



NEWSLETTER MARCH 2024

EDITION 2024-03

OBJECTIVE Nr. 1: ENCOURAGE AND SUPPORT of COMMEMORATIONS and REMEMBRANCE

IN THIS EDITION: WW I BATTLEFIELD TOUR (contribution comrade Dré van Roomen)
UPDATE PROMOTION TEAM
COMMEMORATION GENDRINGEN - ETTEN
FEATURED: THE STORY OF A CANADIAN VETERAN AND RCL MEMBER
MISCELLANEOUS



WW I Battlefield Tour. Ypres March 16/17, 2024.

Contribution: Dré van Roomen.

Here is the travel report of the Battlefield Tour on March 16 and March 17, 2024.

Participants were the members of "The Dutch Polar Bears" and friends. You are probably aware that 'The Dutch Polar Bears' include several comrades of the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 005. There is a very warm bond between the two organizations.

Last year we made, for the first time, a WW I Battlefield Tour to the Somme-area in France. That trip was well received and plans for a sequel were quickly made. Fortunately, we also have some people among our friends who know a lot about it and regularly organize such tours, among others, for the Dutch Armed Forces.

The organization of this trip was again in the hands of Hans Molier and Dré Nagtegaal. Hans regularly does research for The Dutch Polar Bears, in particular for the 'Faces-to-Graves' program for the war graves in Roosendaal and surrounding area. Dré works for the Dutch Armed Forces, particularly as an instructor for the 'elementary commando training'. He himself wears the 'green beret' of the Commando Corps. Together with a colleague, he also has his own Battle Field Tour organization named 'Tales from the front'. That means that our tour was arranged down to the last detail and with military precision. Highly recommended to be guided by these two good friends.

Saturday morning at 7:30am sharp, we started for Ypres. First we made some carpool arrangements here. In advance we already received a travel guide to study at home. Along the way we had some delays due to 'Belgian' roadworks. From 3 to 1 lane in a short distance. When we drove past, we noticed that the work mainly consisted of 'work meetings'.

Anyway, around 10:00am we arrived at the 'Kasteelhof 't Hooghe', our hotel near Ypres, booked in advance by the organization. Located in the middle of the former battlefield. Beautiful hotel with the appearance of a cottage; completely in style and with remains of trenches, etc. in the garden. There, while enjoying a cup of coffee, the troops gather again, a short briefing and then on the road!



The first theme was the [**Plugstreet Christmas Truce**](#). Around Christmas 1914 an atmosphere of "live and let live" arose. Soldiers from both sides stayed in the trenches under appalling conditions.

Although the soldiers had been predicted that the war would be over before Christmas, the reality was quite different.



Christmas truce memorial

Christmas songs were sung in the trenches, audible to both parties.



British and German troops meet during the Christmas truce

At one point, a football match was even played in 'no man's land' near St. Yvon, which, according to tradition, was won 3-2 by the Germans.

History shows that the war would continue for the years to come.

Our next stop was at Mesen (Messines), where we were informed about the so-called 'mine battle'.

The **Battle of Messines** (7-14 June 1917) was an attack of the British Second Army. The battle began with the detonation of nineteen mines (out of 24) beneath the German front position, on June 7, 1917 at 4:10am.

The mines were placed in a line from Hill 60 to the woods near Plugstreet.

(By the way, on July 17, 1955, another mine exploded near Plugstreet, due to a lightning strike.)

In Messines we were allowed to climb the church tower, which gave us a beautiful view of the surroundings.

A perfect moment to send out the drone and record our presence there for the progeny.



For a moment a small shock went through the group during the visit of the church tower. It looked like we would have to interrupt the tour, because comrade Ad van Uffelen unfortunately walked into a door and hit his head quite badly. But despite a big bump, we were able to continue with our tour and visit the local museum.



In front of the museum/town hall there is a beautiful monument in the shape of soldiers depicting the aforementioned football match.

