

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.

On December 1, 2005 the number of Canadian war graves or commemorations photographed on hand is:

92,000

On the above date

25,000

photographs were left to be taken.

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



Seasons greetings to you all,

As I prepare for my annual trip home to Kitchener to spend this special time of year with those that I love, my thoughts wander to those many thousands of Canadian homes who were never to see their loved ones return from the wars and peacekeeping missions over the past century. For those that did, there must have been such a special atmosphere about a homecoming that would never be forgotten. More so, I think, for those that arrived home from the war just in time for their Canadian Christmas. Without realising it, I must go through similar emotions when I go home. The comfort of a warm fire on a cold winter night, the serenity of a gentle snowfall on Christmas eve, the excitement and anticipation in the eyes of my little nephews and nieces when Uncle Steve comes home knowing he is bound to have presents for them. And best of all, for me, is just to be able to spend time with my parents, my brothers and sister and the rest of the family.

This month, the MLLP is, in a very, very, small way finally, after more than eight years, able to start to bring home those soldiers to their loved ones in the form of a photo of their grave or name on a memorial. The recent launch of our newly redesigned web site with a searchable database was long overdue and a huge relief to me to see it finally come together. It is certainly not complete but then, it won't be for a very long time yet. There are some images in the database now. Those are most of the names on the Vimy Memorial. Following those will be the 2,332 graves at Groesbeek Canadian War Cemetery in the Netherlands.

There are plenty of little quirks in the site yet to be ironed out but that will come in due course. Most of the site is now bilingual too thanks mostly to Valerie and Bernard Bince. Valerie is from Vancouver but now lives with husband Bernard, a French English teacher, and family in Douai, France.

The recent visit to the battlefields of northern Europe by a delegation of Canadian Aboriginals came by Ypres on November 1st. The two ceremonies

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performed here were at the Brooding Soldier Canadian Memorial at St Julien, just outside Ypres during the day and at the Menin Gate in Ypres at the nightly Last Post ceremony. The evening ceremony was packed with onlookers.



Canadian Aboriginals performing at the Menin Gate (Photo by Steve Douglas)

The Remembrance Day Last Post ceremony would be the only time the crowd at the Menin Gate would surpass this one. The ceremonial dances, chants and music were very well received and I found them very moving. It was an occasion which made me very proud to be a Canadian.

One of the tasks that falls upon the director of a project like this, especially at this time of year, is to make sure those that contributed something to the success of the project in 2005 are thanked and appreciated. While I try to thank each volunteer and contributor at the time of their contribution, occasionally, someone gets missed. I hope this is a rare event. So, if I have neglected to thank you for something you have done for the project, please accept this as my sincere thanks for your efforts. As usual at the end of the year, there are a few individuals who perhaps warrant special recognition. I would like to give special mention to Eric Reid and Fred Killick. This year Eric made two trips to France from his home in Ottawa. That is in addition to two trips last year. These trips were single purpose trips, that was to photograph war graves.

Accompanying him on many of the cemetery visits, and also doing a lot of photography the rest of the year, is Fred Killick. Fred lives near Bapaume, France and also provides the use of his house for Eric and most anyone else visiting the area. Between them they have accounted for approximately 20,000 images of headstones for the MLLP plus large numbers for



Remembrance Day Crowd at the Menin Gate. Photo by Steve Douglas

the other projects as well. A special 'thank you' to these fine fellows.

That is not to say there are no others who merit special recognition. However, with the high risk of me forgetting to mention someone and perhaps

hurting feelings, it is probably best I not mention any more by name. There

are a lot of them. If you have contributed to the project this year, please accept my sincere thanks for your efforts, commitment and support.

One last item. Given the nature of this project, it is not often I am able to meet the volunteers, or the volunteers get a chance to meet each other. With me living in Ypres, and Ypres being the focal point of the western front for anyone visiting the battlefields of the Great War, I do get the opportunity to meet some of the volunteers of the vari-

ous projects. This I consider a special privilege that I would not normally get if living back in Canada. So, to all those who made their way to Ypres and dropped in to the bookshop where I work to say hello, I would like to say that I was very happy to have been able to meet you. Maybe we had a beer together, or a meal, or maybe just a short conversation. Whatever it was, it was a connection that meant a lot to me and has enriched my life. And for that, I am most thankful and appreciative.

Have a joyous holiday season

and may 2006 bring you many wonderful, memorable and surprising experiences.

Steve Douglas
Director
Maple Leaf Legacy Project

NEWS FROM THE VOLUNTEERS

This is the section that belongs to you - the volunteers and regional representatives. 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 dcroty@chebucto.ns.ca.

This month Ralph McLean the director of our sister group, the South African War Graves Project, reports on how war graves in South Africa are being desecrated. Thanks to Ralph for letting us know about this ongoing, sad situation.

News from South Africa.....War Graves Desecrated

The South African media have reported that the graves of the fallen from the Boer War and the First and Second World Wars have been vandalized. In the Old Klerksdorp Cemetery alone, every one of the 217 cast iron crosses has been stolen. The result of these acts is that the graves have become unidentifiable and no one will ever know who was buried where. Historians are upset that visitors from the United Kingdom come to

South Africa specifically to see the graves of their forefathers only to find nothing but a mound of sand. These malicious acts have led administrators at other cemeteries to remove and store the crosses on other graves for safekeeping.



