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The Blue Hackle

Newsletter of
The Cameron Highlanders of Ottawa
Regimental Association

FROM THE EDITOR



Welcome to the second edition of the expanded Association Newsletter.

Included in this issue are a summary of the activities of the Regiment, Cadets, Association and Foundation over the last year. It also contains two interesting articles; The first is the transcribed proceedings of Sgt. Nunney's court martial, which provides some interesting insights into the man and the justice system at the time. The article was provided by Maj (Ret'd) Roger Laplante and prepared by Philippe deGroot of Vis en Artois. The second piece is an outstanding article written by a William Patterson, a current serving member completing his MA in History. William provides a different look at Thain MacDowell and the impact his experiences had on him during and after the War. Finally, our

member profile outlines the career achievements of our past CO and HCol D.S.C (Dan) Mackay OMM, C.D.

Whether you have this as an attachment to an email, or you have downloaded it from one of the website sources, please pass it on. If you are in contact with a past serving member who is not part of the Association this edition contains information on how to re-connect with the family via various initiatives backed by the Association. There are hundreds of people out there who have served with the Regiment but are no longer connected to the family. Distribution of the newsletter through personal networks may see it land with a past serving member and trigger them to reconnect with Regimental family, through the Association.

Not that I want to be a broken record, but as I have indicated repeatedly, I would like to see more Newsletter input from association members. Our history is in your memories. Everyone has stories from their time in the regiment, experiences on tour, exercises or in garrison, social events, lessons learned, cudos to members who have made an impression on you, or memories of those who have since left us. I strongly encourage you to sit down and put some of those memories on paper and submit them for a future issue. We have a long and rich history, much of it only exists in your memories. Those memories are important, let's not lose those.

Advance!

Jim Seguin.

Editor

REGIMENTAL UPDATE

CO's Introduction



As I reflect on my time since assuming command of the Cameron Highlanders of Ottawa (CHofO) as part of the Tactical Group in May 2024, I am overwhelmed with a sense of pride and gratitude. Leading a Regiment so deeply rooted in history, community, and service has been nothing short of an honour. The unwavering dedication and professionalism demonstrated by every member of this storied unit during this period of transition have been a constant source of inspiration. It is truly a privilege to serve alongside such an exceptional team.

The 2024–2025 training year began with the energy and enthusiasm that have come to define the Camerons. We kicked off with our traditional administrative in-clearance during the welcome weekend, quickly transitioning into a range weekend to ensure maximum readiness for both domestic and international deployments. This was followed by a rigorous combined training exercise focusing on section-level offensive tactics in urban environments. We were fortunate to train alongside our fellow Regiment specializing in the Pioneer mission task, with invaluable mentorship from Regular Force members of the 3rd Battalion, Royal Canadian Regiment (RCR).

Our momentum carried through to our second range weekend, where over one hundred Camerons and Glens honed their marksmanship skills, further preparing for deployment. This event also saw us supporting members of the 33 Canadian Brigade Group while certifying key personnel on the newly issued C-22 full-frame modular pistol—a significant step in the Army Reserve's contributions to the modernization of the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF). Meanwhile, the Tactical Group Ruck March Challenge kept spirits high and legs moving as teams competed to cover the greatest distance from September to December, culminating in well-earned recognition during our annual festive soldiers' dinner.

In 2025, we shifted gears to Cold Weather Operations, aligning with the Canadian Army's focus on the North and the evolving geopolitical landscape. The Camerons also played a key role in Exercise Trillium Venture, a Division level domestic response exercise spanning Ottawa, Cornwall, and other locations across Ontario. Our training year culminated in the 'Highland Scout' patrolling competition, where teams navigated challenging courses with skill stands and a live-fire dynamic range, pushing themselves to excel under pressure.

The Unit's instructional contributions were equally noteworthy. We led the Infantry Basic Machine Gunner (IBMG) Course, a vital prerequisite for the Infantry Section Commander Course (ISCC), where Cameron instructors shared their expertise on the C6 General Purpose Machine Gun. Additionally, our Padre spearheaded the Sentinel Course, graduating members in this essential CAF peer support initiative. As Commanding Officer, I was honoured to welcome back members returning from Operation REASSURANCE and Operation UNIFIER. Their contributions to coalition efforts for international stability showcased the Camerons' professionalism on the world stage, standing shoulder-to-shoulder with their Regular Force counterparts.

Throughout the year, my command team and I had the privilege of recognizing the achievements of our members. We celebrated dozens of well-deserved promotions, from Private to Major, and awarded formal decorations and citations. We also acknowledged the vital support of civilian employers through the Canadian Forces Liaison Council. The Regiment's commitment to giving back was exemplified by the Highlanders' Ride for Wounded Warriors, led by the RSM and his team, which raised significant funds for veterans' mental health.

What continues to stand out to me is the deep connection between the Camerons and the local community. Our

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participation in outreach and ceremonial events has been both meaningful and impactful. From our strong presence at the National Remembrance Day ceremony to hosting the 2025 New Year's Levee at Cartier Square Drill Hall, the Regiment has proudly represented Ottawa. Highlights included welcoming His Worship, the Mayor of Ottawa, and members of the Ottawa Redblacks to experience a training night, as well as exercising our Freedom of the City to march with Colours to the National War Memorial, commemorating the Regiment's role at the Battle of Vimy Ridge. This event was complemented by a well-attended Regimental Association wine-and-cheese reception and the annual mess dinner.

We also celebrated changes within our Regimental Family, bidding a fond farewell to former Honorary Colonel Dan Mackay and formally welcoming Honorary Colonel Barbara Farber into her new role. Meanwhile, our Pipes and Drums dazzled audiences throughout the year, culminating in a standout performance at the 2025 Army Ball, where their stirring tunes captivated an audience that included the Chief of Defence Staff.

The growth of our Cadet Corps and the steadfast support of our Regimental Association, Foundation, and Museum have been vital to our collective success. The countless volunteer hours and dedication of our extended Regimental Family remain the cornerstone of our achievements.

Looking ahead, I am confident that the Camerons will continue to rise to the challenges and opportunities that await us. True to our Highland spirit, we will meet them with the same pride, dedication, and excellence that have long defined this exceptional Regiment.

To the Regiment, thank you for your service, your commitment, and your Highlander spirit. It is an honour to lead you.

ADVANCE!

LCol R. Hendy, CD
Commanding Officer

REGIMENTAL UPDATE

Unit and Brigade Exercises

EX HIGHLAND GAMES

02-03 Aug 24, Maxville ON

EX HIGHLAND GAMES established a recruiting/outreach post, and participation in the Glengarry Highland Games to celebrate and promote highland culture. The event was used to raise the unit's profile in the local community in addition to the potential of a recruiting draw.

EX STALWART GUARDIAN

18-27 Aug 24, CFB Meaford

During Dry Collective Level 3 / 4 phase of the EX conducted and supported combat preparations in CBRN and Urban Operations. This culminated in an Offensive FTX. The final phase of the EX transitioned to level 1 & 2 live fire.

EX HIGHLAND MARKSMAN I

20-22 Sep 24, Garrison Petawawa

EX HIGHLAND MARKSMAN I was a range exercise and APRV conducted at Garrison Petawawa. The exercise qualified members on the C7, and C9 and had CBRN training as a background activity.

EX WOLF READY I

04-06 Oct 24, 33 CBG HQ

EX WOLF READY I was the first exercise designed to prepare the TBG HQ for future domestic operations exercises.

EX HIGHLAND WARRIOR I

18-20 Oct 24, CFB Petawawa

EX HIGHLAND WARRIOR I was an offensive operations exercise focusing on section and platoon level attacks in an urban environment. Skills were taught through stand training, section level demonstrations, and a culminating platoon attack. Primary Training audience was A Company.

EX WOLF READY II

15-17 Nov 24, 33 CBG HQ

EX WOLF READY II was the second exercise designed to prepare the TBG HQ for future domestic operations exercises.

EX HIGHLAND MARKSMAN II

30 Nov - 01 Dec 24, Connaught

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EX HIGHLAND MARKSMAN II was the primary make-up range day exercise for those requiring APRV. C22 course was run teaching theory as well on 30 November and culminated in C22 range on 01 December. The exercise qualified members on the C7 and 9mm pistol.

EX TRILLIUM RESPONSE

31 Jan – 2 Feb 25

EX TRILLIUM RESPONSE (DIV Level), CH of O providing the Regional HQ elements, scenario was an aide-to-civil power disaster recovery.

