

THE / LE BULLETIN



Message from the President

By Stuart Beaton, President OMMC

This will probably be the last message you will receive from me as your President as my term as a director has time expired and will end at the end of the AMM. The committee has been working extremely hard to provide a top notch course and conference, with a good mix of useful information and socialising with all of our members. If you haven't registered as yet, please do so, and you will be pleasantly surprised.

My best,
Stuart Beaton

Message from the Secretary

By David Stinson, Secretary OMMC

For those who read the previous issue of 'The Bulletin', you would have noticed that the first three years of OMMC Programs were in locations that were a mystery to us. Through my research, I can say with certainty that the first three OMMC Museum Studies Programs were all held in Ottawa in partnership with the Canadian War Museum. The mystery has been solved!

Furthermore, although more membership renewals are still trickling in, here is a summary of OMMC membership from 2011 to April 25th, 2015:

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
CAF Museum Members	69	69	70	70	71
Individual Members	69	44	36	41	50 *
Institutional Members	29	24	22	26	33 *
Life Members	8	6	6	6	9
Totals	175	143	134	143	160

* Assumes that all who were members in 2014 will eventually renew membership in 2015.

David Stinson,
Secretary

THE M-152: ARMY TO POLICE

By Jack Templeman, Winnipeg Police Museum

On January 28th, 1955, a Dodge 4 x 4 Utility Vehicle, serial # 91403591, was delivered to the Department of National Defence and became the Ordnance Disposal Vehicle for Military District 10 based in Winnipeg, Manitoba. At that time army personnel assisted police forces with the handling and disposing of explosives or explosive material which was usually wartime souvenirs like grenades or old and unstable chemicals such as nitro left by safecrackers. Actual pipe and letter bombs used by criminals came into fashion in the 1970's and in Winnipeg this started with a letter bomb that destroyed the hand of a court clerk when he opened a letter addressed to a Judge.

The metropolitan area of Winnipeg amalgamated into one big city in 1972 with the police departments amalgamating in late 1974. Several specialty units including a police bomb disposal unit was formed and six officers were trained at CFB Borden in 1975. At this time the 1955 Dodge trucks were being replaced by the military and this one was purchased by the Winnipeg Police Force for a token \$ 1.00. Since the truck was fully equipped and a military robot had also been purchased (for another token \$1.00), they were able to basically handle emergency calls themselves.



To distinguish the bomb truck as a police unit rather than an army unit, the city painted it blue and put on the city crest. It should be explained that they only painted what you could see. The outside was blue but everything inside was still khaki, including the drivers compartment and inside the motor area. If you looked under the fenders or inside compartments all you saw was the original khaki.

This truck only served Winnipeg Police for a couple of years as the department also purchased a very heavy custom built trailer with an explosive tub. The ordnance officers felt the Dodge truck had difficulty pulling this trailer and at times they had trouble starting the 24-volt system, so it was decided to purchase a new truck.

The truck was sold and over the years was used by a key cutting business, as a camper vehicle and finally as a tow vehicle at a marina. It then ended up stripped of parts and sold as scrap.

The Winnipeg Police Museum tried to track the vehicle and found military collectors who remembered it and even knew where it sat at that time. The Police Museum also found a friend who restored military vehicles and he felt it could be restored even after seeing what was left of it. The pictures give you just some idea of the magnitude of this project. Thus began a three years project. The vehicle is displayed at police and special functions.



Strange Alliance: The 15th Battalion C.E.F.

By Ron Drouin, Algonquin Regiment

There's an old adage that says, "Always expect the unexpected". When the 48th Highlanders of Canada moved to Valcartier to form the 15th Battalion, little did they know that support would be coming from the backwoods and mines of Northern Ontario.



In September of 1914, the 97th Regiment Algonquin Rifles sent 15 Officers and 251 Other Ranks, mostly from the Sudbury and New Liskeard areas, to Valcartier to augment the 5th Battalion. These being tradesmen such as miners, lumberjacks, and railway workers, it was thought best to take advantage of those skills and move some of these men to railway corps, forestry corps, and tunneling companies. When the dust settled, 147 Algonquins sailed and fought with the 15th Battalion.



Alexander Reid Keith,
15th Battalion Pipe
Major, and former 97th
Algonquin

The battalion took part in the first major battle of the war involving Canadian troops, the Second Battle of Ypres, 22-26 April 1915. The aim was to hold the Ypres Salient and protect the city of Ypres. This was truly a 'trial by fire' for the Canadian troops. The Germans launched an attack on the 22nd by releasing, for the first time on the Western Front, 160 tonnes of chlorine gas on the northern shoulder of the Salient. It was utterly devastating, as the poison gas was new to these troops and they had no way of defending themselves. Another giant gas cloud was released on the 24th, this time right in front of the Canadian troops. Numbers 1, 3, and 4 Companies of the 15th, engulfed by the highest concentration of gas and artillery fire, were devastated by the assault and forced to withdraw to secondary defensive positions. Meanwhile number 2 Company was heavily engaged in the defense of St. Julien, about one mile west of the main assault. Although the German Army eventually succeeded in capturing St. Julien they failed to reach Ypres or to eliminate the Salient surrounding it, which were the German main objectives.

