of Remembrance* (1,800+ names), and a *War of 1812 Book of Remembrance* (1,600+ names).^{D, 3G}

The *In the Service of Canada Book of Remembrance* lists the names of more than 1,800 members of the Canadian Armed Forces who died while on duty in Canada or serving abroad since October 1, 1947, with the exception of those commemorated in the *Korean War Book of Remembrance*. The *Book* begins with the date of October 1, 1947, the day after eligibility for entry in the *Second World War Book of Remembrance*. This includes those who died in times of conflict, or during peacetime training exercises, peacekeeping deployments abroad or other military duty. Unveiled in 2005, this Book of Remembrance is the final chapter that never ends. It will be

continuously updated to reflect the never-ending sacrifice that is the reality of military service.

The *In the Service of Canada Book of Remembrance* contains the names of at least three Sarnia-Lambton soldiers: Private William Cushley and Corporal Brent Poland who were both killed in action in the Afghanistan War; and Captain Milton David Salmons who lost his life in the Service of Canada.

• **IN THE SERVICE OF CANADA (Canadian Armed Forces at Home):** Canadian Armed Forces members support freedom, democracy, the rule of law and human rights around the world. Aside from contributing to international peace efforts, they also proudly serve Canada by defending its values, interests and sovereignty at home. Members of the Canadian Armed Forces patrol our coasts, monitor our skies, support anti-drug operations, assist with disaster relief (forest fires, floods, avalanches, snowstorms, tornadoes, epidemics, etc.), provide assistance to civil authorities when needed to maintain public order and security, and lead search and rescue missions.^{3G} In all of the above roles, there is sacrifice and risk. In 1980, a Sarnian lost his life in the service of Canada.



SARNIA'S IN THE SERVICE OF CANADA FALLEN SOLDIER

SALMONS, Milton David (C24 733 208)

Those who knew David Salmons fondly recall his multi-faceted personality: respectful and intelligent, sincere and thoughtful, amiable and mischievous. And he was undeniably driven and talented, a young man who knew what he wanted and a husband and father who accomplished much before he died at age 27 while serving Canada.

Milton David Salmons was born in Sarnia on January 29, 1953, the eldest son of Milton Taylor and Myrtle Marie (nee: Farr) Salmons. Milton David always went by his middle name, Dave. Parents Milton (born July 10, 1928 in Sarnia) and Myrtle (born August 15, 1932 in Brigden) Salmons raised four children together. Dave's siblings included; Elizabeth (Beth), born in 1950; Jennifer, born in 1956; and Scott, born in 1963.

Milton Salmons supported his family as a truck driver with Jack Carey, later Duncan Crane and still later Sarnia Cranes. Myrtle worked for a time beginning in the mid-1970s as an office clerk with Point Edward Camping and Trailer and later for many years with the Liquor Control Board (LCBO). Because of Milton's career, the Salmons family moved around for a few years: to Bolton for 4-5 years and then to Rexdale for a year before returning to Sarnia. Beginning in the late 1950s, the Salmons family lived in a variety of houses--at 210 Bright Street, at 455 Wellington Street, at 539 Nassua Cr., at 131 College Ave., S., and at 118 Fairview Place. In the late 1980s, the Salmons moved to 1940 London Road. They lived there for the rest of their lives.

It soon became evident to everyone that Dave Salmons was mechanically inclined. He was educated in Sarnia where he completed grade 8 at Johnston Memorial and received his secondary schooling at Sarnia Collegiate. Outside of school, a hobby he approached enthusiastically was model building. Growing up, he always had a great passion for cars, motorcycles and things that went fast. He was very mechanically inclined and enjoyed working on cars and motorcycles. He worked at Croucher's gas station in Sarnia during high school and later at a gas station in Comox, B.C. when he was first married.

He also was interested in the military. As a teenager, he began his military career with #44 Sarnia Optimist Squadron, Royal Canadian Air Cadets in 1967 (in the late 1980s, it was renamed the 44 Sarnia Imperial Squadron, Royal Canadian Air Cadets). His success was capped on his graduation in May 1970 when he was awarded one of two Flying Scholarships—a course valued at \$700 that enabled him to obtain his private Pilots License and to wear the coveted Air Cadet Wings. David went on to earn his Glider Wings in Chatham and his Power Wings in Trenton. Years later his sister Jennifer said, “It wasn't a surprise that he found his bliss in the Air Force first as an aeroframe tech to ultimately in the cockpit of various aircraft. His first taste of flight came while in Air Cadets as he took his first flight in a glider. He was hooked.”



Dave - Grade 10D
SCITS 1969



#44 Squadron Air Cadet Salmons (L)
(at Northgate Plaza)

In the summer of 1972, nineteen year-old Dave met the love of his life in Sarnia, eighteen year-old Sandra “Sandy” Ruth Martin. They met at a party at Dave’s friends house, Morris Stuckey, in Brights Grove. The daughter of Arthur James Martin (born 1926 in Burnaby, B.C.) and Ruth Carmela Underwood (born 1930 in Vancouver, B.C.), Sandy was born in Calgary, Alberta on September 15, 1954. The Martin family moved to Sarnia in 1959. She had attended Lake Road Public School and Northern Collegiate. A year after meeting, on July 13, 1973, Private David Salmons married Sandy Martin at Grace United Church on Cathcart Road in Sarnia. Less than five months earlier, David had enlisted in the Canadian Armed Forces.

Canadian Armed Forces members support freedom, democracy, the rule of law and human rights around the world. Aside from contributing to international peace efforts, they also proudly serve Canada by defending its values, interests and sovereignty at home. Members of the Canadian Armed Forces patrol our coasts, monitor our skies, support anti-drug operations, assist with disaster relief, provide assistance to civil authorities when needed to maintain public order and security, and lead search and rescue missions. **In the Service to Canada**, in all of these roles, sacrifice and risk exist.



Dave and Sandy, newly married, Grace United Church, July 1973



Back: Grandparents Jessie & Archie Salmons
Middle: Arthur & Ruth Martin, Myrtle & Milton Salmons
Front: Sandy & Dave



Siblings: L-R: Doug, Carol & Dave Martin;
Sandy and Dave;
Jennifer, Scott & Beth Salmons

Twenty year-old Dave Salmons enlisted with the Canadian Armed Forces on February 26, 1973 at Canadian Forces Base (CFB) Cornwallis, Nova Scotia. His plan was to become a mechanic in the military. He underwent his basic training at CFB Cornwallis and did well. A letter received by his mother Myrtle at her Wellington Street home in late June 1973 from Captain T.E. Connors, Base Commander, reveals how successful he was there:

Dear Mrs. Salmons:

It is with pleasure that I inform you that your son has successfully completed an eleven week Basic Recruit Training Course, and will shortly leave Cornwallis for further training and subsequent employment as an Aero Engine Technician with the Canadian Armed Forces.

Milton was particularly successful in his training in that he received the "Commandant's Shield", awarded to the Best All Round Recruit in Course No. 7315.

After graduating as top cadet from CFB Cornwallis, and being awarded the Commandants Shield, he set off for training at CFB Borden in July 1973, the same month that he got married. So newlyweds David and Sandy set off for Barrie where they rented an apartment in the downtown and lived there while David completed his training at CFB Borden. Dave was at CFB Borden from July 1973 to December 1973.



Dave with his grandfather Archie Salmons
Leaving Sarnia bound for Cornwallis, 1973



Dave with his grandmother Jessie Salmons

Note: Dave's grandfather, Archibald Maynard Salmons, was from a family of seven boys and three girls. One of his siblings was Alfred Charles Salmons, born in December 1916 in London, Ontario, who grew up and was educated in Point Edward and Sarnia. For eight years, Alfred worked in the trucking business with his three brothers in Sarnia. In September 1943, at the age 26, Alfred enlisted in the Canadian Army in London. At the time, he was working as a truck driver with Ford Motor Company and living in Windsor with his widowed mother, Lucy. When he enlisted, two of his brothers were already in the RCAF (Robert, a Pilot Officer in England, and George, a Leading Aircraftman in Montreal) and one was in the Canadian Army (Henry, a Gunner in Italy). Alfred embarked overseas to the United Kingdom in April 1944 and arrived in France in July 1944 during the Battle of Normandy. As a member of the Highland Light Infantry of Canada, R.C.I.C., he served with that unit as they advanced through France, Belgium, the Netherlands and into Germany. He was wounded in action in October 1944 but later returned to action. On March 31, 1945, Lance Corporal Alfred Salmons was killed in action (in the field) in Germany during the Battle of the Rhineland. He was originally buried near Vrsselet, Germany, and was later exhumed and reburied in Groesbeek Canadian War Cemetery, Netherlands.



Dave in his 1969 Camaro (with Scott)



Basic Training Cornwallis June 1973

Due to his high scores or ratings, Dave got his choice of postings after CFB Borden and chose Canadian Forces Base (CFB) Comox in British Columbia. In January 1974, Dave and Sandy drove to B.C. It was so cold during their winter drive west that their car battery froze in Saskatchewan in the middle of nowhere. While at CFB Comox with RCAF #407 "Demon" Squadron, Dave was an aero-engine technician, working on aircraft that included the Canadair CP-107 Argus, a four-engine marine reconnaissance aircraft.



Myrtle, Dave and Milton



Jennifer, Beth and Dave

While at Comox, the military officials recognized his talents and skills and recommended that he become a pilot. At the time, they were accepting people with university entrance marks and you didn't have to go to university. Dave was accepted and began his officer training at Canadian Forces Base Chilliwack in B.C. While there, he injured his Achilles tendon enough that he worried it would put him back in the course. Overcoming his injury, he successfully completed his three months of officer training.

From CFB Chilliwack, Dave went to Portage La Prairie in Manitoba where he attended 3 Canadian Forces Flying Training School (3CFFTS). At this basic flight school, he completed three months of training in small-winged aircraft. Then Dave was posted to CFB Moose Jaw (also known as 15 Wing) in Saskatchewan for an 11-month training course. This higher level included training on the Canadair CT114-Tutor, the same aircraft that the Canadian Forces Snowbirds use. During this training period, Sandy stayed in Comox while Dave was in Chilliwack and Portage La Prairie, but she joined him in Moose Jaw.



Dave with his brother Scott in Moose Jaw 1976



Dave graduated from CFB Moose Jaw as top overall cadet and again with achieving the scores that he did, he was able to get his choice of posting. He chose transport squadron and was sent to CFB Trenton, Ontario, where he became a member of #436 Transport Squadron and attained the rank of Captain.



Sandy & Dave – Graduation Moose Jaw Jan. 1976



Captain Dave Salmons – Moose Jaw 1976

RCAF #436 Transport Squadron "Onus Portamus" (We Carry the Load), was formed in India during World War II in August 1944. Operating from a base in India and equipped with the C-47 Dakota medium range transport,

the Squadron's role was to supply troops and material to the Allied 14th Army in Burma. The squadron was disbanded in June 1946 and reformed in April 1953, where it would eventually be based at CFB Trenton, and by 1960 was equipped with CC-130E Hercules aircraft--a four-engine, fixed-wing turboprop aircraft. In 2006, the squadron began to transition to operating with the "workhorse" of the RCAF transport fleet - the CC-130J Hercules aircraft. Years later, RCAF #436 Squadron received the Afghanistan Battle Honour for their significant contributions to Canada's mission in Afghanistan beginning in late 2001.



Dave inspecting #44 Sarnia Squadron cadets



Dave and Sandy – May 1980

Dave Salmons intelligence, dedication and professional abilities were recognized by military officials. While still a Lieutenant, he was appointed a commander of a Hercules aircraft. Dave's training and career path took him to distant places around the globe including his favourite place, New Zealand, and his least favourite, Greenland, where he did his survival training. One of his missions involved him flying into a tense Middle East situation.

The incident took place in January 1979 during Operation BATON. By 1978, civil unrest had led to several heated anti-government demonstrations in Iran. The escalating protests eventually forced Reza Shah Pahlavi, Iran's leader since 1941, to flee his country on January 16, 1979. The Islamic Republic was formed in February. In early December 1978, as a result of civil unrest in Iran, the Department of External Affairs requested and the Government of Canada authorized the CF to provide for a potential evacuation of Canadian and foreign nationals from Iran. The staging point for the CF aircraft in Operation BATON was Ankara, Turkey. Phase I was the deployment of approximately 105 personnel to Ankara on Dec. 9, 1978 to set up the Airlift Control Element at Ankara Airport.

Phase II of the operation involved the evacuation of Canadian and other foreign nationals. Beginning on December 31, with only four hours notice, a CC-137 and CC-130 aircraft departed CFB Trenton. Dave Salmons was the pilot of the CC-130 aircraft. They arrived in Ankara on January 1 and 2, 1979. Another CC-130 from CFB Lahr, West Germany and two other CC-130 from Trenton joined them in Ankara by January 3.

On January 3, 1979, four flights were made into Tehran by four CC-130 aircraft, one piloted by Dave Salmons. When they landed on tarmac in Tehran, they had been instructed to keep their planes running; there would only be a narrow window of opportunity to load; and to leave immediately once the civilians boarded. All told, the Canadian Forces evacuated 315 civilians from NATO-member nations under extremely dangerous and chaotic conditions as Iran entered a state of near-anarchy, including Canadians, West Germans, British, Americans, Australians, Finnish and New Zealanders. A fifth flight on January 4 picked up 52 more personnel.

One side note to the operation involved Dave. While he was waiting in his cockpit on the Tehran tarmac, someone noticed that he was not wearing a Canadian Forces hat. Rather, in a nod to his love of motorcycles, he had donned a civilian ball cap emblazoned with the word "YAMAHA" across the front. Word spread to superior officers

who were livid and let him know it later. His sister stated, “Dave caught hell for what he did.” After that incident, Dave only wore his “YAMAHA” hat when he was off duty.

In Phase III of the operation a final flight was arranged in late January 1979, with the belief that 160 personnel required evacuation. One Hercules aircraft was involved, departing CFB Trenton on January 31 and returning February 8. The final flight from Tehran on February 6 picked up 58 personnel, including Canadians, Americans, British, New Zealanders, French and Australian. Operation BATON was a complete success.



Captain Salmons in lead CC-130 Hercules

Years after David’s death, his sister Beth recalled an incident that was a foreshadowing of what was to come. At a family gathering in Sarnia in 1980, a few months before Thanksgiving, Dave spoke about his job. His words still send a shiver through his sister, Beth, years after he uttered them. “I don’t think he felt any premonition or meant anything ominous,” Beth stated. “Dave simply said that if anything happened to him, we should not be sad. He had seen more things, done more things and visited more places all over the world doing something he loved doing.”

Dave and Sandy were blessed with two children together. Their plan before children was a new motorcycle, a new TV, and a new stereo system. Their first child, arriving two months after their 5th anniversary, was James (Jamie) Patrick, born in September 1978 in Belleville, Ontario. Their goals of a new motorcycle, TV and stereo were all achieved. Their second child was Ruth Marie, born in June 1981 in Nanaimo, B.C.

The circumstances around Ruth’s birth are particularly heart-wrenching. In September 1980, Dave, Sandy and two year-old Jamie were living on Johnson Road in Middleton Pk., Trenton, Ontario. A month later, on October 13, Thanksgiving Monday, Dave learned that Sandy was now pregnant with their second child. Two days later, Dave Salmons lost his life in the service of Canada.

On October 15, 1980, while flying on a Search and Rescue Mission, #436 Squadron’s Lockheed CC130E Hercules aircraft (#130312) stalled at low level (likely at an altitude of less than 600 metres) and crashed in a forest 13 km west of Chapais, Quebec (about 60 kilometres west of Chibougamau, and 450 kilometres north of Montreal).

The Hercules aircraft was combing Quebec’s north woods for a Trans-Quebec Ltd. helicopter that had gone missing 3 days earlier. The helicopter had two people on board had gone down on a flight from Montreal to James Bay. At about 2:45 p.m. (Oct. 15), the Hercules radioed that it was going down and the transmission was picked up by a Canadian Forces helicopter that was also on the mission. The Hercules crashed and burned. There were scattered clouds when the plane went down and a light covering of snow on the ground. A forces spokesperson said, “*There was a fire. Everything was pretty badly burned.*”



Crash site of CC-130 Hercules aircraft #130312 (Source 10R)

Eight members of the air crew died in the crash, including Sarnia's David Milton Salmons. Two crew members survived. The October 16 *Sarnia Observer* reported details of the incident under the headline, *Eight of 10 crew members killed in crash of Hercules transport*. The following day, on the front page of the *Sarnia Observer*, local citizens would read the headline: *Sarnia man dies in Hercules crash*. Following is the Canadian Press story;

The two survivors of the Canadian Forces C-130 Hercules aircraft that crashed Wednesday in northern Quebec, taking eight lives, are in the forces base hospital in Trenton with serious injuries. Forces spokesman Capt. Jim Carnegie said Thursday that Capt. Dahl Manthorpe, 25, of Coquitlam, B.C. and Master WO William Crosby, 48, of Yarmouth, N.S., are in stable condition but their injuries are considered serious.

Carnegie said the four bodies recovered from the Quebec bushland will be flown to Trenton when they have been released by the Quebec coroner. Forces spokesman Maj. John Weisman said four more victims of the crash remain to be found.

Killed in the crash were aircraft commander Capt. David Salmons, 27, of Sarnia, Ont., navigator Capt. Ronald Kavanaugh, 38, of Bell Island, Nfld., Master Cpl. Aubrey Woodham, 33, of Moorefield, Ont., Sgt. John O'Neill, 42, of Port Dover, Ont., Cpl. Ronald Fisher, 27, of Antigonish, N.S., Col. Richard Cocks, 25, of Woodstock, Ont., Master Cpl. R.J. Taylor, of Simcoe, Ont., and Pte. William Minnis, 20, of Toronto.

A team of defence department investigators arrived from Ottawa a few hours after the Hercules went down Wednesday afternoon 60 kilometres west of Chibougamau and 450 kilometres north of Montreal.

The Hercules was searching for a lost helicopter that Jean-Paul Parent, director of marketing for Trans-Quebec Helicopters Ltd., of Lachine, Que., said was assigned to a workcamp 160 kilometres northwest of Chapais.

The two survivors; Capt. Dahl Manthorpe and Master WO. William (Bing) Crosby (flight engineer) were flown to a hospital at their base in Trenton. Capt. Manthorpe survived by smashing a hole in a window and diving from the cockpit. He escaped with only broken bones. He called for the others, but only Crosby followed.

Perishing with aircraft commander Captain David Salmons were Corporal Ronald John Cocks (25) of Woodstock (rescue specialist); Corporal Ronald Wade Fisher (27) of Antigonish (rescue specialist); Sergeant John Ronald O'Neill (42) of Port Dover (rescue specialist); Captain Ronald Kevin Kavanaugh (38) of Bell Island (navigator); Private William David Minnis (20) of Toronto (spotter); Master Corporal Robert John Taylor (32) of Simcoe (spotter); and Master Corporal Aubrey Alan Woodham (33) of Moorefield (loadmaster).

On October 17, 1980, Myrtle and Milton, then at Nassau Crescent in Sarnia, received the following letter from the Commander of Air Transport Group, Brigadier-General L. Skaalen at CFB Trenton;

Dear Mr. & Mrs. Salmons,
On behalf of all who serve in Air Transport Group, I extend to you our heartfelt sympathy for the loss of your son. We too will sorely miss his presence amongst us.

Dave was dedicated to the service of his country and his fellow countrymen. Regretfully, it was in the course of this honourable calling, trying to save the lives of others, that he gave his own life. We are truly grateful and proud to have served with him.

On October 20, Sarnians read in the *Sarnia Observer* about the special military memorial service that was being held that day in Trenton, Ontario for Sarnia serviceman Salmons and the seven other RCAF members killed in the crash of the Hercules C-130 aircraft in Northern Quebec. The Salmons family members attended the service in Trenton. Dave's body was then flown to Sarnia the next day for a memorial service conducted by R.C.A.F. Wing 403 held at the D.J. Robb Funeral Home. On October 22, Dave's funeral was held at the D. J. Robb Funeral Home followed by cremation.

Dave left behind his wife Sandy and their two children Jamie, age 2, and Ruth, born eight months after her father's death; his parents Milton and Myrtle Salmons; his brother Scott; and his sisters Beth Shute and Jennifer Kilbreath, all in Sarnia.



Dave with his son James in Trenton 1980



James and Ruth

Don Thain was the Commanding Officer of #44 Sarnia Optimist Squadron, Royal Canadian Air Cadets when David was a cadet. Don had lost two brothers in World War II (their stories are included in this Project). Following is the eulogy given by Don Thain at David's memorial service;

Some fourteen years ago a young lad appeared at the Optimist Youth Centre on Philip Street to apply to join #44 Squadron, Royal Canadian Air Cadets. As Commanding Officer at that time I tried to make it a point to get to know the cadets that served in the squadron and thus began a lengthy association with David Salmons.

He was an energetic, keen cadet, the long hair syndrome was just coming into vogue and it took determination and desire to have your hair cut short which was a prerequisite of wearing an air cadet uniform. David, as well as being an excellent cadet, was also a good student. He stayed with the squadron for the full term of service. I recall the first year he attended summer camp at Trenton. He was our main hope for the track team competition. He entered the race without track shoes—not that he didn't have them—but he explained that he could run better without them. So shoeless he ran and how proud I was when he won. The interest and support of his parents was evident throughout his cadet career and created a friendship with them that I cherish. David participated fully in all phases of cadet activities.

He was awarded several special courses with the high point being reached when he was granted a flying scholarship. A member of the splendid drill team the squadron maintained, he ultimately held the key position of right marker. HE represented everything that was good in cadet training and was proud to belong. We were proud of him. His interest in motorcycles surfaced during his cadet career and was a continuing joy to him afterwards.

If ever a young man was meant to fly it was David. His marks and abilities throughout his service career were always at or near the top. He was a superb pilot and on completion of his flying training elected to go multi engine and was posted to Transport Command at Trenton. It was enthralling to listen to David tell of his experiences and visits to so many parts of the world we homebound individuals could only dream of.

He lived his air force career to the fullest and it was an inspiration to us all to hear the pride he had in his service, his squadron, its accomplishments and professional expertise. He exulted in the superiority shown by Canadian airmen when competing with or flying with aircrews from other countries. While he worried about the heavy demands made upon our service personnel due to commitments, extensive work load and tasking, he knew there were no airmen more qualified or dedicated to accomplish the country's obligations. He was truly doing what he wanted to do and how many of us can say this.

To know David was an inspiration and an honour; to be considered his friend, doubly so. I am proud I counted myself in this category. He was keen, dedicated, outgoing with a sharp sense of humour. No matter where he served in his military career he maintained his membership in 403 Wing. He invested money in the purchase of our building; he visited regularly when home on leave.

The tragedy of his passing is eased a bit by the knowledge that David was doing the thing he loved doing – flying. All who came in contact with him admired him and were proud of him and what man could receive a better accolade. In God's wisdom he has departed from our midst to higher heights than earth bound flight could take him.

Don Thain

On October 24, 1980, Myrtle and Milton received the following letter from the Commanding Officer of 436 (T) Squadron, Lieutenant-Colonel P.R. DeTracey at CFB Trenton:

Dear Mr. & Mrs. Salmons,

I wish to extend the sympathies and condolences of the officers and men of 436 Squadron on the tragic loss of your son. Dave willingly served as a Search and Rescue pilot, fully aware of the inherent dangers of this most humanitarian service.

In seven years in the Forces, your son was able to fulfill a dream. His progression from Air Cadet to Serviceman, to Pilot was a most satisfying accomplishment. His appointment as a Hercules Aircraft Commander while still a Lieutenant speaks of his professional ability and the high regard in which he was held by our Squadron. A dedicated officer, his talents will be sorely missed by all.

Your son served his Squadron and Country with pride and distinction. His many achievements will long be remembered by those who shared his comradeship.

Once again, may I express our deepest condolences.

Soon after David's death, the wife of one of his comrades wrote the following about him:

Many a poem has been written about famous and loved people. It is this thought that inspired me to do the same for one certain man. A person who instilled many unforgettable memories in the hearts and minds of numerous individuals. There will only ever be one Dave Salmons. Each letter of his name describes in brief, what type of a man he was in those who knew him well and may it give insight to those who were unfortunate not to have known him.

Dedicated to his occupation, to the few people who were close to him and to the many organizations of which he was a part of.

Ambitious to the point of obsession. It was through his ambition he became known and admired as one of the best in his profession.

Valued, honoured, and revered. He had the quality that commanded respect of his opinions.

Efficiency showed in everything he undertook.

Sincere. His sincerity and integrity was undeniable to his family, his friends, and colleagues.

Amiable. Given the time to know him in depth one came to appreciate his traits. Love and understanding blossomed into a tight bond between close friends, of which there were few.

Lively. One who brought happiness to many through his character. Always occupied with relishing his life to the fullest each day.

Mischievous. A pronounced part of his character to which many fell pray to.

Obliging. He devoted most of his time and services to anyone who was in need of them, without hesitation.

Noble in his rank of Captain, he was regarded highly, and it will always remain so.

Sociable. Where harmless groans were emitted by the wives of his close friends when Dave came to claim the full and devoted attention of his male companions.

This is the man whom is as dear to us and is irreplaceable in many of our hearts. May this prose be in memory of him and may he also watch over us and protect us as our guardian angel under God's name.

Also shortly after David's death, Milton Salmons purchased a military sabre which he donated to #44 Sarnia Optimist Squadron. Every year since David's death, Squadron 44 Air Cadets present the memorial sabre at the annual inspection. The Sabre was donated by Milton and Myrtle Salmons, and is awarded to the air cadet who exemplifies the "Espirit De Corps" each year. The award is a source of much pride for the Salmons family.

Understandably, the loss of David was a devastating blow to all the members of the Salmons family, but life continued.

Elizabeth (Beth) Salmons, who had married Rick Shute in June 1971, had two children: Julie (born 1973) and Steven Shute (born 1974). Beth and Rick later divorced. For son Steven, whether it was growing up hearing stories of his uncle or seeing his portrait on a dresser, David influenced his career choice. At the age of eleven, Steven came to his single mother and said, "We need to talk". He continued, "What I'm about to tell you may upset you. I want to go into the Air Force and do what Uncle Dave did." With his mother's full support, Steven joined the

air cadets with plans to join the air force. But Steven grew to a height of 6'3", making him too tall to be a pilot. Several months after completing a year at Lambton College, he went to the military recruiting office in London. A short time later he was offered and accepted a position with the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN). Steven Shute, based at CFB Esquimalt, served all over the world with the RCN for twenty-one years. Steven Shute married Colleen Bonneau and had one child, Harmony. Julie Shute later married Mike Lewis and had three children: Stephen, Josh and Sarah.

Jennifer Salmons, who had married Steve Kilbreath in November 1973, had three children: Jason (born 1974), Justin (born 1976) and Ryan (born 1979). Later, Jason Kilbreath and his partner Katherine Pild had two children: Emily and Ethan. Justin Kilbreath married Shannon Mutter and had one child, Tyson. And Ryan Kilbreath and his partner Crystal Middleton later had one child, Mary Jane. Jennifer Kilbreath later remarried, to Allan Calvert in 1988.

Scott Salmons married Angela Whitehead in 1984 in Sarnia and had three children: Matthew (born 1985), Alex (born 1988) and Robert (born 1990). Alex later had two daughters, Addison and Maxine; and Robert had one son, Graeyson.

Within six months of David's death, a pregnant **Sandy Salmons** and son James re-located out west where her parents lived, and resided in Parksville on Vancouver Island in British Columbia. The two children of David and Sandy Salmons moved on without their father. James married Ashlee Corpe in 2008 and had three children: Kesler, Aleda and Jemma. Ruth Marie later married David Joseph Powers.

For the many nieces, nephews and extended family of David Salmons, they only remember or know him through fading memories, old stories and photographs. Nearly four decades after his death, his sister Jennifer would say, "His life although short has left an indelible mark on our lives and even after all this time he is missed. We are very proud of his remarkable achievements in the armed forces."

Milton Salmons was totally devastated by his son's death. Daughter Beth recalled that the mere mention of David's name would so upset Milton that he'd shed tears and leave the room. Milton Salmons passed away at age 64 on April 12, 1993 at St. Joseph's Health Centre in Sarnia. Along with his wife Myrtle, and his two daughters and one son, he left behind ten grandchildren and one great grandchild. A funeral service was held from the chapel of the D.J. Robb Funeral Home, along with a memorial service conducted by the R.C.A.F. Wing #403. He was interred at Resurrection Cemetery and Crematorium (Grandview Memorial Gardens) in Sarnia.

Myrtle Salmons passed away at age 73 on September 1, 2005 at Bluewater Health in Sarnia. She had been a longtime member of the R.C.A.F. Association. She left behind her daughters Beth Shute in Sarnia and Jennifer Calvert in Brights Grove; her son Scott in Sarnia; her daughter-in-law Sandy Salmons in Nanoose Bay, B.C.; and many grandchildren and great-grandchildren. After private family cremation services the internment of ashes took place at Resurrection Cemetery and Crematorium (Grandview Memorial Gardens) in Sarnia.

Twenty-seven-year-old Milton David Salmons was posthumously awarded the Canadian Forces Decoration Citation, and is commemorated in Ottawa in the *Book of Remembrance - In the Service of Canada*. In November 2019, his name along with 25 others was added to the Sarnia cenotaph, engraved in stone to be remembered always. SOURCES: D, L, N, 2D, 3G, 6J, 8X, 10R, 3o, 3t, 3v, 3w, 3z



Captain Milton David Salmons

THE AFGHANISTAN WAR (2001-2014)

Following is a description of important events, people and operations of the Afghanistan War. Sarnia-Lambton's sons and daughters participated in every major operation fought by Canadian troops. Some made the supreme sacrifice.

- **THE BEGINNING:** Canada's role in Afghanistan began in late 2001, in response to the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in the United States. On that day, thereafter known as **9/11**, four airliners were hijacked in the skies over the eastern United States: two were deliberately crashed into the World Trade Center Twin Towers in New York City; one into the Pentagon in Washington; and one crash-landed in a field in Pennsylvania. These terrorist attacks resulted in the deaths of nearly 3,000 civilians, including many Canadians.

Afghanistan, a rugged country in Southwest Asia, is located between Pakistan and Iran. Its climate can be extreme, with summer temperatures of 50° C, and huge dust storms that sweep across its arid deserts. The various ethnic groups and factions that have made the country home over the centuries have given Afghanistan a rich heritage and diversity, but have also helped make peace and stability difficult to achieve. In the 1980s, the Taliban regime gained control of the country. This extreme fundamentalist regime severely limited civil rights and supported international terrorist groups, including Al-Qaeda (the group that was behind the 9/11 attacks in the United States). Canada would respond to the campaign against terrorism in Southwest Asia through the United Nations (UN) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).^{D, 5A}

On October 7, 2001, the United States and the United Kingdom launched **Operation Enduring Freedom**, a military effort to dismantle the al-Qaeda terrorist network in Afghanistan and to remove the Taliban regime from power. On the same day, Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chrétien announced that Canada would contribute air, land and sea forces to the international campaign against terrorism.^{5A}

Canada had several reasons for participating in the mission in Afghanistan: to defend Canada's national interests; to ensure Canadian leadership in world affairs; to identify and to neutralize al-Qaeda members in that country; to topple the Taliban regime, which was supporting international terrorism; and to help Afghanistan rebuild and create a better governed, more stable and self-sufficient viable country.^{D, 3G}

In late December 2001, the United Nations Security Council authorized the creation of NATO's **International Security Assistance Force (ISAF)** — its mandate to maintain security in and around Kabul so employees of the Afghan Interim Government and the United Nations could operate in a secure environment.

- **CANADA RESPONDS:** The first part of Canada's support was known as **Operation Apollo** which took place on the high seas in the Indian Ocean, the Arabian Sea, and the Persian/Arabian Gulf. In early October 2001, the *HMCS Halifax* was directed to head for the Arabian Sea as part of Canada's counter-terrorism efforts. *Halifax* was soon joined by two more frigates, a destroyer and a replenishment ship, along with *HMCS Vancouver* which was part of an American Aircraft Carrier Battle Group. *Operation Apollo*'s main objective was to prevent the escape of Al Qaeda and Taliban members from Afghanistan to Saudi Arabia and other nearby countries via the seas. The RCN ships also participated in the defence of United States Navy ships transporting US ground and air forces; and supported multi-national counterterrorism activities in the region. The naval component of *Operation Apollo* lasted until December 2003. The Canadian Navy continued to send rotations of its ships—frigates, destroyers, and replenishment vessels until October 2008, conducting intensive patrols throughout the Middle Eastern waters, looking for escaping terrorists.^{D, 3G, 5A}

The second part of the Canadian Forces' role, the land-based segment, began with the first group of approximately 40 Canadian commando soldiers from the elite Joint Task Force 2 (JTF2) that was sent secretly into Afghanistan in early December 2001. The first contingents of regular Canadian troops, the 3rd Battalion of the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, arrived in Afghanistan in January-February 2002. After six months of operations—and four soldiers killed and eight wounded in an errant U.S. Air Force bombing—the battalion returned home.

Leaving home: In every war, when young soldiers leave their home and families to go fight overseas, it is an extremely emotional time. The same kind of scenes have played out again and again as young soldiers parted ways with their loved ones, whether it was to fight in the Boer War, World War I, World War II, Korea or Afghanistan. Following is one young soldier's recollection of leaving home to go to Afghanistan. His name was Corporal D. Brett Irwin.

The day I was leaving for Afghanistan, my family came to Petawawa to see me off. My dad and mom, stepmom and stepdad, sister and grandmother-the whole family. All the soldiers who were shipping out were surrounded by their families. But there wasn't a bus in sight... It turned out that because of a volcano in Iceland, all flights were grounded. So the soldiers went on a forty-eight-hour stand-down.

I went back home to Brampton to hang out with family and friends. Two days later, the volcano was still spewing ash. I figured we wouldn't be going anywhere, but I had to report for duty anyway. My mom hopped into the car with me, and we drove back to Petawawa together, arriving right on time at 6:30 in the morning. As we drove around the corner into the base, both of us spotted the buses at the same time. There were about fifteen, all lined up and waiting. My mom broke down. I could tell she was trying to hold it together but couldn't. By the time I had to climb onto my assigned bus, she was sobbing. I hugged her. I couldn't help but think that this might be the last time I ever get to hug her, so I made it a really tight one. All I could see as we drove off was her standing there, in the same spot, crying.^{9K}

Letters Home: Following are portions of several letters written in March and April of 2002 by four of Canada's Afghanistan peacekeeping soldiers;

> Corporal Curtis Hollister (Saskatchewan):

Dear Mom & Dad, Shannon & McKenzie,

Today is my 16th day in Afghanistan, we are doing perimeter security around the airport. I'm looking forward to getting out of the base and into the countryside which is very arid and rugged... I live in a small tent with one other person and space is very cramped as [we] live within sandbag walls which help to protect from mortar & rocket attack... In our platoon with all our duties we're lucky to get 4 hours sleep a day... It's very dirty here, sand gets into everything and it's impossible to stay clean...

> Corporal Shane Brennan (Collingwood, Ontario):

Dear Mom,

... We are living in two-man trenches by day and by night the same... a long time to live in a trench looking out into a few trees, razor wire and loads of dirt. The dust here is crazy. We have had two dust storms and I think I have inhaled enough dust to last three lifetimes... You'll have to excuse the writing – I am writing on a flimsy pad in my trench with my buddy watching outside... So far, my unit and I are all on the outside of the camp/airfield as the first line of defence. This week, I will be leaving camp for six days to observe a certain area for terrorist activity, working alongside the local Afghani army...

> Private Richard Green (Nova Scotia):

Dear Nan,

How are you? Not too worried I hope. Things are O.K. over here so you don't have to worry. Never believe anything you here in the news either. We've been hearing some of the stuff the media has been saying and none of it is even close to the truth... Well I've got to go for now. I miss you and hope to see you soon.

Hey Sweetie! [to his fiancée Miranda]

... Another month has passed. It's very hot over here. It's "slaps you in the face hot" and it's not even summer yet. That's not good... I miss you Princess. How are things going in Edmonton? No problems I hope... I worry about you all the time. Is there anything you need me to try and do for you? I don't know what I can do but I'll try. I love you princess. I miss you so much. Be careful, have fun and don't forget about me.

Hi Sweetie,

How are you? I'm OK. I got your parcel today... I'm listening to your song right now. Thankyou for everything. We have to go to a place called Khost for 3 weeks. We leave tomorrow or the next day. We should have phones so I should be able to call you. I'll try to call you before we leave... I don't have anything else to say for now honey. I really miss you. I love you so much Miranda. Love always, Rick

Private Rick Green didn't tell Miranda in this letter that he'd bought an engagement ring with three diamonds while on leave in Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

> Sergeant Marc Leger (Lancaster, Ontario):

Dear Nan

... Thing's here are kind of boring so far, at first I found [it] strange living 200m from the runway of a airport however you get adjusted to noise quickly. I've had the opportunity to leave the camp a couple of times so far. It's incredible to see this degree of poverty. They honestly live in mud & brick homes... Now I want to thank

[you] for all you have done for me over the years and especially with all that has happened in the last couple of months. It's great knowing that I have some[one] to help me take care of the most special person in my life, Marley...

Marley was Marc's wife. A month before Marc left for Afghanistan, Marley miscarried their first child at fourteen weeks.

Dear Marley,

... I love you very much and I'm thinking of you. I just want you to know that you are my everything. The other night I had a dream that I had you in my arms & we were both lying around on our bed with the dog of course and it was a great feeling knowing that I have such a good life with you...^{7A}

• **FIRST CASUALTIES:** In the early morning hours of April 18, 2002, members of Canadian Forces were carrying out routine live-fire night training exercises at the foot of a craggy mountain range, an old al-Qaeda training base called Tarnak Farm, about 16 km south of their Kandahar base. As they were firing their machine guns and rocket launchers into the desert night, two majors in the U.S. Air National Guard, flying F-16 jet fighters overhead, apparently believed they were under attack. One of them dropped a five-hundred-pound, laser-guided bomb on the firing range below, on a section of the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry.

In this “friendly fire” incident, eight Canadian soldiers were wounded, including Corporal Curtis Hollister and Corporal Shane Brennan; and four Canadian soldiers were killed, including Private Richard Green and Sergeant Marc Leger (portions of their letters home are above). A tremendous shock to the nation—these were Canada's first military casualties of it's mission in Afghanistan.

Lieutenant-General Mike Jeffery, Chief of the Land Staff wrote the Canadian Armed Forces' formal response to the Kandahar tragedy to the Princess Patricia Canadian Light Infantry. Following is a portion of that response;

Let me begin by expressing my deepest condolences to the families, friends and comrades of the soldiers killed in Afghanistan. Our thoughts and prayers are with you today. Every member of the Canadian Army shares in your sadness. You have lost husbands, sons, and friends and we have lost four of our own. They were a part of your family and they were a part of our family. We will miss them all.

As senseless as this tragic incident may seem, these men did not give their lives for naught. They died fighting for what they believed in. They died serving their country. They gave their lives in the midst of a struggle to restore peace and security to our world. For this we owe these fine soldiers, and their families, a great debt of gratitude.

There is a great sense of shock and grief being expressed here in Canada. Below the surface of this sorrow is something else – a profound sense of pride. Our nation is proud of you and proud of what you are doing. Canadians have known all along that you have a tough job to do and today they have a real sense of the sacrifices being made...^{7A}

The day after the friendly fire disaster, Major Sean Hackett, of Brighton, Ontario, a survivor of the incident, sent his wife an e-mail. Following is a portion of that e-mail;

... We are focused on sending our four home and that will occur later this evening. I'm fine and very occupied ensuring those things I can influence are done correctly, at the same time providing guidance for getting on with the mission... Earlier this evening we conducted a moving ceremony and loaded the remains of the four who died onto a C17 transport plane – for Germany and then home. It was hard to stare into such a large plane while paying respects. Then again there are many images seared into my memory from that night, and to a lesser extent, in the hours following... Now, our attention here must focus on the progress of those on the mend.

Sean Hackett also sent an e-mail to his brother and copies to other family members including his wife. Seeking to “counter the negative and completely counter-productive America bashing” that he was reading about by some Canadians, he wrote;

Very disheartening, when armchair anger is voiced with no concept of what things are like over here on the ground. I can assure you, American air coverage is a pretty important security blanket for us, regardless of the horrible error in judgement of one individual... then again, we could all make errors in judgement that cost lives – the nature of the profession. I could not have asked for a better company of men to have endured our trial by fire the other night. The response was incredible.^{7A}

Captain Nichola Goddard: In May 2006, twenty-six-year-old Captain Nichola Kathleen Sarah Goddard became the first Canadian female soldier killed in combat on the front lines. Her parent unit was the 1st Regiment

Royal Canadian Horse Artillery, based in Shilo, Manitoba. She served in Afghanistan beginning in January 2006 with the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry as a forward observation officer.

Following is a portion of a letter that Captain Nichola Goddard wrote home to her parents and husband in March 2006 (two months before she was killed). It was written after a particularly tough week: she had attended two emotional Ramp ceremonies; and there had been several IED strikes and rocket attacks against coalition vehicles/convoys.

...The longer that we are in the theatre and the more that we actually interact with the Afghan people, the more I feel that we are serving a purpose here. I think that these people, through the Afghan National Army and Afghan National Police, are trying to achieve something that we in Canada have long since taken for granted. They lay down their lives daily to try to seize something that is so idealistic it is almost impossible to define. It goes beyond women wearing burkas and children being taught to read and write. The Afghan people have chosen who will lead them. Their new government is striving to make Afghanistan a better place. I had never truly appreciated the awesome power of a democratic government before. We are here to assist that legitimate and democratically elected government. It is easy to poke holes in that statement and say that the system is corrupt and that violence and poverty make people easy targets for our own agendas. Those statements are true; however, we have to start somewhere. With the best of intentions, we have started in Afghanistan. There is nowhere else that I'd rather be right now.^{7T}

On May 17, 2006, Captain Nichola Goddard's unit was ambushed, and she was killed during a firefight against Taliban militants west of Kandahar city in the Panjwaye District, Kandahar Province. At the time, she was leading a platoon under *Operation Peacemaker*. The **"first female soldier killed"** is an unfortunate footnote, because it isn't about gender. She was a Canadian soldier serving her country, carrying out risky missions in a dangerous battle zone. Captain Goddard, a wife and daughter, believed that her service would create opportunities for others to build a better life. In a letter she sent her mother from the battlefield, she wrote, *"It seems to me that we have such a burden of responsibility, to make the world a better place for those who were born into far worse circumstances... It is very humbling to be here – part of something so much bigger than myself."*^{D, 2N, 3G, 5A, 7T}

• **DANGERS "OUTSIDE THE WIRE":** Anytime Canadian soldiers left the relative safety of their main camps to go "outside the wire," the danger was very real. Though the Canadian and NATO forces had better equipment than the Taliban, including tanks, artillery, LAV's, helicopters and drones, they were faced with a number of challenges that included: the coalition forces were viewed as an occupying power, so were vehemently attacked; the Taliban were more familiar with the terrain and frequently fought from trenches and village compounds; the Taliban had good communications and were well-led by experienced leaders; they were well-armed with AK-47s, rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs) and mortars; the Taliban riddled the countryside with IEDS (improvised explosive devices); the enemy was not easily identifiable (difficult to distinguish a combatant from a civilian); and suicide bombers could be anyone, including women and children.^{D, 6Q}

• **OPERATION ATHENA – Phase One:** This was the longest-lasting and most difficult Canadian operation of the ISAF mission, beginning in July 2003 and concluding in December 2011. There were two phases to this land-based, main combat mission. In the first phase, the 1,900-strong Canadian task force was deployed to the northern city of **Kabul**, Afghanistan's capital city, where it became the commanding nation in the ISAF mission. There it helped to maintain security in Kabul and surrounding areas, along with providing assistance to civilian infrastructure in helping to rebuild the country. During this peace-support phase, specific tasks performed by Canadians included regular street patrols, surveillance missions, armed raids on illegal weapons caches, collaborating with Afghan and other international authorities on security issues, assisting with operations of the Kabul International Airport, and providing assistance in rebuilding the Afghan national armed forces. Phase One of *Operation Athena* continued until August 2005, when the Canadian task force began transitioning from Kabul in the north to southern Afghanistan until January 2006.^{D, 3G, 5A, 6Y}

• **OPERATION ATHENA – Phase Two:** In this second phase of Canada's main combat mission, Canadian personnel were transferred to southern Afghanistan, their primary base located in the southern city of **Kandahar** – the birthplace of the Taliban. By March 2006, the Canadian battle group was in the field and a Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) was in operation in Kandahar, a hotspot of renewed Taliban and terrorist activity. Officials did not anticipate anything more than low-level combat and, although some intelligence officers predicted a coming storm, few anticipated an enemy force of anything more than 200 trained Afghan fighters and some local supporters. Instead, by June, Canadian intelligence put the number of Taliban at 400 to 600. The next month, there

were thousands of men pouring in from Pakistan, including foreign jihadists whose aim was to test the Canadians' resolve and to seize Kandahar.

