



**Volume 2023/Issue 1  
April 2023**

# The GROUND SHEET

## **The Publication of The Royal Westminster Regiment Association**

*‘Dedicated to the ideals and comradeship  
we knew in wars and peace, in our  
service, both home and abroad.’*

*‘Pro Rege et Patria’*

**The Armoury, 530 Queens Avenue  
New Westminster, B.C., V3L 1K3**

[www.royal-westies-assn.ca](http://www.royal-westies-assn.ca)



# *In Memoriam*



Isabel Healy-Morrow

26 March 2023

Regimental Band



## **Reverend Captain Isabel Healy – Morrow**

**19 February 1956 – 26 March 2023**

Isabel was a member of The Royal Westminster Regiment Band, a radio amateur, rector at St. George's Anglican Church in North Kamloops, and chaplain to the Rocky Mountain Rangers.

## **President's Report**

Hello everyone, I am really pleased to let you know that after a number of years of effort, we have received a replacement batch of berets. We are in the process of adding metal cap badges to the berets and will have them ready to distribute by the Melfa Dinner. There is more detail about the berets in the article in this Groundsheet.

We have permission from the CO to hold the Melfa Dinner again this year. So, you will see more details in this edition about the golf tournament, dinner, and Annual General Meeting. For the Golf Tournament we have challenged each Messes to enter at least one team.

We could use your support in encouraging members to come to the Melfa Dinner at which we will have a 50-50 draw and silent auction to raise funds for our planned commemoration trip to Europe in 2025. We are finalizing the itinerary and the plan is to visit battlefields and sites related to the 47th Battalion's actions in World War I, during the last week of April 2025. During the following week in May 2025, we will be visiting battlefields and site related to the Westminster Regiment's actions in the Netherlands in 1945.

I look forward to seeing many of you at the Melfa Dinner.

Bill White  
President

Your Executive  
2020-2021

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Hello fellow Association members:

Should we get our hopes up that Spring is around the corner, I sure hope so, had enough cold weather. Coming home from the board meeting Monday night it was snowing on the freeway.

Melfa is the happening of the year. So, get your tickets and let's have a great time. Last year we were sadly short on the former soldiers from the 50s and 60s. How about it guys and gals.

Our AGM is on Sunday, 28 May at noon. This is your association run by the members. Come and have your say on what we do, We will have elections for all positions, are you interested in joining this merry little group of hard working people.

As some of you know I am stepping down as Secretary, I have been asked to remain as Groundsheet editor which I agreed to. I enjoy putting the Groundsheet together every couple of months so keep your articles coming.

Pro Rege et Patria

Linda Pickell

## The Association Beret

Due to a shortage of a number of sizes and colour, the Board of Directors has been trying to replace the current beret with new ones. This effort was initially led by Doug Noble and Linda Pickell. We were looking at an offshore supplier, primarily for cost reasons, but realized that we were not going to get the quality that we wanted. So, the Board decided to work with a Canadian supplier. Neil Cole contacted Logistik, who are the supplier of the CF Beret, and this has led to receipt of an order of 260 berets.



The Board was assisted by a very generous donation from Derrick Paddinge (in the picture) which indeed was helpful impetus to get the set of replacement berets.

Derrick grew up in North Delta and after high school graduation joined the Westies in June 1983 (SYEP 83 Melfa Platoon) and transferred to the Regular Army end of August 1985. He took everything he learned from the Regiment with him, which proved to be very beneficial. His best memories were the MILCONS in Ft Lewis and street security during the Pope's visit in 1984. He even liked some formal marching parades! His last summer in the Regiment was spent instructing GMT (General Military Training) course in Chilliwack and then going to Nanaimo for the JLC (Junior Leaders Course). Returning to Chilliwack, after passing the course, for two weeks only to receive notice as accepted into the Regular Force. Everywhere he went in his military travels he took his Westies cap badge; worn inside his beret, Tilley hat, UN beret or in a left pocket. He retired as a Corporal in May 2006 and has called Langley home since 2008.

The colour of the beret is of historical significance. The green is coloured to reflect the 4th Canadian Division green that the 47th Battalion wore in the First World War. During that war the green colour varied, but the version of green we have now is based on the current green patch worn by the 4th Division (Ontario). The maroon patch behind the cap badge is the Divisional patch of the 5th Division (Atlantic Canada). This was the same colour of patch worn by The Westminster Regiment in the Second World War when the Regiment was in the 5th Canadian Armoured Division. The embroidered cap badge has been replaced by a metal one.