Editorial addition:

Was unveiled in December 2014 by the president of the European Football Association UEFA, Michel Platini.

After this museum visit, we had lunch in Messines, of course also arranged in advance.

Messines is the smallest city in Belgium.

After lunch we returned to our hotel 'Kasteelhof 't Hooghe'. Due to its higher location, the area was a strategic target for both parties during WW I.

There was fierce fighting for the Bellewaarde Ridge, as the British called the ridge.

Attacks were answered with counter-attacks and the territorial gains were almost nil.

The once peaceful landscape turned into an apocalyptic environment, where the dead lay until they were pulverized by new bombings.

Country	Belgium
Community	Flemish Community
Region	Flemish Region
Province	West Flanders
Arrondissement	Ypres
Government	
• Mayor	Sandy Evrard (MLM)
• Governing party/ies	Mesense Liberaleen/Libéraux Messinois (MLM)
Area	
• Total	3.6 km ² (1.4 sq mi)
Population (2022-01-01) ^[1]	
• Total	1,062
• Density	300/km ² (760/sq mi)
Postal codes	8957
NIS code	33016
Area codes	057
Website	www.mesen.be



24th Bataljon Australian Imperial Force at Bellewaarde Ridge September 1917

To our great surprise and annoyance, there is also an "amusement park" located in that area. After all, there must still be 'remains' of 'missing in action' soldiers.

Editorial addition:

The Honour "Bellewaarde" was awarded to units who defended against a German flanking attack as a diversion of the German main effort in front of St. Julien that fell upon the 1st Canadian Division (Lieutenant-General E.A.H. Alderson). The only Canadian unit to participate in this defence was the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry then serving as a part of the British 28th Division.

Around 4:30pm we checked in at our hotel. Then we left for Ypres for dinner at the famous Cloth Hall.

The hall lay in ruins after artillery fire devastated Ypres in WW I. Between 1933 and 1967, it was meticulously reconstructed to its prewar condition.

To a large extent, money paid by Germany as 'Wiedergutmachung' was used to pay for this.

After dinner we joined the crowds near the Menin Gate for the daily 'Last Post Ceremony'. As you already know the ceremony is a tradition since July 2, 1928. (Except 1940-1944)

Performed at exactly 8.00pm by a group of buglers from the Municipal Volunteer Fire Department of Ypres.



Unfortunately, the Menin Gate was covered in scaffolding, so the ceremony took place right in front of the monument watched by many visitors.

Comrade Amanda Slotboom laid a wreath at this ceremony. She also had taken her great-great-grandfather's medals with her. He had fought in both the Boer War and WW I. Very special!



We returned to our hotel, there we evaluated the day while enjoying a drink (or two). Early to bed and early to rise, was the motto. We were expected at morning roll call, on time and well rested. 'Just in time is just too late', is the military expression.



The start for day two was set at 10.15am. Of course, preceded by a briefing. This time in the hotel's lounge, which was transformed into an "Operations room".

The day's program was presented with military precision. Including the maps!

Learned something again at the briefing:

'you don't point at anything with your finger on a map'.

Questions? No questions!

Check out and off we go.

That's my style!

First destination today: the area around [Tyne Cot Cemetery](#).

Original a fortified position of the German troops where the Australian troops set up a first aid post in October 1917.

First a small burial place that grew into the largest cemetery for Commonwealth forces in the world.

Of the 11,956 gravestones, only 3,588 bear the name of the fallen... Very impressive!



Tyne Cot Cemetery

After our visit at the cemetery, it was already lunchtime. We had lunch in Poelkapelle. Also known for the fierce fighting's.

The Battle of Poelcappelle was fought in Flanders, Belgium, on 9 October 1917 by the British Second Army and Fifth Army against the German 4th Army, during the First World War. The battle marked the end of the string of highly successful British attacks in late September and early October, during the Third Battle of Ypres.



Langemark

After lunch we visited the German cemetery in Langemark.

Also very impressive, 44,304 German soldiers are buried there.