For more than five years, Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) members fought the insurgency in one of the most volatile province in Afghanistan – Kandahar. At its peak, the Canadian battle group included nearly 3,000 personnel and was augmented by an air wing from December 2008 to August 2011. Throughout the operation, senior Canadian officers commanded coalition battle groups, while CAF members integrated and operated alongside international troops at all levels. Operations were aimed at protecting Afghans where they live, reducing the influence of the insurgency, eliminating insurgent strongholds, and creating a secure environment for development work to take place.^{D, 2E, 3G, 5A, 6Y}

Operation Medusa: This is perhaps the most famous combat operation taking place during *Athena*. Beginning on September 2, 2006, the offensive involved almost 1,400 coalition soldiers, including the main force of more than 1,000 Canadian Armed Forces members, making it our country's largest combat operation in more than 50 years. It was a Canadian-led offensive fought primarily by the 1st Battalion, The Royal Canadian Regiment, with support from NATO ISAF forces including the Afghan National Army, a U.S. Airborne Group and a U.S. Infantry Regiment. Taking place in the Panjwai District, in a bid to clear out the district of Taliban fighters once and for all, the Canadians began a full-fledged combat operation that sought to kill or force into permanent retreat the Taliban forces in the area.

This operation over seventeen days saw heavy combat with artillery, aerial bombings, and armoured vehicles taking their toll on the various villages and compounds in the area. By September 17th, most Taliban forces had retreated, with over 500 killed and over 130 captured. Twelve Canadian Forces soldiers lost their lives in *Operation Medusa*, including Sarnia/Port Lambton's **Private William Cushley** of the Royal Canadian Regiment. The Operation was marked by two other incidents: fourteen British military personnel were killed when their plane crashed; and one Canadian was killed, and thirty-five wounded by American forces in a friendly fire incident.^{D, 2E, 5A, 6S, 6Y}

Operation Achilles: Beginning on March 6, 2007, the objective of this operation was to clear violent northern districts of Helmand province of the Taliban. Led by British forces, it was supported by other ISAF forces including American, Danish, Dutch and Canadian units. It was focused on the Kajakai Dam, which was a major power source for Afghanistan that had not been functioning for a number of years. The mission involved clearing villages and a large Taliban complex near the hydroelectric dam, as well as clearing the dam of all enemy forces.

Operation objectives were successfully completed by May 30, at a cost of thirty-five ISAF soldiers, including six Canadians—members of the 2nd Battalion of the Royal Canadian Regiment. In the early afternoon of April 8, 2007, the 2 RCR's were escorting a convoy of troops and supplies through the desert to the British soldiers when their light armoured vehicle (LAV III) struck a roadside IED (improvised explosive device). Six RCR soldiers were killed in the massive explosion, and four survived. One of those who perished in the attack was Sarnia/Lambton's **Corporal Brent Poland**.

• **OTHER OPERATIONS:** Canadian forces were involved in a number of other Afghan operations over the course of the mission. In *Operation Accius* (November 2002-June 2005), a team of Canadian Forces officers were part of a team of strategic military planners that supported the Afghan government. This included providing advice in support of the peace process, promoting human rights and conducting humanitarian relief, and recovery and reconstruction operations. In *Operation Argus* (September 2005-August 2008), a team of Canadian strategic military planners worked with representatives of the Afghan government to develop key national strategies and mechanisms for the effective implementation of those strategies. In *Operation Archer* (February-July 2006), Canadian personnel in Kabul assisted in re-forming and rebuilding Afghan security infrastructure, including the Afghan National Army and National Police Force. This involved providing mentors and trainers to help organize, train, equip, employ and support the Afghan Army and police. In *Operation Attention* (May 2011-March 2014) Canadian troops delivered specialized training and professional developmental support to the national security forces of Afghanistan – the Afghan National Army, the Afghan Air Force, and the Afghan National Police.^{3G, 6Y}

• **CANADA BEGINS ITS WITHDRAWAL:** Canada withdrew the bulk of its troops from Afghanistan in July of 2011, ending its combat role on the front lines there. Though its combat role was over, Canadian military remained in Afghanistan. Canada's role there was diverse: protecting the future of Afghan children and youth through developing education and health; advancing security by enforcing the rule of law and protecting human rights; promoting regional diplomacy; and helping deliver humanitarian assistance.

In late 2013, approximately 1,000 Canadian Forces personnel were still deployed in Afghanistan as part of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). The ISAF was renamed the NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan. Its role was to help train and mentor the Afghan National Army and Afghan National Police. In mid-March of 2014, the remaining Canadian troops left Afghanistan, officially ending Canada's military involvement there as part of NATO. More than 40,000 Canadian troops served in Afghanistan, rotating through different campaigns there in the longest combat mission Canada has been involved in. It was the largest deployment of Canadian troops since World War II. The twelve plus years Canadian mission in Afghanistan came at a cost 159 Canadian soldiers lives and over 2,100 wounded and many more suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. Fourteen of the Afghanistan fallen soldiers are from Southwestern Ontario, including two from Lambton County.

On March 12, 2014, Canada's military personnel officially withdrew from Afghanistan. At an understated departure ceremony held under heavy guard at NATO headquarters in Kabul, the Canadian ambassador to Afghanistan told the remaining soldiers there prior to their withdrawal, *"Your strength has protected the weak; your bravery has brought hope to hopeless; and the helping hand you have extended to the Afghan people has given them faith that a better future is within their grasp."* The last of the Canadian troops left Afghanistan aboard military transport planes on March 15, 2014.

• **THE HIGHWAY OF HEROES:** On August 24, 2007, the stretch of Highway 401 running from Trenton, Ontario, to Toronto was officially renamed the "Highway of Heroes" in remembrance of Canada's fallen soldiers. This came about five years earlier as a grassroots effort that ordinary people supported before the government got involved, as a means to pay homage to those who served Canada and made the ultimate sacrifice. The first four Canadian soldiers killed in Afghanistan in 2002 were repatriated at Canada's largest military base, CFB Trenton, then transported to the Coroners Building in Toronto for examination, before being released to the families. The fallen soldiers were driven down the 172-kilometre stretch of highway between Trenton and Toronto, and pedestrians spontaneously lined the overpasses, hoping to make a connection with the grieving families.

After five years of this moving display of patriotism, the Highway of Heroes was officially named in the summer of 2007 and has been a gleaming example of the nation's shared grief and its pride. At the dedication ceremony in 2007, Premier Dalton McGuinty said, *"the Highway of Heroes reminds us that our freedom, safety, and prosperity is often purchased by the sacrifice of others. We owe them a great debt – and while we can never repay that debt, we can see to it that their courage and commitment will always be remembered."*

Civilians young and old, paramedics, firefighters, police officers, Canadian Legion members, military personnel, friends of the fallen, and family of fallen soldiers stand atop each bridge along the highway in the rain, blistering heat or bone-chilling cold. They gather to salute and wave flags on the Highway 401 overpasses while motorcades carrying the bodies of soldiers killed in Afghanistan made their way to the coroner's office in Toronto.

• **HONOURING THOSE WHO SERVED IN AFGHANISTAN:** More than 40,000 Canadian Armed Forces members—men and women—served in the Afghanistan theatre of operations between 2001 and 2014. On May 9, 2014, the "**National Day of Honour**" was commemorated across Canada to honour the legacy of the Afghanistan heroes. The Government of Canada set aside this day to mark the end of the country's military mission in Afghanistan. Ceremonies that included vigils, parades and moments of silence were held in towns and cities across the country, including in Ottawa and in Sarnia. This one-time event was set aside by the Government for two principal reasons: to recognize and to honour the members of the Canadian Armed Forces in Afghanistan; and to pay tribute to the fallen, to the sacrifices of the wounded, and to the special burden borne by the Canadian Armed Forces families. Prime Minister Stephen Harper was one of the dignitaries who spoke at the ceremony in Ottawa. Part of what he said included, *"Canadians have always been willing to shoulder our share of the burden in defence of our freedoms and of the values we share with our fellow human beings. In the spirit of Vimy, that is what you did in Afghanistan where the fight was as fierce as any Canadian has ever seen. That is why the dates 2001-2014 will be chiseled into the stone of the National War Memorial."*

In 1982, the National War Memorial had been rededicated to honour, along with veterans of the First World War, those who served in the Second World War (1939-45) and the Korean War (1950-53). On Remembrance Day, November 11, 2014, the National War Memorial was rededicated to honour all who had served Canada in wartime. The "South African War (1899-1902)" and the military mission to "Afghanistan (2001-2014)" were added to the memorial, along with a new inscription: "In Service to Canada."

• **THE SARNIA-LAMBTON AFGHANISTAN MONUMENT:** This memorial was officially dedicated in Veterans Park on October 30, 2016. Through the efforts of the Sarnia 1st Hussars Association, a Light Armoured Vehicle (LAV III) was obtained and anchored on the southeast side of Veterans Park. Three bronze plaques are part of the memorial: one plaque is dedicated to Private William Cushley and Corporal Brent Poland, both of Sarnia/Lambton who died in action while serving in Afghanistan; a second plaque is dedicated to the 40,000 men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces deployed to Afghanistan, and the 159 who lost their lives, between 2001 and 2014; and the third plaque is dedicated to the 86 members of the First Hussars deployed in Afghanistan. More information on the Afghanistan Monument is on page 18. The transcribed plaques are on page 1158.



Sarnia-Lambton Afghanistan Monument

• **ST. PATRICK'S CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL REMEMBERS:** The idea to create the plaque was initiated in the spring of 2012 by Tom Slater, former teacher at the school and author of *The Sarnia War Remembrance Project*. The idea was based on the fact that during both World Wars and the Korean War, there were only two secondary schools in Sarnia: Sarnia Collegiate Institute, opened in October 1922; and St. Patrick's High School, founded in 1935. Sarnia Collegiate unveiled a War Memorial plaque in June 1951, honouring former students who fell in World War II (see page 548).

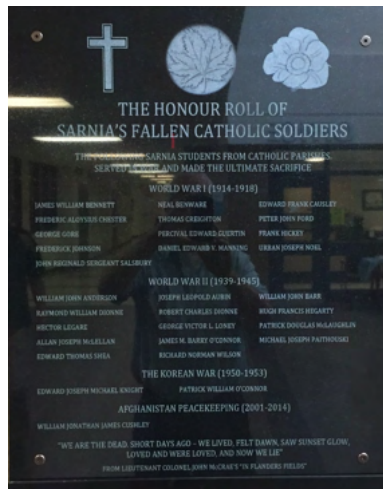
Slater set out to create a similar memorial plaque to honour former St. Patrick's students who fell in war. A starting point for his project was to search for a complete list of all of Sarnia's war fallen; namely, those individuals who had volunteered, fought and died while serving Canada during times of war. He was shocked and surprised to find that no record of Sarnia's fallen soldiers existed. It was then that he began his volunteer research effort that became *The Sarnia War Remembrance Project*.

Along the way, his desire to create a plaque for St. Patrick's continued. Slater derived the list of names from sources that included old St. Patrick's school yearbooks, local church honour rolls (Our Lady of Mercy and St. Joseph's), old *Sarnia Observer* records, and Service Files of the fallen. Through the efforts of Blake Morrison, and support of Lou Giancarlo, Tom St. Amand and Principal Rob Cicchelli, the St. Patrick's plaque became a reality in 2016. On November 10, 2016, a dedication ceremony was held in the school foyer officially unveiling the black granite plaque—**The Honour Roll of Sarnia's Fallen Catholic Soldiers**. Present at the ceremony were dignitaries that included Sarnia-Lambton MP Marilyn Gladu, Sarnia-Lambton MPP Bob Bailey, City of Sarnia Mayor Mike Bradley, Royal Canadian Legion's Bill Chafe and several family members of fallen soldiers on the plaque.

The Honour Roll plaque is inscribed with the names of thirty of Sarnia's fallen Catholic soldiers. The names on the plaque are of ordinary young men who had attended Sarnia-Lambton Catholic schools and/or parishes, including Our Lady of Mercy, St. Joseph's in Sarnia, Sacred Heart in Port Lambton and St. Patrick's High School. The names on the plaque are fallen soldiers from World War I, World War II, the Korean War and the Afghanistan War.

There are three symbols across the top of the plaque: a crucifix, representing God and faith; a maple leaf, representing country (the same leaf design as the one on thousands of fallen soldiers graves overseas); and a poppy, the international symbol of Remembrance. Inscribed along the bottom of the plaque is one line from a poem. The line was chosen specifically to remind young people of the supreme sacrifice of the fallen. They were real people who once lived as the reader does now and who also experienced the same beauty around them and loving relationships with others. The line is from Lieutenant-Colonel John McCrae's iconic poem "In Flanders Fields";
We are the dead. Short days ago – we lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow, loved and were loved, and now we lie.

The Honour Roll of Sarnia's Fallen Catholic Soldiers at St. Patrick's serves as a tribute to the fallen and to their families. It also serves as a permanent reminder for students to always remember the sacrifices of young men and women not much older than themselves who served, past and present. A transcribed copy of "The Honour Roll of Sarnia's Fallen Catholic Soldiers" is included in this Project on page 1171. The bios of all thirty fallen are included in this Project.



• **SARNIA'S VETERANS PARKWAY:** The idea to name a street to honour local military veterans was initiated by Chuck Toth, City of Sarnia Forestry and Horticulture Supervisor, in November 2018. Many communities across the country and in the area have sections of road dedicated to those who served in the military. Examples in this area include Veterans Memorial Parkway (London), Bluewater Veterans Parkway (Forest), Veterans Way (Petrolia) and Veterans Way (Corunna). Chuck along with volunteers Tom St. Amand and Tom Slater met several times and developed a plan. The goal was to have a street/road designated by Remembrance Day 2019.

Their rationale was that a designated roadway would be another way, a visible way, for people to recognize and to honour the thousands of veterans—men and women of Sarnia and Lambton County who served in the military, including those who made the ultimate sacrifice for their community and country.

The three volunteers decided on a four kilometre section of Highway 40 from the south of Highway 402 to Plank Road. The section of roadway chosen was selected for the following reasons: it is a well-travelled, high-traffic flow road; it is a provincial highway, maintained by Lambton County and the City of Sarnia; and at the half-way point is Heritage Park—the second park in Sarnia dedicated to those who served and sacrificed. Within this park is the World War I Memorial Forest—102 Autumn Blaze maple trees in the formation of a cross. The trees were planted by local Beavers, Cubs and Scouts in 2013, one tree for each fallen soldier listed (at the time) on the World War I section of the Sarnia Cenotaph.

Project leaders Tom St. Amand and Tom Slater were able to gather the support of: Minister of Transportation Hon. Caroline Mulroney; Minister of the Environment Hon. Jeff Yurek; MPP for Sarnia-Lambton Bob Bailey; The County of Lambton Warden Bill Weber and County Council; The City of Sarnia Mayor Bradley and City Council; The Royal Canadian Legion Branch 62, Sarnia; The First Hussars Association of Sarnia; The Royal Canadian Naval Association Sarnia; #403 Sarnia Wing; Aamjiwnaang First Nations, Sarnia; and The Point Edward Ex-Servicemen's Association.

The application was submitted in February 2019 to the Ministry of Transportation Ontario (MTO). In May 2019, the MTO approved the secondary designation "Veterans Parkway". The MTO covered the cost of the manufacture and installation of two highway signs, one at the south end and one at the north end of "Veterans Parkway". The official sign unveiling took place in Heritage Park on October 16, 2019.



• **THE INVICTUS GAMES:** Most of us will never know the full horrors of combat. Many servicemen and women suffer life-changing injuries, visible or otherwise, whilst serving their country. How do these men and women find the motivation to move on and not be defined by their injuries? How can they be recognized for their achievements and not given sympathy? These are the questions Prince Harry asked.

Prince Harry (Henry) of Wales (born 1984) is the younger son of Charles, Prince of Wales and Lady Diana, Princess of Wales, and the grandson of Queen Elizabeth II. On a trip to the Warrior Games in Colorado Springs, USA in 2013, Prince Harry saw how the power of sport could help servicemen and women suffering life-changing injuries physically, psychologically and socially. This inspired him to create the inaugural Invictus Games in London, England, in September 2014, an international sporting event for wounded, injured and sick service personnel.

The Latin word ‘Invictus’ means ‘unconquered’. It embodies the fighting spirit of the wounded, injured and sick service personnel and what these tenacious men and women can achieve, post injury. Invictus Games competitors are the men and women who have come face-to-face with the reality of making a sacrifice for their country. They are the sons, daughters, husbands, wives, fathers and mothers who have put their lives on the line and have suffered life-changing injuries. These people are the embodiment of everything the Invictus Games stands for. They have been tested and challenged, but they have not been overcome. They have proven they cannot be defeated. They have the willpower to preserve and conquer new heights. The Games shine a spotlight on the sacrifices these men and women made serving their country, and their indefatigable drive to overcome.^{9A}

The Invictus Games harness the power of sport to inspire recovery, support rehabilitation, and generate a wider understanding and respect for those who serve their country. The Games is about much more than sport – it captures hearts, challenges minds and changes lives. Prince Harry said, *“These Games have shone a spotlight on the ‘unconquerable’ character of service men and women and their families and their ‘Invictus’ spirit. These Games have been about seeing guys sprinting for the finish line and then turning round to clap for the last man in. They have been about teammates choosing to cross the line together, not wanting to come second, but not wanting the other guys to either. These Games have shown the very best of the human spirit.”*

Other Invictus Games have been hosted in Orlando, Florida in May 2016; in Toronto, in September 2017; and in Sydney, Australia in October 2018.

‘Invictus’ (“unconquered”) comes from the title of a short poem written by English poet William Ernest Henley in 1875. Generations have drawn on the words of Henley’s poem for strength during times of adversity. Henley had come from an impoverished childhood and was himself an amputee, having lost a leg due to complications arising from tuberculosis. These were the inspirations he drew from when coming up with the words for his poem.

‘Invictus’

*Out of the night that covers me,
Black as the Pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods may be
For my unconquerable soul.*

*In the fell clutch of circumstance
I have not winced nor cried aloud.
Under the bludgeonings of chance
My head is bloody, but unbowed.*

*Beyond this place of wrath and tears
Looms but the Horror of the shade,
And yet the menace of the years
Finds, and shall find, me unafraid.*

*It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll.
I am the master of my fate:
I am the captain of my soul.*



BIOGRAPHIES OF SARNIA'S AFGHANISTAN WAR FALLEN SOLDIERS

CUSHLEY, William Jonathan James (#N88957698)

Will Cushley of Port Lambton was so anxious to join the military after high school that he tried to join the American and British armies before Canada accepted him. Both parties benefitted. Will, though, was fearful he would show cowardice in battle, but he excelled in combat situations. Unfortunately, he was killed in September 2006 when his company was in a fierce battle with a heavily manned Taliban force. Will, 21, is buried in McDonald Memorial Cemetery, Port Lambton.

William (Billy) Cushley was born in Bristol, England on July 28, 1985, the only son of Errol and Elaine Cushley. Errol Cushley had emigrated from England to Canada in 1977 and was residing in Sarnia where he was employed as an ironworker. In 1984, Errol was vacationing in the UK when he met Elaine. Their marriage was blessed with the birth of William. Four months after his birth, Elaine, along with William and his step-sisters, joined Errol in Sarnia. The Cushley family resided in Sarnia until 1993 when they moved to Sombra, eventually settling for good in Port Lambton. William had three step-sisters: Lisa (born Aug 1, 1967); Tonia (born Oct 10, 1970); and Amanda (born May 26, 1982).

William was a very active and talented child. He enjoyed skateboarding, BMX biking, running, and road hockey as well as playing a few seasons of organized hockey. He also spent some time in the Cubs where his mother Elaine was one of the leaders. William loved to draw, and when others suggested he consider art school, he insisted art was only a hobby and a way to relax. As he got older, William enjoyed fishing and swimming with friends in the St. Clair River by his family home.

He attended St. Benedict's Elementary School in Sarnia for three years. After his family moved, he continued his schooling and graduated from Sacred Heart Elementary School in Port Lambton, and then Wallaceburg District Secondary School. Having a great interest in history, William in his mid-teens began expressing his desire to join the military, specifically the infantry. His father Errol suggested going to university first, which would allow him to enter the military in the officer stream. William, however, wasn't interested and told his father he wanted to go directly into the army like everyone else and work his way up.



Father Errol Cushley surrounded by his children
Back: Amanda and Lisa, Front: William, Errol and Tonia

A number of people in Williams's life undoubtedly influenced him to choose the military as a career. William's maternal grandfather, Ernest Gordon Phillips, was a Private during the Second World War with the British Army "Glorious" Gloucestershire Regiment. He served in Belgium, Holland, Germany, and landed on the beaches of Normandy in France on D-Day. William's paternal grandfather, William Henry Cushley, also served during World War II and beyond. He was a Chief Petty Officer with the British Royal Navy and served from 1938 until 1963, a career which included tours of duty in the Atlantic, the Africa Campaign, the Italian Campaign and in the Arctic.

William's father, Errol, served as an Efficient Deck Hand in the British Merchant Navy from early in 1963 until the end of 1966. He served in Cypress in 1963 as well as in the Atlantic. Another major influence on William was his cousin, James Moloney. Born in 1977, James joined the British military in September of 1993 at the age of sixteen. He was a member of the British Army, Royal Engineers, 59th Independent Commando Squadron, where he served for 14 years, rising to the rank of Corporal. Moloney also served in Northern Ireland (instructor at Lymington, 2001-02); Afghanistan (2002); with the first soldiers in Basra, Iraq (2003); and as an instructor at the training depot in Chatham, England (2003-2007). None of these individuals in William's life overtly encouraged him to join the military; however, growing up with them and hearing of their experiences undoubtedly influenced William's decision to follow in their footsteps.

After graduating from Wallaceburg District Secondary, William submitted his application for the Canadian Forces at a recruitment office in Chatham. So anxious was he to get his army career underway that military recruiters eventually asked William to refrain from calling and emailing to inquire about the status of his application. Frustrated with the delay in hearing a response, William crossed into the U.S. determined to enlist with the U.S. Marines. To his disappointment, however, he was told that the Marines didn't take Canadians and that he should go home and join his own army. Being a dual British-Canadian citizen, William then contacted the Royal Marines in the United Kingdom and was offered a spot in their 42-week basic training program. Upon hearing this, the Canadian Forces quickly offered him a spot in their basic training program.

William got his wish and made the most of it. After joining the Canadian Army, he excelled at basic training at Saint-Jean, Quebec, and later at Battle School. He thrived in the tightly structured environment of the military. William was assigned as a member of the Royal Canadian Regiment (RCR), 1st Battalion, based at CFB Petawawa. He was so proud to be a member of this regiment that he had "RCR" tattooed on his back.

Almost immediately he indicated his interest in going to Afghanistan. He knew that a tour of duty would help him to achieve his goal of having a career in the military: either with the Joint Task Force 2, an elite special operations team of the Canadian Forces; or with a new marine commando unit, similar to the U.S. Navy Seals; or with a special rapid response border unit of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

Aside from helping him to achieve his desired career with special forces, William had another motive for stepping into a combat zone. Not long before he went overseas, he had a heart-to-heart discussion with his father. William explained that he wasn't going overseas so that Afghan girls could go to school. Rather, he wanted to do his part to ensure that Afghans had the opportunity to make that choice without someone telling them they couldn't, as had been the case for decades. He wanted them to have the same opportunities that we have here in Canada.

Will also told his father that he was afraid, not of the enemy, but of being a coward under fire. Will was worried about getting his army pals killed if he lost his nerve and turned tail during a firefight. Errol told Will that he'd never know for sure until he found himself in that situation, but he advised his son to think back to his training. Shortly before leaving for Afghanistan, William gave his father Errol two breast patches from his uniform with the name CUSHLEY embossed on them. Once in Afghanistan, Will's fears were soon put to the test. It turned out his fears were completely unfounded. Private Cushley was cool, calm and professional under fire. Just a week before he was killed, William demonstrated a textbook performance as a fill-in gunner aboard a light armoured vehicle (LAV).

The first contingents of regular Canadian troops arrived in Afghanistan in early 2002, part of NATO's International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). *Operation Athena* was the longest-lasting and most difficult Canadian operation of the ISAF mission, beginning in July 2003 and concluding in December 2011. In the first phase of this land-based combat mission, the Canadian task force was deployed to the northern city of Kabul, Afghanistan's capital city. There it helped to maintain security in Kabul and surrounding areas, along with providing assistance to civilian infrastructure that was rebuilding the country. This first phase continued until August 2005.

In the second phase of *Athena*, Canadian personnel were transferred to southern Afghanistan. Their primary base located in the southern city of **Kandahar**, a hotspot of renewed Taliban and terrorist activity. For more than five years, Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) members fought the insurgency in a province also named Kandahar that was considered one of the most volatile provinces in Afghanistan. Kandahar was also the birthplace of the Taliban. Operations were aimed at protecting Afghans where they resided; at reducing the influence of the insurgency; at eliminating insurgent strongholds; and at creating a secure environment for development work to take place.

Perhaps the most famous combat operation taking place during *Athena* was the Canadian-led *Operation Medusa* in September 2006. The seventeen-day offensive involved almost 1,400 coalition soldiers. It included the

main force of more than 1,000 Canadian Armed Forces members, making it our country's largest combat operation in more than 50 years.

Anytime Canadian soldiers left the relative safety of their main camps to go "outside the wire," the danger was very real. Though the Canadian and NATO forces had better equipment than the Taliban—including tanks, artillery, LAV's, helicopters and drones--they were faced with a number of challenges: the coalition forces were viewed as an occupying power, so were vehemently attacked; the Taliban were more familiar with the terrain; the Taliban riddled the countryside with IEDS (improvised explosive devices); the enemy was not easily identifiable (difficult to distinguish a combatant from a civilian); and suicide bombers could be anyone, including women and children.



Private William Jonathan James Cushley



William Cushley with his mother Elaine just before leaving for Afghanistan

William was home for the Port Lambton Gala Days celebration in July 2006, where he celebrated his 21st birthday. Less than two months later, having been overseas for only one month, William lost his life in Afghanistan. On September 3, 2006, William was killed in action alongside three other Canadian soldiers in a fierce gun battle with Taliban insurgents, approximately 15 kilometers southwest of Kandahar City. It happened in the volatile Panjwai district, where the massive Canadian-led offensive *Operation Medusa* was in its early stages of trying to put the Taliban-held region under Afghan government control. NATO's aim was to remove armed militants from the volatile Panjwai and Zhari district region so that displaced villagers could return to their homes and re-establish their livelihoods without living in constant fear of the Taliban.

Panjwai district, an area of small villages and complex defensive terrain, was the spiritual and literal home of the Taliban movement. It was a stronghold the Taliban chose to defend, so they built it up, and they wanted to draw the Canadians into a costly ground conflict. The area had been mostly an American responsibility until the Canadian battle group arrived in early 2006. The area was a place the Canadians knew well, as on August 3, 2006, the PPCLI were involved in a hellish battle, one that combined Taliban attacks and roadside bombings. It led to the deaths of four soldiers and ten wounded.

By the time the Royal Canadian Regiment (RCR) arrived in early August, the Taliban had changed their tactics from small group "hit-and-run" raids to the conventional "come-and-get-me." *Operation Medusa* began at first light on September 2, with the Canadians seizing the high points on the south side of the Arghanbad River across from Pashmul. From these high points, the Canadians set up firing lines of armoured vehicles and proceeded to blast away at targets of opportunity across the Arghandab River throughout the morning and afternoon of September 2.

Waiting ground forces watched as artillery and aerial salvos rained down on insurgent forces and destroyed clusters of the enemy. The plan was to continue to engage the enemy for 72 hours with artillery and air barrages.

Once the enemy forces were weakened enough, an infantry advance would follow. Late on September 2, the battle plan changed – command felt the enemy had weakened and were ready to be exploited. The Canadians, spearheaded by Charles Company, 1st Royal Canadian Regiment, were ordered to attack at first light on September 3, a full 48 hours earlier than planned and without the promised bombardment.^{2E, 6S}

On that September 3rd morning at about 6 a.m., with no reconnaissance and with intel that was either insufficient or wildly wrong, the Canadians crossed the river onto the far bank, and advanced through tall fields of ripening marijuana plants to take Objective Rugby, described as a “guerilla fighter’s paradise”. Right at the centre of the Objective was one of the main Taliban fortifications, a white schoolhouse, then a stronghold for insurgents. Scattered on the ground were leaflets dropped there by NATO in the previous days, warning the locals that an operation was coming through. This was no surprise attack. Unknown to the Canadians, they were severely outnumbered, as 1200 Taliban fighters, dug in and delusional, waited in ambush. Hidden in their trenches and fortified buildings, the enemy fired on the Canadians from three sides. A Corporal in command of one of the LAV’s said, “All hell broke loose... All I know is the entire area just lit up. We were taking fire from at least two sides, maybe three, with everything they had. Rocket-propelled grenades, small-arms fire, the works.”

Sixty-two members of Number 7 Platoon never had a chance and, miraculously, not all were killed. Private Cushley lost his life in the ambush, along with three other Canadian soldiers in a chaotic and bloody battle that ensued for a full 3 ½ hours. Six other Canadian soldiers were wounded in the attack. Military analysts would call this period some of the fiercest combat Canadian troops had seen since the Korean War.

On the morning of Sunday, September 3, 2006, Errol Cushley was training on the backroads not far from his home in Port Lambton. He was preparing for a month-long hike in Spain that Elaine and he were about to undertake. Elaine was tired that morning and had opted to stay home. Partway through the training session, Errol heard a car slowly approaching on the country road behind him. Behind the wheel was a neighbour from town, who tearfully informed Errol that a military officer and chaplain were waiting back at home. As Errol climbed into his neighbour’s car on that Sunday morning, he knew the military would show up at your doorstep for only one reason.

Killed alongside Private William Cushley, 21, were Sergeant Shane Stachnik, 30, and Warrant Officers Richard F. Nolan, 39, and Frank R. Mellish, 38. Mellish was killed when he had gone back to retrieve the body of his best friend, Richard Nolan. The action the next morning was as bad for the Canadians. Charles Company was hit by friendly fire from an American A-10 Thunderbolt II Warthog jet, killing RCR Private Mark Anthony Graham and wounding dozens more. Private Graham was a former member of Canada’s Olympic sprint team in 1992.

Corporal Ryan Pagnacco, born in Simcoe, Ontario, was a comrade of William Cushley’s in Charles Company, First Battalion, Royal Canadian Regiment. Corporal Pagnacco and Private Cushley would have been together sharing the same experiences during those horrific few days in Panjawi.

Following is a portion of Corporal Pagnacco’s account of his experiences leading up to the attack, *as he was stationed* on the side of a mountain overlooking the Arghandab River valley and the Taliban-occupied village of Pashmul. The air force and artillery had begun its bombardment of the village below them;

September 2 evening - *We were told this would be a three-day bombardment. As the sun began to set over the valley, our platoon warrant officer, Frank Mellish, called me over to our platoon’s G-Wagon jeep. He had a green backpack in his hand. In the pack was my set of bagpipes... This was the first time I’d brought them out since I had been in the country. While on work-up training, I had been made the unofficial piper for Charles Company... That evening, when WO Mellish handed me my pipes and asked me to play, I felt as though I were following in the footsteps of the combat pipers of my great-grandfather’s generation. It filled me with pride. I made my way to the edge of the ridge, beside the LAVs as they fired into the valley, overlooking the battlefield with the enemy less than half a mile away. I pieced the pipes together, brought them up and began to play. I expected the troops to complain, as it woke many of them up. I expected someone to yell, as I was out in the open with no protective equipment on and no weapon in hand. I expected the catcalls and hoots I had received from the troops in the past. But there were none.*

The sound of the pipes echoed across the valley, broken only by the sound of the 25s firing. The troops watched, took pictures, and cheered after each tune. Even the U.S. and Afghan National Army soldiers watched, and some took pictures as well... I ended my impromptu concert with a somber slow air, a farewell to the setting sun, and then packed up my pipes. As the sun set over the Arghandab Valley and the cool, sweet-smelling wind drifted across our position on the side of the mountain, we settled in for the night on the sandy slopes, under the protection of the LAVs, snipers and air supports.

September 3 - At 0400, we awoke with orders to eat, police up our gear and be ready to move. We were going in ahead of schedule. Three days of bombardment had been reduced to one day. Needless to say, we weren't very happy with this plan, but ours is not to question why. By 0500, we were in the back of the LAVs and on our way to the assault line. I looked around at the boys: we were ready, we were anxious, we were good to go. And we were all a little scared. This wasn't going to be a ten-minute roadside contact with the enemy... this was going to be combat.

In describing the first moments they were attacked, he wrote, *At 0730, the calm was broken... Within seconds, we found ourselves in a well-planned and well-executed U-shaped ambush. We were under fire from all directions, except the way we had come in... We kept firing, and they kept coming... As the fighting continued, the casualties mounted. Although we were fighting very effectively, we were still surrounded and grossly outnumbered...*

Corporal Ryan Pagnacco was fortunate enough to survive the chaos and horror of the September 3 battle. Charles Company, First Battalion withdrew to their original firing position on the side of the mountain. They were given the rest of the day to recover as best they could and reflect on the day's events. The next morning was no different from the morning before – they woke up at 0500 and had breakfast, in preparation for another attack on Pashmul. While burning their garbage in the dark, chilly hours before dawn, an American A-10 Thunderbolt II Warthog jet attacked them with so-called “friendly fire”. Private Mark Graham was killed in the incident, and dozens were wounded, including Ryan Pagnacco. Severely wounded with shrapnel wounds in both legs, the right arm, lower back and right hand, Pagnacco was airlifted to Kandahar Air Field hospital. After his surgery while in recovery, Ryan wrote of his experience:

Our company sergeant major, who had been wounded the day before in battle, made his rounds of the hospital, visiting briefly with the troops and trying his best to raise morale. With him was our company commander, who was also wounded in the friendly-fire incident. When they got to me, the CSM asked all the usual questions – “How are you doing?” “Can I get you anything?” et cetera. But his next request broke my heart. He asked me if I would be able to play my bagpipes at the ramp ceremony for our fallen troops the next day.

I couldn't feel anything below my right elbow, and when I held my hand up, the wounds in my fingers still looked as bad as they had when I was first hit. I would have played from the gurney if I could have played at all. But I couldn't move my fingers. I couldn't even vocalize a response. I just held up my hand and felt a tear run down my cheek. I wept not for my hand, or my legs, or even my kidneys, but because I wasn't able to pay my last respects to my fallen brothers. I couldn't play the pipes for them.⁷¹

In a solemn ramp ceremony at Kandahar airfield, approximately 800 Canadian soldiers and 100 from other countries bid farewell to their fallen comrades. While Private Cushley's and four other flag-draped coffins were carried onto a C-130 Hercules aircraft, a piper played a mournful melody. William was the first Lambton County resident killed in action since the Korean War. Twenty-one-year-old William Cushley's body was returned home to Canada, along with the four other Canadian fallen. All five men had gone over to Afghanistan together, and all five returned home together.



Repatriation ceremony for Pte. William Cushley – Sept. 6, 2006 at CFB Trenton

Nearly two thousand people paid their respects during the two-day visitation period at Sacred Heart Church, Port Lambton. Over 500 people attended his funeral at Sacred Heart Church on September 13, 2006. On the day of the funeral, much of the town was closed off, with EMS vehicles and fire trucks blocking the streets. A busload of

troops had arrived and proceeded to march on all four roads surrounding the jam-packed church. The overflow area was also full and a screen had been set-up outside for people to watch the service from there. American servicemen were in attendance and, on bended knee, presented Will's mother, Elaine, with an American flag, the first presented to a Canadian since the Korean War.

As the procession passed by Sacred Heart Elementary School, from which he had graduated only seven years before, the entire student body lined up on the curb, most dressed in red, all wearing arm bands that read 'Thank you Will'. Most waved Canadian flags or tossed flowers. Elaine later recalled that as the procession rounded the corner toward the school, it was the sight of the school children lined up to honour her son that finally made her lose it emotionally. Other than a few muffled sobs, the 145 youngsters stood silently as the procession, which was more than 100 metres long, passed by.

Will's full military funeral concluded with a graveside service of three volleys of fire from soldiers, a bagpiper, and then a trumpeter sounding the "Last Post." William Cushley is buried in McDonald Memorial Cemetery, Port Lambton, Ontario. On his headstone are inscribed the words, *Private William Cushley, 1st Battalion, The Royal Canadian Regiment, died on September 3, 2006 fighting against Taliban insurgents near Kandahar City, Afghanistan. Private Cushley fought to bring human rights and democratic values to an oppressed people. He wanted to make a difference in this world and he died doing so.*

A portion of the September 14, 2006 Canadian Press release after William's funeral reads as follows:

In Port Lambton, Ont., the sun burst through the clouds as soldiers greeted the casket containing the remains of Pte. William Cushley, 21, outside of Sacred Heart Church... "He was a deeply spiritual man," said Brig.-Gen. Guy Thibault, Commander Land Force Central Area. "The rank wasn't testimony to his leadership." ... Cushley was remembered by Capt. Rev. Daniel Roushorne as a man "who got back off the bus to give mom a hug and kiss, and it didn't matter that everyone was watching."

In his eulogy, Tyler Atkins paid tribute to his fun-loving buddy and added that Cushley "made a difference for our country." Cushley's three sisters took turns reading stanzas from a heart-wrenching poem, including lines that read: "You were our brother and our friend. We wish we could have been with you at the end." ...

Following their son's death, William's parents received letters he'd written for delivery only if he fell in battle. One letter to his mother harkened back to a bet that the two had placed just before Will climbed aboard a bus bound for the airport to Afghanistan. As he boarded a bus to CFB Trenton, Elaine bet her son \$50 that she wouldn't cry when they parted. Moments after boarding, Will got back off the bus, picked up his mother in a tight embrace and gave her one last kiss before departing. In doing so, Will won their wager of \$50. The last line of William's final letter to his mother reads, *Do not weep too much. I will always be with you in heart and spirit! Love always & forever, Will.*

P.S. You can keep the \$50! LOL

Things will never be the same for the Cushley family. William's youngest sister, Amanda, felt the strong desire to go to Afghanistan and did so one year after his death. She served with the Canadian Forces Personnel Agency (CFPSA) and ended up doing three tours in Afghanistan, one in Dubai (Camp Mirage) and one in Cyprus. Her last tour was at Kandahar Airfield in Afghanistan when it was closed upon Canada's withdrawal from its mission there. His mother Elaine points out that someone will always be missing from family events and festive occasions. But she says they've come to terms with the fact that they still need to live life; and that's exactly how William would have wanted it.

Elaine says her son is with them everyday and everywhere. She spends time talking with William in his basement bedroom where the walls are adorned with pictures, military certificates and mementos. She also visits the nearby cemetery often, placing flowers and putting up balloons for his birthday, something that Errol says with a chuckle, would surely cause William to roll his eyes. Elaine says she grew up not really knowing much about Remembrance Day and not paying a lot of attention to veterans. The Afghanistan mission was a major "wake-up call." She says our war heroes, past and present, should never be forgotten, and thinks children need to understand that freedom has a price—one that the Cushley family will pay for the rest of their lives. The freedom we enjoy now, says Elaine, is because of our heroic veterans and war dead who gave so much.

On December 4, 2010, the sixty-two members of Number 7 Platoon were given a prestigious award for gallantry. The Governor General of Canada awarded the Commander-in-Chief's Unit Commendation to the men and women of the First Battalion, the Royal Canadian Regiment, Battle Group 3-06. The citation reads, *For courageous*

and professional execution of duty in Afghanistan during August and September 2006 that prevented the capture of Kandahar City by insurgents. William Cushley would also receive posthumously the Citation: Sacrifice Medal.

In Wallaceburg, alongside the cenotaph, are the “Rocks of Honour”. These stones are a lasting tribute to all the service men and women from Wallaceburg, Walpole Island, Mitchells Bay, Port Lambton, Sombra and Wilksport who served and returned from WWI and WWII. There are over 577 names from WWI and over 1830 names from WWII engraved on the stones. A separate stone honouring Private William Cushley is inscribed with these words: *The seeds of peacekeeping can be found buried on the battlefields, in the trenches and in the graveyards of Europe and Asia. The men who lived through two world wars never wanted to see another. They believed ending regional conflicts would prevent the world from ever being consumed by war again. For the service men and women of Canada the cost of conflict and the price of peace has been great. Let us as a nation and a community always hold dear the names of those who paid the ultimate sacrifice to make our world a better place to live.*

Private William Cushley, 1st Battalion, The Royal Canadian Regiment, died on September 3, 2006 fighting against Taliban insurgents near Kandahar City, Afghanistan. Private Cushley fought to bring human rights and democratic values to an oppressed people. He wanted to make a difference in this world and died doing so.

In November 2019, his name along with 25 others was added to the Sarnia cenotaph, engraved in stone to be remembered always. William Cushley is remembered as a courageous man and a proud soldier who was devoted to his country. Though he was a strapping young soldier when he died, his mother Elaine Cushley says she will always see her son as a boy. “I miss cuddling him,” she said. “Every time I close my eyes I see his face and he is always smiling. He was always fun, a dry sense of humour that boy.”

SOURCES: D, E, I, L, N, 2D, 2E, 3D, 6S, 7C, 7T, 8X, 8Y, r

POLAND, Brent Donald (#B88172022)

While growing up in Errol Village, Brent Poland loved athletics and history. When he was 32, Brent followed “his heart and his passion” and enlisted in the Canadian military. While serving in Afghanistan, Brent was killed in action on Easter Sunday 2007. In life and in death, Corporal Brent Poland remains an inspiration. In the event of his death, Brent had written “*I sincerely hope that my death resulted in saving the lives of my fellow brothers in arms.*”

Brent Poland was born October 26, 1969 in Sarnia, the first child of Donald Eldridge and Patricia Evelyn Poland of Camlachie, Ontario. His grandparents were Bill and Evelyn McKenna of Wyoming, Ontario, and Eldridge and Amy Poland (Dawson) and Goldie Dawson of Brigden, Ontario. Brent had a younger brother, Mark Thomas Poland, born September 13, 1971. As youngsters growing up in Errol Village, Brent and Mark, as well as their cousin, Terry, were always on the go. The Poland boys enjoyed sports—playing baseball, soccer, hockey—and Brent was an avid downhill skier. The boys loved being outdoors, and with father Don being a Scout leader, they worked their way up from Beavers to Ventures. Their maternal grandparents had a cottage on an island in Lake Temagami (northeast of Sudbury) where the boys spent time fishing, swimming, boating and canoeing. Brent attended Huron Church Camp where he progressed from a camper to a camp counsellor and eventually a canoe leader.

Brent’s younger brother, **Mark Poland**, who attended Errol Village School and St. Clair High School, also joined the military. After completing grade 11, Mark joined the 1st Hussars as a Trooper in the reserves in 1989. Shortly thereafter, the seventeen year-old enrolled in undergraduate studies in Political Science at the University of Western Ontario (UWO) in London. While in his first year of studies, he was selected from the ranks and appointed as an Officer Cadet with the 1st Hussars, an Armoured Corps Regiment of the Canadian Armed Forces Reserves. During his summer breaks from university, Mark attended Armour Officer Training and graduated as a Lieutenant.

After graduating with an Honours Bachelor of Arts from Western in 1993, Mark completed two years of full time service with the Canadian Forces. During this time he was deployed as a member of the United Nations Protection Force to Bosnia-Herzegovina beginning in the fall of 1994. The Bosnian conflict was an ethnically rooted war that took place in Bosnia and Herzegovina, a former republic of Yugoslavia, between April 1992 until December 1995. After years of bitter fighting, atrocious war crimes and genocide that involved Bosnian Muslims, Serbs, and Croats, as well as the Yugoslav army, NATO became involved. Their strategy was to use a combination of an air bombing campaign, peacekeeping ground forces and diplomacy. During his deployment in Bosnia, Mark Poland served in the rank of Lieutenant as both a Squadron and Regimental liaison officer with the Royal Canadian Dragoons.

As a liaison officer, Poland was responsible for communicating between the Canadian army and the local Serb army. In the fall of 1994, the Serbs, in retaliation for NATO air strikes on Serb airfields in the (Serb-held) Krajina region of Croatia, decided to detain 55 Canadian soldiers. The captive Canadians, including Lieutenant Mark Poland, were held by the Serb army to act as a human shield against NATO bombing of the Serb forces. Lieutenant Poland described the event shortly after being detained:

Well it's now day 2 of our detainment and I (lazy) am finally writing some notes. First the background: It started 23 Nov 94 at 1215 hrs. I was the first one to hear about it (our detention) through SERB Major Miric, who requested a meeting between Major Milner (my OC) and Major Savic (local Serb commander). Miric told me before the OC knew that Checkpoint Papa was closed and that we would become their 'guests'. My first reaction was not surprise, strangely enough. It was more like coping... I thought basically, okay this is the situation, what can we do about it?^{5R}

Through negotiation, Mark and his fellow Peacekeepers were eventually released after 16 days in captivity and would return to their base. A peace agreement that ended the war in Bosnia was eventually finalized in Dayton, Ohio in December 1995. Following the Dayton Agreement, NATO forces continued to serve in Bosnia-Herzegovina to enforce the peace, along with support for humanitarian aid and reconstruction.

