

# THE / LE BULLETIN



## Message from the President

By Stuart Beaton, President OMMC

Now that the New Year is here, I hope that all of you and your families had a very enjoyable Christmas and New Years break. Hopefully, 2014 was a successful year for all of you and your museums and that 2015 is off to a great start, even though it's well below freezing across the country. We are moving along very well for an interesting and informative OMMC course and conference that is being held in Ottawa in mid June. It should be a time well spent for the benefit of our museums, please plan on attending.

Enjoy the rest of the winter,  
Stuart Beaton

## Message from the Secretary

By David Stinson, Secretary OMMC

Anyone reading the Bulletin will have thought that the annual OMMC courses have moved around some over the years - they did indeed! The Organization began to take good shape in the mid-1960s and was founded in 1967 under the sponsorship of the Canadian War Museum. I have not yet found the locations for the courses in 1967, 1968 and 1969 - any clues will be welcome. However, the archives do show where "we have wandered" beginning in 1970:

1970 - Ottawa (hosted by Canadian War Museum (CWM))

1971 - CFB Borden

1972 - CFB Chilliwack

1973 - CFB Halifax

1974 - CFB Montreal

1975 - CFB Calgary

1976 - RMC Kingston

1977 - CFB Halifax

1978 - US Military Academy, West Point

1979 - CFB Ottawa

1980 - CFB Toronto

1981 - CFB Saint-Jean

1982 - CFB Gagetown

1983 - RRCM Victoria

1984 - CFB Borden

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- 1985 - CFB Halifax
- 1986 - CFB Winnipeg
- 1987 - Ottawa (hosted by CWM)
- 1988 - CMR Saint-Jean
- 1989 - RRCM Victoria
- 1990 - CFB Borden
- 1991 - CFB Galetown
- 1992 - RMC Kingston
- 1993 - CFB Calgary
- 1994 - CFB Valcartier
- 1995 - CFB Shearwater
- 1996 - Canadian Emergency Preparedness College, Arnprior, and CFB Petawawa
- 1997 - CFB Esquimalt
- 1998 - CFB Winnipeg
- 1999 - CFB Galetown
- 2000 - CFB Kingston, supported by RMC and its Museum
- 2001 - Québec, QC, supported by CFB Valcartier and Naval Reserve HQ, Québec; a joint activity with the US Army Museums and the International Congress of Military Museums
- 2002 - Hamilton, ON, supported by Mohawk College
- 2003 - CFB Halifax
- 2004 - Regina and Saskatoon, supported by The RCMP Museum and the Saskatchewan Military Museum
- 2005 - Ottawa, supported by Algonquin College, marking the opening of the new CWM at 1 Vimy Place
- 2006 - The Military Museums, Calgary
- 2007 - Victoria, supported by the University of Victoria and local OMMC member museums
- 2008 - HMCS Chippewa, Winnipeg
- 2009 - CFB Borden
- 2010 - Sydney, NS
- 2011 - Charlottetown, PEI, supported by the PEIR Museum
- 2012 - Montreal, supported by le Musée FMR Montreal
- 2013 - London, ON, supported by The RCR Museum
- 2014 - Kingston, supported by RMC Museum and Military Communications and Electronics Museum
- 2015 - Ottawa, supported by Algonquin College, CWM, Library and Archives Canada and local OMMC member museums
- 2016 - Tentatively - The Military Museums, Calgary - OMMC 2016 will be Course 50!

The aim in all of these Courses has always been two-fold: the development of museum skills and knowledge among the military museum staff members and allied OMMC members; and fostering the essential networks among the museums and their staff members. Much good has come from the pursuit of these aims - much more good can yet be done. It is worth doing well; let us continue to do so!

So, do I see any hands waving for 2017 yet? Places not yet visited include anywhere in Newfoundland and Labrador, Vancouver and Edmonton - all have cost implications. This will be a good Ottawa discussion topic as we continue to move forward!

## Veterans' Honour Plaques

By Pat Murphy, Vancouver Island Military Museum

It became clear to all concerned that once we moved into our new downtown location in 2011 that our eight side building was the perfect location for many things, but perfect for using one of several walls for mounting "Honour Plaques" honouring veterans from not only both World Wars but from all services with the Canadian Military, RCMP and Merchant Navy, right up to the present. Permission first had to be gained from the landlord (the City of Nanaimo) to permanently attach 6" x 9" black granite plaques. This was achieved.

