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Volume 58 Issue 21



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October 17, 2019

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MCpl was a 'giant' among  
his training peers. Page 12



**LEST WE FORGET**



James Keay (top) was KIA during the Great War after leaving his farm to serve in the CEF. The May brothers, Harold and Bill, trained at Camp Hughes (above) in 1916 before seeing action during the Battle of Vimy Ridge in 1917. Bill May was wounded by shrapnel to the leg, while his older brother was left for dead on the battlefield after sustaining horrific wounds after a shell exploded nearby. He was found alive three days later.



# Second World War Discovery Box deals with 'difficult history'



It was a hive of activity at the MPTF during the Base's Family Day event, with plenty to do for all ages. Base Ammo was popular among the kids in attendance, as was doing the Forces Test.

Photos Jules Xavier/Shilo Stag



## Steven Fouchard Stag Special

The Canadian War Museum (CWM) is bringing the Second World War to life for students across the country with a new Discovery Box of artifacts designed to stimulate discussion in the classroom.

The project is a follow up to the CWM's Supply Line First World War Discovery Box, which has been borrowed more than 1,900 times since the museum launched the initiative in 2014.

This year, the museum is circulating 20 Second World War kits and 30 First World War kits, which will be loaned to schools free of charge for two weeks at a time. Both are aimed at students from Grades 4 to 12.

Sandra O'Quinn, a Learning Specialist with CWM, said the Second World War box contains 23 artifacts, some reproductions, others authentic.

There are hands-on objects and clothing, photographs and documents. As was the case with the First World War version, she added, they were chosen to spark students' curiosity.

"A big part of the current curriculum in most provinces is teaching historical literacy skills and inquiry-based thinking," she said. "So by giving them things that are curious and cause them to ask questions, it opens up a whole line of thinking for the teacher to run with."

Feedback from the first round of Second World War kit loans is still being gathered, but O'Quinn said she suspects students will be fascinated by two artifacts in particular: a lifeboat ration tin and a "sweetheart pin."

"It's a real ration," O'Quinn said of the former. "We filled it with epoxy so that it won't spoil. It's got chocolate tab-



This authentic Second World War-era coat is just one example of the contents of the Canadian War Museum's Supply Line Second World War Discovery Box. The resource is being made available to schools at no charge and includes many other artifacts from the era to enhance classroom instruction.

Photo Canadian War Museum

lets, some crackers. You open it up and it still smells like chocolate."

She added, "Sweetheart pins were often given by a service person to their loved one. They really capture the daily lives of Canadians at home during the war."

One big take-away from the user feedback received, O'Quinn noted, was that teachers wanted more focus on the experiences of women and visible minorities in wartime. The museum has responded by incorporating the story of Japanese-Canadians who were forcibly relocated over concerns about their loyalty.

The product also deals with the Holocaust.

"Teachers don't want to shy away from difficult history so that's why we felt it was important to include those," O'Quinn said.

Also among the artifacts is a helmet of the sort worn, not only by soldiers on the front, but also by Canadian Women's Army Corps members and civilians volunteers on the home front.

"We have an image of a group of African-Canadians in the Dartmouth area and they're all wearing the helmets," said O'Quinn. "It shows the diversity of those affected and of those participating in the war."

The museum has also created supplementary materials to aid teachers, and they include first-hand accounts from Canadians who lived through the period to deepen the experience for students.

"I think there are a lot of opportunities to link those people with the objects and have even more depth of learning," said O'Quinn.

Bookings for both First and Second World War kits start Nov. 1.

## Pet of the Week

### CHARLEY & KEEVER



Charley McKeever has a dog and cat as pets. Do you have a photo of your pet — cat, dog, bird, snake, hamster — you'd like to share with our Stag readers? If so, e-mail it to us via [stag@mymts.net](mailto:stag@mymts.net)



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# Clark brothers see action in Passchendaele

**Jules Xavier**  
Shilo Stag

RCA Museum senior curator Kathleen Christensen will be remembering a number of her ancestors, who saw action in the Great War, during this year's Remembrance Day ceremonies happening across Canada.

Like her great-uncles William and James Clark, who grew up in this province, calling Clarkleigh home.

"William and James were named after their grandfather, another James Clark," noted Christensen. "They are my mother's father's [Laura/Sidney] older brothers. The family farmed in the Interlake for years, going back to their grandfather's immigration to Manitoba in 1875 from the Orkneys."

Explaining the family history is no easy task when you look back a century, but Christensen said the Great War soldiers' grandfather had two sons born in South Africa, William and James, who are the father of the William and James and Sidney.

"Their mother was South African of African heritage," said Christensen. "William was the older, but shorter brother and James was the younger, but topped his brother by five inches."

Five-foot-eight James Clark also had militia experience with the 100th Winnipeg Grenadiers. He enlisted on May 27, 1916, just three months after turning 18.

Standing five-foot-three, William Clark signed up for the CEF on Feb. 23, 1916, age 20. Both of her great-uncles trained at Camp Hughes.

"They both sailed to England on the HMS Olympic, but at different times," offered Christensen on her relatives leaving Canada for the battlefields overseas.

"They landed in France within four days of each other in May 1917, but with different Battalions. William was trained for the Signals Corp and was with the 43rd Battalion. James was with 28th."

Christensen has a family photo of the two brothers, standing alongside another soldier, in her Great War family archives.

The brothers were at Hill 70 and in the lead up to Passchendaele. On the first day of Passchendaele, William Clark was wounded by a shrapnel shell — severely in the left leg, moderately in the left arm, right leg, face and shoulder.

According to war records for her great-uncle, the left knee was shattered and was amputated at the thigh at an advanced dressing station. It was not until December that he was evacuated to Blighty, England.

It was on Dec. 20 that James heard of his brother's evacuation just as he was transferred to William's Battalion, the 43rd. He wrote him a postcard that day, which Christensen still possesses, which was addressed to ward two of a hospital in France.

James Clark wrote: "Your letter reached me last night, the 19th, and pleased to hear from you and to know that you are alright. I was over to the 43rd last Sunday and found out you weren't there, but they told me that you were in Blity [sic]. I am down on course for eight days at the school CCRC, but will be going back for Christmas."

William Clark made it back home the following June. His



The Clark brothers, William and James, are the great-uncles of RCA Museum senior curator Kathleen Christensen.

certificate for a pension was signed by the local Justice of the Peace, who happened to be his father, James Clark. He was medically discharged just a bit more than a year after landing in France, then moved to Vancouver, BC.

Based on his war service, William was entitled to wear two blue chevrons on his uniform. He was officially released on Dec. 12, 1918 for being "medically unfit for service" after he requested it so he could return home to Manitoba, where he was a "poultry" farmer. His wounds were healing, including the stump on his left leg which required lots of medical attention, according to his records, following the amputation.

His records, now all scanned in and available at [www.bac-lac.gc.ca](http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca) under personnel records of the First World War, provide all of his medical records as well as pay. Did you know soldiers in the Great War received \$15 per month for their service on the battlefields.

James Clark stayed overseas until March 1919 after suffering several bouts of influenza. He went to work in the mines in Flin Flon after the Great War ended on Nov. 11, 1918.



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General manager	Craig Ethelston	ext 3073
Managing editor	Jules Xavier	ext 3093
Assistant Editor	Céline Garbay	ext 3013
Advertising rep		ext 3013
Editorial advisor	Lori Truscott	ext 3813

Fax: 204-765-3814 Email: [stag@mymts.net](mailto:stag@mymts.net)



Mailing Address:  
Box 5000, Stn Main  
CFB Shilo, Manitoba, R0K 2A0

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Deadline for submissions is the Thursday prior to the week of publication. Submissions can be sent to the Stag via email at [stag@mymts.net](mailto:stag@mymts.net), dropped off at the Stag office located in CANEX or via Inter-base mail.

**Submitting articles and photos for print:**

- Please submit articles as a MS Word Document.
- Include the author's full name, rank, unit and contact information.
- Include photos with your articles whenever possible, however, do not embed photos in word documents.
- Please submit photos as high resolution jpegs (if scanned 300 dpi), digital images or in hard copy format.
- With photos, include a caption that names the individuals in the photo; what is taking place; and the name, rank, and unit of the photographer.