Upon redeployment in the spring of 1995, Mark was promoted to the rank of Captain in the 1st Hussars. He enrolled in the Faculty of Law at UWO. He completed his legal studies in 1998 and was granted the degree of Bachelor of Laws. After articling with Siskinds Law Firm in London, Mark was called to the Bar as a member of the Law Society of Upper Canada in February 2000. He began his practice as a civil litigation lawyer but soon transitioned to the field of criminal defence law. Mark then joined the Ontario Ministry of the Attorney General in 2003 and became an Assistant Crown Attorney in the Waterloo Region in 2004. In October 2005, Mark obtained a Master of Laws Degree (LL.M) in criminal law. In October 2012, after a brief appointment as a Deputy Crown Attorney, Major Poland was appointed as the Crown Attorney of Dufferin County in Orangeville. In July 2015, he became the Crown Attorney for the Waterloo Region.

Concurrent to his civilian legal career and academic pursuits, Mark has maintained his commitment to serve in the Canadian Armed Forces Reserves. Upon his call to the Bar in 2000, Mark transferred from the Armoured Corps and joined the Office of the Judge Advocate General (“JAG”) of the Canadian Forces. He initially served as a Deputy Judge Advocate. He was appointed as Counsel in the office of the Director of Defence Counsel Services in 2007. In July 2008, Major Poland completed the Joint Reserve Command and Staff Programme. In May 2010, Mark left the JAG and returned to the Armoured Corps where he was appointed Regimental Second in Command of the 1st Hussars.

In September 2012, Mark took up a position with the Royal Highland Fusiliers of Canada (RHFC), and completed the Army Operations Course. He was appointed Deputy Commanding Officer (DCO), RHFC in December 2013. The following year, he completed the Armoured Reconnaissance Squadron Commander's Course. In October 2015, Mark was appointed Commanding Officer of the RHFC and was promoted to Lieutenant-Colonel.

Mark has been awarded the UNPROFOR medal, the Canadian Peacekeeping Service medal, the Canadian Forces Decoration (CD) with clasp, and the Queen's Golden and Diamond Jubilee medals. His wife, Susan Dube, and he are currently residing in the Kitchener area where he is the Crown Attorney for the Waterloo Region in Ontario. Early in 2019, Mark was appointed a Justice with the Ontario Court of Justice and assigned to the court in London. Mark also has a step-daughter, Shelley, living in the Kitchener area. Approximately 13 months after his brother Brent lost his life in Afghanistan, Mark and Susan had twins – Sophie Poland and Brent Lucas Poland.

Brent Poland attended Errol Village Elementary School where he enjoyed reading and, like his father, was interested in history. Evening television at the Poland house often involved news programs, a routine that helped Brent develop a solid general knowledge base and an understanding of Canada and World affairs. In grade eight, he spent a couple of weeks in Quebec on a French exchange. Near the end of grade ten, the Poland family travelled to Europe, rented a car and spent six weeks travelling through the continent. The trip further enhanced Brent's love for history, a trend that continued through high school and university.

Brent graduated from St. Clair High School in Sarnia and then went on to earn two university degrees. His first degree was a Bachelor of Arts History diploma from York University. After achieving that degree, Brent traveled to Europe where he taught in a small village in the Greek mountains, before heading for Italy to help his aunt at an agriturismo—a resort where guests stay on a working farm. He then returned to Toronto to obtain his second

degree, a Bachelor of Media Arts Honours diploma from Ryerson University. After earning his second university degree in 1998, Brent worked for a time in office environments, a type of work for which he quickly lost enthusiasm.

In 2002, at the age of 32, Brent Poland joined the Canadian Armed Forces also, as his family members stated to “follow his heart and his passion.” Having two university degrees, he immediately entered the officer stream. He completed basic officer training at the Canadian Forces Leadership and Recruit School in St-Jean-sur-Richelieu, Quebec. Brent had his heart set on being in the infantry and attended the required four-phase combat arms training where he competed against significantly younger men and women. Unsuccessful in the final phase of the grueling combat arms training, and having no desire to move to a different branch of the military as a Lieutenant, Brent resigned his officer’s commission and re-enlisted as a Corporal. In this way, he could stay in the infantry and go to Afghanistan. Despite the lower rank, he achieved his goal of being an infantry soldier and was assigned as a member of the Royal Canadian Regiment, 2nd Battalion, based at CFB Gagetown, New Brunswick. Then his focus shifted to another one of his goals: getting to Afghanistan.

Once he knew he had a permanent posting, Brent bought a house in French Lake, New Brunswick, not far from his base in CFB Gagetown. At his own home, he could finally be re-united with his beagle-mix hound “Shorty”. He had acquired Shorty while studying at Ryerson University and the “badly behaved hound” had been living with Don and Pat Poland in Errol Village ever since Brent had joined the army. Brent was anxious to get his dog back and introduce him to the wide-open spaces and fields of his country home. Not long after, Brent received the news that he was being deployed to Afghanistan. Brent was thrilled to be going overseas and excited about the upcoming adventures awaiting him in the mountains and on the dusty plains of Afghanistan.

At a Christmas dinner party shortly before his departure, one of the guests began leaning on Brent about why he wanted to go to Afghanistan, suggesting that Canadians had no business being there. Brent calmly pointed out that the guest had two little girls and asked how she would like it if they were never given the opportunity to go to school and to get an education, as had been the case in Afghanistan for years. Brent’s response terminated the conversation.



Corporal Brent Donald Poland

The first contingents of regular Canadian troops arrived in Afghanistan in early 2002, part of NATO’s International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). ***Operation Athena*** was the longest-lasting and most difficult Canadian operation of the ISAF mission, beginning in July 2003 and concluding in December 2011. In the first phase of this land-based combat mission, the Canadian task force was deployed to the northern city of Kabul, Afghanistan’s capital city. There it helped to maintain security in Kabul and surrounding areas, along with providing assistance to civilian infrastructure that was rebuilding the country. This first phase continued until August 2005.

In the second phase of *Athena*, Canadian personnel were transferred to southern Afghanistan. Their primary base located in the southern city of **Kandahar**, a hotspot of renewed Taliban and terrorist activity. For more than five years, Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) members fought the insurgency in a province also named Kandahar that was considered one of the most volatile provinces in Afghanistan. Kandahar was also the birthplace of the Taliban. Operations were aimed at protecting Afghans where they resided; at reducing the influence of the insurgency; at

eliminating insurgent strongholds; and at creating a secure environment for development work to take place.

Anytime Canadian soldiers left the relative safety of their main camps to go "outside the wire," the danger was very real. Though the Canadian and NATO forces had better equipment than the Taliban—including tanks, artillery, LAV's, helicopters and drones—they were faced with a number of challenges: the coalition forces were viewed as an occupying power, so were vehemently attacked; the Taliban were more familiar with the terrain; the Taliban riddled the countryside with IEDS (improvised explosive devices); the enemy was not easily identifiable (difficult to distinguish a combatant from a civilian); and suicide bombers could be anyone, including women and children.

Taking place during *Athena*, the objective of *Operation Achilles*, beginning in March 2007, was to clear the Taliban from the violent northern districts of Helmand province. Led by British forces, Operation Achilles was supported by other ISAF forces including Canadian, American, Danish and Dutch units. It was focused on the Kajakai Dam, a major power source for Afghanistan that had not been functioning for a number of years. The mission involved clearing villages and a large Taliban complex near the hydroelectric dam, as well as clearing the dam of all enemy forces.

In April 2007, Corporal Poland's "Hotel Company" of the 2nd Battalion of the Royal Canadian Regiment was serving with NATO's International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). Hotel Company was a mechanized infantry company, and Brent served as a light machine gunner in Bravo section, 2 platoon. In the weeks prior to Brent's death, as part of *Operation Achilles*, the men had been providing security for massive convoys of soldiers and material being moved westward from Kandahar City into Helmand province, where the British had a major offensive operation against the Taliban. NATO was trying to re-open the hydroelectric dam in order to supply the region with electricity. During this operation, the men would have been on high alert.

On April 8, 2007, Easter Sunday, the 2nd Battalion was escorting a convoy of troops and supplies through the desert to British soldiers in Helmand province. It was its third escort in three days and the company was looking forward to a much-deserved rest. About 1:30 pm on that day, the light armoured vehicle (LAV III) that Corporal Poland was travelling in struck a roadside IED (improvised explosive device), triggering a massive explosion. The attack occurred around 75 kilometres west of Kandahar. Corporal Poland and five other comrades from 22 Bravo Section, who were all sitting in the rear passenger compartment of the vehicle, were killed instantly in the explosion.

Perishing with thirty-seven-year-old Brent Poland were RCRs Sgt. Donald Lucas, 31; Pte. Kevin Kennedy, 20; Cpl. Aaron Williams, 23; and Pte. David Greenslade, 20. Cpl. Christopher Stannix, 24, a reservist from the Halifax based Princess Louise Fusiliers, was also killed. Four soldiers survived the attack, although one had serious injuries. Captain Simon Bowser, then a Private travelling in the LAV behind the six slain soldiers, said the deaths changed the complexion of the entire regiment. "Suddenly, it was very serious," he recalled. The attack was the largest single-day combat death toll suffered by Canadian troops since the Korean War.

Back in Sarnia on that April 8 Easter Sunday, Don and Pat Poland were in their Bright's Grove church listening to the Easter service when a tremendously dark and gloomy feeling suddenly descended upon Don, shaking him to the core, but then passing quickly. Shortly after, while they were driving home from the church, the same dark premonition of fear descended on Don again. Don was petrified that a black car would be waiting in the driveway to deliver terrible news. Making the final turn home, he breathed a mammoth sigh of relief when he discovered no such car was waiting in the driveway.

Several hours later, after the Poland family finished their Easter dinner, a knock sounded on the Poland's front door. At the door was a man wearing a kilt. Younger son Mark opened the door, where there stood a kilted soldier and a military chaplain. They were there to deliver the devastating news of Brent's death, forever changing the life of the Poland family.

Corporal Brent Poland received the Citation: Sacrifice Medal (posthumously). His repatriation ceremony was held at CFB Trenton on April 11, 2007. A full military funeral with honours was held on April 20, 2007 at a packed Temple Baptist Church in Sarnia attended by more than 1000 people, with younger brother Mark delivering a powerful eulogy. The funeral procession made its way beyond the city limits, down rural roads, and arrived at Brent's final resting spot in a country cemetery among his forefathers not far from the Poland ancestral farm near Brigden. Thirty-seven-year-old Brent Poland is buried in Bear Creek Cemetery in Brigden, Lambton County, Ontario. On his headstone are inscribed the words, *Too dearly loved to ever be forgotten*. Brent's name is also inscribed on the Village of Camlachie's Memorial.



Repatriation Ceremony, CFB Trenton



Funeral Service, Sarnia

Two personal effects were with Corporal Poland at the time of his death, two items that held great significance for Brent and others. Both were returned to his parents. Before Corporal Poland left for Afghanistan, he had become friends with a chaplain, with whom he shared a barrack. Brent had an understanding of religion and the two had many talks. Shortly before his departure, Brent's mother, Pat, had given him a card on which was printed Psalm 23 of the Holy Bible, one of his grandmother's favourite verses. When Brent's personal effects were returned, in the clear plastic window of his wallet sat the card containing the 23rd Psalm.

Brent also had a soft spot for children and another item in his pocket when he died was a letter he had received from a classroom of children taught by one of his mother's friends. With it were the blood-stained rough notes of a letter he was preparing to send back to the students as soon as he returned to the main base at Kandahar. His father Don would transcribe the letter and forward it to the teacher and children.

Brent had been in contact with the children in the grade 4 class of Mrs. Leona Moore at Confederation Central School of the Lambton Kent Public School Board. The students enjoyed writing and receiving letters with Brent and were excited that he was taking the time to reply to their letters. They had many questions when his letters were read to them. When they learned of Brent's tragic death, many students stayed in at recess to make a card to send with Mrs. Moore to the funeral home. The following are the rough notes, *To: Mrs. Moore's 4th Grade Class*, that Brent had with him when he lost his life. They would have been written a week or so before his death:

- *Thanks*
- *We ride in heavily armoured vehicles called LAV III*
- *We patrol our area of operation for suspected Taliban fighters, and go into villages and district centers to provide protection for our bosses who have meetings called Shuras.*
- *We generally provide a presence in our area of operations, to let the Taliban know we are here, and to restrict their freedom of movement so that they can not terrorize the local population. These Shuras are important to ensure the local villagers have a say in the reconstruction process.*
- *Yes there are landmines and the occasional ambush, but our training is world class, so that protects us from being in too much danger.*
- *We sleep in sleeping bags behind our vehicles wherever we stop for the night.*
- *My name is Corporal Brent Poland. A corporal is a rank in the army one step above a private.*
- *We help train the Afghan national police to do things like set up vehicle check points in order to search for weapons and explosives.*
- *The people are generally poor, but things are improving.*
- *Since we have been here there is a new road.*
- *A canal/irrigation project is underway to help the people in the area grow better crops.*
- *They are mostly farmers.*

Brent understood the importance of a good education. In memory of their son, Don and Pat, with the help of the Royal Canadian Regiment, started up The RCR Education Fund for the Children of Fallen Soldiers. The Fund helps with the cost of post-secondary education for the children of RCR soldiers who lost their lives in Afghanistan, or who died in Canada as a result of the physical or mental injuries of war. In Brent's death, others will have the opportunity for a brighter future.

Corporal Brent Poland is remembered as a good, strong and loving man, a proud soldier and proud Canadian. According to a family member, “He told us before he left that he saw this tour as his chance to help in the effort to bring peace and stability for the people of Afghanistan. He was inspired by the thought that his efforts might help to ensure that little girls had the chance to go to school and women might be given an opportunity to thrive in an environment free of brutal oppression.” The following is a quotation from a letter Brent wrote to his family, to be opened in the event of his death:

I sincerely hope that my death resulted in saving the lives of my fellow brothers in arms. I feel it is my obligation to protect the young men in my unit, given that I have been so blessed, so that they may go on to lead fulfilled lives and experience as much as I have.

The timing of the deaths of Corporal Poland and his five RCR comrades had a dramatic ripple effect across the country. The very next day, April 9, 2007, the nation and the Commonwealth marked the 90th anniversary of the famous Battle of Vimy Ridge with the rededication of the Vimy Memorial in France. After a five-year restoration process, in a ceremony broadcast live across Canada and attended by the largest crowd on the site since the 1936 dedication, including Canadian high school students and a handful of Canadian Great War veterans still alive, Queen Elizabeth II rededicated the Vimy Memorial in a moving and emotional ceremony. More information on the Vimy rededication is on page 149.

Through the efforts of Sarnia City Counselor Jim Foubister, a plaque was added to the Sarnia cenotaph in November 2008. The plaque reads: “OTHER THEATRES OF CONFLICT – CPL BRENT POLAND – AFGHANISTAN 2007”. In late October 2015, the Poland family dedicated a memorial in memory of their son at St. John-in-the-Wilderness Anglican Church in Brights Grove. The Poland family had been members of the church for over 45 years, and it was where both Brent and brother Mark attended growing up, and where both boys were baptized and confirmed.

In the fall of 2015, a wooded, garden-like cemetery area at the church’s side was dedicated in memory of Corporal Brent Poland. Engraved on a memorial stone in the serenity garden is, IN LOVING MEMORY OF CPL. BRENT POLAND, KIA IN AFGHANISTAN APRIL 8, 2007. The small plot of land, long bleak and sparse, had stones, mulch and plants added to it to create a shaded refuge for people to pause and reflect in peace. In June 2017, a playground at Errol Village Public School was dedicated in the memory of Brent Poland, a former student of that school. Funds for the Corporal Brent Poland Memorial Playground were raised by the Errol Village School Council.

In November 2019, the plaque that was added to the Sarnia cenotaph in 2008 was replaced. Brent Poland’s name along with 25 others was added to the Sarnia cenotaph, engraved in stone to be remembered always.
SOURCES: B, D, E, K, L, N, 2D, 3D, 6O, 7C, 8X, 8Y, p

“The Man in the Arena”

It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly;...

who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat.

Theodore Roosevelt (portion of a speech --1910)



WAR MEMORIALS, PLAQUES & HONOUR ROLLS



BOER WAR MEMORIAL FOUNTAIN

ERECTED BY THE SCHOOL CHILDREN AND CITIZENS OF LAMBTON COUNTY

PAARDEBERG, DRIEFONTIEN, JOHANNESBURG, DIAMOND HILL,
BELFAST, DEWEGENDRIFT, LYNDENBURG
SOUTH AFRICA 1899-1901

NAMES ON THIS MEMORIAL ARE THOSE MEN FROM
LAMBTON COUNTY WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE BOER WAR

COLTER, C.F.
GORMAN, SERGT. F.
HUME, A.H.
MACKENZIE, H.
NEAR, B.
NEVILLE, H.S.
PARDEE, J. B.
SCOTT, C.R.

CRONE, D.J.
HARLEY, J.
JOHNSTON, K.G.
MCMILLAN, D.C.
NEVILLE, H.M.
NEVILLE, J.F.
REYNOLDS, R.
VAN TUYL, T.

NOTES: In 1902, a contingent of veterans of the Boer War came to Sarnia, from Windsor, Ontario, with the express purpose of creating a monument to commemorate those men from Lambton County who had served in the Boer War (1899-1902).

In January of 1902, at a meeting held in Sarnia, the South African Club, comprising Windsor men who saw service in the Boer War, opened subscription lists for funds for a memorial for their fallen comrades. Public collections would be supplemented by the proceeds from a number of concerts to be given, with the goal to raise \$1,500 for the purpose. It was suggested that the memorial would probably take the form of a public drinking fountain to be located near the post office.

The Boer War Memorial Fountain was erected in Victoria Park in 1908, having been made possible through donations by both citizens and school children of Lambton County over a six-year period.

Around 1960, the memorial was moved and slightly damaged during the demolition of the original Sarnia Carnegie Library. It was later repaired and in 1998, received heritage designation.

The names of sixteen men from Sarnia-Lambton County who served in the South Africa War of 1899-1902 are engraved on the cap of the monument. Also engraved are the South African locations where they served. Daniel Crone was the only Sarnia-Lambton soldier to lose his life while serving in the Boer War.

THE CITY OF SARNIA CENOTAPH

ERECTED BY THE CITIZENS OF THE CITY OF SARNIA

UNVEILED BY MAYOR GEORGE CRAWFORD ARMISTICE DAY NOV. 11TH, 1921

RE-DEDICATED BY REV. G.G. STONE

UNVEILED BY LT-COL. J.H. COLEMAN M.B.E. ED. NOV. 11TH, 1955

TO KEEP FOREVER LIVING THE FREEDOM FOR WHICH THEY DIED

THIS SYMBOL HAS BEEN DEDICATED TO THE FALLEN

1914-1918

ACKERMAN, R.H.
ALLAN, J.H.
BATEY, R.A.
BELL, A.W.
BENTLEY, Dr. D.B.
BOLTON, M.
CARSON, R.J.
CHESTER, F.J.
COWAN, S.
CROUCHER, J.
DICKINSON, G.
EDDY, W.P.
FAIR, R.
GARROD, A.
GRAY, G.
HANNA, N.W.
HICKEY, F.J.
ILIFFE, R.
JOHNSTON, F.
KERR, D.
KNOWLES, N.
LUMLEY, R.H.
MANNING, H.
MCINTOSH, A.
MONTGOMERY, D.C.
NOEL, U.J.
PLAYNE, L.
PRINGLE, A.S.
ROBINSON, F.J.
SALISBURY, J.
SKINNER, W.B.
SOPER, R.W.
SUMMERS, M.J.
TOWERS, N.E.
WALTERS, J.J.
WESTON, A.
WILLIAMS, F.J.
WRIGHT, T.W.

ADAMS, A.R.
ANSBRO, G.P.
BEAUMONT, G.
BENDALL, W.G.H.
BENWARD, N.
BREARLY, N.
CAUSLEY, E.F.
CORRICK, A.
CRAWFORD, R.B.
CUNNINGHAM, A.
DOXTATOR, F.
EDWARDS, F.W.
FITZGERALD, A.L.
GILES, G.T.
GUERTIN, P.E.
HARRIS, G.H.
HOWARTH, J.L.
IRESON, A.
JOHNSTON, G.C.
KETCH, A.H.W.
LECKIE, N.C.
MAJOR, C.R.
MCDONALD, A.
MCMULLEN, L.C.
NASH, H.
NORWOOD, J.H.
POTTER, A.E.
REID, G.
RODBER, A.
SCOTT, W.
SMITH, H.
STEELE, J.
THOMSON, D.A.E.
WADE, R.
WATSON, E.P.
WHEATLEY, G.
WILSON, C.B.

ALLAN, A.J.
BARNES, C.H.
BELL, A.
BENNETT, J.W.
BISSETT, C.
BURY, H.G.
CHAPMAN, W.H.
COULTER, W.J.
CRAWFORD, R.P.
DAVIES, S.R.
EBERLY, A.E.
ELLIOTT, J.M.
FORD, P.J.
GORE, G.
HALL, G.
HAZEN, G.D.
HOWE, C.
JANES, G.J.
JONES, A.
KNIGHT, C.E.
LITTLEFIELD, T.E.
MANNING, D.E.V.
MCGIBBON, H.
MCMUTRIE, J.A.
NICHOL, D.L.
PIERRIE, J.M.
POWELL, T.
REYNOLDS, W.H.
ROGERS, A.
SIMMONS, M.J.
SMUCK, D.R.
STOTT, H.
TIMPSON, E.A.
WALLIS, H.
WEATHERILL, C.
WILKINSON, W.
WISEMAN, A.

1939-1945

NAVY

ANDERSON, W.J.
BROWN, P.A.
KETTLE, A.S.
LUCAS, W.E.
PAITHOUSKI, M.
RIGBY, R.C.
WILCOX, R.

ANDREW, W.C.
GRAINGER, R.J.
LEGARRIE, H.
MARTINDALE, R.O.
POWELL, S.B.
SCHILDKNECHT, A.C.

BELL, J.C.
HORLEY, W.C.
LOVE, J.F.
McLELLAN, A.J.
RAMESBOTTOM, E.
STEVENS, R.E.

ARMY

AUBIN, J.L.
BELL, I.G.
BIRKINSHAW, F.
BURR, K.L.
CONWAY, A.E.
DICK, D.
DUROCHER, W.A.
EVERINGHAM, A.C.
FISHER, M.K.
GREEN, R.R.
HUMBLE, H.G.
JOLLY, R.E.
KIRK, L.G.
LEGARE, R.
McCLURE, D.L.
McRAE, H.
MONTEITH, C.C.
RAMSAY, R.D.
RUSSELL, E.F.
TOTTEN, W.F.
WALKER, W.R.
WILLIAMS, W.P.L.
WRIGHT, J.D.

BANKS, J.K.
BERGER, M.
BRYDGES, T.E.
CARLTON, W.F.
CORE, G.D.
DIONNE, R.C.
ELLIS, N.G.
FERGUSON, L.
GRAHAM, W.R.
HAMILTON, T.
JARVO, F.A.
JONES, G.
KROHN, C.H.
LONEY, G.V.
McCLURE, J.K.
METCALFE, W.S.
NORTHCOTT, J.H.
RICHARDS, C.V.
SHEA, E.T.
VOKES, M.K.
WILLIAMS, F.G.
WILSON, J.E.S.

BARCLAY, J.
BERRY, C.E.
BUCHNER, W.H.
CLARKE, J.C.
DAWDY, C.B.
DIONNE, R.W.
ESSER, G.
FISHER, J.G.
GREEN, H.C.
HEBNER, C.V.
JENSEN, J.C.
KELLY, G.R.
LARSON, P.A.
LYCHOWICH, J.L.
McLAUGHLIN, P.D.
MILLS, T.G.
OTTAWAY, E.E.
ROBERTS, M.J.
STOKES, E.S.
WADE, J.R.
WILLIAMS, H.J.
WILSON, R.N.

AIR FORCE

AIKEN, D.
BORCHARDT, H.H.
BURKE, D.W.
CARR, S.A.
CRAWLEY, D.
DRINKWATER, J.W.
ELLIOTT, R.L.
FORDYCE, G.W.
GALLAWAY, L.G.
GLASS, W.J.
GRAHAM, L.T.

ANDREW, G.V.
BRAKEMAN, C.J.
CAMERON, W.D.L.
CLARK, W.B.
DAWS, F.J.
DUNCAN, J.W.
EVERS, O.C.
FOSTER, C.ST.C.
GAMMON, R.T.
GORING, C.A.
HAGGERTY, H.F.

BARR, W.J.
BROWN, G.W.
CAMPBELL, A.J.
COLEMAN, W.P.
DOWDING, J.F.
ELLIOT, T.H.
FARNER, H.O.
FOWLIE, J.M.
GANDER, A.F.
GORING, F.C.
HALLAM, J.N.

1939-1945
AIR FORCE CONTINUED...

HARRIS, J.M.
KEE, R.J.
LANG, W.E.
LIVING, C.H.
MacGREGOR, D.C.
McKEOWN, V.H.
MENDIZABAL, R.
MORRIS, H.P.
O'CONNOR, J.M.B.
POLE, D.C.
QUINN, J.E.
ROSS, J.D.C.
SMITH, M.
SUTHERLAND, L.G.
THAIN, J.A.
VAIL, D.
WRIGHT, J.L.

HARRIS, V.H.
KNIGHT, W.L.
LECKIE, J.L.
LOCHHEAD, R.
McCALLUM, A.R.
MEERE, L.R.
MILLER, D.D.
MYLES, E.R.
OLIVER, W.J.
POLE, R.N.
RAMSAY, M.H.
SHANKS, J.R.
STONE, G.W.
TESKEY, S.J.
THOMPSON, A.C.
WATSON, E.C.
ZIERLER, I.

JOHNSON, J.S.
KNOWLES, G.W.
LEE, T.E.
LOWRY, J.
McFAYDEN, G.C.
MELLON, R.J.
MISENER, E.P.
NASH, G.A.
PARSONS, A.E.
POWELL, T.E.
RIDDOCH, G.
SMITH, A.G.
STRONACH, J.G.
THAIN, C.K.
THOMPSON, F.F.
WISE, F.E.

KOREAN CAMPAIGN

KNIGHT, E.J.M.
WRIGHT, J.O.

O'CONNOR, P.W.

TOOLE, J.R.

IN SERVICE TO CANADA

SALMONS, M. DAVID (1980)

AFGHANISTAN 2001-2014

CUSHLEY, WILLIAM J.J.
POLAND, BRENT

NOTES: The original Sarnia Cenotaph was officially unveiled on November 7, 1921. It consisted of a huge rectangular granite block sitting on a granite foundation. There were three bronze tablets bolted on its sides, enscribed with the names of over 1,000 Sarnians who served and sixty who paid the supreme sacrifice.

On November 11, 1922, the cenotaph was rededicated/unveiled. Added to it was the bronze Canadian "Tommy" soldier in full uniform on top, and another bronze tablet bolted on its side, bearing the names of another forty-two Sarnians who had died in the Great War.

The "new" renovated cenotaph was rededicated on November 11, 1955. The granite monument had been enlarged by the addition of two new "wings", on which were inscribed the names of Sarnia's fallen soldiers from World War I, World War II and the Korean War. The four bronze tablets from the original cenotaph were moved to the outside west wall of the Sarnia Legion.

In November 2019, the names of twenty-six Sarnia fallen soldiers were added to the cenotaph. The names included soldiers from WWI to Afghanistan who had been missed in the past.

THE SARNIA-LAMBTON AFGHANISTAN MONUMENT

(Veterans Park)

There are three plaques on the LAV III Monument

PLAQUE #1:

DEDICATED TO THOSE
40,000 men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces who fought
in the Cause of Peace and Freedom and in the memory of those 159
who gave the ultimate sacrifice.
“Never to be forgotten”

Ils ont combattu pour la cause de la paix et de la liberte

2001 AFGHANISTAN 2014

PLAQUE #2:

IN MEMORY OF

Pte. CUSHLEY, William Jonathan James
1st Battalion, The Royal Canadian Regiment
Hometown: Port Lambton, Ontario
Age 21 years
Killed in Action: September 3rd, 2006

Cpl. POLAND, Brent Donald
2nd Battalion, The Royal Canadian Regiment
Hometown: Camlachie, Ontario
Age 37 years
Killed in Action: April 8th, 2007

PLAQUE #3:

Honouring the members of the 1st Hussars
who served in the Afghanistan Mission
from 2003 to 2014

Hodie Non Cras

NOTES: Led by the Sarnia First Hussars Association, funds for this project were received from the Kiwanis of the Seaway, Sarnia Legion Branch 62, the Sarnia Saints Rugby Club, the Royal Canadian Regiment, the Labourer's International Union of North America, Local 1089, and from private citizens. This monument was unveiled on October 30, 2016.

ROYAL CANADIAN LEGION BRANCH 62

MEMORIAL PLAQUES

NOTE: There are four plaques located on the outside west wall of Sarnia Legion Branch 62. These plaques were part of the original Sarnia Cenotaph unveiled in November 1921 and again in 1922.

SARNIA EVER HOLDS IN HONOUR IT'S RESIDENTS WHO SO NOBLY SERVED IN THE GREAT WAR 1914 - 1918

AIKEN, N.R.	ALLAN, W.	ALLDRED, T.J.	ALLEN, E.C.
ALLINGHAM, C.A.	ALLINGHAM, J.C.	ALLINGHAM, L.F.	ANDERSON, B.H.
ANDERSON, C.	ANDREW, C.A.C.	APPLEBY, F.C.	ARCHER, G.
ARMSTRONG, D.M.	ASH, R.J.	AXTELL, G.	BAIKIE, S.W.
BAIRD, H.L.	BAKER, A.	BAKER, J.	BAKER, T.A.
BALDWIN, H.L.	BALLS, W.C.	BARNES, C.A.	BARNES, H.C.
BARNES, R.C.	BARNEY, C.	BARNINGHAM, W.T.	BARRETT, J.D.
BARRIE, J.	BASS, A.	BATHE, H.	BATTLE, J.C.S.
BAYDUCK, P.	BEADON, A.	BEADLE, F.A.	BEASLEY, C.F.
BEATTY, G.	BEER, D.P.	BELL, A.	BELL, A.W.
BELL, C.F.	BELL, J.A. DR.	BENDALL, S.	BENDALL, T.
BENDALL, W.C.H.	BENDING, A.	BENDING, C.R.	BENNETT, F.
BENNETT, J.	BENNETT, T.	BENTLEY, A.W., M.C.	BENTLEY, C.
BENTLEY, D.W.	BENTLEY, J.	BENTLEY, J.S., M.M.	BENTLEY, R.R.
BENTLEY, W.J., DR.	BERNARD, M.	BERESFORD, H.F.	BERREY, J.
BIGLER, C.	BIRKINSHAW, W.	BISHOP, M.L.	BISSETT, WM.
BLACKBURN, G.	BLACKLOCK, A.	BLAKE, C.	BLAKE, C., JR.
BLAKE, C.W.	BLOOMFIELD, H.S.	BODDY, G.T.	BOHANAN, T.A.
BOHANAN, J.J.	BOODY, W.J.	BORG, C.	BORTHWICK, C.E.
BOSWELL, J.W.	BOULTON, A.R.	BOULTON, L.E.	BOWER, J.E.L.
BOYD, R.G.	BOYD, W.J.	BOYNES, G.A.	BRADLEY, T.P., DR.
BRADT, F.A.	BRAMLEY, H.	BREAKEY, J.S.	BRENT, G.E.
BRENT, W.A.	BRIGDEN, S.	BRIMS, W.J.	BRITNEY, B.H.
BROOKE, J.	BROWN, E.	BROWN, G.E.	BROWN, J.G.
BROWN, J.L.	BROWN, L.C.	BROWN, N.	BROWN, W.F.
BROWNING, J.H.	BRUNLEP, C.M.	BRYANT, C.	BUCHANAN, F.
BUCHANAN, C.J.	BURKE, C.H.	BURKINSHAW, W.	BURLEY, S.H.
BURNS, W.	BUXTON, W.	CAIRNS, R.	CALLUM, G.
CALLUM, J.D.	CALLAGHAN, J.	CAMERON, A.	CAMERON, A.P.
CAMERON, G.D.	CAMERON, H.J.	CAMPBELL, A.	CAMPBELL, A.G.
CAMPBELL, E.A.	CAMPBELL, H.E.	CAMPBELL, L.A.	CAMPBELL, W.M.
CARLTON, F.G.	CARROLL, R.	CARSON, A.W.	CARSON, M.B.(NURSE)
CARTER, A.J.	CARTER, J.W.A.	CHADWICK, A.	CHALMERS, J.A.
CHAMBERS, A.F.	CHAPELLE, G.	CHAPELLE, H.J.	CHARRINGTON, H.J.
CHEYNE, W.	CHIVERS, C.J.	CHIVERS, J.A.	CHIVERS, J.W.
CHRISTIE, E.	CHRISTNER, A.	CHURCHER, A.	CLARK, B.
CLARK, R.J.	CLARK, W.R.	CLARKE, E.T.	CLAXTON, G.
CLELAND, F.W.	CLEMENCE, S.W.	CLEMENTS, J.	CLEMSON, J.J.
COGGER, A.E.	COLE, M.	COLE, R.G.	COLLINS, F.E.
COLLINS, H.T.	COLLINSON, G.	COLLUM, G.P.	COLTER, H.D.
COLVILLE, J.F.	CONLIN, F.P.M.	CONLIN, J.S.	CONLIN, T.E.
CONNELLY, G.H.	CONSIDINE, G.J.	CONSTABLE, L.	COOK, G.A.
COOK, M.J.	COOK, S.	COOPER, G.	COOPER, G.J.
COREY, P.M.	CORIN, W.T.	CORNISH, A.J.	COPELAND, W.C.
COSSEY, R.N.	COTCH, C.	COWAN, H.	COX, A.
COX, C.E.	CRANNEY, O.	CRAWFORD, A.W., M.M.	CRAWFORD, G.
CRAWFORD, H.S.	CRAWFORD, J.S.	CRAWFORD, R.P.	CRICK, E.G.

CROCKARD, A.T.
 CROSBY, G.S.
 CUNNINGHAM, J.
 CURTIN, E.H.
 DALE, R.W.
 DATE, E.C.
 DAWSON, F.P.
 DENCH, G.B.
 DIAMOND, J.A.
 DIONNE, M.V.
 DOUGHTY, C.
 DUFFIELD, S.J.
 DUNCAN, M.S.
 DYMOND, S.J.
 EDWARDS, W.E.
 ELLIOTT, A.C.
 ELLIS, A.C.
 ELLIS, I.M. (NURSE)
 ELRICK, W.
 EWENER, W.G.
 FAWCETT, L.
 FERGUSON, G.
 FINAN, D.W.
 FITZGERALD, A.L.
 FORBES, A.
 FOREMAN, T.A.
 FORRON, G.A.
 FOSTER, J.F.
 FRALICK, G.W.
 FREELAND, C.I.
 GALLOWAY, A.J.
 GAMMON, T.
 GARK, R.J.
 GARSON, J.I.
 GEDDES, J.K.
 GILBERT, W.T.
 GILROY, E.
 GORDON, C.H.
 GLAAB, N.
 GLEASON, M.E.
 GOWIE, J.L.
 GRAY, A.
 GRAY, W.
 GREENWOOD, D.D.
 GUERDON, C.
 HACKET, M.J.
 HALEY, J.R.
 HALL, N.
 HANEY, W.S.
 HARKNESS, G.
 HARRIS, A.
 HAWKINGS, C.E.
 HEARST, J.H.
 HENSHAW, A.G.
 HICKS, B.
 HIPPLE, J.S.
 HODGINS, R.
 HOOPER, R.V.
 HOWARD, A.
 HOWARTH, J.L.
 HUCKER, C.
 HURRY, R.C.
 IRVINE, T.

CROCKETT, J.
 CROUCHMAN, O.G.
 CUNNINGHAM, J.W.
 CURTIS, A.S.
 DALE, S.
 DATE, L.
 DAWSON, G.D.
 DENNIS, O.E.
 DICKINS, H.
 DIONNE, R.W.
 DOXTATOR, F.
 DUFRENNE, D.
 DUKE, J.
 EBERLY, A.E.
 EISENBACH, J.E.
 ELLIOTT, E.E.
 ELLIS, E.
 ELLIS, J.
 EMERICK, W.F.
 FAIRSERVICE, J.
 FAWCETT, W.
 FERGUSON, G.W.
 FINAN, G.A.
 FLACK, B.S.
 FORBES, G.
 FOREMAN, W.
 FORRON, R.C.
 FOX, E.
 FRASER, A.
 FRENCH, A.C.
 GALLOWAY, H.
 GAMMON, W.T.
 GARNUM, L.C.
 GARVEY, G.G.
 GELDARD, E.
 GILCHRIST, W.
 GILSON, A.
 GORDON, J.
 GLAAB, P.
 GLEASON, P.J.
 GRAHAM, R.J.
 GRAY, G.S.
 GRAYSON, H.V.
 GRIFFIN, S.
 GULSTON, D.
 HAGUE, L.
 HALEY, W.D.
 HAMILTON, D.
 HANDSON, W.
 HARKNESS, J.C.
 HARRIS, G.
 HAWKYARD, H.
 HENDERSON, A.J.
 HESKEITH, W.G.
 HICKS, J.
 HIPPLE, W.C.
 HOLLAND, F.T.
 HORNBOSTEL, A.P.
 HOWARD, A.R.
 HOWE, C.
 HUFF, J.H.
 HURST, J.H.
 IVENSON, A.

CROCKETT, L.
 CROXFORD, W.G.H.
 CURRIE, E.
 CUSACH, B.S.
 DARBYSHIRE, J.E.
 DAVIDSON, T.
 DEEGAN, W.J.
 DENNIS, P.E.
 DIONNE, C.A.
 DODDS, L.J.
 DRINKWATER, E.W.
 DUFRESNE, E.T.
 DURAND, E.
 EDGAR, W.
 ELLEANOR, H.
 ELLIOTT, J.
 ELLIS, G.
 ELLIS, J.F.
 EVANS, J.T.
 FAWCETT, C.G.
 FAWCETT, W.L.
 FERGUSON, J.
 FINCH, R.
 FLEMING, H.
 FORD, W.J.
 FOREMAN, W.G.
 FORSHEE, H.E.
 FOX, F.J.
 FRASER, C.H.
 FRENCH, E.G.
 GALLOWAY, L.
 GAPP, S.T.
 GARRISON, R.
 GARVIN, W.
 GILBERT, G.W.
 GILES, G.T.
 GOODALL, A.
 GORMAN, F.
 GLASS, A.
 GLEASON, T.
 GRANAT, M.
 GRAY, J.
 GREEN, D.
 GRIMMER, G.
 GUTHRIE, R.A.
 HAINES, G.A.
 HALL, A.
 HAMILTON, J.A.
 HANRATTY, P.
 HARKNESS, W.J.
 HARRIS, G.H.
 HAY, W.D.
 HENDERSON, W.
 HEWITT, W.
 HIGGINS, T.F.
 HITCHCOCK, S.
 HOLLAND, R.
 HORNBOSTEL, G.E.
 HOWARD, E.F.
 HOWELL, A.J.
 HUNT, J.M.
 HYNE, J.H.
 JACOBS, F.

CRONIN, T.P.
 CULLEY, F.C.
 CURRIE, N.
 CUSCHIERI, C.
 DARBYSHIRE, L.H.
 DAVIES, J.
 DEGURSE, A.A.
 DIAMOND, E.
 DIONNE, C.L.
 DONOHUE, M.J.
 DROPE, A.
 DUNCAN, J.T.
 DYELE, R.H.
 EDWARDS, G.
 ELLEANOR, S.
 ELLIOTT, J.M.
 ELLIS, G.F.
 ELLIS, W.J.
 EVERINGHAM, E.
 FAWCETT, H.
 FERGUSON, E.
 FERRIS, F.G.
 FINLAY, R.G.
 FLETCHER, M.B.
 FOREMAN, J.H.
 FORGIE, G.W.
 FOSTER, F.
 FOY, E.
 FRAYNE, A.H.
 FULCHER, E.W.
 GAMACHE, E.W.
 GARDINER, J.R.
 GARROD, A.
 GEARY, C.
 GILBERT, W.G.
 GILMORE, W.L.
 GOODISON, J.M.C.
 GOSLING, J.
 GLASS, J.W.
 GOWANS, L.B.
 GRANT, M.
 GRAY, R.
 GREEN, G.S.
 GROVER, J.
 GUTTERIDGE, W.
 HALEY, H.W.
 HALL, J.
 HAMILTON, T.G.
 HARDY, G.W.
 HARNESS, S.
 HAWE, F.C.
 HAYES, E.W.
 HENDERSON, W.A., DR.
 HICKEY, F.
 HILL, H.L.
 HOBIN, J.
 HONEYBOURNE, A.
 HOUGHTON, F.A.
 HOWARD, J.
 HOWES, R.
 HUNT, R.S.
 IRVINE, H.J.
 JACQUES, R.

JAMES, J.F., DR.	JAMIESON, C.	JAMIESON, J.A.	JANES, E.
JANES, F.	JANESS, J.W.	JARVIS, J.	JENNINGS, W.E.
JERVIS, C.E.	JOHNSON, E.W.	JOHNSON, W.	JOHNSON, W.E.
JOHNSTON, B.	JOHNSTON, E.	JOHNSTON, G.	JOHNSTON, J.J.
JOHNSTON, W.	JONES, E.H.	JONES, J.A.	JONES, J.E.
JONES, L.E. D.S.O.	JORDAN, R.	JOSS, R.	KANE, J.W.
KARNS, J.	KEAT, C.W.P.	KEAT, W.T.	KEENE, F.
KELLAM, F.	KELLS, G.P.	KELLY, F.L.	KEMSLEY, F.L.
KEMSLEY, G.	KENNEDY, J.	KENNY, R.Y., M.C.	KERR, D.
KILLER, C.P.E.	KING, J.	KING, J.C.	KIRBY, G., JR.
KNIGHT, R.	KNIGHT, W.W.J.	KNOWLES, J.W.K.	KNOWLES, R.J.
LAIDLAW, N.J.	LAIDLER, H.	LANE, F.E.	LANE, J.
LANG, J.	LANG, M.	LANGAN, A.	LANGAN, C.P.
LANGAN, J.P.	LAPHAM, E.W.	LAPHAM, G.W.	LAPHAM, H.J.
LAPLANTE, C.E.	LATCHFORD, W.A.	LAURIE, R.	LAWRENCE, C.H.
LAWRENCE, D.D.	LAWRENCE, J.M.	LAWRENCE, L.M.	LAWRENCE, R.C.
LAWRENCE, W.A.	LEBEL, A.	LEITCH, S.	LEITCH, V.
LENNOX, W.	LEROUX, D.	LESTER, C.A.	LESUEUR, N.L., M.C.
LETHBRIDGE, J.	LETHBRIDGE, W.	LEWIS, C.H.	LEWIS, F.A.
LEWIS, L.	LEWIS, W.A.	LEZZETTE, L.	LISTER, A.
LITTLEFIELD, T.E.	LIVERANCE, E.	LLOYD, A.E.	LOETSCHERT, H.T.
LOGAN, C.	LOGIE, D.	LONDON, A.L.	LONGLEY, H.
LOTT, R.L.	LOTT, W.H.	LOVE, W.J.	LOVE, R.E.
LOVER, R.	LUCAS, F.	LUCAS, G.E.	LUCAS, H.T.
LUCAS, J.E.	LUCAS, J.F.	LUCAS, R.J.	LUCKINS, A.E.
LUMBY, C.A.	LUMBY, M.	LUMLEY, F.W.	LUMLEY, W.
LUSCOMBE, C.	LYNN, C.	MACADAMS, J.M.	MACDOUGALLES, ^{GF}
MACDONALD, J.	MACDONALD, J.A.	MACDONALD, J.C.	MACDONALD, W.G.
MACFEE, M.D.	MACGREGOR, H.M.	MACGREGOR, R.G.	MACKENZIE, ^{DNMCM}
MACKENZIE, J.	MACKENZIE, J.R.	MACKENZIE, M.	MACKENZIE, M.F.
MACKENZIE, U.A.	MACKENZIE, W.J.A.	MACLEAN, D.	MACLEAN, N., DR.
MACRAE, M.	MACVICAR, W.W.	MADDEN, R.G.	MAGGS, W.
MAHUE, F.	MAIR, G.	MAIR, W.J.	MALLEY, J.L.
MANCHESTER, H.	MANERS, E.	MANESS, A.W.	MANESS, E.
MANN, H.A.	MANN, W.A.	MANNERS, A.W.	MARKS, A.E.
MARRIOTT, G.M.	MARRIOTT, H.R.	MARRIOTT, R.A.	MARRIOTT, W.C.N.
MARSHALL, J.	MASSON, J.	MATEER, I.L.	MATHEWS, A.A.
MATHEWS, J.G.	MATHEWS, O.H.	MATTHEWS, G.A.	MAVITY, J.E.
MAVITY, W.B.	MAYS, U.T.	McCALLUM, R.C.	McCALLUM, S.
McCARTHY, J.W.	McCLINTOCK, H.G.	McCORMICK, W.L.	McCRAE, N.
McDONALD, D.	McDONALD, D.K.	McDONALD, G.A.	McDONALD, J.C.
McDONALD, R.	McDONNELL, J.	McDOUGALL, J.F.	McFEE, F.J.
McFEE, K.	McGEE, T.H.	McGIBBON, F.	McGIBBON, J.
McGREGORY, J.	McINTOSH, C.E.	McKENNA, J.L.	McKENZIE, K.B.
McKENZIE, M.F.	McKENZIE, S.	McKNIGHT, A.J.	McLAREN, A.
McLAREN, J.F.	McLAUGHLIN, A.J.	McLAUGHLIN, J.P.	McLEAN, A.
McLEAN, J.	McLELLAN, A.	McLEOD, J.J.	McMAHON, W.J.
McMANN, E.	McMICHAEL, H.F.	McMURTIE, J.	McNAMARA, J.
McNAUGHTON, H.R.	McNEIL, S.E.	McPHERSON, D.	McRAE, M.
McRAE, J.	McVEY, J.P.	MELDRUM, W.	MERCER, J.
MERCER, N.W.	MERENZ, L.	MERRISON, J. G.	MIDDLETON, G.
MILLARD, H.C.	MILLER, G.C.	MILLER, J.	MILLER, J.W.
MILLER, M.L.	MILLIGAN, G.C.	MILLIGAN, H.C.	MILLIGAN, J.
MILLIKEN, A.E.	MILLIKEN, O.J.	MILNE, J.S.	MILNE, C.A.
MILNE, J.C.	MINNE, C.L.	MITCHELL, G.	MITCHELL, O.J.
MITCHELL, S.W.	MITCHELSON, A.R.L.	MODELAND, R.	MOORE, G.A.
MOORE, J.	MOORE, L.	MORGAN, A.	MORLEY, B.
MORPHEW, A.J.	MORPHEW, E.	MORRIS, B.	MORRIS, H.L.
MORRIS, W.G.	MORRISON, J.G.	MORRISON, J.R.	MORRISON, L.B.
MORRISON, M.L.	MORRISON, R.G.	MULLEN, A.E., DR.	MULLIGAN, R.T.
MUMFORD, J.V.	MUNDAY, C.F.	MUNRO, D.	MURRAY, A.
MURPHY, A.	MURPHY, A.R.	MUSSELMAN, S.B.	MYLES, E.W.
MYLES, J.	NAPPER, E.P.	NASH, A.C.	NASH, F.
NAYWOG, A.R.	NEILSON, W.	NELSON, F.E.	NELSON, R.C.