## **MELFA WEEKEND 26 – 28 May 2023**

### **MELFA GOLF TOURNAMENT**

#### **Melfa Golf**

Date: Friday, 26 May 2017  
Location: Delta Golf Club  
Time: 0900 hrs  
Cost: \$90 Payable by etransfer to [Treasurer@royal-westies-assn.ca](mailto:Treasurer@royal-westies-assn.ca)  
RSVP: no later than 12 May 2023  
Contact: Greg Bell for reservation; [Treasurer@royal-westies-assn.ca](mailto:Treasurer@royal-westies-assn.ca)

### **MELFA DINNER**

*The President and Directors of The Royal Westminster Regiment Association request the pleasure of your company and partner at the Annual Melfa Dinner*

#### **Melfa Dinner**

Date: Saturday, 27 May 2017  
Location: The Armoury  
Cocktails: 1800-1900 hrs  
Dinner: 1900 hrs  
Retired Members Dress: Blazer (without Medals) and tie  
Serving Members Dress: DEU  
Dress for Guests: Business Casual (no jeans, no t-shirts, no runners)  
Cost: \$65 – Payable by etransfer to [Treasurer@royal-westies-assn.ca](mailto:Treasurer@royal-westies-assn.ca)  
Unit Contact: Erik Skrebsky skrebsky@hotmail.com  
Association Contact: [Secretary@royal-westies-assn.ca](mailto:Secretary@royal-westies-assn.ca)  
RSVP: No later than 12 May 2023

Please remember to bring cash as there will be a silent action. The purpose of the auction is to raise money for the Europe 2025 trip.

### **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

#### **AGM**

Date: Sunday, 28 May 2016  
Location: Warrant Officer's and Sergeants Mess  
Time: 1200 hrs  
Dress: Business Casual

## 2023 Annual Mess Dinner

After 3 years, The Royal Westminster Regiment was glad to host community representatives and other guests for the annual mess dinner. This year, the mess dinner was conducted as a mixed dining event and re-established connections with the cities of the County of Westminster. The guest of honor was Major-General R.R.E. MacKenzie, OMM, CD, a long serving reservist who is the Chief of Reserves and Employer Support. He spoke about his career as he approaches retirement. Due to the impacts of COVID on hospitality businesses and the time since the last dinner, there were challenges in mounting the dinner, but planning has already started for 2024. We hope to see you there!



View of the dinners on the drill floor of the Armoury



Hon Lt.Col. George Salamis presents the guest of honor, Maj.Gen. Rob Roy Mackenzie, with a framed Westie crest.

## **Change of Command 1789 RCACC Hope**

The Hope army cadet corps recently conducted a change of command parade and a depart with dignity ceremony. Captain Marguerite Parsons CD has reached retirement with 20 years of CIC service and handed over command of 1789 The Royal Westminster Regiment RCACC to Captain Roger Perry CD formerly of 147 Airwolf Air Cadet Squadron in Chilliwack. Lieutenant-Colonel (Retired) Chuck MacKinnon served as the reviewing officer, and Major Derrick Gee of Regional Cadet Support Unit (Pacific) served as the Presiding Officer. Capt. Parsons was presented with framed crests of the Rocky Mountain Rangers, CIC, and The Royal Westminster Regiment, a pewter mug, and a model tank.



## **Report from our New Westminster Cadet Corp 2316 RCACC**

2022/20233 has been an unusual year for recruiting. In the past we saw a rush around September/October. Now new faces continue to come in as word-of-mouth spreads of our return to regular training. Presently, we are at 47 cadets parading. As such we are in need of more officers and volunteers to help guide our growing Corp.

Our Corps has focused recently on cold weather training. We had a good day of snowshoeing on Seymour Mountain, and another day for a mini day-FTX at Golden Ears. Coquitlam SAR delivered an excellent evening of survival training. Also, the New Westminster Police Department conducted an exciting visit to our Corp. The officers presented an informative demonstration of their various functions in the community. The sniffer dog and the attack dog were a hit with the cadets.

Senior cadets had instructional workshops and winter expedition opportunities. Gold Star expeditions were a great success in Vernon over Spring Break. Silver Star Expedition is coming up at the end of April. This year our Annual Ceremonial Review will be held Thursday 15 June 2023 at 1900 hrs at the Armoury.