PRESS CLIPS

Remembrance Day 2005 / New Book of Remembrance Unveiled
Adapted from CBC News Report November 11, 2005

Canada remembered its war dead in solemn ceremonies across the country on November 11, as thousands gathered at dozens of Remembrance Day events and a special Book of Remembrance was unveiled at an emotional ceremony in Ottawa. But for the first time, there were no First World War veterans in attendance. The last of those veterans from the Ottawa area died earlier this year at the age of 104. The First World War ended 87 years ago today, and only a handful of Canadians who fought in the Great War are still alive. Veterans from other conflicts stood alongside family and dignitaries in a cold breeze under sunny skies as a lone bugler played the Last Post.

New Book of Remembrance unveiled

Earlier in the day, a new



*New Book of Remembrance
(Photo courtesy of Veterans
Affairs Canada)*

memorial to members of Canada's military, the Seventh Book of Remembrance, was unveiled during a solemn ceremony in Ottawa as part of the country's Remembrance Day events. The black leather-bound book contains the names of more than 1,300 Canadian Forces members who have died in the service of their country from October 1947 to today, not including those who died in the Korean War

which has a separate book. The Seventh Book of Remembrance marks the first time fallen peacekeepers have been recognized in this way. It will be placed alongside six previous books in the Memorial Chamber below the Peace Tower on Parliament Hill. All seven books taken together commemorate the names of the 112,182 Canadians killed while in military service.

The first six books contain the names of Canadians killed in the South African War and the Nile Expedition, the First and Second World Wars and Korea. There are also books to honour the Merchant Navy and soldiers from Newfoundland, which only joined Confederation in 1949. One of those whose name appears in the book is Sgt. Marc Leger. He died in 2002 in Afghanistan along with three fellow soldiers, killed by a bomb dropped from an American fighter plane. His father and mother, Richard and Claire Leger, took part in the ceremony. Claire Leger is this year's Silver Cross Mother. She wept as the book containing her son's name was officially unveiled. The

Governor General then held Leger and gave her a kiss on the cheek.

Nancy Ellis, an Ottawa calligrapher, wrote every name in the book. It took her four months in her studio to complete the list of names in ink on calf-skin parchment. Writing the names, she says, allowed her time to think of each person who died. "I think, at my age, I feel more sorry for the families. I think that's always the worst part," she said. "And I don't know whether it really helps. It hasn't happened to me. "So, I don't know whether it really, truly helps to go to a memorial book in a memorial chamber and see your loved one's name in a book. But I really hope it does. I really hope that it provides them with some sense of solace." Richard and Claire Leger are sure they'll take some comfort seeing their son's name in the book. But his loss is still a source of immense sorrow for them and Remembrance Day brings it all to the surface. Ellis calls the Seventh Book of Remembrance a living volume. Entire pages are blank. But over time, those pages will be filled.

MONUMENTS PROFILED

The Memorial Chamber, Ottawa, Ontario *(courtesy of the Government of Canada)*

The Memorial Chamber occupies the second level of the Peace Tower in the Houses of Parliament, Ottawa. The Peace Tower is, in itself, a stately and reverential memorial to Canada's war dead. Its vaulted ceiling, stained glass windows and intricate carvings depicting Canada's record of war lend an atmosphere of quiet dignity to the setting.

Since Confederation, Canadians have served in many far-flung battles - many gave their lives. Their names are inscribed in Books of Remembrance in the Memorial Chamber. The centerpiece of the Chamber is the main altar for the First World War Book of Remembrance. It is set on steps made from stone quarried from Flanders Fields. Inlaid into the floor surrounding the steps are brass nameplates, fashioned from spent shell-cases found on the battlefield, recording the major

actions in which Canadians fought in the First World War. At regular intervals around the walls are the other altars, which are made of wood and which support the remaining four Books for the Second World War, South Africa/The Nile, Korea and Newfoundland.



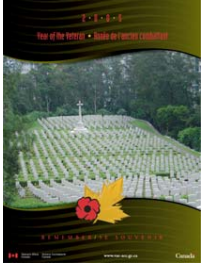
Memorial Chamber

Every morning at eleven o'clock, the pages of the Books are turned according to perpetual calendars for each Book. These calendars allow for each page in each Book to appear once in the course of a year. Information is available at the Memorial Chamber regarding the date on which any particular name will appear.

A MOMENT IN TIME

The Surrender of Hong Kong, Christmas Day 1941

(Courtesy of Veterans Affairs Canada)



Year of the Veteran poster *

Late in 1941, the Allies, hoping to deter hostile action by Japan, reinforced their outpost at the Crown colony of Hong Kong. Canada was asked to provide two battalions, and sent 1,975 members from the Royal Rifles

of Canada (from Quebec City) and the Winnipeg Grenadiers. They sailed from Vancouver on

October 27, 1941, and arrived in Hong Kong November 16.