EX GUN CAMP

15-16 Mar 25

Two simultaneous Gun Camps held at two separate locations. The first was at CFB Petawawa firing the M203 & M72 and the second was at Connaught Ranges firing the C6 in the light role.

EX TRILLIUM VENTURE

02-04 May 25

TGB Exercise in Ottawa/Cornwall ran out of NDHQ and included a Helicopter Insert of CHofO pers into situation in Long Sault (Cornwall) area, scenario was for a downed plane.

Unit Lead Courses

United Nations Engagement Platoon

26 Sep - 05 Dec 24

The 33 CIMIC Det ran an in-house training-of-trainer course for the United Nations Engagement Platoon (UNEP) qualification. This course was the first known decentralized offering of the UNEP course, and qualified fifteen members of the CAF to provide valuable input for future training iterations for CAF personnel and Troop Contributing Nations.

Infantry Basic Machine Gunner (IBMG) Course

04 Oct – 01 Dec 24

Weekend Bde course run out of CFB Petawawa and Pembroke Armouries graduating twenty-seven candidates from all infantry units in the Bde, with 50% from the Camerons.

Cold Weather Operators Course

09 Jan – 03 Feb 25

Basic Winter Warfare qualification course run at Connaught Ranges including two weekends in the field and numerous training evenings at the drill hall and graduating 35 Candidates from the Camerons, SD&G and Sigs.

IODP1 (Pre Course for DP1.1 (a.k.a. Phase 3))

06 Mar – 08 May 2025

Bde Course for Jr. Infantry Officers covering areas of study on Map Modelling, Infantry Doc-

REGIMENTAL UPDATE

trine, Battle Procedure, Deliberate / Hasting Attacks, Defensive, Patrolling, Raid/Ambush, All Arms Call to Fire and numerous TEWTs to support the study package.

Pipe and Drums

The Pipes and drums had an eventful year. In addition to regular Monday and Thursday traing and supporting the regiment internally during training nights the Pipes and Drums represented the Regiment at the following events this past year:

21 Jun 2024	Key to the City Ceremony	1 Piper
27 Jul 2024	Little League Tournament	2 Pipers, 1 Drummer
03 Aug 2024	Highlanders Tug of War	1 Piper
05 Aug 2024	Regimental Birthday	1 Piper, 1 Bugler
22 Sep 2024	Army Run	3 Pipers, 1 Drummer
28 Sep 2024	Carp Fair	1 Piper
05 Oct 2024	Truck Pull – Regimental Event	3 Pipers
07 Oct 2024	City Hall Ceremony	1 Piper
06 Nov 2024	CSIS Remembrance Day Ceremony	1 Piper
08 Nov 2024	Vars Remembrance Service	1 Piper
09 Nov 2024	Constance Bay Remembrance Day Pde	Full Band
10 Nov 2024	True Patriot Love Gala	1 Piper
10 Nov 2024	Gala at Air Museum	1 Piper
10 Nov 2024	Regimental Church Service	1 Piper, 1 Bugler
11 Nov 2024	B Coy Remembrance Service	1 Piper
11 Nov 2024	National Remembrance Day – Cenotaph	Full Band
11 Nov 2024	Artillery Remembrance Day Service	1 Piper
23 Nov 2024	Officers’ St. Andrew’s Dinner	5 Pipers
27 Nov 2024	British High Commissioner’s Residence	1 Piper
30 Nov 2024	St. Andrew’s Day City Hall Flag Raising	1 Piper
06 Dec 2024	St. Giles Christmas Concert	Full Band
07 Dec 2024	Mess Dinner	1 Piper
11 Dec 2024	30th Field Mess Dinner	1 Piper
12 Dec 2024	CRPTC Christmas Dinner	1 Piper
01 Jan 2025	Levee	1 Piper
25 Jan 2025	Ottawa Scottish Society Robbie Burns	5 Pipers, 3 Drummers
05 Mar 2025	GGFG Boxing Event	2 Pipers
08 Mar 2025	Senior NCOs Mess Dinner	1 Piper
15 Mar 2025	Hudson St. Pats Pde (RHC Augment)	5 Pipers, 3 Drummers
16 Mar 2025	Montreal St. Pats Pde (RHC Augment)	5 Pipers, 3 Drummers

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Parades



REGIMENTAL BIRTHDAY

The regiment laid a wreath at the National War Memorial on the fifth of Aug to commemorate those that have served the Regiment on the anniversary of its 143 Birthday. The wreath was laid by a small party composed of Capt Dicko, HLCol Farber and RSM Port.

REMEMBRANCE DAY

The Regiment provided a 50-person Guard in Scarlets to the National Remembrance Day Ceremony in Ottawa and supported a second parade location at Center-Point with a 30 person guard composed of members from B Coy.



VIMY RIDGE COMMEMORATION

The regiment provided a 30-person guard in Cad-Pat with the Colour Party in Scarlets and the colours cased due to the inclement weather for the first time in many years. The parade numbers were augmented with help from Regiment's Cadet Corps who provided an additional seventeen cadets in FTU.

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Other Events



BICYCLE RIDE FOR WOUNDED WARRIORS

The annual ride raises funds for the Wounded Warrior Charity that supports Trama Exposed Personnel and their families. This year's ride saw participants ride to Cornwall Armoury on Day 1 and then return to CSDH on Day 2. The ride this year raised over \$8k in donations from its 14 riders and is scheduled again for this year.

24H STATIONARY BIKE RIDE FOR THE OTTAWA FOOD BANK

This was the inaugural year for the Static Bicycle ride for Ottawa Food Bank. The event ran for 24 hours at CSDH and was comprised of Teams competing. The ride raised over \$11,100 in support of the Ottawa Food Bank.



FIRE TRUCK PULL

The unit has competed this year in the annual firetruck pull at Lansdowne Park with a team of 8 pers. The event was held on 05 Oct with the ten teams raising over \$45k for Epilepsy Ottawa organization.



REGIMENTAL UPDATE

TUG-OF-WAR

The annual Military Tug of War competition at the Maxville Highland Games has been expanded since 2007 to include all reserve military teams that want to attend. This year's event saw the Camerons coming in a close third in the event.



ST GILES CHRISTMAS CONCERT

This year's concert at St. Giles was supported by the Cameron Pipes & Drums, The Band of the GGFG and with the vocal renderings of the Vocestra Chorus. The event was again held in support of the Ottawa Food Bank and its holiday Food Drive, raising funds and collecting food staples.

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Regimental Awards

Top Regimental Supporter:	Sgt Mitchell
Top Soldier:	Cpl Jodoin
Top JNCO:	MCpl Lockie
Top SNCO:	Sgt Bush
Top Junior Officer:	Lt Hill
Top Shot:	Sgt McCormick
Top Musician:	Cpl Aldous
Most Outstanding Member:	MCpl Mathew
Ruck Challenge Winner:	Pipes and Drums team, led by MCpl Mathew.

Social Events

OFFICERS' MESS (CAMERON AND COMBINED)

Officers' Mess (Cameron and Combined)

Remembrance Day Parade Reception:	11 Nov 24 (75+ attending)
St Andrew's Dinner at the Somerset Mess:	30 Nov 24 (100+ attending)
New Year's Day Levee	01 Jan 25 (08 Members + Visitors)
Annual Combined Wine Tasting:	01 Mar 24 (25+ attending)
Annual Combined Whiskey Tasting:	09 Mar 24 (38 attending)

Additional TGIF are held on the first Friday of the Month in addition to the mess being open on all Mon & Thurs nights, with a light lunch served on Thurs throughout the training year.

WO'S AND SGT'S MESS

Whisky Tasting:	16 Nov 24 (20+ attending)
New Year's Day Levee:	01 Jan 25 (13 Members + Visitors)
Hockwald Dinner:	08 Mar 25 (50+ attending)

JR RANKS MESS

JR's Christmas Dinner:	05 Dec 24 (120+ all ranks)
Robbie Burns:	25 Jan 25 (40+ attending)
Sr Cpl Night at WOs & Sgts Mess:	30 Jan 25 (10+ attending)
St Paddy's Day:	15 Mar 25 (100+ attending)

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RSM's Closing Words

Since my last closing remarks, we have been extremely busy as Camerons all ways seem to be within Bde. We have completed an ATV course getting members of the unit qualified to drive and command the off-road vehicles. Members of the unit also had the opportunity to get to grips and complete the required training to handle and fire the new C22 pistol. Exercises this year were challenging as ever and good numbers deployed into the field with the last exercise Highland Scout seeing teams participate in challenging stands and shooting on the battle lanes. Capt Marquardt and I even managed to get down the pairs lane and complete the shoot, I managed to keep up with the young Captain! The Bde exercise Trillium Venture was attended by members



of the Camerons deploying down to Long Sault, Cornwall to be exercised in a domestic operation involving a downed aircraft, working closely with other agencies to ensure its success.

