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THE DUKE



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DUKES IN EUROPE

Battlefield Tour (3–16 June 2019)



Dukes at Vimy

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BATTLEFIELD TOUR (3–16 JUNE 2019)

By: Colonel (Retired) Keith D. Maxwell, OMM, CD

3-4 June

The Tour members all made their way to Europe independently and we rendezvoused at CDG Paris Airport mid-day 4 June. Four of us decided to visit downtown Paris to keep active through the day and minimize time change disruption.

We took advantage of the wonderful public transportation system in Paris and rode the suburban train - the RER – to the station next to the Arc de Triomphe. It is truly magnificent and a bold icon of France. We held a moment of silence for the WWI Unknown French Soldier buried under the Arc. We then walked the entire length of the Champs-Elysees, from the Arc de Triomphe to the Louvre Palace where we saw the architecturally controversial glass pyramid that serves as the entryway into the Louvre Museum. We then took the RER back to our hotels at the airport.



Rendezvous at Charles de Gaulle Airport on 4 June



At the Arc de Triomphe in Paris

5 June

We picked up our vehicle early and proceeded to Normandy, arriving late morning. Out to our first stop was the landing area for 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion on the far east flank for the entire operation. One company of the Battalion blew a bridge to hamper any German counterattack from that direction, then took up all round defence in the village of Robehomme. They met up with the rest of the battalion the next morning and rejoined the 6th British Airborne Division where they defended the flank for the next month.

We then drove through the town of Ranville, where the cemetery for most of those killed who served in 6th UK Airborne Division during the battle are buried. We then drove to Pegasus Bridge, the site of the daring coup-de-force by British glider troops who captured the strategically important bridge intact and liberated the first territory of France shortly after midnight, 5/6 June 1944. The area was packed with restored WWI vehicles, people in WWII uniforms and period costumes and visitors there to commemorate the 75th Anniversary of D-Day.



WWII vehicles parked at Saint-Aubin-sur-Mer. They are on top of the remains of the German fortification where the North Shore New Brunswick Regiment landed on D-Day

We then drove to the Canadian sector for D-Day and visited the beach at Saint-Aubin-sur-Mer where the New Brunswick (North Shore) Regiment landed and captured the town after very heavy fighting. We saw the preserved German defences that still bear the battle scars inflicted by the boys from the North Shore and the Fort Gary Horse. Next was the beaches where the Queen's Own Rifles landed under withering fire and took the highest casualties for any of the Canadian battalions landing on the D-Day. Our next stop was the beach of The Regina Rifle Regiment where we visited the restored amphibious Sherman tank and noted the BCR plaque mounted on the tank, along with the plaques of many of the Regiments who fought in Normandy.



Canada House – where the Queen's Own Rifles landed on D-Day



Randy Erickson and HLCol Farid Rohani on the battlefield of Hill 140. Randy's father, LCpl Einar Erickson, was a driver in the HQ Troop on that fateful day. His tank was destroyed, but he was able to escape on foot. Randy and Farid are standing within 10 metres of where LCpl Erickson's tank was destroyed

We then drove toward our accommodations south of Caen, stopping at Hill 140 en route. Randy Erickson, whose father fought on the Hill as a Sherman tank driver was able to stand on the exact spot where his Dad's tank was knocked out. Lance Corporal Einar Erickson escaped from the Hill on foot late on 9 August 1944 and was back in action 5 days later. We paid our respects at the Memorial to the BCR and the Algonquin Regiment and drove to our lodgings.

6 June

We were up early for a 5 AM start and drove to the reception centre in Caen where we went through ID confirmation and security and joined hundreds of Canadians in a hall, where we waited for our shuttles to Juno Beach Centre. Activity at the reception centre was well organized, with coffee and snacks available and plenty of seating. Our trip to Juno Beach Centre went well and the police escort ensured no delays. When we got to the Centre things were already underway. The program included entertainment and historical videos as well as interviews with many of the surviving Canadian D-Day veterans who were able to make the trip. Our only complaint was a lack of seating. We only packed one camp stool and many of us sat against the fence for much of the day. The formal program began around 1 PM with the Guard marching on, remembrance of fallen comrades and mercifully short and to-the-point speeches from the Prime Ministers of France and Canada. The program ended mid-afternoon. There were some hitches with transportation back to the reception centre and we gathered at the vehicle parked at the reception centre in Caen around 4:30 PM and drove to our accommodations for the night.



At the Reception Centre early in the morning of 6 June
Left to right – HLCol Farid Rohani, Shaela Hill, Bob Hanna,
Col (retired) Keith Maxwell, OMM, CD, Sergeant (retired) Bob Remple, CWO Huf Mullick, CD

Note – Randy Erickson is taking the photo – his photo appears earlier in this narrative. Names will not be provided in photos that follow.



Association members and friends at the D-Day Commemoration event at the Juno Beach Centre. Note the lack of seating!

7 June

We got our start at a more civilized hour on 7 June and drove to the battlefield where the encounter battle between 3rd Canadian Division and 12 SS Panzer (Hitler Youth) Division took place. We visited the villages of Buron and Authie where the North Nova Scotia Highlanders and the Fort Gary Horse were attacked from the flank and fought for several hours, then visited the Abbey d'Ardenne where the German SS soldiers murdered a large number of Prisoners of War. We then drove to Rots and Putot where The Regina Rifle Regiment, The Winnipeg Rifles and The Canadian Scottish Regiment fought off a series of determined Panzer counter attacks and preserved the six miles of territory inland from the beach captured on 6 and 7 June. That area provide space for the buildup of troops, equipment, supplies and airfields for the eventual breakout battle. Our last stop on that battlefield was to visit the Memorial to the POWs of the Winnipeg Rifles who were murdered at the Chateau d'Audrieu. In all, the German SS Hitlerjugend murdered 156 Canadian POWs in Normandy.



The Memorial Garden at Abbey d'Ardenne where so many Canadian Prisoners of War were murdered by their captors of the 12th SS "Hitler Youth" Panzer Division



Plaque in remembrance of the Winnipeg Rifles Prisoners of War murdered at the Chateau d'Audrieu

We then drove to Arromanche where the Mulberry artificial harbour was built – its remains are still visible offshore. Again, the streets were jammed with WWII vehicles, people in WWII uniforms and those dressed in period costume.



At Arromanche with the remains of the Mulberry artificial harbour in the background



The Normandy American Cemetery above Omaha Beach

We then visited the American Cemetery at Omaha Beach and visited the beach itself, where so many young Americans lost their lives on D-Day.

We tried to visit Pointe du Hoc but there was no access, so we drove to the German Cemetery at La Cambe and visited the grave of Major Michael Wittmann, the famous SS tank ace, who was killed on 8 August by tanks from the Sherbrooke Fusilier Regiment.

We proceeded to our hotel in Bayeux and met up with RSM Tony Harris, who joined our group for the next two days. That evening we had dinner with Jean-Pierre Benamou, our great friend of the Regiment and noted Normandy historian. It was great to see him!



At the Memorial on Omaha Beach where so many young Americans died. Note the heights above the beach, which provided for German observation and firing lines onto the beach



At La Cambe German Cemetery. Major Michael Wittmann's grave is where the group of people are gathered behind Shaela. It is a shrine to many neo-nazis from Germany and elsewhere. We literally "bumped into" them at his grave site

8 June

On the road at 9 AM with our first stop at Beny-sur-Mer Canadian War Cemetery; more than 2000 Canadians killed fighting north of Caen during the Battle of Normandy are buried there. The headstones had been recently refurbished, and the grounds were beautifully kept.

We then headed for the battlefields south of Caen. We drove to the Canadian Battlefields Foundation viewing Belvedere at Point 67 where most of the battlefields for the fighting in late July 1944 can be seen. Particularly tragic is the slope where the Black Watch attacked dug in Panzer troops with near total casualties. We then visited the village of Verrieres where the Royal Hamilton Light Infantry were the only

unit to capture and hold ground during Operation Spring in 25 July 1944. It was a holding operation meant to tie down Panzer troops in the vicinity of Caen so they could not oppose the imminent American breakthrough operation further south.

Next was to drive through the ground captured in Operation Totalize. This operation on the night of 7/8 August 1944 broke through the German line and advanced 6 kilometres, sending the defenders into wild retreat. It was a night operation with a phalanx of armoured vehicles – two Armoured Brigades with two Brigades of Infantry mounted, for the first time, in ad hoc APCs. We then visited the farmyard where the Sherbrooke Fusilier Regiment went into all round defence after capturing their objective and were counterattacked. This is the site where one of their tanks with an 18-pounder gun (a Sherman Firefly) killed Michael Wittmann, who was leading a counterattack with seven Tiger Tanks.

We then visited the Bretteville-sur-Laize Canadian War Cemetery at Cintheaux and visited the graves of the Dukes killed on Hill 140 and subsequent actions in Normandy. More than 3000 Canadian soldiers are buried in the cemetery. As always, seeing the graves of the Worthington brothers buried side by side is particularly poignant.

At the Cross of Sacrifice in Bretteville-sur-Laize Cemetery at Cintheaux where more than 3000 Canadian soldiers are buried, including LCol Don Worthington and more than 40 Dukes killed on Hill 140 on 9 August 1944



At the graves of Don and Jack Worthington

We then drove to the Hill 140 Memorial to pay our respects, then drove across the battlefield for Operation Tractable and visited the bridge in Rouvres where the mother of all Sherman tank traffic jams took place on 14 August 1944 as 200 tanks converged on the bridge after finding that they couldn't ford the Laize river.

We then drove to Trun for lunch and viewed the plaque to the 4th Armoured Division that was installed by members of the British Columbia Regiment and the Algonquin Regiment in 1999.



The British Columbia Regiment (DCO) and the Algonquin Regiment Memorial on Hill 140

We then visited St Lambert-sur-Dives where Major David Currie won the Victoria Cross during the closing of the Falaise Gap in late August 1944. We then visited the Polish Memorial on Montormel where the Poles fought so desperately in the final days of the Battle of Normandy. We then visited the Tiger Tank at Vimoutiers which was knocked out as the Germans retreated.