Unidentified victims were buried in a so-called 'Comrade Grave'. (mass grave) There are also several bunkers in this cemetery, just like in Tyne Cot.

Interesting detail, Adolf Hitler visited this cemetery in 1940 as part of Nazi propaganda.

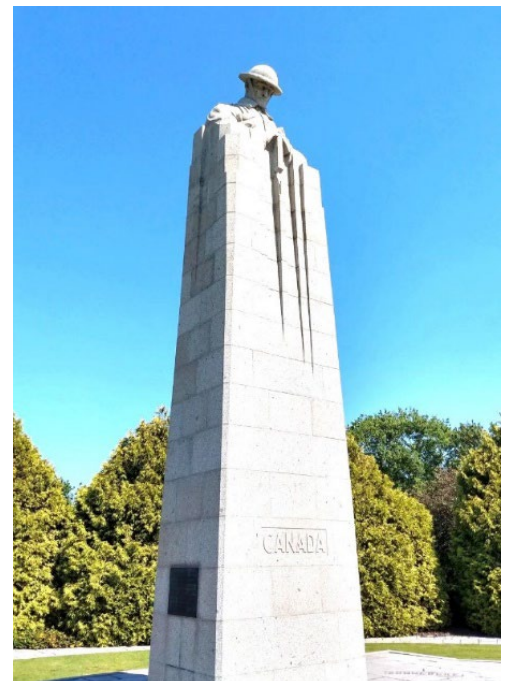
As is well known, he had also taken part in WW I. He survived, but what if?

To conclude the battlefield tour we visited the monument in Sint-Juliaan. This monument is called ['The Brooding Soldier'](#).

It is an impressive Canadian monument, commemorating the 2,000 soldiers who lost their lives during the German gas attack of April 22 - 24, 1915. A monument of about 10 meters high with a Canadian soldier above.



The soldier's hands, resting, are on the butt of his down-turned rifle in the 'arms reversed' position, a pose used as gesture of mourning and respect for the fallen, performed at funerals and services of remembrance. A well known pose for us, members of the Royal Canadian Legion.



With this we came to the end of our two-day tour.
We said goodbye to each other and everyone went on their way home.
And at home the entire trip was reviewed again. What an impressive tour!
Two days were far too short to properly absorb everything.
The positive thing is that my wife and I will come back again.

IN FLANDERS FIELDS THE POPPIES BLOW....

WE SHALL NOT SLEEP, THOUGH POPPIES GROW
IN FLANDERS FIELDS.

In Flanders' Fields

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.

Major John McCrae, 1915



Dré van Roomen

The comrades of RCL Branch 005 'Liberation of the Netherlands'
who participated in the tour.

Update promotional team.



March 24, 2024, Gorinchem.

The introduction of the RCL Branch 005 promotional team at the fair was a success.

This time the team could rightly say: 'And now...something quite different'.

Location: The Event Hall of Gorinchem where many promote and sell their military 'goods'.



The interest in our presence was good. We received many questions from visitors about our participation in the fair and also had good discussions about the objectives of RCL, our Branch and the Youth Auxiliary in particular.

In that context, Reinier and Suzanne, with videos and explanations, are a good addition to the team. And of course, the organization and sales.



The new 'RCMP-member', which was donated to us by the Canadian Embassy in the Netherlands, did well in the promotional tent and stands out in the corridors.

Thank you again!

Of course we spoke to acquaintances, even RCL005 comrades, but also members of the Royal British Legion, who also had a tent at the fair.

There was no expectation in advance about a possible result, because this was the first time that RCL005 was present at this fair with the promotional tent, but fortunately it was not disappointing.

The Poppy seeds were very popular items and sold well, probably because of spring. These packages are sold for €2 each.

And most importantly: a lot of promotion and awareness has been given to the objectives of our organization.

We will have to see if this is worth repeating once a year, because it requires a lot of organization and commitment from the promotion team, but we were happy to do that.