Fitness is a big part of being in the Infantry and I always go by "Fit body, fit mind" and as Commanders and leaders we should be leading by example and setting a standard. So far this year we have completed the 24-hr static bike challenge raising over \$11,000 with six teams competing over the 24hrs raising money for the Ottawa Food Bank. This August 23rd will see the HTG complete the fifth year sponsored ride for Wounded Warriors, so far, we have raised \$46,000 and will be riding from Ottawa to Cornwall then riding back the following day all for a great cause.

This years Vimy Parade was a damp affair that saw the unit march through Ottawa to the National War Memorial with Colours flying and bayonets fixed. This was the third parade the unit has conducted exercising their right to march through the city of Ottawa having received the Freedom of the City on 24 May 1969. The CO and Association President laid wreaths at the National War Memorial before the unit marched back to CSDH being supported by a wet and cold Pipes and Drums to prepare for the Association Dinner the same evening.

We have nine members of the unit deploying on operations in 2025 and are now loading future members to be deployed in 2026 in support of the Regular Force, I wish them good luck and God speed whilst deployed and we look forward to their safe return in this strange world we are presently living in. They will do the Cameron's proud whilst deployed, all members have been supported by the Association prior to and will be supported throughout their deployment.

REGIMENTAL UPDATE

I have now had the honour and privilege to serve as the RSM of the Cameron Highlanders of Ottawa for over three years and the HTG for one & a half years, this Fall will see me hand over the stick to the new incoming RSM. My time as your RSM has been extremely busy and challenging at times but very fulfilling and satisfying to see the fine results our unit has achieved and the flexibility and steadfast attitude the soldiers have all shown during my tenure. We are a proud unit, and you are all the finest bunch of Highlanders I could have ever served with as your RSM.

ADVANCE!

CWO I. Port, CD

Regimental Sergeant Major

REGIMENTAL ASSOCIATION

It has been another year of change for the Association. We continue our regular monthly in person meetings, but have augmented some of these with a “Google Meets” online presence to allow members to attend virtually. It is not exactly like being there, but it helps our remote members and those unable to get to the Sgts Mess to keep in contact with the family.

Regular communication to our members has become routine. We distribute our regular meeting minutes monthly and provide the membership with news and information as appropriate



During the last year we made some significant changes to our constitution. First we changed the roles and responsibilities of some of the executive positions, then we made a major change to the membership categories.

The changes to the membership categories are as follows: The regular and honorary memberships remain largely unchanged; but associate membership has been revised to become non-voting and without membership dues. This category is available immediately to any serving member qualified in rank, or past member honorably released. It was introduced to enable ongoing engagement with serving members immediately upon their becoming qualified in rank and keep them apprised of the association's activities throughout their serving years. It also provides past serving members who are not in a position to become fully active members with a means to maintain contact with the regimental family. We will have a station set up at in-clearance to add serving members, and if you know of anyone who served with the regiment and would like to maintain contact please pass on these details and the membership secretary's email address as appropriate.

REGIMENTAL ASSOCIATION

The Association exists to support the Regiment as well as past and serving members. We execute this function through our support to deployed Camerons in Partnership with St. Giles and whenever we find a member in need. This past year we lost LCol Boyd Aitken (Ret'd) to illness. I am extremely proud and thankful of the Association's, and in particular A.J. Bergsma's involvement in supporting Boyd in his last days and supporting his family in the days that followed.

In the last year we continued many of our traditional activities in support of the regiment.

- We continue to organise (with significant help from the regiment) and staff the in-clearance and stand down BBQs. We split funding for these with the Foundation and typically feed in excess of 110 members. We recently held the 2025 Stand Down BBQ which was a great success. We are always looking for association members to come out to help and to foster relationships with the serving members.
- We organised and executed the annual reunion dinner in April with 156 guests. Since moving the dinner to April when the regiment has less on its plate it has become much more involved in planning and executing the dinner and wine and cheese. This has increased our numbers and made execution much easier for the Association team. Many Thanks go out to Ashley Beswick and Kerry Nicholson for their efforts putting together an outstanding spread for the Wine and Cheese.
- At the beginning of the year we had initiated a project to refurbish the Universal Carrier in front of the Drill Hall. I am pleased to report that through the efforts of Morgan Wright, the War Museum has agreed to refurbish the Universal Carrier. They will repair it, clean it up, repaint it, and weld a steel plate over the crew areas to prevent it becoming a receptacle for garbage and cigarette butts in the future. We expect them to pick it up in August.
- We continue our long standing partnership with St. Gilles Presbyterian Church to support deployed Camerons. This year we have a number of troops deploying to Latvia. We support them and their families in the Ottawa region as required, and every deployed Cameron receives at least one care package while deployed. Thanks to St. Giles for their support and to AJ Bergsma and Don Tate from St. Giles for taking the lead on this initiative. **Anyone interested in being part of AJ's support team please let me know and I will put you in touch.**
- This year, as in the past we have provided financial support to various initiatives supported by the regiment. We have supported the Cameron Hockey team and Cameron Cycling team.

REGIMENTAL ASSOCIATION

Vis en Artois 2026

Vis en Artois is a small commune in the north of France close to the site of one of our First World War battle honours DROCOURT-QUEANT and where Pte Nunney won his Victoria Cross. The regimental family has maintained an ongoing relationship with the people of Vis en Artois, with the Regiment and Association members participating in commemorative events there as recently as 2023.

The Regiment is currently working on sending a contingent to Vis en Artois in late August/ Early Sept 2026 as part of the town's annual commemoration of the 38th Bn and Pte Nunney.

<https://www.cmfmag.ca/events/french-town-of-vis-en-artois-grants-cameron-highlanders-of-ottawa-freedom-of-the-city/>

In parallel with the Regiment's preparations the Association will investigate organising a tour of its own to coincide with the Regiment's visit. We would likely stay a week in the area, and as Vis en Artois has no public accommodations we would likely stay in one of the surrounding towns like Arras. During our time there we would charter transit, attend the ceremonies in Vis en Artois and visit some of the historic sites including Vimy and the DROCOURT-QUEANT battlefield. This trip would be self-funded. If you are interested in joining the group please drop me a line at chofoassocpresident@gmail.com. No commitments expected at this point, We are just looking for numbers for planning purposes.

I would like to close by thanking, once again, the stalwarts of the Association who have supported our activities this past year. AJ Bergsma, Chris Murphy, Conrad Laplante, Don Tate, Drum Robertson, Gerry McCauley, Gwyn Nicholson, Ian Marrs, Jay Demaine, Morgan Wright, Jeff Hill, Jim Doherty, Laird Coghill, and Matt Robidoux. I would also like to thank the LCol Ryan Hendy, Capt. Rob Newcombe, Capt Steve Jackson, and MWO Mark Gray for their support and assistance over the past year.

Advance!

Jim Seguin

President

REGIMENTAL FOUNDATION

The Foundation is the charitable arm of the Regimental Family and its purpose is to support serving and past members of the Regiment and the cadets corps. Receipts for income tax purposes are issued for all donations.

Previously we have purchased ceremonial uniforms, published the Regimental history, purchased jerseys for the hockey team, sent serving members to France to participate in ceremonies commemorating the 38th Bn CEF and Pte Claude Nunney VC, DCM, MM and have awarded more than \$50,000 in bursaries to serving members.



2017 Foundation Canada Day BBQ

In the past year support was provided to the hockey and cycling teams, the out-clearance BBQ, purchase of a piper's ceremonial doublet and provision of hackles for new members. Unfortunately no bursaries were awarded as no applications were received.

Currently funds have been allocated to purchase a new drum major's baldric and mace, support to the cadet corps and to the visit to Vis-en-Artois in 2026.

Funds are raised through operation of the Kit Shop and fund raising events such as whisky tastings, one of which is planned for this October.

Projects have been created to which donations may be directed and which can only be used for the purpose of the project. Some of these are: Bursary, Band, Cadet Corps, Ceremonial Kit, Vis-en-Artois.