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<http://www.facebook.com/ShiloSTAG>



Pumpkin carving photos Jules Xavier/Shilo Stag



Rowen (below) was the winner of the CANEX pumpkin carving contest, which saw more than 25 families involved. While mom or dad did lots of the heavy carving, it was a family affair at the end.



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Cliff Cullen  
MLA for Spruce Woods  
[ccullenmla@mts.net](mailto:ccullenmla@mts.net)  
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Pte Ashley Kraayeveld's Taekwondo skills (right) paced her to a bronze medal in the women's 62-kilogram division at the seventh CISM Military World Games held in Wuhan, China. *Photo Yvette Yong*

# Triathletes garner two gold, silver in China

## Shilo Stag

Team Canada capped off the recent seventh CISM Military World Games in Wuhan, China with two gold medals, and a silver, during triathlon competitions.

MCpl Alexandre Boule garnered gold in the men's Olympic triathlon Oct. 27, while the senior mixed team also copped gold. Silver went to Capt Lesley Quilan in the senior women's triathlon.

Two days earlier, Pte Ashley Kraayeveld earned a bronze medal in the women's 62-kilogram division competing in Taekwondo.

The men on the mat in Taekwondo were not as fortunate in the tough competition — Pte Miguel Diaz lost in the round of 32 in the 54-kilogram division, while OS Sherif Hassan lost in the round of 16 in his 63-kilogram division.

In men's volleyball competition, featuring assistant coach ... from 2PPCLI, the Canadian Armed Forces' CISM team lost 3-2 to Venezuela, the result putting them in 10th

place.

The men's marathon team finished 14th overall thanks to results posted by Maj Joel Maley 46th 2:31.39 (Personal Best), LS Mark Brown 51st 2:32.34 (PB), MCpl Scott Galt 70th 2:45.47 (PB) and Lt(N) Mike Bergeron 2:50.55.

The women's marathon team garnered a top-10 finish thanks to the results posted by Capt Celine Best 30th 3:04.28, Capt Jessica Grace 41st 3:29.36 and Maj Kristine Self 43rd 3:41.13.

CAF representation at the Military World Games saw 10 teams — men's and women's volleyball, marathon, golf, swimming, fencing, Taekwondo, triathlon, women's basketball and men's soccer — or 168 athletes and support staff in competition.

MWO James Davidson, who works at the Base's Transition Centre, is an assistant coach with the men's volleyball team — he recently retired from playing with the team, where he was the libber.

The men's soccer team featured 1RCHA's Gnr Badh and Lt Burrell.

## Military mixer Nov. 5 at Brandon Armoury

### MFRC

#### Stag Special

Want to learn about Brandon and area businesses in one location?

If so, you might want to attend the second annual military mixer Nov. 5 co-hosted by CFB Shilo's MFRC and 26 Field Regiment at the Brandon Armoury.

The two-hour event starting at 5 p.m. provides an opportunity for Regular Force and Army Reserve Force members, military veterans and their family members to learn about local businesses which support the military community through military incentives.

There will be free pizza provided by Boston Pizza as well as more than \$1,000 in door prizes to be won by those in attendance.

Visit the special events section on [www.cafconnection.ca/shilo/](http://www.cafconnection.ca/shilo/) for updates featuring the business lineup and prize packages to be won.

Childcare is available by pre-registering with the MFRC. Call 204-765-3000 ext 3341 for more information.

# Two amputees share special bond

## Stag Special

Sean Borle recalls meeting Second World War veteran Lloyd Brown for the first time six years ago at a Remembrance Day ceremony.

"We had this magical moment where I reached out my right hand and he put out his left, to shake hands," the 24-year-old recalled.

Borle was born missing his left hand, and 96-year-old Brown lost his right arm on Oct. 18, 1944 while serving with the Loyal Edmonton Regiment in Italy.

"I was staked at a farmhouse which had a children's treehouse located behind it," recalled Brown. "In the treehouse was a sniper who kept shooting at our boys. A tank then came which shot out shells, the shrapnel hitting my right arm."

When Brown arrived at the hospital, the doctors had to amputate his arm.

"Fortunately, I was in such shock that I didn't feel a thing," he said.

The ability to find the positive in a dark situation is one reason why Borle admires Brown. On Remembrance Day, the pair share a special tradition of laying a wreath on behalf of The War Amps, an organization entering its second century of service this year.

The War Amps was started by war amputee veterans returning from the First World War to help each other adapt to their new reality as amputees. They then welcomed amputee veterans following the Second World War, sharing all that they had learned.

Borle grew up in The War Amps Child Amputee Program (CHAMP), which provides financial assistance for the cost of artificial limbs, emotional support and regional seminars to young amputees across Canada. It was started by War Amps members, like Brown, who realized their experiences of living with amputation could help others.

Through what they call "Operation Legacy," Borle and his fellow members of CHAMP have now "taken up the torch" of remembrance to pay tribute to the veteran members of The War Amps, whose efforts have made a difference in the lives of thousands of amputees.

"I can't overstate the impact that these programs have on young amputees and their futures," says Borle. "Knowing that there are people like Lloyd who understand what it's like to be missing a limb, makes you feel like you're not alone."

When Brown attends Remembrance Day ceremonies, he reflects on all those in his regiment who never came home.

"It's heartbreaking to think of all those who lost their lives and it's important to remember them," he said.

For Borle, it's special to share Remembrance Day with Brown.

"I would not be the person I am today had it not been for that decision more than 100 years ago to begin The War Amps," he said. "It is our commitment as CHAMPS that the legacy and sacrifices of Lloyd, and all the war amputee veterans, will be remembered and carried forward."

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## Family fun

There was plenty to eat thanks to the burgers, hotdogs, mini donuts and popcorn served up at the Base's Family Day event held at the MPTF. Army mascot JUNO was there, too, as was Shilo's MFRC providing face painting.

Photos Jules Xavier/Shilo Stag



## PLAYSAFE: Don't Let It Happen to You

Adam

Rebecca



The War Amps new "kids-to-kids" safety video, featuring stories from young amputees who have lost limbs in accidents, delivers the hard-hitting but positive message: "Spot the danger before you play!"

Visit [waramps.ca/playsafe](http://waramps.ca/playsafe) for the video and safety resources.



The War Amps



## 1RCHA soldiers prepare for another season keeping Roger's Pass open

### Ashley Materi Stag Special

Op PALACI — the combined military and Parks Canada effort to keep Roger's Pass open during the winter — will soon start up with the advent of another winter.

During the last operation earlier this year, soldiers with the Royal Canadian Artillery, including 1RCHA, fired 400 rounds from 16 gun positions that marked 134 different avalanche paths and approximately 270 artillery targets.

"I'm very proud of the troop for the work they have done," said Troop Commander (TC) Lt Jermaine Burrell. "This was a great learning opportunity for junior artillery officers in one of the most beautiful landscapes in the world."

The avalanche control program required two rotations of RCA members, 12 Parks Canada avalanche forecasters and technicians, and visitor safety staff, two Parks Canada law enforcement officers, and Parks Canada highway staff.

Each day, approximately 3,000 vehicles make the journey through Rogers Pass, BC, connecting Canadians and visitors to the cold-weather splendours offered in Glacier National Park and beyond.

This historic travel corridor through the Columbia Mountains receives, on average, 10 metres (32.5 feet) of snow at tree line each year.

Road conditions can quickly become treacherous in in-

element weather, and avalanches which reach the Trans-Canada Highway create choke points for thousands of vehicles and dozens of freight trains.

In partnership with Parks Canada, military gunners from across Canada, including CFB Shilo, come together during Op PALACI to conduct avalanche control using C3 105mm Howitzers with meticulously planned artillery strikes.

Running annually since 1961, it is the longest-running Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) operation domestic or expeditionary, in Canadian history.

"The operation is vital in keeping one of Canada's main transport and travel arteries opened during the winter months," said Capt Nelson Bath, the Joint Task Force Pacific officer responsible for overseeing the operation.

"The use of howitzers is one of the primary options for avalanche control in Rogers Pass. Due to the extreme nature and locations of the trigger points for the avalanche paths, no other system on its own, has been found to function reliably to ensure the safety of the Trans-Canada highway and its travellers."