At the Polish Memorial on Montormel which looks out over the battlefield where the Falaise Gap was closed and two German Armies were destroyed



German Tiger Tank destroyed in August 1944 near Vimoutiers, Normandy, France

We then cut cross country to Dieppe, with a first stop at the Cemetery with 1000 graves, mostly Canadians, who died on this ill-fated operation of 19 August 1942. We then visited the beaches at Pourville where the South Saskatchewan Regiment and the Cameron Highlanders landed and took so many casualties. We visited the Bridge named for Lieutenant-Colonel Cecil Merritt, CO of the SSR, who led his men to attack the German defences and was awarded the Victoria Cross for his gallantry and leadership.



The Lieutenant Colonel Cecil Merritt, VC Bridge, Pourville, near Dieppe



The Memorial Park in Dieppe, commemorating the losses of that tragic battle

We then drove into town and checked into our hotel, then toured the main beach on foot. This is where the Royal Hamilton Light Infantry, the Essex Scottish and the Fusiliers Mont-Royal along with the tanks of the Calgary Regiment fought and so many died. The operational failures were the fault of a poorly thought out plan and the soldiers paid the price.



The Esplanade of Dieppe where so many Canadian Soldiers attacked, fought and died

9 June

First stop in the morning was the third Dieppe beach at Puys, about 3 kilometres east of the main beach. Here the Royal Regiment of Canada and a Company of the Black Watch landed against a cliff face and a completely blockaded draw off the beach. They suffered withering machine gun fire and had no where to advance or withdraw. Casualties were near 100%. It was a plan that was impossible to fulfill, and the Canadian soldiers paid the price. Of 5000 soldiers who landed at Dieppe, 1000 were killed and 2000 were taken prisoner. 2000 were evacuated and many of those were wounded. It was a terrible baptism of fire for 2nd Canadian Division.



The Canadian Memorial on Puys Beach, the killing ground of the Royal Regiment of Canada



The Newfoundland Memorial at Beaumont Hamel

10 June

In the morning, we visited several battlefields associated with the final 100 Days campaign. We drove up the hill to Monchy-le-Preux, captured by the 3rd Canadian Division on 26 August 1918 where the Newfoundlanders fought so gallantly in April 1917. We paid our respects at the Newfoundland Memorial on the hill. We then followed the centre line of the battle where 2nd and 3rd Canadian Divisions advanced for three straight days, clearing the approaches to the Hindenburg Line. On 2 September 1918, 1st and 4th Divisions and 4th British Division attacked the Drocourt-Queant Switch – a heavily fortified length of the Hindenburg Line - and smashed through. Seven Canadian VCs were won that day, including Private Rayfield of the 7th (1st British Columbia) Battalion. We then visited the village of Villers-les-Cagnicourt to see where the Regimental plaque to Private Rayfield is mounted on the church wall.

Next, we drove to the battlefield of the crossing of the Canal du Nord and Bourslon Wood. The Canadians captured the approaches to the city of Cambrai in five days fighting. We visited the BCR plaque to Lt Lyall, VC which is mounted aside the village's war memorial. We also visited the Canadian National Monument to the battle on the western slope of the hillside of Bourslon Wood. We then visited the bridge where Captain Mitchell of the Canadian Engineers won the VC capturing a critical bridge with a small party and removed the demolitions under fire. The local government has installed a very nice memorial to Captain Mitchell and his small band of men.

We then drove to the Memorial to the Battle of Moreuil Wood where the Lord Strathcona Horse carried out a cavalry charge on a dug in German position and brought the German Operation Michael Offensive to a close in March 1918.

Next was the battlefield of Amiens where the Final 100 Days campaign started. First stop was a small cemetery at Hangard Wood where we visited the grave of Private Croak, VC, a Newfoundlander serving with the Black Watch. We wound our way through the battlefield where the Canadians and Australians advanced six kilometres on the first day – it was the beginning of the end and we paid our respects at the Canadian National Monument to the Battle at Le Quesnel.

We next visited the Canadian battlefields associated with the Battle of the Somme. From the high point of the battlefield two Canadian Divisions attacked on 15 September 1916 supported by the first tank attack in history. We visited the Canadian National Monument to the Battle of the Somme and Adanac Military Cemetery, where we visited the grave of Piper Richardson, VC of the 16th (Canadian Scottish) Battalion.

We then visited the Newfoundland Memorial at Beaumont-Hamel where the Newfoundland Regiment suffered 90% casualties attacking on the first day of the Battle of the Somme – 1 July 1916.

Arriving at our hotel in Arras was a welcome event. We had a good meal and a sound sleep.



BCR (DCO) Association members at the Memorial to Captain Mitchell, VC, the only Canadian Engineer to be awarded the Victoria Cross



On the Mitchell Bridge

Next was the battlefields of Vimy Ridge. As we approached the area, we visited the memorial to 1st Canadian Division and ran into the soldiers of the BCR who were in France to provide a burial party for Private George Newburn, who was killed in battle on 15 August 1917 at the battle of Hill 70. His remains had been recently recovered and identified. We toured the Vimy battlefields, went to the visitors centre and visited the magnificent National Memorial at Point 145 – the highest point on the Ridge. We then drove to Ypres and checked in to our hotel in the centre of this historical town.

11 June

While the Regiment's guard and burial party were conducting rehearsals for the interment ceremony for Private George Newburn, the Association toured some important sites for the Battle of the Scheldt Estuary, the battle fought by 1st Canadian Army to clear access to the port of Antwerp. The Germans occupied both sides of the estuary preventing shipping into the port, which had been captured intact by the British Army in early September 1944. We visited the Adagem Canadian War Cemetery first, where a thousand Canadian soldiers are buried – they were killed fighting to clear the Breskens Pocket on the south shore of the estuary - mostly 3rd Division troops along with several Dukes fighting in their support.



At the Adagem Canadian War Cemetery with Iris Van Landschoot and the young students with whom she keeps alive the memory of the liberation of Belgium by Canadian soldiers

We then drove to the Leopold Canal and visited a German bunker. The crossing of the canal by 7th Brigade was tough, close quarter fighting and resulted in very high casualties. We paused for a moment of reflection.



*German Bunker on the Leopold Canal –
Battle of the Scheldt, Second World War*

We then wound our way through the Antwerp port area to drive the centre line for the advance north from Antwerp by 2nd Division and 4th Armoured Division where the BCR fought a running fight headed north. We visited the Dutch town of Woensdrecht where the Royal Hamilton Light Infantry, supported by the tanks of the Fort Gary Horse, captured the town and secured the approaches to cut off the Beveland peninsula – the last escape route for the Germans blocking the estuary. We visited memorials in the town to the RHLI and the Black Watch and visited the Fort Gary Horse tank that was knocked out during the battle and now stands as a memorial to that Regiment. The Black Watch and several other battalions took very heavy casualties in the clearing operation, then fought their way west on the peninsula to remove the last German resistance blocking Antwerp port.



*The Black Watch Memorial plaque at
Woensdrecht, Netherlands*



*A Fort Gary Horse Sherman tank Memorial in the
town of Woensdrecht, Netherlands*

We then drove out to the site where a troop of the BCR and a platoon of the Lake Superiors cleared west of Bergen op Zoom and engaged and sank four German minesweepers across on channel of the Rhine estuary. The ships were at port in the harbour of Zijpe. We then drove over two long bridges to visit the port and the BCR plaque at the harbour to commemorate that unusual action.



The BCR (DCO) plaque at the Harbour of Zijpe where a Troop of the Regiment, assisted by a platoon from the Lake Superior Regiment, sank four German minesweepers on 6 November 1944

Then back to Ypres/leper for the night. We were joined for dinner by Luke Vandebussche, a long-standing friend of the Regiment from Leke, Belgium. He was kind enough to provide us with the two floral arrangements for the next day – a beautiful wreath of red and white flowers with the Regiment's name on a banner across the arrangement.

12 June

This was a big day for the Regiment and the Association with the main focus on the interment of Private George Newburn. The Association arrived in the area early and toured the area where the 7th Battalion fought as part of the 1st Division attack on 15 August 1917. The Battalion took over the advance from the 10th Battalion from Calgary at the high point of Hill 70 and ran into strong machine gun fire and heavy artillery. They advanced 500 metres using fire and maneuver and captured their objective after suffering very high casualties. The Regiment lost 158 men killed on that day and Private Michael O'Rourke was awarded the Victoria Cross for his heroic efforts as a medic and stretcher bearer to save many, many wounded men, all under heavy fire. This is also the advance where George Newburn was killed. We toured the 7th Battalion fighting area and gave a thought to George Newburn and Mickey O'Rourke. We also visited the BCR plaques dedicated on 7 September 2008, noting the two Victoria Crosses won by members of the Regiment at the Battle of Hill 70 – Company Sergeant Major Robert Hanna, VC and Private Michael O'Rourke, VC. Our party included CSM Hanna's son and great-granddaughter – it was a notable occasion.



We then drove directly to the spot where CSM Hanna won his Victoria Cross on 21 August 1917 in the second phase of the battle. The site is now inauspiciously located near a gas station in a small shopping mall in a residential area of Lens, France.

Bob Hanna and his Grand-daughter Shaela Hill at the plaque to two BCR (DCO) Victoria Cross winners awarded for gallantry at the Battle of Hill 70. Bob is the son of CSM Robert Hanna, VC, 29th (Vancouver) Battalion, CEF

We then visited the new Memorial to the Battle of Hill 70. It is still under construction but is already magnificent. The Battle of Hill 70 is the only major Canadian battle of WWI not to have a National Memorial. This new installation corrects that error.



At the new Canadian Memorial at Hill 70

We then drove to the Vimy Ridge Memorial for a photo shoot with the Regiment.