Donations made be made as follows:

- By e-transfer to treasurer@camerons.ca
- By credit card through <https://www.canadahelps.org/en/charities/cameron-highlanders-of-ottawa-foundation/>
- By cheque to the Foundation, P.O. Box 180, Station B., Ottawa, Ontario, K1P 6C4

640 Royal Canadian Army Cadet Corps, Cameron Highlanders of Ottawa



The Cameron Highlanders Cadet Corps continues to thrive in its new location at A.Y. Jackson Secondary Highschool in Kanata. The Corps finished last year on a high note having 41 Cadets on Parade and 60+ guests for its Annual Cadet Review (ACR) held at CSDH on 01 Jun.

The Corps returned in Sept to the school for its second year at that location and continued to grow with numbers more than eighty before Sept was over with their ranks continuing to grow to more than one hundred registered cadets by the springtime.

The Cadet Corps has continued with additional training such as the Pipe and Drum program with 13 members taking up instruments at the Stittsville Legion, the Marksmanship program



at Connaught, and also had six members compete at the Biathlon competition in the fall with two securing top ten finishes.

Unique activities for members of the Cadet Corps included providing a 3-person Flag Party at an Ottawa Senator's Game, providing eight Cadets to the National Remembrance Ceremony, thirty cadets to other commemorations including the Nepean Remembrance Ceremony. As part of its community outreach programs, they provided numerous support days to the Legions Poppy Campaign.

The Cadet Corps is now able to dress twelve of its senior cadets in Kilted-Walking-Out Order and continues to seek out ways to increase this count as it continues to grow.

To complete the Corps' fall program the Cadets visited CSDH for its annual historical tour, with lectures on Regimental History provided in the Museum by HCol (Ret'd) Mackay, Wpns Lectures

640 Royal Canadian Army Cadet Corps, Cameron Highlanders of Ottawa

on the Floor and a small reception following in the Officers' mess.

The Corps has offered opportunities for its members to participate in weekend camps at Connaught that have included C7 shoots, Fld Training Exercises and this has been reflected in one of its own passing Selection for the coveted Para Course running this summer.



The Cadet program concluded this year on 14th Jun when it held it's Annual Cadet Review at CSDH, if you didn't make it this year, please put it on your calendars for next year.

A LOOK AT OUR PAST

COURT MARTIAL OF 410935 SERGEANT C.J.P. NUNNEY D.C.M. M.M.

Provided by Maj. (Ret'd) Roger Laplante

Prepared by Philippe Degroot, Vis en Artois, France

As most are aware, Nunney was awarded the DCM for his actions at Vimy Ridge and promoted to Sergeant. He was awarded the MM for actions at Avion.

In April 1918 he was court martialled, convicted, sentenced to one year at hard labour and reduced in rank to Private. Because of his previous service, his prison sentence was suspended, and he was returned to the Regiment.

Subsequently, he was awarded the VC for his actions in Vis-en-Artois on September 2, 1918 and later died of wounds received.

What was missing were the details of the court martial. Thanks to Philippe Degroote, the Regiment's contact in Vis en Artois, we now have copies of the actual records of the court martial.

The minutes of the trial were handwritten on what appear to be pages from an officer's notebook. There were six pages and the transcription has been condensed into one document for easier reading.

Following is the transcription of the minutes and a copy of the charge sheet.

Trial of No 410935 Sergeant C.J.P. Nunney D.C.M. M.M. 38th Canadian Battalion

1st Witness for the Prosecution

No 410708 Company Sergeant Major .M. Colville M.M. 38th Canadian Battalion sworn states:

On 13th April 1918 about 4 pm I was sitting on the top of the (illegible) (illegible) Airplane post, Company H.Q. I was writing at the time when I suddenly heard my name called out in a very disrespectful manner. The remark was "Where's Colville?" I looked up and saw the accused with a party of men, which he had brought from the transport lines. In the meantime, someone directed him to where I was sitting. When the accused saw me, he shouted to me "Come on you God dammed son of a bitch, get up off your lazy Cunt and get these men to their billets." I closed my writing pad. While doing so the accused shouted out to me "Come on or do you want me to fetch you" at the same time he grabbed a rifle from Pte Silverthorne. The accused advanced towards me taking the breech cover of the rifle off and held the rifle in a threatening manner.

I advanced towards him and asked him in a quiet manner what was the matter, but I only received more abusive language. I was then forced to report to the officers below, in the dugout. I went below and made a report and brought Captain Johnson up with me. On nearing the top Captain Johnson passed me. Then I followed out and met the accused with a rifle and fixed bayonet in his hand.

When he saw me he again made abusive language calling me "A low degraded Scotch son of a bitch" In the meantime Captain Johnson tried to quiet the accused but it was no use. The accused then dropped the rifle and grabbed hold of me by the respirator which was in the (illegible) position and struck me a light blow on the side of the head with his hand, knocking my steel helmet off. Captain Johnson then ordered me below.

COURT MARTIAL OF 410935 SERGEANT C.J.P. NUNNEY D.C.M. M.M.

Cross-examined

The blow did not leave a mark. The blow just grazed the side of my face, just touching it and knocking my helmet off.

2nd Witness for the Prosecution

Captain A Johnson 38th Canadian Battalion sworn states:

About 4 pm on 13th April 1918 I was in the dugout of the Airplane post when CSM Colville came and made a report to me. In consequence of this report, I accompanied him to the top of the dugout where I met the accused standing with a rifle in his hand and the point of the bayonet, which was fixed, directed towards the entrance to the dugout. He was swearing violently. I passed CSM Colville and tried to quieten the accused who was calling out that he would kill the son of a bitch if he came out. By this time CSM Colville left the dugout whereupon the accused in compliance of my caution placed the rifle against the sandbag. He tore his medal ribbons from his breast and threw them in the direction of the top of the dugout. At the same time, he declared that he would not wear them so long as they were also worn by one did not earn them.

After that he seized CSM Colville near the throat with his left hand, drew him towards him and struck with his right hand knocking off his steel helmet. I then ordered the CSM and the accused to go to their dugout. I reported the matter to the Company Commander.

No Cross Examination

By the Court

As soon as CSM Colville disappeared the accused went away quietly.

DEFENCE

The accused sworn states:

On 13th April 1918 I took a party of men from the Horse lines under Lt (illegible). I filled my water bottle before I left with wine and, on the way, I was drinking. When we reached battalion HQ I was told to report to company HQ. I left the men there. I had an argument with CSM Colville. I don't remember anything more. I was too drunk at the time to remember what I was doing. I only heard that he had it in for me.

No Cross Examination

By the Court

I have never had any unpleasantness with CSM Colville before. I never have had a row with him before

COURT MARTIAL OF 410935 SERGEANT C.J.P. NUNNEY D.C.M. M.M.

After the Finding

Maj TH Warren 38th Canadian Battalion sworn states:

I produce a certified true copy of AFB122 of the accused which marked X signed by the President and attached to the proceedings. (This is CM 740 Conduct Sheet)

The accused is one of the best front line fighting men in the battalion. A few months ago, the battalion was complimented in Brigade (illegible) by the GOC Division on having such a competent NCO doing duty with the battalion.

No Cross Examination

Witness of Character

Captain P Lt Gardner, 38th Canadian Battalion sworn states:

I have known the accused for the last 3 years. He is a man of exemplary character. He has always carried out any duty assigned to him most conscientiously

No Cross Examination

The accused states in mitigation.

I enlisted in February 1915. I came to France in August 1916. I was on the Somme.

I went over the top at Vimy Ridge on 9th April 1917. As private in charge of a machine gun, I took 3 men on the way over. I took the lewis gun magazine (illegible) from them and carried them myself over the top. We were held up by Gerry machine guns. I went on alone to shift the enemy. I did so and then got the rest of the men up. There was no officer there after that. I was awarded the D.C.M. for this. I was wounded at the same time. I did not leave the country. I rejoined my battalion a week later.

On the 26th June 1917 went over the top at La Culotte.

On 28th June 1917 I went over the top at Avion. Before reaching them, the platoon officer was wounded and I was left in charge. I was awarded the M.M. for this action.

On 1st July I was gassed. I was in hospital for 2 months. I rejoined the battalion when they went to Passchendaele. I was at the Corps School at the time

Confirmation as true minutes.

Signed GH Kirkpatrick, Major, President FGMC

Nunney was convicted of 'Striking His Superior Officer' but found not guilty of "Using Insubordinate Language".