NELSON, R.H.
 NICHOL, W.G.
 NOEL, U.J.
 NUHKATON, E.
 O'CONNOR, W.N.
 ORMOND, T.J.
 PACQUETTE, J.J.
 PAQUETTE, A.J.
 PARKER, K.L.
 PARSONS, C.
 PATTERSON, W.
 PEASE, W.
 PETERSON, H.
 PHILLIPS, W.E.
 PIRRIE, T.W.
 POTTER, P.
 PRINGLE, A.C.
 PURCELL, M.
 RAMSAY, B.A.
 RANDOLPH, J.W.
 REEVES, H.J.
 RICHARDSON, S.G.
 RIGSBY, R.W.
 ROBERTS, W.
 ROBINS, A.
 ROBINSON, W.
 ROONEY, W.K.
 ROSENBLOOM, R.E.
 ROSS, R.E.
 RUSSELL, F.
 RYLANDS, W.S.
 SANDERSON, E.J.
 SARVIS, E.G.
 SAVOY, E.
 SCHOOLCRAFT, C.
 SELVEY, H.C.
 SHEDDEN, W.
 SHORT, A.
 SIM, R.K.
 SIMPSON, R.G.
 SINCLAIR, J.
 SLATER, A.T.
 SMITH, H.
 SMITH, M.E.
 SMUCK, J.W.
 SPARLING, N.
 SPENCER, W.T.
 STAUFFER, T.D.
 STEPLER, C.E.
 STONER, G.P.
 STRUTHERS, R.F.
 STUBBS, L.N.
 SWAN, J.A.
 TANCOCK, J.E.
 TAYLOR, H.M.
 TELFER, H.R.
 THOMAN, W.O.
 THORN, H.W.
 TOREK, P.
 TRAINOR, H.
 TREMEER, C.
 TURNER, T.
 VALLIS, C.G.
 VIGNEAU, R.H.

NEWELL, J.S.
 NISBET, D.W.
 NORMAN, F.D.
 NUNN, T.
 O'DONNELL, F.J.
 OWENS, G.E.
 PALMER, H.W.
 PAQUETTE, L.
 PARKER, R.
 PARSONS, D.A.G.M.C.
 PAUL, C.
 PELL, B.
 PETERSON, O.
 PHIPPEN, C.
 POLE, W.H.
 POTTER, W.O.
 POUSETTEE, A.C.B.
 QUIGLY, W.J.
 RAMSAY, L.H.
 RANDOLPH, R.
 REYNOLDS, E.
 RIDEALGH, A.
 ROADHOUSE, R.T.
 ROBERTSON, D.N.
 ROBINSON, A.
 RODD, W.
 ROSE, A.
 ROSS, E.
 ROSS, W.
 RUSSELL, F.J.
 SAMIS, C.H.
 SANDFORD, F.R.
 SAUNDERS, E.
 SCARROW, R.
 SCOTT, W.G.
 SHANKS, S.
 SHEEHAN, J.
 SHORT, A.O.
 SIMMONS, E.S.
 SIMPSON, T.C.
 SINCLAIR, L.H.
 SLOAN, O.S.
 SMITH, J.
 SMITH, S.
 SNELL, H.
 SPENCE, T.
 STAMM, H.
 ST. CLAIR, J.W.
 STEWART, J.
 STOREY, G.B.
 STUART, D.
 SULLIVAN, W.K.
 SWANN, T.
 TANNER, C.A.
 TAYLOR, S.
 TELFER, L.O.
 THOMAS, O.
 TILLEY, J.P.
 TORRANCE, W.
 TRAPP, G.R.
 TRIPP, H.
 TYLLER, G.E.
 VALLIS, C.J.
 VINCE, G.

NEWTON, F.
 NISBET, H.A.
 NORTH, J.G.
 O'CONNOR, C.
 OLIVER, A.
 PAGE, H.
 PALMER, J.
 PAQUETTE, L.M.
 PARKER, W.H.
 PARSONS, H.M.S.
 PAUL, R.
 PELL, J.
 PHILLIPS, A.H.W.
 PIRRIE, J.
 PONTEFRAC, R.W.
 PROCTOR, D.
 PROWSE, H.C.
 QUINN, H.
 RANDOLPH, C.
 REDDING, W.T.
 RICHARDSON, G.
 RIDEALGH, H.W.
 ROBB, W.E.
 ROBERTSON, W.
 ROBINSON, J.R.
 RODEY, E.A.
 ROSE, H.
 ROSS, J.
 ROWE, J.P.
 RYAN, E.
 SAMIS, N.E.
 SANGSTER, J.
 SAUNDERS, O.
 SCHELL, R.
 SCULLEY, R.W.E.
 SHARLAND, T.
 SHILLINGLAW, L.G.
 SHORT, G.T.
 SIMPSON, C.F.
 SIMPSON, W.N.
 SINCLAIR, W.J.H.
 SMILY, H.T.
 SMITH, J.L.
 SMITH, S.J.
 SNIDER, W.T.
 SPENCER, J.H.
 STANLAKE, R.W.
 STEEL, A.E.
 STOKES, S.G.
 STOREY, W.G.
 STUART, G.F.
 SUTCLIFFE, E.
 TAGG, C.
 TANNER, D.
 TAYLOR, T.H.
 TENNANT, A.W.
 THOMPSON, A.E.
 TINSLEY, J.H.
 TOTTEN, I.
 TRAVIS, J.T.
 TURNER, G.
 TYLLER, J.
 VANVALKENBURG, G.
 WADE, A.

NEWTON, J.
 NISBET, P.E. (NURSE)
 NORTHCOTE, A.F.
 O'CONNOR, M.J.
 OLIVER, F.
 PAGE, R.R.
 PALMER, W.S.
 PARDEE, H.M.
 PARSONS, A.W.G.
 PATTERSON, C.E.
 PEARSON, J.
 PERCIVIAL, J.C.
 PHILLIPS, R.
 PIRRIE, J.M.
 PORTER, W.G.
 PRICE, F.W.
 PURCELL, D.
 QUINN, R.
 RANDOLPH, D.R.
 REED, J.
 RICHARDSON, G.A.H.
 RIDGE, W.
 ROBERTS, R.
 ROBERTSON, W.J.
 ROBINSON, P.S.
 RODEY, J.B.
 ROSENBLOOM, E.A.
 ROSS, P.
 ROWLAND, C.A.
 RYAN, J.G.
 SANDERSON, E.D.
 SARGEANT, F.H.
 SAVAGE, R.W.
 SCHWARTZ, A.L.
 SEDWICK, L.
 SHARPE, G.
 SHILLINGLAW, T.W.
 SHORT, J.E.
 SIMPSON, J.A.
 SINCLAIR, H.
 SKIPP, A.W.
 SMITH, G.
 SMITH, L.K.
 SMITH, W.
 SPARLING, E.R.
 SPENCER, T.
 STAUFFER, G.
 STEEP, E.
 STONEHOUSE, A.A.
 STOTHERS, J.
 STUBBS, H.
 SUTHERLAND, R.
 TAIT, C.W.
 TAYLOR, E.
 TAYLOR, W.H.
 TESKEY, A.
 THOMPSON, P.
 TINSLEY, R.L.
 TOWERS, R.I.
 TRAYNOR, P.
 TURNER, J.H.
 URMSON, J.
 VIGNEAU, J.E.
 WADE, R.J.

WADE, W.	WALKER, E.S.	WALKER, F.R.	WALKER, W.H.
WALKER, W. L.	WALLACE, F.W.	WALLACE, J.	WALLACE, J.W.
WALLER, W.	WALLEY, J.	WALLIS, J.W.	WALTERHOUSE, J.E.
WANAMAKER, W.T.	WANLESS, A.G.	WARD, F.	WARD, H.
WARD, J.E.	WARD, J.S.	WAREHAM, W.C.	WARNE, H.
WATERS, A.	WATSON, E.	WATSON, N.F.	WATSON, R.
WATSON, W.G.	WATTHAM, W.J.	WEATHERRILL, B.P.	WEATHERRILL, R.J.
WEBSTER, E.H.	WEIR, C.	WELCH, G.M.	WELSH, G.E.
WEST, E.B.	WEST, W.N.	WESTON, A.	WESTON, C.E.
WESTON, H.	WESTON, J.H.	WESTON, R.W.	WESTON, T.
WHALEN, C.	WHALLEY, J.	WHITE, E.W.	WHITE, J.H.
WHITLAM, W.D.	WILCOCKS, G.	WILES, N.	WILKIE, A.
WILKIE, F.N.	WILKIE, J.	WILDING, H.	WILKINSON, D.G.
WILLIAMS, A.D.	WILLIAMS, C.H.	WILLIAMS, G.	WILLIAMS, G.H.
WILLIAMS, J.	WILLIAMSON, B.	WILLIS, J.	WILLIS, R.
WILLOWS, F.	WILLS, W.M.	WILSON, B.	WILSON, C.
WILSON, D.E.	WILSON, J.J.	WILSON, S.W.	WILSON, W.J.
WINGROVE, V.J.	WISE, C.E.	WISE, M.	WISEMAN, W.
WITHERS, S.C.	WOOD, V.H.	WOODIWISS, E.	WOODROW, C.S.
WOODS, G.	WOOLNER, H.	WRIGHT, J.	WRIGHT, W.E.
WYKESMITH, W.A.	WYLD, H.	WYNNE, J.	WYSEMAN, R.G.
YEATES, W.W.	YORKE, G.B.	YOUNG, H.C.	YOUNGS, E.A.
ZINK, H.	ZINK, L.J.		

ROYAL CANADIAN LEGION BRANCH 62 PLAQUES CONTINUED...

NOTE: There are two smaller plaques located on the outside west wall of the Sarnia Legion, on either side of the above two large memorial plaques.

Plaque #1 was part of the original Sarnia Cenotaph unveiled November 1921.

PLAQUE #1

1914 – 1918

PRO HONORE ET JUSTITIA

ERECTED IN MEMORY OF
THE RESIDENTS OF SARNIA
WHO PAID

THE SUPREME SACRIFICE

ANSBRO, G.P.	ACKERMAN, R.H.	ALLAN, A.J.	ALLAN, J.H.
ADAMS, A.R.	BEAUMONT, G.	BENNETT, J.W.	BATEY, R.A.
BENWARD, N.	BISSETT, C.	BOLTON, M.	BARNES, C.H.
CRAWFORD, R.B.	CORRICK, A.	COULTER, W.J.	COWAN, S.
CROUCHER, J.	CHAPMAN, W.H.	CAUSLEY, E.F.	CHESTER, F.J.
EDWARDS, F.W.	EDDY, W.P.	EBERLY, A.E.	FORD, P.J.
GUERTIN, P.E.	GORE, G.	HANNA, N.W.	HAZEN, G.D.
ILIFFE, R.	JOHNSTON, F.	JONES, A.	JANES, C.J.
KETCH, A.H.W.	KNIGHT, C.E.	KNOWLES, N.	LUMLEY, R.H.
MCGIBBON, H.	MAJOR, C.R.	MCMULLEN, L.C.	MCINTOSH, A.
MCDONALD, A.	NASH, H.	NORWOOD, J.H.	NOEL, U.J.
POTTER, A.E.	REYNOLDS, W.H.	SIMMONS, M.J.	SMUCK, D.R.
STOTT, H.	TIMPSON, E.A.	TOWERS, N.E.	THOMSON, D.A.E.
WESTON, A.	WRIGHT, T.W.	WADE, R.	WATSON, E.P.
WEATHERILL, C.	WHEATLEY, G.	WILLIAMS, F.J.	WISEMAN, A.

ROYAL CANADIAN LEGION BRANCH 62 PLAQUES CONTINUED...

PLAQUE #2

NOTE: Plaque #2 was added to the original Sarnia cenotaph when it was rededicated in November 1922.

IN MEMORIAM

BELL, A.	BELL, A.W.	BENDALL, W.G.H.	BENTLEY, DR.D.B.
BREARLEY, N.	BURY, H.G.	CARSON, R.J.	CRAWFORD, R.P.
DAVIES, S.R.	DICKINSON, G.	DOXTATOR, F.	ELLIOTT, J.M.
FAIR, R.	FITZGERALD, A.L.	GILES, G.T.	HALL, G.
HARRIS, G.H.	HOWE, C.	HOWARTH, J.L.	IRESON, A.
JOHNSTON, G.C.	KERR, D.	MONTGOMERY, D.C.	MANNING, H.
MCMUTRIE, J.A.	NICHOL, D.L.	POWELL, T.	PIERRIE, J.M.
REID, G.	RODBER, A.	ROBINSON, F.J.	ROGERS, A.
SKINNER, W.B.	STEELE, J.	SALISBURY, J.	SOPER, R.W.
SCOTT, W.	SMITH, H.	SUMMERS, E.	VALLIS, H.
WILSON, C.B.	WILKINSON, W.		

IMPERIAL OIL LIMITED – SARNIA REFINERY PLAQUE

NOTE: In April of 1949, the President of Imperial Oil Company unveiled this Memorial Plaque at the Sarnia Refinery, dedicated to the memory of those employees who gave their lives in World War II.

It is mounted on an outside wall at the exit doors facing Clifford Street.

Imperial donated a second identical plaque to Sarnia Legion Branch #62 in 2020.

1939 – 1945

THEY GAVE TO THE LAST FULL
MEASURE OF SACRIFICE THAT
LIBERTY MIGHT NOT PERISH

FRED BIRKINSHAW
WM. D.L. CAMERON
A. EDWARD CONWAY
THOMAS H. ELLIOTT
WALLACE C. HORLEY
FREDERICK H. IRWIN
GERALD R. KELLY
WALLACE E. LANG
THOMAS G. MILLS
H. PAUL MORRIS
W. JOHN OLIVER
DOUGLAS C. POLE

CHARLES RICHARDS
W. JOHN ROGERS
DOUGLAS J. ROSS
JAMES R. SHANKS
JAMES G. STRONACH
LES. G. SUTHERLAND
STANLEY J. TESKEY
H. FRASER THOMPSON
JACK A. THURLOW
WALTER F. TOTTEN
ROBERT J. WILCOX
JOHN D. WRIGHT

“BE YOURS TO HOLD IT HIGH”
SARNIA REFINERY

AAMJIWNAANG FIRST NATION CENOTAPH

(Chippewas of Sarnia First Nation)
Tashmoo Ave. South, Sarnia

TO OUR
GLORIOUS VETERANS
WHO HAVE SERVED
OUR NATION
AND ITS' ALLIES
FOR
PEACE AND FREEDOM

LEST WE FORGET

WORLD WAR I

IN MEMORY OF
THE YOUNG MEN
FROM THIS NATION
WHO SERVED
KING AND COUNTRY
THROUGHOUT THE
WORLD

1914 – 1919

FRED DOXSTATER

WORLD WAR II

IN MEMORY OF
THE YOUNG MEN
AND WOMEN WHO
LOYALLY SERVED
THROUGHOUT THE
WORLD

1939 – 1945

HARLEY WILLIAMS

PONTIAC'S WAR WAR OF 1812 KOREA VIETNAM PEACEKEEPING

RCAF MEMORIAL and F-86 SABRE GOLDEN HAWK MONUMENT

(Germain Park)

NOTE: The F-86 was originally mounted in September 1973. It was restored and rededicated in May 2015.

1939-1945

IN HONOUR AND MEMORY OF THE MEN
OF THE ROYAL CANADIAN AIR FORCE
WHO PAID THE SUPREME SACRIFICE
WHILE SERVING DURING THE SECOND
WORLD WAR

D. AIKEN
G.V. ANDREWS
W.J. BARR
H.H. BORCHARDT
C.J. BRAKEMAN
G.W. BROWN
D. BURKE
R.J. CAMERON
W.D.J. CAMERON
A.J. CAMPBELL
S.A. CARR
R. CLARKE
W.B. CLARKE
D. CRAWLEY
J.J. DAWS
J.F. DOWDING
J.W. DRINKWATER
J.W. DUNCAN
H.O. EARNER
T.H. ELLIOT
O.C. EVERS
G.W. FORDYCE
C. FOSTER
J.M. FOWLIE
L.G. GALLOWAY
A.F. GANDER

C.A. GORING
T.C. GORING
L.T. GRAHAM
H.J. HAGGERTY
J.N. HALLAM
J.M. HARRIS
J.S. JOHNSON
R.J. KEE
W.J. KNIGHT
G.W. KNOWLES
W.E. LANG
J.L. LECKIE
R. LOCHEAD
J. LOWRY
A.R. McCALLUM
G.C. McFAYDEN
D.G. McGREGOR
V.H. McKEOWN
L.R. MEERE
R.J. MELLON
R. MENDIZABEL
D.D. MILLER
E.P. MISNER
H.P. MORRIS
E. R. MYLES
G.A. NASH

J.M.B. O'CONNOR
W.J. OLIVER
A.E. PARSONS
D.C. POLE
R.N. POLE
T.E. POWELL
J.E. QUINN
M.H. RAMSEY
G. RIDDOCH
J.D.C. ROSS
J.R. SHANKS
A.G. SMITH
M. SMITH
G.W. STONE
J.G. STRONACH
S.J. TESKEY
C.H. THAIN
J.A. THAIN
A.G. THOMPSON
F.F. THOMPSON
D. VAIL
E.C. WATSON
F.E. WISE
J.L. WRIGHT
E. ZEILER

THIS MEMORIAL WAS PROVIDED AND
ERECTED BY THE MEMBERS OF
403 WING R.C.A.F. ASSOCIATION

C.F. ADAIR
R.W. ALEXANDER
R.J. ATKINS
J.K. BROWN
L.P. COLLINSON
D.M. DUFFY
R.L. ELLIOTT
R.T. GAMMON
W.J. GLASS
J.E. GRAY

P.W. GREGORY
R.S. HADLEY
V.J. HUBBARD
J.C. KERR
T.E. LEE
A.S. MCLEAN
F. MIDDLETON
J.A. MONTGOMERY
W.P. MORRIS
D.C. ODELL

A. SHARP
G.R. STOKES
R.H. STRAUSS
L.G. SUTHERLAND
J.C. TRACEY
D. TURNER
K.D. WALLINGFORD
R.E. WILSON
J.H. YORKE

RCAF GOLDEN HAWKS AEROBATIC TEAM

TEAM PERSONNEL MARCH 1, 1959 – FEBRUARY 7, 1964

COMMANDING OFFICERS

W/C J.F. EASTON 1959
W/C J.F. ALLAN 1960-1962
W/C R.F. HATTON 1963-1964

TEAM LEADERS

S/L F.G. VILLENEUVE 1959-1960
S/L/ J.D. MCCOMBE 1961
S/L J. HUBBARD 1962-1964

TEAM WINGMEN

F/L J.D. MCCOMBE
F/L E.J. ROZDEBA
F/L G.J. KERR
F/L R.H. ANNIS
F/L E.J. MCKEOGH
F//L W. GRIP

F/L L.S. EISLER
F/L J.T. PRICE
F/L W.C. STEWART
F/O J.A. HOLT
F//L A. YOUNG
F/O B.H. GROVER

F/L D.V. TINSON
F/L B.R. CAMPBELL
F/L L.J. HUBBARD
F/L A.F. MCDONALD
F/L C.B. LANG
F/L C.W. WARRIAN

F/L J.L. FRAZER
F/L J.E. MCCANN
F/L N. GARRIOCK
F/L G.E. MILLER
F/L D.J. BARKER

COMMENTATORS

F/L G.L. MACDONALD
F/O W.R. DOBSON
F/L L.G. VAN VLIET
F/L B.J. LEBANS

PUBLIC RELATIONS

S/L R.M. BOWDERY
F/O L. JOHNSON
F/L J.C. GILES

ENGINEERING OFFICERS

F/O C.R. GRANDY
F/O P.S. PERRY
F/L D.J. MCKINNON
F/L C.G. PETERSON

NCOS AND AIRMEN/AIRWOMEN

FLT SGT J.A.G. LATRAVERSE
SGT J. CLARK
SGT J.L. FINNIGAN
SGT D. GIBSON
SGT V.R. METCALF
CPL K.G. BRADLEY
CPL R.A. CHAIGNON
CPL W. DUNN
CPL G.T. GEMMEL
CPL D.H. HAUPT
CPL R.T. LUNUDHAL
CPL E.R. MCKINLEY
CPL J.J.M.G. NOLIN
CPL J.H. RISLING
CPL ZINN
LAC J.W.D. BRENTON
LAC R.J. CAMPBELL
LAC R.J. CROWN
LAC A. DUGGAN
LAC R. EMER
LAC E. HALL
LAC D.A. HUGHES
LAC D.A. KENNEDY
LAC J. LABELLE
LAC LEGGETT
LAC MACAHONIUK
LAC J.E. MCMANAMAN
LAC W.H. MORRISON
LAC M. NORDEEN
LAC E. PROSKIN
LAC A.R. SAVAGE
LAC J.J.E. ST. PIERRE
LAC J.C.R. THOMPSON
LAC K.J. WEBBER
CPL J.M. BLACHE

FLT SGT D. ROBINSON
SGT COOPER
SGT D. GIBSON
SGT H.C. HEWITT
SGT D.G. MOONEY
CPL B. BROOKS
CPL A. R. CHARTRAND
CPL K.B. ENMAN
CPL GENOVY
CPL L. HIGHAM
CPL H.E. MAAHS
CPL J.A. MELANCON
CPL J.A. OAKES
CPL SANCHE
LAC S. ANDERSON
LAC W. BRIGGS
LAC C. CHRISTENSEN
LAC C.D. CURTIS
LAC R. EDGINGTON
LAC G. FAULKNER
LAC E.R. HARNUM
LAC R. HUGHES
LAC D.J. KING
LAC D. LAIDLAW
LAC J.L. LEVESQUE
LAC R.L. MACLELLAN
LAC D.D. MCNICHOL
LAC M. MURPHY
LAC D.A. OSMUN
LAC J.B.D. RACINE
LAC J.H. SAVOIE
LAC G.A.J. TARDIFF
LAC T.T. THOMPSON
LAC E. WEST
CPL G. HARDY

FLT SGT O.J. TOUSIGNANT
SGT DALTON
SGT R. JOHNSTON
SGT J. HICKS
SGT L. TESKEY
CPL CANN
CPL F.J. CONRAD
CPL C. FLINN
CPL N.J. GRAY
CPL KAHOUT
CPL R.S. MCCARTHY
CPL F. MONTELEONE
CPL G. PAIMENT
CPL J.K. TERRIO
LAC J.E. ARSENAULT
LAC G. BULMER
LAC J.R. CLEMENTS
LAC G.W. DONALDSON
LAC J.M. ELMOSE
LAC D.E. FLETCHER
LAC E.A. HODGINS
LAC A.V. JOHNSON
LAC B. KRIER
LAC D. LAURIAULT
LAC E.D. LINDSAY
LAC B. MAILANEY
LAC D. MERRIAM
LAC N. NICHOLS
LAC A.M. PARDY
LAC R. REID
LAC M. SAVOIE
LAC TAYLOR
LAC THOMS
LAC R.W. WEST

SGT V.O. CAMPBELL
SGT F. DEVINS
SGT H.G. EARLE
SGT R. MCGILLIVARY
SGT G.E. WILLIAMS
CPL G. CARPENTER
CPL L.G. COTE
CPL R. FORGET
CPL JEEVES
CPL A.G. LAPOINTE
CPL E. MCEATHRON
CPL J.M. MURPHY
CPL PROUSE
CPL A.A. WHITE
LAC D.G. BERCOVITS
LAC A.W. CAMERON
LAC F.E. CLOONEY
LAC B. DONOHUE
LAC R.L. EMBREE
LAC G.D. FRASER
LAC G.R. HOMER
LAC W.N. KARACHUM
LAC R.C. KURP
LAC L.O. LEBLANC
LAC E.T. LUNN
LAC M. MARCEAU
LAC D. MORECOMBE
LAC E.B. NICKERSON
LAC A. PELLTIER
LAC J.G.V. RICHARD
LAC SPRATT
LAC E.A. THOMPSON
LAC WARD
LAC W.M. WHALEY

The restoration and perpetuation of Sarnia's F-86 Sabre MkV Golden Hawk, Serial #23164 is a direct result of the tireless advocacy and stewardship members of the 403 Wing Sarnia RCAFA have shown for this important monument. What you see before you is one of the original Canadian-built Sabre jets that performed with the RCAF Golden Hawk aerobatic team in the late 1950s and early 60s. This project represents their dedication to the memory of their Air Force comrades, past and present, and their commitment to preserving history and keeping that memory alive.

SARNIA WWI TREES OF REMEMBRANCE MEMORIAL PLAQUE

(Heritage Park)

THESE ONE HUNDRED AND TWO TREES WERE
PLANTED TO HONOUR THE MEMORY OF THE SOLDIERS
FROM SARNIA WHO FOUGHT IN WORLD WAR I, AND
IN PARTICULAR THE MEMORY OF THE 102 SOLDIERS
FROM THIS COMMUNITY WHO DIED IN BATTLE –
ONE TREE FOR EACH FALLEN SOLDIER

R.H. ACKERMAN	J.M. ELLIOTT	U.J. NOEL
A.R. ADAMS	R. FAIR	J.H. NORWOOD
A.J. ALLAN	P.J. FORD	J.M. PIERRE
J.H. ALLAN	A.L. FITZGERALD	A.E. POTTER
G.P. ANSBRO	C.T. GILES	T. POWELL
R.A. BATEY	C. GORE	G. REID
C.H. BARNES	P.E. GUERTIN	W.H. REYNOLDS
G. BEAUMONT	G. HALL	F.J. ROBINSON
A. BELL	N.W. HANNA	A. RODBER
A.W. BELL	G.H. HARRIS	A. ROGERS
W.G.H. BENDALL	G.D. HAZEN	J. SALISBURY
J.W. BENNETT	J.L. HOWARTH	W. SCOTT
DR. D.R. BENTLEY	C. HOWE	M.J. SIMMONS
N. BENWARD	R. ILIFFE	W.B. SKINNER
C. BISSETT	A. IRESON	H. SMITH
M. BOLTON	G.J. JANES	D.R. SMUCK
N. BREARLY	F. JOHNSON	R.W. SOPER
H.G. BURY	G.C. JOHNSTON	J. STEELE
R.J. CARSON	A. JONES	H. STOTT
E.F. CAUSLEY	D. KERR	M.J. SUMMERS
W.H. CHAPMAN	A.H.W. KETCH	D.A.E. THOMSON
F.J. CHESTER	C.E. KNIGHT	E.A. TIMPSON
A. CORRICK	N. KNOWLES	N.E. TOWERS
W.J. COULTER	R.H. LUMLEY	R. WADE
S. COWAN	G.H. MANNING	H. WALLIS
R.B. CRAWFORD	C.R. MAJOR	E.D. WATSON
R.P. CRAWFORD	A. McDONALD	C. WEATHERILL
J. CROUCHER	H. McGIBBON	A. WESTON
S.R. DAVIES	A. McINTOSH	G. WHEATLEY
G. DICKINSON	L.C. McMULLEN	W. WILKINSON
F. DOXTATOR	I.A. McMUTRIE	F.J. WILLIAMS
A.E. EBERLY	D.C. MONTGOMERY	C.B. WILSON
W.P. EDDY	H. NASH	A. WISEMAN
F.W. EDWARDS	D.L. NICHOL	T.W. WRIGHT

This Project Was Undertaken By Members Of Scouts Canada – Bluewater Area,
and The Corporation Of The City Of Sarnia, with The Generous Assistance of
Enbridge, Sun Life Financial, The Sarnia Horticultural Society And Union Gas

NOTES: The list of 102 names was derived from the names as they were inscribed on the Sarnia Cenotaph pre-2019.
The 102 (Autumn Blaze) maple trees were planted in the formation of a cross in November 2013, and dedicated in
November 2014. Ten more WWI names were added to the cenotaph in November 2019.

SARNIA COLLEGIATE INSTITUTE & TECHNICAL SCHOOL
WAR MEMORIAL PLAQUE

IN MEMORY OF OUR STUDENTS WHO DIED IN THE SERVICE OF CANADA
1939 – 1945

DOUGLAS AIKEN
WILLIAM J. ANDERSON
GEORGE V. ANDREW
WILLIAM C. ANDREW*
KEITH BANKS
WILLIAM BARR
JOE GRIFFITHS BELL
MAX BERGER
HUGO BORCHARDT
CLEMENCE BRAKEMAN
GEORGE W. BROWN
PAUL A. BROWN
DAVID BURKE
KENNETH BURR
WILLIAM CAMERON
WILLIAM F. CARLTON
STUART A. CARR
ROSS CLARK
WILLIAM BROWN CLARK
JOHN C. CLARKE
WESLEY COLEMAN
A. EDWARD CONWAY
FRED DAWS
JACK DOWDING
WILLIAM DRINKWATER
RALPH LESLIE ELLIOT
THOMAS HAROLD ELLIOT
JOHN ESSELMONT
GEORGE ESSER
HUGO FARNER
LORNE FERGUSON
GORDON WILLIAM FORDYCE
CHARLES FOSTER
JOHN FOWLIE
LLOYD GALLAWAY
REX GAMMON
ARTHUR GANDER
WILLIAM GLASS
LLOYD THOMAS GRAHAM
LYLE GORING

FRANCIS HAGGERTY**
JOHN N. HALLAM
THOMAS HAMILTON
JOHN M. HARRIS
VICTOR HARRIS
ROLAND JAMIESON
JAY S. JOHNSTON
RUSSELL E. JOLLY
GLYN JONES
ROSS KEE
GERALD R. KELLY
WILFRED L. KNIGHT
GEORGE WILLIAM KNOWLES
JOHN LYLE LECKIE
TOM LEE
HECTOR LEGARRIE***
ROBERT LOCHEAD
W. ELDON LUCAS
WALLACE LANG
DONALD C. MACGREGOR
DONALD MCCLURE
JAMES MCCLURE
GILBERT CAMPBELL MCFADYEN
VICTOR MCKEOWN
PATRICK MCLAUGHLIN
OMAR MARTINDALE
LEONARD MEERE
RALPH J. MELLON
RODOLFO MENDIZABAL
WILLIAM STUART METCALFE
DAVID DOUGLAS MILLER
THOMAS GORDON MILLS
PAUL MISENER
PAUL MORRIS
JOSEPH THOMAS MURPHY
EDWIN ROBERT MYLES
CHARLES ARTHUR NASH
DON NEAL
BARRY O'CONNOR
WILLIAM JOHN OLIVER

TED PARSONS
DOUGLAS POLE
ROSS POLE
BRUCE POWELL
T. EDWARD POWELL
JAMES E. QUINN
MELVIN RAMSAY
ROBERT RAMSAY
CHARLES V. RICHARDS
DOUGLAS ROSS
ARNOLD SCHILDKNECHT
JAMES SHANKS
GORDON SMITH
EDWARD SAMUEL STOKES
GEOFFREY STONE
JAMES STRONACH
LES SUTHERLAND
STANLEY J. TESKEY
CLAIR THAIN
JACK ALEXANDER THAIN
ARTHUR CAMERON THOMPSON
HOWARD FRASER THOMPSON
MYLES K. VOKES
FLOYD WILLIAMS
WILLIAM PATRICK LOGIE WILLIAMS
RICHARD WILSON
FRED WISE
JAMES WRIGHT
JOHN D. WRIGHT
JOHN H. YORKE
ISAAC B. ZIERLER

NOTES:

*William C. Andrew – Son of A.G. Andrew (then at 111 North College Avenue in Sarnia), was reportedly a part of the Civilian Technical Corps, and was aboard the *SS Vancouver Island* when it was torpedoed on October 15, 1941 on its way to the U.K. He is not listed in the Canadian veterans database because the Civilian Technical Corps was a British non-military body of paid craftsmen. The CTC was comprised of U.S. male citizens, but according to a November 15, 1941 article in the *Globe & Mail*, two Canadians, including William C. Andrew, were a part of this group. Source: Ian Brown

** Francis Haggerty – the correct spelling is (Hugh) Francis Hegarty

***Hector Legarrie – alternative spelling is Hector Le Gare

The SCITS War Memorial Plaque was unveiled on June 6, 1951.

The SCITS War Memorial Plaque was moved into Great Lakes Secondary School in 2019.

SOURCES:

Sarnia Observer February 7, 1946 (Pg. 3) @ at Sarnia Library 124 Christina St., Sarnia.
(the original list was compiled by Miss Doris Wilkins)

SCITS World War II memorial website: www.lkdsb.net/scits/memorial/plaque.html

ST. PATRICK'S CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL
WAR MEMORIAL PLAQUE

**THE HONOUR ROLL OF
SARNIA'S FALLEN CATHOLIC SOLDIERS**

**THE FOLLOWING SARNIA STUDENTS FROM CATHOLIC PARISHES
SERVED IN WAR AND MADE THE ULTIMATE SACRIFICE**

WORLD WAR I (1914-1918)

JAMES WILLIAM BENNETT
EDWARD FRANK CAUSLEY
THOMAS CREIGHTON
GEORGE GORE
FRANK HICKEY
DANIEL EDWARD V. MANNING
JOHN REGINALD SERGEANT SALSBUURY

NEAL BENWARE
FREDERIC ALOYSIUS CHESTER
PETER JOHN FORD
PERCIVAL EDWARD GUERTIN
FREDERICK JOHNSON
URBAN JOSEPH NOEL

WORLD WAR II (1939-1945)

WILLIAM JOHN ANDERSON
WILLIAM JOHN BARR
ROBERT CHARLES DIONNE
HECTOR LEGARE
PATRICK DOUGLAS McLAUGHLIN
JAMES M. BARRY O'CONNOR
EDWARD THOMAS SHEA

JOSEPH LEOPOLD AUBIN
RAYMOND WILLIAM DIONNE
HUGH FRANCIS HEGARTY
GEORGE VICTOR L. LONEY
ALLAN JOSEPH McLELLAN
MICHAEL JOSEPH PAITHOUSKI
RICHARD NORMAN WILSON

THE KOREAN WAR (1950-1953)

EDWARD JOSEPH MICHAEL KNIGHT

PATRICK WILLIAM O'CONNOR

AFGHANISTAN PEACEKEEPING (2001-2014)

WILLIAM JONATHAN JAMES CUSHLEY

**"WE ARE THE DEAD. SHORT DAYS AGO – WE LIVED, FELT DAWN, SAW
SUNSET GLOW, LOVED AND WERE LOVED, AND NOW WE LIE "**

FROM LIEUTENANT COLONEL JOHN McCRAE'S "IN FLANDERS FIELDS"

NOTE: The St. Patrick's Catholic War Memorial Plaque was unveiled in November 2016.

SARNIA ARMOURY

NOTE: These two World War I plaques were recovered from a Toronto curbside in May 2016.
They are believed to have originally come from Parker Street Methodist Church in Sarnia.

HONOR ROLL

MINISTERS

REV. ARTHUR SINCLAIR

REV. HERBERT ELFORD

MISSIONARIES

ELLEN FERGUSON

HETTIE HARRIS

FOR KING AND COUNTRY

THOMAS DAVIDSON

CLIFFORD BARNES

GORDON STOREY

CRAWFORD LUSCOMBE

RALPH ACKERMAN*

JOHN R. LAW

ALVIN TESKEY

ROBERT E. LOVE

HAROLD PROUSE

JOSEPH CURRIE

HOWARD McGREGOR

NORMAN BREARLEY*

CRAWFORD STEPLAR

JAMES HIPPLE

GEORGE WILLIAMS

JOSEPH ELLIOTT*

ARTHUR BELL*

DONALD ROBERTSON

WILLIAM SCOTT*

LEONARD McMULLEN*

HARVEY HILL

CARLYLE HIPPLE

CHARLES TAIT

WILLIAM COULTER*

WALTER MORRIS

WILFRED CURRIE

JOHN LEONARD

WILLIAM ROSS

RUSSEL SOPER*

JAMES ROWE

WILLIAM P. EDDY*

LEONARD GALLOWAY

NELSON SMITH

MELVILLE WELCH

HONOR ROLL

FOR KING AND COUNTRY

HARRY BUREY*

ROY CRAWFORD*

EARLE SIMMONS*

ROBERT CRAWFORD*

ROY FITZGERALD*

RICHARD WILLIAMSON*

MELVILLE SIMMONS*

EARLE SMITH

HERBERT STOTT*

CLARENCE SIMPSON

ALTON LUCKINS

EARLE LUCAS

OSCAR PETERSON

ARTHUR SIMPSON

ELMER WELLS

HOWARD BROWNING

ROBERT FINCH

ROBERT GRAHAM

BERTRAM BRITNEY

CLARENCE ALLEN

WILFRED LOVE

GEORGE LAPHAM

GEORGE MOORE

HERBERT ELFORD

ERNEST HAYES

PERCY COREY

ALBERT SIMPSON

HARRY LAPHAM

FRED FOSTER

HARRY PETERSON

JOHN SINCLAIR

NEVILLE WILES

DOUGLAS HAZEN

FRANK HAMILTON

EDWARD LAPHAM

ROGER WADE

GEORGE COLLUM

BASIL GUSACK

GEORGE KELLAM

HARVEY YOUNG

RUSSELL BUREY

ERNEST ROSENBLOOM

FRANK KELLAM

EDWARD HOWARD

GEORGE McINTYRE

ARTHUR HOWARD

ALFRED MILLIKIN

FOR KING AND COUNTRY
MEMBERS OF
BLACKWELL UNITED CHURCH
WHO HAVE VOLUNTEERED FOR ACTIVE SERVICE
WITH
CANADA'S FIGHTING FORCES

Stanley Somes	R.C.A.	Glenn Garrison	R.C.A.F.
James Somes	R.C.A.	Leslie Tretheway	R.C.A.F.
George Herron	R.C.A.	Wm. J.L. Smith	R.C.A.F.
Jack Hardick	R.C.A.	Raymond Hardick	R.C.A.F.
Charles Somes	R.C.N.V.R.	Norman O'Dell	R.C.A.
Robert Young	R.C.A.	Kenneth Sitter	R.C.A.
Russell Hardick	R.C.A.M.C.	Raymond Core	R.C.A.
Robert Garrison	R.C.N.V.R.	Bud Sole	R.C.A.
Garnet Core*	R.C.A.		

CANADIAN BANK OF COMMERCE

IN MEMORY OF 1701 MEN OF THE CANADIAN
BANK OF COMMERCE WHO SERVED IN
THE GREAT WAR 1914-1918

MAJ. G.S.S. BOWERBANK D.S.O.M.C.
PTE. W.B.C. BRADLEY
PTE. H.H. HUFF
*2ND LT. L. PLAYNE
LT. G.C. PROCTOR
CPL. T.F.B. WALKER
SPR. D.E. WILSON

SARNIA BRANCH

NOTES:

Names with a star * beside their name were killed in action.

The Blackwell United Church Honour Roll and the CIBC Plaque are both located inside the Sarnia Legion Branch #62.

FOR KING AND COUNTRY
MEMBERS OF
CENTRAL BAPTIST SUNDAY SCHOOL
WHO HAVE VOLUNTEERED FOR ACTIVE SERVICE
WITH CANADA'S FIGHTING FORCES

MARION E. BROWN
PHYLLIS HUGHES #
GOLDIE POWELL #
B. AILEEN RIDEALGH
JEAN I. TUTTLE
ETHEL BRIGHT

I. RAY ATKIN
HOWARD BAKER
JOHN BAZELEY #
WM. J. BENETEAU
DONALD A. BOWDEN #
WM. HUGH BRIGHT
KENNETH BUXTON
FRED J. FLEMING
HAROLD FOWLER
CLARENCE FRASER
JOSEPH FRITZLEY #
CLIFFORD GARDINER
GORDON GARDINER
ROGER GARDINER
ROSS L. GLENN
JOHN E. HAYES
L. FRANK JOLLIFFE
MORLEY LUMBY #
JOHN MACKENZIE
NIVEN MACKENZIE
WILLIAM MACKENZIE

RAYMOND MATTINGLEY
DOUGLAS McRURY
CALVIN MORRIS
WALTER NICHOLLS
GEO. RAMESBOTTOM
JAS. RAMESBOTTOM
GLEN ROSEBRUGH
LORNE C. SCHULTZ
WM. E. SCHULTZ #
WM. (BERT) SHAW
WM. T. SHAW
LEONARD SINGLETON
ROBERT G. SMITH
WM. T. THORPE
GORDON TUTTLE
DALTON WALPOLE
VICTOR WALPOLE
GEO. SINGLETON
MURRAY THORNER
DONALD BRYENTON
BERT THORPE
CHARLES WALLIS
JAMES A. GUISE
FLOYD WILLIAMS*
FRED WILLIAMS
HARLEY WILLIAMSON
JOHN McLAGAN*
FRED GEORGE

NOTES:

Names with a star * beside their name were killed in action.

Names with a pound symbol # beside their name were discharged.

SOURCE:

Central Baptist Church located @ 391 London Rd., Sarnia.