Mount Revelstoke and Glacier National Parks superintendent Nicholas Irving said, "Parks Canada and the Canadian Armed Forces have collaborated since 1961 on the world's largest mobile avalanche control program. This work is vital in keeping the major transportation corridor open through Glacier National Park in winter."

# Digitized Great War records allow families to learn about soldiers

**Jules Xavier**  
Shilo Stag

Imagine leaving the cramped trenches, bayonets fixed. Dodging a hail of German machine gun fire and shrapnel from nearby exploding bombs, you make your way through muddy No Man's Land in Passchendaele en route to the enemy lines just a few hundred yards away.

Then a bullet, perhaps a piece of shrapnel or an exploding bomb claims your brother's life in Belgium during the Great War. This might have happened on Nov. 6, 1917 when Alberta farmer James Keay died on the battlefield. He was 32, but confirmation of his death took some time.

There are many soldiers, after leaving their trenches, who were never found on that day of battle, lost in the muck of war or vaporized by a direct hit from an 80mm shell. Some of these soldiers are being found now as farmer's unearth their remains decades later while working fields which once saw the slaughter of men on both sides from 1914 to 1918.

Keay's younger brother, 27-year-old Alfred was there as part of the 13th Canadian Mounted Rifle (CMR) and escaped unscathed so he could fight another day with the 27th Canadian Infantry Brigade. He was hospitalized at the time of his older sibling's death, after sustaining gunshot wounds in battle to his right hand on Aug. 22, 1917.

He was not discharged from military hospital, his third stay while recuperating in Oxford and then Epsom, until Nov. 16, according to his digitized military records. This wound came after an earlier bullet wound to his left cheek on May 3, his scar noted on demobilization paperwork in Calgary on Feb. 17, 1919.

The brothers were part of a major offensive in the fall of 1917, after the Germans had control of Passchendaele for three years after taking it from the Allied occupation in the middle of October 1914. On Nov. 6, 1917, after the severest fighting in most unfavourable weather, the 5th Canadian Infantry Brigade took, and passed, the village. But the eldest Keay was among the Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF) casualties that day.

This Great War information is known because granddaughter Bonnie Roncin's research into her grandfather Alfred's and great-uncle James' war records she obtained from Ottawa-based Library and Archives Canada.

This journalist was privy to life in the army for these men who left the farm to serve their country with the CEF in France and Belgium from perusing Roncin's — her father Jim is the son of Alfred — numerous documents, from medical and assigned pay records, to discharge certificates and casualty forms.

With all Great War paperwork now digitized and available for download from the website, stories can now be told with the storyteller no longer with us.

Standing 5-foot-9 and weighing 160 pounds, James Keay — born on June 18, 1882 — had blue eyes and was a bachelor when he went to war. On the day he died, initial military records dated Dec. 29, 1917 had him wounded and missing in action. "For official purposes" on Aug. 18, 1918 the private was "presumed to have died on or since 6-11-17."

His mother Jane Keay of Lochee-by-Dundee, Scotland, would not be sure of her son's fate until Jan. 16, 1922, a year after she arrived in Canada, and settled in Alberta, that the military confirmed Keay, regimental No. 552294, was dead.

Keay's final resting place is in the New British Cemetery in Zonnebeke, Belgium. This graveyard was opened after the Armistice when graves were brought in from the battle-



James Keay



Alfred Keay

fields of Passchendaele and Langemarck.

Almost all of the burials are from the autumn of 1917 and feature 647 from Canada, one from Newfoundland, plus 292 from Australia, 126 from New Zealand and four of the Royal Guernsey Light Infantry.

Keay is among 2,101 burials and commemorations of the First World War. Of this total, 1,600 of the graves are unidentified. Keay is in grave No. 21 in the C-section of XI area.

In the spring of 1917, Keay missed some fighting time at the front when he perforated

his left ear on May 11, and was hospitalized. Discharged June 5, he rejoined his brother, also a bachelor when he enlisted, and their 13th CMR on June 26.

James and Alfred Keay both enlisted on Jan. 25, 1915. In May 1916, the brothers' military records show they were late for muster parade, and subsequently lost two days pay, and were sentenced to 10 days detention.

Both brothers were certified fit to serve by their doctor Lt George Wade following a medical exam on Jan. 12, 1915. Alfred's medical records — born on Aug. 25, 1889, he was 160 pounds, stood 5-foot-10 — showed he was healthy, but needed his teeth fixed. He had 19 fillings.

They were initially assigned to the 11th Canadians Battalion Infantry, then were transferred to the 27th on Sept. 27, 1916. The Keay brothers left Canada for overseas on the SS Olympic, along with soldiers who trained at Camp Shilo, embarking on June 29, 1916. They arrived in England after crossing the Atlantic Ocean on July 5.

They finally arrived for their first action in France on Sept. 29 that same year. On Feb. 24, 1917 after seeing his share of war, Keay was awarded a good conduct badge. He brother also garnered the same military accolade.

When it came to being paid during the Great War, the military assigned James' \$15 per month starting in July 1916 to John 'Jock' Henderson, his cousin who stayed on the farm to work it while James and Alfred were overseas. With James' death, Henderson's last payment in December 1917 brought the total to \$270. He received an additional \$15 before the military closed the account on Jan. 31, 1918.

The military also paid Keay \$1 per day, plus a 10-cent field allowance. So after 19 days, he pocketed \$20.90. From June 30, 1916 to March 31, 1917, Keay's pay records showed his army earnings to be \$303.40. He was able to take cash payments from this total, with his biggest withdrawal being \$9.73 on Oct. 1, 1916. Most times he took cash payments of just \$2.61.

Alfred Keay's earnings from serving in the CEF once he was discharged back in Calgary was \$420. His last pay certificate covering 17 days in February 1919 was \$53.77, again based on \$1 per day, and 10 cents per day for a field allowance. This total also included a \$35 clothing allowance and the \$15 separation allowance — or assigned pay — paid by England to Betsy Keay in Lochee by Dundee in Scotland. By the end of the Great War, his sister had banked \$135 covering August 1916 to March 1917.

Alfred Keay would also serve his country in the Second World War as a Veterans Guard at a POW camp in Western Canada. He died in September 1969.

If you have a Great War veteran in your family history, you can access their digitized paperwork — to help located your great-uncle or great-grandfather, you'll need surname, given names, and to narrow down the search for quick results, his Regimental number — by visiting: [www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/military-heritage/first-world-war/personnel-records/Pages/search.aspx](http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/military-heritage/first-world-war/personnel-records/Pages/search.aspx)

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**Nov. 5 vs Rebels**  
7 p.m.



**To discover your Great War ancestor's military records visit**  
[www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/military-heritage/first-world-war/personnel-records/Pages/search.aspx](http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/military-heritage/first-world-war/personnel-records/Pages/search.aspx)



Avr (B) Jade Lefebvre had an opportunity along with her extended family to possibly walk in the footsteps of Sgt Samuel Gibson at Camp Hughes, where he trained in trench warfare starting in March 1916.



## Researcher discovers soldier trained at Camp Hughes

**Avr (B) Jade Lefebvre**  
Stag Special

We have all explored our roots at one point; perhaps you have a family tree so large it would make Ancestry.com blush — or maybe you have that one relative, a faceless name, shrouded in a bit of mystery.

Either way, something drives us to learn more about where, or who, we came from.

I have always been fascinated by the stories that go along with a name from the past. One of the things I love most is that no matter how many records, photos and anecdotes you are given, you must use your imagination to understand what their lives were really like. Recently, I was able to do just that.

Although I personally have not had any family in the military, my extended family had a story to tell. Their grandfather Samuel Kemp Gibson was born on Oct. 24, 1882 in Guelph, Ont. As a young adult, an iron moulder by trade, Gibson moved west to Manitoba, where he began farming in Waskada. Life would soon be interrupted by the First World War.

At the nearby town of Deloraine, Gibson voluntarily enlisted into the 222nd Battalion, Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF) on March 8, 1916. At age 33 when he enlisted, he was fit for service and sent to nearby Camp Hughes for training among hundreds of other soldiers.

At the time, there were more than 27,000 people at Camp Hughes, making it the largest community in Manitoba outside of Winnipeg. To this day, it is said to be the best-preserved First World War trench system in all North America.