FEATURE ARTICLE

THE LEGACY OF LT COL THAIN WENDELL MACDOWELL

Researched and written by Cpl. William Patterson



When I was first asked to write an article for the regimental newsletter, I will admit that I was lost for a subject. While my seven years with the regiment have been the most important in my life, few of those experiences would be of much interest in an article. I haven't done much besides my due diligence, really, and that doesn't make for riveting reading. Eventually, I thought of writing a historical article. I consider myself grossly underqualified—there is no dearth of historical knowledge in our regimental family—but I figured I might, at least, have some different takes. After giving it some more thought over the next few days, I decided I wanted to talk about Thain Wendell MacDowell, VC, DSO, who fought with the 38th Battalion, CEF, in the First World War. His name and face should be familiar to the reader. Besides having some personal items on display in the regimental museum and multiple passages in Kenneth Reynolds' outstanding regimental history, his likeness and accomplishments adorn the walls of our storied home. His stern portrait keeps watch over the Officers' mess, and his Victoria Cross citation compels troops to greatness on their weekly pilgrimage to the Junior Ranks'. Yes, his accomplishments have been well recognised. The personal price he paid for them less so.

It's not that his mental wounds have been sidelined out of shame or malice, of course, and it's certainly not that they haven't been discussed at all; friend of the regiment and 38th Battalion enthusiast Dr. Ken Reynolds dedicates a few lines to them in his book "Capital Soldiers." But while Reynolds' work is a thorough interpretation of the regiment's past, it cannot speak to the personal lives of one man. So, I seek here to flesh out that side of MacDowell's story. I don't pretend to be unique in my interest in this topic—realistically, I'm riding a wave. Broad interest in the topic of Canadian veterans' mental health has evolved, I would say, from the past forty or fifty years of the development of psychology, and most acutely from Canada's involvement in Afghanistan. This interest has made us realise that there is not only physical sacrifice involved in the heroic, but mental and spiritual sacrifice as well. These latter two often seem to be the most consequential. So, while MacDowell deserves praise and recognition for his actions, I think that there is an element of injustice to the current treatment of his memory. Celebrating only his accomplishments denies what makes him human, those parts that go beyond flashy paragraphs in hawkish paperbacks. It's time, I think, that we return the human to the citation. It's time we understood the price the man paid for his bravery.

THE LEGACY OF LT COL THAIN WENDELL MACDOWELL

Thain Wendell MacDowell, for those readers unfamiliar with his exploits, was an officer with the Ottawa and Eastern Ontario-based 38th Battalion, Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF). He is one of two Victoria Cross recipients the regiment claims as our own, the other being the 38th's Claude Nunney (who is also mentioned in this newsletter). While MacDowell's Vimy Ridge VC is the most well-known of his accomplishments, he also earned the Distinguished Service Order—another award for valour—on the Somme in 1916, and a Mentioned in Despatches. He certainly fits the character of a recipient of two bravery awards. Both in his Brockville high school and at the University of Toronto, he was noted for being rugged, stolid, and athletic. He had loved sports, and kept them up in the military. A former member of the 41st Regiment Brockville Rifles (1 year) and the Queen's Own Rifles of Canada (4 months), MacDowell graduated from the University of Toronto in 1914 and was commissioned into the 38th in January 1915. He followed the battalion to its garrison duty in Bermuda in 1915 and then to England for training in 1916. He disembarked with the 38th in France in August 1916 to begin training to fight in the line.

I found much of this information in his service records, which is the collected documentation from his military career, and it was exactly what I expected. He was a shining product of the world in which he was raised: educated, athletic, sound of mind, and fiercely loyal to the Empire. I was surprised, though, by the dozens of pages on a condition called 'neurasthenia'. I didn't know exactly what that meant when I first came across it, so I did what any man in doubt does—I asked my mother. Her medical knowledge (combined with as a healthy dose of internet research) taught me that 'neurasthenia' was a medical diagnosis closely related to shell shock. The term 'shell shock' was rarely used in medical files, as it was only loosely defined and poorly understood. Instead, medical staff used 'neurasthenia', as well as closely-related terms like 'nervous shock', 'concussion', 'hysteria', and 'general debility'. Each term has its own specific implications, and while I can't discuss them all I urge the reader to consult the reading list at the end of the article. However one defines the terms, though, I didn't expect to find them in MacDowell's file.

It's hard to understand his diagnosis and the world of shell shock without first understanding how the Edwardian world conceptualised of a man's character. The Edwardian world's social dynamics drew largely, like its Victorian forebearer, on the Darwinian scientific tradition. According to Darwinian social theory, physical and mental characteristics like strength of character and morality were somatic. They were fixed attributes caused by genetics, not mental conditioning. They were found in the body, not the mind. They were definitive and unchanging, and as such determined the course of one's life. The fittest excelled, and the weak and morally corrupt fell to the wayside. Weakness was understandable, but not acceptable. The weakest crowded into beer halls and slept in gutters, supposedly unwilling to take responsibility for their weak genes. Strong men, men like MacDowell, shouldered life's burden with the characteristic stiff upper lip and became lawyers and politicians. They were often educated in public schools—what Canadians now refer to as private schools—and went to university. Their education taught them pride, ruthlessness, and Christian morality. They cared for those around them, but did not coddle them. There was a moral imperative to reinforce strength and sideline weakness. Women, it is important to mention, were thought to lack strength and resilience exclusively by virtue of their sex. They were prone to 'hysterics'—the loss of control of their emotions and actions—and lacked moral conviction because of weak traits like excessive empathy. They required men's guidance to shepherd them through life. These perceived feminine characteristics would come to inform the discussion on shell shock.

These unalterable expectations of strength translated onto the battlefield. It is certain that as long as people have tried to kill each other, they have gone on to relive those memories in later days. It is also certain that those around

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them have always noticed and tried to make sense of this behaviour. By the 1914, the answer was believed to be somatic. Battle fatigue was found in the body, not the mind. Thus, when the strong and moral doctors and businessmen of civilian life commissioned into the Empire's expeditionary forces and eventually broke down, they were diagnosed neurasthenic. Given that they had strong constitutions, their minds wouldn't—couldn't—just break down under the grinding stress of war. It had to be that their nerves were quite literally physically worn out. That the mind could not compel the flesh was not a character flaw if the flesh itself was the problem. Unlike the doctors and businessmen, the teamsters, lumberjacks, bakers, and typists joined the ranks. While some of these eventually proved their strong constitutions, their ability to soldier on under the stress of battle was generally suspect. When they broke it was, as in civilian life, the fault of their weak character. They could not help that they were insubordinate deserters and malingering cowards. They were diagnosed 'hysterical', feminine, unable to help their weakness. They were fined, jailed, or shot.

Before I return to MacDowell and his struggle with neurasthenia, I would like to make one more point; mental conditions are lived experiences, not diagnoses. They are not timeless. I disagree with the idea that shell shock—or neurasthenia, hysteria, or any other of those terms—is little more than 'what we would now call PTSD'. This is not because I believe, say, that UN Peacekeepers and First World War veterans were traumatized in vastly different ways, or that the suffering of a First World War veteran was harder than that of an Afghan veteran. It is because mental states are categorized according to socio-cultural realities. A medieval witch, for example, communes with the Devil, while a modern woman has schizophrenia. These 'diagnoses' of the same set of mental conditions carry with them different consequences and implications. No one thinks a schizophrenic woman is going to Hell, and no one thought witches had dopamine and glutamate imbalances. Witches were ostracized, persecuted, and lynched, while schizophrenics are treated with (relative) compassion. The social realities behind these cases of the same mental conditions produced totally different lived experiences. In the same way, the different social realities around shell shock and PTSD simply produced different lived experiences. As Mark Humphries puts it in "A Weary Road," "symptoms reflect culture rather than physical pathology."

DESIRE TRENCH – BATTLE OF THE SOMME, 18 NOVEMBER 1916

Now that we have that context, I'll now return to Thain MacDowell and the 38th as they disembarked in France in the late summer of 1916. The Battle of the Somme, which had been raging since the massacre on the 1st of July, had ripped bloody holes into the British and French lines in northern France. Reinforcements—ready or otherwise—were desperately needed. The 38th was slammed through training behind the line and quickly rotated into the trenches at Ypres, north of the battle, for 'seasoning'. A pitifully short time later in September, they were moved to the Somme sector to prepare for the offensive's second phase. While the men of the 38th probably hadn't known the exact scale of the 1st of July's losses—nearly 20,000 British soldiers killed in the first day, along with thousands of French and Germans—they had certainly heard rumours. Now it was their turn.

