

Per Semaphorum ad Satellites



The Signaller



Newsletter of The Signallers Club of Canada, Box 1983, Kingston, ON, K7L 5J8

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History of "The Rock" The Signallers Club of Canada's Memorial dedicated to all Past, Present and Future Canadian Forces Communicators and Support Staff

by Bill Fallows and Ed Peters

On July 26 1945, soon after the end of the Second World War, Maj Gen E.G. Weeks (RCCS) unveiled a cairn at the entrance of Southwood Camp in Cove, Farnborough, Hants, the home of 1st Cdn Sigs Reinforcement Unit. The Cairn contained a time capsule, an ammunition box which contained the names of all Cdn Army personnel who had passed through the Unit in its five years of existence.

The camp was later handed over to the Royal Engineers and in 1975 the REs, when preparing to dispose of the camp moved the Cairn to Blandford Camp, Dorset, the home of the Royal Signals School, to a site in Roosevelt Gardens, a USA memorial which was constructed adjacent to a US Gen Hosp during the Second World War. The Cdn Cairn was reerected at the rear of the Gardens.

In July of 1997 permission was given to move the cairn (which was swiftly deteriorating) to a very prominent position on the verge of Hawke Parade Square, beside the Royal Signals Memorial. Attempts to tpt the cairn failed because of its deterioration. The Cdn C&E Exchange Offr, Maj Paul Rutherford decided to proceed with the constr of a new Cairn from Portland stone - a stone from a quarry in Dorset, which was in fact used in the constr of Buckingham Palace. The new cairn is one solid rock; the accoutrements of the original Cairn were then affixed and the time capsule eventually was handed over to the C&E Museum. (See Jan 1988 "The Signaller", page 4)

On 8 Nov 1997 the new Memorial Cairn was re-dedicated in the presence of Bgen WS Richard, and Bill Marshall, both of the Sigs Club. Also present were four ex-RC Sigs pers who had retired in England.

Now, back to this side of the pond. Back in the 1999 time frame, seems like only yesterday, the Club's Executive thought it would be a good idea if we dedicated a memorial to acknowledge the 100th Anniversary of Communications in the Canadian Military, which was just around the corner. They put the concept to the membership and it was accepted, and the exec asked the membership for ideas for an appropriate memorial.

Needless to say, there were a lot of wonderful ideas put forward. However, most of the ideas were well beyond the realm of possibility due to financial or other restraints.

After reviewing the long list of ideas, the exec sat down and put their heads together to try to come up with an idea that would be acceptable to the membership, the museum and the concept.

During the discussions and having talked about the Cdn Memorial at the Royal School of Signals in England, Ron Knaption came up with the idea that we should twin their idea and try to find a piece of our countryside from around what is commonly referred to as the Home Station of Communications in the Canadian Signal Corps and the Canadian Forces. Specifically, we should try to find a large rock that would make a suitable memorial to dedicate during the 100th Anniversary.

And so, the history of "The Rock" was born.

(continued next page)

After some discussion, it was agreed that Ron would take on the task of finding a suitable rock from a quarry in the Greater Kingston Area and after a good deal of driving and looking in big holes in the ground, Ron was able to find what he thought was a good rock. He invited the museum staff and club president out to have a look. Good enough, and now the challenge was to get the huge rock to the museum! Again through a friend of Ron's, the rock was delivered and placed in its resting place at the museum.

The overall concept of the memorial was to dedicate it to Past, Present and Future Communicators and Support Staff. The inscription that was to be put on the plaque was also a great challenge, not only in the correct wording to ensure everyone knew exactly who it was dedicated to, but of course it had to be translated into the other official language of our country. After that was sorted out, the problem was where to have it made. Of all places, it was sent to a company in the USA to be built. Can you believe they came back and informed the museum that they found an error in the french translation? Anyway, to make a long story short, the plaque was not completed in time to have the dedication take place during the 100th Anniversary Celebrations. It was therefore decided to dedicate the memorial at the club's next meeting in April 2004.