FOR KING AND COUNTRY
MEMBERS OF
CENTRAL UNITED CHURCH
WHO VOLUNTEERED FOR ACTIVE SERVICE
WITH CANADA'S FIGHTING FORCES

GILBERT N. WATSON
ERNEST E. WATSON
WILLIAM McCRIE
D.J. MOTT
JACK THORNER
STANLEY CAMPBELL
M. JEAN ROBERTSON
ARNOLD HODGINS
W. LANG*
ALLAN G. McLAREN
W.M. DAWSON
TOM PRESSEY
MEAFORD THOMPSON
MAX FALCONER
DONALD ROBERTSON
L. JOHN PHIPPEN
NEIL CRAIG
DR. MAURICE G. HILL
HERBERT K. JARVIS
W. "DUCKY" KNOWLES*
ALLAN W. LAWSON
W. GRAHAM LINK
MORLEY LUMBY
DONALD L. McCLURE*
DONALD A. McRITCHIE
FRANK J. MACDONALD
JIM MILLER
WM. A. MURRAY
BILL PEARSON
ROSS N. POLE*
HOWARD REED
ERNEST F. RUSSELL*
LLOYD G. SMITH
SAM STOKES*
KEN VANHORNE
WM. C. ANDREW*
MORRIS A. ARCHER
ROSS BAKER
TUXIS A. BEATTIE
ALFRED H. BUTLER
RUSSELL C. BROWN
PAUL BROWN*
BETTY A. CAMERON
JACK C. CLEAVE

A.C. WEBB
HADYN C. WESTON
HAROLD WIGGINS
CARL THORNER
DONALD TAYLOR
LYLE KIRK
ROSS GLENN
WILLIAM SHAW
ROSS PALMER
KENNETH PARKINSON
DON HAMILTON
VERNE P. KIRK
JAMES HOLLINGER
JOHN E. FALCONER
J. ROBB
W. STUART CARSON
LLOYD B. ROBERTS
WILFRED HILLIER
JOHN JACKSON M.D.
GLEN A. LAMBERT
J. LYLE LECKIE*
JOHN R. LITTLE
DR. J.G. MACKENZIE
L. McCLINTOCK
DR. NORMAN McMILLAN
DON McGILLIVRAY
PAUL MORRIS*
JOHN D. MURRAY
FRED W. PEMBLETON
ROBERT D. RAMSAY*
HOWARD W. ROSS
DON RUTHERFORD
WM. R. SOUTHCOMBE
E. MURRAY TAYLOR
DR. G.L. ANDERSON
R.F. ATKINSON
DON R. BAIRD
ERNEST N. BANKS
JIM BERRY
HUGO H. BORCHARDT*
DAVE BURKE*
GORDON J. BRUTON
EDWARD B. CAMPBELL
JOHN C. CLUME

JACK A. WEBSTER
ARTHUR EMMETT
JACK MARSHMAN
HAROLD THORNER
KEITH RINTOUL
F.T. HOLLANDS
J. PARR
A. PELL
KENNETH FULCHER
REID DUNCAN
JOHN HOUSTON
ISABELLE McLEAN
KENNETH PALMER
JACK GLADWISH
W.C. ROBB
J.T. BIEHN M.D.
DELMARM. VANDENBURG
CARLYLE E. HODGINS
GLYN JONES*
MAJOR D. LAUGHER
EDGAR S. LECKIE
BOB LOUGHEAD*
J.K. McCLURE*
ARCHIE MACDOUGALL
BASIL W. MACDONALD
W.S. METCALFE*
JOHN R. MURRAY
BRUCE MURRAY
DOUG C. POLE*
MELVIN H. RAMSAY*
JAS. H. RUSSELL
JOHN SANDS
FRANK STIRRETT
JACK TALLAMY
GEORGE V. ANDREW*
JIM ARNOLD
BOB BANNISTER
JOE G. BELL*
STEWART BRADD
HARRISON BROCK
WM. T. BUTLER
H.G. CALLISTER
H. MURRAY CLARKE
MAXWELL R. CRAIG

M. COWPER-SMITH
 JOHN L. DATE JR.
 RICHARD H. DYBLE
 CHAS. S. FOSTER*
 DONALD FRASER
 W. DONALD GIFFEN
 STUART GRANT
 JACK M. HARVEY
 CAMERON R. WIGGINS
 FRED G. WHITCOMBE
 A. LASCELLES
 RICHARD N. WILSON*
 DOUGLAS L. ROSS
 JOHN E. HAYNE
 HARRY PETERSON
 WM. ARNOLD
 DONALD WEBSTER
 GRIFFITH BELL*
 LEO BAILEY
 KENNETH FORBES
 BEVERLY PALMER
 GORDON A. McPHAIL
 CHARLES BROWETT
 MARJORIE EMMETT
 ALAN KEAT
 DONALD F. McKENZIE

KENNETH C. COOK
 FRED J. DAWS*
 A.R. FLEMING
 THOS. E.G. FOX
 BILL GAMBLE
 KENNETH GILLESPIE
 ROBT. E. GOODLAND
 JOHN A. HAYES
 LLOYD WILLIAMS
 GERALDINE P. WHITCOMBE
 C.S. LASCELLES
 KEITH FISHER
 ROBERT B. ELDER
 IAN RUTHERFORD
 D.E. FLEMING
 ALVIN THOMPSON
 MELVIN LAWRENCE
 EDWARD L. IVINSON
 DONALD BROWN
 ROY LYFORD
 JACK LECKIE
 ROY C. McPHAIL
 CHARLES A. McKENZIE
 LES SUTHERLAND*
 ROY BASS

H. "BUDDY" DATE
 NEIL W. DOVE
 ROY FLEMING
 CHAS. D.J. FOX
 W.L. GIFFEN
 S. LLOYD GORING
 EDWIN F. GUSTIN
 WM. H. WHITING
 JOHN D. WRIGHT*
 ARTHUR M. LAWSON
 WILBUR J. MACDONALD
 MELVIN FISHER*
 ROBERT CAMPBELL
 WM. MACKENZIE
 GILBERT McFADYEN*
 THOS. MURPHY
 ROBT. MacGREGOR
 DON McCRIE
 CHARLES WALLIS
 IAN CUNNINGHAM
 MILTON CARDIFF
 HUGH McPHAIL
 DOUGLAS BAIRD
 DONALD MARRIOTT
 THOMAS ELLIOT*

NOTE: Names with a star * beside their name were killed in action.

SOURCES:

Central United Church located @ 220 George St., Sarnia.

"The Centurian – A Memorial" published by Central United Church, October 1946.

NOTE: Central United Church traces its roots in Sarnia all the way back to 1837, when a "Chapel" was built on Lochiel Street, near Brock Street. A larger church was built on Vidal Street in 1861 and by 1880, ever larger accomodations were required. The Vidal Street property was sold and the present facility was constructed and finally completed in 1883. The church has undergone a number of expansions and renovations over the years. The church houses one of the largest pipe organs in the area, which can be broadcast over a sound system located in the tower. Chimes in the church were donated in memory of the many from the congregation who lost their lives in World War II.

DEVINE STREET UNITED CHURCH

REMEMBRANCE BOOK

This Remembrance Book is to Honour those who Served in World War II 1939 - 1945

DOUGLAS EARL AIKEN*	RCAF	ROSS ARBLASTER	RCN
ROBERT D ARBLASTER	Army	ROSS E. BAKER	RCAF
HAROLD J. BAKER	RCAF	ROBERT L. BAKER	RCAF
JAMES C. BLAIN	Army	H.E. BATHE	RCAF
JOHN EDWIN BEEBE	Army	J.W. BOLTON	RCAF
HUGH J. BOLTON	RCAF	ANGUS BROADBENT	RCOC
LILLIAN BROOKS	Army	VERLIN E. BRUNER	WRCNS
EDWARD B. CAMPBELL	RCAF	MILTON R. CARDIFF	Army
EUGENE G. CARES	RCAF	HAROLD W. CHAMBERS	Army
W.H. (BILL) CARTER	RCAF	RAYMOND E. CHAMBERS	RCN
E.M. CHURCHER	WRCNS	CYRIL COATES	Army
H. COATES	Army	J. MORLEY COLLING	Army
A.E. CONWAY*	Army	FRED CRIM	Army
J.W. DAYMAN	RCAF	WILLIAM H. DELLOW	Army
GARNET R. DENOMY	Army	WILFRED DUROCHER*	Army
THOMAS ALBERT EAST		W.H. GALLOWAY	Army
ROY M. GIFFELS	Army	ROBERT FERGUSON	Army
CLARENCE F. FRASER	RCAF	HAROLD GIBSON	Army
LAWRENCE GILL	Army	RUSSELL H. GIFFORD	Army
A.R. GORING	RCAF	R.A. GORING	USAF
F.C. GORING*	RCAF	CURTIS ALBERT GORING*	RCAF
IAN D. GRANT	Army	J.D. HALL	Army
DONALD R. HALLAM	RCAF	ALAN C. HAMILTON	RCAF
ROBERT H. HAMMETT	RCAF	HAROLD E. HANNAM	RCAF
ROBERT W. HARDY	RCAF	HARVEY L. HENDERSON	Army
RUSSELL D. HENDERSON	RCN	HAROLD HILL	RCAF
FRED HILL	RCAF	HAROLD GEORGE HILL	RCAF
L.E. HILLIER	RCAF	BETTY HOOVER	RCAFWD
ALISTAIR J. HORLEY	RCN	FLOYD A. HORLEY	RCN
WALLACE C. HORLEY*	RCN	KENNETH HYATT	RCAF
WM. P. JARVIS	RCAF	THOMAS EARL JOHNSTON	RCAF
FREDERICK N. KILBREATH	RCN	LYLE A. KIRK	RCN
LEONARD E. LaFOND	RCAF	SHERWOOD C. LaFOND	Army
JAMES R. LAWS	RAF	T.K. LESTER	RCAF
WILLIAM ELDON LUCAS*	RCN	KENNETH L. LUTHER	
W. ARVIN LUMBY	RCAF	WILLIAM B. MANDEVILLE	RCAF
MATTINGLY T. GORDON	Army	S.Q McALLISTER	RCAFWD
ROY FISHER McALLISTER	Army	D.L. McGILLIVRAY	RCN
T.M. McKAY	WRCNS	J.D. McKNIGHT	RCAF
T.A. McLEOD	Army	ROBERT N. McLAUGHLIN	Army
FREDERICK J. McWAIN	RCAF	J.G. MEAD	Army
ELLIOTT L. MORDEN	Army	HAROLD M. MURRAY	RCAF
CARMEN J. NEWMAN	Army	WALTER NICHOLLS	RCN

RONALD A. OLDE	Army	WILLIAM J. OLIVER*	RCAF
W. RAY OLIVER	Army	WILLIAM F. OSBORNE	RCN
GORDON PARSONS	Army	D.W. PARK	RCAF
ALLAN FRANKLIN PELL	Army	THOMAS EDWIN POWELL*	RCAF
ROBERT EARL PULLMAN	RCN	JOHN H. RAMSEY	Army
W.A. REESE	RCAF	KENNETH REESE	RCN
CHARLES T. RICHARDS		ROBERT E. RICHARDS	Army
DOUGLAS F. RODEY	RCAF	TOM S. ROMPF	Army
JEAN R. ROSS	CWAC	J. DOUGLAS C. ROSS*	RCAF
WM. NEIL RUBERRY	RCAF	CHARLES RUBERRY	RCN
RAY SAYERS	RCAF	R.L. SCARROW	Army
FRANK SCRIVER	Army	ROBERT SLOAN	RCAF
HAROLD SMITH	Army	RALPH SMITH	Army
W.C. SNIDER	Army	EDWARD B. STEVENS	Army
LLOYD STOKES	USN	F.O. SUHRING	RCAF
MURRAY TAYLOR	Army	RALPH M. TAYLOR	RCN
S.J. TESKEY*	RCAF	D.C. TESKEY	RCAF
H.W. TESKEY	Army	WILLIAM L. TESKEY	RCN
ROSS W. THOMPSON	Army	HARVEY TINKHAM	Army
W. BRUCE THOMSON	RCAF	MASON W. VOKES	RCAF
MYLES K. VOKES*	Army	EDWARD WALTHAM	Army
A.E. WALKER	RCN	CYRIL WAREHAM	Army
CARLTON W. WARD	CMR (WWI)	HAROLD W. WATSON	RCAF
JACK WAREHAM	RCN	HARVEY R. WELLINGTON	Army
HENRY E. WELLINGTON	Army	IELEEN E. WELLINGTON	CWAC
WILLIAM F. WHITELY	RCN	GRENVILLE THOMAS WOODS	RCN
W.J. WILLIAMS	RCN	KENNETH M. YOUNG	RCAF
JACK R. YOUNG	RCAF	J.W. THOMPSON	RCAF

NOTES:

Names with a star * beside their name were killed in action.

The Devine Street United Church Book of Remembrance is located at the Sarnia Armoury. The book contains photographs and information on the soldiers that includes for most: their rank, regimental number, mailing address, date of birth, name and address of next of kin.

It is estimated that the Book of Remembrance was put together around 1944.

The Devine Street United Church closed its doors in the mid-1990s.

DUNLOP UNITED CHURCH

NOTE: These two Honour Rolls were formerly located in Parker Street Church.

FOR KING AND COUNTRY MEMBERS OF PARKER STREET UNITED CHURCH

Sarnia, Ontario

**WHO HAVE VOLUNTEERED FOR ACTIVE SERVICE
WITH CANADA'S FIGHTING FORCES**

ALLEN ROY D.
ALLEN ROBERT W.
ARMSTRONG HAROLD W.
ATCHISON ROSS D.
ANDERSON JAMES W.D.
ALBERT ADOLPH
BRENT JAMES A.
BROADBENT ANGUS
BROWN ELLAR W.
BROWN MALCOLM A.
BROWN JOSEPH A.
BROWN R. KENNETH
BICE ELDON M.
BURR WILLIAM A.
BEATTIE TUXIS
BELL ERNSET A.
BELL JACK T.
BATTLE CHARLES W.
BROCK WILFRED J.
BROCK IVAN E.
BAILEY MILTON E.
BAILEY HAROLD V.
BERRY CHARLES E.
BRUSHEY GORDON
BILICK WALTER
COLEMAN J. HOWARD
COWLEY ROY A.
CLAXTON WALTER S.
CLAXTON JACK O.
CLEMENTS RAY W.
CRABB HERBERT
COOK CLAIR V.
COOK KENNETH
COLE ED
CLEDENNING LENARD
COX JAMES
CRONIN VICTOR
CHAPMAN JAMES F.
CARTER WILLIAM J.
CAMPBELL WILLIAM
CHALMERS ALEX
DEMERAY ERVIN W.
DEMERAY LLOYD F.
DEMERAY LESLIE N.

DEMERAY ELMER D.
DEMERAY DONALD L.
DEMERAY NORRIS A.
DOUGHERTY C. LAVERNE
DUPEE ALBERT E.
DUPEE FRANK F.
DUPEE JACK C.
EVERINGHAM EARL
FULKERSON R. NEIL
FOSTER ROY
FOSTER WILLIAM
FOSTER OTTO W.
FOSTER NORMAN B.
FIELD HARRY W.
FERGUSON WILLIAM J.
FORREST DONALD
GOULD JAMES M.
GOLDRING DONALD R.
GRAVELLE ALFRED J.
GLASS JOSEPH M.
GLASS CHARLES L.
GLASS JACK W.
GUNN STEWART
GUNN JOHN W.
GRANT DON
GIBBS HARVEY W.
GUTHRIE NORMAN W.
HARPER MARGARET R.N.
HARPER DOROTHY R.N.
HUMPHREY L. WALKER
HARVEY JOHN P.
HALL LAWRENCE
HUTCHINSON JAMES E.
HILL FRED G.
HANSEN CAPT. L.F.
HANSEN GEORGE C.
HANSEN HOWARD F.
HOSKIN GRANT
HOSKIN ROY N.
HUGGETT J. ALVIN
HUGGETT HARVEY
HUGGETT ROY N.
HALEY JACK
HALL GORDON

HILLIER IVAN S.
HAMILTON DONALD L.
HAMILTON JACK
HARKNESS F. LYLE
HASLIP RAY C.
JENNINGS J. LLOYD
JENNINGS CHARLES F.
JENNINGS HARRY M.
JENNINGS THOMAS W.C.
JOHNSON KENNETH L.
JOHNSON J. DONALD
JACKSON HAROLD D.
KETTLE RICHARD
LOGAN FLORENCE
LECLAIR CHARLES
LOWRY JAMES
MANICOM WILLIAM E.
MIDDLETON HAROLD
MIDDLETON THOMAS A.
MOTT, GUY E.
MOTT DELBERT J.
MILLER WILLIAM C.
MILLER ROY D.
MILLER FRED W.
MILLARD DUDLEY H.
MOORE J. GLENN
MANSFIELD GORDON K.
MACINTYRE ROBERT F.
MACDONALD CHARLES
MACDONALD ARCHIE
McLEAN HILLIARD N.
McLEAN WILLIAM M.
McGEE J. ROSS
McARTHUR MALCOLM
McKINNON WILLIAM G.
McNEIL WILLIAM T.
NORRIS ALEX
NORRIS W. RICHARD
NORRIS THOMAS H.
NELSON E. RALPH
O'DELL NORMAN
O'DELL LLOYD
PERRY RALPH L.
PERRY CHARLES R.

PERRY LYLE D.
 PERRY C. BYRON
 PRESSEY HAROLD J.
 PRESSEY THOMAS
 PARK STANLEY A.
 PETERS HOWARD
 PINEO LEWIS GORDON
 PHILLIPS C.A.
 ROOT HELEN
 RICHARDSON C. DOUGLAS
 ROSS WILLIAM I.
 ROSE J. MILTON
 REID BOLTON
 REID ALEX
 REID DICKSON
 ROSENBLOOM EARL E.
 RICHARDS GLENN E.
 RICE K. LaVERNE
 ROSS W. HAROLD
 STANLAKE EILEEN G.
 STUBBS FRED W.

STEPHENSON BRUCE T.
 STEPHENSON JOSEPH JR.
 STEPHENSON MANIFRED W.
 STEPHENSON LINDSAY
 STEPHENSON VAUGHN L.
 SEABROOK ROY A.
 SEABROOK CLARENCE S.
 SEABROOK LEWIS R.
 STOREY STANLEY E.
 STOREY JAMES A.
 SMITH T. LYLE
 SMITH JAMES D.
 SMITH JACK L.
 STEWARDSON DON R.
 SNIDER WILBUR C.
 SHORTT JAMES W.
 SHORTT CHESTER N.H.
 SHARPE R.E.
 SECORD LESLIE W.
 SCARROW CARMEN
 SAWYER JACK

STANLAKE KENNETH B.
 STANLAKE GORDON T.
 SOPER WARREN
 STEELE NATHANAEL A.
 SABINE R. LLOYD
 SEABROOK WILLIAM J.
 TAYLOR CLARENCE
 TRIGGER GEORGE A.
 TENNANT ELMER L.
 THORN ROBERT M.
 WISE BETTY J.
 WISE JOHN C.
 WISE DONALD E.
 WALKER ELVEY
 WALKER WINSTON
 WALES ARCHIE A.
 WALES ROBERT T.G.
 WYVILLE ALLEN B.
 WORSLEY WILFRED L.
 HANSEN WALTER E.

PARKER STREET METHODIST CHURCH HONOR ROLL

1919 - 1918

NOTE: This Honour Roll includes the photographs of these twenty-one church members who served in World War I.

L. GOWANS
 ED. P. WATSON
 J. CRONIN
 H.C. MILLARD
 S. HITCHCOCK
 WESLEY EMERIC
 JACK BARRIE

JACK RODEY
 H. MANCHESTER
 CYRIL NELSON
 A. GLASS
 R.H. NELSON
 VIC. GOWANS
 R.J. GARK

ED. RODEY
 H.W. THORN
 F.E. NELSON
 BERT NELSON
 NELSON BROWN
 GEO. FERGUSON
 GORDON SMITH

SOURCES:
 Dunlop United Church located @ 757 Rosedale Ave., Sarnia.

FOR KING AND COUNTRY
MEMBERS OF
OUR LADY OF MERCY ROMAN CATHOLIC PARISH
WHO VOLUNTEERED FOR ACTIVE SERVICE
WITH CANADA'S FIGHTING FORCES

AMBROISE, A.R.
AMBROISE, CARMEN
ATRAS, S.
AUBIN, J. LEOPOLD*
BAKER, WILLIAM
BEACHEY, VYRIL
BEACHEY, G.H.
BEACHEY, HUGH
BEACHEY, MARY
BEACHEY, R.W.
BEDARD, ALEX
BENNETT, CLAT
BERRY, WILLIAM
BETTRIDGE, C.R.
BIRMINGHAM, GERALD
BIRMINGHAM, L.F.
BLONDIN, C.M.
BLONDIN, F.T.
BLONDIN, MOSES
BLONDIN, O.W.
BLONDIN, MRS. O.W.
BLUNDY, PAUL
BOUCHER, W.J.
BRIDGER, WILLIAM J.
BROWN, GERALD
BRUSSEAU, L.B.
BUKOVINSKY, J.
BUTLER, PATRICK
CAMERON, JOHN B.
CAUSLEY, LEO
CHUMKO, JOHN
CHUMKO, MICHAEL
CLARKSON, LOUIS
CLEMENS, JACK
COOKE, CLIFFORD
CORBETT, JAMES
COTE, CONSTANCE
COWELL, H.W.
COWLEY, C.J.
CROFTON, J.A.
DENLEY, HERBERT J.
DENLEY, JOSEPH
DENNIS, JOHN E.
DENNIS, JOHN H.
DERUSH, W. JOHN
DIFEDERICO, M.

DIONNE, MELVIN
DIONNE, RAY*
DIONNE, ROBERT*
DIONNE, RONALD
DOOHAN, JAMES M.
DOOHAN, WILLIAM R.
DOUCHER, WILLIAM K.
DOYLE, FREDERICK
DOYLE, PATRICK E.
DUBREUIL, HARVEY
EGAN, J.M.
EGAN, VINCE J.
ENNETT, RICHARD W.
ENNETT, WALTER H.
EVELAND, HOYT
FAUTEUX, DONATO A.
FAUTEUX, J.R.
FILLION, ERNEST
FLYNN, RAY
FORBES, F.G.
FOSTER, NORMAN
FOSTER, STANLEY S.
FRAZER, R.
GAVLAK, S.A.
GILMORE, ARTHUR
GOLAB, JOSEPH
GONYOU, HAROLD
GRIFFIN, EDWARD
GRIFFIN, V.J.
GUERTIN, V.E.
GUZI, WALTER
HASLIP, JOHN
HASLIP, ROBERT
HAWKINS, M.S.
HEFFRON, CHARLES
HEFFRON, R.A.
HEWITT, F.W.
HEWITT, J.D.
HEWITT, J.L.
HIGGINS, W.F.
HOBIN, ANNE
HUGGETT, BERNARD D.
HUGGETT, L.W.
JACQUES, MARY
KEELAN, R.J.
KEELAN, W.O.

KELCH, H.E.
 KINCH, DON
 KNIGHT, EILEEN
 KNIGHT, JOHN H.
 KOVAL, JOSEPH
 LALONDE, C.F.
 LAMBERT, MORRIS
 LANGAN, GERALD J.
 LAPOINTE, N.J.
 LAPOINTE, R.J.
 LAROCQUE, JOHN I.
 LAROCQUE, MERRILL J.
 LECLAIR, J.A.
 LECLAIR, LEO
 LEGARRIE, HECTOR*
 LEGAULT, A.E.
 LEGAULT, LEO P.
 LESSARD, H.A.
 LEVERQUE, ROGER
 LONEY, GEORGE*
 MACDONALD, JAMES A.
 MACDONALD, ROBERT R.
 MADZENIAK, J.
 MADZENIAK, MARY
 MARCY, A.P.
 MCALLISTER, WILLIAM
 MCCART, JOHN
 MCMAHON, G.J.
 MCMAHON, H.J.
 MCMANN, ELEANOR
 MCMULLEN, A.A.
 MERCURIO, EDWARD
 MERCURIO, M.A.
 MONDOUX, A.J.
 MUNDY, C.Q.
 MUNDY, F.V.
 MURPHY, FRANK
 MYERS, J.T.
 NEVILLE, STEVE
 O'DRISCOLL, J. W.
 O'LAUGHLIN, M.E.
 OUIMET, AMEDEE
 OUIMET, G.
 PAQUETTE, ALBERT
 PELLETIER, P.J.
 PETTIT, FRANK
 PETTIT, H.

PETTIT, LLOYD
 PETTIT, VAUGHN
 PICKERING, THOMAS J.
 POWELL, ARTHUR
 POWER, T.M.
 POWER, W. A.
 QUINLAN, CHARLES C.
 ROBBINS, WILLIAM T.
 ROSENBLOOM, EARL
 RYAN, LEO J.
 SABOURIN, C.A.
 SALAK, J.
 SAUVE, JOSEPH
 SAUVE, LEONARD
 SCHELL, HERBERT H.
 SHANGRAW, WILLIAM
 SHEA, E.T.*
 SIMA, ANDREW
 SIRDEVAN, ALAN
 STEFANKO, STEPHEN
 STEVENS, O.K.
 STEVENS, JOHN
 SUHLER, J.D.
 TAMBORO, C.F.
 TAYLOR, C.J.
 THORPE, ROBERT, H.
 TOBIN, P.G.
 TULLY, A.J.
 VANROOYEN, JOHN P.
 WALSH, CLARENCE
 WALSH, JACK
 WASYL, A.
 WEISS, JOHN
 WEISS, WILLIAM
 WHITE, L.J.
 WILES, EMMETT
 WILKINSON, MELVIN
 WILSON, EDWARD L.
 WILSON, RICHARD*
 WOODCOCK, ROBERT J.
 WRIGHT, LLOYD
 WRIGHT, S.M.
 WRIGHT, STUART
 ZAMOIC, ANNE
 O'BRIEN, PATRICK
 STEVENS, JAMES, E.
 SNYDER, CARLISLE

NOTE: Names with a star * beside their name were killed in action.

SOURCES:

Our Lady of Mercy Catholic Church located @ 390 N. Christina St., Sarnia.
 Sarnia Canadian Observer – March 23, 1945 (Pg. 14): @ Sarnia Library 124 Christina St.

FOR KING AND COUNTRY
MEMBERS OF
ST. ANDREW'S CHURCH, SARNIA
WHO HAVE VOLUNTEERED FOR ACTIVE SERVICE
WITH CANADA'S FIGHTING FORCES 1939 - 1945

ARMSTRONG, JAMES
ASBURY, DAVID W.
BELL, KENNETH
BELTON, JOHN
BORROWMAN, Dr. A.M.
BRODIE, NORMAN
BROWN, GEORGE*
BURD, STEPHEN
BURLEIGH, WILLIAM
BELTON, ELIZABETH
BROWN, ARTHUR
CAMERON, GEORGE D.*
CARR, JAMES
CARR, STUART*
CHILTON, MAURICE J.
CLARK, WILLIAM B.*
CONN, HENRY
COOK, ALEX
CRAIG, LESLIE
CRAIG, WILLIAM
CLARK, DAVID
CLARK, IAN
CUNNINGHAM, ERIC
CRAWFORD, JOHN
CHALMERS, ALEX
DALZIEL, I. BRUCE
DARRACH, NEIL C.
DOBBINS, I. NORMAN
DOHERTY, I. DAVID
DOHERTY, THOMAS B.
DOWDING, HARRY I.
DUNCAN, REID
DUNCAN, STEWART
DAWSON, WILLIAM
DUNLOP, ROBERT
DOWDING, JOHN F. *
DEAN, GEORGE M.
ELLIOT, THOMAS H. *
FAIRLIE, JOHN
FORBES, JOHN
FOWLIE, JACK*
FRANCE, JOHN
FERGUSON, ANGUS
FERGUSON, JOHN

GAMMON, REX T. *
GAMMON, WILLIAM A.
GARRETT, JAMES K.
GARRETT, JOHN M.
GIBB, JOHN
GOUGH, GEORGE
HARBORNE, DONALD
HARKINS, GORDON F.
HART, DONALD
HAY, ARTHUR J.
HAYES, ALEX M.
HENDERSON, HERBERT J.
HENDERSON, PETER J.
HENDERSON, THOMAS J.
HILLIS, J. FLOYD
HUNTER, WARREN
HARKINS, WILLIAM
HAY, MRS. EDITH
HUNT, JAMES
INGERSOLL, GEORGE C.
ISBISTER, LESLIE
ISBISTER, ROBERT
JOHNSTON, RAYMOND
JOHNSTON, WALTER
JAMIESON, JOHN
KEE, ROSS*
KING, ALVIN
KNOWLES, WILLIAM*
LEACH, WILLIAM
LOCKHART, HOMER A.
LOCKHART, OWEN M.
LOTT, ANGUS
LUCKHURST, ROSS
LOGAN, JAMES
MacFARLANE, MATTHEW A
MacGREGOR, DONALD*
MacKENZIE, DOUGALD
MacKENZIE, LOGAN
MacKENZIE, ROBERT
McDERMID, WESLEY K.
McCLUGHAN, ROBERT
McGIBBON, PETER
McGIBBON, ROBERT
McLAREN, KENNETH W.

McLEAN, JACK
 McMILLAN, ARCHIE
 McMILLAN, JACK
 MacFARLANE, WINNIFRED
 MacKENZIE, RUTH
 MacLEAN, LACHLAN
 McINTYRE, RAYMOND
 McKENZIE, WILLIAM
 McCRAE, DAVID W.
 McGIBBON, MARGARET J.
 McNEILL, L. ALEXANDER
 MACKLIN, DOUGLAS
 MAIDMENT, CHARLES
 MILLER, JAMES
 MISENER, JOHN
 MISENER, PAUL *
 MOORE, ORVILLE
 MORRISON, JACK
 MILLER, JOHN
 MILLS, PAUL
 MURRAY, JOHN
 NEEDHAM, KENNETH
 NEELY, JOSEPH R.
 NEEDHAM, JOHN
 O'DELL, GORDON
 PAISLEY, W.G.
 PALMER, ALBERT
 PALMER, DONALD
 PALMER, EDWARD
 PATON, PETER
 PAUL, FRANCIS
 PHIPPEN, JOHN L.
 PRINGLE, L. DALE
 RANKIN, JOHN
 ROSE, ALEX C.
 ROSE, DONALD
 ROSE, HAROLD
 RUTHERFORD, DONALD
 RUTHERFORD, JAN
 RUTHERFORD, Dr. W.B.
 RIDDELL, HUBERT J.
 SCOTT, DONALD
 SHANKS, JAMES R. *
 SHAW, CHARLES
 SHAW, ROBERT

SIMPSON, FIELD
 SLEETH, TREVELYAN J.
 SMITH, JAMES
 SNEDDON, JAMES
 STEPHENSON, R.M.
 STEPHENSON, V.L.
 STEWART, JAMES D.
 STIRLING, HUGH J.
 STOVER, CHARLES
 STUART, HOWARD E.
 SWANSON, H.E.
 SMITH, MARGARET C.
 SINCLAIR, H. THOMAS
 SLOANE, JOHN
 SUMMERS, AUBREY
 SUMMERS, MARIAN E.
 SCOTT, GLENN
 STOKES, EDWARD S. *
 TAYLOR, GORDON
 THOMPSON, CAMERON*
 THOMPSON, FRASER*
 TORRANCE, JAMES
 TURNBULL, HARRY R.
 TURNBULL, WILLIAM D.
 TUTT, Dr. W.R.
 TAYLOR, WINNIFRED
 TRUSLER, JACK
 TAYLOR, ISABEL
 WALKER, CARL
 WATSON, NEAL M.
 WILLIAMS, WILLIAM A.
 WOODROW, CHARLES C.
 WYVILLE, ALLEN
 WYVILLE, FREDERICK
 WILLIAMSON, ROBERT
 WILSON, JACK
 WELSH, D. ROY
 WELSH, ARTHUR B.
 WELSH, THOMAS M.

 CORNISH, HARRY
 FINLAY, RICHARD
 FARNER, HUGO*
 OLIVER, W. JOHN*
 POWELL, T. EDWARD*

NOTE: Names with a star * beside their name were killed in action.

SOURCE:

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church located @ 261 Christina St., Sarnia.

ST. ANDREW'S PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH PLAQUES

1914 – 1918

IN PROUD AND AFFECTIONATE REMEMBRANCE OF THE MEN OF ST. ANDREW'S CHURCH,
SARNIA WHO GAVE THEIR LIVES FOR CANADA AND THE EMPIRE DURING
THE GREAT WAR

MAJOR DAVID B. BENTLEY, M.D.

DIED APRIL 5, 1917

PTE. CAMERON R. BISSETT

KILLED SEPTEMBER 3, 1918

CORP. WILLIAM H. CHAPMAN

KILLED SEPTEMBER 27, 1917

LIEUT. STEWART COWAN

KILLED OCTOBER 1, 1916

CAPTAIN WILLIAM A. HENDERSON, M.D.

DIED OCTOBER 25, 1916

FLT-LIEUT. DAVID HEGLER McGIBBON

KILLED SEPTEMBER 15, 1918

LIEUT. RUSSELL H. SOPER

KILLED 1917

CAPTAIN NORMAN EWART TOWERS

KILLED SEPTEMBER 20, 1916

“AVETE FRATRES, AVETE ET VALETE.”

1939 – 1945

IN PROUD AND AFFECTIONATE REMEMBRANCE
OF THE MEN OF ST. ANDREW'S CHURCH, SARNIA
WHO GAVE THEIR LIVES IN THE SECOND GREAT WAR

F.L. GEORGE WILLIAM BROWN, R.C.A.F.

SEPTEMBER 16, 1944

W.O.-PT. WILLIAM DONALD CAMERON, R.C.A.F.

AUGUST 31, 1943

SGT.-A.G. STUART ALLAN CARR, R.C.A.F.

JANUARY 23, 1944

SGT.-OB. WILLIAM BROWN CLARK, R.C.A.F.

AUGUST 31, 1941

P.O. JOHN FREDERICK DOWDING, R.C.A.F.

OCTOBER 17, 1944

P.O. THOMAS HAROLD ELLIOT, R.C.A.F.

APRIL 25, 1944

P.O. HUGO OSCAR FARNER, R.C.A.F.

SEPTEMBER 24, 1943

F.L. JOHN MACINTOSH FOWLIE, R.C.A.F.

MARCH 15, 1945

F.SGT.-W.A.G. REX THOMAS GAMMON, R.C.A.F.

JULY 24, 1942

F.O. JAMES ROSS KEE, R.C.A.F.

FEBRUARY 19, 1944

P.O. GEORGE WILLIAM KNOWLES, R.C.A.F.

OCTOBER 8, 1942

SGT-PT. DONALD CAMERON MACGREGOR, R.C.A.F.

MAY 11, 1942

SGT-PT. EVERETT PAUL MISENER, R.C.A.F.

OCTOBER 11, 1942

F.O. WILLIAM JOHN OLIVER, R.C.A.F.

OCTOBER 6, 1943

W.O.-PT. THOMAS EDWARD POWELL, R.C.A.F.

OCTOBER 5, 1942

P.O. JAMES ROGER SHANKS, R.C.A.F.

SEPTEMBER 13, 1942

LT. EDWARD SAMUEL STOKES, R.C. DRAGOONS

SEPTEMBER 3, 1944

F.SGT.-OB. HOWARD FRASER THOMPSON, R.C.A.F.

JUNE 28, 1942

P.O. ARTHUR CAMERON THOMPSON, R.C.A.F.

JANUARY 28, 1944

“LEST WE FORGET”

SOURCE: St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church located @ 261 Christina St., Sarnia.

ST. CLAIR UNITED CHURCH HONOUR ROLLS
AAMJIWNAANG FIRST NATIONS RESERVE, SARNIA

IN HONOR OF
THE MEN FROM
THE SARNIA INDIAN RESERVE
WHO SERVED THEIR COUNTRY
IN THE GREAT WORLD WAR 1914-19

FRED DOXSTATER*
ALBERT DAVID
ELIAS JAMES
FRANK JACOBS

EDWIN MANESS
ALEX R. NAYWOG
J.F. WILLIAMS
WELLINGTON RODD

ARTHUR W. MANESS

CANADA AND THE EMPIRE

NOTE: Name with the star * was killed in action.

NOTE: The Honour Roll below was unveiled in early February of 1944, prior to the end of World War II.
Thus, there is no war end date recorded on the Honour Roll.

GOD SAVE THE KING
1939 – 194_

HONOUR ROLL

WITH GREAT PRIDE ST. CLAIR UNITED CHURCH AND DEEP GRATITUDE
WE RECORD THE NAMES
OF OUR MEMBERS ENLISTED IN THE SERVICES OF OUR KING AND COUNTRY

LEONARD E. MANESS*
LEO NAHMABIN *
GORDON JACOBS*
ERVINE BRESSETTE*
MELVIN JACOBS*
DAVID WILLIAMS*
GENEVIEVE ROGERS*
STAFFORD F. ROGERS^
JAMES E. PLAIN ^
FREDERICK F. PLAIN^
LEONARD PLAIN~
HARLEY J. WILLIAMS*
CLIFFORD DAVID#

CARL F. MANESS#
STANLEY C. JACKSON#
DOUGLAS SIMON#
THOMAS STONE#
TELFORD ADAMS JR#
CLARENCE ROGERS#
EDISON KAHGEE*
ALVIN KAHGEE*
PERCY JAMES~
MILFORD COTTRELLE~
SYLVESTER E. STONE*
CHRISTOPHER L. ADAMS#

NOTES:

Names with a star * beside their name served with Canada military.

Name with a pound sign # beside their name served with United States military.

Names with an upward arrow ^ beside their name were reserve.

Names with a squiggle ~ beside their name were discharged.

ST. CLAIR UNITED CHURCH HONOUR ROLLS continued

AAMJIWNAANG FIRST NATIONS RESERVE, SARNIA

FOR KING AND COUNTRY
MEMBERS OF
SARNIA RESERVE
WHO HAVE VOLUNTEERED FOR ACTIVE SERVICE
WITH
CANADA'S FIGHTING FORCES

GARNET WILLIAMS#
TELFORD F. ADAMS#
CHRISTOPHER ADAMS#
ERVINE L. BRESSETTE*
MILFORD COTTRELLE~
CLIFFORD DAVID~
STANLEY C. JACKSON#
GORDON H. JACOBS*
MELVIN H. JACOBS*
PERCY JAMES~
CARL F. MANESS#
CLIFTON PLAIN#
THEODORE STONE
THOMAS WILLIAMS#

HARLEY WILLIAMS*
LEONARD E. MANESS*
LEO A. NAHMABIN*
LEONARD PLAIN~
JAMES E. PLAIN^
FREDRICK PLAIN^
STAFFORD F. ROGERS^
GENEVIEVE P. ROGERS*
CLARENCE ROGERS#
THOMAS J. STONE#
DAVID R. WILLIAMS*
SYLVESTER E. STONE*
PETER JAMES~
DOUGLAS SIMON#

NOTES:

Names with a star * beside their name served with Canada military.

Name with a pound sign # beside their name served with United States military.

Names with a upward arrow ^ beside their name were reserve.

Names with a squiggle ~ beside their name were discharged.

SOURCE:

St. Clair United Church located @ 978 Tashmoo Ave., Aamjiwnaang First Nations Reserve, Sarnia
and
Sarnia Aamjiwnaang Band Office on Tashmoo Avenue.

ST. GEORGE'S ANGLICAN CHURCH

HONOUR ROLL

FIRST GREAT WAR

AHERN, E.G..
BAKER, J.
BARKER, G.H.
BENDALL, T.
BENDALL, W.G. *
BENDING, A.
BENDING, C.H.
BERESFORD, H.
BERESFORD, T.
BOSWELL, J.W.
BRADLEY, T.P.
CHEDWICK, A. *
CHESTER, F.J. *
CHEYNE, W.
CLARKE, E.T.
CLEMENCE, S.
DUKE, J.
EMERICK, W.F.
FAWCETT, C.
FAWCETT, H.
FINLAY, R.G.
GARVEY, G.G.
GILROY, E.C.
GILSON, A.
GORMAN, F.

HARRIS, A.
HARRIS, G.H.
HOLLANDS, F.
HOWARD, A.
HOWSE, C.
JAMES, A.A.
JAMES, J.F.
JANES, F.
JONES, L.E.
JOHNSTON, B.A.
KNOWLES, J.W.
KNOWLES, T.N. *
LESUEUR, N.L.
LUCAS, H.T.
LUCAS, G.E.
LUCAS, J.F.
LUCAS, FRANK
LUCAS, GORDON
MacADAMS, J.M.
McVICAR, W.W.
MELLON, J.R.
MUMFORD, J.
MULLIN, A.E.
NASH, F.
NASH, H.
NEIL, P.

NEWTON, J.
PAGE, H.
PARDEE, H.M.
PARSONS, D.A.G.
PARSONS, H.M.S.
PARSONS, A.W.G.
PEARSON, J.H.
PHILLIPS, E.
PHILLIPS, F.G.
PLAYNE, L. *
POUSSETTE, H.R.
RANDOLPH, D.R.
RANDOLPH, W.L.C.
RANDOLPH, J.W.
REED, J.
SMILEY, T.H.
STUART, J.
TURNBULL, A.S.
VanVALKENBURG, G.
WADE, A.
WADE, W.
WADE, R.
WALKER, E.S.
WALKER, W.L.
WRIGHT, T. *
MacADAMS, B. Miss

SECOND GREAT WAR

ABRAHART, W.A.
AGNEW, D.J.
AIKEN, F.R.
ALLISON, J.H.
AMBLER, J.G.
ATWOOD, W.H.
BAWTENHEIMER, J.R.
BLANCHARD, M.J.
BLANCHARD, R.W.
BRADFORD, C.M.
BRAKEMAN, J.C. *
CARES, E.G.
CAWTHORN, B.S.
CHIVERS, C.W.
CHIVERS, E.C.
CHURCH, J.G.
CHURCH, J.G.
CHURCH, W.H.

CLARKE, C.C.
CLARKE, C.W.
CLARKE, J.C. *
CLARKE, R.C.
CLEMENT, W.R.
CRANMER, D.L.
CRANMER, H.G.
CRANMER, W.O.
DEPEW, J.H.H.
DICKINSON, R.R.K.
EAST, T.A.
EHMAN, J.A.
EHMAN, S.L.
EHMAN, W.H.
EWENER, R.C.
EWENER, W.A.
FIELDING, E.L.
FOUBISTER, E.J.

GALLAWAY, E.D.
GALLAWAY, J.K.
GALLAWAY, L.G. *
GALPIN, R.R.
GARVEY, T.G.
GRAHAM, F.A.
HAGUE, T.A.
HALE, W.G.
HALLAM, J.N. *
HANEY, D.W.
HANEY, T.V.
HANEY, W.S.
HARRIS, M.E.
HARRIS, W.E.
HODGINS, G.D.
HUESTON, A.M.
HUESTON, E.H.
HUESTON, W.M.

HUNT, W.D.
 HUNTER, C.C.
 JAMES, G.A.
 JAMES, J.P.
 JANES, D.M.
 JANES, K.B.
 JOLLY, N.R.J.
 KEWLEY, W.E.
 KINDERSLEY, R.E.G.
 LEACH, N.F.
 LECKIE, L.E.
 LESUEUR, C.R.
 LESUEUR, N.L.
 LESUEUR, R.E.
 LEWIS, J.A.
 LORRIMAN, C.A.
 MacADAMS, H.W.
 McINTYRE, G.
 McINTYRE, P.H.
 MEERE, A.E.
 MEERE, J.F.
 MEERE, L.R.*
 MENDIZABAL, R.*
 MILLHOLLAND, A.S.
 MILLHOLLAND, W.B.
 NASH, C.A.*
 NEILSON, D.H.
 NETHERY, A.H.
 NEWMAN, S.R.
 NEWTON, F.B.

NEWTON, J.W.
 PACAUD, R.A.
 PALTRIDGE, C.K.
 PALTRIDGE, D.A.
 PALTRIDGE, R.F.
 PARDEE, T.B.
 PARKER, R.L.
 PARKER, W.E.
 PERRY, B.C.
 PHILLIPS, F.J.
 PHILLIPS, S.L.
 PINKETT, W.H.
 POWELL, S.B.*
 RANDOLPH, A.B.
 RICHARDSON, F.H.R.
 RICHARDSON, R.S.
 RICHARDSON, T.G.
 ROBBINS, G.K.
 SAYMAN, H.
 SCHREIBER, F.E.
 SCHWEITZER, J.C.
 SCROGGIE, N.A.
 SIM, B.A.
 SIM, B.A.
 SIM, R.J.
 SIMPSON, J.H.
 SMITH, A.C.
 SMITH, R.B.
 STRONACH, J.G.*
 SUTHERLAND, L.G.*

WALKER, J.G.
 WHALLEY, W.K.
 WILCOX, H.T.
 WILCOX, R.J.
 WILKINSON, F.R.
 WOODROW, C.E.
 WOODROW, H.S.
 WRENSHALL, C.
 WRIGHT, C.W.
 WRIGHT, J.L.*
 WYNNE-JONES, A.

BURKE, D.W.*

WOMEN'S SECTION

AHERN, N.F.
 BAIKIE, M.L.
 CLARKE, P.M.
 COLLINS, F.P.
 DEPEW, A.V.
 DURANT, D.M.
 HALE, V.
 HUGHES, M.I.
 KERSHAW, M.U.
 McLEOD, J.M.
 NASH, M.E.
 REEVES, M.J.

NOTE: Names with a star * beside their name were killed in action.

SOURCE:

All Saints Anglican Church (formerly St. George's Anglican Church) located @ 248 Vidal St., Sarnia.

FOR KING AND COUNTRY
MEMBERS OF
ST. JOHN'S ANGLICAN CHURCH
WHO HAVE VOLUNTEERED FOR ACTIVE SERVICE
WITH CANADA'S FIGHTING FORCES

ALLINGHAM, J.C.
BATEY, D.
BELTON, J.W.
BERRY, J.
BLAKE, C.W.
BLAKE, E.R.
BRITTON, G.W.
BURGESS, R.
CAMERON, H.S.
CARTER, C.C.
CASE, R.S.
COCKS, J.H.M.
CROCKETT, C.
CORNER, R.
DAGG, C.S.
DELDERFIELD, R.J.
DUNFORD, H.W.
DUNFORD, T.
EVERINGHAM, E.
FINAN, E.T.W.
FISHER, J.M.
GALLAWAY, L.G.*
GANDER, J.R.
GORDON, C.
HARVEY, J.M.
HARMER, J.H.
HARRIS, R.
HOAD, C.E.
HOLLANDS, W.C.
HORNBLOWER, C.
HODGINS, D.
JOHNSTON, J.S.*
KAY, S.
KETTLE, J.
KIRBY, D.A.
KIRBY, W.L.
KNIGHT, N.L.
KNUDSEN, J.F.
LAIDLER, T.
MAGILL, T.H.
MILDON, D.
MORPHEW, A.F.
MORPHEW, MARGARET
MYLES, E.R.*

AMOR, J.G.D.
BATEY, W.G.
BELTON, W.G..
BERRY, J.A.
BLAKE, C.J.
BLAKE, J.J.
BUCKINGHAM, J.E.
BURKE, D.
CARLTON, S.G.
CARTER, R.P.
CHIVERS, W.N.
COCKS, H.C.
CROOKS, H.
CROXFORD, W.R.
DAWS, F.J.*
DOBSON, G.E.
DUNFORD, J.W.
DURBAN, J.A.
FARNER, R.
FIRTH, R.C.
FLAVELL, A.J.
GAMBLE, W.
GARVIN, G.
GROVER, J.
HEALEY, C.W.
HARRIS, J.
HARRISON, C.C.
HOAD, J.R.
HOLLERAN, G.
HORNBLOWER, J.
JANESS, R.
JONES, G.
KENT, E.G.
KEYS, J.
KIRBY, G.D.
KIRBY, W.H.
KNIGHT, P.T.
KNUTT, R.
LE NEVE, K.
MAGILL, T.W.
MITCHELL, R.D.
MORPHEW, G.
MURRAY, D.S.
McCLINTOCK, L.G.