Their turn came at Desire Trench on November 18, 1916, after rest of the 4th Canadian Division's bloody fight for Regina Trench. In the early morning light, braced against the freezing sleet and the distant hammering of their artillery, the 38th readied itself in its trenches on the left edge of the offensive. MacDowell and his B Company awaited 6:10 a.m. Down the line to their right, A Company did the same. Somewhere out in the trenches, shell craters, and sunken roads beyond them the Germans stood to.

6:10 came and the assault began. The battalion's first show was, to put it briefly, suboptimal. The assault bogged down almost immediately under the mouths of a number of tough machine gun positions dug into a

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sunken road on their right. A and B Companies' officers and NCOs fell one after another, shredded by enemy fire, until none of A Company's leadership was left standing and only a handful of MacDowell's leaders were left. It was probably around this time that he took his first wound—a flesh wound—to his left hand. This, luckily, did little to impede his fighting spirit. Upon witnessing the annihilation of the leading companies' officers, he gathered what survivors still stood and led the attack on in. Saturating the sunken road with grenades, MacDowell led the shattered companies to overwhelm the defenders. Effective as it was to blow the Germans up, though, only the obscene brutality of hand-to-hand combat would manage to carry the assault. Even when the sunken road was cleared, MacDowell maintained the momentum. He led the companies in a confused, sleet-blinded push that went on into the evening. It was then that, according to his medical file, he was blown into the air “some distance” by a high explosive shell. The attack came to a close that night, and with it the excruciating Battle of the Somme. The exhausted 38th had won 800 yards of new ground, 400 enemy prisoners, and 102 friends and brothers laying dead and dying in the fields around a town they'd never heard of.

For his actions that day MacDowell earned the Distinguished Service Order, his first award for merit. A 6-week stay in the medical system healed his wounded hand, but the wounds suffered from the concussive force of the shell blast weren't so easy to deal with. Shortly after the blast, according to his file, he developed a tremor and a stutter and was diagnosed with neurasthenia. This would later develop into panic attacks, crying fits, and an almost total inability to sleep, as well as what can only be described as veritable attacks of sweating upon exertion, none of which were stymied by his stay in hospital. MacDowell fit into a pattern of skyrocketing nervous casualties during the Battle of the Somme, as civilian volunteers replaced dead and wounded British regulars and the increased use of high explosive in shells were used to obliterate anything and everything. In September



and November 1916, between 8-17% of the Canadian Corps' casualties were nervous cases. How many more were nervous cases hidden behind a wound, as in MacDowell's case, is hard to tell. Stories of men surviving the blasts that obliterated their trenchmates were common, but many more were probably wounded and hospitalised for that reason.

MacDowell's medical file seems to attribute his symptoms to the concussive force of the blast that threw him, as was standard practice in such cases. Was MacDowell's brain physically damaged by the blast? Probably. If it could throw him into the air, it could compress his brain into the side of his skull and give him a concussion. But is it not worth considering that two (recorded) brushes with death in one day could traumatize a man? Or any of the other horrors of that day? It is worth remembering that before rallying the companies, MacDowell had to watch his brother officers die. Before leading the assault, he had to order his troops to their deaths. Before beating the defenders, he had to manually kill people. The revolver and brass-studded club he used to do so sit in the regimental museum today. Really, it's hard to imagine who that wouldn't traumatize. And yet, medical staff could only diagnose soldiers the way they did in the civilian world. They parsed through medical charts, lists of symptoms, and sometimes notes from proto-therapy sessions in an attempt to understand what exactly was wrong. And while I don't look down on our forebearers for understanding the world differently—that is the historian's cardinal sin—I can't help but feel that MacDowell's doctors were looking for a bad expla-

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nation in the wrong place. They should have been reading the battalion's war diaries, not his medical file.

Still, MacDowell was fortunate to be diagnosed with neurasthenia, and not hysteria or some other diagnosis that implied weakness. MacDowell's diagnosis was probably due largely to his status as an officer, his classic Edwardian masculine traits, and his physical wound. Neurasthenics were typically treated with rest to allow their nervous systems to recover, while those with less socially-acceptable diagnoses like hysteria were treated with more aggressive methods. While often administered in ways that were relatively pain-free and generally well-intentioned, treatments like electroshock therapy were commonly used to bring hysterics and other perceived weaklings to their senses and encourage them to take control of their emotions. Doctors in the CEF, after all, were expected both to prescribe treatment to the wounded and to keep fit troops in the line.

That MacDowell salvaged the battalion mid-assault and was awarded the DSO—which only came at the end of his hospital stay anyway—counted for less than one might assume. While a shell-shocked soldier might receive sympathy from friends in the battalion, Mark Humphries points out that being sent up the line to a hospital was anonymising. It stripped even formidable soldiers like MacDowell of the social protection afforded by friendship, love, good conduct, and the recognition of awards. Patients didn't know one another, and doctors were trained to be cold and clinical in their approach. A *Weary Road* tells of another university man who, like MacDowell, joined the CEF in 1915, was promoted and decorated for bravery, and was blown up by a shell on the Somme. His panic and crying fits had made him a target for humiliation by other patients in his most vulnerable moments, some even referring to him as a “nurse's pet” because his claustrophobia drew sympathy from the nursing staff. Even the kind reputation of the nursing staff could be a double-edged sword. While not stated specified in his file, MacDowell probably received some of the same treatment. He may have officially been hospitalized for a flesh wound to his hand, but he suffered crying fits and other visible and audible symptoms. Other patients would have noticed.

VIMY RIDGE, 9-12 APRIL 1917

MacDowell's first set of wounds didn't end his time in the trenches. After a brief period of recovery following its culling at the Somme, the 38th was marched to the Arras sector to prepare to take a ridge near the town of Vimy. MacDowell rejoined them in Arras in the middle of January. Over the following months, the 38th rotated in and out of the trenches along the base of the ridge, suffering casualties from shellfire, training for the assault, and participating in smash-and-grab raids on the German line. On the 4th of April, 1917, many men rotated into the line for what would ultimately be their last time. The day of the Canadian Corps' assault was nearly upon them. This time, MacDowell's company—B Company—would be in reserve in the assembly trenches immediately behind D Company. B Company was designated to assault Baby Trench after A and D Companies had secured the battalion's initial objectives. As the 38th crouched waiting in its frigid trenches and deep chalk tunnels that April morning, memories of the 18 November assault preoccupied its survivors. That was obviously the case for MacDowell—frustratingly laconic notes in his medical file reveal that, on Vimy Ridge, he had “mental worries.” At 5:30 a.m. a rolling barrage of fire and steel descended on the ridge from the heavens and the two forward companies stepped off on their assault. Half an hour later, the 38th had taken its initial objectives. The rolling barrage had ensured that they made the German trenches before the defenders could even get out of cover. Then, as D Company consolidated, it was MacDowell's turn. As he led his troops past D Company's positions, he must have felt some relief at the ease with which the initial assault went in and hoped that his would be the same.

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It wouldn't. Based on MacDowell's 8:00 a.m. dispatch to battalion headquarters, his troops were not able to hug the rolling barrage properly and took heavy casualties. MacDowell was largely separated from his company as they pushed forward through clouds of machine gun bullets and retaliatory artillery fire. By the time he reached Baby Trench it was only him and two runners, Privates Kobus and Hay. As they moved towards the Baby Trench dugout MacDowell had selected as his company headquarters, they found to their horror that some of the enemy machine guns were still manned. Under heavy fire, MacDowell bombed out one machine gun nest and chased the crew of another through the trenches. They led him to the dugout he planned to claim and realised it was still chock-full of defenders. MacDowell and his runners were outnumbered. Their response was to subdue the defenders with two more grenades, after which MacDowell climbed down into the dark, enemy-occupied dugout. He reached the dazed defenders and managed to convince them that they were outnumbered. They surrendered. MacDowell counted 77 survivors of the bombing, two officers and 75 men. He decided to send his new prisoners—perhaps the remnants of a German company—up in groups of twelve to hide the fact that it was only him and two runners.



It seems that the ploy was not as successful as he hoped. What happened next is vague, but was reported by MacDowell in the 8:00 a.m. dispatch:

“I am afraid a few of [the prisoners] got back as I caught one man shooting one of our men after he had given himself up. He did not last long, and I am afraid we could not take any back except a few who were good dodgers as the men chased them back with rifle shots.”

