

# THE/LE BULLETIN



## President's Comments

By Léon Chamois, President OMMC

Those of us who were lucky enough to attend our annual course in Calgary know how much of a success it was. So many people were involved in organizing it and seeing to its success that I hate to start naming people and forgetting some. I will take a chance and thank Doug, Al and Rory and all their staff for a job well done. Also a big thank you to Teri Jane and Arlon and Sharon for sharing their personal collections with us. They and all our presenters made for a very worthwhile course. I have to thank David for the amazing job he did as course director. He kept us on track and very professional. I admit things got a bit out of control on Friday night; perhaps a bit more that we have in the past. I hope it happens every year.

One person who tends not to get the public recognition that he deserves is Richard; without his steady hand on our financial rudder our very existence would be threatened.

Also a big thank you to the Army for making it possible for so many of our museums and historical collections to attend.

As an old Army guy this is difficult for me to say; it was nice to see so many Air Force and Navy people in attendance.

Enough for now.

## Commentaires du président

Par Léon Chamois, président de l'OMMC

Ceux d'entre nous qui ont eu la chance d'assister à notre cours annuel à Calgary savent que c'était un très grand succès. Tant de gens ont été impliqués dans son organisation et ont vu à son succès que je déteste commencer à les nommer et d'oublier certains. Je vais prendre une chance et remercier Doug, Al et Rory et tout leur personnel pour un travail bien fait. Aussi un grand merci à Teri Jane et Arlon et Sharon pour avoir partagé leurs collections personnelles avec nous. Ils et tous nos présentateurs nous ont fait de quoi que le cours était très intéressant.

Je dois remercier David pour le travail incroyable qu'il a fait en tant que directeur de cours. Il nous a gardés sur la bonne voie et très professionnel. Je reconnais que nous avons perdu un peu de contrôle vendredi soir; peut-être un peu plus que nous avons dans le passé. J'espère que cela se produit chaque année.

Une personne qui a tendance à ne pas obtenir la reconnaissance publique qu'il mérite est Richard; sans sa main ferme sur notre gouvernail financier notre existence même serait menacée.

Aussi un grand merci à l'Armée pour avoir rendu possible qu'un si grand nombre de nos musées et collections historiques peuvent y assister.

Comme un vieux gars de l'armée c'est difficile pour moi de l'avouer; il était agréable de voir tant de gens de l'Air et de la Marine présents.

Assez pour l'instant.

## The Horse War: Horse Transport in the First World War

By Caitlin Bailey, Canadian Centre for the Great War

For those of you who follow us on Facebook, you will have seen these boots already. We received this pair of Canadian First World War era riding boots last week, complete with Canadian army marked spurs. Though these boots may have been worn by a member of the cavalry, it is more likely that they were property of a soldier working in horse transport; either with the Canadian Army Service Corps or the Canadian Field Artillery.



The common image of the First World War is that of machines and mechanized warfare, which, in the field of battle is certainly accurate. Cavalry units, like the 5th Canadian Mounted Rifles, were quickly dismounted at the beginning of the war, with only a handful fighting mounted for the duration. Cavalry and cavalry charges had no place in an artillery war, and the damage that could be done by a single machine gun to a mounted unit was considerable.

However, the horse and the mule were still critical to the war effort, but in a different capacity. Heavy draft horses, ponies and mules were used by all sides to haul supplies, ammunition and carry out the wounded. Even with the introduction of motorised transports and their increased use later in the war, there were any places that a truck simply could not go. As a result, horses, and the soldiers who cared for them, spent the war dangerously close to the front lines.

Canada sent over 130, 000 horses to the Western Front during the war, ultimately supplying about 10% of the animals used by the British Empire. Most were requisitioned or bought from farmers and passed through the Bickerdike Yards in Lachine, Quebec, before being shipped by boat to France. The death rate for horses was extremely high; they worked in terrible conditions and were frequently targets for shell fire as they carried critical supplies to the guns and the fighting soldiers.

The soldiers who worked with the horses, like New Brunswick lumber worker James Robert Johnston, usually had some kind of pre-existing ability with them. Many were former saddlers, blacksmiths or farmers, though some soldiers found themselves working in horse transport with no prior experience at all of how to handle them. Like their care-givers, horses suffered shell shock, and many were sold off to the Belgian government for slaughter after the war, as it was thought that they were too damaged to ever be useful in civilian life.