"The main camp along the tracks included a railway station and platform for arrivals and

departures, administrative offices, vehicle maintenance buildings, hospital, veterinary hospital, dental office, bakery, kitchens, armoury, two churches, prison, post office, an in-ground swimming pool (touted as the largest in western Canada, including hot baths and showers), parade ground, ordnance sheds, and a water tower. On the east edge of the camp was an area allocated to civilian concessions, known as 'The Midway.'

"It consisted of six movie theatres, watch repair shop, tobacconist, tailor shop, bookstore, two banks, camp newspaper, and a photographic studio. Troops were accommodated in hundreds of cone-shaped canvas tents in neat rows. A 10-kilometre network of trenches, along with grenade and rifle ranges, were constructed to the south of the main camp area. Occupied by battalions of 1,000 men for periods of at least 24 hours at a time, the trenches were meant to replicate those that troops would encounter on arrival at European battlefields."

— Manitoba Historical Society on Camp Hughes

After training was completed, Gibson was sent to England on Nov. 20, 1916. From there he was transferred to the 44th Battalion in Shoreham, England. He was very proud to belong to the 44th, as they were

doing so much at the time.

"And on the 10th, just after nightfall, comes the rumour that the representatives of the German nation have surrendered to the terms of the Allies. At 9 O'Clock the next morning, instructions are received that the hostilities will cease at 11 O'Clock. When the battalion marches into Valenciennes, the streets were decorated with Union Jacks, Canadian ensigns — flags made from old clothes and rags—anything. And on Sunday following Armistice, as 44th march through Mons, church bells are pealing forth the chimes of an unaccustomed tune 'O Canada.'"

— Ed Russenholt's book about the 44th Battalion

During the Great War, Gibson was wounded several times, but family tell how his first injury was by far the most painful.

In May 1917, Gibson suffered a gun shot wound (GSW) to his backside. He was told due to the nature of his injury to walk it off and had to remain in the field.

When his wound became infected and he was too weak to continue fighting, he was sent to Boulogne for medical attention. Once healed and cleared, he was back in the field again fighting the Germans, where he was promoted to Corporal.

He withstood two more significant injuries on the battlefield — shrapnel to the face and hand, then again shrapnel through the face and back, among other injuries to his arm and leg. He would go on to be further promoted to Sergeant.

While on a mission, after his Lieutenant had been mortally wounded, he assumed command and led the men to their objective despite being badly wounded.

For this he received his secondary honour. Sgt Gibson kept a photo of his Lieutenant's grave among his keepsakes because of the great respect he had for him.

Following the end of the war on Nov. 11, 1918, Gibson sailed home on the Empress of England and upon his return was honourably discharged from the military on June 6, 1919.

He would go on to marry, raise a family and returned to farming. During his military career, he received the Military Medal and Bar, Victory Medal, and the British War Medal, which was presented to him by King George at Buckingham Palace.

In later years, his injuries took a great



Here are the medals Sgt Samuel Gibson received before he was discharged on June 6, 1919.

toll on his health and Gibson had both legs amputated due to complications. He died in 1959 at age 77.

Although the war had affected him for the rest of his life, he took great pride in having fought for his country.

This past July, the Gibson family held a reunion to remember Samuel, most of whom never had the chance to meet the Great War veteran.

Highlighting his military service, they toured Camp Hughes and stood in the same trenches and walked the same paths their grandfather/great-grandfather had walked 103 years ago.

The family members envisioned the train station, barracks, hospital and pool that once stood where now sits an empty farmer's field, and wondered how he and the other soldiers had prepared for the unknown in France and Belgium.

They brought out his medals, records, pictures and shared stories of what they did know of the man. And as they posed for a group portrait, I couldn't help but wonder if retired First World War Sgt Samuel Gibson ever did the same in that very spot.

In researching this story, I was lucky to have input from many people and various resources, such as military records through the Government of Canada website and the National Historical Site of Camp Hughes.

But with the family's stories, the memorabilia and a little imagination, I could gain a more personal image of the man. There are many men like Sgt Samuel Kemp Gibson who's bravery and service must be remembered, and by sharing their stories we can continue to honour them as they deserved. *Lest We Forget!*



Sgt Samuel Gibson



Sgt Samuel Gibson's name is engraved on one of three medals he received serving in the Great War.

Photos Avr (B) Jade Lefebvre





Friend and colleague LCdr Brian Trager (middle) provided words of remembrance during the memorial service held at 1RCHA Gun Park. Son MCpl Cameron Rice placed his father's urn (left) at the front of the service. The following day (right) 1RCHA soldiers saluted the former RSM at the Brandon Cemetery. Photos Jules Xavier/Shilo Stag

## Avid Maple Leafs fan remembered at 1RCHA memorial service

**Jules Xavier**  
Shilo Stag

"For the soldier!"

Those three words were the NATO Allied Land Command motto followed by former 1RCHA RSM CWO Stephen Arthur Rice, said long-time friend CWO Garth Hoegi.

He shared that during words of remembrance for CWO Rice during his Oct. 25 memorial service held at the 1RCHA Gun Park.

"He lived by that motto," he said. "He was a tough soldier [who] never wasted words."

Having been friends and military colleagues for more than 25 years, CWO Hoegi said his friend was dedicated to his family, when he wasn't working for the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF). "I'm going to miss his sense of humour and our long conversations on his boat," he said, adding his friend's proudest moments were being able to parachute with his son MCpl Cameron Rice with 3PPCLI and his three-year posting at NATO's Allied Land Command headquarters in Izmir, Turkey.

As he looked out on the memorial service at the conclusion of his eulogy, he had three words for his attentive audience in reference to CWO Rice's favourite NHL team, "Go, Leafs go!"

Friend and Regimental Adjutant Capt Trevor Jesseau always enjoyed "ribbing" his buddy about his love for the Toronto Maple Leafs, or sharing time on the golf course where he was up against a competitive golfer.

"I'm going to miss his sarcastic smile and his honesty," offered Capt Jesseau.

Looking back on CWO Rice's time as 1RCHA RSM, Capt Jesseau acknowledged his friend took pride in being a Gunner. "He was all about bringing back the history and traditions back to the Regiment," he said.

To bring levity to a solemn occasion, friend and military colleague LCdr Brian Trager said, "Steve is having a good laugh having a navy guy talk at his funeral."

He also acknowledged his competitiveness in sports, whether it was hockey or golf. He said vacationing with CWO Rice when he was away from work "were good times." Especially the time a Caretta turtle surfaced from the ocean, according to LCdr Trager, when CWO Rice was floating in the waves on a pink noodle. He quickly made it back to the boat because there were reports that tourists were being bitten by this ocean turtle. He shared that story on many occasion.



Karyn and CWO Stephen Rice attended the Land Command ball in Ephesus during his three-year posting to Turkey.

Photo supplied

"In Turkey, he was the NCO champion," said LCdr Trager on his overseas posting. "He made sure they were important in the workplace ... always saying it was 'for the soldier'."

LCdr Trager then asked the memorial service goers to repeat those words loudly, as one group, three times.

In her eulogy for her husband, shared by CWO Hoegi, Karyn Rice offered these words she penned for those in attendance: "In closing, I would just like to ask a favour from everyone here. I would like you to go on that adventure, take that trip, kiss that person, do what scares you, follow that dream and always say I love you before you go to sleep, because you never know when your time is coming to an end. And to borrow a quote from one of Steve's farewell speeches at LandCom please 'Leave it better than you found it!'"

If there was one soldier among those in attendance who knew CWO Rice well, it was former 1RCHA CO Col Stew Taylor, currently posted to Ottawa as the CAF's Director Defence Ethics Programme.

"I was privileged to have served alongside Steve when he was the Regimental Sergeant Major (RSM) from 2013 to 2016," he told the Stag. "During this period, I knew Steve to be a consummate professional and authentic leader whose indomitable devotion to cause earned him the deepest admiration and respect of his comrades in arms with whom he served. Once more, his unrelenting commitment to living and upholding our values and principles, which embody the spirit of who we are and what we do in the service of our country, reflect the highest professional standards to which we should all aspire."