A design was created, costs were gathered and work started on the marketing aspect. A media partner was obtained to help with the promotion and marketing and museum posters were created to showcase the finished product. Press releases were sent out to local media outlets and soon the sales process were started.

Each honour plaque features the name of the individual being honoured along with the branch of the service he or she serves or served with. A tile installer was selected and a facsimile was mounted on the chosen wall so that all prospective plaque buyers had a clear understanding of what the finished wall would look like.

It was determined that a total of 264 plaques would have to be marketed to fill the designated wall space available in phase one. To date (and only after 3 weeks of selling) we have sold 95 plaques at a cost of \$195 each and sales are brisk. Once phase one is sold and mounted, efforts will begin on phase two of the honour plaques. These plaques will be installed along the sides of the museum and we will be able to mount a further 200 plaques.

One memorial plaque is particularly important to this new project. It was procured on behalf of long time RCAF Bomber Command pilot Bill Lane who joined the RCAF at age seventeen. Bill was a volunteer at the museum for over fifteen years and sadly passed away last year. The plaque will honour Bill's service and his memory for decades to come.

To date we have had families with relatives or friends purchase honour plaques that served in all three Canadian services, the RCMP and the Merchant Navy going back to both World Wars as well as in post war Canadian military units.



Vice president Brian McFarlane is shown holding a plaque dedicated to Bill Lane.

## Cadet Volunteers at the PEI Regiment Museum

By Greg Gallant, Curator

Last February, we unveiled a new display on the Islanders who served in the First Special Service Force (The Devils Brigade) at the PEI Regiment Museum. There were seventeen Islanders, most of whom started with the PEI Highlanders and then volunteered for service with the Force. Of the seventeen, nine were originals who trained in Montana with the US troops. Of these seventeen Islanders, we were able to get photographs and biographies of sixteen.

Invitations and media advisories were sent out. We also contacted local Legions and Veterans groups and of course the families and next of kin of the former members. The last member passed away last November. As with many area events, we employ our local Army Cadets to lend us a hand. They help us in the setup, clean up and coat check just to name a few. We had about eight Cadets employed which was great because we needed all the help we could get. We usually get about 50 to 60 visitors but this day we hit an all-time high of 225. As fast as the Cadets were bringing chairs up from the basement, more people were arriving. The event went over very well.



We use our Cadets whenever we can. They are very eager to help. Some of them are working on their Duke of Edinburgh program, which requires them to volunteer in the community. At the end of the event we will reward them job well done. Some of the senior Cadets also help with cataloguing and cleaning and other museum jobs. They are valuable to our museum and greatly appreciated.

## The Memory Wall Project at the Canadian Centre for the Great War

By Caitlin Bailey, Curator

We're very happy to announce that our Memory Wall Project/Mur de souvenir is now open to the public! The Memory Wall features over 150 unnamed photographs and photo postcards from our archival collection, with images from Canada, Britain, France and Germany.



[Unknown soldier with horse] c1914-1918. CCGW Collections.

Like many institutional image collections, ours at the CCGW/CCGG contains several hundred photographs whose information has been lost. Some were sent as photo postcards to family and never written on; others show only a first name. Without traceable provenance, these images would normally have been left in storage, since most are portraits and would not have been consulted for any specific reason (such as the person shown or the event captured).

Taking inspiration from a portion of an exhibition put on by the National Gallery of Canada, "The Great War: The Persuasive Power of Photography", we created a magnetized wall that would allow us

to display unframed and un-matted photographs without damaging their edges. The photographs were selected with a special focus on those from our collection of Canadian portraits and photo postcards, and were hung on the wall using 4mm magnets over a period of several weeks. The finished wall measures 4.8m by 0.75m and is situated out of direct sunlight to protect the photographs. We are planning to rotate the images in April to ensure that none are exposed for an extended period.

The collection and the Memory Wall are open to the public Tuesday to Friday from 9h to 17h and Saturdays from 11h to 15h30. Please visit our website [www.greatwarcentre.com](http://www.greatwarcentre.com) for the address and directions. Those interested can also view images from the wall via the History Pin "Living Legacies 1914-1918" project.