To maintain the theme of the memorial, *Past, Present and Future* it was decided that Capt Frank Pratt would represent the Officer side and SM WO1 Jim MacKay would represent the enlisted men and women of the Corps and Branch. Both of these gentlemen served during the Second World War in 5 Armd Div Sigs. They would represent the Past. All serving Commanding Officers and serving RSMs of all communication units in Kingston were invited to represent the Present and three young recruits from CFSCE, two men and a woman, were invited to represent the Future. Father Georges Savoie was invited to do the dedication service. Mr Bill Marshall read the poem "The Signals Spirit" and Mr Bob Murray played the Last Post. Special invited guest to the dedication was BGen Fraser OMM CD, Col Comdt of the C & E Branch.

During the dedication service the president of the club emphasized that the memorial was dedicated to all Communicators, regardless of their former or present affiliation. From the operator to the maintainer, from the designer to the support staff, we are all communicators.

The accompanying photos show the plaque and the former Corps Badge. The museum is presently having a mold of the C & E Badge made and will have the badge mounted on the memorial.

NOTE: Pictures of the Dedication Service on 4 April 2004 can be viewed at the C & E
Museum
in the back of the Signallers Club *Book of Remembrance*
which is in the *Vimy Ridge Memorial* Display Room

They may also be seen on the Club's Web Page - www3.sympatico.ca/the-sigs-club

**The following item is the Eulogy read by Bill Marshall
as part of the Signallers Club Memorial Dedication Service**

“The Signals Spirit”

This is the spirit of the men of the flag and lamp, the semaphore and the key. It has come down through the ages. It is as old as time and as immortal as the gods. These are the heralds of the world. By their noble devotion and self-sacrifice they have contributed to the advancement of mankind. By this you shall know them. Since the realization of the dignity of man, their kind has been the messengers. Proudly have they proclaimed the birth of monarchs, sadly have they announced the death of the lonely soldier on a far-off foreign battlefield. Their roots are sunk deep in the past, and are enmeshed along the path of Man's forward march towards happiness and peace. Two thousand years ago the "V"s which in these modern times symbolize the Corps, attained immortality when used to announce the glory of Caesar. Within our day, it stood alone as the Empire stood alone - to stand for victory: the hope for all the then enslaved, for whom men served and sacrificed and died.

To these men and women of Signals we owe much for they have given much. Civilization in its relentless march towards progress has changed the means by which they toil, but the spirit remains, constant and unchanged throughout the ages. Gone is the swift runner with the flaming torch held high. Relegated to the past are the signal tower and the pony rider. The smoke ring remains only in song and story; and the throb of the distant jungle drum is muffled and faltering.

But the spirit lives on, and is the richer for having been in their keeping.

DECEASED MEMBERS, WIVES & OLD COMRADES

Members

None reported since last meeting

Members Wives

Edith GOAD wife of LM653 Bob GOAD on 22 Mar 04 at Abbotsford BC
Evelyn V CLIFFE, wife of John(Jack) CLIFFE (also deceased) on 15 June 04 at Kingston On

Old Comrades

James A CARROLL (P4030) SGT RC Sigs PF Ret'd age 87, at Scarborough Gen Hosp. Toronto, on 19 Apr 04. In WW2 he served with 1 Cdn Div Sigs in UK, Sicily and Italy, the 78th British Inf Div in Algeria and Tunisia and 2nd Cdn Corps in France, Belgium Holland and Germany. Only member of 1st Div Sigs to be sent to 1st Brit Army for battle experience in N Africa 1942-43.

MAY THEY REST IN PEACE

Close Call in Normandy

In 1944 as our SIGNAL UNIT was moving up through Normandy, we were very lucky to find a made-to-measure spot - no digging. My friend, Fraser, popped into the kitchen after supper and suggested a little tour so we grabbed a tin of Bully and a little tea and took off. The road was not well travelled and not mined. We were passing what appeared to be a very deserted farmhouse when we got "snipered". One of the shots tickled Fraser's ear. He exclaimed, "Gee Wisty, the flies are bad."