BACKMAN, H.G.
BELL, R.
BENTLEY, L.J.
BLACKMORE, F.A.
BLAKE, C.P.
BOODY, G.H.
BURGESS, G.
BUTTERFIELD, A.
CARLTON, W*.
CASE, L.R.
COCKS, REV. H.F.C.
COPLAND, J.W.
CONNOLLY, E.
CURRAN, J.F.
DAWS, L.
DRINKWATER, W.*
DUNFORD, W.L.
ELDRIDGE, C.
ALLEN, EDNA
FISHER, E.A.
GALLAWAY, E.D.
GANDER, A.F.*
GEORGE, E.
HALL, K.
HEALEY, F.H.
HARRIS, J.M.*
HARRISON, J.F.
HOAD, S.F.
HOLLERAN, W.C.
HURST, H.J.
JOHNSON, B.
KARR, G.S.
KENT, R.W.
KIPPER, LINDA
KIRBY, S.J.
KIRKPATRICK, W.J.
KNIGHT, W.L.*
LAIDLER, H.G.
MAGGS, F.H.
MARTIN, L.J.
MITCHELL, D.L.
MORPHEW, J.J.
MURRAY, D.
McKEGNEY, E.L.

McKEGNEY, J.C.
 NEEDHAM, K.
 NUTT, FLORENCE A.
 PEARSON, W.S.
 PIRRIE, J.
 RAWCLIFFE, J.D.
 RICHARDS, C.V.*
 ROLLO, W.G.
 SECORD, L.
 SKELTON, R.J.
 SUMNER, B.
 THAIN, D.
 TIMPERLEY, G.D.
 WALKER, G.
 WATSON, G.T.
 WILKINSON, M.J.
 WILSON, J.
 CAMPBELL, A.J.
 BRITTON, J.E.
 ALLINGHAM, L.R.
 HOWES, MARJORIE
 MITRINK, M.L.
 BACKMAN, A.
 DERHAK, E.
 HUGHES, F.
 MOORE, K.
 WALKER, J.
 ELLIOT, H.S.

McKEGNEY, W.E.
 NEEDHAM, T.
 NUTT, J.J.
 PIPPARD, F.A.
 POWELL, T.E.*
 RAWCLIFFE, C.
 RICHARDSON, R.S.
 ROSS, R.L.
 SEWELL, W.
 SMITH, J.R.
 SUTTON, C.L.
 THAIN, J.*
 TIMPERLEY, J.E.
 WALLER, L.
 WEBSPER, W.
 WILLIS, S.
 WRIGHT, A.
 HARRIS, M.D.
 CHAPPLE, N.L.
 BLOOMFIELD, PEARL
 HILL, E.A.E.
 MITRINK, C.
 BERRY, D.
 DUNN, L.
 McKEGNEY, R.
 PERKINS, J.K.
 WASSON, J.E.
 REECE, E.

NEEDHAM, J.
 NIELD, R.
 PARSONS, A.E.*
 PIPPARD, G.E.
 RATTEE, J.T.
 REDDING, W.
 ROBBINS, J.
 SADLEIR, C.W.
 SIMPSON, W.P.
 STEWART, J.
 THAIN, C.
 THOMAS, L.C.
 WALDECK, E. JEAN
 WATSON, E.C.*
 WESSELL, BETTY
 WILLIS, J.R.
 YUKISH, W.
 HUMPHRIES, R.
 PASS, HELEN
 CHIVERS, J.W.,
 KNUDSON, L.
 WALTON, J.
 BIRKENSHAW, F.
 HOAD, A.W.
 MITRINK, S.
 STRACHAN, J.
 WYSEMAN, A.
 STEWART, C.A.

NOTE: Names with a star * beside their name were killed in action.

St. John's Anglican Church, which closed in 2011, also had the following plaque in it's foyer (it is now located in St. John's Anglican Church in Corunna):

TO THE GLORY OF GOD
 AND TO THE SACRED MEMORY OF
 THE REVEREND EDGAR WATT McKEGNEY, M.A., T.C.D.
 BORN AT ST. PAUL MINNESOTA, ON FEBRUARY 6TH, 1892
 RECTOR OF ST. JOHN'S CHURCH, SARNIA, ONT.
 OCTOBER 4TH, 1929 TO HIS DEATH ON CHRISTMAS EVE 1937
 SERVED WITH THE ROYAL INNISKILLING FUSILIERS 1915 TO MAR. 1918
 PRISONER OF WAR 8 MONTHS
 THIS TABLET WAS ERECTED BY THE PARISHIONERS OF THIS CHURCH
 TO PERPETUATE THE MEMORY OF A BELOVED RECTOR
 DEDICATED CHRISTMAS EVE 1939
 "GREAT DEEDS CANNOT DIE:
 THEY, WITH THE SUN AND MOON, RENEW THEIR LIGHT
 FOREVER, BLESSING THOSE THAT LOOK ON THEM."

SOURCE:

All Saints Anglican Church (formerly St. John's Anglican Church) located @ 248 Vidal St., Sarnia.
 Ian Mason

FOR KING AND COUNTRY
MEMBERS OF
ST. JOSEPH'S ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH
WHO VOLUNTEERED FOR ACTIVE SERVICE
WITH CANADA'S FIGHTING FORCES

REV. T.J. MCCARTHY
HARDING, D.
ABDO, E.
ALLEN, J.
ALLEN, C.
ALLAN, R.
ANDERSON, S.
ANDERSON, WILLIAM.*
BARR, WILLIAM.*
BARBEAU, W.
BAYDUCK, R.
BAYDUCK, L.
BECOWERY, M.
BELLENGER, E.
BOURASSA, H.
BOYLE, R.
BOYLE, W.
BORCE, E.
BROWN, ALBERT
BROWN, JOSEPH
BROWN, WILLIAM
BUTLER, PATRICK
BUTLER, JAMES.
BUTLER, JOHN
BUTLER, STEVE
CAROBIN, P.
CAUSLEY, R.
CAUSLEY, C.
COLBOURNE, JACK
COLBOURNE, JOSEPH
COTE, T.
COOPER, G.
COOKE, K.
CRAWFORD, J.
CRADDOCK, J.
CRIBBIN, TOM
CURRAN, JOHN
CURRY, JAMES
CURRY, JOSEPH
CURRY, R.
DAWSON, J.
DAWSON, JAMES
DEVINE, D.
DENNIS, JOHN
DERUSH, E.
DERUSH, F.
DERUSH, O.
DERUSH, W. JOHN

DEVEREAUX, JOHN
D'ATH, P.
DIONNE, RAYMOND*
DOOHAN, JAMES
DOOHAN, WILLIAM
DOUCHER, R.
DOYLE, H.
DUFFY, F.
DUNN, V.
DUNN, D.
DUNN, L.
EGAN, FRANCIS
EGAN, JOSEPH M.
EGAN, VINCE J.
FAUBERT, LEO
FAUBERT, R.
FELLOWS, FRED
FELLOWS, J.
FELLOWS, G.
FISHER, T.
FISHER, R.
FISHER, R.
FILION, J.
FORD, J.
FOSTER, J.
FRANCOEUR, F.
FRENKOWSKI, P.
GAWUNICK, N.
GAWUNICK, W.
GLEASON, R.
GOOD, E.
HARKNESS, G.
HASLIP, ROBERT
HAYES, T.
HAGGARTY, F.* (HEGARTY)
HEALEY, K.
HEALEY, T.
HEMSTREET, F.
HEMSTREET, M.
HEMSTREET, R.
HEWITT, J.D.
HEWITT, F.W.
HIPPLE, J.
JORDAN, REV. J.
KIRLUIK, P.
KIRLUIK, S.
KINCH, DON
KERWIN, KENNETH

KNIGHT, MISS EILEEN
 KNIGHT, G.
 KNIGHT, EDWARD J.*
 KOLOTA, J.
 KOLOTA, W.
 KUMSKY, F.
 KUMSKY, P.
 LALONDE, C.F.
 LAPOINT, N.
 LAFOND, H.
 LEGARRIE, H.* (LEGARE)
 LEVACK, F.
 MACDONALD, JAMES A.
 MACDONALD, ROBERT R.
 MCDERMOTT, P.
 MCCARTHY, KENNETH
 MCKENZIE, C.
 MCKEOWN, W.
 MCLEAN, F.
 MCLEAN, L.
 MCLELLAN, ALLAN*
 MCMANUS, G.
 MATHERS, L..
 MORRISSEY, I.
 MORRISSEY, JOHN
 MULLIGAN, JAMES
 MULLIGAN, JOSEPH
 MULLIGAN, R.
 MURPHY, G.
 MORAN, W.
 MILNE, HAROLD
 NEIF, ROBERT
 NELSON, J.
 NEVILLE, STEVE
 NOLAN, W.
 O'BRIEN, A.
 O'CONNOR, BARRY*
 O'CONNOR, PATRICK*
 O'CONNOR, E.
 O'REILLY, PATRICK
 O'REILLY, MICHAEL
 PARROTT, P.
 PAYNE, F.
 PAQUETTE, ALBERT
 PAQUETTE, K.
 PAITHOUSKI, NICHOLAS
 PAITHOUSKI, MICHAEL*
 PETTIT, FRANK

PETTIT, G.
 PETTIT, HAROLD
 PETTIT, LLOYD
 POWERS, J.
 PRENTICE, F.
 PRENTICE, D.
 PRENTICE, P.
 PROULE, A.
 QUINN, JOHN P.
 QUINN, THOMAS
 QUINN, C.
 RYAN, THOMAS D.
 SADOQUIS, G.
 SADOQUIS, M.
 SADOQUIS, ROLLAND
 SAUVE, R.
 SAUVE, A.
 SAUVE, V.
 SANTACHE, R.
 SHEEHY, F.
 SHIRLEY, J.
 SHORTT, M.
 SMITH, R.
 SNIDER, C.
 SULLIVAN, M.
 SUMMERS, J.
 TAYLOR, C.J.
 TAYLOR, J.
 TIMMERMAN, T.
 TOBIN, JOSEPH
 TOBIN, W.
 TRACEY, J.
 TRIPANIER, B.
 TULLY, A.J.
 VARNEY, R.
 VALLEE, V.
 VANROOYEN, JOHN P.
 WADE, R.
 WALSH, REV. C.
 WARD, E.
 WARD, JOHN
 WASTELL, J.
 WESTON, H.
 WOODCOCK, JAMES
 WOODCOCK, JOSEPH
 WOODCOCK, C.
 WYNNE, E.
 WYNNE, W.
 WYNNE, G.

NOTE: Names with a star * beside their name were killed in action.

SOURCES:

St. Joseph's Sarnia Catholic Church located @ 293 Stuart St., Sarnia.

Sarnia Canadian Observer – March 23, 1945 (Pg. 14): @ Sarnia Library 124 Christina St.

ST. PAUL'S UNITED CHURCH

HONOUR ROLL

L. PERRY #
J. ROBB
G. SMITH
D. MOORHOUSE
W. HOLLERAN
W.P. STONER
D. AUSTIN
W. JARVIS
D. FINNIGAN
J. MURRAY
IAN MILNE
A. HAMILTON
H. ANDERSON
R. COX
K. COLLINS
C. FOX
D. CREBSON
J. MacMILLAN
B. FLETCHER
J. BARTLEY
W.A. ROSE
M. BROWN
N. GREER
R. RAE #
W. HALEY
A. BURKHOLDER
K. BROWN
D. HALLAM
B. PHILLIPS #
E. GREER
J.A. ROSE
J. McCAW
W. PASSMORE
V. STAUFFER
M. PASSMORE
N. REID
A. FOULTON
B. McCAW
D. STAUFFER
W. McCAW
A. McDONALD
W. LANG*
J. GRIFFITH
R. ANDERSON
J. SMITH
G. MILNE
S. BRENNAN

G. KELLY*
W. KIRK
J. CLIFT
P. CHAPPELLE
J. ALLEN
W. KELLY
L. McKAY
J.R. KNOX
J. WALTON
G. QUINN
D. SCHNARR
G. GREER
H. GREER
MAJOR G. STIRRETT R.C.A.
MAJOR J. MacDONALD R.C.A.M.C.
FLT.CMDR. E. FERGUSON R.A.F.
LIEUT. H. HAINES R.C.A.
LIEUT. WM. REID R.C.A.
CH./P.O. WM. SPENGE R.C.N.
STF./SGT. R. BENDING R.C.A.M.C.
SGT. D.D. MILLER R.C.A.F.
SGT. H. HOBBS R.C.E..
SGT. D.A. MacMILLAN R.C.A.
SGT. L. LAUR R.C.A.
SGT. J. QUINN R.C.A.F. *
CPL. THOS. HAMILTON R.C.E. *
L/CPL. A.G. STIRRETT R.C.E.
L/CPL. R. DAILEY R.C.O.C.
BDR. A. HODGINS R.C.A.
SGT. J. MURRAY R.C.A.F.
A/G. R. McALLISTER R.C.A.F.
GNR. K. LAUR R.C.A. #
PTE. D. ROSE
PTE. R. DUNCAN
PTE. A. TAYLOR
PTE. WM. FLETCHER
GNR. CHAS. SADLEIR R.C.A.
GNR. H.S. CAMERON R.C.A.
GNR. D. LUCKAM R.C.A.
TPR. WM. KELLEY TANK CORP.
J.F. HALEY R.C.A.F.
D. VAIL R.C.A.F. *
A. MINERS R.C.A.F.
A/C. W. IRVINE R.C.A.F.
GNR. C. HODGINS R.C.A.
LD./S. A. MacMILLAN R.C.N.
GNR. THOS. GREER R.C.A.

LD./S. K. HOUSTON R.C.N.
 L/CPL. R.A. WADHAM R.C.O.C. #
 PTE. E. WALTHAM
 GNR. C. HUMPHREY R.C.A.
 SPR. ROBT. SCOTT R.C.E.
 GNR. R.M. WHITING R.C.A.
 STK. C. MacMILLAN R.C.N.
 PTE. F. DAVIDSON KENT REGT. #
 PTE. E. BULMAN
 PTE. T. GUTTERIDGE R.C.A.F.
 PTE. C. CAVEN
 PTE. W. KANE U.S.A.
 A/C. W.J. ALLEN R.C.A.F.
 PTE. R. STREET KENT R.
 GNR. V.R. CLARK R.C.A.
 E.W. BROWN
 J.A. BROWN
 J. LAING
 W. KIRKPATRICK
 C. CAMPBELL #
 L. CAVEN #
 L.S. MURRAY
 J.R. MURRAY
 D. MacKINLEY
 R.A. ZINK #
 N. BROWN

Additional Names WWII

N.F. ANDERSON
 G.R. BRENNAN
 A. BROOKS
 HAZEL BROWN
 J. BURGESS
 J. CAMPBELL
 J. CRAWFORD
 E. DAVIS
 E. DAWSON
 P. DAWSON
 W. DEMPSEY

I. FERGUSON
 L. FOLEY
 D. FOX
 M. GARSIDE
 J. GOODALL
 J. GREASON
 R. HACKNEY
 ELIZABETH JAMIESON
 J. JAMIESON
 J. KNIGHT
 M. KESHANEK
 B. MATTINGLEY
 R. MORRISON
 T. MOORE
 J.D. MURRAY
 R. MUNRO
 R. McCRAW
 R. McGIRR
 J. NUTTALL
 M. PHIBBS
 D. PASSMORE
 G.W. PASSMORE
 D. PALFRAMAN
 R. PALFRAMAN
 R. ROSS
 A. ROWE
 D. SANDS
 O. SMITH
 W. THOMPSON
 J. WADE
 G. WAITE
 J. WALKER
 E. WILKINS
 R. WILKINS
 D. WILLIAMSON
 J. WILLIAMSON
 R. WILLIAMSON
 C. YOUNG
 J. YOUNG
 R. YOUNG

NOTES:

Names with a star * beside their name were killed in action.

Names with a pound symbol # beside their name were ????

In 1922, St. Paul's United Church constructed an adjoining Memorial Hall (gym). It was built to honour the sacrifice of the young men of St. Paul's who gave their lives in the Great War. The Memorial Hall was constructed entirely by the volunteer labour of the men of the congregation, and was the only building erected to honour Sarnians who died in the First World War.^k

SOURCE:

St. Paul's United Church located @ 360 Devine St., Sarnia.

Ian Mason

VILLAGE OF POINT EDWARD CENOTAPH

(Located in Point Edward Veterans Memorial Park)

THIS MEMORIAL
WAS ERECTED BY THE CITIZENS OF
POINT EDWARD
THROUGH VOLUNTARY CONTRIBUTIONS
TO THE HONOURED HEROS
WHO MADE THE SUPREME SACRIFICE
IN THE GREAT WAR
1914 – 1918
LEST WE FORGET
THEIR NAMES SHALL LIVE FOREVER

THIS STONE WAS LAID BY
LORD JULIAN BYNG OF VIMY
GOVERNOR GENERAL OF CANADA
APRIL 18TH 1922

YPRES	HOOGE	ST. ELOI	VIMY RIDGE	BOURLAN WOOD	SANCTUARY WOOD
DOUAI	HILL 70	ARLEUX	FRESNOY	VALENCIENNES	QUEANT DROCOURT
MONS	DENAIN	GIVINCHY	FESTUBERT	PASSCHENDAELE	NEUVE CHAPPELLE
LENS	SOMME	AMIENS	CAMBRIA	CANAL-DU-NORD	MONCHY-LE-PREUX

KILLED IN ACTION

RANDALL ROBERT
SEAGER FREDERICK
SKINNER WILLIAM BRUCE
SLATER BENJAMIN
WALKER FRANK
FERNS PERCY

TAYLOR ERNEST
VOLLICK HENRY HERBERT
WALTER KENNETH
WILLIAMS MORRIS

HOWELL ARTHUR

KILLED IN ACTION

BENWARE NEIL
CLARKE WILLIAM
FORSYTHE ROBERT
FAIR ROY
GRACEY AUBREY WILLIAM

HAMBLETON GEORGE
HOWIE MORLEY
KEEMLE CHARLES
McRURY ANGUS
PLUMBRIDGE THOMAS

DIED DURING MILITARY SERVICE OR THROUGH MILITARY SERVICE

KNIGHT, RICHARD R.
EVANS, THOMAS H.
BROWN, JAMES GORDON
MAVITTY, JOHN

THE STONE IN THIS
MEMORIAL WAS DONATED
BY THE
CENTRAL CANADA STONE CO. LTD.

VILLAGE OF POINT EDWARD BELL TOWER

(Located in Point Edward Veterans Memorial Park. It has these four plaques on it)

DEDICATED
TO THE MEN AND WOMEN OF THIS COMMUNITY
WHO SERVED IN WORLD WAR II
1939 – 1945

KILLED IN ACTION
ALBERT E. BENDALL
JACK BURGESS
ROSS CLARK
ROBERT S. HADLEY
GEORGE HOPWOOD

THIS PLAQUE IS ERECTED IN HONOUR OF
THE VETERANS OF THE KOREAN WAR
1950 – 1953

THIS PARK DONATED TO POINT EDWARD BY
CARL C. MANORE
IN MEMORY OF HIS PARENTS
MR. AND MRS. C.C. MANORE,
LONG TIME RESIDENTS OF THE VILLAGE

POINT EDWARD CANADIAN MERCHANT NAVY MEMORIAL

(Also located in Point Edward Veterans Memorial Park)

CANADIAN MERCHANT NAVY - THE LIFE LINE OF THE WORLD

IN MEMORY OF THE CANADIAN MERCHANT SEAMEN AND THE CANADIAN
VESSELS LOST BY ENEMY ACTION AND THOSE WHO SERVED IN THE CAUSE OF FREEDOM

COMMEMORATING		
WORLD WAR I	WORLD WAR II	THE KOREAN WAR
1914 – 1918	1939 – 1945	1950 - 1953
WORLD WAR II		
KENNETH BURGESS	CLIFFORD JARVIS	NORMAN ROSS
JAMES BURNS	REID McLAM	JAMES SHAW
FRANK HARKNESS	BRUCE PEACHEY	JOHN WALKER
DONALD HUGGINS	CLARKSON G. PEACHEY	

ON ALL THE OCEANS WHITE CAPS FLOW THERE ARE NO CROSSES ROW ON ROW
THOSE WHO SLEEP BENEATH THE SEA MAY SLEEP IN PEACE FOR OUR COUNTRY'S FREE
WE WILL REMEMBER THEM YES WE WILL REMEMBER THEM

(On the back of this stone Memorial is a list of)
CANADIAN VESSELS LOST BY ENEMY ACTION IN
WORLD WAR I (24 ships recorded)
and WORLD WAR II (67 ships recorded)

ERECTED BY THE RESIDENTS OF POINT EDWARD 1996

VILLAGE OF POINT EDWARD EX SERVICEMEN'S ASSOCIATION

NOTE: These two Honour Rolls are located inside the Pt. Edward Club.

HONOUR ROLL FOR KING AND COUNTRY

JOHN EDWARD LEA	1 ST BATT.
*FRED SEAGER	18 TH BATT.
ERNEST BURDETTE	34 TH BATT.
ALFRED McLAUGHLIN	34 TH BATT.
CHARLES BRYANT	34 TH BATT.
PETER H. COMBE	70 TH BATT.
VICTOR BUCHANAN	70 TH BATT.
AUBREY GRACY	70 TH BATT.
DRUMMOND GREENWOOD	70 TH BATT.
FRANK BURDETTE	149 TH BATT.
WILLIAM SIDNEY COOK	149 TH BATT.
JAMES WESLEY COOK	149 TH BATT.
WILLIAM EDGAR	149 TH BATT.
HERBERT VOLLOCK	149 TH BATT.
FRANK COOK	149 TH BATT.
GEORGE COOK	149 TH BATT.
A.S. HARDY HILL	R.N.C.U.R. BATT.
GEO. JENKINS	R.F.C. BATT.
JOSEPH KEE	1 ST DEPOT BATT. W.O.R.
CORP. N.G. KIRKLAND	2.M.STAFF W.O.R.

FOR KING AND COUNTRY MEMBERS OF POINT EDWARD UNITED CHURCH WHO HAVE VOLUNTEERED FOR ACTIVE SERVICE WITH CANADA'S FIGHTING FORCES

ANDERSON, EYLER	HADLEY, ROBT. S. *
BARR, ROBERT	HAYES, BILL
BARR, NEIL	HAYES, TED
BARRETT, BRUCE	HEFFRON, WILSON
BARRETT, ORTIE	JONES, HERBERT L.
BEASLEY, WILL	JONES, CLIFFORD
BROCK, WM. E.	KEMSLEY, JACK
BURR, STANLEY	KIRKLAND, BOB
CHURCH, STANLEY	MATTINGLY, RAY
CLARK, ROSS E.	MAIDMENT, CHAS. K.
COOK, DOUGLAS	McAULEY, ROBT.
COOKE, CLAUDE	McMAHON, JAS. W.
CLAXTON, WALTER	MILLER, ERNEST J.
CLEAVE, WILL	RICHARDS, ELMER
CLEAVE, JACK	RICHARDS, FRANK
DENNIS, GLEN	SWALES, HOWARD
FINCH, BOB	WHITELAW, ERNEST
GOULD, KENNETH	YATES, ROSS
GOULD, LEE. NELSON	YATES, BILL
GUTTERIDGE, BILL	BRADY, WALTER
GRAHAM, JOHN. EDW.	GUTTERIDGE, ROBT.
GUTTERIDGE, TOM. H.	SCOTT, NORM
GREENWOOD, TED	TAYLOR, BERT
HADLEY, DONALD, H.	

CITIZENS OF SARNIA-LAMBTON WHO FOUGHT IN THE **KOREAN WAR**

JUNE 25, 1950 – JULY 27, 1953

<u>NAME</u> (* = killed in action)	<u>REGIMENT</u>
L.R.W. AULPH	
WILLIAM ANDERSON	Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry
PALMER ARNOLD	
SYRIL BABIN	
ROBERT BACHELOR	Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry
JOE BALOGNA	
J.B. BARRIE	
LEONARD ROE BEATSON	Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry
WILF BEDARD	
ORV BLONDIN	Royal Canadian Engineers
F.L. BROOKS	
CHARLES BROWN	US Army
J.P. CAHILL	
CHARLIE CHAFE	Royal Canadian Navy
KEN CHIDWICK	Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry
G.A.D. CHURCHER	
H.W. CLARK	
JOSEPH CONNOR	
DOUG COOPER	
WALLACE T. CRAVAN	Royal Canadian Navy
JAMES CROSSMAN	Royal Canadian Regiment
DONALD DARK	Royal Canadian Navy
GOLDIE DAWSON	Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry
PAUL DENSMORE	Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry
C.J. DOEY	
WILLIAM EMBERLEY	
CHARLES EMMONS	Royal Canadian Navy
BRUCE CARLTON EYRE	
ROBERT FADER	
JC FERGUSON	
GEORGE GALLOP	Royal Canadian Army
EDWARD GAMMON	
VIC GANDER	Royal Canadian Army Service Corps
ERNEST GELINAS	
FRED GENERAL	Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry
WILF GERMAN	
ROBERT GRAHAM	Royal Canadian Navy
ERNEST GREENBIRD	
TED HASLIP	
C. HATFIELD	
JOHN HENNESSY	Royal Canadian Regiment
RUSS HOBSON	
BRUCE L. HOUCK	
W.J. IDEN	
ROBERT EDWARD JAMES	Royal Canadian Regiment
JOHN KEMP	
EDWARD KETTLE	Royal Canadian Navy
EDWARD JOSEPH MICHAEL KNIGHT*	Royal Canadian Regiment

JACK EDWARD LACHANCE	Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry
GUY LACHAPELLE	
GUY LUC LALONDE	Royal 22nd Regiment (The Van Doos)
BOB LAPAGE	Royal Canadian Regiment
W.J. LEITCH	Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry
ROB LESLIE	
WILLIAM LESPERANCE	
G.A.D. LETHONEN	
HAROLD MACDONALD	Royal Canadian Regiment
PETE MCDONALD	RHR
HAROLD MCLELLAN	Royal Canadian Horse Artillery
GEORGE MCPHEE	RSF
JIMMY MERCER	
JOSEPH ANTHONY MILLS	Royal Canadian Regiment
PETE MORREAU	
BRUCE MURCH	Royal Canadian Navy
HOWARD NEUBAURR	Royal Canadian Regiment
RENNIE NICKSON	Medic
CARSON NIXON	Military Police
PATRICK WILLIAM O'CONNOR*	Royal Canadian Regiment
WILLIAM E. OLDALE	Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry
A.D. ORTON	
ARNOLD PALMER	
HOWARD PEARCE	Royal Canadian Regiment
DAN PHILLIPS	
RONALD PHILLIPS	
JAMES PRIOR	Royal Canadian Horse Artillery
JACK PYNE	
KENNETH REDMOND	
LESLIE ROBERTSON	Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry
ROBERT ROSEI	Royal Canadian Regiment
GEORGE S. SADOQUIS	
KEN SAUVE	
AL SCOTT	Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry
JAMES H. SILVER	US Marine Corps
KEN SISSON	
WILLIAM R. SMALE	
HAROLD BRUCE SMITH	
R.D. STEPHENSON	
R.J.K. STEVENS	
JACK SWETLISHNOFF	Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry
DONALD THOMAS	US Military
JOHN RICHARD TOOLE*	Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry
TERRY TULLY	Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry
GEORGE VALE	RCSC
DAVE VANSICKLE	Royal Canadian Regiment
HANK WELLINGTON	Royal Canadian Engineers
PETE WELLINGTON	Royal Canadian Army Service Corps
LEN WHITE	Royal Canadian Engineers
R.F. WILLIAMS	
JOHN O'HARA WRIGHT*	Royal Canadian Engineers

SOURCES:

Sarnia R.C. Legion Branch 62; Point Edward Serviceman's Club; Bill Oldale; *Sarnia War Remembrance Project*.

APPENDIX I

CANADA AND SARNIA WAR STATISTICS

	Served	Wounded	Canadian Fallen	SARNIA Fallen*
South African War (Oct. 11, 1899 – May 31, 1902)	approximately 7 400+	250+	Approximately 270+	1 (16 participated)
World War I (Aug. 4, 1914 – Nov. 11, 1918)	approximately 620 000	172 000+	61 000+**	119 (112)
World War II (Sep. 10, 1939 – Aug. 15, 1945)	1 100 000+	55 000+	47 000+	185 (169)
The Korean War (June 25, 1950 – July 27, 1953)	26 791	1 550+	516	4 (4)
Vietnam War (1964 - Apr. 1975)	estimated 12 000	estimated 4 000	estimated 120-400	
In the Service of Canada*** (as of Sept 2016)	175 000+		approximately 1 800	1 (1)
The Afghanistan War (Dec. 2001–Mar. 2014)	approximately 40 000	2 100+	159	2 (2)

For both World War I and World War II numbers above, they are for Canada and Newfoundland combined. (Newfoundland, though a British Colony, did not join the Confederation of Canada until March of 1949)

* Sarnia Fallen numbers is research based, and are the names included in *The Sarnia War Remembrance Project*. (in brackets below are the number of names inscribed on the City of Sarnia Cenotaph)

* *Some sources, including the First World War Book of Remembrance list this total as 66,000+. This is because several thousand personnel died after the disbandment of the Canadian Expeditionary Force, so includes military personnel who died from August 4, 1914 to April 31, 1922.

***In the Service of Canada

Canadians that gave their lives in service to their country since October 1947 (not including the Korean War). This includes during training, peacekeeping and foreign operations and service in Canada. Source: In the Service of Canada Book of Remembrance, Peace Tower on Parliament Hill, Ottawa.

Note: Sarnia and Canada's approximate populations at the start of the two World Wars;
1914: Sarnia = 10,900 1914: Canada = 7.8 million 1939: Sarnia = 18,240 1939: Canada = 11.2 million

APPENDIX II

SARNIA AT WAR: QUICK FACTS AND NUMBERS

- *The Sarnia War Remembrance Project* has 312 names included in it: 1 from the Boer War, 119 from World War I (114 known*), 185 from World War II, 4 from the Korean War, 1 from In Service To Canada; and 2 from the Afghanistan War. (The City of Sarnia Cenotaph has 288 names inscribed on it: 112 from World War I, 169 from World War II, 4 from the Korea War, 1 from In Service To Canada; and 2 from the Afghanistan War).
*Five names inscribed on the World War I section of the Sarnia cenotaph (and listed in this Project), could not be identified with absolute certainty as to their true identities.
 - The original City of Sarnia Cenotaph was unveiled in November 1921, three years after the end of World War I. The “new” renovated Sarnia Cenotaph was re-dedicated in November 1955, ten years after the end of World War II.
 - The Sarnia Cenotaph includes eleven sets of brothers and two fathers and sons who lost their lives in war. (*The Sarnia War Remembrance Project* includes twelve sets of brothers).
 - A total of 16 men from Sarnia and Lambton served in the Boer War. It is estimated that more than 1100 Sarnia men and women served in World War I, approximately 3000 Sarnia men and women served in World War II, and at least 50 from Sarnia-Lambton served in the Korean War.
 - It was only three months after the town of Sarnia was officially declared a city in May 1914, that its citizens were called upon to fight for home and country.
 - Sarnia’s sons and daughters have always answered the call to fight in far off lands to save the oppressed and occupied, to defeat evil forces, and to defend freedom and liberty. The vast majority were volunteers—ordinary “citizen soldiers”. Those who served comprised people of every class, ethnic origin, religious affiliation, with a wide variety of educational backgrounds, professions and ages.
 - In World War I, there was a locally raised battalion—the Lambton 149th; and in World War II, there was a ship—the Bangor-class minesweeper *HMCS Sarnia*, and an air squadron—the *RCAF No. 414 “City of Sarnia” Squadron*, adopted by the city.
 - On the home front, providing support to those serving overseas and humanitarian relief to those impacted by war have been numerous local volunteer organizations including the Sarnia Red Cross, IODE, Salvation Army, YMCA, Canadian Legion, St. John’s Ambulance, Knights of Columbus, Sarnia Kinsmen Club, Kiwanis Club, Rotary Club, Children’s Aid Society and many local church groups.
 - Industry has always played a critical role in times of war, whether providing soldiers to serve, its know-how or supplying materials. Key to the war effort locally has been Mueller Limited, Electric Auto-Lite Limited, Holmes Foundry, MacCraft Corporation, Dow Chemical, Polymer Corporation Limited and Imperial Oil Company.
 - Sarnia’s first casualty of World War I was 28-year-old Private Roy Iliffe—he lost his life on April 22, 1915, the first day of the Second Battle of Ypres, Belgium. In the week following, two more Sarnia’s lost their lives in the same battle; 24-year-old Private Harry Bury on April 24, and 23-year-old Private Thomas Powell on April 30. These three soldiers lost their lives only eight months after the war had started.
- Sarnia’s first casualty of World War II was 18-year-old Able-Bodied Seaman Stephen Powell—he lost his life on October 22, 1940, thirteen months after the war began. Powell was one of 142 who were lost in the sinking of the *HMCS Margaree* in the mid-Atlantic, after it had collided with another ship. Just over one month later on December 1st, two more Sarnians lost their lives; 20-year-old Able Seamen Paul Brown and 21-year-old Hector Le Gare. Brown and Le Gare were two of twenty-one crew members killed when the *HMCS Saguenay* was attacked by a U-boat in the North Atlantic.
- Sarnia’s youngest fallen soldier is 15-year-old Robert Batey, who lost his life during the Battle of the Somme, France in September 1916 of World War I. Sarnia’s youngest fallen soldier of World War II is 17-year-old RCAF Pilot Officer-Air Gunner John Dowding, who lost his life as a crew member aboard a Whitley bomber that crashed during a nighttime cross-country flight exercise in England in October 1944.

- Sarnia's oldest fallen soldier is 54-year-old Edward Ramesbottom, who died of natural causes in St. John's, Newfoundland in December 1942 while serving with the Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve in World War II. Sarnia's oldest fallen soldier of World War I is 52-year-old Major David Bentley. A doctor with the Canadian Army Medical Corps, Bentley died in England in April 1917 of ill health, the result of his time spent at the Front.
- Of Sarnia's World War I fallen, the median enlistment age was 24 years old. Eighteen of them, or 15.7% of the WWI enlistees were teenagers (age 19 or under). Of Sarnia's World War II fallen, the median enlistment age was 21 years old. Seventy of the WWII enlistees were teenagers (age 19 or under). This equals 37.8% of Sarnia's WWII fallen enlisted as teenagers. Of the 185 World War II fallen soldiers included in this Project, 113 of them enlisted at age 21 or under, representing just over 61%.
- The median age of Sarnia's World War I fallen soldiers is 26 years old (the average Canadian soldier age was a little over 26 years old). The median age of Sarnia's World War II fallen soldiers is 23 years old (matching Canada's national median). A total of 69.7% of Sarnia's World War II fallen were age 25 or under. Of the 185 World War II Sarnia fallen soldiers included in this Project, 59 of them were between the ages of 17 and 21, representing close to one third of Sarnia's World War II fallen.
- Nine of Sarnia's World War I fallen were conscripted to service under the Military Service Act of 1917. All were called to service in January 1918, and eight of them were killed in action overseas. Five of Sarnia's World War II fallen had enrolled under the National Resources Mobilization Act. Four of them embarked overseas in 1944, losing their lives in action. The fifth man lost his life in British Columbia in 1944.
- There are 5 Sarnia names of WWI fallen soldiers included in this Project who lost their lives after the end of the First World War. There are 10 names of WWII fallen soldiers included in this Project who lost their lives after the end of the Second World War (six of them between VE Day-May 8/45 and VJ Day-Aug 15/45).
- Of the total 307 identified Sarnia fallen soldiers, 215 of them are buried in graves in cemeteries, representing 70% of Sarnia's war dead. These graves are in over 120 cemeteries that are scattered throughout the world, in at least 17 different countries; including South Africa, France, Belgium, England, Netherlands, Germany, Sicily, Italy, Algeria, Portugal, Sri Lanka, India, Egypt, Iceland, Azores, Barbados, South Korea as well as Canada.

The overseas cemeteries with the most Sarnia fallen graves are;

World War I: Lijssenthoek, Belgium – 4, and Etaples, France – 3.

World War II: Groesbeek, Netherlands – 12, Brookwood, United Kingdom – 8, Bretteville-Sur-Laize, France – 7, Calais, France – 5 and Adegem, Belgium – 5

Korean War: United Nations Memorial Cemetery, South Korea – 3

- Of the total 307 identified Sarnia fallen soldiers, 92 of them have no known grave, representing 30% of Sarnia's war dead. This includes 42 of the 114 World War I fallen (37%), and 49 of the 185 World War II fallen (26%), and one of the four from the Korean War.
- For the 92 Sarnia fallen soldiers that have no known grave, their bodies were never recovered. Their names are inscribed on various war memorials around the world including in the countries of France, Belgium, Egypt, Malta, United Kingdom, Malaya, Singapore, China, South Korea, the United States and Canada.

The war memorials with the most Sarnia fallen names are;

World War I: Vimy, France – 28, Menin Gate, Belgium – 9, Arras, France – 3, and Halifax, Canada – 2

World War II: Runnymede, United Kingdom – 23, Halifax, Canada – 14, Alamein, Egypt – 3, Ottawa, Canada – 3, Malta, Floriana – 2, Sai Wan, China – 1, and Singapore, Malaya – 1

Korean War: Busan, South Korea – 1

- Sarnia's fallen soldiers by branch of service is;

Of the 114 identified World War I fallen: 109 served in the Army (95.6%) and 5 served in the Air Force (4.4%).

Of the 185 World War II fallen: 74 served in the Army (40%), 91 served in the Air Force (49%) and 20 served in the Navy (11%).

Of the 4 Korean War fallen and 2 Afghanistan War fallen: all were Army
(Royal Canadian Regiment, Royal Canadian Infantry and Royal Canadian Engineers)

- Of the 91 World War II Sarnia fallen that served in the Air Force, 60 of them lost their lives serving in Bomber Command (66%). Included in Sarnia's Bomber Command fallen are: two-engine medium/light bomber losses were 12 aboard Wellingtons, 4 aboard Hudsons, 2 aboard Hampdens and 2 aboard Blenheims; and four-engine heavy bomber losses were 23 aboard Halifaxes, 20 aboard Lancasters, 2 aboard Stirlings and 2 aboard Liberators. At least 19 of Sarnia's RCAF/RAF airmen lost their lives during training.
- Of the 20 World War II Sarnia fallen that served in the Navy, 15 of them lost their lives during the Battle of the Atlantic (75%). Of Sarnia's Navy fallen, 4 were aboard Corvettes and 7 were aboard Destroyers.
- The deadliest periods for Sarnians were the three months of the Hundred Days Campaign in World War I—33 lost lives; and the three months of August through October 1944 in World War II—35 lives lost.
- Following are the major battles and campaigns in the two World Wars, Korea and Afghanistan along with the number of Sarnia lives lost in each (in chronological order, based on start date):

World War I:

Second Battle of Ypres, Belgium (April 22-May 25, 1915) = 3 fallen
 Battles of Festubert & Givenchy, France (May 18-June 16, 1915) = 3 fallen
 Battle of St. Eloi, Belgium (March 27-April 16, 1916) = 1 fallen
 Battle of Mont Sorrel, Belgium (June 2-13, 1916) = 2 fallen
 Battle of the Somme, France (July 1-November 18, 1916) = 20 fallen
 includes: Battle of Flers-Courcelette = 7 fallen
 Battle of Vimy Ridge, France (April 9-12, 1917) = 4 fallen
 Attack on Hill 70/Lens, France (August 15-25, 1917) = 3 fallen
 Battle of Passchendaele, Belgium (October 26-November 10, 1917) = 6 fallen
 Battle of Moreuil Wood, France (March 30, 1918) = 1 fallen
 The Hundred Days Campaign (August 8-November 11, 1918) = 33 fallen
 includes: Battle of Amiens, France = 7 fallen
 Second Battle of Arras, France = 10 fallen
 Battle of Canal-Du-Nord/Cambrai, France = 11 fallen
 Battle of Valenciennes, France = 1 fallen
 Pursuit to Mons, Belgium = 1 fallen
 Royal Flying Corps = 5 fallen
 "Wastage" (between named set-piece battles) = 25 fallen

World War II:

Battle of the Atlantic (September 3, 1939-May 8, 1945) = 15 fallen
 North African Campaign (June 1940-May 1943) = 4 fallen
 Battle of Hong Kong (December 8-25, 1941) = 1 fallen
 The Burma Campaign (December 1941-May 1945) = 2 fallen
 The Dieppe Raid (August 19, 1942) = 1 fallen
 Italian Campaign (July 10, 1943-February 25, 1945) = 19 fallen
 includes: Battle of Sicily = 3 fallen
 Battle of Italy = 16 fallen
 Battle of Normandy (June 6-August 21, 1944) = 16 fallen
 The Long Left Flank (mid-August-early October 1944) = 6 fallen
 Battle of the Scheldt (October 1-November 8, 1944) = 12 fallen
 Battle of the Rhineland (February 8-March 10, 1945) = 6 fallen
 Liberation of the Netherlands (February 7-May 5, 1945) = 5 fallen
 Accidents (not in battle) = 11 fallen

Korea:

Hill 187 = 1 fallen
 Hill 355 = 1 fallen
 Hill 467 = 1 fallen

Afghanistan:

Operation Medusa = 1 fallen
 Operation Achilles = 1 fallen

APPENDIX III

EPITAPHS OF SARNIA'S FALLEN SOLDIERS

Following is a collection of the individual expressions of love, sorrow and consolation, engraved on the headstones of most of Sarnia's fallen soldiers of World War I and World War II.
Information on the Commonwealth War Graves Commission and epitaphs is on page 200.

SOME NOTE THEIR HOMETOWN

BELOVED AND ONLY SON OF JEAN NEIL & WILLIAM J. HANNA BORN AT SARNIA, ONT. JAN. 16, 1895.

Lieutenant Neil Hanna, RFC, 20.11.18 (age 23), Montecchio Cemetery, Italy

BORN IN SARNIA, CANADA.

Captain Norman Towers, RCR 7th Light Bat., 20.9.16 (age 29), St. Sever Cemetery, Rouen, France

BELOVED SON OF MR. AND MRS. T.H. ELLIOTT, SARNIA, ONT., CANADA.

P/O-BA Thomas Elliott, RCAF, 24.4.44 (age 26), Schoonselhof Cemetery, Belgium

SON OF JAMES AND RHODA GAMMON SARNIA, ONTARIO, CANADA.

F/S-WAG Rex Gammon, RCAF, 28.7.42 (age 25), Ohlsdorf Cemetery, Hamburg, Germany

HUSBAND OF DOROTHY L. BRITTAIN, SON OF PERCY & JEAN RAMSAY, SARNIA, CANADA.

F/O-N Melvin Ramsay, RCAF, 18.12.43 (age 29), Reykjavik (Fossvogur) Cemetery, Iceland

BELOVED SON OF GUY AND ANNIE NEAL, COURTRIGHT, ONTARIO, CANADA

Private Donald Neal, RCIC, 27.9.44 (age 25), Cesena War Cemetery, Italy

OF CORNWALL, ONTARIO, CANADA. R.I.P.

Private Francis Jarvo, RCIC, 19.10.44 (age 19), Schoonselhof Cemetery, Belgium

BORN IN TORONTO, CANADA, 5TH MARCH 1918. STUDENT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO.

F/O-Pilot Rodolfo Mendizabal, RCAF, 10.8.43 (age 25), Madras War Cemetery, Chennai, India

SOME TURNED TO POETRY/LITERATURE/MUSIC

AT THE GOING DOWN OF THE SUN AND IN THE MORNING WE SHALL REMEMBER THEM

Major David Bentley, CAMC, 5.4.17 (age 52), Ramsgate Cemetery, United Kingdom

AT THE GOING DOWN OF THE SUN AND IN THE MORNING WE WILL REMEMBER HIM

Corporal Myles Vokes, CMSC, 9.1.42 (age 19), Sarnia (Lakeview) Cemetery, Sarnia, Ontario

TO LIVE IN HEARTS WE LEAVE BEHIND IS NOT TO DIE.

Private John Salsbury, 15th Battalion, 27.9.18 (age 21), Sains de Marquion Cemetery, Pas de Calais, France

TO LIVE IN THE HEARTS OF THOSE WE LOVE IS NOT TO DIE.

F/O-Pilot Allan Campbell, RCAF, 25.8.44 (age 26), Bretteville-Sur-Laize Cemetery, Calvados, France

NEVER HAVE SO FEW GIVEN SO MUCH FOR SO MANY, TO THE UTMOST, TO THE END.