While CWO Rice was a Gunner first, Col Taylor said his death is a great loss, "not only to the Royal Regiment, but to all those who had the great fortune to serve with him from across the Canadian Army and the Canadian Armed Forces. Steve was a great man, a friend, and an outstanding RSM who lifted us up and made us all stronger. As I remember Steve, my thoughts and prayers are with Karyn, Blake and Cameron and all those that Steve inspired along way. Stand easy my friend. Ubique!"

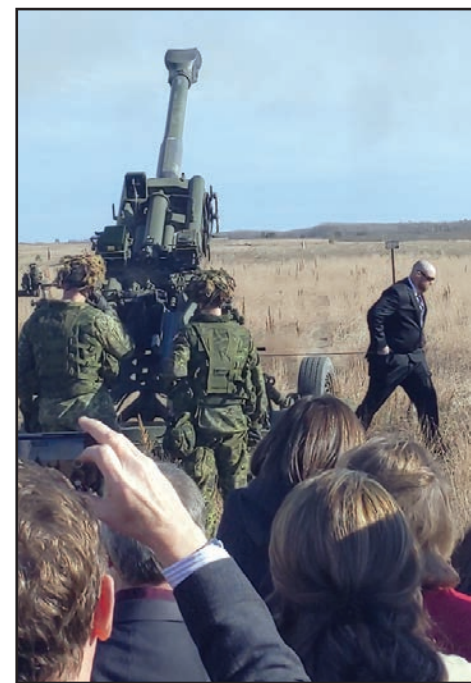
Born Dec. 1, 1969 in Toronto, CWO Rice enrolled in the CAF as a field artilleryman in 1987.

After completing basic training at CFB Cornwallis, NS, and occupational specialty training at CFB Shilo, he was posted for his first regimental tour with 3RCHA, also at CFB Shilo.

Subsequent regimental tours included 1RCHA after its return from Germany to CFB Shilo in 1992 and 5th Field Regiment in Victoria, BC. One of his proudest career accomplish-



Capt Trevor Jesseau saluted his friend during a ceremony at the Brandon Cemetery.



Eldest son Blair Rice fired the last round for his father in the field following the memorial service.

Photo supplied

ments with the CAF was as 1RCHA B Bty BSM.

Throughout his career he held numerous leadership appointments in all aspects of the artillery on the Gun Line and in Observation Parties. Key regimental appointments included Observation Party Technician; Detachment Commander on the 105mm and 155mm howitzers; unit Training and Operations Warrant Officer; and Battery and Regimental Sergeant-Major (RSM).

Out of trade appointments include Training Standards Warrant Officer in the Divisional Training Centre and Artillery Observer Controller Trainer and Company Sergeant Major (CSM) of the Contemporary Operating Environmental Force or "COEFOR" at the Canadian Maneuver Training Centre in Wainwright, Alberta.

CWO Rice also served as the Headquarters Sergeant Major (HSM), at the Canadian Defence Academy Headquarters in Kingston, Ont.

CWO Rice completed several operational deployments including Op SNOWGOOSE in Cyprus as a Section Commander and two tours to Bosnia on Op PALLADIUM in 1997 on Roto 1 as a Forward Observation Officers (FOO) technician, and in 2000 on Roto 6 as an Infantry Section Commander (ISC) with 3PPCLI.

His most recent deployment was to Afghanistan on Task Force 1-08 Op ATHENA as Battery Sergeant-Major (BSM). CWO Rice has also deployed on numerous domestic operations including, avalanche control in Rogers Pass, BC, in 1988; Manitoba floods in 1997 and 2014; and the G8 Summit in Kananaskis, Alberta in 2002.

He's also a qualified basic parachutist and rappel master.

In May 2013, CWO Rice was appointed 1RCHA RSM. Throughout his time as RSM the regiment deployed on two domestic operations; both as the lead unit for the Manitoba floods in 2014 and in a supporting role during the Saskatchewan fires in 2015.

In 2016, the regiment also supported several operational commitments overseas, deploying members to Operations IMPACT, REASSURANCE, UNIFIER and ADDENDA.

CWO Rice assumed the duties of Command Senior Enlisted Leader or Command Sergeant Major (CSM) in NATO's Allied Land Command Headquarters in Izmir, Turkey from August 2016 to June 2019.

CWO Rice was laid to rest in the Field of Honour of the Brandon Cemetery 10 days following his death in Kingston, Ont., where he was posted to the second language training school at CFB Kingston following his return from Turkey.



Disease and training accidents claimed the lives of a number of soldiers in the Great War training at Camp Hughes. They are interred in the Brandon Cemetery.

## Take a moment Nov. 11 to reflect on soldiers' sacrifices

**Jules Xavier**  
Shilo Stag

For those attending a Remembrance Day ceremony here, in Brandon, or elsewhere, pause during the two minutes of silence and think about the 20 CFB Shilo-based soldiers — see page 14 — who made the ultimate sacrifice for their country.

While we're no longer involved in the Afghanistan War on combat missions against the Taliban, we still have Canadian soldiers deployed to a number of theatres like Latvia on Op REASSURANCE or in Ukraine Op UNIFIER.

War is a plague on humanity which has existed as long as people have gathered together and will unfortunately and without doubt mar our planet again.

Not a year has gone by in recorded history where at least one civil war, revolution or insurgency has not taken place. It has been said that the one constant in the history of man is war. No matter how many young men or women perish or how many lives are turned upside down, war persists through time.

One day, take a walk to the cenotaph in Brandon, Douglas, Boissevain or other Manitoba hamlets, towns and cities and try to picture the faces of those who never returned home after losing their lives on the battlefield.

Like the three Bowes brothers who died in the Great War (1914-1918), and are among 59 names inscribed on a towering cenotaph unveiled in 1920 in Boissevain which features the statue of a soldier carved out of Italian stone.

The community of Glenboro saw 34 men and women die in the First World War, including Christine Frederickson, who died on Oct. 28, 1916, and 13 in the Second World War (1939-1945), including F/O T. Frederickson.

There is a community north of Edmonton, the hamlet of Vimy — named after Vimy Ridge in France where 11,285 Canadian soldiers perished during the First World War. Of this total, there were eight men from Boissevain who died at the Battle of Vimy Ridge in 1917, including Hank Anderson and buddy Gordon Little from the 44th Battalion. These two as well as Cliff Mains were profiled in the documentary Warpaths: Every Town Had A Soldier, narrated and researched by former RCA Museum director Marc George.

Cenotaphs in our communities remind us of the folly of war. Cities, towns and villages list their fallen upon them, with some of these soldiers who died on the Vimy and other battlefields having trained in trench warfare in 1916 at nearby Camp Hughes as part of the Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF).

There are a handful of soldiers buried at Camp Hughes; their deaths attributed to disease during training. Pneumonia was especially cruel to young soldiers, with seven dying, including four privates who died in a 13-day span in July 1916: John Davidson (13th), John Messenger (17th), Walter Barringer (22nd) and William Perkins (26th).

In the Brandon cemetery, two buddies with the Canadian Mounted Rifles died in the spring of 1915 while training to go overseas with the CEF. They are buried together, with a family grave stone, plus their military tombstones which came later. Trooper John Bloomer, 28, went first on March 3, while Cpl Thomas Lane followed on April 2. He was 21.



My great-grandfather is buried on Vancouver Island in Nanaimo, BC, following his death in 1964. He was with the Kings Own Scottish Borderers during the Great War from 1914-18, leaving England in 1919 for Canada. He settled in the Village of Cumberland, where he continued his career as a coal miner.

*Photos Jules Xavier/Shilo Stag*

The First World War was labeled as the War to End All Wars, but perhaps a more fitting name would be the war to herald a new age of warfare. Poison gas, tanks and machine guns all evolved from the bloody trenches of that era.

Now more than ever before, with the destructive forces at our command, the message behind Remembrance Day rings true; war is mankind's greatest and deadliest folly.

Walk through the Brandon cemetery and its military section and gaze at granite slabs above veterans who survived the conflict overseas so that Canadians could enjoy their freedoms today. Among the many rows is the headstone of 2PPCLI's MCpl Timothy James Wilson, who was KIA on March 5, 2006 while in Afghanistan. Friends and fellow soldiers often leave him a large Tim Hortons coffee, or small mini bar fridge sized bottles of Jim Beam.