We broke into a fast zigzag run. My friend, never stumped for words, then said: "You know, it was lucky that we zigged in opposite directions - it could have been a hell of a calamity." Still feeling his ear, he seemed almost disappointed that he didn't have a little blood on his finger.

When I told of this episode in a nearby cafe, it was suggested there could have been a shot from a disillusioned lady. "Oh yes," the cafe owner informed us "the people here are not all true French, so we have to be very careful for now, how we treat you."

Vince Wistard, Kingston (Kingston newspaper)

D DAY 1944

A Ringside Seat on D-Day

Four interminable years in the south of England, training and waiting, and at long last it was upon us: nothing less than the massive invasion of occupied France. Of all the times to be felled by pneumonia in a hospital bed. Not all bad news, though, as this Folkestone military hospital was a requisitioned seaside hotel atop the white cliffs. Talk about a ringside seat.

Awakened hospital-style before dawn, no officious matron could keep a ward of recovering pneumoniacs off the balcony. And what a sight the rising sun revealed: nothing less than the greatest armada in history steaming past in review. No telling how long this had been going on in the dark. Battleships, cruisers, dreadnoughts, liberty ships, corvettes and armed freighters as far as the eye could see in every direction, many with tethered barrage balloons overhead; all carrying brave, frightened souls in the thousands.

How many would make it across the open beaches against German Field Marshal Erwin Rommel's "impenetrable" Atlantic Wall? How many would never see home again?

What a once-in-a-lifetime sight. Camera? Who brings a camera to hospital?

Nor was this the whole force. Not those from the South Coast; but this was the bottleneck through which all those who had been assembled for months on the Thames Estuary and the great North Sea ports had to pass. And high above all this was the mighty protective air fleet droning away.

A dozen days would pass before I would haul rifle and backpack across the dearly won safety of Juno Beach, but I would never forget my front row seat at the prelude to one of history's most momentous events.

Frank Pratt, Napanee (An item from the Kingston Whig-Standard)

(NOTE: On 6 June 1944, I among many other prisoners of war deep in Germany had been patiently waiting up to five years for that marvelous day to come. When it did, the BBC European Network announced it, of course. And we, on our clandestine radio were listening. It took three days for the German High Command to release the info and it was announced over the loudspeakers in our camp that a "large Commando Raid" had occurred on the French channel coast, but that the enemy troops were once again being "hurled back into the sea"!

So it was that we knew of the landings three days before our guards did. We all had a terrible job during those few days, keeping a calm face so that the guards wouldn't twig onto OUR GOOD NEWS! Ed Peters, your Editor

PPS. Oh yes - they never did discover that tiny radio receiver).

A Cdn 1st Div Sigs Sgt, standing on top of one of the seven hills of Rome, watching the American troops marching into Rome on their Victory Parade, suddenly heard British voices on his radio frequency.

He turned to his officer and told him. After the officer listened, he got the sgt to drive them immediately back to Bde HQ. They had been listening to a British Army transmission from Normandy. *Over 1000 kilometers away.* The date? 6th June 1944!



(Above) Father George Savoie CD (Ret'd) performs the dedication prayer during the unveiling of a new monument by the Signaler's Club of Canada Sunday. The monument is dedicated to all military communicators and support staff. World War II veteran Jim MacKay (top right) unveils the memorial dedication plaque at the Communications Museum and Electronics Museum at CFB Kingston Sunday, April 18. The memorial dedication service was held to mark the 100th anniversary of military communications in Canada and are located outside of the Communications and Electronics Museum at CFB Kingston (Right) MacKay looks on following the unveiling of two new plaques to mark the contribution of Canada's military signallers.

Photos/John Chambers



PRECAUTIONARY NOTICE FOR ALL MEMBERS

GENERAL/ANNUAL MEETING MINUTES and SIGS CLUB NEWSLETTERS

Our Secretary/Treasurer directs this important message to all members:
I have recreated the address labels to include "status" i.e. membership status(2nd line- example-03/12 means Dec. 2003), and on our next mailing we remind all to check their status and that we will no longer be mailing to those whose membership is not up to date.