BCR Association Tour Members at the Vimy Ridge Memorial

We arrived at Loos British Cemetery in the pouring rain and gathered under the trees and met other attendees. Everything was prepared for the interment with the covered grave, headstone and seating for the official guests. At the appointed time the Guard of eight BCR soldiers arrived carrying George Newburn's casket with George's nephew, Ian Atherton and his daughter Allison following with military escort. The ceremony was conducted with grace, dignity and reverence and the sermon from the officiating clergy was stirring. The Regiment then buried their dead with precision and skill – it was an exceptionally good show by the Regiment. After the ceremony we attended the reception in the Town Hall at Loos-en-Gohelle then drove back to our hotel.



The BCR (DCO) buries its dead. At long last Private George Newburn is laid to rest



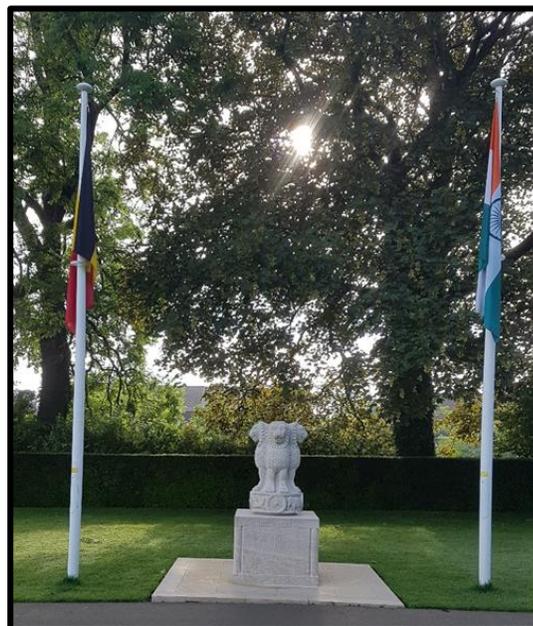
The final resting place of Private George Newburn, 7th (1st British Columbia) Battalion, CEF



Private George Newburn's name on the Vimy Memorial



*The British Columbia Regiment (DCO) Guard
at the Menin Gate*

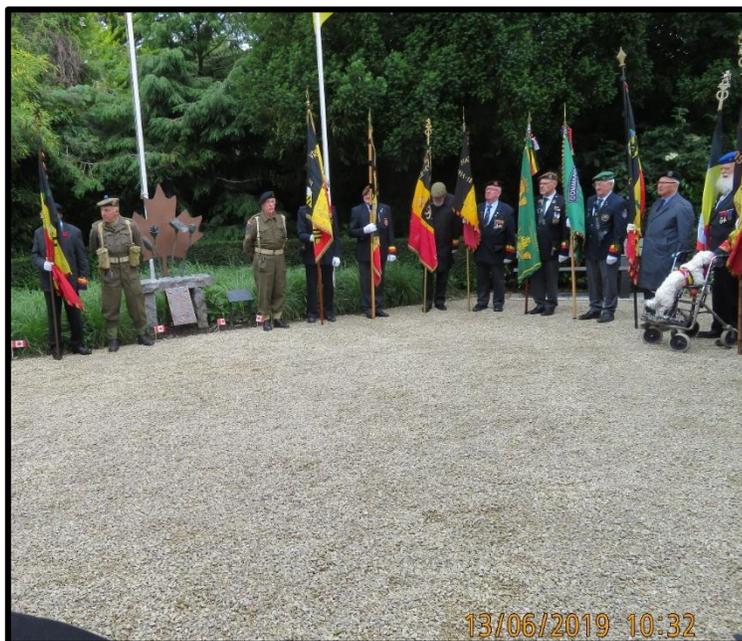


*The Indian Army Memorial
at the Menin Gate*

That evening we all attended the ceremony at the Menin Gate to honour the Canadian and Commonwealth soldiers who died in the Ypres salient and have no known grave. There are 7000 Canadians commemorated on the gate, with lists of names too long etched in the walls from the three Battalions from the British Columbia Regiment – the 7th, 29th and 102nd Battalions of the CEF. The Regiment mounted an honour guard for the ceremony and the Association with the Regiment laid a wreath in honour of the Regiment's fallen.

13 June

We rendezvoused with the members of Regiment near the Menin Gate and drove in convoy to Leke, Belgium for a ceremony of remembrance in the village. In 2001, the good people of Leke installed a park of remembrance – Canada Park – with a very nice sculpture in commemoration of the village's liberation by the BCR on 8 September 1944. The village mounted a full flag party of veterans for the occasion, with the last post and reveille played by a member of the village Fire Department. We honoured the Act of Remembrance, laid wreaths and stood for the National Anthems of Belgium and Canada, then proceeded to the village's War Memorial to lay another BCR wreath to remember Leke's fallen from two wars. We were then guests at a very nice reception where the village presented gifts to three members of the Regiment and Association.



*The Colour Party and friends at the
Canada Park in Leke, Belgium*



The Ceremony of Remembrance at Leke



The sculpture and memorial plaque to commemorate the liberation of Leke by The British Columbia Regiment on 7 September 1944

We departed the reception after renewing many old acquaintances and seeing many old friends. Thanks to Luke and Wim Vandenbussche in particular for the wonderful hospitality. We then drove to Essex Farm Cemetery near Ypres/Ieper to visit the site where John McCrae wrote in Flanders Fields and CWO Mullick gave a rousing presentation of the famous poem. We then drove to the Brooding Soldier Memorial at Vancouver Corner in the centre of the Saint Julien battlefield and reviewed the battle from that famous viewpoint. 2000 Canadians died stopping the German offensive, where the German Army used poisonous gas on an industrial scale. We then visited Locality C – a strong point on the Gravenstafel Ridge – where the 15th Battalion and elements of the 7th Battalions held off a second German attack on 24 April 1915.



The Memorial Plaque at Locality C on the St Julien Battlefield

We then visited the Passchendaele battlefield along both ridgelines of attack. The 7th and 8th Battalions finally captured the ridgeline on 10 November 1917, bringing that terrible battle to a close. We then visited the Canadian National Memorial to the battle and the Tyne Cot Cemetery where 12,000 soldiers killed in the Battle of Passchendaele are buried.

We then drove to the PPCLI Memorial where that Regiment held off another German advance on 8 May 1915. They entered the trenches with 800 men and left with just 140 soldiers.

Next was a visit to the Mount Sorrel battlefield and the Canadian Hill 62 (Sanctuary Wood) National Memorial. It was the first time the Canadian Corps mounted a deliberate attack on 13 June 1916, retaking the high ground lost to a surprise German attack ten days earlier. We said goodbye to the members of the Regiment and returned to our hotel in Ypres/Ieper.

14 June

We left our hotel and drove directly to the start line for Operation Market-Garden. The British XXX Corps broke out of a small bridgehead headed north toward Eindhoven. They met significant resistance shortly after crossing the start line and fought a major engagement at the Netherlands' border. Their advance was delayed and they had to stop for the night short of Eindhoven. The next morning, they continued their advance and met up with troops from the 101st US Airborne Division south of Eindhoven and moved quickly to Son, a few kilometres north. Two Regiments of the 101st had landed near Son to capture a major bridge but it was destroyed as the American airborne troops closed to within 200 metres, creating another delay in the advance. The British XXX Corps pushed through a replacement bridge which was completed early on the third day of the battle and they pushed north to a second major bridge captured intact by the third Regiment of the 101st.

To the north, the Bridge at Grave, Netherlands was captured by a platoon of the 82nd Airborne Division immediately after landing. The bridge is now named for the leader of that platoon, Lieutenant John Thompson. His platoon landed very close to the bridge, neutralized an anti-aircraft installation in a bunker 150 metres from the south end of the bridge, killed the guards on the bridge's approaches and ran across the bridge to secure the opposite end.

We continued north, passing the second major bridge captured by the 82nd Airborne on the first day and continued to the Groesbeek and the landing site for two Regiments of the Division. We then drove to the bridge in Nijmegen which was captured by the Division in a two-day fight that included an assault river crossing in small boats to capture the south end of the bridge. We then drove to the John Frost Bridge in Arnhem where the British so gallantly and so vainly fought to secure this major Rhine crossing. After a week's fighting, counterattacks by Panzer forces and a series of misfortunes, the remnants of the Division were withdrawn. We then proceeded to our hotel in Nijmegen.

15 June

Our first stop this day was the Groesbeek Canadian War Cemetery a few kilometres south of Nijmegen where Canadian soldiers who were killed in the Battle of the Rhineland are buried. There are a significant number of Dukes amongst them.



Groesbeek Canadian War Cemetery with 2,619 graves. 2,338 of them are Canadian soldiers killed in the Battle of the Rhineland, February – March 1945

The Rhineland was the largest battle ever fought under Canadian Command, with General Harry Crerar, the head of 1st Canadian Army, at the helm. The aim was to clear the west bank of the Rhine to form a firm base for the invasion of the German heartland and the battle went on for almost four weeks. We drove the centre line for much of the battle and saw where the attacks attempted to break through the gap in the Hochwald Forest photo failed to break through and then followed the road where the BCR flanked the forest

and advanced with the rest of 4th Canadian Armoured Division to Veen, Germany. In the final two days of that advance the Dukes took very heavy casualties - it was their most ferocious fighting since Normandy. We saw where the German Army blew the bridge at Wesel, Germany as three Armies – one Canadian, one British and one American – converged on that last remaining Rhine crossing on 9 March 1945.



The "Lion's Mound" (fr - Butte du Lion) Memorial at the centre of the Allied line for the Battle of Waterloo. The tents and period-dressed soldiers are re-enactors gathering for events to commemorate the 205th anniversary of the battle

We then drove through western Germany, southern Netherlands and across eastern Belgium to visit the Waterloo battlefield where Napoleon was finally defeated in 1815. That battle laid the foundation for modern Europe. It is considered one of the most important historical battles ever fought.