It has been 101 years since the First World War ended, and 74 since the last shots were fired in the Second World War.

Our veteran population from three conflicts, including the Korean War, grows fewer with the passage of time. Every Nov. 11, Canadians across this country pause for a silent moment of remembrance for the men and women who served our country during wartime.

Like Douglas, where 13 men from the that tiny community died in the First World War and are listed on the cenotaph.

Lorne and Percy Broad, Alex Campbell, William Doak, Harry Faggetter, James Leith, Joseph Madder, George McLean, WJ McGowan, Charles Rollins, Thomas Shepherdson, George Westcott and Frank Whittle never returned with other CEF veterans to Canada. Instead, their final resting place is on a battlefield likely where they fell, or in a well kept cemetery looked after by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC).

Canada's last known First World War veteran, 109-year-old John Babcock, died in 2010. He enlisted at age 16, but did not see any front-line action with the CEF because of his age.

Of the 1.1 million Canadians who served in the Second World War there are about 40,000 still alive and their aver-

age is 94.

They grow old today, but their actions should not be forgotten, just as their comrades who sacrificed their lives and their future so that we may live in peace.

The valour of men and women who died fighting for their country during the First, Second and Korean Wars, and more recently, the Afghan War, must not be forgotten. Or for those soldiers who were deployed on Peacekeeping missions in Cyprus or more recently Bosnia — 2PPCLI marked this 26th anniversary of Medak Pocket this past September.

For that reason, I was told by Jack Reilly, a Royal Canadian Legion member, there are a number of traditions associated with the Nov. 11 ceremonies, from selling poppies to raise funds to assist war veterans and their families to visiting schools and talking about war-time experiences.

"It's important that we bring our message to the younger people. As we get older there will be fewer of us to talk about what we went through or explain the freedom they enjoy today is a result of us going to war," he said. "I tell the kids that sometimes when you want your freedom, you have to fight for it."

The laying of wreaths, Last Post, lament and reveille, according to Reilly, are part of the Remembrance Day ceremonies based on traditions passed on from the British Empire.

"I can remember when I was a young boy standing by my desk at school on Nov. 11 and there would be two minutes of silence. It was important for our teachers because they were ex-service people from the First World War and Remembrance Day was important to them.

"Then in 1939 another war brought Remembrance Day back into focus. There was a war going on and people were dying. After the Korean conflict for some reason the two minutes of silence went down to one minute."

The two-minute silence is back thanks to an initiative of the Legion called the Wave of Silence campaign, which asks Canadians to stop for two minutes of silence at 11 a.m.

Moreover, Reilly pointed out that the poppy plays an integral part in the days leading up to Remembrance Day ceremonies. While money is raised through sales, the poppy stands for much more when worn by veterans.

"The poppy is a symbol and tradition that we should evaluate and keep in perspective because it does mean a lot for us, the one's who were lucky enough to return home," he said. "Being part of the war is an experience I never regretted. There were six of us who left Edmonton one sunny day by train for Toronto. Only two of us returned home alive."

Myself, I will think about my great-grandfather Pte Thomas S. Sampson, who survived some of the bloodiest battles during the First World War while with the British Expeditionary Force (BEF).

Initially with the Scottish Rifles, he saw action Galipoli, and the Battle of Vimy Ridge. He then remustered and joined the Royal Engineers.

A coal miner before the war started, he left England in 1919 for Canada. He settled with his family in the Village of Cumberland on Vancouver Island, BC, where he worked in the coal mines.

For her service in the Great War, he received the 1914 Star, British War medal, and the Victory medal. He died in 1964 at age 88. *Let us forget!*

# SHILO COMMUNITY COUNCIL

We are looking for ward representatives, vice-president



- Ward 1 - Kingston, Leaside, Royal, Sapper, The Parkway**
- Ward 2 - Alfriston, Sennybridge**
- Ward 3 - Kingston, Lundy's**
- Ward 4 - Esquimalt, Frontenac, Kingston, Larkhill**
- Ward 5 - Citadel, Petawawa, Kingston, Royal**

If interested, visit [www.CAFconnection.ca](http://www.CAFconnection.ca) to learn more about the council, or contact 2Lt DiFalco to submit your name for consideration: [Jonathan.DiFalco@forces.gc.ca](mailto:Jonathan.DiFalco@forces.gc.ca)

## Poppy has colourful history

### Shilo Stag

Why was the poppy chosen as the symbol of remembrance for Canada's war dead?

The poppy, an international symbol for those who died in war, also had international origins.

A writer first made the connection between the poppy and battlefield deaths during the Napoleonic wars of the early 19th century, remarking that fields that were barren before battle exploded with the blood-red flowers after the fighting ended. Prior to the Great War few poppies grew in Flanders.

During the tremendous bombardments of that war the chalk soils became rich in lime from rubble, allowing "popover rheas" to thrive. When the war ended the lime was quickly absorbed, and the poppy began to disappear again.

LCol John McCrae, the Canadian doctor who wrote the poem In Flanders Fields, made the same connection 100 years later, during the First World War, and the scarlet poppy quickly became the symbol for soldiers who died in battle. Today, fields of brilliant poppies still grow in France.

Three years later, an American, Moina Michael, was working in a New York City YMCA canteen when she start-

ed wearing a poppy in memory of the millions who died on the battlefield.

During a 1920 visit to the United States a French woman, Madame Guerin, learned of the custom. On her return to France she decided to use handmade poppies to raise money for the destitute children in war-torn areas of the country.

In November 1921, the first poppies were distributed in Canada. Thanks to millions of Canadians who wear flowers each November, the little red plant has never died. And neither have Canadian's memories for 116,031 of their countrymen who died in battle.



2PPCLI will visit the grave of Victoria Cross recipient Sgt George Mullin Nov. 11 prior to their attendance at the Moosomin, SK, Remembrance Day ceremony.

Photo Jules Xavier/Shilo Stag

### Where's Willie?

Somewhere on the pages of this *Shilo Stag* is a picture of Willie, the Wheat Kings mascot.

Tell us on what page, in what particular advertisement Willie was found and correctly answer the following skill-testing question for your chance to win two tickets to an upcoming Wheat Kings home game in Brandon.



### Entry Form

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Page #, ad: \_\_\_\_\_

Answer skill-testing question:  
 What medal did Maj Fred Tilston receive for his valour fighting German soldiers in a heavily fortified forest setting on March 1, 1945?

Cut out your entry form and fax it to 204-765-3814, or scan it and e-mail to [stag@mymts.net](mailto:stag@mymts.net) or drop it off at the Stag's office at CANEX. Draw will be made on the Monday prior to game day.



## WARNING SHILO RANGES

Day and night firing will be carried out at the Shilo Ranges until further notice.

The range consists of DND controlled property lying approximately 32 kms SE from Brandon and N of the Assiniboine River in Townships 7, 8 and 9; Range 14 WPM, Townships 8, 9 and 10; Ranges 15 and 16 WPM and Townships 9 and 10; Range 17 WPM in the Province of Manitoba. If required, a detailed description of the Shilo property may be obtained from the Base Construction Engineering Office at Canadian Forces Base Shilo.

All boundaries, entry ways, roads and tracks into the Range are clearly marked and posted with signs indicating that there is to be NO TRESPASSING. Hunting is no longer permitted on the Shilo Ranges.

### STRAY AMMUNITION AND EXPLOSIVE OBJECTS

Bombs, grenades, shells, similar explosive objects, and their casings are a hazard to life and limb. Do not pick up or retain such objects as souvenirs. If you have found or have in your possession any object which you believe to be an explosive, notify your local police and arrangements will be made to dispose of it.

No unauthorized person may enter this area and trespassing on the area is strictly prohibited.

BY ORDER  
 Deputy Minister  
 Department of National Defense

OTTAWA, CANADA  
 17630-77





You could not miss MCpl Erin Doyle (left) when he was a reservist (minus red beard) with the Rocky Mountain Rangers. Later, he was with 3PPCLI during the Afghan War (right).

## Assistant editor recalls 'friendly giant' during Reserve training

**Céline Garbay**  
Shilo Stag

MCpl Erin Doyle was a living legend well before he died in Afghanistan in August 2008.