The promotion team:

Elly van Wakeren

Conny Lempke

**Reinier and Suzanne
Groeneveld**

Ruud Janssen



Gendringen, March 30, 2024.

Source: Oude-IJsselstreek.nl and gelderlander.nl

On March 30, a commemoration was held in the 't Olde Kerkhof Memorial and Walking Park in Gendringen in memory of more than 650 war victims (civilians and military) who died during the Second World War from the former municipalities of Gendringen and Wisch. The commemoration took place at the monument 'Lest We Forget'.



A leading role was reserved for the young people this Saturday afternoon and that is exactly what Youth Auxiliary stands for. They told stories from the war, read poems and laid flowers.

'They are our standard bearers; they have to take over and that is why we have to involve them. To commemorate, and to prevent,' the organization said.



Schoolchildren had made tulips with a 'Maple Leaf' on them that were placed in wooden blocks in front of the monument.

Deputy Mayor Janine Kock gave a speech on behalf of the municipality.



'Today we commemorate the more than 650 victims who fell in the former municipality of Gendringen and Wisch during the Second World War. We reflect on the deep suffering that they and their relatives have endured. That suffering that is sometimes still palpable generations later. Who would have thought that 79 years later, history seems to be repeating itself in Europe.'

She also laid the first wreath.



The Canadian Embassy was represented by Sergeant Nicole Mitchell, who also laid a wreath.



1st Vice President Gerrit Bruggink was present for The Royal Canadian Legion Branch 005 'Liberation of the Netherlands'. He also laid a wreath in memory of the victims.

Etten, March 31, 2024.

Source: oud-ijsselstreek.nl

The organization of the commemoration in Etten is in good hands with the Ettense Molenstichting.

But even they cannot control the weather gods.

79 years ago, the weather was calm, but the violence of war disturbed the peace in Etten and the surrounding area.

The South Saskatchewan Regiment was on its way to liberate the village and it had to be fought for. Five men of the Regiment and four civilians lost their lives.

On Sunday, March 31 this year, the weather conditions were significantly worse during the commemoration.

Despite the pouring rain, the turnout was large.

Mrs. Maasdam, acting mayor since March 7, this year, was present and held a short speech. A short quote from it:

'The war victims we commemorate today have made the supreme sacrifice. Out of respect, let us continue to tell their stories and express our gratitude. Today, tomorrow and all the years that follow. So that future generations are also aware that freedom cannot be taken for granted.'

'We must protect and cherish freedom.'



Children's mayor Bente Tiemessen was also present. She read a poem and together with Mrs. Maasdam she laid a wreath.



The ceremony was also attended, among others, by Mr. van de Meij from the Dutch Branch of **'In Our Fathers Footsteps'**.



Furthermore, the following took part in the commemoration:

The women's choir 'Con Brio' together with the choir 'The Voices' from Etten.

Also present a piper from 'City of Apeldoorn' and the Colour Party of The Royal Canadian Legion Branch 005.





New for Etten was the presence of the Canadian Remembrance Torch.

That is to say: an exact copy of the original that was transferred to the Dutch committees that are committed to commemorations in the Netherlands.

As we have already published several times, the Youth Auxiliary of RCL Branch 005 was founded in 2023.

Representatives thereof have taken on the care for the Torch during ceremonies.

In all weather conditions!

In Etten, Suzanne Groeneveld braved the elements on behalf of Youth Auxiliary. In the photo on the right, she is just visible with her red coat and black beret, to the left of the speaker. →

Members of Schutterij 'De Eendracht' were also present at the ceremony. ('Schutterij' is, more or less, a reenactment of the former militia)

The three representatives of the Schutterij had quite a bit of difficulty igniting the Torch.



On behalf of RCL Branch 005 'Liberation of the Netherlands', 1st Vice-President Gerrit Bruggink laid a wreath.



Featured.

The story of a Canadian veteran AND member of RCL Branch 005.