We then drove south to the Mons area and visited the Saint Symphorien Military Cemetery on the outskirts of Mons. The cemetery is unique, containing both Commonwealth and German graves as well as the graves of both the first and last British soldiers killed in the First World War. The cemetery also contains the grave of the first Victoria Cross winner of the war – a British machine gun officer killed in the Battle of Mons, 1914. The cemetery is also where Private George Price of the 28th Canadian Infantry Battalion is buried. Price was the last soldier of the British Empire to die in the war – he was shot by a sniper at 10:58 AM on 11 November 1918 in the village of Ville-sur-Haine, about five kilometres east of Mons. We then drove to the spot where he was killed to see the new memorial park that was established in his name - it was dedicated on 10 November 2018 by the Governor General – one hundred years after his death.



The grave of Private George Price, 28th Battalion CEF - the last soldier of the British Empire to die in the Great War

16 June

We visited Mons and walked to the main square, where the Canadian Corps held a parade on the afternoon of 11 November 1918 with General Currie as the reviewing officer. There is a large brass plaque installed by the municipal government shortly after the First World War to note the liberation of the Town by the Canadian Corps.



Plaque in the entry way to the Mons Town Hall noting their liberation by the Canadian Corps. The plaque reads, "Mons was recaptured by the Canadian Army on 11th November 1918. After 50 months of German occupation, freedom was restored to the City. Here was fired the last shot of the Great War"

We then drove to Paris-Charles de Gaulle Airport for our return to Canada the following day.



180288 PRIVATE GEORGE NEWBURN, 7TH (1ST BRITISH COLUMBIA) BATTALION, CEF

The Department of National Defence and the Canadian Forces identified the remains of a Canadian First World War soldier, discovered near the village of Vendin-le-Vieil, France earlier this year, as Private George Alfred Newburn. Private Newburn enlisted in Victoria, British Columbia. He died on August 15, 1917, in the Battle of Hill 70, as a member of the 7th (1st British Columbia) Battalion, Canadian Expeditionary Force, a unit perpetuated by The British Columbia Regiment (Duke of Connaught's Own) of Vancouver. Private Newburn was subsequently buried at the Commonwealth War Graves Commission's Loos British Cemetery outside Loos-en-Gohelle, France, on 12 June 2019.

The Department of National Defence Casualty Identification Program identifies unknown Canadian soldiers when their remains are discovered, so that they may be buried with a name, by their regiment, and in the presence of their family. The identification program fosters a sense of continuity and identity within the Canadian Armed Forces and provides an opportunity for all Canadians to reflect upon the experiences of those men and women who made the ultimate sacrifice for their country. Through DNA analysis and a search of archival records, Mister Ian Atherton of Victoria, BC was identified as George Newburn's nephew – he is the son of George's younger sister.

George Newburn was born on 7 April 1899 in London, England. Following the death of his mother, he immigrated to Canada with his father and three younger sisters in 1911 and the family settled in Esquimalt BC.



George Newburn circa 1904



George Newburn and sisters, circa 1910

At the outbreak of the war, George was employed as a messenger for the Canadian Pacific Telegraph Co. Following the death of his father in 1915, George joined the Army and volunteered for service with the Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF). He was attested for overseas service with the 88th Battalion (Victoria Fusiliers), CEF on 6 November 1915 at the age of 16 years and six months, having lied about his age. At the time of his attestation George was 5'7" tall and of average build. He had dark red hair and grey eyes. He designated his Aunt, Sarah Gilson, as his next of kin. Sarah had immigrated to Canada some years earlier and had married Alfred Gilson of Winnipeg. The Gilsons resided at 740 Hillside Drive in Victoria, which is located three blocks north of the Bay Street Armoury. The site is now a newly built apartment building.

George's rate of pay was \$1 per day plus 10 cents per day field allowance when serving overseas. Starting in June 1916, when he arrived overseas, he had a standing pay assignment of \$20 per month to his sister. She had received \$300 total at the time of his death.

George spent the winter of 1915-1916 in Canada training and eventually embarked in Halifax on the SS Olympic, a sister ship to the RMS Titanic, on 1 June 1916. The luxury passenger liner had been converted to a troop ship for the duration of the war. He arrived in Liverpool, England on 8 June 1916. He then travelled with his Battalion to the town of Sandling in the southeast of England near Dover. There his unit was absorbed by the 30th (Reserve) battalion, CEF, a training and reinforcement unit. His transfer to that unit took place on 18 July 1916. After additional training, he was transferred to the 7th (1st British Columbia) Battalion on 10 August 1916 and proceeded to France that same day. He was taken on strength at his new unit on 12 August 1916 in the field. He was then transferred to the 1st Entrenching Battalion, a Divisional Unit, on 25 August 1916, returning to the 7th Battalion 22 days later, on 16 September 1916. He served with the 7th Battalion through the Battles of the Somme and Vimy Ridge without any apparent physical injury.

In the summer of 1917, the Canadian Corps was ordered to attack and hold Hill 70, approximately eight kilometres northeast of Vimy Ridge. The crest of Hill 70 provides full observation over the northern part of the Douai Plain of France, including large areas of industrial production. The attack was ordered to deny the German Army unrestricted access to the Douai Plain resources and to keep pressure on the German Army. The latter was particularly important to minimize the possibility of a German offensive further south where French troops were still recovering from the disastrous Nivelle Offensive in April. After some administrative and weather delays the date for the offensive was set for 15 August 1917. 2nd Brigade, 1st Division (the 7th Battalion's home formation) was assigned to the centre of the attack that day, with the crest of the hill as part of their intermediate objective. The 7th Battalion was assigned the task of following up the 10th (Calgary) Battalion, move through them at the intermediate objective line, take the crest of the hill, and advance another 600 metres down the eastern slope of the hill and consolidate.

The attack by the 10th Battalion jumped off at 0425 hours and went well, with the support of a heavy and accurate rolling artillery barrage. The 10th Battalion achieved the intermediate objective at the Blue Line by 0600 hours. The 7th Battalion then advanced from that line after a planned pause of 20 minutes for artillery adjustment. Unfortunately, the smoke screen that had been laid down was dissipating and the German defenders had consolidated on the reverse slope. The 7th and 5th Battalions faced withering small arms fire and, after having lost contact with the rolling barrage, were forced to advance using, "individual rushes from shell hole to shell hole" according to the official history. The left rifle companies of the 7th Battalion achieved their objective 600 yards into the attack at the quarry just inside the Green Line but the right rifle companies were forced to halt at the Red Line. After ferocious fighting and very heavy casualties the Battalion consolidated on the Red Line for the night. The next day the quarry between the Red Line and the Green line was taken by the 5th and 10th Battalions With the 7th Battalion in support, achieving all the 1st Division objectives. The surviving soldiers of the 7th Battalion then retired to the rear. In the fighting that day, George Newburn received a gun shot wound to the head and died instantly. In the confusion and the fog of war, his body was not recovered, and he is commemorated on the Vimy Memorial.

YOUNG VICTORIAN KILLED IN FRANCE

Pte. George Newburn, who left Victoria with the 88th Battalion, was killed August 16. Although only eighteen years of age, he had spent twelve months in the trenches.

He was a native of London, and his mother died six years ago, predeceasing the father by only four years. The family came to Victoria in 1913, and the three sisters are now living here. He made his home with his uncle, Mr. A. Gilson, 710 Hillside Avenue, and up to the time of enlistment was employed by the Canadian Pacific Telegraph Co. as messenger. His uncle, Mr. Walter Newburn, of Esquimalt Road, is now serving in the Canadian Navy

Victoria newspaper article on the death of George Newburn

Private Michael James O'Rourke was also active that day. Many of his fellow soldiers were saved through his tireless and heroic efforts as a Battalion stretcher-bearer and medic. He rescued, treated and evacuated many soldiers under heavy small arms fire and was awarded the Victoria Cross for gallantry for his actions.

The battle continued for another ten days and the area captured by the 1st Division held fast against determined counterattacks. This was the first battle commanded by General Arthur Currie and was considered a significant success.

In 1921 Private George Newburn's war medals – the British War Medal and the Victory Medal – were given to next of kin, Miss Ethel Newburn, a younger sister, who was living with Sarah and Alfred in Victoria.

George Newburn's remains were interred at the Loos British Cemetery, located near the battlefield, on 12 June 2019 by soldiers of his Regiment, The British Columbia Regiment (Duke of Connaught's Own). It is a solemn duty of soldiers to bury their dead. It is particularly appropriate to do so in the presence of George's family members. Ian Atherton (George's nephew) was present, along with two of his daughters. The Family inscription on George Newburn's Headstone was written by Ian's daughter, Allison. The words are memorable and evocative -

"Lost, Found, Loved
And Always Remembered"

1032

8th BATTALION VICTORIA FUSILIERS No. 180288

ATTESTATION PAPER.

Folio. **TRIPPLICATE**

CANADIAN OVER-SEAS EXPEDITIONARY FORCE.

QUESTIONS TO BE PUT BEFORE ATTESTATION.

(ANSWERS.)

1. What is your name?..... *George Newburn*
 2. In what Town, Township or Parish, and in what Country were you born?..... *London England*
 3. What is the name of your next-of-kin?..... *Mrs Sarah Gibson*
 4. What is the address of your next-of-kin?..... *740 Wilkesden Ave Victoria BC*
 5. What is the date of your birth?..... *April 7th 1897*
 6. What is your Trade or Calling?..... *Labourer*
 7. Are you married?..... *No*
 8. Are you willing to be vaccinated or re-vaccinated?..... *Amenable* *Yes*
 9. Do you now belong to the Active Militia?..... *Yes*
 10. Have you ever served in any Military Force?..... *85th Victoria Fusiliers*
If so, state particulars of former Service.
 11. Do you understand the nature and terms of your engagement?..... *Yes*
 12. Are you willing to be attested to serve in the }
CANADIAN OVER-SEAS EXPEDITIONARY FORCE? } *Yes*
- George Newburn* (Signature of Man.)
Alf Blackmore (Signature of Witness.)

