

The
Maple Leaf
Legacy
Project



L'heritage
de la feuille
d'erable

UPDATE!

A Project in Remembrance of Canada's War Dead

Latest Numbers

The aim of the Maple Leaf Legacy Project is to photograph or obtain a photograph of every Canadian War Grave of the 20th Century.

As of April 2, 2006, the number of Canadian war graves or commemorations photographed on hand is:

93,343

On the above date

342

commemoration photos were added.

This project relies solely on the kind assistance of the hundreds of volunteers and sponsors around the world to get the photographs or to donate funds to help pay for the good work of the project. To date the project has been honoured with the assistance of at least

639

wonderful and generous volunteers from around the world who have contributed photographs or other services.

*For Canada, for Canadians,
for the fallen, lest we forget.*

We remember

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR



Hello one and all:

As I write this on Friday night, it is raining - again. It rains a lot here in Flanders at this time of year - that is winter. A lot of dreary grey days make the longing for the warmer sunnier days of spring all the stronger.

The rain here though often evokes thoughts of what it must have been like here during the First World War. A cold rainy day on the waterlogged fields of Flanders in the autumn of 1917 was the misery of thousands of

soldiers on both sides and many died when wounds otherwise easily treatable caused them to be mired in the mud unable to extricate themselves. Often a fall, in the dark, into a water and slime filled shell hole spelled death by drowning for an otherwise lightly injured or even uninjured man. Even teams of horses went down in the quagmire of thick slippery mud that today yields such rich harvests of sugar beats, hops and corn. The mud was the grave of many good men and the legacy of the battle of Passchendaele (3rd Ypres) in which approximately half a million men were killed or wounded between July and November 1917.

Just north of the city of Ypres, sits a Canadian memorial to the men killed during the second battle of Ypres which began on the 22nd April 1915. This is the famous battle in which gas was first used as a weapon on a large scale as a crucial element of the battle strategy. On the memorial plaque, it says that 2000 Canadian soldiers fell here during that battle. A colleague of mine, Les Moores, found that number curious and started to do some number crunching. There didn't seem to be enough Canadian war dead in the area cemeteries from around that date. Even if you look at hospital cemeteries far behind the lines, there were no where near the two thousand names. Then he took a look at the missing as listed on the Menin Gate Memorial in Ypres. A thorough check of the register for the memorial shows that over 1700, of the 6700 Canadians listed on the Menin Gate, died between April 22 and May 30 of 1915 and have no known grave. I find that an astonishing number and such numbers go a long way to

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explaining the nature of the situation at the time. Some 1700 Canadians - plus unknown (to me) numbers of French, German, British and Algerian were never found or, if found, were never identified. The area is not that large - just a few square kilometers - and it must have been literally littered with bodies or parts thereof. Add to that the ever increasing warmer weather and the resultant stench, rats and flies must have been as unbearable as the gas itself.

MLLP 10th Anniversary

Next April, 2007, will be the project's Tenth Anniversary. It will also be the 90th anniversary of the battle for Vimy Ridge on April 9th, 2007.

I would like to propose a gathering of the project volunteers to mark this auspicious occasion. I am proposing that as many volunteers that can come, meet up in Ypres for a week of fun, education and exploration and to make acquaintance with many other volunteers from across Canada and maybe from other countries as well. I propose we do battlefield tours of the Ypres Salient, Vimy, The Somme, Dieppe, and maybe Normandy or Arras as well, if time permits. There is great shop-



Situated north of Ypres is the St. Julien Monument, which commemorates the 2000 Canadians killed at the second battle of Ypres in 1915. (Photo by Steve Douglas)

ping, sites to see, interesting visits to various places you would not normally be able to go to. Not to mention great food, wine and beer. So, if you are interested in being part of this, let me know **as soon as possible** and if there is enough interest, I will get the ball rolling and organise this.

As part of this tour, we would attend the memorial re-commemoration at Vimy Ridge on Vimy Ridge Day, April 9th. I expect that this will also be the official unveiling and rededication of the Vimy memorial which will by that time have undergone more than two years of renovations. I am hearing that as many as 15,000 are expected to attend.

Now, don't forget folks, if you have anything you think should go into this newsletter, please be sure to send it along to me or to the editor, Dale Crory.

Take care til next time.

Steve Douglas
Director, Maple Leaf Legacy Project

NEWS FROM THE VOLUNTEERS



This is the section that belongs to you - the volunteers, regional representatives, and people having an interest in commemorating Canada's fallen. Why not let everyone know what's going on in your part of the world by sending us photos, progress reports or news about events? Please send your submissions to dcory@chebucto.ns.ca with "MLLP Newsletter" in the subject line. Here are a few recent submissions.