P/O-BA Arthur Thompson, RCAF, 29.1.44 (age 22), Berlin 1939-1945 War Cemetery, Germany

OMNIA VINCIT AMOR (Love Conquers All).

Private William Bendall, 38th Battalion, 31.10.17 (age 29), Lijssenthoek Military Cemetery, Belgium

THEY SHALL RECEIVE A GLORIOUS KINGDOM

Major Robert Ramsay, RCA, 31.8.44 (age 32), Calais Canadian War Cemetery, Leubringhen, France

SOME TURNED TO RELIGION/FAITH/SCRIPTURE

GOD TOOK HIM HOME IT WAS HIS WILL BUT IN OUR HEARTS HE LIVETH STILL.

Private James Bennett, 5th CMR, 1.10.16 (age 26), Regina Trench Cemetery, Somme, France

UNTIL THE DAY BREAK AND THE SHADOWS FLEE AWAY.

Private Charles Howe, 1st Battalion, 22.9.16 (age 30), Adanac Cemetery, Somme, France

Private Harry Smith, 1st Depot Battalion, 15.2.18 (age 28), Lakeview Cemetery, Sarnia, Ontario

Trooper Arthur Everingham, RCAC, 21.2.45 (age 20), Groesbeek Canadian War Cemetery, Netherlands

Trooper Donald McClure, RCAC, 30.7.43 (age 22), Agira Canadian War Cemetery, Sicily

Private James McClure, RCIC, 13.12.44 (age 24), Villanova Canadian War Cemetery, Italy

ASLEEP IN JESUS

Gunner Ernest Russell, RCA, 7.9.44 (age 24), Calais Canadian War Cemetery, Leubringhen, Pas de Calais, France

ASLEEP IN JESUS BLESSED SLEEP FROM WHICH NONE EVER WAKE TO WEEP. WIFE AND FAMILY.

Sgt. David Kerr, RCR, 9.4.17 (age 35), La Chaudiere Cemetery, Vimy, France

SO EASILY REMEMBERED BUT HARD TO FORGET. MAY GOD GRANT YOU, KEITH ETERNAL REST.

Lance Corporal Keith Banks, RCIC, 6.9.44 (age 21), Calais Cemetery, Leubringhen, France

AT PEACE IN JESUS' ARMS SAFE AND SECURE FROM ALL HARMS.

Private James Barclay, RCSC, 27.9.43 (age 20), Brookwood Cemetery, Surrey, United Kingdom

ETERNAL REST GRANT UNTO HIM, O LORD; MAY HIS SOUL REST IN PEACE.

P/O-AG William Barr, RCAF, 9.6.44 (age 20), Omerville Cemetery, Seine-et-Oise, France

I HAVE FOUGHT A GOOD FIGHT, I HAVE FINISHED MY COURSE, I HAVE KEPT THE FAITH.

Corporal Isaac Bell, RCIC, 8.7.44 (age 23), Beny-Sur-Mer Cemetery, Reviers, France

WOII-Nav Maurice Church, RCAF, 3.4.43 (age 27), Uden War Cemetery, Netherlands

Private John McKernan, RCIC, 19.8.44 (age 23), Ranville War Cemetery, Calvados, France

I HAVE FOUGHT A GOOD FIGHT, I HAVE FINISHED MY COURSE, I HAVE KEPT THE FAITH. II TIM. IV.7.

Lt. Jack Brunette, RCIC, 24.3.45 (age 22), Groesbeek Canadian War Cemetery, Netherlands

GOD BE MERCIFUL TO MY SON. REUNITE HIS SOUL WITH THOSE OF HIS DAD AND HIS PALS. MOTHER.

Sgt-AG Jesse Brakeman, RCAF, 3.9.41 (age 21), Dunkirk Town Cemetery, Nord, France

A SOLDIER OF THE CROSS WHO DID NOT LOSE THE BATTLE.

Private George Esser, RCIC, 23.10.44 (age 19), Bergen-Op-Zoom Cemetery, Netherlands

WE CANNOT, LORD, THY PURPOSE SEE BUT ALL IS WELL THAT'S DONE BY THEE.

P/O-AG Orval Evers, RCAF, 9.5.45 (age 19), Clichy Northern Cemetery, France

OUR DARLING IS SHELTERED BY THE ROCK OF AGES ANCHORED ON GOD'S GOLDEN SHORE.

Private Joseph Fisher, RCAMC, 6.9.44 (age 24), Calais Cemetery, Leubringhen, France

WHOSOEVER BELIEVETH IN HIM SHOULD NOT PERISH, BUT HAVE EVERLASTING LIFE.

P/O-BA William Glass, RCAF, 16.1.45 (age 21), Reichswald Forest Cemetery, Germany

FATHER IN THY GRACIOUS KEEPING LEAVE WE NOW OUR DEAR ONE SLEEPING.

F/O-AB Wallace Lang, RCAF, 5.11.45 (age 22), Harrogate (Stonefall) Cemetery, Yorkshire, United Kingdom

BE THOU FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH, AND I WILL GIVE THEE A CROWN OF LIFE.

Private Thomas Mills, RCIC, 1.10.44 (age 23), Cesena War Cemetery, Italy

BE THOU FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH AND I WILL GIVE THEE A CROWN OF LIFE. REV.2.10.

F/O-Pilot James Wright, RCAF, '5.3.45 (age 28), Chester (Blacon) Cemetery, Cheshire, United Kingdom

SAFE IN THE ARMS OF JESUS.

FS-AG Geoffrey Stone, RCAF, 8.11.44 (age 19), Harrogate (Stonefall) Cemetery, Yorkshire, United Kingdom

THE LORD GIVETH AND THE LORD TAKETH AWAY BLESSED BE THE NAME OF THE LORD.

WOII-P Leslie Sutherland, RCAF, 23.5.43 (age 24), Haaksbergen General Cemetery, Netherlands

FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH

Private Albert McDonald, 18th Battalion, 28.8.18 (age 24), Vis-En-Artois British Cemetery, Haucourt, Pas de Calais, France

THE LORD KNOWETH THEM THAT ARE HIS. II TIMOTHY 2.19.

Private Albert Potter, 21st Battalion, 6.8.18 (age 22), Longueau British Cemetery, Somme, France

CROWNED

Private William Reynolds, 18th Battalion, 9.8.18 (age 25), Crouy British Cemetery, Crouy-Sur-Somme, Somme, France

WHILE ETERNAL AGES RUN REST IN THY SAVIOUR'S LOVE

Private John Wilson, 1st Battalion, 19.5.16 (age 23), Chester Farm Cemetery, Belgium

HEAR MY UNWORTHY PRAYER. PRESERVE ME FROM ALL DANGER. GIVE MY IMMORTAL SOUL A PLACE

PSALM XXIII.4

WOII-Pilot William Cameron, RCAF, 1.9.43 (age 22), Berlin 1939-45 War Cemetery, Charlottenburg, Germany

TILL THE DAY BREAK AND THE SHADOWS FLEE AWAY

Bombardier William Carlton, RCA, 19.5.41 (age 27), Brookwood Military Cemetery in Surrey, United Kingdom

AMONG THE CHOSEN

Private Joseph Aubin, RCIC, 24.2.45 (age 21), Ravenna War Cemetery, Italy

THE PEACE OF JESUS FILLED HIS BREAST AND IN HIS ARMS HE SANK TO REST

Private Garnet Core, RCR, 31.5.44 (age 21), Cassino War Cemetery, Italy

THERE WAS A MAN SENT FROM GOD, WHOSE NAME WAS JOHN. ST. JOHN I.6

Private John Esselment, RCIC, 31.10.44 (age 28), Adegem Canadian War Cemetery, Belgium

SO HE PASSED OVER AND ALL THE TRUMPETS SOUNDED FOR HIM ON THE OTHER SIDE

P/O-WAG Lloyd Gallaway, RCAF, 1.10.42 (age 25), Newark-Upon-Trent Cemetery, Nottinghamshire, United Kingdom

"COME, YE BOUGHT BUT NOT WITH GOLD WELCOME TO THE SACRED FOLD." WITH LOVE, MAM

Sapper Glyn Jones, RCE, 19.8.42 (age 21), Dieppe Canadian War Cemetery, Hautot-Sur-Mer, Seine-Maritime, France

MORT LOIN DES SIENS SON SOUVENIR VIVRA. JESUS DONNEZ LUI LE REPOS ETERNEL

(Died far from home his memory will live on. Jesus, grant him eternal rest).

Private Joseph Legare, RCIC, 18.7.44 (age 21), Beny-Sur-Mer Canadian War Cemetery, Reviere, France

THE GRACE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST BE WITH YOUR SPIRIT. AMEN.

P/O-AG Robert Lochhead, RCAF, 23.4.44 (age 19), Reichswald Forest War Cemetery, Germany

HOLY FATHER, LOOK ON US TODAY, AS WE THINK OF HIM OUR DEAR ONE GONE AWAY

Sgt-Pilot Donald MacGregor, RCAF, 11.5.42 (age 27), Exeter Higher Cemetery, Devon, United Kingdom

THERE IS COMFORT IN THE THOUGHT THAT A LOVING GOD KNOWS BEST

P/O-Pilot Edwin Myles, RCAF, 3.4.43 (age 22), Sarnia (Lakeview) Cemetery, Sarnia, Ontario

GOD'S KINGDOM THE HOPE OF THE WORLD

Private Walter Totten, RCIC, 22.10.44 (age 24), Adegem Canadian War Cemetery, Belgium

HE WALKS WITH THEE AN ANGEL KIND FOR GOD IS LOVE AND SERVES MANKIND

Private Floyd Williams, RCIC, 2.1.45 (age 22), Villanova Canadian War Cemetery, Italy

SOME FOR THE GOOD OF OTHERS/COUNTRY

IN LOVING MEMORY HE GAVE HIS LIFE FOR HIS COUNTRY MAY HIS SOUL REST IN PEACE.

Private Neal Benware, 1st Battalion, 23.5.16 (age 27), Lijssenthoek Cemetery, Belgium

OUR DEAR SON & BROTHER. HE LIES AMONG THE BRAVE. AT HIS COUNTRY'S CALL HIS LIFE HE GAVE.

Sapper Charles Berry, RCE, 22.9.44 (age 20), Calais Cemetery, Leubringen, France

HE DIED THAT OTHERS MIGHT LIVE.

Sgt-AG Stuart Carr, RCAF, 23.1.44 (age 19), Cambridge City Cemetery, United Kingdom

IN MEMORY OF A BRAVE SOLDIER WHO DIED THAT HIS COUNTRY MIGHT LIVE.

Corporal Adam Conway, RCIC, 24.3.45 (age 23), Groesbeek Cemetery, Netherlands

HE CHALLENGED THOSE WHO WOULD DESTROY THE INNOCENT AND THE WAY OF LIFE HE LOVED SO WELL.

P/O-AG John Dowding, RCAF, 17.10.44 (age 18), Harrogate Cemetery, Yorkshire, United Kingdom

"GREATER LOVE HATH NO MAN"

Sgt-Pilot John Hallam, RCAF, 12.7.41 (age 21), Kiel War Cemetery, Schleswig-Holstein, Germany

WOI-WAG John Yorke, RCAF, 13.12.42 (age 22), Lajes War Cemetery, Azores Region, Portugal

GREATER LOVE HATH NO MAN THAN THAT HE LAY DOWN HIS LIFE FOR HIS FRIENDS.

Private Herbert Stott, 1st Battalion, 177.8, 19 (age 36), Dewsbury Cemetery, Yorkshire, United Kingdom

HE GAVE HIS LIFE FOR OTHERS.

F/O-BA John Leckie, RCAF, 17.12.44 (age 27), Dieppe Cemetery, Hautot-Sur-Mer, France

GIVING ALL, DARING ALL TO THE UTMOST, TO THE END, HE DIED THAT WE MIGHT LIVE.

FS-N H. Fraser Thompson, RCAF, 27.6.42 (age 23), Halaya Sollum War Cemetery, Egypt

HE DIED FOR KING AND COUNTRY

Lance Corporal Robert Crawford, 15th Battalion, 12.9.16 (age 29), Contay British Cemetery, Somme, France

Lieutenant Royal Crawford, 1st Battalion, 1.10.18 (age 21), Sancourt British Cemetery, Nord, France

HE DID WHAT HE COULD

F/O-BA Hugo Borchardt, RCAF, 21.7.44 (age 30), Eindhoven (Woensel) Cemetery, Netherlands

GREATER LOVE HATH NO MAN THAN THIS, THAT A MAN LAY DOWN HIS LIFE FOR HIS FRIENDS.

Private Wifred Durocher, RCIC, 26.2.45 (age 29), Groesbeek Cemetery, Netherlands

Private Leslie Kirk, RCIC, 13.9.44 (age 23), Coriano Ridge War Cemetery, Italy

NOBLY HE FELL WHILE FIGHTING FOR LIBERTY

Gunner Thomas Brydges, RCA, 12.3.45 (age 27), Groesbeek Canadian War Cemetery, Netherlands

HIS WARFARE O'ER HIS BATTLE FOUGHT HIS VICTORY WON SO DEARLY BOUGHT

Able Seaman Hector Le Gare, RCNVR, 1.12.40 (age 21), Barrow-in-Furness Cemetery, Lancashire, United Kingdom
FOR HONOUR, FOR COUNTRY AND FOR GOD

F/O-Pilot William Oliver, RCAF, 6.20.43 (age 19), Haddington (St.Martin's) New Burial Ground, East Lothian, United Kingdom

ROYAL MILITARY COLLEGE ROYAL CANADIAN DRAGOONS TRUTH, DUTY, VALOR

Lt. Edward Stokes, RCAC, 3.9.44 (age 23), Gradara War Cemetery, Italy

SOME TO FAMILY

OUR ONLY SON.

Gunner William Coulter, CFA, 14.11.17 (age 20), Lijssenthoek Cemetery, Belgium

THE ONLY SON OF HIS MOTHER, HE LOVED HONOUR MORE THAN HE FEARED DEATH.

Private Leonard McMullin, 18th Battalion, 25.5.18, (age 19), Wailly Orchard Cemetery, France

IN MEMORY OF OUR BELOVED BROTHER WHO DIED FOR HIS COUNTRY.

Private David Montgomery, 49th Battalion, 26.4.17 (age 23), Etaples Cemetery, Pas de Calais, France

THE PLACE MADE VACANT IN OUR HOME CAN NEVER MORE BE FILLED, MOTHER.

Private George Turner, 42nd Battalion, 11.1.16 (age 27), R.E. Farm Cemetery, Belgium

IN LOVING MEMORY OF ONE WHO WILL NOT BE FORGOTTEN BY HIS WIFE AND DAUGHTER.

Private Carl Burke, RCIC, 23.7.43 (age 30), Agira Cemetery, Sicily

WE MISS YOU SO, YOUR WONDERFUL SMILE BUT IT'S JUST GOODBYE FOR A LITTLE WHILE.

F/O-Pilot Frederick Daws, RCAF, 25.7.43 (age 22), Le Petit Lac Cemetery, Oran, Algeria

REST IN PEACE MY DARLING AND MAY YOU NOT HAVE GIVEN YOUR LIFE IN VAIN.

Sapper Robert Dionne, RCE, 1.10.44 (age 20), Bergen-Op-Zoom Cemetery, Netherlands

IN LOVING MEMORY OF A BELOVED HUSBAND, WIFE EVELYN B. AND DAUGHTERS PATRICIA ANN AND SHIRLEY.

Private Melvin Fisher, RCIC, 20.12.44 (age 22), Villanova Cemetery, Italy

HE GAVE HIS LIFE SO THAT HIS WIFE GLADYS, AND SON DOUGLAS, MIGHT LIVE IN PEACE.

Private Norman Ellis, RCIC, 8.8.44 (age 22), Bretteville-Sur-Laize Cemetery, Calvados, France

A BEAUTIFUL MEMORY DEARER THAN GOLD OF A SON WHOSE WORTH CAN NE'ER BE TOLD. MOTHER.

LBomb Russell Green, RCA, 13.8.44 (age 25), Bretteville-Sur-Laize Cemetery, Calvados, France

LOVINGLY REMEMBERED BY HIS WIFE, DAUGHTER, PARENTS AND BROTHERS.

Corporal Thomas Hamilton, RCE, 9.9.44 (age 28), Bretteville-Sur-Laize Cemetery, Calvados, France

CLIFF AND I LIVED A GLORIOUS LIFETIME TOGETHER IN FIVE SHORT MONTHS. VERA.

Sgt. Clifford Hebner, RCE, 5.10.44 (age 32), Schoonselhof Cemetery, Belgium

SOMEDAY WE SHALL MEET YOU WHERE THERE WILL BE NO MORE GOODBYES. LOVING WIFE AND DAUGHTER.

Private George Humble, RCIC, 10.12.44 (age 32), Ravenna War Cemetery, Italy

IN THE GARDEN OF MEMORY WE MEET EVERY DAY. SLEEP ON, DEAR SON, TILL WE MEET AGAIN.

Private Russell Jolly, RCIC, 8.6.44 (age 19), Bretteville-Sur-Laize Cemetery, Calvados, France

IN THE GARDEN OF MEMORY WE MEET EVERY DAY. HIS SPIRIT IS ETERNAL

Sgt-F/E Charles Foster, RCAF, 28.3.43 (age 26), Escoublac-La-Baule War Cemetery, Loire-Atlantique, France

OUR ONLY SON. SADLY MISSED BY MOM AND DAD, SISTERS DOROTHY AND THELMA.

Private Charles Krohn, RCAC, 23.9.44 (age 20), Cesena War Cemetery, Italy

THOUGH GOD HAS TAKEN YOU YOU ARE ALWAYS IN MY HEART FOR DEATH SHALL PART US NOT.

Private Charles McIsaac, RCIC, 13.10.44 (age 28), Antwerpen Schoonselhof Cemetery, Belgium

JOHN, BELOVED HUSBAND OF ROSE, DEAR FATHER OF MARY ANNE McLAGAN.

Private John McLagan, RCIC, 30.4.45 (age 37), Holten War Cemetery, Netherlands

THE LORD BLESS THEE AND KEEP THEE. BELOVED HUSBAND OF BETTY ASH

P/O-Pilot Hugo Farner, RCAF, 24.9.43 (age 21), Sarnia (Lakeview) Cemetery, Sarnia, Ontario

FOR EVER REMEMBERED BY WIFE AND SON.

Private John E.S. Wilson, RCIC, 21.12.41 (age 23), Ravenna War Cemetery, Italy

BELOVED SON OF ALEX AND MARY McLELLAN

Able Seaman Allan McLellan, RCNVR, 23.5.47 (age 43), Our Lady of Mercy Catholic Cemetery, Sarnia, Ontario

LOVING WIFE AND SON

Sergeant Thomas Creighton, 34th Battalion, 27.2.15 (age 38), Our Lady of Mercy Roman Catholic Cemetery, Sarnia

OLDEST SON OF WILFRED & ISOBEL, NORWICH, CANADA. HUSBAND OF MILDRED F. FATHER OF JAMES ROBERT

S/L Pilot Robert Alexander, RCAF, 21.9.44 (age 24), Bergen-op-zoom Canadian War Cemetery, Netherlands

IN LOVING MEMORY OF MY DEAR HUSBAND WHO WAS KILLED IN OOSTBURG, HOLLAND

Lt. Ernest Ottaway, RCIC, 21.10.44 (age 32), Adegem Canadian War Cemetery, Belgium

SADLY MISSED BY WIFE AND SON. REST IN PEACE

Edward Ramesbottom, RCN Reserve, 25.12.42 (age 54), Forest Road Anglican Cemetery, St. John's, Newfoundland

REMEMBRANCE

IN THE GARDEN OF MEMORY WE MEET EVERY DAY. HIS SPIRIT IS ETERNAL.

Sgt-F/E Charles Foster, RCAF, 28.3.43 (age 26), Escoublac-La-Baule Cemetery, Loire-Atlantique, France

HE IS GONE BUT NOT FORGOTTEN. THOUGHTS OF HIM ARE ALWAYS NEAR.

Private Gerald Kelly, RCIC, 14.9.44 (age 19), Adegem Canadian War Cemetery, Belgium

THE LAST PRIVILEGE OF LOVE IS MEMORY.

F/O-WAG Wilfred Knight, RCAF, 9.6.45 (age 19), Colombo (Liveramentu) Cemetery, Sir Lanka

P/O-WAG Elliott Watson, RCAF, 29.7.44 (age 20), Lerwick New Cemetery, Shetland, United Kingdom

IN OUR HEARTS YOUR MEMORY LINGERS, SWEETLY TENDER, FOND AND TRUE.

P/O-BA Thomas Lee, RCAF, 5.8.44 (age 21), Chantilly (St.Pierre) Communal Cemetery, Oise, France

LOVING AND KIND, FAITHFUL AND TRUE, BEAUTIFUL MEMORIES WE HAVE OF YOU. FAMILY.

Trooper Charles Monteith, RCAC, 14.4.45 (age 29), Brookwood Cemetery, Surrey, United Kingdom

GOD'S GREATEST GIFT, REMEMBRANCE.

F/O-N Arthur Parsons, RCAF, 30.4.43 (age 27), Muiden General Cemetery, Netherlands

HE WILL NOT AGE HIS SONG IS SUNG AND HE REMAINS FOR EVER YOUNG. REST IN PEACE.

Sgt.-AG George Riddoch, RCAF, 22.10.44 (age 20), Chester (Blacon) Cemetery, Cheshire, United Kingdom

HE IS NOT DEAD BUT LIVES ON IN THE HEARTS OF HIS LOVED ONES.

F/O-Pilot William Rogers, RCAF, 22.1.44 (age 25), Chester (Blacon) Cemetery, Cheshire, United Kingdom

HE IS NOT DEAD WHILE HIS MEMORY LIVES IN THE HEARTS OF THOSE WHO LOVED HIM.

Corporal Donald Vail, RCAF, 9.7.42 (age 35), Brookwood Cemetery, Surrey, United Kingdom

FOR HIM LIFE MORE ABUNDANT, FOR US A GUIDING STAR. LOVED AND REMEMBERED.

Private John Wade, RCIC, 4.1.45 (age 21), Argenta Gap War Cemetery, Italy

SOME DAY, WE KNOW NOT WHEN, WE HOPE TO MEET IN THE BETTER LAND, NEVER TO PART AGAIN.

Private Wilford Walker, RCIC, 28.1.45 (age 28), Groesbeek Cemetery, Netherlands

HIS NAME LIVETH FOREVER

Captain Walter McKenzie, 83rd Battalion, CAMC, 19.2.17 (age 25), Shorncliffe Military Cemetery, Kent, United Kingdom

IN BELOVED MEMORY NEVER FORGOTTEN

F/O-Pilot Francis Goring, RCAF, 12.8.44 (age 22), Banneville-La-Campagne War Cemetery, Calvados, France

HE WILL NOT AGE HIS SONG IS SUNG AND HE REMAINS FOR EVER YOUNG. REST IN PEACE

Sgt-AG George Riddoch, RCAF, 22.10.44 (age 20), Chester (Blacon) Cemetery, Cheshire, United Kingdom

AT REST

Private Clifford Vallis, 213th Battalion, 20.12.17 (age 24), Mount Pleasant Cemetery, London, Ontario

Bombardier Kenneth Burr, RCA, 28.12.44 (age 21), Groesbeek Canadian War Cemetery, Netherlands

Private Patrick McLaughlin, RCIC, 27.2.45 (age 21), Groesbeek Canadian War Cemetery, Netherlands

ETERNAL REST

FS/AG John Drinkwater, RCAF, 18.9.42 (age 19), Evesham Cemetery, Worcestershire, England

REQUIESCAT IN PACE

Private John Lychowich, RCIC, 8.7.44 (age 26), Beny-sur-Mer Canadian War Cemetery in Reviers, France

continued over...

REST IN PEACE

P/O Douglas Aiken, RCAF, 25.6.44 (age 23), Criquetot-Sur-Longueville Churchyard, France

Captain Cecil Dawdy, RCR, 21.7.45 (age 37), Mount Pleasant Cemetery, London, Ontario

Corporal William Ferguson, RCOC, 18.7.42 (age 26), Sarnia (Lakeview) Cemetery, Sarnia, Ontario

LA-Pilot Leonard Meere, RCAF, 23.9.43 (age 19), Sarnia (Lakeview) Cemetery, Sarnia, Ontario

P/O-Pilot James Shanks, RCAF, 13.9.42 (age 24), Sarnia (Lakeview) Cemetery, Sarnia, Ontario

APPENDIX IV ORGANIZATION OF THE CANADIAN ARMY OVERSEAS^{7P}

UNIT	COMPONENTS	MAKE-UP	COMMAND	STRENGTH
Army		2 or more corps	General	100,000-190,000
Corps		2 or more divisions	Lieutenant-General	35,000-60,000
	Division	2 or more brigades	Major-General	10,000-18,000
	Brigade	3 or more battalions	Brigadier	3,500-5,000
	Battalion	4 or more companies	Lieutenant-Colonel	600-1,000
	Company	2 or more platoons	Major	100-150
	Platoon	2 or more sections	Lieutenant	16-40
	Section		Corporal	4-12

APPENDIX V BASIC TABLE OF RANKS FOR ALL SERVICES^{3G, 4A, 7P} (highest to lowest)

Royal Canadian Air Force

Air Chief Marshal
Air Marshal
Air Vice Marshal
Air Commodore
Group Captain
Wing Commander
Squadron Leader
Flight Lieutenant
Flying Officer
Pilot Officer
Officer Cadet
Warrant Officer (I & II)
Flight Sergeant
Sergeant
Corporal
Leading Aircraftsman
Aircraftsman

Canadian Army

General
Lieutenant-General
Major-General
Brigadier
Colonel
Lieutenant-Colonel
Major
Captain
Lieutenant
Second Lieutenant
Officer Cadet
Warrant Officer (I & II)
Staff Sergeant
Sergeant
Corporal
Lance Corporal
Private/Gunner/Sapper/Trooper

Royal Canadian Navy

Admiral
Vice Admiral
Rear Admiral
Commodore
Captain
Commander
Lieutenant Commander
Lieutenant
Sub Lieutenant
Midshipman
Chief Petty Officer (I & II)
Petty Officer (I & II)
Master Seaman (Master Sailor)
Leading Seaman (Sailor 1st Class)
Able Seaman (Sailor 2nd Class)
Ordinary Seaman (Sailor 3rd Class)
*(Seaman ranks renamed in 2020)

APPENDIX VI

ROYAL CANADIAN AIR FORCE CODES

a) In *The Sarnia War Remembrance Project*, for many of the Royal Canadian Air Force airmen, their anecdotal notes may include numbers and words such as the following:

#409 Night Hawk Squadron “Media Nox Meridies”. These refer to;

- “#409” represents the Unit number
- “Night Hawk” is the nickname of the squadron
- “Media Nox Meridies” is the squadron motto, often in Latin, (in this case, the motto translates to “Midnight is our Moon”). Wherever possible, English translations have been included in this Project.

b) Below is a list of some of the main Royal Canadian Air Force Rank codes:

AC: Aircraftman (class I or II)	FS: Flight Sergeant	P/O: Pilot Officer
AG: Air Gunner	G/C: Group Captain	Sgt: Sergeant
BA: Bomb Aimer	LAC: Leading Aircraftman	S/L: Squadron Leader
Cpl: Corporal	N: Navigator	WAG: Wireless Operator/Air Gunner
F/E: Flight Engineer	NB: Navigator/Bomb Aimer	W/C: Wing Commander
F/L: Flight Lieutenant	O: Observer	WO: Warrant officer (class I or II)
F/O: Flying Officer	P: Pilot	W/Op: Wireless Operator

The Anxious Dead

*O guns, fall silent till the dead men hear
Above their heads the legions pressing on:
(These fought their fight in time of bitter fear,
And died not knowing how the day had gone.)*

*O flashing muzzles, pause, and let them see
The coming dawn that streaks the sky afar;
Then let your mighty chorus witness be
To them, and Caesar, that we still make war.*

*Tell them, O guns, that we have heard their call,
That we have sworn, and will not turn aside,
That we will onward till we win or fall,
That we will keep the faith for which they died.*

*Bid them be patient, and some day, anon
They shall feel earth enwapt in silence deep;
Shall greet, in wonderment, the quiet dawn,
And in content may turn them to their sleep.*

*John McCrae, 1917
(his last written poem)*



APPENDIX VII

MILITARY ABBREVIATIONS^F

(Following are a number of official Military abbreviations used in this Project)

AA – Anti-Aircraft	HMCS – His/Her Majesty’s Canadian Ship
AF – Active Force	HMS – His/Her Majesty’s Ship (Royal Navy)
AFU – Advanced Flying Unit	HMT – His/Her Majesty’s Transport or Troopship
AGGTS – Air Gunners Ground Training School	HRH – His/Her Royal Highness
AGTS – Aircrew Graduate Training School	IATC – Infantry Advanced Training Centre
ANS – Air Navigation School	ITC – Infantry Training Centre
AOS – Air Observer School	ITS – Initial Training School
B&GS – Bombing and Gunnery School	KIA – Killed In Action
BTC – Basic Training Centre	KTS – Composite Training School (RCAF)
CAATC – Canadian Army Advanced Training Centre	LAA – Light Anti-Aircraft
CABTC – Canadian Army Basic Training Centre	LAV – Light Armoured Vehicle
CAC – Canadian Armoured Corps	MIA – Missing In Action
CACRU – Canadian Armoured Corps Reinforcement Unit	MC – Military Cross - medal for bravery (officers)
CACTC – Canadian Armoured Corps Training Centre	MD – Manning Depot
CAMC – Canadian Army Medical Corps	MM – Military Medal - medal for bravery (non-officers)
CARU – Canadian Army Reinforcement Unit	MOEF – Mid-Ocean Escort Force
CASC – Canadian Army Service Corps	MREU – Missing Research and Enquiry Unit
CASF – Canadian Active Service Corps	MSA – Military Service Act (Canada 1917)
CATC – Canadian Army Training Centre	NATO – North Atlantic Treaty Organization
CATS – Canadian Army Training School	NCO – Non-Commissioned Officer
CCAC – Canadian Casualty Assembly Centre	NPAM- Non-Permanent Active Militia
CCB – Canadian Cavalry Brigade	NRMA – National Resources Mobilization Act (1940)
CCRC – Canadian Corps Reinforcement Camp	OTC – Officers Training Centre
CCS – Casualty Clearing Station	OTU – Operational Training Unit
CE – Canadian Engineers	POW – Prisoner of War
CEF – Canadian Expeditionary Force	PPCLI – Princess Patricia’s Canadian Light Infantry
CERU – Canadian Engineer Reinforcement Unit	QOR – Queen’s Own Rifles of Canada
CETC – Canadian Engineer Training Centre	R22R – Royal 22nd Regiment (The Van Doos)
CFA – Canadian Field Ambulance	RAF – Royal Air Force (British)
CFA – Canadian Field Artillery	RCA – Royal Canadian Artillery
CFC – Canadian Forestry Corps	RCAC – Royal Canadian Armoured Corps
CFDS – Canadian Field Dressing Station	RCAF – Royal Canadian Air Force
CIC – Canadian Infantry Corps	RCAMC – Royal Canadian Army Medical Corps
CIRU – Canadian Infantry Reinforcement Unit	RCAPC – Royal Canadian Army Pay Corps
CITC – Canadian Infantry Training Centre	RCASC – Royal Canadian Army Service Corps
CITR – Canadian Infantry Training Regiment	RCCS – Royal Canadian Corps of Signals
CLH – Canadian Light Horse	RCD – Royal Canadian Dragoons
CMGC – Canadian Machine Gun Corps	RCE – Royal Canadian Engineers
CMMGB – Canadian Motor Machine Gun Brigade	RCIC – Royal Canadian Infantry Corps
CMR – Canadian Mounted Rifles	RCN – Royal Canadian Navy
CMSC – Corps of Military Staff Clerks	RCNR – Royal Canadian Naval Reserve
CNR – Canadian National Railways	RCNVR – Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve
COTC – Canadian Officer Training Corps	RCOC – Royal Canadian Ordnance Corps
CPTC – Canadian Parachute Training Centre	RCR – Royal Canadian Regiment
CRT – Canadian Railway Troops	RFC – Royal Flying Corps (British air Force pre-April 1918)
CTS – Composite Training School	RHC – Black Watch (Royal Highland Regiment) of Canada
CU – Conversion Unit	RMC – Royal Military College of Canada
DEMS – Defensively Equipped Merchant Ships	RN – Royal Navy (British)
DFC – Distinguished Flying Cross	RRC – Royal Regiment of Canada
DSM – Distinguished Service Medal	RRC – Royal Rifles of Canada
DSO – Distinguished Service Order	SFTS – Service Flying Training School
EAC – Eastern Air Command	SOS – Struck Off Strength (soldier ceases to be in unit)
EFTS – Elementary Flying Training School	SS – Steamship - transport vessel
ESR – Essex Scottish Regiment	SW – Shell or Shrapnel wound
FIS – Flying Instructors School	TOS – Taken On Strength (soldier enters a unit)
GGFG – Governor General’s Foot Guards	TTS – Technical Training School
GRS – General Reconnaissance School	VC – Victoria Cross
GSW – Gun Shot Wound (bullet)	WAC – Western Air Command
HCU – Heavy Conversion Unit	WOR – Western Ontario Regiment
HLI – Highland Light Infantry of Canada	WS – Wireless School

For a complete list of Military Abbreviations used in Service Files, go to Library and Archives Canada;
<https://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/military-heritage/Pages/military-abbreviations.aspx>

APPENDIX VIII

SARNIA AND CANADA AT WAR - KEY EVENTS TIMELINE

1700's to the SOUTH AFRICAN (BOER) WAR

1756

- May: Beginning of the Seven Years' War, the first global war, fought in Europe, India, North America, and at sea. In North America, called the French and Indian War, rivals Britain and France struggled for supremacy.

1759

- September 13: The Battle of the Plains of Abraham - pivotal moment in the Seven Years' War. British forces led by General J. Wolfe defeat French troops under Marquis de Montcalm, Quebec surrenders.

1762

- September 15: The British defeat the French at Signal Hill in St. John's, the last battle of the Seven Year's War.

1763

- February 10: Treaty of Paris signed, ending the Seven Years' War, after Great Britain's victory over France and Spain. Canada passed from French control into the British Empire.

1775

- American Revolution begins, rebel forces invade Canada, attacking Montreal, Quebec City and Atlantic ports. (July 4, 1776 - U.S. Declaration of Independence signed)

1783

- September 3: Treaty of Paris signed, concluding the American Revolutionary War. Great Britain formally recognizes United States independence, boundary between U.S. and Canada is established.

1791

- June 10: Constitutional Act enacted by the British Parliament, creating Upper Canada and Lower Canada.

1812

- June 18: United States declares war on Great Britain, the War of 1812 begins.
- July 12: An American force attacks Upper Canada from Fort Detroit, landing near Sandwich (Windsor).
- July 17: A British & First Nation force capture U.S. Fort Mackinac, which was unaware war had been declared.
- August 16: Major-General Isaac Brock and Shawnee War Chief Tecumseh capture Fort Detroit.
- October 13: Major-General Sir Isaac Brock, "the Hero of Upper Canada", is killed in the Battle of Queenston Heights.

1813

- April 27: American forces attack and burn the capital of Upper Canada, York (Toronto).
- June 1: Royal Navy's *HMS Shannon* captures the American frigate *USS Chesapeake*.
- June 22: Laura Secord walks 30 km to warn British troops of an impending American attack.
- October 5: First Nations chief, leader Tecumseh is killed in the Battle of the Thames, near Moraviantown.
- November 11: Battle of Crysler's Farm, a vastly outnumbered British & Canadian force defeat a US force.

1814

- July 25: Battle of Lundy's Lane, one of the bloodiest and deadliest battles of the war, fought on Canadian soil.
- August 24: British troops burn the U.S. capital Washington, DC in retaliation for the burning of York.
- December 24: The Treaty of Ghent is signed, officially ends the War of 1812, and restores Canada-U.S. borders.

1815

- January 8: Battle of New Orleans, the last major battle of the war, US forces repulse British forces.
- July 18: British forces evacuate Fort Mackinac in Michigan following the signing of the Treaty of Ghent.

1836

- January 4: The community known as "The Rapids", changes its name to "Port Sarnia".

1841

- February 10: Colonies of Upper Canada and Lower Canada merge to form the United Province of Canada.

1857

- January 1: Port Sarnia is officially changed to the town of "Sarnia".

1858

- North America's first commercial oil well is established at Oil Springs.

1866

- The threat of Fenian attacks into Canada results in Militia garrisons at various locations, including Sarnia.
- June 2: Battle of Ridgeway – Fenians attack near Fort Erie, the first battle to be fought exclusively by Canadians.

1867

- July 1: Enactment of the British North America Act = Canada Confederation
(the United Province of Canada, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia join together = the Dominion of Canada)
In Sarnia, the first Dominion Day is celebrated in Market Square.
Since 1917 in Newfoundland and Labrador, this day is known as Memorial Day.
In 1983, Dominion Day officially became known as Canada Day.

1869

- July: British-made “Long Tom” cannon is positioned in west end of Market Square, Sarnia.
- Red River Rebellion: Louis Riel led Metis uprising against Canada, leads to creation of the Province of Manitoba.

1871

- Threat of Fenian Raids ends as movement collapses.

1883

- December 21: The Royal Canadian Dragoons and The Royal Canadian Regiment are formed.

1885

- March 18-July 3: North-West Rebellion: Metis uprising led by Louis Riel in what is now Saskatchewan/Alberta.
- May 9-12: Battle of Batoche – Decisive defeat of Riel’s outnumbered Metis & First Nation forces.
- November 7: The Last Spike – Ceremonial final spike driven in, completing the CPR transcontinental railway.

1891

- September 19: The St. Clair Tunnel, the first underwater cross border tunnel opens linking Sarnia to Port Huron.
- Market Square in Sarnia is renamed “Victoria Park” in honour of Queen Victoria.

1899

- October 11: The South African War begins when the Boer Republics declare war on the British Empire.
- October 30: First Contingent of Canadian soldiers leave for South Africa.
- December 10-15: British troops suffer three major defeats, in what became known as “Black Week”.

1900

- January 25: Nursing Sisters receive the rank and pay of lieutenants.
- February 18-27: Battle of Paardeberg. First major action by Canadian Infantry; results in a significant victory.
- February 18: Bloody Sunday – 1st day of Paardeberg battle, Canada’s bloodiest single day of fighting in the war.
- November 7: Battle of Leliefontein. Canadian military units valiantly & successfully cover a British withdrawal.

1902

- March 31: Battle of Hart’s River –the second bloodiest day of the war for Canada.
- May 31: War ends (Treaty of Vereeniging) with a British victory & annexation of both republics by British Empire.

1903

- November: Carnegie Library, Sarnia’s first public library is built in Victoria Park.

1908

- The Boer War Memorial Fountain was erected in Victoria Park, Sarnia.

WORLD WAR I YEARS

1910

- May 4: Under the Naval Services Act, the Canadian Navy is established.

1911

- August 29: Canada’s Navy is renamed, with the new designation, the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN).

1912

- April 14/15: Luxury liner *RMS Titanic*, on her maiden voyage, sinks in the North Atlantic, over 1,500 lives lost.

1914

- May 7: Sarnia is officially proclaimed as a city, having reached a population of 10,00 residents.
(adopt the nickname “Imperial City” because of the visit of H.R.H. the Duke of Connaught)
- May 18: The Royal Naval Canadian Volunteer Reserve is established.
- May 29: *Empress of Ireland*, a CP passenger ship collides with a Norwegian freighter in Gulf of St. Lawrence, the *Empress* sinks in 14 minutes, 1,015 perish, Canada’s worst maritime disaster.

- June 28, 1914: Assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria and his wife in Sarajevo.
- July 6: Germany agrees to support Austro-Hungarian action against Serbia.
- July 28: War officially begins, when Austria-Hungary declares war on Serbia.
- August 1: Germany declares war on Russia.
- August 3: Germany declares war on France.
- August 4: Germany invades Belgium.
- August 4, midnight: United Kingdom, including Canada and Newfoundland declare war on Germany.
- August 7: First troops of British Expeditionary Force (BEF) land in France.
- August 19: The first volunteers of approximately 32,000 men, begin to arrive at Valcartier Camp, Quebec.
- October 3: Over 30,000 men of the Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF) depart en route to Europe, the largest convoy ever to sail from Canada.
- October 14: 1st Contingent of Canadian Expeditionary Force arrives in a massive convoy in England.
- December 21: The Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry arrives in France, the first Canadian unit committed to battle in the Great War.
- December 25: Soldiers of opposing armies fraternize at points along the Western Front in the "Christmas truce."

1915

- January 6: The Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry arrives at the trenches in France.
- February 4: The 1st Canadian Division embarks for the trenches in France.
- April 22: Canadians see first major action at Ypres; first use of poison gas against Canadian troops.
- April 22-May 25: Second Battle of Ypres, Belgium; Canada's first series of major battles.
- April 24: Canadians targeted with poison chlorine gas. In the first 48 hours at Ypres, more than 6,000 casualties.
- April 25-January 9, 1916: The Battle of Gallipoli. Approximately 46,000 Allied troops killed.
- May 3: Lt-Col. John McCrae of the Canadian Expeditionary Force composes "In Flanders Fields".
- May 7: Luxury ocean liner *RMS Lusitania* is sunk by a German submarine near Ireland, over 1,100 casualties.
- May 15-25: Battle of Festubert, France: Canada's second major engagement, they suffer 2,600 casualties.
- May 25: Second Canadian Division formed in Canada
- June 1: Prohibition begins to go into effect, province by province.
- June 15: Battle of Givenchy, France: Canada suffers 400 casualties.
- November 26: The Lambton 149th Battalion (raised exclusively in Lambton County) begins recruiting.
- December 8: British *Punch* magazine publishes "In Flanders Fields" by Lt-Col. John McCrae.
- December 25: Third Canadian Division is formed.

1916

- March 27-April 16: The Battle of St. Eloi, Belgium. Over 1,370 Canadians killed or wounded.
- April 25: The first ANZAC Day is held, an annual day of Remembrance originating in Australia and New Zealand.
- June 2-13: The Battle of Mont Sorrel, Belgium. Over 8,700 Canadians killed or wounded.
- July 1: Beaumont Hamel. The first battle of the Somme, where the 1st Newfoundland Regiment was virtually wiped out, over 700 casualties in less than half an hour.
- July 1-November 18: The Battle of the Somme, France. More than 24,000 Canadians were killed.
- September 15-22: The Battle of Courcellette. First use of the tank and rolling barrage, 7200+ Canadian casualties.
- September 16: The Ontario Temperance Act took effect, prohibiting the sale of alcohol in the province.

1917

- April 6: The United States declares war on Germany (first U.S. divisions would not arrive until late in the year).
- April 9-12: Battle of Vimy Ridge, France. "Canada becomes a nation", cost of 7,000 wounded and 3,600 lives lost.
- June 7: Battle of Messines. Allied engineers, many of them Canadian, use underground explosives in this victory.
- July 1: Newfoundland and Labrador begin to observe this date as Memorial Day to commemorate their sacrifices.
- August 1: Hospital ship *SS Letitia* carrying 546 wounded Canadian soldiers runs aground off Halifax harbour.
- August 15-25: The Attack on Hill 70, France. The victory cost more than 9,100 Canadian killed or wounded.
- August 29: PM Robert Borden's Military Service Act passes through Parliament, making conscription mandatory.
- Sept. 20: Income War Tax Act is introduced (personal income tax), a "temporary" measure to help finance the war.
- Sept. 20: Wartime Elections Act gives select groups of women the right to vote, for first time, in federal elections.
- October 26-November 10: The Second Battle of Passchendaele, Belgium. 12,000 Canadians wounded, more than 4,000 killed.
- December 6: The Halifax Explosion - French munitions vessel *SS Mont Blanc* collides with *SS Imo* and explodes in Halifax Harbour, killing approximately 2,000 people, and injuring another 9,000.

- December 17, 1917: For the first time, some Canadian women are given the right to vote in a federal election.

1918

- March 30: The Battle of Moreuil Wood, France: Canadian Cavalry carry out “the last great cavalry charge.”
- April 21: Canadian airman Roy Brown is credited with shooting down German fighting ace known as “Red Baron”.
- June 27: Attack and sinking of Canadian Hospital Ship *HMHS Llandovery Castle*, 234 lives lost, the most significant Canadian naval disaster of the war.
- August 8-November 11: Canada’s Hundred Days Campaign, France and Belgium. In final 3 months of war, over 39,000 Canadians and Newfoundlanders wounded, and more than 6,800 killed.
- August 8-14: The Battle of Amiens, France that begins the Allied offensive. Canadians advance through German defences.
- August 26-September 3: The 2nd Battle of Arras, France. Canadians break Hindenberg Line and DQ Line.
- September 27-October 11: The Battle of Canal-du-Nord and Cambrai, France. A great tactical achievement.
- November 1-2: The Battle of Valenciennes, France - The Canadian Corps last major battle of the War.
- November 10-11: Canadians liberate the city of Mons, Belgium.
- November 11, 11:00 a.m.: Armistice of Compiègne signed, ending the Great War.
- December 13: Canadian troops cross the Rhine River into Bonn and Cologne, Germany.