DECLARATION TO BE MADE BY MAN ON ATTESTATION.

I, *George Newburn*, do solemnly declare that the above answers made by me to the above questions are true, and that I am willing to fulfil the engagements by me now made, and I hereby engage and agree to serve in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force, and to be attached to any arm of the service therein, for the term of one year, or during the war now existing between Great Britain and Germany should that war last longer than one year, and for six months after the termination of that war provided His Majesty should so long require my services, or until legally discharged.

George Newburn (Signature of Recruit)

Date *November 6th 1915* *Alf Blackmore* (Signature of Witness)

OATH TO BE TAKEN BY MAN ON ATTESTATION.

I, *George Newburn*, do make Oath, that I will be faithful and bear true Allegiance to His Majesty King George the Fifth, His Heirs and Successors, and that I will as in duty bound honestly and faithfully defend His Majesty, His Heirs and Successors, in Person, Crown and Dignity, against all enemies, and will observe and obey all orders of His Majesty, His Heirs and Successors, and of all the Generals and Officers set over me. So help me God.

George Newburn (Signature of Recruit)

Date *November 6th 1915* *Alf Blackmore* (Signature of Witness)

CERTIFICATE OF MAGISTRATE.

The Recruit above-named was cautioned by me that if he made any false answer to any of the above questions he would be liable to be punished as provided in the Army Act.

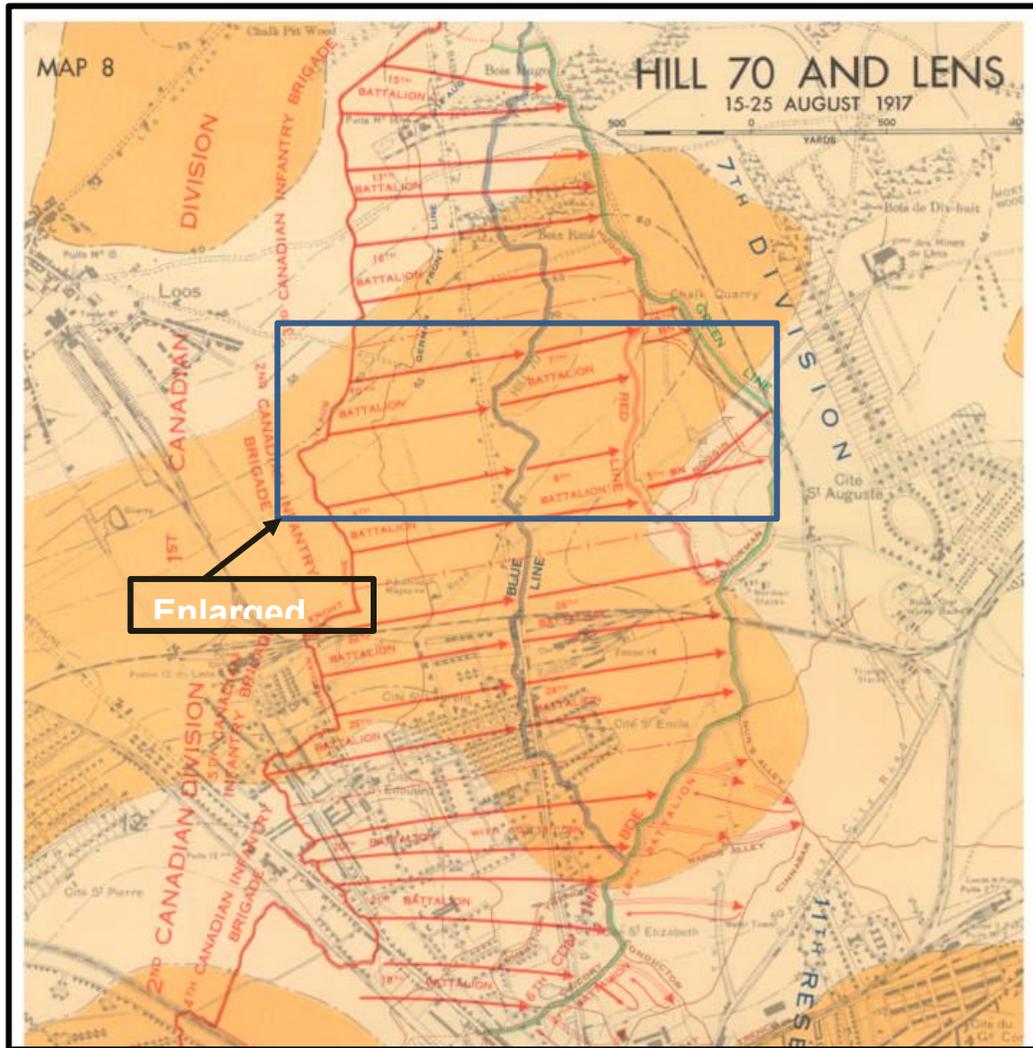
The above questions were then read to the Recruit in my presence. I have taken care that he understands each question, and that his answer to each question has been duly entered as aforesaid, and the said Recruit has made and signed the declaration and taken the oath before me, at *Victoria BC* this *6th* day of *November* 191*5*.
A. W. Jones (Signature of Justice)

I certify that the above is a true copy of the Attestation of the above-named Recruit.

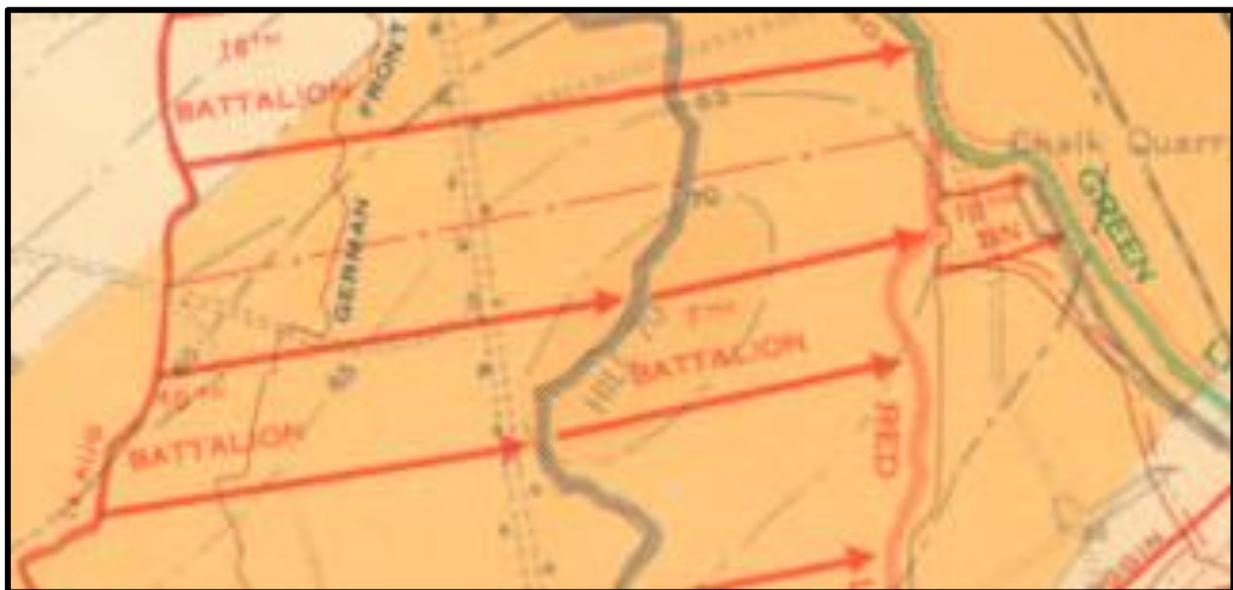
A. M. Stewart Major (Approving Officer)

for O. 603th Batt., C. E. F.
Absent on duty

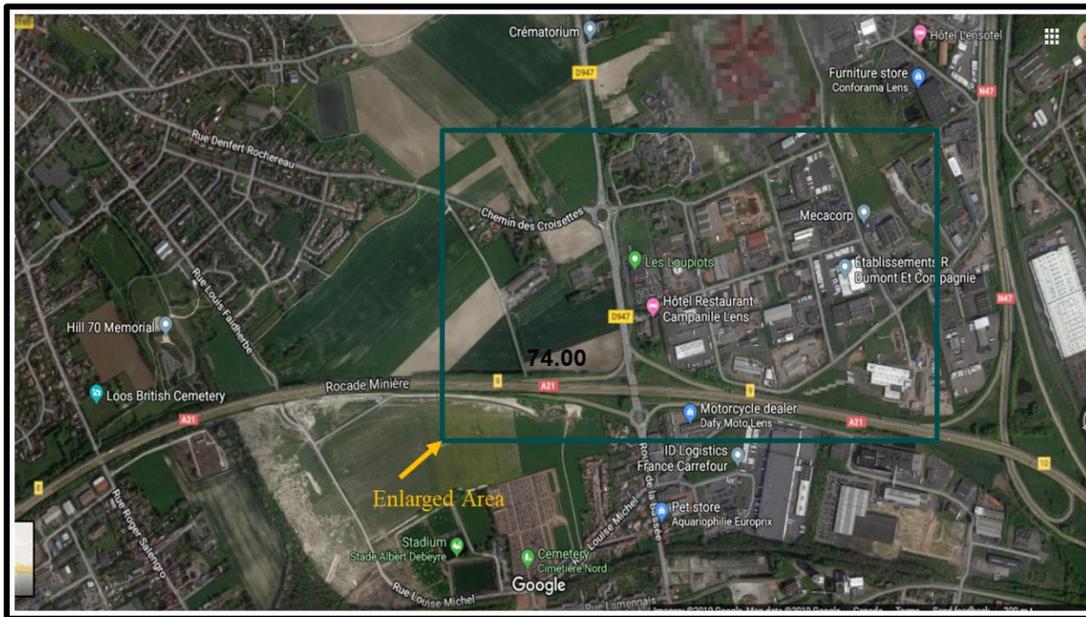
Attestation Papers – Private George Newburn