Here's a great photo (altered) that appeared in the Kitchener Waterloo Record last Nov 12. This young fellow says it all, at the veterans parade in Cambridge, Ont. His name is Evan Douglas and he was 5 then and happens to be my nephew! A proud uncle – Steve

Here's an interesting submission from Gil Kezwer a Canadian living in Israel who has offered to help the MLLP. Gil passed along an article which he wrote some 10 years ago about the life of Harry Cohen, the only Canadian believed to have died in the Holocaust. Following is a short summary of Gil's story which was prefaced by the fact that the Canadian government missed an opportunity to honour Mr. Cohen when *Canada Post* issued a stamp commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Holocaust. If anyone would like to read the whole article, just write to me at dcroy@chebucto.ns.ca.

"...Harry Cohen was born in Aptov, a suburb of Lodz, in 1891. The textile centre, called the Manchester of Poland, was then part of the Czarist Empire. The Cohen family owned a jute mill in the prosperous city. Harry's story parallels that of thousands of Canadians of eastern European origin in that era. As a result of the economic and political turmoil caused by World War I, he immigrated to Canada in 1919. Fluent in Polish, Russian, Ukrainian, German, Yiddish, Hebrew, English, French and Italian, Cohen got a job as an interpreter with Canadian Steamship Lines.

But after several years he left to fulfil the Canadian dream of being independent. Cohen became a scrap metal dealer and started up his own business. Cohen eventually married. His wife, Ida nee Shapiro, a native of Montreal, died in 1938 after a lengthy illness leaving him to raise four young children. As a result Cohen placed the three eldest in a Jewish orphanage; his sister Sarah Berenbaum took the baby. Cohen returned to Poland to sell the family-owned jute factory. Though stringent currency regulations restricted the export of capital from Poland, Cohen planned to smuggle his money to Switzerland, his son remembers. (Cohen was not heard from again.)

After the war, in October 1945, some information came from a woman in Lodz (who wrote to Cohen's son). "In 1942 the Germans found out I had been hiding your father in my cellar. They arrested my husband and took away your father. They never returned." Sheltering Jews was a

capital crime. Cohen and his Polish protector were likely deported to the infamous Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp, where most Jews from Lodz were sent.

(About 1.6 million people died there. Of these, about 1,350,000 were Jews, of whom 30,000 died of mal-

treatment, and the rest by gassing with Zyklon-B. About 74,000

Catholic Poles, 20,000 Gypsies, 11,000 Soviet prisoners-of-war, and smaller numbers of cripples, political critics, criminals, homosexuals and priests also died there.



Harry Cohen

The vast majority of the six million victims of the Holocaust were born in Europe and lived in Nazi-occupied countries. Among the Jews who perished were American citizens born in places like San Francisco, St. Louis, Chicago and even Port Chester, N.Y. Others who had the misfortune of being in the wrong place at the wrong time were born in places as disparate as Hong Kong; Tientsin, China; Stanleyville, Belgian Congo (today Zaire); Havana, Cuba; Buenos Aires, Argentina; Jerusalem, Palestine; St. Gallen, Switzerland and London, England. Like Harry Cohen of Montreal, none were protected by their foreign passports.



The Third battle of Ypres, known forever as Passchendaele 1917 was one of the great conflicts of the First World War. One hundred days of heavy fighting resulted in over half a million Allied casualties for but a gain of only a few miles. The dead comprised mainly British, Australian, Canadian, New Zealand and South African troops and on the great memorial wall at Tyne Cot Cemetery are inscribed the names of 35,000 British and New Zealand dead who fell at Passchendaele. Many of the Missing are buried in military cemeteries about the Ypres Salient as "A Soldier of the Great War" and "Known unto God", but most lie still undiscovered in Flanders Fields. A visit to a military cemetery is always an inspiring and emotional experience but the fact remains that the Missing have only headstones and memorials whereon they are remembered. In the Passchendaele Archives at the Memorial Museum Zonnebeke, we have created a living memorial where we are endeavouring to put faces and stories to the names of the missing by building a personal record with photographs, family documentation and information from military sources.

To avoid a duplication of the excellent database of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission we will only create a file if a photograph is available and only if the man concerned lost his life between 12th, July and 15th, November, 1917.

To this end we seek your help in providing family material which you may feel will assist us in building our Passchendaele Archives. Photographs, letters, personal papers and reminiscences of family members will be gratefully received but note, we do not ask for original material unless you feel that you would wish to donate such to the Memorial Museum. Copies are quite acceptable but if you are not able to copy or scan

**Did your granddad fight in
Passchendaele?
Did he give his life?**

**The Passchendaele Archives
A project of the Memorial Museum
Passchendaele 1917**

your possessions at a high resolution we are most willing to undertake the task for you.