One horse who did return to Canada was Morning Glory, the personal mount of Lt .Col. George Harold Baker of Brome, Quebec. Baker, commander of the 5th Mounted Rifles, went to the war on foot and was killed, but Morning Glory survived the entire conflict to return to Brome in 1918. She lived a long life and is buried at the Baker family summer house.

## National Award Recognizes NAFMC Volunteer Don Reid

By Barb Neri, Public Relations

The Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) Museums Volunteer Award was established in 2016 by Director General Canadian Forces Morale and Welfare Services, Commodore Mark B. Watson, to recognize the work of serving volunteers who devote time and effort to preserve, protect, display and interpret a segment of Canadian Military History and Cultural Heritage. The National Air Force Museum of Canada (NAFMC) is thrilled to announce that the first recipient of this award is our own Don Reid.

On July 5th, Don was recognized in a private ceremony for his exceptional volunteer services to both the NAFMC and the commemoration of Canada's air force personnel for over 20 years. His continued and ceaseless dedication has been instrumental in the Ad Astra Stone program's ongoing success in exceeding all expectations.

One of the founders of the Museum's "Ad Astra Stone Program", created 1996, Don remains actively engaged in the management and logistics of allocating and maintaining the over 11,000 stones that line the pathways of the RCAF Memorial Airpark. The Ad Astra Program, designed to commemorate individuals serving and supporting Canada's Air Force—past and present—has resulted in donations to the Museum of over one million dollars. Don has also been a strong leader on the Ad Astra Stone Ceremony Committee. Held annually on the last Saturday of September, the ceremony is a way of publicly commemorating and thanking all those who have supported the Ad Astra Program and the Museum.

Chris Colton, NAFMC Executive Director, remarked, "Our volunteers, are an extremely essential element of our success. Thus I was delighted and proud to have received word recently that our nominee, Don Reid, was awarded the 2016 Canadian Armed Forces Museums Volunteer Appreciation Award. Since its inception in 1996, his tireless efforts as the AD ASTRA team lead in placing over 11,000 stones in their respective locations throughout the Memorial Air Park, has been an inspiration to all. I wish to acknowledge his many years of volunteering here and congratulate him on the well-deserved honor."



## The Little Museum That Could

By Francois Arsenault, Curator, Vernon Cadet Camp Museum

The Vernon Cadet Camp Museum is now three years old and is the only Cadet Camp Museum in the country. Located at the Vernon Cadet Training Centre in Vernon, BC, it exhibits photos, uniforms, musical instruments and more, in the former WWII-built Military Post Office of Vernon Military Camp. Displaying the history of the Vernon CTC since 1949 is a wonderful challenge as there is so much to show. More than 80,000 cadets and staff have passed through the gates in the past 67 years.



The early days of Cadet trades training from 1949 to mid-1950s features the various training course cadets undertook: Infantry Basic Training; Driver Mech; Engineer; and Signals training. The evolution of Cadet training continues into the 1960s with the slow phase out of trades training to Cadet Leader and Leader Instructor training. The 1970s brings in the first female course Cadets, a greater emphasis on adventure training and the last of the trades training, driver communication. The last red ensign to fly at the camp in February 1965, Company flags, pennants and other large pieces are being prepared for display. The music

program features a display of vintage instruments dating back to 1916 – bugles, drums, bagpipes and more.

One of the highlights of the museum is full scale circa-1977 barracks room display which cleverly uses mirrors to create the illusion of a full length barracks room - battledress tunics, an open barracks box populated by original vintage clothing, and accoutrements help create a time capsule. An accurate 1977 audio soundtrack was produced at the local FM station KISS-FM with long time on air announcer Frank Martina harkening back to his days as on CJIB; it's all about the little details. Future displays will include rations from various time periods – 1974 IMPs; map & compass training through the years; USMC Jr ROTC exchange Cadets 1976-88; army, air and sea Cadet uniforms from 1942 to the present; CIC/CIL/CSofC uniforms; adventure training and more. We have an amazing collection of aerials of the training centre covering 1915-2015, a full century, more than 110 photos.