With special thanks to the National Gallery of Canada and its curator of Canadian Art, Charlie Hill for the inspiration and advice.

## The Long Arms of Education and Outreach of a Two Room Volunteer-Run Museum

By John Ball, Head Researcher for 26 Fd Regt RCA – XII MB Dragoons Museum

When we discuss museums and their missions, we frequently think of a building with a collection that is held in public trust for the education of visitors. We open our doors and wait for visitors to come to us so we can share with them the history of our Regiment or Units. In our own mission of educating visitors of the 26 Fd Regt RCA and XII MB Dragoons, over the last two years and with tireless efforts of museum volunteers, we have learned to look beyond our walls and connect in a variety of ways with different groups of people.

Through our websites Facebook, and Twitter, we are discovering that people are contacting us with greater frequency for research and donations and surprises. This summer, the family of Lt M.G. Farr loaned our museum a fantastic artifact, and all because of our vast connections. The loan came about after years of inquiry from Gord Sim, one of the researchers at the museum, who had sporadic contact with members of Lt Farr's family. A tunic of Lt Farr's was up for auction on eBay and bought by Marco Hogenkamp, whom we have dubbed the "Holland Branch" of our Museum as he has a variety of artefacts and materials relating to the 12th Manitoba Dragoons and their time in Holland (as well as driving a Staghound Armoured car). After being in contact with Marco for four years for research purposes, Marco shared the pictures of Lt Farr's tunic with him. In turn, Gord contacted the daughter of Lt. Farr, Janet Farr-Parks, to inform her of the purchase of her father's tunic by Marco. As a result of this contact, Mrs. Farr-Parks and her husband travelled all the way from Ontario to present us the Military Cross earned by Lt Farr during the Second World War as a loan to the museum on August 14, 2014. The series of events and number of people that helped create this loan is an example of the broad and far-reaching network within which our museum operates.

As chance would have it, on the same day, the museum received a M109 Self Propelled Howitzer that now sits as a guardian to the Armoury and is dedicated in memory of LCol R. Thompson and past, present, and future Gunners of 26th Field Regiment RCA. The gun was the pet project of the Curator Edd McArthur who diligently worked with Engineers from CFB/ASU Shilo as well as City Engineers and the City Planning Department. The gun itself is useful for the museum as it draws in members of the public, eager to find out "what is that big tank thing doing there."

The museum hosts two events that commemorate two occasions that benefit from volunteers from outside the museum. The first event is the Vimy Night Fundraiser for the museum, which involves the museum volunteers as well as the local Army Cadet Corps, and the communities of Brandon and area. The event is preceded by some of the museum volunteers going to the Brandon, Shilo, and Virden Army Cadet Corps to teach them about the Battle of Vimy Ridge. In turn these Cadets are involved in the museum's fundraiser in a variety of roles. The second event is the D-Day Tea which utilizes the Sea Cadets from Brandon as servers and assistants for the Tea. Before the event, museum volunteers go to a Sea Cadet Parade evening and educate the Cadets on the history of D-Day.

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As a result of our connection with the 2528 Royal Canadian Army Cadets Corps during Vimy Night, they presented our museum with a WWII film of the 12 Manitoba Dragoons. This film was created by the Troopers during WWII and portrays a day in the life of a Regiment from recruiting to fighting overseas. A new museum outreach project for this year involving the film will be a documentary done in cooperation with Graham Street. A few years ago, Graham dropped in to our museum to do research on a local Brandonite. Now this local filmmaker and instructor of Social Media at Assiniboine Community College (Brandon, Manitoba), has recently found funding to create a documentary and shared his interest in the Day in the Life of the Regiment:

*From the very first time that I was exposed to the Day in the Life of the Regiment film I was struck with the fact that I was watching something special. The film isn't the usual collection of World War Two footage that you usually find in history documentaries. This footage has a personal touch; there is a sense that the footage wasn't professionally acquired but instead it was acquired in a very authentic and personal manner. It's this authenticity that made me want to create the documentary and to find out more about the men in the film and the men behind the camera.*

It is our hope that the documentary will provide greater outreach to the community, and that the effort to commemorate their service, and, in sixty seven cases, their sacrifice, will be appreciated.