THE LABEL WILL FOLLOW THIS FORMAT:

Abel WL
LM 159
Box 252
CARSTAIRS AB T0M 1N0

When the Minutes and/or Newsletter is ready, those for the Kingston members will be placed in the Museum(ham shack),and we encourage all those who can make the journey to please pick them up, they will remain there for 2 weeks and then be mailed out. Everything including the Newsletter will be available on our web page, visit it often.

Signed: Terry

P.S. This is the reminder!

THE BOER WAR - BRUCE CARRUTHERS

The following is a copy of Lcol Evans' report submitted to the Cdn Minister of Militia and Defence with ref to an action at a camp on Doernbault Farm that Bruce Carruthers was part of during the Boer War.

(Extracted by Doug Hildebrand from a document recently acquired by our museum).

When the camp was being attacked Lt Carruthers' party (about 21 men of the 3rd and 4th Troops of E Sqn) had moved off to the right of the farm. Sgt Hodgins, with another party of the 3rd and 4th Tps was to the right of Lt Carruthers. Still further to the right was a detached post of about 75 mounted infantry. Several hundred Boers swept down on this post on the right, stampeding the mounted infantry, who galloped through the line occupied by our men. Lt Carruthers, assisted by Sgt Perry, Cpl Wilkinson, L/Cpl Bond and Pte McCall, kept his men in hand, dismounted them and formed into a half-moon shape to face the Boers. Sgt Hodgins whose men were being swept off in the stampede, rallied about ten of them and dismounted to meet the attack. The splendid stand made by Lt Carruthers' party without cover of any kind against overwhelming odds, was well worthy of the best traditions of Canada and the whole Empire. Before their ammunition was exhausted 17 of the 21 were either killed or wounded. Cpl Wilkinson, shot twice, both in the arm and the body, continued fighting until he was shot through the eye. He then threw the bolt of his rifle into the long grass to render it useless to the enemy. Pte Evans, although mortally wounded through the bowels, exhausted his own ammunition, secured another bandolier, used it up, and as the Boers were making their final rush, he broke his rifle rendering it useless. Pte Evans died shortly after being brought into camp. Pte Minchin, although wounded in six places, fired his last shot when the Boers were only 15 yards off and threw his rifle bolt into the grass.

I have mentioned only a few individual incidents showing the spirit displayed by this party, but an equally invincible courage and devotion to duty was displayed by Lt Carruthers and every one of the party with him.

THE CANADIAN AIRBORNE BROTHERHOOD

We have received a message from James E Steed (cdn.ab.brotherhood@sympatico.ca) asking for the names of cdn "jumpers".

He says: The Brotherhood nominal roll consists of all jumpers of the Cdn Armd Forces. This is not a club or an assoc. It does not cost a cent. You will find that there are all types of men and women that have jumped from perfectly good aircraft; (Army-Navy-Air Force) from the 2nd World War to the present day. If you would like your name included on the Nominal Roll, please advise me. Info required is city, phone number and the jump units served with; just a few of the units are listed below: 1 Can Para, Para Rescue, Search and Rescue, FSSF (Devil's Bridge), Cdn AB Regt, Jump Companys, Jump Battalions, SAS, Skyhawks, Airborne School - CFPMD, Airborne Qualified,.

The Nominal Roll is for contacting purposes and a news outlet to keep you informed of what is happening, ie: Military News, reunions, etc. This comes from your Rep's or you as individuals. The Roll consists of every jumper from the 2nd World War to the present. The Last Post - in memory of those not fallen but have taken their last jump.

For those of you who haven't got e-mail, his home address is:

Canadian Airborne Brotherhood,
James E Steed CD
RR1, 5086 Hwy 38,
Harrowsmith ON K0H 1V0

You can also get further info from him by e-mail: skyhorse@sympatico.ca

That's it. I've used up my five sheets of paper again.
I hope you had a good Canada Day!

No words of wisdom from the President this time as I used up the Cover Page with the pictures of our new Cairn.

Your editor: Ed Peters