As a measure of our thanks and for your cooperation, we shall endeavour to discover, upon your behalf, what exactly happened to your loved one. You will receive wherever possible, a trench map, marking the approximate place where he was killed or was mortally wounded. With this comes a short report based upon the war diaries of his unit.

The aims of our project are:

1. to build a personal archive of thousands of files which may be researched at the Memorial Museum Passchendaele 1917
2. to create a database with the extracts of all files and extensive research facilities to provide for example the exact location of death on trench maps
3. to select records of 100 men to be stored at the new Visitors Centre shortly to be erected near Tyne Cot Cemetery; one for each day of the battle.
4. the composition of a book on Passchendaele 1917 based upon the stories of the fallen.

If you have a family member who died at Passchendaele 1917 and would like information or assistance, upon how to assemble and collate information for our project, please contact:

The Passchendaele Archives
Jan Van der Fraenen
Ieperstraat 5
B-8980 Zonnebeke
archives@passchendaele.be
tel 0032 51 77 04 41
fax 0032 51 78 07 50



You never know what you might find in a graveyard!

Director Steve Douglas came across this rather odd cemetery photo that he just had to share with us!



PRESS CLIPS

French Government Readies for 90th Anniversary of Beaumont Hamel Battle

An excerpt from an article in the March 4, 2006 edition of "The Telegram" St. John's, Newfoundland

The Government of France is planning a series of cultural events to commemorate the 90th anniversary of the Battle of Beaumont Hamel. The battle that took place in a small part of France on July 1, 1916 was part of the larger Battle of the Somme offensive and it resulted in the near decimation of the Newfoundland regiment. At roll call later that day, only 68 of the 778 men of the Regiment who had taken part in the battle answered.

"Beaumont Hamel happened on French soil so the French government and the French people are very aware of the huge sacrifices made. This is a tragedy of France, as well as Newfoundland," said Olivier Nicolas, French Consul General for the Atlantic Provinces. Nicolas made the comments in St. John's where he held a news conference to announce his government's plans for the commemoration. Nicolas noted that this year, a delegation of up to 400 people from the province – including for the first time since 1916 the entire complement of the Newfoundland Regiment – is going to France to take part in July 1 commemorative ceremonies at Beaumont Hamel. Other events planned include essay contests, conferences, concerts, film screenings and a literary evening.

MLLP Volunteers gather in Newfoundland Park in Beaumont-Hamel. – July 1, 2004. Left to right Daniel & Iris Van Landschoot of Belgium, Geoff and Jill Smith from Australia (Australian project Director Matt Smith's parents), MLLP Director Steve Douglas, and Fred Killick, an English volunteer now living in France. Iris and Daniel are RCL members and members of the RCL colour party at various events across Europe.



WEB LINKS

POW Network Japan was set up in March 2002 to dig out histories of POW camps. The group's activities include determining cause of death of POWs in Japan, researching the camps and War Crimes Trials regarding camps, as well as associating with former POWs and their families. The network has a growing membership of around thirty members throughout Japan and overseas. Check out the site at:

<http://homepage3.nifty.com/pow-j/e/>

(Submitted photo)



A Tribute to Our Troops

<http://media.putfile.com/a-soldiers-tribute>

This link is to a video put together in remembrance of all Canadian Soldiers, those who have fallen and those who even now stand guard, serving away from their families and loved ones, from friends and fun. If you take away one thing from this video, let it be the sacrifices that young men and women have laid down at your feet, the nameless and faceless Canadian. A sign that hangs in the Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT)'s mess hall in downtown Kandahar City says better than any poet what it means to choose to be a soldier. "All Gave some, Some gave all."

God watch over and protect our troops. Our Friends, our loved ones, our family.

<http://media.putfile.com/a-soldiers-tribute>

CEMETERIES PROFILED

A Remarkable Act of Remembrance: Assisi War Cemetery in Italy

Assisi War Cemetery in Italy is the scene of an unusual adoption program. An Italian war veteran, Vincenzo Cavanna, noticed that the Commonwealth War Cemetery had few visitors. The relatives of those buried there lived far away and found it hard to visit. Signor Cavanna set up a scheme of adoption and local people have so far adopted over 300 graves. Priority was given to soldiers from New Zealand, Australia and South Africa, as their families were least likely to visit. Some people have put aside their bitterness and embraced the project by adopting graves of their former enemies. Assisi War Cemetery contains the graves of 945 members of the Commonwealth Forces.



(Photo: Commonwealth Graves Commission)