Everyone, it seems, has a story about the former Patricia dubbed "the friendly giant."

Erin and I met when we were both new reservists; he with the Rocky Mountain Rangers in Kamloops; me with the Royal Regina Rifles. It was July 1996, and my search for a summer job had been fruitless.

My lack of any professional experience was working against me, and I was running out of time. Three days manning the mini-doughnut booth at Regina's Agribition wasn't going to cover books or tuition for my third year of university and I was getting desperate.

My roommate was an Army brat; the youngest of four kids and her dad's last hope that any of his offspring would follow in his footsteps. I let her talk me into meeting a recruiting officer, but I had no intention of actually joining the military.

The Army, I discovered, was as desperate for soldiers as I was for a job and within weeks we were both stuck with each other. Before I even fully knew what I had signed up for, my roommate and I found ourselves bumping down the highway to Camp Dundurn, for basic training. For the next five weeks, home would be one side of a wooden H-hut, a relic of the Second World War.

At 4-foot-11, I was the shortest member of our 50-man platoon. At 20 years old, same age as me, Pte Doyle was easily the biggest man I had ever seen, easily weighing more than 200 pounds and towering above me.

He stood out not just for his imposing physique, but also for his shock of bright red hair which within a day was shorn down to millimetres.

We weren't in the same section so I — thankfully — never had to fireman-carry him. Among the rest of us wannabe clerks and cooks, he already seemed like a real soldier.

As course senior, he could easily be mistaken for an instructor. He issued commands with as much authority as they did, and when he stomped down the length of our barracks, the entire building seemed to shake.

He was a natural leader, and he features in some of the most vivid memories of my QL2. One day during inspection, a stained PT shirt was discovered in Pte Doyle's locker. "Didn't you shout it out?" the sergeant asked, snidely.

"No, Sergeant!" came the reply.

"Then do it now!" he was ordered.

For the rest of the inspection, Pte Doyle held his dirty T-shirt in front of him, yelling at the stain to "GET OUT!" "GET OUT!" He was so loud, and it was so funny, that for once morning inspection was worth getting up for.

Maybe you had to be there; but for years afterwards the memory would make me laugh to myself whenever it popped into my head. With his great sense of humour and fondness for practical jokes, Pte Doyle always knew how to boost morale.

I'm pretty sure it was he who tied his bunkmate to his mattress one night, wrapping roll after roll of toilet paper over and under his sleeping form. The kid woke up to find himself a mummy, and to howls of laughter as he tried to un-tie himself.

However, Erin's greatest characteristics were how hard he would push himself, and his selflessness. He would run so hard he'd puke. I remember being appalled, and then aghast when he was awarded a blue chit for doing that to himself.

It wouldn't be the last time he challenge his natural limits.

Towards the end of our course, we were doing our last and longest ruck march. We were tired, blistered, and sweating profusely in the summer heat; even more so from the added weight of our rifles and rucksacks.

As usual, I trailed behind. Weeks of training had made me stronger, but had done nothing for my height. Suddenly, the weight was lifted off my shoulders — literally.

It was Pte Doyle, grabbing my gear, urging me to run ahead without it. He had already grabbed others' packs, and he insisted he could take mine too.

He understood that by speeding us up individually, the faster we could meet our goal collectively. Later at supper-time, Pte Doyle was nowhere to be seen in the mess. He had been taken to the MIR, suffering from heat stroke and exhaustion.

• • •

I lost track of Erin after that summer, when we all went our separate ways. After spending two years with the



Assistant editor Céline Garbay was the smallest of the reservists during summer training, here showing off her weapon alongside Paul Welke.

Rocky Mountain Rangers, he enlisted in the Reg Force and joined 3PPCLI out of Garrison Edmonton.

Twelve years after we had met in Dundurn, I was working in France when news of his death reached me, on Aug. 11, 2008.

He had been on his third tour of Afghanistan; killed when his section came under insurgent attack at an Afghan National Police substation in the Panjwaii district.

I recognized him instantly: a mammoth of a man, with a bushy red beard.

And I recognized him in the tributes which followed, from friends and colleagues who knew Erin much better than I. In a 2009 *Legion* magazine article chronicling his life and death, one anecdote in particular jumped out at me.

Just a few months before he died, Erin's section had been sent to that same substation to take over from another section of soldiers who were

coming in from the field.

During the transition, the area came under insurgent attack.

Loading the departing soldiers' sizeable amount of equipment was tasked to MCpl Doyle and his section.

Under enemy fire, they began moving the boxes as swiftly as they could.

And MCpl Doyle, being who he was, gave it everything he had — and more.

I'm sure they all did.

But Erin "moved boxes until he passed out and his vital signs got so bad the medic came over the radio saying he was unsure if Doyle would live," the story goes.

He hadn't changed a bit.

Friends and colleagues paid tribute to a man, dead at 32, who really was "larger than life."

In the brief time that I knew him, he left an indelible mark on me.

On Remembrance Day, I think of him.

He is a legend, after all.

*Lest we forget!*

## Pte Morley Roney, Maj Fred Tilston VC

# Second World War soldiers share their war stories with reporter

**Jules Xavier**  
Shilo Stag

As a student growing up on Bases across Canada with my late father in the RCAF, I was witness to many Remembrance Day assemblies, where a veteran of the First or Second World Wars would tell us stories about their experiences overseas.

As a young journalist working at daily or community newspapers across Canada, I had the privilege of interviewing countless war veterans leading up to the Nov. 11 Remembrance Day ceremonies.

These gentlemen would take me with them to the battlefields where they fought for our freedom during our lengthy conversations. And they were conversations, more than interviews. I always found to pique the interest of a war veteran now residing in a seniors' home to share their stories, it was best to have a casual conversation.

Those veterans who I spoke with from the Great War would describe in detail the sounds, smells and ambience of the trench warfare they experienced as though it was yesterday. Then quip that I should not ask them what was on the menu for lunch the previous week. Their attention to detail on fighting in France or Belgium was incredible 70-plus years after they were fighting at Ypres or Vimy Ridge.

While they might not have shared those same stories with their immediate family, a reporter's visit often saw them open up and share yellowing photos in an old album, or pose for a photograph proudly wearing their medals. Following these interviews, this reporter often received a thank-you for showing an interest in their war stories, but also for letting them tell their story so that family and readers of the newspaper would have an appreciation for what they did serving their country decades earlier as young men.

My most memorable interview came in the late 80s, when I was afforded an opportunity to interview Second World War Victoria Cross recipient Maj Fred Tilston at his home in Kettleby, Ont.

He was in his early 80s, an amiable senior standing 6-foot-1 with white hair who offered me his time to tell a story he'd recounted hundreds of times with other journalists. There would be no photos with his Victoria Cross — a simple bronze cross bearing the image of a lion atop a crown and the inscription 'For valour' — as it was kept in a nearby bank vault. The VC is the highest decoration for valour awarded to members of the British Commonwealth's armed forces.

"There was a job to do and I did it," he recalled modestly of his role fighting the Germans in Hochwald Forest.

The medal Maj Tilston received after that battle which saw him lose both of his legs was named for the Queen who originated and designed it in 1855.

Born in Toronto on June 11, 1906, he died in there at age 86 on Sept. 23, 1992. He was interred at Mount Hope Catholic Cemetery. Prior to the war which Canada became involved in on Sept. 10, 1939, Maj Tilston had a pharmacy degree from the University of Toronto.

A year later, he enlisted with Windsor's Essex Scottish. He actually lied to the recruiters about his age, saying he was 28 when he was actually 34, and that he had a pharmacy degree. He wanted to be a soldier, not be posted to the medical corps.

Maj Tilston's early military career saw him train in England from 1941 to '44, then a month after D-Day, he arrived on the war-scarred beaches of Corseulles-sur-Mer, France.

He recalled life fighting the Germans following D-Day was no picnic for Canadian soldiers because of the limitations afforded the Canadian Army. This included dietary concerns.

"Sometimes you might go 24 hours without a real meal, but that's all right," he told this attentive newspaper scribe. "Sometimes you were up as much as 48 hours without sleep, but you live through it."