04-03-2024 07.22 pm - Herman Sligman: Good evening, Danny.

Question: Photo with the soldiers:

You are in the back row, 2nd from, right?

04-03-2024 07.23 pm - Murphy Danny: Yes, correct. Having a drink tonight.

It's been 63 years.

04-03-2024 07.24 pm - Herman Sligman: Wow. Yes, I've read that.

I'll have one too and cheers to you. All the best.

A strange start to a column, you might think.

Maybe for you, but not for the undersigned. He knows what comes next.

The reason for this article was the photo you see here on the right.

In edition 2024-01 we mentioned the following:

During the New Year's reception on January 21, two comrades with Canadian roots, **Danny Murphy** and **Wayne Healey**, received an unexpected surprise.

Both officially recognized Canadian veterans and both injured during their service. Danny and Wayne received a beautiful quilt.

Made by volunteers from the Canadian Association 'Quilts for Valour'.



When you hear and see this, you think: there must be a story behind that.

At first, we contacted Danny Murphy, pictured to the left of Canada's Ambassador, His Excellency Hugh Adsett.

It is not in Danny's nature to show off his efforts as a soldier.

But if asked, he would like to tell us something about it and share some of his experiences with us. After all, the awarding and presentation of such a quilt is not 'just like that'.

There must be a good reason for that.



Danny has sent a number of photos and information and that led to the WhatsApp contact that you read here as an opening.

The photo we were in contact with can be seen here on the left.

Danny standing, second from the right.

The photo was taken on the home journey during a stopover when they visited Pisa in Italy.

The famous leaning tower is in the background.

What was the background for the story that Danny shares with us?

For this, we must read, among other things, the reports of the Canadian House of Commons.

However, extensive passages have been omitted here.

March 6, 1961.

Hon. Howard C. Green (Secretary of State for External Affairs):

'Mr. Speaker, the house will wish me to make a statement about the incident which took place over the week end in the Congo when Canadian soldiers were involved in fighting between United Nations forces and Congolese troops at Matadi, a port city on the Congo River some 160 miles southwest of Leopoldville, and the chief sea supply center for United Nations operations in the Congo.

At about noon on Saturday, March 4, Leopoldville time, elements of the Congolese army attacked a United Nations Force stationed at Matadi. This force consisted of Sudanese infantry and a detachment of the Royal Canadian Corps of Signals which was operating the communications station for the United Nations command at that center.

The United Nations force returned the fire.

The building in which the communications station was housed was hit by anti-tank, mortar and small arms fire.

Direct communications between the United Nations headquarters in Leopoldville and Matadi ceased at about 4.30 p.m. Saturday, Leopoldville time.

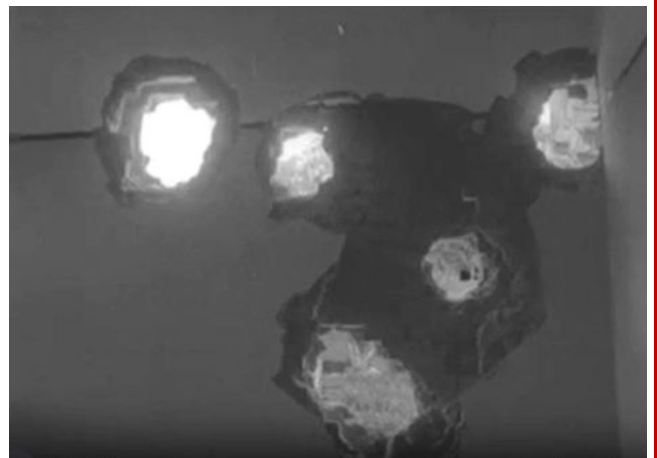
As soon as information of the attack was received in Ottawa on Sunday morning the Canadian permanent representative in New York, under my instructions, got in touch with the secretary general to try to establish the facts and to express the grave concern of the Canadian government about the fate of our men.