Lt. Ernie Bodrogi

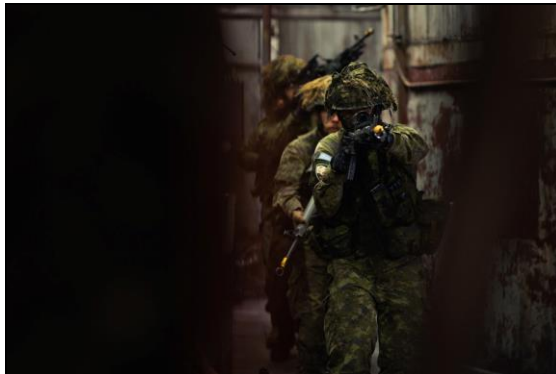
## **Former Brewery Serves as Urban Operations Training Site for Local Soldiers**

Soldiers of The Royal Westminster Regiment participated in a company level urban operations exercise at the former site of the Molson Brewery near the Burrard Bridge in Vancouver on the weekend of 24 – 26 February 2023. Fifty-five local reservists joined other troops from 39 Canadian Brigade Group for a combat team task, training for war in the modern context of fighting in industrial areas as was recently in the news in Mariupol, Ukraine.

After orders, rehearsals, and the other preparations, the three platoons conducted a stealthy insertion, backed up by notional artillery and armoured assets to round out the combat team. Soldiers used “Simunition”, essentially a small paint pellet fired from the C7 service rifle by gunpowder to augment the immersive training experience. The fictional opposing force, the Denovians, were fortified throughout the deactivated brewing facility, providing a challenge to the infantry soldiers clearing the building room by room.

“An industrial site such as this is the ideal location for realistic urban warfare training in the combined arms context” explained Captain Clint Uttley, Officer Commanding “A” Company, The Royal Westminster Regiment, “The excellent training value of an exercise like this prepares our infanteers to augment the regular force when needed.” Attached medics, pioneers, and other combat trades rounded out the platoons to make integrated combined arms combat teams.

Scenarios such as these are well known to video game aficionados, but the weight of a weapon and the smell of gunpowder experienced by the soldiers sprinting across a catwalk far above the fermentation tanks provided an experience that is hard to replicate any where else. Persons interested in joining the Canadian Armed Forces Primary Reserve for unique part-time job such as this are urged to contact their local army unit recruiter.



## **-20.C Weather Challenges Soldiers on Winter Survival Training**

In January, soldiers of The Royal Westminster Regiment headed to the mountains for a four-day winter warfare training exercise at the Coquihalla Summit. They were prepared with snowshoes, toboggans, and arctic tents, but spent the first day learning winter survival skills from the Canadian Rangers, including building improvised shelters in the snow, starting fires, avalanche awareness, and foraging for food. The subsequent days were spent honing essential soldier skills in the winter environment, with over a meter of snow, winds, and nighttime temperatures dipping to -24 degrees Celsius.

“I was so proud to get a fire going with just some shavings and a flint” enthused Corporal Visscher, of Chilliwack after the back country lesson from the Canadian Rangers. As subject matter experts on all things wilderness, the red shirted Rangers are always appreciated for their bushcraft lessons.

Morale was high despite the austere conditions, with soldiers pulling together as a team and enjoying the simple pleasures when they could: “Getting up to brew some coffee at 6am and sitting in the snow with the other troops watching the sunrise was definitely the highlight for me” added Corporal Fernandes.

As the Army in BC, being able to operate in all conditions is a critical skill for these Primary Reserve soldiers who have served in Eastern Europe, on the fire lines in 2020, and during the 2021 floods. To build their skills and resilience, reservists give up their weekends and brave the elements to challenge themselves in a hostile operating environment. This “one night a week, one weekend a month, one month a year” commitment is truly what makes these soldiers “twice the citizen”.



Soldiers from The Royal Westminster Regiment set off into the wilds above the Coquihalla Summit.



Soldiers from The Royal Westminster Regiment learn about back county survival from instructors from the 4<sup>th</sup> Canadian Ranger Patrol Group.



Soldiers practice fire starting using flint and steel.

## **DOMESTIC OPERATIONS OF THE WESTIES Pre-1950**

By Chuck MacKinnon (LCOL Retd),  
Manager of The Royal Westminster Regiment Museum

For the last two decades, members of The Royal Westminster Regiment have participated in various Domestic Operations in Canada. Aid to the Civil Authority and Assistance to Law Enforcement have been requested by the various Provinces for everything such as: natural disasters for example Flooding, Forest fires; Health Pandemic and security assistance. Since the year 2000, Domestic Operations has become a priority task for Reservists.