We fundraise year round, but our big event is the annual fundraiser auction held in the combined mess of the training centre. The museum functions as a satellite of the Greater Vernon Museum & Archives and is open to the public on Saturday afternoons July and August and by bookings year round. If you have a Cadet item that you would like to donate to our museum, please contact curator Francois Arsenault by phone 250-550-9565 or email: [rcaccacadet@gmail.com](mailto:rcaccacadet@gmail.com).

## A Museum Mystery Solved in Calgary

By Ken Raychert, The Military Museums

Most museums have artifacts such as guns and tanks that are impressive and imposing, but have no story. There may be a plaque on it that states weight, speed, armour thickness, range, caliber, but for the most part, little or nothing of the actual story of the particular piece. It's anonymous.



We have one such item in our collection at The Military Museums in Calgary. We know where it's been for the last 30 years, but nothing of its actual service history. It is a German WWI 77mm Field Gun. This gun was going to be placed in the upcoming Vimy Ridge Commemoration display as a background piece, however, it required some urgent attention. It was not fit for display as it had been exposed to the outside elements, and all exposed metal on the breech ring had rusted on the bare metal surfaces.

During the restoration process, things became interesting. Disassembly was required to address the rust issues and with no technical knowledge of the gun, research was necessary. We did not wish to damage the components, and were also concerned about potential dangers from the recoil system. A significant amount of information was amassed. Initially it was all technical data, but there was a surprising discovery that solved the mystery of the gun's origin. Following a thread on a website led to an obscure notation on a publication about captured guns by the CEF. This turned out to be the key to an amazing story. Apparently, the Army had maintained extremely accurate records of all captured guns. Details of the battles, dates, and Regiments involved were very accurately recorded.

Post-War, a decision was made to bring back to Canada 2,000 artillery and 2,500 machine guns. These came from stocks held by the Canadian Army in Europe. The material was held in Ottawa and distributed to eligible parties based on their support of the war effort. No historical information was supplied with the guns, but that information was held and buried away in the National Archives.

On another Internet source based on these records, we found our gun listed. We had it - mystery solved. Gun Nr 1571 was captured by the 20th Battalion (Toronto) on August 26, 1918, outside the town of Guemappe, France. Even more exciting for us, the Queen's York Rangers, who perpetuate the 20th, provided us access to the war diary.

We found details on the Battle of The Scarpe (August 26-30) that led to the capture of the gun. The story was riveting. The 20th Battalion had the tough job of attacking straight down the main road from Arras, into the mouths of Gun 1571 and two others, as well as heavy machine guns. Nevertheless, they captured all of them and 30 prisoners early on the 26th. In the early afternoon the Germans tried to recapture the guns, but were repelled by gallant holding of the line and a particular display of bravery by a soldier with a Lewis machine gun.

This gun, our 7.7 cm Nr 1571, will be a significant item in our Vimy Ridge commemoration. Anonymous hunk of metal no more.

## From Athabaskan and Haida in 1944: From the Perspective of Two Crew Members

Brad Froggatt CD, Naval Museum of Alberta

More than 70 years after the action that saw the sinking of HMCS Athabaskan on 29 April 1944 and the abortive rescue of her survivors by HMCS Haida, coincidence and history still combine to bring these crews and the events they lived through together. In May of 2016, I was visited at the Naval Museum of Alberta by two separate families on the same day. The first visitor was the daughter of Max Brown who served on HMCS Haida during the war from her commissioning, and includes an account of the action that resulted in the sinking of HMCS Athabaskan. The other visitor was the grandson of Benjamin William (Bill) Bint who served on the Athabaskan from her commissioning until the battle that sunk her.

Both of these men had either written accounts of their time on their ships; in the case of Bill Bint in the form of a memoir, and in the case of Max Brown a detailed diary of his time on the Haida. Both accounts tell a riveting tale of naval life during the war, and the engagement that sunk the Athabaskan - from their own perspectives.