During this battle, the 1st Canadian Division suffered 6,035 casualties, including more than 2,000 killed in action. The 15th Battalion paid a heavy price with 647 casualties during the gas attack on the 24th alone. Almost destroyed, the 15th Battalion rebuilt and fought in all major battles in which the 1st Canadian Division was engaged in for the duration of the war.

Of the 147 soldiers of the 97th, 47 were killed in action, 31 of these casualties occurring during the Second Battle of Ypres. The 97th went on to form its own battalion in 1915 and would eventually be split up before going to France.

Although these men were from totally different cultural areas and backgrounds, they came together to form one of the finest battalions of the Canadian Expeditionary Force.

Captain O’Kelly’s War: A Northwestern Ontario Hero, Part II

By Captain George Romick, Thunder Bay Military Museum

Early in March 1918, O’Kelly, now a Captain, applied for compassionate leave with the intent of returning to Canada to see his ailing mother.

Upon this return to Winnipeg, he was given a hero’s welcome and a most enthusiastic civic welcome, from the people of Winnipeg. A wonderful reception was held and many speakers paid homage to the first Winnipegger to return to the city bearing on his breast the little bronze cross bearing the simple words “For Valor”. O’Kelly seemed overwhelmed by the noise made by the audience when he rose to speak, said scarcely a dozen sentences. It was the first speech he had ever given and he felt “like a new sentry on duty at the front for the first time.”

During his return journey to his unit, O’Kelly had been selected to be memorialized in an official war portrait. One of the staff of the Canadian War Records Office who saw O’Kelly when he reported observed: “He was very young. His manner was quiet and somewhat grim, as if he had looked too closely into a hundred faces of death.” This was the O’Kelly who met Captain F.H. Varley, who would later be part of the famous Group of Seven, to stand for his portrait. Varley “felt the ordinary soldier was a victim of forces beyond his control” and his intent “was to reveal the intimate experience of the individual caught up in a ‘game of life and death.’”

When O’Kelly rejoined the 52nd on 26 August, the 52nd were preparing for their part in the series of battles for the Canal du Nord, part of the German “Hindenburg Line”, near Cambrai. The next day, the 52nd moved forward to attack and capture the section of trench known as the Marconing Line. By 4:00 pm it was clear the Marconing Line would not be captured that day. The 52nd was exhausted and suffered the heaviest casualties it would in any individual battle and Captain O’Kelly was wounded while trying to organize his troops for the attack. He had been hit by machine gun fire, and he managed to take cover in a shell hole, where he was subsequently hit by shrapnel. By early November he had been transferred to the Manitoba Regimental Depot and then the 18th Reserve Battalion to await reassignment.

In the meantime the war ended. Having sufficiently recovered from his injuries, O’Kelly was transferred back to the 52nd, which was now in England, on 9 March 1919. With his remaining 587 comrades he embarked on the SS Olympic eleven days later at Southampton, England.

They landed in Halifax and proceeded to the Lakehead for “dispersal”. The remaining members of the 52nd arrived by train on 29 March to a huge civic welcome. The battalion formed up and marched through the city to the Armoury. Upon arrival in the City they were presented with the “Key to the City” and parades, street carnivals and dinners were organized.



52nd Battalion Parade, Port McArthur, Mar 29, 1919.

O’Kelly returned to Winnipeg and took a job selling real estate. Not content to be out of uniform completely, he rejoined his old militia unit the Winnipeg Rifles in 1921 and was promoted to Major in March of 1922.

Tragically, in November 1922, while prospecting around Lac Seul and Goose Island in North Western Ontario, a storm overturned his canoe, leaving him and his partner in the cold water. His body was never found, and, after a short search, he was pronounced dead on 15 November 1922. There is some irony in the fact that the twice decorated war hero who survived some of the bloodiest battles of the First World War, died in a boating accident.

A wooden Memorial Cross with a silver plaque was erected 10 June 1924 on Goose Island, by his brother officers from the Winnipeg Rifles, with the following inscription: “Erected to the memory of Major Christopher Patrick John O’Kelly, V.C., M.C., by his Brother Officers of the 90th Winnipeg Rifles. Ye who pass this way are asked to care for this monument.” Forty years later a portion of the cross was recovered by one of Major O’Kelly’s 52nd Battalion comrades, Gerald Bannatyne, and the upright portion was donated to the Ear Falls, Royal Canadian Legion #238, for display. The St. John’s College Association, in 1927 also erected a stone cairn in his memory at Camp Morton, on Lake Winnipeg. On the 14 November 1965 a replica plaque, honouring the memory of Major C.P.J. O’Kelly was unveiled in the Royal Canadian Legion Hall in Red Lake Ontario.