However, aid to Domestic Operations also occurred before 1950. The operations the unit was called out for were for security and flooding. They were the following:

- 15 May – 2<sup>nd</sup> Oct 1864 Chilcotin/Bute Inlet Affair<sup>1</sup>;
- 1 May- 4 May 1877 Dunsmuir Coal Mine Strike, Nanaimo BC<sup>2</sup>;
- 24<sup>th</sup> July – 30<sup>th</sup> July 1900 Stevenson Salmon Strike, Stevenson BC<sup>3</sup>;
- 15 Aug 1913- 15 Aug 1914 Cumberland Coal Mine Strike<sup>4</sup> (the longest militia deployment in BC prior to the Pandemic in 2020), and the
- 28<sup>th</sup> May – 13<sup>th</sup> of June 1948 Fraser Valley Floods.

The militia and permanent force were called out for other incidents, but these only affected the military on Vancouver Island.

A synopsis of each deployment gives the reader an insight on what the unit did. One of the biggest issues for the unit was having appropriate equipment and any logistics to support their deployments. The legality of the call outs came into question and both military, judicial and government claimed deniability when the orders were questioned. Furthermore, there were questions of conflict of interest between the mining companies and militia officers. Some of the officers were executive management or related to those companies.

### **The Chilcotin Uprising of 1865**

The Chilcotin Uprising of 1864 started as a dispute between Alfred Waddington and Tsilhqot'in First nation. Alfred Waddington's intent was to build a road from Bute Inlet to Chilcotin Plateau.

There were a number of factors that led to the First Nation warriors harassing Waddington's construction crews and killing fourteen of them. These included the treatment and relationship of Europeans with the peoples of the First Nations, as a result of the fur trade and the gold rush and

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<sup>1</sup> *The Chilcotin Uprising of 1864*, Edward Sleigh Hewlett, BC Studies, No. 19, Autumn 1973

<sup>2</sup> *History of the Militia And Defences Of British Columbia 1871-1914*, Peter Silverman, MA Thesis. April 1956

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, Peter Silverman

<sup>4</sup> *The Militia and the coal mine strike*, Peter Silverman, Legion Magazine 25<sup>th</sup> July 2016

the introduction of smallpox leading to the epidemic of 1862. (Haida Gwaii First Nation had experienced 95% mortality.)

On the 15<sup>th</sup> May 1865, under the command of Captain Chartres Brew, Officer Commanding The New Westminster Volunteer Rifles and twenty eight personnel set sail on HMS Forward. (Brew was also the Chief Inspector of Police for the Colony of British Columbia). Governor Seymour ordered an increase in personnel and a land and additional maritime force were established. This second force, consisted of thirty-eight-man force from the Rifles and the Hyack Fire Brigade (of New Westminster), set sail on HMS Sutlej. On the 6<sup>th</sup> of October 1865, the soldiers returned to New Westminster.

Eventually the First Nation Warriors were tried in Quesnel on the 29<sup>th</sup> Sept 1865 and five were hanged for their participation in the uprising.

In 1999, the Tsilhqot'in First nations applied to have their Warriors convictions overturned. Their position was that their Warriors were defending their Nation and were not criminals. The Government of B.C. pardoned the Warriors.

### **Wellington Coal Strike 1877**

In February of 1877, miners at the Dunsmuir, Diggie Company had a dispute with the miner owners about the rate of pay for the weight of coal being mined. What incensed the miners was that during negotiations with the owners, Chinese labourers continued to work. Violence incurred between the two groups of miners. Local law enforcement was concerned that they couldn't quell the unrest and that it would get worse as one mine site was supported by other miners from other sites.

The mine owners requested assistance from the Lieutenant Governor. HMS Rocket was dispatched to the strike zone. Hoping its presence alone would quell the unrest. But it had no significant effect.

To pressure the miners, the Company owners tried evicting them from Company housing, a common technique used in negotiations. The miners refused to be evicted.

Therefore, 1 May 1877, Number 1 and 2 Company of the Victoria Volunteer Rifles were called out and embarked on HMS Maude which then sailed to New Westminster. Members of the New Westminster Volunteer Rifles and the Seymour Battery under the command of Lt Scott and Capt Peele respectively, embarked.

The 120 personnel set sail for Departure Bay. Upon arrival they set up camp and acted in liaison with the local authorities.

However, the unrest didn't materialize. A few days later the force re-embarked on HMS Maude, which returned them to their home cities.

### **Stevenson Salmon Strike 1900**

In the summer of 1900, local fishermen in Stevenson, B.C. at the Britannia and Phoenix Canneries were trying to negotiate for better wages and union recognition. However, Japanese fisherman refused to participate in the strike. The white and Indian fishermen set up fishing boat patrols to prevent the Japanese fishermen from fishing.