The building in question in Matadi



Silent witnesses I



Silent witnesses II

This was followed by a detailed explanation of the contacts with the Canadian representation at the United Nations.

We skip this typical political verbosity here.

Continuation of Howard C. Green's speech:

*'Yesterday afternoon (March 5-1961-hs) I received a report from our permanent representative in New York that a cease-fire had been arranged by the United Nations authorities with the Congolese at 11 a.m. local time on March 5. A period had been arranged for the exchange of prisoners and for the restoration of order, for this purpose a mixed United Nations-Congolese commission was being set up. This report gave the names of the Canadians involved in the fighting as follows: Captain G. E. Belanger, Staff-Sergeant L. H. Harris, Sergeant F. B. Wood; Signalmen C. G. Bates, R. M. Beggs, C. B. Bostwick, G. A. Janules, **D. J. Murphy** and H. B. Strike.*

In this initial report no Canadian casualties were listed but seven Sudanese troops were reported missing. It was stated that the secretary general had sent a protest direct to President Kasavubu about the Canadian and other detainees.

Yesterday afternoon I received a further report from the Canadian permanent representative who had been informed by UN headquarters in New York that eight of the nine Canadians whose names I have given had been released and brought from Matadi to Leopoldville by United Nations plane.

Three of our men were described as slightly wounded.

It was stated that Captain Belanger had not been included among those released by the Congolese forces to the United Nations. Captain Belanger had gone out to arrange a cease-fire at about four o'clock Congo time, March 4, and had not been seen thereafter

He was therefore listed as missing and action was taken to have his next of kin informed.



Congolese points to a bloody mattress

seen when he went out to talk to the attacking Congolese troops during a lull in the fighting.

Capt. Belanger, an officer with the Royal 22nd Regiment on loan to the Canadian signal unit in the Congo, was arrested by Congolese soldiers and held for five hours last December.

The other Canadians involved were Sgt. Frank Wood, 34, Calgary; Staff Sgt. L. H. Harris, 37, of Griesback, Alta.; Sig. C. B. Bostwick, 19, Hatfield N.B.; Sig. Charles Janules, 30, Toronto; Sig. Daniel Murphy, 21, Vancouver, and Sig. Herbert Strike, 20, Montreal.

CONGOLESE SUSPICIOUS

However, according to a report received half an hour ago, Captain Belanger has since arrived unhurt in Leopoldville.

After the anxiety caused by the prolonged uncertainty clash at Matadi in Congo about his fate, I am sure the house and Canadians everywhere will share my relief at this good news.

At this time, I can only add that the Canadian government is deeply conscious of the indignation which must fill the hearts of all Canadians at the way in which Canadian troops have been treated by the Congolese forces.'

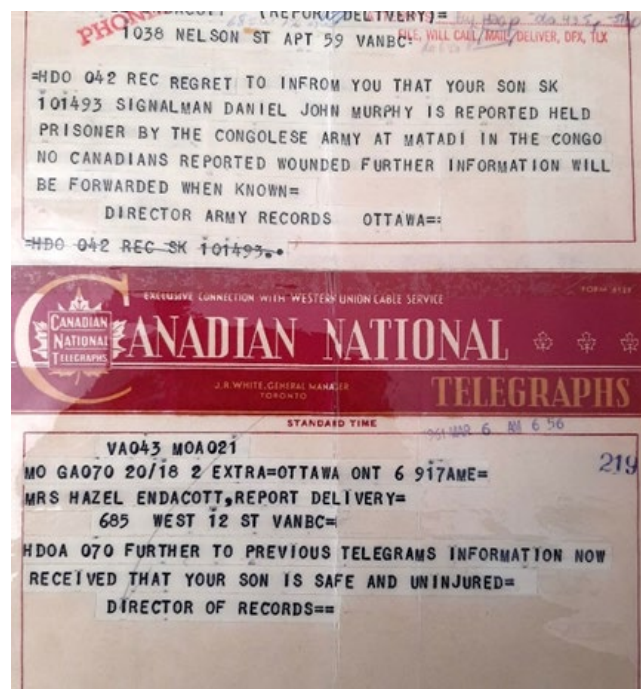
End quote.