1919

- January 18: Paris Peace Conference opens, to establish the terms of the peace. Canada took part, having gained international recognition for its great contribution during the War.
- March: The first OHA Memorial Cup is awarded to the national junior hockey champions of Canada.
(in remembrance of the many young men and women who paid the supreme sacrifice for Canada in WWI)
- June 28: Signing of The Treaty of Versailles, the Peace treaty ending war between Germany and the Allied Powers. It includes a plan to form a “League of Nations” (precursor of the United Nations), in which Canada gains an independent seat.
- November 11: The first “Armistice Day” declared by King George V, taking place throughout the Commonwealth.

1920

- January 10: The League of Nations is established, designed to maintain global peace.
- February 1: The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) are created with the merger of the North West Mounted Police and the Dominion Police.

1921

- July 5: Canada adopts the red poppy as its national flower of Remembrance.
- November 7: The original Sarnia Cenotaph Memorial is officially unveiled in Victoria Park.

1922

November 11: The Sarnia Cenotaph is rededicated, with the addition of the bronze “Tommy” soldier atop it.

1923

- January 31: The Royal Canadian Naval Reserve and RCN Volunteer Reserve are established.

1924

- April 1: During WWI, Canadians flew with the Royal Flying Corps and Royal Naval Air Service. On this date, a permanent national air force is established in Canada, the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF).

1925

- November: Canadian Legion of the British Empire Service League (Canadian Legion) is founded in Winnipeg.
(formerly the Great War Veterans Association, which had been founded in 1917).

1929

- October 29: Known as “Black Tuesday”, the stock market crash on this day is often cited as the beginning of the Great Depression, a period of economic slump that would last for approximately ten years (millions of Canadians would be left unemployed, hungry and often homeless).

1931

- November 11: Armistice Day renamed to “Remembrance Day” & is ensured that it will always be November 11th.
- December 11: Statute of Westminster passed, Canada gains its legislative (declaration of) independence from U.K.

WORLD WAR II YEARS

1934

- August 2: Adolf Hitler becomes dictator of Germany, with absolute power, declaring himself as Der Fuhrer.

1935

- September 15: German Jews stripped of rights by Nuremberg Race Laws.
- October 3: Italian army invades Abyssinia (Ethiopia) on order of Mussolini. League of Nations does little in response to this aggression, it's credibility is undermined.

1936

- March 7: German troops occupy the Rhineland.
- July 17: Beginning of vicious Spanish Civil War, Nationalists vs. Republicans, would last for more than 2 ½ years.
- July 26: The Canadian National Vimy Memorial is unveiled by King Edward VIII, on Hill 145 on Vimy Ridge.
- August 1-16: Summer Olympic Games in Berlin, Germany. 109 Canadian competitors, 9 medals won (1G, 3S, 5B).
- October: Suiyuan Campaign begins, Japanese-backed forces attack into Suiyuan province in Republic of China.
- November 1: Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy announce a Rome-Berlin Axis.
- December 23: Dr. Norman Bethune began administering blood transfusions to injured people in the Spanish Civil War out of a station wagon, the first mobile blood unit of its kind in medical history.

1937

- June 29: Canadian Prime Minister Mackenzie King visits Adolf Hitler in Nazi Germany (King impressed by him).
- July 7: Japan invades China, initiating World War II in the Pacific.

1938

- March 12: Germany invades Austria.
- October 1: German troops occupy the Sudetenland (a portion of Czechoslovakia).
- October 10: The Blue Water Bridge (cantilever truss bridge) opens connecting Point Edward to Point Huron.
- November 9: "Kristallnacht" - Wave of violence carried out against Jews throughout Nazi Germany.

1939

- March 15: Germany invades Czechoslovakia.
- mid-May: King George VI and Queen Elizabeth embark on month-long tour across Canada.
- May 31: King George and Queen Elizabeth officially unveil the National War Memorial, *The Response*, in Ottawa.
- June 7: Thousands of Sarnia/Lambton citizens travel to London, Ontario to see the King and Queen.
- August 26: All Canadian merchant ships passed from owner control to the control of the Royal Canadian Navy.
- September 1: Germany invades Poland in a blitzkrieg, the official start of the War in Europe.
- September 3: Britain, France, Australia and New Zealand declare war on Germany.
- September 3: Montreal-bound passenger ship *SS Athenia* sunk by a German submarine; 117 were killed including four Canadians.
- September 3 (lasts until May 8, 1945): The Battle of the Atlantic begins. The longest continuous battle of the war.
- September 10: Canada and Newfoundland declare war on Germany, officially entering the Second World War.
- September 16: The first convoy for Britain sails from Halifax, escorted by the Canadian destroyer *St. Laurent*.
- September 29: Germany and the Soviet Union divide up Poland between them.
- December 17: Main body of the First Division of Canadian troops arrive in Scotland.
- December 17: The British Commonwealth Air Training Plan agreement – Canada to provide facilities and training

1940

- April 9: Canada creates a Department of Munitions and Supply to manage the production of war material.
- April-June: Germany invades & takes control of Denmark, Norway, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Belgium & France.
- May 26-June 4: Miracle of Dunkirk - 340,000 trapped Allied troops are successfully evacuated from France.
- June 10: Italy declares war on Britain, including Canada, and France.
- June 10: North Africa Campaign begins, battles fought in Libya, Egypt, Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia.
- June 21: National Resources Mobilization Act enacted in Canada – registration of eligible men for home defence.
- July 10-October 31: The Battle of Britain - RAF fighter pilots, including Canadians, stop German air advance.
- September 15: Battle of Britain Day – RAF defend against a massive Luftwaffe assault, a decisive RAF victory.
- September 22: Germany, Italy, and Japan sign the Tripartite Pact creating the Axis Alliance.

1941

- February 12: Germany sends the Afrika Korps to North Africa to reinforce the Italians.
- April 6: Germany invades Yugoslavia and Greece.
- May 27: Germany's most famous battleship, the *Bismarck*, is sunk by the British Royal Navy.
(a handful of Canadians involved; gathering intelligence, air strikes and gunnery action, several were killed)
- June 22: Germany launches massive invasion of the Soviet Union under the codename *Operation Barbarossa*.

- November 27, 1941: First war vessel, a submarine chaser, the *Fairmile HMC Q062* is built and launched in Sarnia.
- December 7: Japan attacks Pearl Harbour, declares war on Britain, Canada, United States and allies.
- December 8: Canada, the United States, the Commonwealth, and the Netherlands declare war on Japan.
- December 11: Germany declares war on the United States.
- December 8-25: The Battle of Hong Kong. Japan attacks and overtakes vastly outnumbered Canadian defenders.

1942

- February: Polymer Corporation is established in Sarnia, in order to manufacture synthetic rubber for the war effort. (13 months later, Sarnia facility began production)
- February 15: The Fall of Singapore to the Japanese Army, one of the worst disasters of the British Army.
- June 4-7: Battle of Midway. Decisive battle in the Pacific Theatre, a major American victory over the Japanese.
- August 13: The Royal Canadian Navy minesweeper *HMCS Sarnia* is commissioned for service in Toronto.
- August 19: The Dieppe Raid (*Operation Jubilee*). One of Canada's worst military disasters, with more than 1,940 taken as POW's, and over 900 losing their lives during the single day.
- September: Camp Ipperwash opens, a basic training centre for infantry troops.

1943

- January 19: Princess Margriet of the Netherlands is born in Ottawa (the Dutch royal family had fled from the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands). The annual Canadian Tulip Festival in Ottawa emerged from this event.
- May 13: Axis forces in Tunisia surrender to the Allies, ending the North African Campaign.
- July 10-August 6: Battle of Sicily (*Operation Husky*). Allied invasion of Sicily, launching the Italian Campaign.
- September 3, 1943-February 25, 1945: Italian Campaign continues; Allies invade mainland Italy.
- September 8: Unconditional surrender of Italy is announced. They now join the Allied forces against the Germans.
- December 20-28: Battle of Ortona, Italy: 1372 Canadians killed in fierce urban warfare.

1944

- January 22: Battle of Anzio begins with the landing of 36,000 Allied soldiers at Anzio, Italy.
- March: RCAF No. 414 Squadron is officially adopted by the city, becoming the RCAF *City of Sarnia* Squadron.
- March 19: Germany occupies Hungary.
- March 24: Commonwealth airmen tunnel out of a German Stalag in Poland, became known as "The Great Escape".
- May 11-early June: Battle of Liri Valley – Canadians break through Gustav and Hitler Lines in Italy.
- June 4: U.S. Forces (and Canadian FSSF) enter Italy's capital city Rome, a major symbolic victory.
- June 6: D-Day (*Operation Overlord* begins): 14,000 Canadians land in Normandy, France (Juno Beach).
- June 6-August 21: The Battle of Normandy. Allies push into France, with over 5,300 Canadians killed.
- August 25: Paris, France is liberated by Allied Forces.
- August 25-September 21: Canadians break through German defensive Gothic Line in Italy at a cost of 1,000+ lives.
- September 17-25: *Operation Market Garden*. Unsuccessful Allied operation to cross the Rhine (a 'bridge too far').
- October 1-November 8: The Battle of the Scheldt. Allies push into Belgium and the Netherlands; more than 6,300 Canadian casualties, including over 800 Canadians killed.
- November 22: National Resources Mobilization Act amended – Sending Canadian conscripted soldiers overseas.
- December 16: Germany launches their last major offensive in Belgium/France, known as the Battle of the Bulge.

1945

- January: 13,000 Canadian conscript soldiers proceed to Britain, but only a few thousand enter combat.
- January 27: Auschwitz-Birkenau camp is liberated. This date is now International Holocaust Remembrance Day.
- February: *Operation Penknife* – 1st Canadian Corps leave Italy to reunite with the First Canadian Army in Europe. (Over 20 months of fighting in Italy, more than 26,000 Canadian casualties including nearly 6,000 killed).
- February 8-March 10: The Battle of the Rhineland; more than 5,300 Canadians killed.
- February 7-May 5: The Liberation of the Netherlands; over 7,600 Canadians killed.
- May 7: Germany signs unconditional surrender. The next day, May 8, is declared "V-E Day" (Victory in Europe).
- July 26: The U.S., U.K. and China issue the Potsdam Declaration, calling for the surrender of Japan.
- August 6: First atomic bomb ("Little Boy") dropped on Hiroshima, Japan. Three days later, second atomic bomb ("Fat Man") dropped on Nagasaki.
- August 15: Japan surrenders. Due to the time zone difference, surrender is announced August 14 in North America. Date is declared "V-J Day" (Victory over Japan Day).
- September 2: Japan signs the official "Instrument of Surrender" aboard the *USS Missouri* in Tokyo Bay.
- October 24: The United Nations organization is created with the signing of the United Nations Charter.

- November 20, 1945: The Nuremberg War Crimes trials begin. Verdicts on 22 defendants announced Oct 1, 1946.

THE COLD WAR BEGINS and THE KOREAN WAR

1947

- Cold War begins: Military tensions between the Western Bloc democratic nations (United States and NATO allies) and the Eastern Bloc communist nations (Soviet Union and its allies).
- November 20: Princess Elizabeth (future Queen) marries Prince Philip Mountbatten in Westminster Abbey, London ("The People's Wedding" - more than 200 million people around the world listened to the BBC broadcast)

1949

- March 31: Newfoundland joins Canada Confederation, becoming the 10th province.
- April 4: The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) alliance is signed by 12 nations, including Canada.

1950

- June 25: War begins when North Korean forces cross the 38th parallel into South Korea, three days later, they capture the capital city Seoul. Sixteen UN nations join to resist the aggression, led by the United States.
- July 1: Lead elements of the first United States forces land in Pusan, South Korea.
- July 5: Three Canadian destroyers sail for Korea, the *HMCS Cayuga*, *Athabaskan*, and *Sioux*.
- August 7: Canadian government creates the Canadian Army Special Force brigade to serve in Korea.
- late October: China joins forces with North Korea, launching their first phase offensive against South Korea.
- December 18: The first Canadian battalion, the 2nd Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, arrive in Pusan.

1951

- April 23-25: Battle of Kapyong – Victory by Canada's 2PPCLI, against overwhelming odds, 10 Canadians killed.
- May 4-6: The 25th Canadian Infantry Brigade arrives in Korea, landing at Pusan.
- May 30: Battle of Chail-Li and Hill 467, results in sixty Canadian casualties.
- July: Intermittent Peace talks begin and would continue intermittently throughout the war.
(more Canadians would be wounded or killed after the talks began).
- November 22-24: Canadians successfully defend Hill 355 against heavy Chinese attack 11 Canadians killed.

1952

- October 2: Canadian Tribal class destroyer *HMCS Iroquois* is shelled off the Korean coast, 3 Canadians killed.
- October 23: Canadians lose, and then regain control of positions on Hill 355, resulting in 67 casualties.

1953

- May 2-3: Enemy attack on Hill 187 results in heaviest Canadian battalion casualties of the war, 26 Canadians killed.
- June 2: Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II as monarch of the Commonwealth at Westminster Abbey.
(first coronation to be televised, more than 350 million around the world tuned in).
- July 27: Korean War ends* with the signing of the Korean Armistice Agreement at Panmunjom.
(*technically, the two countries are still at war)

1955

- November 11: The "new" Sarnia Cenotaph Memorial is officially unveiled in Victoria Park, with the inscribed names of Sarnia's fallen soldiers from World War I, World War II and the Korean War.

THE VIETNAM WAR and U.N. PEACEKEEPING BEGINS

1940's

- Mid 1940s: No official declaration of war, but conflict in the Vietnam region begins.

1954

- May: Vietnam War essentially begins (nine years after the end of WWII, and during the Cold War).
North Vietnam (allies China and Soviet Union) vs. South Vietnam (USA ally).

1956

- July 26: Egypt's President Nassar seizes control of the Suez Canal, sparking the 1956 Suez Crisis.
- November 4: UN votes in favour of Canadian Lester Pearson's proposal of a United Nations Peacekeeping Force.
- November 24: The first Canadian Peacekeepers, as part of the United Nations Emergency Force, set foot in Egypt.

1962

- October 16-28: Cuban Missile Crisis – Tense 13-day political and military confrontation between the U.S. & the Soviet Union concerning U.S. missiles in Italy & Turkey, and the Soviet plan to install missiles in Cuba.

1965

- February 15: The Red Ensign is replaced by the new Maple Leaf flag, becoming our official flag of Canada.
- March 2: U.S. commence air strikes, then introduce full active combat units into the war against North Vietnam.

1967

- Canada's Centennial: Celebrations, activities, events across Canada throughout the year mark it's 100th year.
Highlighted by Expo '67 in Montreal, a world's fair that ran from April 28-October 27.
- March 15: Parliament approves "O Canada" as the national anthem, replacing "God Save the Queen".

1968

- January 30: North Vietnamese launch *Tet Offensive*, a turning point in the war, and antiwar movements in America.
- February 1: The Canadian Armed Forces came into being with the merger of the Canadian Army, the Royal Canadian Navy and the Royal Canadian Air Force. By 2011, the historic names were restored.

1973

- January 27: All warring parties in the Vietnam War sign a ceasefire.
- March: The last United States military personnel leave Vietnam, though some remain protecting U.S. installations.
- September: Sarnia's F-86 Sabre Golden Hawk fighter jet is unveiled, part of the RCAF Memorial in Germain Park.

1975

- April 30: Vietnam War ends with the capture of Saigon by the North Vietnamese Army.
- Canada begins admitting Vietnamese immigrants to the country, reaching 5,608 in one year.
- Over one million refugees flee Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos, became known as "boat people".

1976

- July 2: Vietnam is unified as a communist country, the Socialist Republic of Vietnam.

1979/80

- Approximately 50,000 "boat people" from Vietnam settle in Canada.

1982

- April 17: Queen Elizabeth signs the Proclamation of the Constitution Act, enshrining the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and completing Canada's independence from Britain.

1983

- July 1: Known as Dominion Day since 1867, this date officially becomes known as Canada Day.

POST COLD WAR and THE AFGHANISTAN WAR

1989-1991

- Cold War ends with the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989. Borders open, free elections oust Communist regimes, and the formal dissolution of the Soviet Union in December 1991.

1990

- August 2: Iraq invades Kuwait, start of Persian Gulf War involving UN coalition forces, including Canada.

1991

- January 16: *Operation Desert Storm* – Combat phase of Gulf War begins with a massive U.S.-led air offensive.
- March 3: UN coalition forces liberate Kuwait, Iraq cease-fire, end of Persian Gulf War.

1995

- July 2: The Canadian Vietnam Veterans Memorial (The North Wall) is unveiled in Windsor, Ontario.

1997

- July 27: The Canadian Korean War Wall of Remembrance is unveiled in Brampton, Ontario.

1998

- November 11: Sarnia's Victoria Park is officially renamed Veterans Park.

2000

- May: Canada's Tomb of the Unknown Soldier is created at National War Memorial in Ottawa.
(contains the remains of an unidentified Canadian soldier who died at Vimy Ridge, France in WWI).

2001

- September 11: Four coordinated terrorist attacks by Islamist extremists on U.S targets including the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. Referred to as "9/11", approximately 3,000 people killed from over 90 nations.
- October 7: United States begins *Operation Enduring Freedom* against Al-Qaeda & Taliban regime in Afghanistan.
- October 9: As part of *Operation Apollo*, first Canadian warship proceeds to Arabian Sea.

- December 22, 2001: United Nations Security Council creates an International Security Assistance Force (ISAF).
- December: Canada's Afghanistan mission begins with the arrival of commandoes from Joint Task Force 2.

2002

- January: First Canadian troops arrive in Afghanistan.

2003

- April 9: Government of Canada declares this date annually as "Vimy Ridge Day".
- August: Under the mandate of *Operation Athena*, Canadian forces deploy to Kabul, in northern Afghanistan.
- September 3: Canadian Parliament declares this date annually as "Merchant Navy Veterans' Day".

2005

- August: Under *Operation Athena II*, Canadian forces transition to Kandahar Province in southern Afghanistan.

2006

- January: Canadian forces begin conducting main combat operations in Kandahar.
- January 27: The first commemoration ceremony of International Holocaust Remembrance Day.
- September 2-17: *Operation Medusa* in Panjwai District results in 12 Canadians killed in action.

2007

- March 9-May 30: British-led *Operation Achilles* in Helmand Province, results in 6 Canadians killed in action.
- April 9: The restored Canadian National Vimy Memorial is rededicated by Queen Elizabeth II.
- August 24: A stretch of Hwy 401 running from Trenton to Toronto, is officially renamed the Highway of Heroes.

2008

- August 9: National Peacekeeper's Day was established in Canada.

2011

- July: Withdrawal of the bulk of Canadian troops from Afghanistan, ending its combat role on the front lines there.

2013

- July 27: Canadian government designates 2013 as the Year of the Korean War, and makes every July 27 "Korean War Veterans Day".

2014

- March 12: Official withdrawal of all Canadian military personnel from Afghanistan.
- May 9: National Day of Honour commemorated across Canada to honour the legacy of the Afghanistan heroes.
- September 10-14: The inaugural Invictus Games are held in London, England.
- November: Dedication of WWI Trees of Remembrance Memorial (Scouts Canada project) in Heritage Park, Sarnia.

2015

- November: The "Big Tom" cannon is returned to Veterans Park, it's original home since 1869.

2016

- October 30: Sarnia-Lambton Afghanistan Monument is unveiled in the southeast corner of Veterans Park.
- November 7: The Veterans Park Storyboard is unveiled, documenting the history of the park and it's artifacts.

2017

- May: Sarnia's Vimy Ridge Memorial is unveiled in Veteran's Park, commemorating the Battle's 100th anniversary.
- September 27: Canada's National Holocaust Monument is unveiled in Ottawa.

2018

- October: Two storyboards are unveiled in Veterans Park commemorating Sarnia sacrifices in both World Wars: World War I – Sarnia At War, and World War II – Overseas and The Homefront.

2019

- October 15: Four kilometre section of Highway 40 in Sarnia (south of Hwy 402) receives the secondary designation of "Veterans Parkway".
- November 11: The Royal Canadian Legion, Branch 62, adds to the Sarnia cenotaph, inscribing the names of 26 fallen soldiers.

Sonnet 55 (2nd quatrain)

*When wasteful war shall statues overturn,
And broils root out the work of masonry,
Nor Mars his sword nor war's quick fire shall burn
The living record of your memory*

By William Shakespeare, 1609

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- a – Jerry Carol – a relative of Robert Charles Dionne, confirming Robert was a St. Patrick’s graduate.
- b – Lyn Westfall – daughter of William Wilfred Henry Lavers, confirming her fathers information.
- c – Bill (and Illa) Bullock – nephew of Hugh Francis Hegarty. Provided information about his uncle.
- d – Kevin McHarg – National Director-Hero to Hero Team Canada, and
Marsha Guthrie – niece of W.R. Graham. Both provided information on W.R. Graham.
- e – Garry McBean – Provided information on J.E. Quinn.
- f – Richard Prudom – Provided information on his uncle C.A. Nash.
- g – Dan McCaffrey – Reporter, historian and author, provided stories on Daniel Crone (Boer War, printed November 2005), Charles Henry Living (WWII, printed November 2007) and Mayor William Paul.
- h – Jeff Beeler – Lambton County Library, Sarnia Branch, information on M. Berger.
- i – Cathy Jolicoeur – niece of John (Jack) Fowlie, provided information about her uncle.
- j – Shawn O’Keefe – Grandson of James L. Wright, provided information about his grandfather.
- k – Ian Mason – Provided information on Ross Stevens and St. Paul’s United Church.
- l – Trevor Sherwood – Provided information on Gordon Fordyce.
- m – Alice Frew – Provided information on Gerald Kelly.
- n – City of Sarnia Records – Courtesy of Mayor Mike Bradley.
- o – Joseph Paithouski – Provided information on the Paithouski family including his uncle Michael.
- p – Don Poland – Provided information on the Poland family including sons Brent and Mark.
- q – George Mathewson – *The Sarnia Journal*.
- r – Errol and Elaine Cushley – Provided information on William Cushley.
- s – Henry Nevile – Provided information on Herbert Nevile.
- t – George Pitfield – Lay minister at St. Clair United Church, Aamjiwnaang First Nations, Sarnia.
- u – Lou Howard – Former crew member of the *H.M.C.S. Sarnia*.
- v – Janet Chapple – Relative of Percy and Maud Guertin.
- w – Gregory Scharf – Provided information on William Donald Leslie Cameron.
- x – Oliver Slater – World War II veteran. Served with the Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve.
- y – Laurie Egan – Provided information on George Esser.
- z – Phil Egan – Sarnia author and historian (Sarnia Historical Society).
- 2a – John Albinson – Provided information on Leslie Gordon Sutherland.

- 2b – Joyce Prudom – Provided information on Charles A. Nash.
- 2c – Eleanor Smith – Provided information on Alfred Adams.
- 2d – Terri O'Connor – Provided information on Barry and Patrick O'Connor (her father).
- 2e – Marg Emery – Corunna Legion. Provided information on Leslie Sutherland.
- 2f – Harold A. Skaarup – Retired Canadian Forces Army Intelligence Officer, military historian, author.
- 2g – Peter Mirabel Wolff – Provided information on James F. Wolff (crew mate of William Brown Clark).
- 2h – Esme Gander – Provided information on her brother Arthur Gander.
- 2i – Randy Evans – Provided additional information on Nelson Brown.
- 2j – Chuck Toth – City of Sarnia Parks and Recreation, Supervisor, Forestry/Horticulture.
- 2k – Ellwood Phillips – Provided information on his great uncle David C. Montgomery, and Johnson, Kerr, Lumley.
- 2l – William Benjamin Jones – brother of Glyn Jones.

From his written chronicle of the Jones family, "As I Recall", 1982.

- 2m – Tom St. Amand – co-editor of this Project, and provided information on the Centennial Park anchor.
- 2n – David Plain – Sarnia/Aamjiwnaang historian and author.
- 2o – Marsha Guthrie – Daughter of Jack Graham, niece of Lloyd and William Graham.
- 2p – Dave Burwell – nephew of Allan Campbell.
- 2q – Sharon McDonald – Niece of Edward Parsons.
- 2r – Mary Moulden (nee Powell) – sister of Stephen Powell.
- 2s – Marshal Kern – Freemason Victoria Lodge No. 56.
- 2t – Norma MacLean – Great uncle was David Kerr.
- 2u – Judy Arthurs – relative of Peter Ford.
- 2v – Victoria McRae – relative of Howard McRae.
- 2w – Lisa and Ruth Ann Handy – relatives of Kenneth Burr.
- 2x – Howard Ashton – family connection to Howard Fraser Thompson.
- 2y – Bill Oldale – Korean War veteran.
- 2z – Charlene Ruberry – niece of Ernest Ottaway.
- 3a – Howard Wheatley – nephew of George Wheatley.
- 3b – Tina Marie Hansen – information on Jack Brunette.
- 3c – Macalem Henley – Researcher, Directorate History and Heritage, Department of National Defence.
- 3d – Keith McNeil – nephew of Curtis and Francis Goring.
- 3e – Gary Campbell – researcher, information on Frederick Gorman (Boer War).
- 3f – David van Coolwijk – Halifax Monument Muiden, Netherlands.
- 3g – Sarnia Observer – "Relative of Dead Airman Sought", September 6, 2003 and,
"Local War Hero's Mystery Solved", October 9, 2003, Jack Poirier.
- 3h – David Hext – provided photograph of William Coulter.
- 3i – Norm Carr – nephew of Stuart Carr.
- 3j – Gail Hankinson - relative of John C. Clarke.
- 3k – Jeremy Shaffer – relative of Hector Le Gare.
- 3l – Charles and Susan Muxlow – Charles is grandson of Amos Iveson.
- 3m – Barbara Chrichton (daughter) & Carolyn Barnes (niece) – of Arthur Powell.
- 3n – John Cowan, Senior & Junior – Senior is nephew of Stewart Cowan.
- 3o – John Stewart – relative of Harly Williams (also #403 Airmen's Club, Sarnia).
- 3p – Christopher Plain – Chief, Aamjiwnaang Chippewa First Nation, Sarnia.
- 3q – Janet Pole Cousineau – daughter of Neil Pole/niece of Douglas & Ross Pole.
- 3r – Sandra Lang – relative of Alfred Corrick.
- 3s – Laurie Logan – relative of Ivy Mae Logan (Douglas Pole).
- 3t – Sandy Salmons – wife of David Salmons.
- 3u – Bob Churchill – Corunna Legion. Provided information on Leslie Sutherland.
- 3v – Jennifer Calvert – sister of David Salmons.
- 3w – Don Berrill – Past President, National Air Cadet League of Canada.
- 3x – Kristina Zimmer – Public & Government Affairs Manager, Imperial, Sarnia & Nanticoke Sites.
- 3y – Sandi Spaulding – relative of Neil Hanna.
- 3z – Beth Shute – relative of David Salmons.
- 4a – Mike Lester – family connection to Floyd Williams/Norine Demeray.
- 4b – Kathryn Godley – niece of Wallace Horley.

- 4c – Joe Horley – brother of Wallace Horley.
- 4d – Krista Pierson – relative of Thomas Brydges.
- 4e – Timothy Farrell – relative of Thomas Brydges.
- 4f – Bill Mulloy – relative of Hector & Stewart Cowan.
- 4g – Natasha Elloway – family connection to David Burke.
- 4h – Darcy Windover – relative of Hugo Borchardt.
- 4i – Susan Hinojosa – information on R. Mendizabal.

PHOTOGRAPH CREDITS:

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Back Cover – Sarnia Cenotaph, Glenn Ogilvie Photography.

THE FOLLOWING POEMS & VERSES WERE USED IN THIS PROJECT:

Back of Donor’s page – “O Valiant Hearts”, Sir John Stanhope Arkwright (1917).

End of Table of Contents – “Autumn, 1917”, Helena Coleman (1917).

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Pg. 40 – “Dulce Et Decorum Est”, Wilfred Owen (1918).

Pg. 48 – “Attack”, Siegfried Sassoon (1918).

Pg. 48 – “Anthem for Doomed Youth”, Wilfred Owen (1917).

Pg. 58 – “Aftermath”, Frank Walker (1916).

Pg. 72 – “The Hope of My Heart”, John McCrae (~1893).

Pg. 75 – “In Flanders Fields”, John McCrae (1915).

Pg. 112 – “Seam Squirrels”, (WWI verse, author unknown).

Pg. 112 – “Sing Me to Sleep”, (WWI verse, author unknown).

Pg. 191 – “My Son”, Myrtle Corcoran Watts (1918).

Pg. 193 – “The Soldiers’ Widow”, Edgar Guest (1915).

Pg. 212 – “A Working Party”, Siegfried Sassoon (1918).

Pg. 270 – Untitled (written after the loss of Alexander Cunningham), by his mother and siblings (~ 1918).
 Pg. 336 – “Somewhere in France”, Irene McMullin (~ 1918).
 Pg. 399 – Untitled (written after the loss of Alfred Weston), by his siblings (~ 1917).
 Pg. 413 – “A Canadian’s Message”, from a postcard written by an unknown Canadian soldier (1915).
 Pg. 413 – “Perhaps”, Vera Brittain (1916).
 Pg. 464 – “This was my brother”, Mona Gould (~ 1943).
 Pg. 480 – “High Flight”, P/O John Gillespie Magee Jr. (1941).
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 Pg. 711 – Untitled (written after the loss of his brother), John Glass (1945).
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 Pg. 1243 – “Imagine”, John Lennon (1971).

Canada’s Men

*From the Grand Old Home of the Maple Leaf,
 That lays o’er the Rolling Sea;
 In response to the Call – come Canada’s Men,
 These Sons of the Empire – Free.*

*Boldly they stand for the Cause of Right,
 And Britain’s Might – uphold;
 Sons of the Grand Imperial Race,
 They can Fight as in Days of Old.*

*From the Days when Wolfe scaled High Quebec,
 That overlooks the Plain;
 The Gallant Deeds of Canada’s Men.
 Shall Ring through the World again.*

*From City, and Prairie, and Distant Farm,
 They Respond to their Empire’s Call;
 To avenge their fallen Comrades,
 True Patriots – one and all.*

*We are proud to-day of Canada’s Men,
 And very good reason to be!
 The Bravest Men – we’ve seen of late,
 That have crossed the Atlantic Sea.*

*And when the War is finished,
 And our Lads go Home once More;
 What a Rousing Welcome shall be theirs,
 On their fine Canadian Shore!*

*From a post card written by a Canadian soldier to his mother, 1916
 Author unknown*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Sarnia War Remembrance Project is a completely volunteer, non-profit undertaking by its author. The successful completion of this project was possible only with the gracious support and contributions of a number of key individuals. Project author Tom Slater wishes to express a very special thank-you to the following for their invaluable support and assistance. Their admiration and respect for all the men and women who served and continue to serve is abundantly evident and inspiring. These individuals saw the value of *The Sarnia War Remembrance Project* as a means to pay tribute to all of Sarnia's fallen soldiers, to all those who served, and to the families of those who served. These individuals were instrumental in ensuring that the men and women of Sarnia-Lambton who served are remembered with honour.

Lou Giancarlo and Tom St. Amand – These two gentlemen wholeheartedly volunteered countless hours of their expertise in proofreading, organizing, revising and editing the research. They offered insight, suggestions, critical analysis, encouragement and advice. Their invaluable expertise ensured that the stories of Sarnia's fallen are told with clarity and eloquence and that the memory of these brave souls and their families is preserved with reverence and respect.

Randy Evans – After the release of the first edition, Randy offered to assist in identifying any possible Sarnia World War I fallen who may have been missed on the cenotaph. Collaborating over several months, a number of potential candidates were investigated, leading to several new fallen being added to the World War I section of this Project.

Mayor Mike Bradley – When Slater first began his search for a record of the local fallen, he ran into numerous dead ends and disappointments in trying to obtain any information at all. Slater—a complete stranger to Mayor Bradley at the time—met with the mayor one day and described what he was hoping to achieve. Mayor Bradley's enthusiasm, his eagerness to help, and his belief in the value of the project had a major impact in Slater's desire to continue the pursuit to his goal. From the outset, Mayor Bradley provided names of people to contact, potential resources to access and was an on-going support for information on Sarnia's war contributions.

After completion of the project in 2020, Mayor Bradley and the City of Sarnia provided support for the printing of copies of this two-volume edition. Mayor Bradley and the City also posted the entire PDF version of the Project on the City of Sarnia website: www.sarnia.ca. In this way, *The Sarnia War Remembrance Project* is accessible to all worldwide.

Family members of the fallen – Slater is forever grateful to the countless family members of Sarnia's fallen who provided him with invaluable information. Their contributions were instrumental in recording the stories of their loved ones and in making this project become a reality. Bearing the burden of the loss of their loved ones and the thoughts of what could have been for their entire lives, they were willing to share their joys, love and special memories of their fallen family members. Their rich, emotional recollections, in some cases many years after the loss of their loved one, left an indelible impression of the lasting pain and heartache felt in the loss of son, uncle or father to war.

Local media – Many members of the local media were instrumental from the outset by putting the word out to the community about the goal of the project and of Slater's request for information. Many family members contacted Slater as a result, who then provided information about their loved ones. The local press has also used *The Sarnia War Remembrance Project* as a source to continue to tell the stories of Sarnia's sacrifices during war. Thanks to many including George Mathewson, Carl Hnatyshyn, Tyler Kula, Paul Morden, Tara Jeffrey, Troy Shantz, Barbara Simpson, Melissa Schilz, J.D. Booth, Holly Wenning, Sue Storr, Barry Wright and Heather Young.

Donors – **The City of Sarnia; Bluewater Power Group of Companies; the Royal Canadian Legion, Branch #62, Sarnia; and the Sarnia Historical Society** generously provided financial support for the printing of this two-volume project. All printed copies have been donated to local groups and organizations including city and county government records, libraries, museums, archives, military service groups, schools, retirement and long-term care residences and local media. The generosity of these donors has ensured that there is a lasting record of Sarnia's wartime contributions; and that the sacrifices made by those who have served and those who have fallen, as well as the families of all servicemen and servicewomen, will always be remembered. The Sarnia Historical Society has also posted a PDF of the Project on their website: www.sarniahistoricalsociety.com

The following is a list of many of the people who contributed to the successful completion of this Project. Information, details and support that they provided through e-mails, telephone calls and meetings since the inception of this project, added to the thoroughness and accuracy of the story's of Sarnia's fallen. The author is indebted to and gratefully recognizes all of the following individuals for their significant contributions.

Angela Abram (re: Jesse Harold)	Lillian Addario (French translations)
John Albinson (re: Leslie Sutherland)	Ted Archer (Sarnia retiree)
Judy Arthurs (re: Peter Ford)	Howard Ashton (re: Howard F. Thompson)
Janet Baker (daughter of Nick Paithouski)	Peter Banks (re: Paul Morris)
Carolyn Barnes (re: Arthur Powell)	Carol Barr (re: William Barr)
Heather Bastien (re: Hugh Hegarty)	Jeffrey Beeler (Sarnia Library)
Don Berrill (re: Dave Salmons)	Louise Brazeau (Archives Canada)
Robert Brown (re: Rodolfo Mendizabal)	Bill and Illa Bullock (nephew of Hugh Hegarty)
Dave Burwell (nephew of Allan Campbell)	Jennifer Calvert (re: David Salmons)
Gary Campbell (re: Frederick Gorman)	Jerry Carol (relative of Robert Dionne)
Norm Carr (nephew of Stuart Carr)	Susan Chamberlain (The Book Keeper)
Janet Chapple (re: Percival Guertin)	Bill & Melissa Chong (Haines Printing)
Barbara Chrichton (daughter of Arthur Powell)	Don Christopher (re: Thomas Lee)
Bob Churchill (Corunna Legion re: L. Sutherland)	Jenna Clark (Veterans Affairs Canada)
Danielle Cooper (LambtonShield.com)	Janet Pole Cousineau (re: Pole brothers)
Denis Couture (RCAF websites)	John Cowan Sr and Jr. (relative of Stewart Cowan)
Errol and Elaine Cushley (parents of W. Cushley)	Bill Dickie (St. Patrick's alum)
Bill Douglas (Royal Canadian Legion)	Laurie Egan (re: George Esser)
Phil Egan (Sarnia Historical Society)	Scott Elliott (Royal Canadian Legion)
Natasha Elloway (re: David Burke)	Marg Emery (Corunna Legion re: L. Sutherland)
Timothy Farrell (re: Thomas Brydges)	Bryan and Alice Frew (re: Gerald Kelly)
Esme Gander (sister of Arthur Gander)	Don Gibson (re: T. Brydges and M. Vokes)
Kathryn Godley (niece of Wallace Horley)	Eldon Grant (Sombra Museum)
Marsha Guthrie (daughter of Jack Graham)	Ruth Ann and Lisa Handy (sister of Ken Burr)
Gail Hankinson (re: John C. Clarke)	Tina Marie Hansen (re: Jack Brunette)
Mark Harrison (re: Fairmile Q-boats)	Macalem Henley (Dept. of National Defence)
David Hext (re: William Coulter)	Susan Hinojosa (re: R. Mendizabal)
Carl Hnatyshyn (<i>Sarnia This Week</i>)	Joe Horley (re: Wallace Horley)
Ed Hoskin (Watford)	Carol House (re: Geoffrey Stone)
Lou Howard (re: <i>HMCS Sarnia</i>)	Teresa Iacobelli (author/historian)
Anna Iafate (OLM, St. Joseph's)	Tara Jeffrey (<i>Sarnia Journal</i>)
Cathy Jolicoeur (niece of John Fowlie)	William Jones (brother of Glyn Jones)
Marshal Kern (Freemason Lodge No. 56)	Florence Kettle (re: Ross Stevens)
Frances LaChance (re: Patrick O'Connor)	Sandra Lang (re: Alfred Corrick)
Chris LaPointe (niece of Glyn Jones)	Heather Lavalley (Lambton County Archives)
Betty Learn (re: P. Guertin & U. Noel)	Mike Lester (re: Floyd Williams)
Dr. Sarah Lockyer (Casualty ID Program, DND)	Laurie Logan (re: Douglas Pole)
Brian Lynch (SCITS teacher)	Norma MacLean (re: David Kerr)
Ian Mason (re: Howard Morris and St. Paul's)	George Mathewson (<i>Sarnia Journal</i>)
Lynn Mathieson (Royal Canadian Legion)	Garry McBean (re: James Quinn)
Dan McCaffrey (author/historian)	Gene McCaffrey (St. Patrick's alum)
Sharon McDonald (niece of Edward Parsons)	Kevin McHarg (Hero to Hero Team Canada)
Grant McKenzie (Central United Church)	Linda McLaughlin (Haines Printing)
Janice McMichael-Dennis (Bluewater Power)	Keith McNeil (nephew of Curtis & Francis Goring)
Joan McRae (re: Thomas Lee)	Victoria McRae (re: Howard McRae)
Robert Molland (re: Patrick O'Connor)	Paul Morden (<i>Sarnia Observer</i>)
Fred Morley (Royal Canadian Legion)	Susan Morphew (father and uncle were veterans)
Mary Moulden (sister of Stephen Powell)	Janet Mountain (Central United Church)
Bill Mulloy (relative of Stewart Cowan)	Rev. Lloyd Murdock (St. Andrew's Church)

Charles & Susan Muxlow (grandson of A. Iveson)
 Terri O'Connor (daughter of Patrick O'Connor)
 Shawn O'Keefe (grandson of James Wright)
 Joe Paithouski (nephew of Michael Paithowski)
 Ann Pearce (St. George's/St. John's Church)
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 John Stewart (RCAF #403 & re: H. Williams)
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 David van Coolwijk (Halifax Monument Muiden)
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Henry Nevile (re: Herbert Nevile)
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 Bill Oldale (Korean War veteran)
 Nathaniel Patch (U.S. National Archives)
 Jim Pederson (re: 149th Battalion)
 Krista Pierson (re: Thomas Brydges)
 Christopher Plain (Chief, Aamjiwnaang Sarnia)
 Don Poland (father of Brent Poland)
 Joyce Prudom (niece of Charles Nash)
 Lee Randall (1st Hussars)
 Joanne Rogers (Chief, Aamjiwnaang Sarnia)
 Sandy Salmons (re: David Salmons)
 Greg Scharf (re: William Cameron)
 Jeremy Shaffer (re: Hector Le Gare)
 Trevor Sherwood (re: Gordon Fordyce)
 Beth Shute (re: David Salmons)
 Barbara Simpson (*Sarnia Observer*)
 Harold Skaarup (Military author/historian)
 Eleanor Smith (re: Alfred Adams)
 Sandi Spaulding (re: Neil Hanna)
 Sue Storr (Radio Lambton)
 Chuck Toth (City of Sarnia)
 Michael van de Velde (Adegem website)
 Bev Walkling (some WWI letters)
 Jack Weston (re: Bomber Command)
 Patricia Wilson (Central Baptist Church)
 Peter Wolff (re: William Clark)
 Heather Young (*Sarnia This Week*)

Imagine (portion of)

*Imagine there's no countries
 It isn't hard to do
 Nothing to kill or die for
 And no religion too
 Imagine all the people
 Living life in peace...*

*Imagine no possessions
 I wonder if you can
 No need for greed or hunger
 A brotherhood of man
 Imagine all the people
 Sharing all the world...*

*You may say I'm a dreamer
 But I'm not the only one
 I hope someday you'll join us
 And the world will live as one*

John Lennon, 1971



INDIVIDUAL PATRONS

The following provided support for the printing of this two-volume project. All printed copies have been donated to local groups and organizations including city and county government records, libraries, museums, archives, military service groups, schools, retirement and long-term care residences and media.

The generosity of these donors has ensured that there is a lasting record of Sarnia's wartime contributions; and that the sacrifices made by those who have served and those who have fallen, as well as the families of all servicemen and servicewomen, will always be remembered. Their personal dedications are in loving memory of family members who served their country, never to be forgotten.

In memory of **all who served**, from Donald and Catherine Wardell.

Dedicated in memory of **Wilfred Ernest Pike**, from Steven Duncan Pike and family.

In memory of **Joe Egan**, RCNVR, from the Egan family.

In memory of **Sarnia's fallen soldiers**, from John and Lesley DeSotti.

In memory of **Wallace Carman Horley**, RCNVR, lost at sea *HMCS Alberni* August 1944.
From the Horley family.

In memory of **Douglas Earl Aiken**, RCAF, killed in action June 1944.
From the Lloyd Hillier family.

In memory of Leading Seaman **Joseph Fisher**, Royal Canadian Navy, from the Fisher family.

In memory of **Keith Fisher**, Royal Canadian Navy.
From Diane Fisher and Susan Fisher Savignac and family.

In memory of **Private Melvin Fisher**, killed in action while serving with the Perth Regiment, R.C.I.C..
From Randy Evans and the late Randy Fisher.

In memory of **Thomas Edwin Brydges**, Royal Canadian Artillery, killed in action March 1945.
From Helen (Brydges) & Michael O'Leary, Debra Brydges.

In memory of **Sgt. Arthur F. Gander**, RCAF, killed in action November 1943.
With love from Esme.

In memory of **Harold Johnston**, killed in action June 1942 in North Africa. Buried at the Tobruk War Cemetery. Father and Grandfather lovingly remembered. The Bradley family.

In memory of **Fred Henry**, RCAF, who proudly served Canada during World War II.
From the Giancarlo family.

In memory of **Rolly St. Amand**, who served with the RCAF during World War II.
From the St. Amand family.

In memory of **Oliver Slater**, who served with the RCNVR during World War II.
From the Slater family.

GREATER LOVE HAS NO MAN THAN THIS: THAT A MAN IS WILLING TO
LAY DOWN HIS LIFE FOR HIS FRIENDS AND COUNTRY.



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Sarnia, like thousands of other communities across Canada, had many of its sons and daughters answer the call of duty to serve their country during times of war. These “ordinary” local citizens left the comforts of their homes, as well as their schools, farms, jobs, trades and careers. They left their loved ones—grandparents, parents, aunts, uncles, brothers, sisters, husbands and wives, children and friends—in response to this nation’s call to fight in far off lands.

The men and women from Sarnia who volunteered and served did so with pride, valour and honour in the fight to save the oppressed and occupied; to defeat evil forces; and to secure for others the peace, liberty and freedoms that we enjoy in this great country. For the veterans who returned home, their experiences in war forever changed their lives. For the fallen, they lost the opportunity to live full lives, enriched by friends and family. Their deaths affected their loved ones and Sarnia and Lambton community as a whole for decades.

The Sarnia War Remembrance Project is a comprehensive record of the contributions and sacrifices Sarnians made during times of war. Included in this project are the history of Veterans Park and its Sarnia cenotaph; an overview of those who sacrificed; details on key events and summaries of the major battles and important campaigns in which Canadians participated; local news stories relating to these key war events; descriptions providing insight into the conditions and experiences of soldiers; letters local soldiers wrote home; biographies on over 300 of Sarnia’s fallen; Sarnia war facts and statistics; a Sarnia and Canada at war key events timeline; epitaphs of all of Sarnia’s fallen; and a record of all war memorials, plaques and honour rolls located throughout the City.

The Sarnia War Remembrance Project is an enduring tribute to all the brave men and women of Sarnia who served in war. It commemorates the sacrifices made by all the veterans, their families and those who made the supreme sacrifice for their love of home and country.