Extrapolating from this slightly confusing account, it seems that MacDowell personally shot the bellicose German (“I caught one man”), and the exchange of fire caused a panic. Then, either the Germans scattered, fearful of captivity or reprisals, or the scared and outnumbered Canadians opened up on the prisoners out of fear for their own safety. Most likely it all happened so fast that the events were indistinguishable.

What is certain is that after the capture of Baby Trench and the surrender of the dugout, the ground was scattered with German and Canadian dead and wounded in the cold, wet mud. How many “good dodgers” were ultimately chased back with rifle fire isn't clear, but a summary of the battle by Major W.S. Wood in the battalion war diary states that the battalion had only captured 2 officers and 148 other ranks over the course of seven days. Considering the 38th fought with four companies and rolling barrages tended to create a lot of surprised prisoners, that number seems low.

After the dugout was secured, MacDowell still had to hold Baby Trench against German counterattacks. By 10:15 a.m., MacDowell had only managed to gather 15 junior ranks with two disabled Lewis guns and clogged rifles firing the last of their ammunition. Shell, machine gun, and sniper fire were plastering his position, and he could see that the field in front of him was littered with Canadian dead and wounded “by the rifles sticking up.” Over the course of the day, reinforcements slowly trickled into his position and his soldiers cleaned their

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weapons or found working replacements. Despite suffering a gunshot wound to the hand, MacDowell led the defence of the precarious position against harassing fire and artillery bombardments. The 4th Canadian Division eventually caught up to and pushed past MacDowell's position, consolidating its gains on Vimy Ridge. The battle cost the 38th 4 officers and 54 other ranks killed, while 9 officers and 214 other ranks were wounded, some certainly dying of wounds later. 44 other ranks also disappeared. Maybe they were captured, but it's more likely they were mangled into anonymity by shellfire, laying at the bottom of a flooded crater, or crumpled in an unreachable part of no man's land.

BACK TO BLIGHTY AND DEMOBILIZATION - 1917-1919

The stress and exhaustion of the fight for Vimy Ridge led to MacDowell's hospitalization once again, this time for tonsillitis and bronchitis. He was out of hospital quickly and resumed his position as a company commander until 10 July, 1917, when he left the 38th for the last time. He was diagnosed with trench fever and sent to the 24th General Hospital at Étaples. In reports from both stays in hospital it became clear that he still suffered from the issues he had in 1916—tremors, loss of sleep, panic attacks. He was later moved to Mitchison Hospital on the Chelsea Embankment in London, a private hospital for officers. He probably spent time in the Chelsea Physic Garden which the hospital's founder, Mrs. Mary E.

Mitchison, petitioned for shell-shocked soldiers to be allowed to visit. Perhaps he didn't, though—a medical file from his stay at the hospital recorded that he hadn't slept well for months and that the slightest exertion brought on exhaustion and sweating attacks. While in England he received the Victoria Cross from the King himself for his actions on the Ridge, while his runners received the Distinguished Conduct Medal. Special attention was paid, in his VC citation, to a flawless capture of the dugout and its occupiers. What he made of that assessment is impossible to know.

What he thought of his stay in hospital is also lost to history, though the circumstances of it must have made the university man feel ashamed of his inability to control the condition. It was, after all, expected of him. Luckily again, MacDowell had been treated primarily as a physical casualty since the reasons for his two hospitalisations were illness and a gunshot wound. Not that this would have done anything to hide his sobbing fits from doctors and other patients. He was sent back to Canada for a short two months' recovery, but a recurrence of trench fever (or a mental breakdown, as some medical notes suggest) extended his stay. Medical records from the time attribute his "insomnia, palpitation at times, and loss of ambition" to trench fever, but this is probably incorrect—these were all symptoms recorded immediately after his trauma at the Somme. An October 1917 medical report from the Brockville General Hospital, where he was sent after the recurrence to be closer to home, lists him as a depressed insomniac. His sister Eula, a nurse at the hospital, recalled having to hold her brother down and look him in the eyes during a crying fit. She held him and reminded him he was safe.

The time in recovery seems to have done him at least some good. He still had a fine tremor and tired easily by the end of January 1918, but despite giving "a history of having had a certain mental complex of a disturbing



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nature,” the medical officer believed that “he has this perfectly rationalized now and mentally he appear[ed] to be normal.” The Edwardian gentleman had, apparently, reasoned his way out of shell shock. MacDowell, dedicated to his service, asked to return to England for training. He went to London a month later to work for the Overseas Military Forces of Canada headquarters in London. He was attached to the Canadian Training School in Bexhill, East Sussex, in July 1918, and would ultimately be there for the Armistice on 11 November 1918.



Maj. MacDowell (4th from left, bottom row) in England at the hospital during one of his periods of recovery.

He was sent back to Canada a month after the Armistice with a ‘recurrence’ of neurasthenia. He once again told the medical staff that he had not slept well since November 1916. When he made it back to Canada, he was appointed Officer Commanding of Dispersal Station ‘C’, No. 3 District Depot, Ottawa, until he himself was demobilized at District Depot No. 4 in Montreal in March 1919. He was attached to Fleming Home in Ottawa for medical reasons, and in August was admitted to Ste. Anne de Bellevue Hospital in Montreal with all the symptoms of neurasthenia. His file recorded that he looked older than he was, had no energy, frequent headaches, difficulty concentrating, and heavy perspiration brought on by any excitement. He was finally discharged from the military in October 1919, diagnosed once again with neurasthenia typified by all his symptoms, his heightened reflexes, and heart palpitations at any excitement. This last symptom seems to be a euphemism for his panic attacks.

LIFE AFTER TRAGEDY – 1920-1960

Regardless of his condition, he had a successful postwar career. MacDowell’s nephew (Eula’s son) recalled that his uncle didn’t speak much about the war and said of Vimy Ridge only that he was very lucky. He stayed involved in military affairs after his demobilization, working as the private secretary to the first four Ministers of National Defence from 1923 to 1930. He also served with the postwar Ottawa Regiment (the precursor to the Cameron Highlanders of Ottawa), got married in 1929, and became the Commanding Officer of the Frontenac Regiment in Napanee, Ontario. He went on to be the director of several mining companies before his death on 28 March, 1960, in Nassau, Bahamas. He died in a way that sounds not so different from the Thain MacDowell recorded in his wartime medical files; he downplayed a coronary attack as an upset stomach, according to his physician, so he could carry on with his business.

After the war in 1920, the British government established the Committee of Enquiry into ‘Shell-Shock’ in an attempt to understand and better deal with the phenomena they had seen manifested on a grand scale in the fields of France and Flanders. While the popular narrative of suggests that the Empire grew more sensitive to the realities of mental wounds in the aftermath of the war, items like the Committee’s report suggest a more nuanced reality. Composed of military leadership, civil servants, politicians, and doctors, the Committee heard the testimony of a number of experts on and witnesses of the shell shock crisis. While interviewees answers ranged from total denial of the condition’s existence to deep sympathy for the afflicted, the Committee’s conclusions reflected only slight changes to the societal response; the report suggested that better living conditions

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and more frequent breaks from the line would be crucial to preventing the condition's development, but it also stressed that soldiers should not be allowed to think that the loss of nerve was an honourable escape from the battlefield, that they should be treated in segregated wards as close as possible to the front, and that only those physically concussed by shell blasts should be listed as battle casualties. Recruits, it was further suggested, should be screened more closely for 'character flaws' that caused hysterical reactions to combat, and officers should be better trained in what was called 'man mastership'—the ability to control a soldier as one would a dog or a horse. It is telling that it was only in 1930, after fierce debates on the morality of the concept, that the death penalty for cowardice was abolished in the British Army.

CONCLUSION

Major Thain MacDowell, VC, DSO, has been unfairly lionized by history. The celebration of his Victoria Cross has made a Rudyard Kipling character out of a human being. Besides Ken Reynolds' book, few sources even bother to mention his actions at the Somme despite the fact that it was probably a more formative experience than Vimy Ridge. It was at Desire Trench that he suffered a concussion from an artillery shell. It was at Desire Trench that he had to piece together a decimated battalion and beat them into the German guns. It was at Desire Trench that he lost the ability to sleep at night, and at Desire Trench that his stutter and his fits and his panic attacks began. Vimy Ridge was horrifying, there is no doubt about that, but the Victoria Cross distracts us. It makes us forget that he didn't collect his wounds on the Ridge—he carried them up with him. I think we, as his regimental family, owe it to him not to pick out the parts that make for the coolest stories. Transforming him into a fearless hero requires that we amputate his humanity, and I think that every member of this family deserves better than that.