This was followed by an explanation of what measures the United Nations wants/should take to better monitor the safety of the troops present.

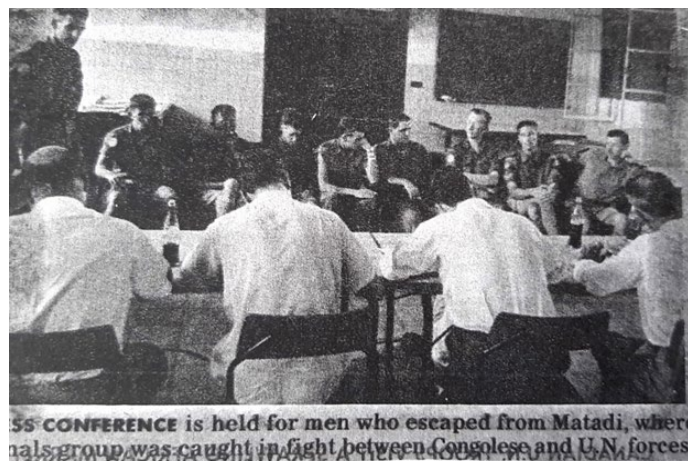
The Congolese soldiers liked to pose for a 'tough photo'.
Needless to say, such photos in the press were viewed with mixed feelings by those left behind. →



The telegrams that caused concern and later relief on the home front.



The press also wanted a firsthand explanation.



By far the best photo with this column



One thing is for sure:

Danny Murphy can wear the blue UN-beret with honour.

Thank you, Danny, for sharing this episode of your life with us.

Herman Sligman

Video images of the building in Maradi immediately after the incident can be viewed via this link:

<https://www.britishpathe.com/asset/248214/>



Miscellaneous.

Source: QOR Regimental Museum and Archive via Gerrit Bruggink.

On Monday, 26 February 2024, members of the serving Regiment, the Regimental Trust, and the Regimental Museum and Archive, oversaw the transfer of Sergeant Aubrey Cosens' Victoria Cross to the Canadian War Museum.



John Stephens, Museum director

While our museum would have been proud to exhibit this valuable piece, we have never been able to display it securely. As a result, it has been held in secure storage for many years.

This historic artifact, important not only to Regimental history but also that of the country, will finally be given the recognition and access that it truly deserves.

In due course, it will be added to the Canadian War Museum's existing Cosens exhibit.



Aubrey Cosens, VC

Those in attendance were Honorary Colonel Major General David Fraser (Ret), Honorary Lieutenant Colonel Manjat Minas, Commanding Officer Lieutenant Colonel Chris Boileau, Regimental Sergeant Major Chief Warrant Officer Justin Thorn, Regimental Trust President Major Tony Schultz (Ret), Trust member Lieutenant Colonel John Fotheringham (Ret) and Regimental Museum Director Major John Stephens (Ret).



Unknown British soldier given a name after 107 years.

Source: Flanders News by Colin Clapson.

Photos: Thijs Pattyn

An unknown soldier buried at the Hoge Crater Cemetery in Ieper (West Flanders) has been given a headstone with his name on it 107 years after his death. The previous headstone read 'Known unto God', but he has since been identified.

The soldier is John Harold Bott, an Englishman, who was killed during the Great War.



From now on, the name of John Harold Bott, aged 21, appears on the headstone. He was an English soldier, who fought in the First World War. He was buried in 1917, without a name on his headstone.

'Since 2018 British officials have been busy researching to find out what his name was,' Niek Benoot of the Hoge Crater Museum, opposite the cemetery, explains.

'In a war diary, researchers were able to find the date on which the soldier died. Based on a medal, they were able to identify him, but you have to be able to prove it all. It turned out to be a lengthy undertaking.'