Some 14,000 Allied troops from the United Kingdom, Hong Kong, Canada, Singapore and India defended the Crown colony, including the island of Hong Kong and the adjacent mainland areas of Kowloon and the New Territories. The Canadian battalions, with Britain's Middlesex Regiment, formed the island brigade.

Neither Canadian battalion had battle experience, having served only on garrison duty — the Grenadiers in Jamaica and the Royal Rifles in Newfoundland. Nor had they received all the training required for front-line troops, but it was believed they would have time to complete their training in Hong Kong. Instead, they became the

first Canadian soldiers to fight as a unit in the Second World War when Japan almost simultaneously attacked Pearl Harbor, Northern Malaya, the Philippines, Guam, Wake Island and Hong Kong.

The Japanese attacked the mainland positions on December 8 (in North America the date was Dec. 7), and all mainland troops withdrew to Hong Kong on the 11th. On December 18, the Japanese invaded the island. The invasion force was overwhelming in strength, backed with a heavy arsenal of artillery and air support. The Allied troops had no significant air or naval defence, and no hope of being relieved or resupplied. Yet they fought and held out for several days. Governor Young, after being advised that further resistance was futile, surrendered the colony on Christmas Day.

In 17 days of fighting, 290 Canadians were killed; 493 were wounded. Those who survived were imprisoned in foul conditions in camps in Hong Kong, where another 129 Canadians died. Early in 1943, 1,184 Canadians were taken to Japan for forced labour in industries, including mining. About 135 of them died. In all, more than 550 of the Canadians who embarked for Hong Kong never returned to Canada.

**The Remember Poster marks the 60th anniversary of VJ-Day and is the fourth in a series of five posters commemorating 2005 as the Year of the Veteran. The central image emphasizes that 60 years later, the lives of those who fought in the Far East theatre are continuing to be honoured and remembered. It features the Sai Wan Bay War Cemetery in Hong Kong. Here, 283 soldiers of the Canadian Army are buried, including 107 who are unidentified.*

WEB LINKS

Who was Company Sergeant Major John Osborn? If anyone has seen the Heritage Canada TV vignette, you will know him as one of Canada's VC winners who died in the defence of Hong Kong. By visiting the following web page you can learn more about Sergeant Osborn and how he saved so many lives by sacrificing his own. Check it out!

<http://www.vac-acc.gc.ca/general/sub.cfm?source=feature/hongkong/hkhistory>.

REFLECTIONS

Once again a commentary from Peter Mansbridge, Chief Correspondent of CBC Television News and Anchor of The National (Courtesy of MacLeans Magazine November 7, 2005.)

The grief that unites: Cenotaphs across the country remind us of this country's great sacrifices PETER MANSBRIDGE

Of the things that unite Canada, one, sadly, is a nation's grief. It knows no provincial borders, no regional tensions -- it affects us all equally. No matter where you are in the country, you don't have to go far to see the silent reminders of why we grieve: the more than 6,000 war memorials in communities large and small. We often tend to pass them by, except of course on Remembrance Day, when some of us join an ever-dwindling number of veterans who bow their heads in memory of comrades who never made it home from across the seas.

In the small southwestern Ontario town I call home, our cenotaph is in the often-busy downtown core, but because it's sheltered by trees it can be a place of quiet reflection. There are rows of names on the plaque, just some of the more than 100,000 Canadians who became the fallen in the wars of the last century. When I study our list, as I did early one recent Sunday morning, I found myself lingering over the families that seem to have suffered most -- like the Barnhardts, who lost three in the First World War, or the Deweys, who never saw two of their boys return after they left for the Second World War. How their mothers, and the mothers of so many others across the land, handled that is something that most of us in the generations that followed have never, fortunately, had to face.

The memorials are, in themselves, an interesting story about us as Canadians, how we initially saw the sacrifice and

how we continue to see it today. Wherever they stand across the country, the federal government did not place them there -- the people did. Perhaps that's why they are all so different. One can only imagine that if Ottawa had organized a nationwide war memorial plan, we'd almost certainly be looking at hundreds of identical monuments across the land. Instead, the money to fund the projects was raised locally, and what was gathered determined what was possible. Local committees decided on design, and that's why we have a variety of stone, brick, marble, iron and bronze structures, some simple, some spectacular sculptures. It's also why the messages on them are so different -- the result, one assumes, of vigorous discussions that must have taken place in each community. The words often seem written with the hope they'd be forever read as the reason why such terrible sacrifice was needed. I've always been moved by the message in Mahone Bay, N.S.: "They died for peace, let us live for it."



Morden Monument

The monuments started appearing after the First World War, proudly constructed by a country that was bursting with pride over how its young men had placed Canada on the international stage. It was called the Great War then, because no one felt such horror could ever happen again. It did, of course, and that's why those first memorials now tell our history of sacrifice in a special, if unintended way. The one in Morden, Man., is a good example -- the letters spelling out the names of the First World War dead have been worn by the elements. When

your eyes shift to the names added in later decades, you can see the difference, somehow underlining the anguish of a nation that had to

send its young to die yet again. This year, take a look, pause, and reflect upon what we have lost. And pray the lists need grow no longer.

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