Map from the Official History of the CEF showing the Hill 70 Battle area. The 7th Battalion area of advance on 15 August 1917 is highlighted



Enlarged view of the area where the 7th Battalion attacked on 15 August 1917



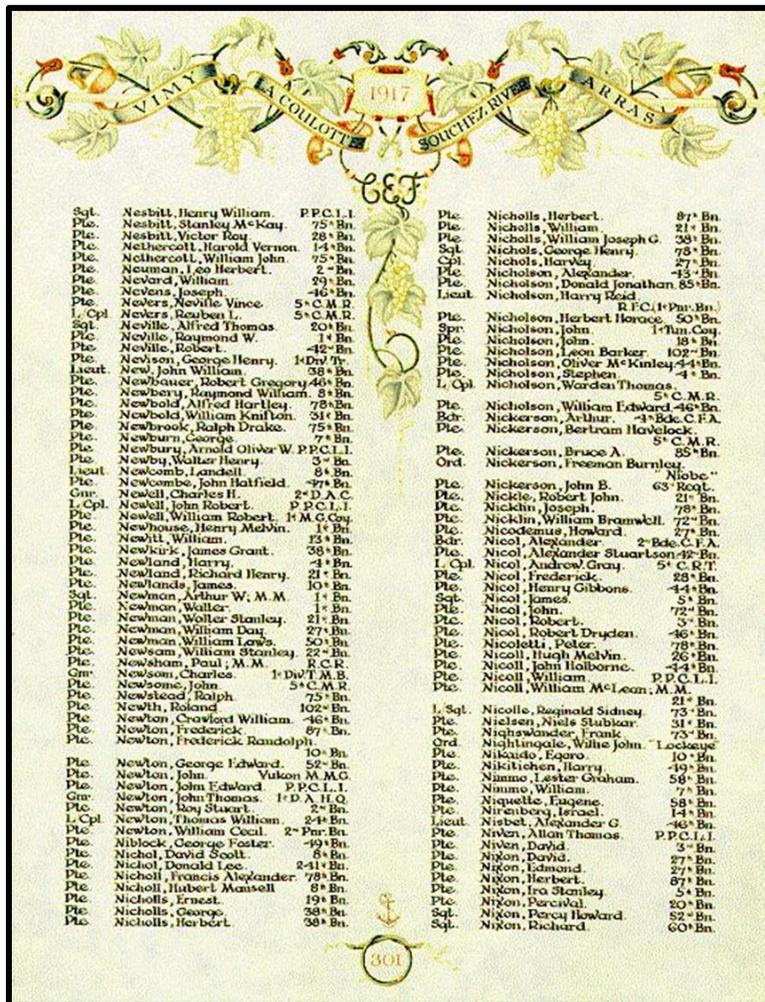
Area where the 7th Battalion fought – image from Google Maps



Google Maps image of the battle area where the 7th Battalion fought on 15 August 1917. Boundaries, phase lines and objectives shown. Today the battlefield is an industrial and commercial area

1. NO.	2. RANK OR RATING	3. SURNAME	4. CHRISTIAN NAMES
180288	Private,	NEWBURN,	George,
5. UNIT OR SHIP	6. DATE OF CASUALTY	7. H.Q. FILE NO.	8. RELIGION
7th Battalion.	15-8-17.	649-N-2540.	Not stated.
9. CIRCUMSTANCES OF CASUALTY		10. NAME, RELATIONSHIP AND ADDRESS OF NEXT OF KIN	
<p>"Killed in Action."</p> <p>He was hit in the head by an enemy sniper's bullet and instantly killed during an attack at Hill 70, Loos.</p>			
11. LOCATION OF UNIT AT TIME OF CASUALTY			
NOTE—Items 12, 13 and 14 are not to be completed until grave is permanently located.			
12. CEMETERY	13. LOCATION OF CEMETERY	14. GRAVE LOCATION	15. REGISTERED NO. OF GRAVE
		Grave.....	
		Plot.....	
		Row.....	
16. PHOTOGRAPH OF GRAVE TAKEN	17. EXPOSURE NO.	18. PHOTOGRAPH OF GRAVE AND CEMETERY SUPPLIED TO	
19. FURTHER PARTICULARS ON REVERSE SIDE OF SHEET.			

Casualty Report Form – Private George Newburn



WWI Book of Remembrance entry – Private George Newburn, 7th Battalion



Private George Newburn's grave on the day of his burial – Loos British Cemetery

INTERMENT OF PTE. GEORGE NEWBURN

Submitted by: Capt Manjeet S. Vinning

In the following pages you will find a daily summary written by members of the Burial Party for the interment of Pte. George Newburn. This was the first time The British Columbia Regiment (DCO) would be interring a soldier from WW1 after the war had ended. The honour and privilege to have served as the Funeral Party Commander and Burial Party Commander, cannot be expressed in words. This duty was not taken lightly nor will it be forgotten. The troops rehearsed for 2 days before deploying to France. Throughout the rehearsals at the Drill Hall and in France, they remained professional and constantly striving for perfection. A special thanks to Maj Seymour and MWO Hryniw from Cdn 3rd Div HQ. They provided phenomenal support before, during and after the tasking. Maj Miller and MWO Girard from DHH were also instrumental in the success of the interment ceremony.



*Capt Manjeet Vinning – Funeral Party Commander and
Sgt Alejandro Langone – Burial Party Commander*

Saturday, 8 June 2019
Tpr Swanson S

Today we visited the Vimy Ridge Memorial. All the photos you will see cannot do it justice. The weather has been overcast and heavy rain with strong wind since we arrived. The weather feels fitting, a call back in a small way to the cold and wet the men on both sides had to live with. Being at the monument in these conditions in our combats, gives us all a sense of sadness and pride. Our soldiers came here, they fought, sacrificed, and were victorious. It was a cold day when we visited the memorial, it should be cold and wet, the solemn task we have been honoured with should not be a comfortable one.

The memorial was resplendent in magnificent white stone. The sculptures have incredible detail that conveyed a depth of emotion I have never seen before. I can see the anguish in the way the bodies lay and the loss in the eyes, and perhaps the hope for the future in the way some stand. I looked for my family names in the stones, I found six with my last name. I hope that in the future I will be able to confirm if they are directly related to me.

After Vimy we went to take a tour of the tunnel and trench system of the allies. Finding that they had dug ten kilometers of tunnel was a shock. I previously did not understand the scale of the battle. Driving up to the tunnels we saw huge craters caused by underground explosives and artillery used to disrupt the German trenches. We were told that some of these bombs were over two thousand pounds. There was no even ground anywhere on the ridge due to all the bombs, mines, and trenches.

The tour guide gave us all some incredible insight into how close our boys got to the German lines by digging underground. She told us they tunneled to just thirty meters away from the enemy trenches. Seeing this really put it into perspective; they were an easy stone's throw from each other. In most of the area the trenches were closed off from the public due to unexploded ordnances. It is a shame that we will never be able to excavate more of the tunnels. To keep the grass down in the fenced off area they have flocks of sheep roaming the area.

As soon as the tour ended, we started practicing for the funeral. I think we are all a little worried about it. We all want to do our best to honour a fallen hero and our unit. It is good that we worry, it shows we care about what we are doing here. When the day comes, we will do our duty with proper reverence and professionalism.



Funeral Party at the Vimy Ridge Memorial



A tunnel used by the Canadians during the Battle of Vimy Ridge



Day 1 of rehearsals in France



Day 1 of Rehearsals

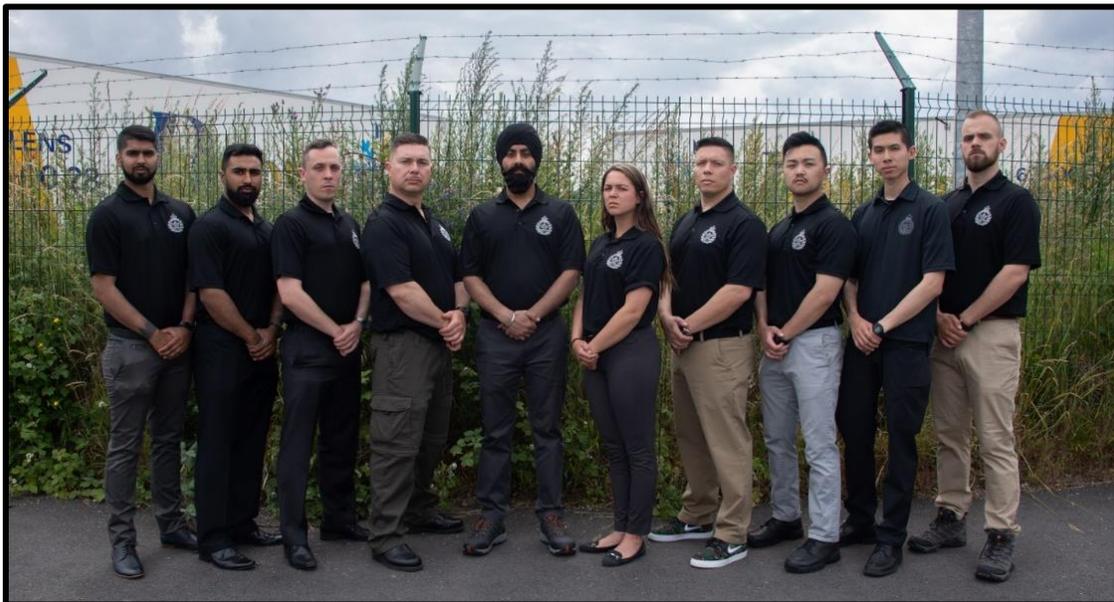
Sunday, 9 June 2019

Cpl Lee J

Day 2 started with early rehearsals of the interment at the Canadian Cemetery #2 near the Vimy Ridge memorial. Our group had practiced the flag folding the previous night with gloves. Eventually CWO Richards came by to watch our final practice and there was a sense of pride and achievement when it was all done - knowing we had come from knowing almost nothing just a week prior to completing a full rehearsal from start to finish.