SOURCES AND FURTHER READING

While I didn't footnote this work as I would an academic article, it is important to underline to the reader that not all of the ideas herein are mine—in fact, most are not. Beyond MacDowell's service file and the 38th's war diaries, I referenced four major works: Ted Bogacz's 1989 article "War Neurosis and Cultural Change in England, 1914-22: The Work of the War Office Committee of Enquiry into 'Shell-Shock,'" Kenenth Reynolds' 2011 regimental history "Capital Soldiers: The History of the Cameron Highlanders of Ottawa," Matthew Barrett's 2016 article "Absolutely Incapable of 'Carrying On:': Shell Shock, Suicide, and the Death of Lieutenant Colonel Sam Sharpe," and Mark Osborne Humphries' 2018 book "A Weary Road: Shell Shock in the Canadian Expeditionary Force, 1914-1918." I also referenced a number of news and webpage articles on MacDowell from Legion Magazine, the Toronto Sun, and the University of Toronto's alumni webpage, as well as websites like "The Lost Hospitals of London," "Canadian Great War Project," and "Thousand Islands Life." Most of the details about MacDowell's family and work come from these latter sources.

MEMBER PROFILE

In each issue we profile a past or serving member of the regiment in order to learn more about the member's activities outside the regiment, their past service with the regiment or their interests and career outside the regiment. In this issue we provide a view of our recently retired Honourary Colonel, Dam Mackay OMM, CD

MEMBER PROFILE—HCOL D.S.C MACKAY, OMM, CD

LCol Dan Mackay (Ret'd) was born on 8 October 1948 the son of Dr. and Mrs. W. B. F. Mackay. He is the third generation in his family to have served in the Camerons. His father and grandfather were members of the Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders of Canada. Dan's personal association with the military began as an Air Cadet in 1960. In 1968, upon his arrival in Ottawa to study at Carleton University, he joined the Cameron Highlanders of Ottawa as a Private.

Shortly after enrolling LCol Mackay (Ret'd) was promoted to Officer Cadet and accepted into the first Reserve Officer University Training Plan in 1969. Within the regiment he has filled various roles including Platoon Commander, Company Commander, Adjutant, Band Officer, and Recruiting Officer. Following a long career in the regiment serving in various roles he was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel and took command of the Cameron Highlanders of Ottawa in 1982. LCol Mackay (Ret'd) commanded the Camerons from 1982 to 1985 and for a second time from 1987 to 1989. Other accomplishments while serving with the Battalion include assisting in the production of the Roger's Cablevision documentary entitled, "The Cameron Highlanders of Ottawa D-Day Landing", and producing a feature documentary entitled, "Farewell to the 38th Battalion" in conjunction with Skyline Cablevision. During his first tenure as CO he facilitated the participation of the Pipes and Drums in the 1983 Edinburgh Military Tattoo and during his second tenure as CO the regiment won the Sir Casimir Gzowski Trophy for best militia infantry unit in Canada, twice!

In addition to his roles with the Regiment, LCol Mackay (Ret'd) also served in various positions at Brigade (then District) Headquarters. Positions he has held include: Assistant Chief of Staff (Plans); Assistant Chief of Staff (Support); Headquarters Commanding Officer; G3; Exercise Director; Commanding Officer of the Ottawa Militia District Battle School; Senior Staff Officer Personnel and as Deputy Commander of the District.

LCol Mackay (Ret'd) has also served outside the regular chain of command as Liaison Officer (Eastern Ontario) for the Canadian Forces Liaison Council; Vice President of Confédération Interalliée des Officiers de Réserve (CIOR); and as Directing Staff at the Militia Command and Staff College;

Most recently LCol Mackay (Ret'd) was appointed the Honorary Lieutenant-Colonel of The Cameron Highlanders of Ottawa (Duke of Edinburgh's Own) in June 2015, and Honorary Colonel in January 2019.



MEMBER PROFILE

For his “day job” LCol Mackay (Ret’d) was initially employed with Energy Mines and Resources as an historical geographer holding various positions from 1974 to 1996. During this period he was seconded to Department of External Affairs where he carried out research supporting Canadian case in the Gulf of Maine Boundary Dispute. He was subsequently seconded to the Department of National Defence from 1996 to 2004 as the Deputy Director of History and Heritage; and in 2004 he was instrumental in establishing the position of the Canadian Army Heritage Officer; a position he occupied until his retirement in 2012.

LCol Mackay (Ret’d) holds a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) Degree (1972) and a Master of Arts Degree in Geography (1974) from Carleton University. He is an active member of the Canadian Infantry Association. He has been President of the Eastern Ontario Branch since 1986. In 2000 he was elected National President and served an unprecedented two terms. He has also been involved in the Organization of Military Museums of Canada. He served as President from 1999 until 2003.

LCol Mackay (Ret’d) always been very active in his community. In 1995 he became a Member, and in 2001 he was appointed an Officer of St John Ambulance. He has served as a Director and President with the Federal District Council of St John Ambulance. In 2006 he was appointed a Commander and in 2012 a Knight of the Order of St John. He was also awarded the Service Medal of St John with three bars. He was awarded a Provincial Commendation in 2009 and the Chancellor’s Commendation in 2014. In 2021 LCol Mackay (Ret’d) received the Order of Ottawa which recognizes exceptional citizens and their outstanding contribution to the City of Ottawa.

LCol Mackay (Ret’d) was appointed an Officer of the Order of Military Merit. He has received the Canadian Forces Decoration with three clasps (42 years service). He was also awarded the Canada 125 Medal (1992), the Queen’s Golden Jubilee Medal (2002), the Queen’s Diamond Jubilee Medal (2012), the Queen’s Platinum Jubilee Medal (2022) and the King Charles III Coronation Medal (2024). In 2000 he received both the Head of the Public Service Award and the ADM (HR-Mil) Certificate of Achievement for his contribution to Op MEMORIA - The Return of the Unknown Soldier. In 2005 LCol Mackay (Ret’d) received the Chief of Defence Staff Commendation for his work with CIOR. In 2008 he received a second Chief of Defence Staff Commendation for his work in a joint DND/Solicitor General Project. He also has received a Land Force Command Commendation in 2010 and the Chief of Military Personnel Commendation in 2008.

LCol Mackay (Ret’d) was appointed an Aide-de-Camp to the Lieutenant-Governor of Ontario in 1993. He received the Vice Regal Commendation in 2014. He was awarded the Lieutenant Governor’s Award for Volunteer Service in 2018 acknowledging over 20 years’ service as an Aide-de-Camp presently having served under five Lieutenant-Governors.

LCol Mackay (Ret’d) is married to Fran Chilton-Mackay a former high school music teacher who also served as the Director of Music for The Regimental Band of the Governor General’s Foot Guards. She is currently the Honorary Lieutenant- Colonel of the Guards. Together they share four daughters and very much enjoy spending time with their nine grandchildren.

THE BACK PAGE



ASK ALMOST ANYTHING

Do you have a question you wanted to ask about the Regiment or the CAF ? A query about pay and benefits? Curious about Regimental traditions or perhaps the traditions of another Regiment or Branch within the CAF? Let us know what they are and we will endeavour to find the answers for you!

DID YOU KNOW?

- ◇ We want your submissions. Stories, Articles, Jokes, Questions, comments and suggestions. Email your input to chofo-newsletter@googlegroups.com

As time passes we loose people. First we loose people who are typically our seniors, those who we have watched and looked up to, those who mentored us and supported us. As you read this I expect names and faces will come to mind of those who had a significant impact on you in your youth.

Next you start losing your contemporaries, those you served with, your peers. You laughed with them, worked with them, learned with and from them; and made some of your most memorable mistakes with them.

Finally you start losing those who were your juniors. Those you trained, mentored and led. Those in whom you saw great potential and a future filled with opportunity,

As we put this year behind us, we will remember those we lost and be grateful for having had the opportunity to know them and to have had shared some common experiences.

They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old; Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn. At the going down of the sun and in the morning We will remember them.

The Cameron Highlanders of Ottawa Regimental Association

Association Contacts

President: chofoassocpresident@gmail.com

Membership: chofoassocmembership@gmail.com

Treasurer: chofoassoctreasurer@gmail.com

Private Facebook Group

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/587769775282974>

Public Facebook page

<https://www.facebook.com/cameronhighlandersofottawa/>

Regimental Website

www.cameronhighlanders.ca

Foundation Website

www.camerons.ca

Newsletter Submissions

chofo-newsletter@googlegroups.com

Regimental Kit Shop

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