Major O’Kelly’s Victoria Cross, Military Cross, British War Medal, and Victory Medal were donated to the Canadian War Museum in 1970 by his two sisters, Mrs. Margaret M. Wall and Mrs. Monica Kiely. The Ecole O’Kelly School for children of military personnel at Canadian Forces Base Shilo was named in his honour in 1976. In 1989, the then Thunder Bay Militia District Headquarters sought permission to have the Armoury in Thunder Bay named after him. The honour was approved on 14 May 1990 to designate it officially “The Major Christopher Patrick John O’Kelly, VC, MC Armoury” with the short title “O’Kelly Armoury”.



In 1992, Royal Canadian Legion Members from Branch 238, Earfalls, Sioux Lookout, Hudson and Dryden, dedicated a new cross and base to the memory of Major O’Kelly on Goose Island to replace the original that had been covered in water due to the installation of a hydro dam. On the 4th of July 2014. The Government of Manitoba recognized the bravery and courage of the 14 Manitoba Victoria Cross recipients including Major O’Kelly by naming provincial lakes in their honour through the Manitoba Geographical Names Program. O’Kelly Lake is located at 51° 59’ 00” Lat.; 95° 50’ 11”.

Although he was a Winipegger born and bred, OKelly’s connections to Northwestern Ontario are evident, in life and in death. He fought for the 52nd Battalion, which has memorialised him as one of its own. His last resting place ties him permanently to the region.

The Royal Canadian Regiment Museum: Welcome Our New Staff Members

By Georgiana Stanciu, Executive Director/Curator, RCR Museum

At the beginning of 2015, The RCR Museum went through a major staff turnover. We are very happy to introduce our new co-workers to the museum community. From left to right: Mara Mohaupt (Retail Clerk), Katrina Pasierbek (Public Programmer), and Amber Mandich (Collections Registrar).



Amber Mandich joined The RCR Museum in February 2015 as the museum's Collections Registrar. In this position, Amber is responsible for all aspects of Collections Management and is currently rehousing and relocating the collection into new storage areas. Amber received a BA (Honours) degree from The University of Western Ontario in Bioarchaeological Anthropology in 2010 and a Certificate in Museum Management and Curatorship from Fleming College in 2011. Amber has a strong interest in museum collections, community engagement and built heritage. Prior to joining The RCR Museum, Amber worked at Fanshawe Pioneer Village as a Collections Assistant and has actively been involved in the local museum and heritage community. She is currently conducting research on the adaptive reuse of heritage buildings in the high-tech sector in partnership with GRAND-NCE and The University of Western Ontario. While working in the field, Amber has been pursuing a Master's in Library and Information Science. She is focusing her studies on Archives and Records Management and will be graduating from the program this fall.

Katrina Pasierbek is excited to join the dedicated team at The RCR Museum as their Public Programmer. After completing a Bachelor of Education degree, Katrina returned to campus to earn a Master of Arts degree in History at the University of Western Ontario. She has focused her research on the rise of Great War battlefield tourism during the immediate post-war years. Since completing her degrees, Katrina has worked in three local museums as a researcher and educator. Most recently she served as Canadigm's historical researcher on their First World War traveling exhibition *Southern Impressions* to compile biographical information on the soldiers who left their mark on the chalk cave walls below Vimy Ridge in the days preceding the famed battle in April 1917. At The RCR Museum, Katrina is responsible for educational programs and public tours of the museum, in addition to developing innovative ways to interpret and communicate the history of the Regiment. Katrina considers Wolseley Barracks the perfect setting to combine her passion for experiential learning and Canada's rich military history.

Mara Mohaupt is responsible for the Gift Shop operations at The RCR Museum, having joined the staff in April 2015. Mara brings to her new role strong customer service, sales and marketing skills. She has 18 years of experience in arts administration from her previous position at the London Regional Children's Museum. As the Finance and Administration Manager, she was also involved in all aspects of the museum's gift shop operations. Mara has completed the Ontario Real Estate College and she also is a licensed Realtor, specializing in residential real estate.

The Editor Asks...

What event or exhibit with your museum or Base/Wing/Unit are you most excited for this year?

22 Wing/CFB North Bay is known for having amazing annual 'Armed Forces Day' celebrations. Our fifth major celebration is Wednesday June 3rd, 2015. Each year, one of the big parking lots at the City's waterfront is taken over by a couple thousand school children with military vehicles, Cadets, tents of displays (Museum, MFRC, recruiting, etc.), sometimes a military helicopter, and there's always some form of air show. We are fortunate to have the Snowbirds for this year. It's a major outreach event for the museum, but it's a really incredible experience of essentially the entire military community of North Bay (we have the Wing and an Armoury) coming together and putting on a great show. I look forward to it every year!

-Bethany Aitchison, Canadian Forces Museum of Aerospace Defence

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