Each of these events and projects bring our museum out from within its walls and our ability to educate people about the history of 26 Field Regiment RCA and XII Manitoba Dragoons grows. Every time a museum volunteer checks the museum e-mail or looks at comments on Facebook or Twitter, we know that we the effects of our hard work are being felt within a broader community. With each request, we wonder just where it will lead us in our quest for educating visitors, connecting with the community, and, above all, commemorating and remembering the service of the veterans of South Western Manitoba.

## Captain O'Kelly's War: A Northwestern Ontario Hero

By Captain George Romick, Thunder Bay Military Museum

*This is Part One of an edited version of a research paper presented at a Military History Symposium in November 2014. The original contains considerably more details and information. To read the full version, please contact Captain Romick directly.*

Captain Christopher Patrick John O'Kelly, VC, MC, was born in Winnipeg in 1895. He won his Victoria Cross (VC) at the battle of Passchendaele, Belgium in 1917. Though Winnipeg may claim him as its native son, Northwestern Ontario has a reason to share in a part of that acclaim. O'Kelly's connection to this region is significant. He served in a unit, the 52nd Battalion of the Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF) which was raised in Port Arthur. His VC and Military Cross (MC) make him the most remembered and honoured of the men of the 52nd. This is the story of Captain O'Kelly's war.

The impact of the First World War was felt throughout Canada, Northwestern Ontario being no different. Despite the constant news of casualties, killed and wounded, soldiers being taken prisoner and going missing, among many of the residents of the region there was a sense of pride in their contributions, particularly in one of the units raised in the region, the 52nd Battalion out of Port Arthur, Ontario, whose exploits were closely followed in the local papers.



Library and Archives Canada

O'Kelly was attending St. John's College, part of the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg, when the war started. After being in uniform less than a year, O'Kelly was sent overseas to England and on the 19 February 1917, O'Kelly was drafted to the 52nd Battalion and joined them in France, assigned to D Company. After a brief period at the Canadian Corps School, he joined the 52nd and was now with C Company, commanding 9 Platoon. By this time the Canadian Corps had taken Vimy Ridge from the Germans and the 52nd was waiting orders to move on to the next objective.

The Battalion moved down the ridge towards the trenches in front of Avion, which the Canadian Corps needed to take before moving onto Hill 70. The operation of taking Hill 70 was intended to engage as many German formations as possible and to prevent them from reinforcing the Ypres sector during the Third Battle of Ypres.

On 28 June, a short but intense artillery barrage started at 2:30am sharp, moving forward at one minute intervals. At 2:40am when the artillery barrage was lifted from the forward part of the German line, the men were assaulting the trenches. Upon reaching the first trench they came under machine gun fire. The men reacted quickly, bringing suppressing fire onto the machine gun and Lieutenant O'Kelly moved forward tossing grenades. The German crew was killed and O'Kelly brought in the captured gun. This decisive action prevented the gun crew from inflicting more serious casualties on the attackers.



Over the next two days the attacks continued with the 52nd aiding in the capture of Avion. For their part in the attack, the 52nd headquarters put forward nominations for 27 gallantry award nominations, one of the largest groups of awards the 52nd was nominated for. O'Kelly was one of two officers who received the Military Cross, for his distinguished service in the 52nd Battalion attack on 27-28 June.



Library and Archives Canada

The 52nd remained in the area of Vimy and Lens until 22 October 1917, when they boarded the train for Ypres. The 52nd joined the attack on 26 October and the initial reports were good. However, by 10:40am both C and D Companies of the 52nd had moved forward to assist holding the part of the line that had been captured and the attack had stalled. At the same time it was learned that the remaining German pillboxes on the spur dominated the captured ground inflicting casualties on the 43rd. Orders were received from brigade headquarters that meant the entire brigade assault now rested on the 52nd, supported by other two units.

O'Kelly, leading the flanking assaults of A Company using new tactics, cleared a number of the German pillboxes. He then linked up with B Company to clear more pillboxes and helped consolidate the defence of the ground captured. According to the press release prepared by the propaganda section of Military Intelligence, "Throughout the day Lt. O'Kelly had been always where the danger was greatest, encouraging the weary, cheering the wounded, and inspiring every man of his company...Under such leadership his men were willing to go anywhere and do anything." By about 2:50pm, after beating off a number of counter attacks, the 52nd consolidated. The Battalion had captured nine pillboxes, some 275 prisoners and twenty-one machine guns. The unit remained in the front line until the evening of 27 October when it moved into support.