After 107 years, researchers do know something about Bott. Sergeant John Harold Bott was born in London in 1896. He had three brothers and worked as a barber's apprentice. He joined the army when World War I broke out. He was awarded a medal after he captured a machine gun but was himself wounded in the process.

About 125 British recruits, who visited the museum, attended the ceremony. Niek Benoot then laid a wreath.

'As a mark of respect and out of sympathy. I am especially happy for the relatives that the fallen get a name,' he said.

For more than half of the nearly six thousand soldiers at the Hoge Crater Cemetery this is not yet the case. On their Headstone remain the words 'Known unto God'



UPCOMING.

Take a look at the calender. (Google version)

<http://tinyurl.com/4yzn9jus>

Follow us on Facebook:

<http://tinyurl.com/38cmdrct>

For the Youth Auxiliary of RCL Branch 005:

<http://tinyurl.com/cwbx7vzy>



TO HONOUR CANADA'S VETERANS:

Donations are always welcome.

Our organization has an ANBI status.

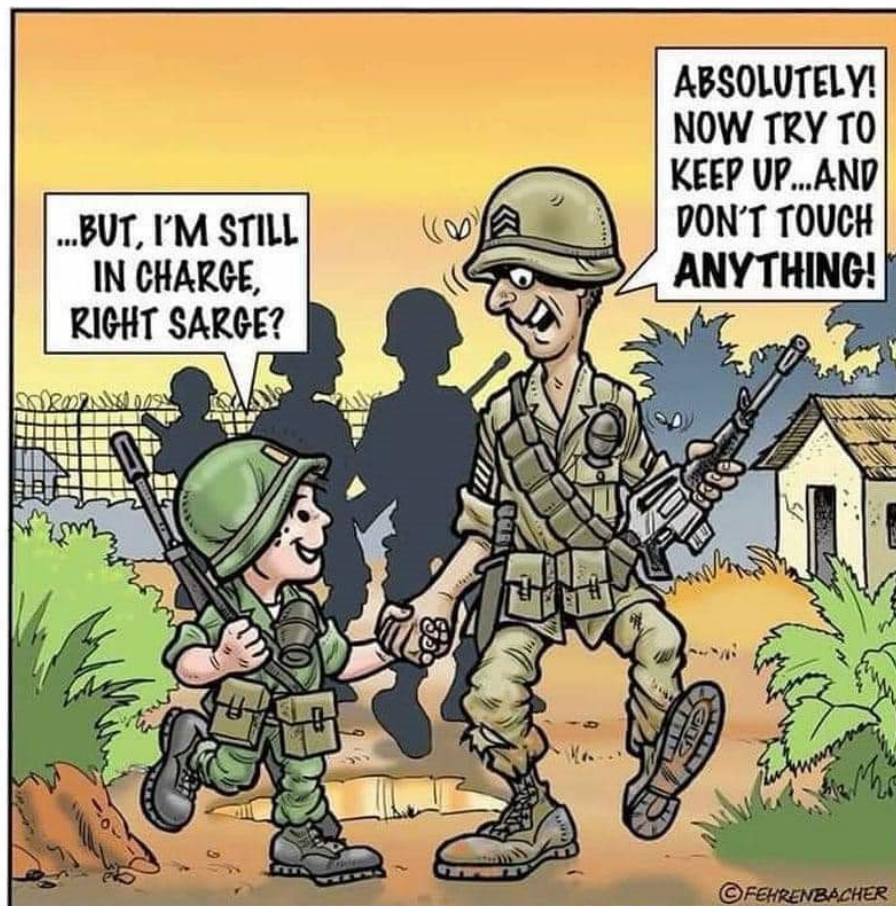
All donations have a Tax Advantage.

Scan the QR-code or visit our website.

Ending with a smile

The non-commissioned officer corps has been referred to as "the backbone" of the armed services

IN-COUNTRY



SHOWING THE NEW BOSS AROUND!