What made Max Brown's story exceptional was the detailed journal he kept during his time on HMCS Haida – a practice that was not encouraged at the time for security reasons. Fortunately, he recorded incredible details including weather, actions, defaulters, and various “escapades” while on leave. Of particular note are the events recorded on 28 April 1944, including the engagement that saw the sinking of the Athabaskan, or “Ashcan” as Max recorded it:

*“Meanwhile the “Ashcan” was manoeuvring off to our right and had fired about 6 salvos when she was hit in the gearing room and slowed down, flames pouring from her side illuminating her and presenting a fair target.*

*E-boats were present and a half-moment later there was a blinding flash and she was split asunder in a mass of flames and flying debris, a torpedo from an E-boat having found its mark in a fuel tank.*

*We were stunned for a second and then the Capt. cursed, closed in on her assailant and poured on a barrage of hell setting her ablaze from stem to stern and she went careening in on the rock bound beach - a definite casualty though a lot of her crew would land safely...*

*We now turned to our stricken comrades whose ship was now submerged having gone down by the stern. We could hear the cries and curses of the men and could see dozens of their head-lights on their life jackets blinking in the darkness as numerous tiny fire flies and we pulled in amongst them cutting loose all our Carley Floats and lowering our boats while our spare men scrambled down to aid the floundering men.”*

Bill Bint was sworn into the Navy on 26 August 1940 in Saskatoon. After training in Saskatoon and Esquimalt and then made his way to Halifax, and after being posted to the minesweeper “Wasaga” and the flower class corvette HMCS Moncton, he was told upon returning from leave one day that they were looking for people for a tribal-class destroyer being built in the UK, which, as he states “suited me fine”. (Continued on next page)

Bill tells his story of the sinking of the Athabaskan as follows (excerpts):

*“On April 26 we headed for the French coast with the Black Prince, a Royal Navy cruiser, the Haida and Huron plus the Ashanti, an RN destroyer. Three German destroyers had been reported leaving St. Malo and that was our target. When we contacted them, the Black Prince fired star shell and illuminated them and the action quickly got underway...*

*“...we got a signal that German destroyers were on the loose and pretty soon we encountered them and the chase began. We were banging away at them and they at us and things seemed to be going OK, when they fired torpedoes back at us. These were designed to have a zig zag course back at pursuing enemy. I guess they worked because we suddenly had our stern blown off and were of course dead in the water.*

*When I got [to my abandon ship station] I looked back at the port quarter and I could see a serious fire burning, probably a fuel tank. I checked the quick release on the Carley float and suddenly the after part of our ship blew up and I was blown off the flag deck to the foc'sle, a drop of about 10 feet and landed on my back. My clothes were on fire and I heard Captain Stubbs calling “abandon ship” which I did and the cold water felt good on my burns.*

*...Our ship began to go down by the stern and as the bow came up there was a terrible clatter as everything that was loose fell down. She went down quickly but suddenly stopped as she hit bottom and the bow leveled off momentarily and then was gone.*

*I saw a Carley float nearby with people aboard and empty space so I went over to it and got in. The only people I recognized on the float were Hurwitz and Hayward, our navigating officer. About this time the Haida came back and dropped nets over the side for survivors to climb up; I thought about swimming over but I was pretty groggy and it was a fair distance away. The Haida finally left and it became pretty quiet, then Hendrickson came by and he looked pretty bad; his head was down and the waves were hitting him in the face so I got back in the water and told him to take my seat. I never mentioned this incident with anyone until I met Hendrickson's daughter at a reunion in Halifax and she thanked me for saving her Dad's life.”*

Bill's story continues after the Haida was ordered away, and he was picked up by a German Air / Sea rescue boat. From there he was taken to Orleans, France, where he was treated for burns, eventually sent to Malag Nord camp and, later, Milag camp. On 1 April 1945, he was marched to Lubeck where eventually they were freed by the 23rd Hussars. Bill was then sent to Luneberg where he witnessed the landing of the big 4 engine Focke Wulf 200 landing with German Admiral Donitz on board to sign the surrender at the close of the war.

The details included in these records are far more than can be related in one article, but the coming together of these two families – on the same day – so far removed from the Second World War was an unexpected coincidence. That they both had a written account of their experiences is even more fortunate, and these accounts has given us yet another glimpse of the experiences of these men and the many who fought in the Atlantic during the Second World War, and furthers the Naval Museum of Alberta's ability to tell the history of the RCN.

The original documents will be held within the Naval Museum of Alberta Collections at the University of Calgary Library and Archives. Excerpts were re-printed with the permission of the families.