The second half of the day consisted of a guided tour with historian Carl who took us through the advancement of the 7th Battalion at the battle of Hill 70. Maps were provided which helped much with the orientation and lay of the ground. We were taken to the field where the 7th Battalion would have staged just prior to their advancement and the sheer scope and magnitude of just this one battle became apparent. Eventually we made it to the top of Hill 70, which struck us as more of a slight slope (if that) than a hill - and then we were directed to an unusually quiet parking lot. This parking lot had been the site of where Pte Newburn was killed on August 15, 1917. The realization of the significance of the ground soon hit the members as the events that occurred in this exact spot over 100 years ago was the reason members of the regiment were here today. So much had changed from then to now, but we will still honour those who fought and died on our behalf.

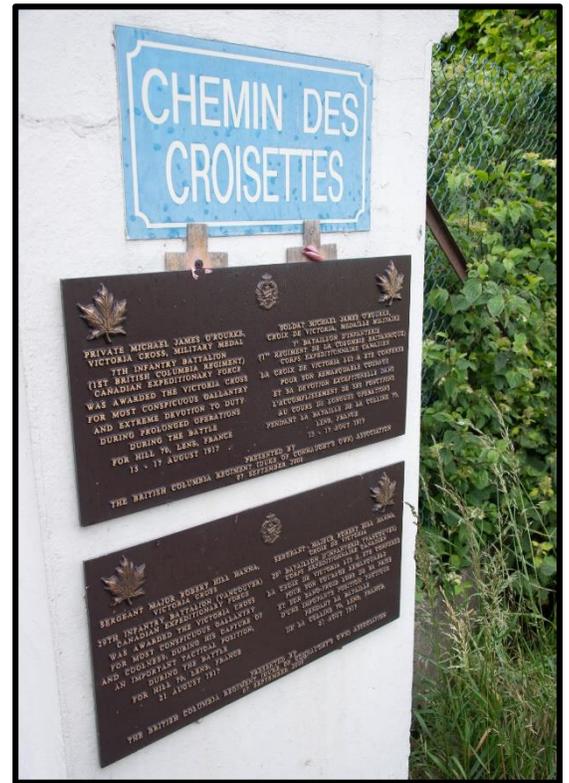
Lastly, we ended the day off with a trip to the Hill 70 memorial just outside of Loos. The site of the memorial was decorated with fields of poppies - which evoked a feeling of peace and remembrance all these years later. The regiment made it to the center of the Hill 70 memorial - which unveiled a obelisk with the words Canada and 1917 on it. A group picture was taken in front of the monument before making our way to the Loos British Cemetery where the interment is to take place. Upon reaching the cemetery and looking at the hallowed ground Pte Newburn would finally be placed to rest all these years later, we felt a sense of pride and duty knowing that although we did not know this individual - it would be our honor to finally bury his casket forever.



Funeral Party standing just in front of the exact location where the remains of Pte George Newburn were found



Dukes visited The Hill 70 Memorial



Victoria Cross plaques for
Pte Michael James O'Rourke
and CSM Robert Hanna

Monday 10 June 2019

Tpr Blouin S

Today, we had the chance to visit battlefields, cemeteries and monuments near the town of Arras, France. I think that Battlefield tours are one of the best ways to remember the history of the world wars and to pay our respect to the fallen ones. I admire France for preserving beautiful cemeteries and monuments that our generation and the generations to come can visit and learn about their history.

We started the day by visiting a commonwealth cemetery. In this cemetery, the tombstones were placed in a chronological order, most of the first rows of tombstones were French soldiers that were killed in action. The following rows were either British or Canadians soldiers. Earlier in the tour I learnt that all Canadian tombstones were distinguished by the maple leaf symbol. The tour guide specifically showed us the tombstones of two Lieutenants that had the inscription "MM" written on it. "MM" means that the soldier earned a military medal, and usually it is given to brave soldiers and these soldiers then become officers because of their natural leadership skills.

The second cemetery that we visited was a German cemetery. The Neuville-St Vaast German war cemetery has approximately 45,000 buried soldiers. While I was visiting this cemetery, many thoughts went through my mind, first this cemetery is different from the commonwealth cemeteries. The tombstones are darker, the shape is a cross, there are no plants or flowers growing along the rows and there are 3 to 4 soldiers per tombstone.

The next cemetery that we visited was particularly touching for us, because the last rows of tombstones were mostly soldiers from the 7th Battalion. When I read the tombstones inscriptions, I was in shock when I realized that most of the soldiers died in their mid twenties, they were as old as me and sometimes younger; they fought with bravery. Throughout this visit I learned why there was a larger percentage of western than eastern Canadians that joined the military. Eastern Canadians were more likely to be already married

because of the men/women ratio and they owned farms; they had more to lose which made them less inclined to join compared to western Canadians which consisted of fewer born Canadians.

I have noticed that when you are walking through a forest or a field in the Arras area, you are likely to find some evidence of the war. We visited German gun positions that were cemented, most of these positions are still standing. To see these in person made me imagine those soldiers looking through their arcs of fire like we do on our exercises. But these German positions were probably found by flash spotting. On the night of the 15th of April, the 7th Battalion moved up to the German trench lines that we visited, pushing the Germans to back up from that position. The 7th Battalion then continued their patrol in search of the enemy their goal was to keep contact with the enemy. It's impressive that the methods used to find German gun positions were of 80% accuracy, they would get destroyed once found.

The battlefield tour left me with many feelings, mostly I have enormous respect for the sacrifices made by those men. I am proud to be part of the same forces they served and lucky to have the chance to see and walk the fields where so many fought and died.

*Dukes - burial party
and Association - at the
1st Division Memorial on the
Vimy Ridge battlefield*



German Defensive position



*Cabaret-Rouge British Cemetery near Vimy Ridge.
The Canadian Unknown Soldier was taken from this cemetery
and re-interred at the National War Memorial in Ottawa in May 2000*

Tuesday, 11 June 2019

Cpl Lim V

We started with early travel to Loos British Cemetery, where we had our first full dress rehearsal. With the lay of the ground in front of us, we had a grasp of the distance and able to get a feel of the slow march to the burial site. Today was also the first time we had an actual feel for the lowering straps with gloves and how to feed the straps through the casket. Lowering the casket was a delicate process, having to lower the casket slowly and leveled together as pallbearer party. With the help of all the MWOs present, they instructed us on how we can improve on the lowering of the casket. By the time lunch had rolled around, the group was confident of their drill with the casket and their roles in the ceremony. At the end of multiple dress rehearsal, we also presented a folded Canadian flag to the Commonwealth War Graves Commission which will be displayed at their visitor center in Beaurains. This flag will be along side the other Commonwealth countries in order to see how each country folds their flags.



After a short intermission, our Commanding Officer and Regimental Sergeant Major arrived to learn their part in the ceremony. With our part complete, we were able to see the ceremony in full. With the help of the support staff, we ironed out the little kinks. After our final practice, we all had a sense of pride and achievement. We look forward in giving Pte. Newburn his proper send off in front of his family.

*Capt Vinning presenting a flag which
was folded by The BCR (DCO) which
will be displayed permanently at the
Commonwealth War Graves Commission
visitor center in Beaurains.*

Wednesday, 12 June 2019

**Cpl Hothi D
Tpr Gangar B**

Today is the big day, the Interment of Pte Newburn. The day began with an early start with all of the BCR's coming together for photos at Vimy Ridge. This was the first moment that started to bring this day into perspective of how honourable and important of a responsibility we have been tasked with. At the arrival at Vimy Ridge, we first got together with the fellow Dukes and the burial party and began taking pictures, adding in the RSM, CO, Cdn 3rd Div members, and the Association. We then departed from this location and headed towards Loos British Cemetery where the interment would be taking place. This is the moment that we have all been working towards for multiple weeks and everyone was nervous because we all wanted to do the family proud as well as make this perfect for our fallen soldier. This is the last moment that the family and the public will see of Pte Newburn. When we first stepped off and began it was obvious that we have been working on our drill and practicing a lot, our feet came down together, our drill was in perfect symmetry. We then proceeded to carry the casket and slow marched down the pathway towards Pte Newburn's final resting place. Continuing with the ceremony the next big moment that we knew was all coming was the folding of the flag. This was something that had all the burial party nerves tense because this was the first time, we were folding a wet flag. Yet we still managed to make it work and present the family with a flag we could all be proud of as Dukes and members of the Canadian Armed Forces. Then we proceeded to continue with the ceremony and give Pte Newburn the final salute before he was buried. This was a very humbling moment to honour people that have fought and gave us the freedom and liberty that we take for granted. One message I saw on a tombstone that stuck out for me was "He died for me", this really made me want to ensure that Pte Newburn's burial was done in the best of all our abilities. Not many people pay attention to the sacrifice that people made for our freedom and the courage it must have taken to know you might not come back but you're doing this for something bigger. This was how I now see Pte Newburn as a person who knew his chances at a young age and knew that this is the most honourable and respectable profession that anyone could ever take part in. It gave me goosebumps knowing that this was a hero of our Regiment that made the ultimate sacrifice so that we may all have the freedom and liberty we have today.