Maj Tilston's first war wound occurred at Falaise in Normandy. The jeep he was driving hit a land mine, and he lost an eye. He did not return to England to recuperate — instead he spent the winter billeted in Holland. He recalled his Dutch hosts had little because of the German occupation of their country, yet they shared what they did have. And he shared in turn his rations of cheese and meat. Back in the fight pushing the Germans back to Berlin, Maj Tilston was awarded his VC following a battle which took place in Hochwald Forest on March 1, 1945. He was with 100 men, the majority of which had never fought together before. He was ordered to break through the German defence line, with the battle starting out as an ordinary infantry attack.

"It was on the axis of the main withdrawal rout of the German army," he recalled. "They were retreating across the Rhine and had really reinforced that area we were asked to break through where we had to cross 500 yards of open ground to reach the German lines."

In Maj Tilston's official citation in the May 1945 London Gazette, he was wounded almost immediately in the head, but pressed on into the enemy trenches while "firing his steno gun from his hip." Having taken out a German machine gunner with a hand grenade, "flying steel smashes into his hip and he falls. He waves his men on, then struggles to his feet and catches up."

With blood leaking from head and hip wounds, Maj Tilston continued pushing his shrinking platoon of men in hand-to-hand combat. With ammo running low, he repeatedly crossed the bullet-torn ground to restock supplies. On his seventh trip, a shell shattered both legs. Conceding to himself that he was no longer able to lead his men, he found cover in a nearby bomb crater. Knowing it was crucial to hold their position, he turned over command to his one remaining officer.

At no time did Maj Tilston fear a German counterattack as he observed what was happening around him on that fateful day on a bloody battlefield where he would lose both legs.

"There may be some things you don't like [fighting], but real fears, no," he offered.

He recalled joking with Red Cross workers following the double amputation, telling them he had a base case of athlete's foot in both feet. Returning to England to recover, King George VI presented his VC at Buckingham Place. Always modest about his war efforts wearing the Canadian uniform — like a sports MVP telling reporters the award might go to one person, but it was a team effort to win it — Maj Tilston noted he lost three-quarters of his men on that day.

"The last time I counted, had 27 men left. I felt [the Victoria Cross] belonged to the men as much as to me. I only wear it for them."

Fast-forward to November 2013, I had an opportunity to learn about PPCLI veteran Pte Morley Roney's experience in the Second World War. He invited this Stag editor to his home in Wawanesa, and recalled his time surviving daily German artillery barrages in Italy, then in Belgium.

A piece of advice he received as a young soldier helped Pte Roney return home unscathed after the war.

"I was told you 'always keep your head down.' I was a lucky guy. I came home with not a scratch."

Not a superstitious fellow growing up south of this Base, Pte Roney went to war in the summer of '42 with a small horseshoe and lucky rabbit's foot for luck provided by his sister. He carried them in his army tunic then, still possessed those trinkets 68 years after the guns went silent overseas.

Born in 1922, Pte Roney was still a teenager when he enlisted in the Canadian Army.

"It's what you did then when Canada was at war. I started my field artillery training at Shilo, so I was still close



Pte Morley Roney shows off his PPCLI beret he wore during the Second World War while sharing his war stories with a Stag editor in Wawanesa in 2013. He died on Nov. 6, 2014 at age 92.  
Photo Jules Xavier/Shilo Stag

to home, using the 18-pounders from the First World War. That's all they had for us."

While he manned a coastal ack-ack gun after leaving Canada, he arrived in England on the day the Dieppe raid landed, and the beginning of the Battle of Britain. Once the German Luftwaffe was beaten in the air by the RAF, Pte Roney was no longer needed to defend the air space and was dispatched to PPCLI, where he was then shipped to Italy to face German soldiers on the ground.

While more than 70 years had passed since he was on a battlefield, Pte Roney could still conjure up the hell that war was for him, from the sounds of incoming artillery shells — even imitating the whistling sound he heard often — to bullets whizzing by his head as two armies fought for control of territory inch by inch.

The whistle sound told you the shells were incoming, and you got to know where they would be landing. But it was the [friendly fire] shells from your own guns that fell short that were terrifying," he recalled. "You had to let the guys at the back know so that they would change the arc, but it was not easy because of the communications we used. Often the telephone line was cut, so you had to send somebody back."

Pte Roney described his infantry experience to me as though he was going out deer hunting.

"But the deer there were shooting back at you," he quipped with laughter. "It was all about the advance ... you take ground, which was the name of the game. I was lucky, I got to Italy in the last half of that campaign."

Prior to his death nine days before Remembrance Day a year after our interview, Pte Roney said he never regretted having been a soldier. He returned to Wawanesa and found a wife by age 35, marrying Jean Scott, a nurse he met at the local hospital. Three kids later, and established his trenching business, Pte Roney only started talking about his war experience when he had grandchildren.

"Dad didn't really talk about his war experience with us," said daughter Janice McDonald, adding it was a grandson working on a school project about a veteran's experience in war that led to him sharing his war memories.

"It was hard to talk about it because I did lose a lot of guys I fought alongside in the war," said Pte Roney. "That's why I enjoyed going to our reunions in Brandon, but because a lot of us have died over the years ... there's very few of us left to hold a reunion."

His home that he built in 1957 was always open to the young military members calling Wawanesa home, with rum and war stories served every Friday after 4 p.m. Or he'd visit this Base and partake in 2PPCLI activities. He followed the adage, "Once a Patricia, always a Patricia."

And 2PPCLI soldiers were at his graveside on that fall afternoon when Pte Roney was laid to rest beside his late wife, a final salute for the 92-year-old war veteran by a new generation of fighting warriors.



Maj Fred Tilston provided this promotional Second World War portrait to reporters who visited his Ontario home, where he shared his Victory Cross story.



Pte Garrett Chidley, 21, Cambridge, Ont., 2PPCLI, KIA on Dec. 30, 2009

# LEST WE FORGET

These 20 soldiers from CFB Shilo paid the ultimate sacrifice for their country while deployed to Afghanistan. They shall not be forgotten.

...

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

*We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,  
Loved and were loved, and now we lie  
In Flanders fields.*

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

— **John McCrae**



Sgt Prescott Shipway, 36, Saskatoon, SK, 2PPCLI, KIA on Sept. 7, 2008



Pte Chadwick Horn, 21, Calgary, AB, 2PPCLI, KIA on Sept. 3, 2008



Cpl Andrew Grenon, 23, Windsor, Ont., 2PPCLI, KIA on Sept. 3, 2008



Cpl Michael Seggie, 21, Winnipeg, 2PPCLI, KIA on Sept. 3, 2008



MCpl Joshua Roberts, 29, Prince Albert, SK, 2PPCLI, KIA on Aug. 9, 2008



Cpl Jim Arnal, 25, Winnipeg, 2PPCLI, KIA on July 18, 2008



Capt Richard Leary, 32, Brantford, Ont., 2PPCLI, KIA on June 3, 2008



Pte Terry Street, 24, Surrey, BC, 2PPCLI, KIA on April 4, 2008



Sgt Jason Boyes, 32, Napanee, Ont., 2PPCLI, KIA on March 16, 2008



Bdr Jeremie Ouellet, 22, Matane, Que., 1RCHA, KIA on March 11, 2008



Capt Jefferson Francis, 37, New Brunswick, 1RCHA, KIA on July 4, 2007



Pte David Byers, 22, Espanola, Ont., 2PPCLI, KIA on Sept. 18, 2006



Cpl Shane Keating, 30, Dalmaney, SK, 2PPCLI, KIA on Sept. 18, 2006



Cpl Keith Morley CD, 30, Winnipeg, 2PPCLI, KIA on Sept. 18, 2006



Cpl David Braun, 27, Raymore, SK, 2PPCLI, KIA on Aug. 22, 2006



MCpl Jeffrey Walsh, 33, Regina, SK, 2PPCLI, KIA on Aug. 9, 2006



Capt Nichola Goddard MSM, 26, Calgary, AB, 1RCHA, KIA on May 17, 2006



MCpl Timothy Wilson, 30, Grande Prairie, AB, 2PPCLI, KIA on March 5, 2006




Cpl Paul Davis, 28, Bridgewater, Nova Scotia, 2PPCLI, KIA on March 2, 2006



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Photo Jules Xavier/Shilo Stag

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