Twenty-three awards were given for this event, but nothing for Captain O'Kelly. The 52nd continued the now familiar routine of trench rotation. However, on 13 January 1918, the 52nd learned there had been a twenty-fourth gallantry award won at Passchendaele. Two days earlier, the King had awarded Captain C.P.J. O'Kelly the Victoria Cross. It was one of the three Victoria Crosses, given to Canadians for the attack on 26 October. The following is the excerpt from the London Gazette:

*For most conspicuous bravery in an action he led his company with extraordinary skill and determination. After the original attack had failed and two companies of his unit had launched a new attack. Capt O'Kelly advanced his company over 1000 yards under heavy fire without any artillery barrage, took the enemy positions on the crest of the hill by storm, and then personally organized and led a series of attacks against "Pill-boxes" ... Later on in the afternoon, under the leadership of this gallant officer, his company repelled a strong counter-attack... The whole of these achievements were chiefly due to the magnificent courage, daring and ability of Capt. O'Kelly.*

This was quite an accomplishment, to win both the Military Cross and Victoria Cross, and not yet reaching his 22nd birthday.

To be continued in the next issue...

## The Editor Asks... What are you most proud of for your museum in 2014?

*Editor's Note: Greg Fekner originally responded to this question with a few comments about the New Brunswick Military Museum's renovations. Seeing the immense amount of work, I decided to feature his response.*

My greatest accomplishment for 2014 was seeing the New Brunswick Military History Museum officially re-open to both base personnel and to the general public on the 70th Anniversary of D-Day. Prior to the reopening, the museum had been closed for nearly three years and for a time the momentum of the museum revitalization program seemed threatened with derailment. For me, I'd never been thrown into the middle of a massive project before let alone work for a military establishment. Everything was a huge learning curve and yet as I dug my feet further into the project I began to get a better sense of what went on and how to piece the museum back together again. I can honestly say I had a very small support network and had to literally roll up my sleeves on many occasions to get the exhibits pieced together with the right artefacts and information. In about eight months, I managed to figure out the gaps in the museum's artefact collection (the museum's artefact collection and cataloguing system was and is to some degree a huge jigsaw puzzle that needs to get sorted out and pieced together again, got the exhibits complete, and started offering private group tours by appointment only. After the museum reopened, I had the pleasure of welcoming scores of day trippers and hosting educational workshops for Cadets, day camp groups from the MFRC, and PAT's from the CTC.



The second greatest accomplishment was developing an interactive WWI trench exhibit in the main timeline gallery. By September, I had the pleasure of working with a young PAT from the Armoured Corps School and together we developed a game plan to construct an interactive WWI trench exhibit in the museum's Timeline Gallery. For three weeks straight, the two of us and his friends from the Armoured Corps School, as well as my staff worked diligently to construct and fine tune a trench exhibit that was befitting of the space that was available. Needless to say, we pulled it off and when the Chairs of the Museum's Executive Committee (I must point out that I've never worked with finer COs than these two men) came to see the final product they were left very impressed.

## First Canadian Division Temporary Exhibit

By Dr Andrew Gregory, Curator of the Canadian Forces Logistics Museum

This 40-foot temporary exhibit, unveiled at 1 Cdn Div HQ on December 1st, was created by the Canadian Forces Logistics Museum. The exhibit focuses on the First Canadian Division in the First Year of the Great War, with attention to the Division's logistics components.

Within five weeks of the declaration of war on August 4th, 1914, over 32,000 men of the Canadian Contingent were assembled at the newly created Camp Valcartier. Seven months later, they would play a pivotal role in blocking a German breakout in the Second Battle of Ypres thereby setting the standard of Canadian tenacity and courage. Logistics played a seminal role in getting the Canadian Contingent off to Old Blighty and in supporting the Division in the Second Battle of Ypres in the spring of 1915.

The temporary exhibit shows Canadian and German artefacts as well as images from August 1914 until mid-1915. It will be on display until May 1st, 2015.



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