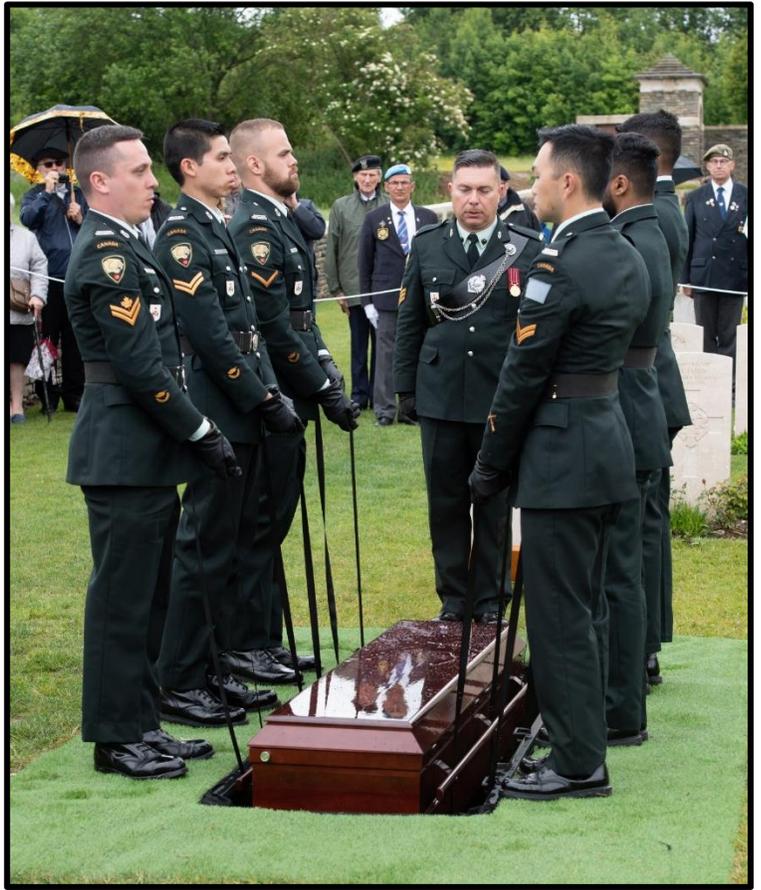
We then made our way to the reception which took place in the town hall of Loos. This was a very interesting event mainly since many of the members of the burial party are relatively new to the regiment and have never been to a reception of this sort. It took place on the second floor, with the family of Pte Newburn, the BCR association, Cdn 3rd Div, and the members of the BCRs. For many of us this was the first chance for many of us to get to talk about this whole experience and all the work that was put in. The main purpose of this interment was to honour the sacrifice of our fallen soldier from WW1 as well as being able to respectfully honour the family in his burial. It was amazing to hear that the family was very happy and pleased with the ceremony. Also, the members of Cdn 3rd Div were at the reception and they were the ones who had been teaching us this drill and assisting us in order to make it as sharp as possible. It was amazing to hear all the positive feedback from the interment ceremony. The reception included the family receiving some of Pte Newburn's personal items that had been recovered with his remains which included a spoon as well as a rock that had his fingerprint imprinted onto it. After receiving these items, the CO BCR and RSM BCR presented the family with a book of our history which included the moments that Pte Newburn had lived through. After the reception it was time for the road move to Menin Gate.

This was a fair distance away; it was an hour drive which would add on to the long day that everyone had expected to occur. We made it in time to meet Cpl Alexander's wife as well as her family which was an interesting story to hear. Mainly since they had met on a battlefield tour that Cpl Alexander had previously been a part of. After the drink with the family, the BCRs proceeded to the Menin Gate to participate in the ceremony that had been taking place everyday for the past 95 years. This was my first time in Belgium and it was honestly such an incredible and humbling moment to be a part of. Being able to see all the names of the fallen soldiers from WW1. As soon as we got to the ceremony, we were instructed on what to do and we did so which resulted in the BCRs standing at attention during the ceremony. Preceding the ceremony, the

BCRs were standing on the stairs and we had many people coming to take pictures of us, this moment made me realize how much respect and how grateful the public is for members serving in the military. The people of this community were very welcoming and accepting of our regiment. We proceeded to be in awe of all the names that had been carved into the gate and of all the sacrifices of the people. The RSM had then showed us the names of all of the soldiers that had been from our Regiment and the number of names on this was breathtaking. Just to realize the amount of life that had been lost and that had been willingly sacrificed for something greater than themselves. We then moved up to the top of the Menin Gate and saw another memorial off to the side and it was the Indian memorial for WW1. Personally, this was a surprising thing to see because I didn't believe that the Indian Army had been recognized for the sacrifice they had made. We then proceeded to dinner and made our way out of Menin Gate and had the opportunity to see Vimy Ridge in the dark. It was incredible to see the light shining on the stone and being able to see how this amplified the memorial. Also, we were able to see vast distances even at night from all of the lights and seeing how this was such an important ridge to take in order for the following attacks to be able to succeed.

I'm proud to say that it was one of the more humbling days I've experienced. From being able to be a part of the interment of Pte Newburn to experiencing Menin Gate for the very first time. The interment was a once in a lifetime opportunity and I was proud and humbled to say that we made our fellow Duke proud and had put him to rest. Also being able to talk to the family and see how proud we made them and how we were able to do the burial in a respectful way that made all parties involved proud.







Dukes after the interment ceremony at The British Loos Cemetery



The family of Pte George Newburn



*Members of The BCR (DCO) and the BCR (DCO) Association
at the Vimy Ridge Memorial*

Thursday, 13 June 2019

MCpl Palmer N

The day after the interment, the contingent travelled to Belgium to meet with the regimental association for a battlefield tour. We rendezvoused with Colonel (retired) Keith Maxwell just outside the Menin Gate in the city of Ypres and drove west towards the village of Leke.

The village of Leke is important to the Regiment because on 7th September 1944, then 28th Armoured Regiment (BCR) liberated the town from the Germans. The residents of Leke, made a small plaza in which they named Canada Plaza in remembrance of the Regiment liberating their town. On 8th September 2001 the regimental association placed a plaque in the plaza surrounded by a maple leaf and the four phases a poppy goes through, all designed by a local artist. It was quite moving to hear O Canada being played during the quick ceremony as well as the Belgian national anthem. Shortly after the ceremony the contingent and the parade members formed up on the road and marched to the village hall. On the way we stopped at a church to lay a wreath.

Honourary Lt. Col. Rohani and Cpl. Hothi laid a wreath on behalf of the Regiment at the church memorial. The parade continued to march down the road and to the village hall. At the village hall the contingent was given drink tickets at a small reception. It was a fantastic moment where members of the Regiment and association got to mingle with the locals. LCol Lindsay, CWO Mullick, and Col (Rt'd) Maxwell received gifts from the Belgian-Canada Association President as a gift of thanks and appreciation. We then departed shortly after to carry on with our battlefield tour; however, seeing the town of Leke appreciate what the Regiment did for them 74 years ago shows the deep gratitude others have for Canada whom are not Canadian.

At 1250 hours, the contingent arrived at Essex Farm. Essex Farm is one of the well-known Commonwealth War Graves because Lt. Col. McRae wrote "In Flanders Fields". CWO Mullick recited the poem for us on the very same bank where Lt. Col. McRae wrote his poem making it a somber moment. Also, at Essex Farm the youngest soldier killed during the First World War is buried there, rifleman V. J. Strudwick aged 15. A very stark reminder what some young lads did so they could do their bit for the war effort. After reflecting we continued onto one of the regiment's battle honour's, St. Julien.

St. Julien is very important for the Regiment because it is where the 7th Battalion held the line against the first German gas attack. St. Julien is also known as, 'Vancouver Corner' after the brave actions the battalion did during the battle in holding their ground while being attacked and gassed by the Germans. The battalion held out for two days until the British relieved them after. 2,000 men lost their lives during this battle. The memorial is the only kind in terms of Canadian memorials to represent a soldier in the arms reverse position, a gesture of mourning and respect for fallen comrades. The next big battle the battalion fought in was Passchendaele.

Just like at the Battle of Hill 70, the 7th Battalion took the left ridge over-looking Passchendaele on the 7th November 1917. The battle for Passchendaele was also known as the third battle of Ypres. The town was destroyed due to the battle and could only know it was a town due to the colour of bricks lying on the ground. General Currie wanted to take Passchendaele so that the Germans couldn't observe them over the winter. General Currie won the battle at an extreme cost of lives and was furious when the British withdrew from the area when the Germans attacked in the spring of 1918. Although the battle took place 102 years ago, the fields around Passchendaele still have the barbwire stacks in the ground, which are used by the farmers for their fences. At the Passchendaele memorial, it is also known as the Seaforth Highlanders of Canada ground as their respected battalion took the right ridge. At the front of the memorial is Canada Gate which is a replica gate that stands in Halifax symbolizing where the Canadian soldiers started their journey into the war.

Quickly jumping back into our vehicles, we stopped at the Battle of Frezenberg memorial. Here, the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry (PPCLI) were on the Frezenberg ridge. The Patricia's responded in kind to the Germans after their attacks and artillery barrages. Many of the original members of the regiment were killed in this battle and not many came out alive. Holding the line came at a large cost and the unit had to be taken off the line and regrouped. A very memorable stop because our former RSM, CWO Mullick was part of 2 VP and served with them in the Medak pocket.

Mount Sorrel (Hill 62) was our last stop on the tour. Here at Mount Sorrel and Sanctuary Wood is very important for Canadians in trying to hold and push the Germans back. During the battle the 7th battalion conducted a hasty counter attack but only gained 600 meters of ground and did not take the high ground back. The Germans conducted the attack to keep units pinned down and draw resources away from the Somme. Even with the German push, the Germans did not take the advantage of taking the undefended city of Ypres and stopped. Though the Germans wanted to drain resources, the Canadians were taken off the line and sent to the Somme. Commonwealth soldiers are buried at Sanctuary wood, Hoge Crater and those not found are on the walls at Menin Gate. Also, on every second Sunday in the month of June, the Royal Canadian Regiment at Fort York Armoury conduct a Sorrel Day parade.



The Vimy Ridge Memorial



At "Locality C" where so many Dukes fought and died during the Battle of St Julien, April 1915



CWO Tony Harris speaking to fellow Dukes about LCol John McCrae in front of a plaque dedicated to him



Memorial in the village of Leke, Belgium



Dukes at Vancouver Corner



*The Cross of Sacrifice at Tyne Cot Cemetery near Passchendaele.
The supporting structure for the Cross was built on top of a German bunker*