## Milk for Who? Kin Canada Releases Commemorative Documentary for 75th Anniversary

Sarah Welton, Communications and Media Assistant at Kin Canada

As service club organization, Kin Canada prepares for its 96th National Convention in Edmonton, Alberta, this August, they're also preparing to release a story that has never before been told: a story of war and starvation, but also of hope and determination. In the form of a documentary, the story of Kin's first national project will provide a closer look at their WWII fundraising and donation efforts to help feed British children in dire need, while also sharing a significant piece of Canadian history.

From 1941 to 1948, Kinsmen, Kinettes, and Canadians banded together to raise over \$3 million (equivalent to over \$42 million today) and sent more than 50 million quarts of milk to Britain. British children were suffering under heavy bombings and the destruction of supply chains under the German Nazi regime, resulting in a need for outside help in the form of food and supplies. Just like Kin's work today, the focus in *Milk for Britain* was always on meeting the greatest needs of a community, and providing a necessary service – even though that community was outside their borders.

The *Milk for Britain* campaign would not have been possible without the support of the Canadian public, or the various organizations that offered their assistance: Canadian dairy farmers, for the provided milk; the Canadian National Railway, for transportation assistance; the Canadian Red Cross, for help with collection; the Women's Voluntary Service, who carried out distribution in Britain; other service clubs such as the Lions Club, who helped fundraising efforts; the Canadian Military, who escorted the shipments to Britain; and CIBC, in the form of their branch manager, Jack Houston, who managed the funds for Kin throughout the duration of the campaign. Though they weren't around to provide assistance at the time, *Milk for Britain* also led directly to the creation of *Meals on Wheels*, which used the leftover milk containers for hot meals and continues to provide food to those in need around the world.



Through a partnership with Learnography (Curriculum Services Canada), the documentary will launch in August to preserve and share the story of the *Milk for Britain* campaign, with the intention to be used in schools as a learning resource. There will be an accompanying study guide, and the documentary will be accessible from Kin's YouTube channel to the general public. Kin clubs across Canada pledged over \$50,000 to fund the making of the documentary, and are eager for its reveal.

Even today, Kin continues to do great work across Canada, from small community projects to nationwide initiatives. While the *Milk for Britain* project occurred 75 years ago, the same purpose and goal of Serving the Community's Greatest Need is what guides club work and the projects they support today.

Looking to the past also allows for the opportunity to celebrate and recognize the project that solidified Kin's position as a nationally prominent service club organization. *Milk for Britain* led to the rapid expansion of clubs and members in the years following the campaign, and brought Kin and humanitarian aid to centre stage across Canada.



## Wanted! OMMC Facebook Page Administrator!

OMMC has launched a Facebook Page, so we can better communicate and network with each other. We are looking for an OMMC member who is interested in taking on the task of managing the Page. Information would be sent to you to post (you won't be expected to generate all the content), but you are encouraged to find things to post that the Organization would find interesting. Ideally, this person would be bilingual (or have easy access to swift translation services), so that we can ensure all members of our group can participate.

If you're interested, please get in touch with Webmaster, Bethany Aitchison (Bethany.Aitchison@live.ca), to discuss further. This is a great way to be involved with OMMC, and to help us increase our networking and group education roles!

## Recherché! Un administrateur pour la page Facebook de l' OMMC

Nous avons commencé une page Facebook afin de pouvoir mieux communiquer entre nous et de nous échanger les idées. Nous sommes à la recherche d'un membre de l'OMMC qui est intéressé de gérer cette page. L'information à être posté vous sera envoyé (vous ne serez pas censé de créer tout le contenu) mais vous serez encouragé de développer du matériel qui nous serait d'intérêt. Idéalement vous êtes bilingue ou vous avez accès facile à un service de traduction rapide et fiable.

Si vous êtes intéressé vous êtes priez de contacter notre maitresse Web, Bethany (Bethany.Aitchison@live.ca) pour en discuter davantage. Ce serait un bon moyen de vous impliquer plus avec l'OMMC et de nous aider avec notre réseautage et notre rôle en éducation publique.

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'The Bulletin' is the official publication of the Organization of Military Museums of Canada. The editor is Bethany Aitchison. Articles can be submitted to bethany.aitchison@live.ca.