As in Nanaimo B.C., local authorities were concerned that the dispute between fisherman would become violent and escalate and they didn't have the means to quell the insurrection. Therefore, they requested military support.

On the 10<sup>th</sup> of July 1900, the 6<sup>th</sup> Regiment Duke of Connaught's Own Rifles, was called out. (A and B Companies were located in New Westminster and the 6<sup>th</sup> Regiment is an antecedent unit of The Royal Westminster Regiment). Apparently, "a bugler rode the streets of Vancouver to rally the troops". 200 personnel were mustered and moved to Stevenson, B.C. to set up camp and act in liaison with local authorities. Their orders were to remain there for seven days. Upon their arrival there were no violent fishermen to contend with and on the 17<sup>th</sup> July 1900, they were sent back to their garrisons.

### **15 Aug 1913- 15 Aug 1914 Cumberland Coal Mine Strike**

In the early weeks of August 1913, the American Federation of Miners had served strike notice against McKenzie and Mann who had bought the Dunsmuir mine assets. As with previous strike incidents, the Japanese and Chinese labourers continued to work. Street fighting and violence broke out. It was believed that US agitators, Belgian and Polish Nationals hired by the mining company were also involved in trying to break the strike.

On the 13<sup>th</sup> August 1913, the Militia was called out. Not even the Canadian Government's \$17 million dollar grant to the mining company to help construct the Canadian Northern railway could settle the affair.

Riots started to take place. Special Police were hired to quell the strike but were pushed out of the various mining communities by the strikers.

At 9 p.m. on the evening of the 13<sup>th</sup> August, Colonel Hall of the 88<sup>th</sup> Fusiliers and Colonel Arthur Currie<sup>5</sup> of the 5<sup>th</sup> B.C. Regt of Garrison Artillery plus 50 permanent force personnel and 2 x Machine Guns mustered their troops. The Esquimalt and Nanaimo Railway was used to move

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<sup>5</sup> Col Arthur Currie would later become the Canadian Corps Commander during WWI

them from Victoria to Nanaimo. Meanwhile, in Vancouver arrangements were made with the B.C. Steamship Company of the Canadian Pacific Railway to move troops from Vancouver. This force did not include the 104<sup>th</sup> Regiment of New Westminster, which previously had been A and B companies of the 6th Regiment Duke of Connaught's Own Rifles. At 11 p.m. that evening they set sail. At the same time the Provincial Police cut telegraph and telephone lines to Nanaimo.

1000 all ranks left Victoria and at 2 a.m. arrived at the Brechin Mine with no opposition. The force of 1000 personnel were distributed at the following locations: Nanaimo Railroad yard, Nanaimo Wharf, Ladysmith, South Wellington, the Extension and Cumberland/Union Bay. Their task was to guard mine property, rescue refugees and other duties. Locals who were related to the miners also ran local infrastructure and the telephone system. In fact, the military had to remove local operators and replace them with members of the 72th Seaforth whom spoke Gaelic – “the Scottish talkers”.

The force also interdicted reinforcements for the miners and had these personnel arrested. However, after a few days the members of the force requested short leave so they could go home and get a change of clothing and look after their business affairs. This reduced the force to between 350-400 personnel.

For the next year, soldiers continued to rotate from their units and conduct patrolling and protecting Mine property and local citizens. On 28 April 1914 the 104th Regiment Westminister Fusiliers of Canada were ordered to supply two companies for duty in Nanaimo. One company from New Westminster and the second company selected from the companies at Chilliwack and Cloverdale, were activated. They travelled to Nanaimo on Wednesday 29 April 1914. They were there to keep the peace in case there were demonstrations by the striking miners on May Day. There were no incidents and the companies returned home on Sunday 3 May 1914.



On the 15<sup>th</sup> of August 1914, the remainder of the force was stood down and return to their garrison locations.

### **28 May – 13 June 1948 Fraser Valley Floods**

The spring of 1948 saw the Fraser River reach record water levels of 25 feet above the norms of 16 feet, but the dike being breached in Harrison Mills lead to both transcontinental railways becoming submerged and the Fraser Valley flooded as well as low lying areas downstream of the Fraser River.

On the 28<sup>th</sup> of May, C Company under command of Major Grinstead OBE were activated. By the 30<sup>th</sup> of May, under command of Lt Col Cummings 25 Officers and 110 personnel of the unit were activated.

The Westminster Regiment was assigned both Sector 6 around Lulu Island and the eastern Fraser Valley and was headquartered in Chilliwack.

By the 13<sup>th</sup> of June 1948, the water receded, and militiamen were stood down. Members of the Permanent Force continue to assist until 30<sup>th</sup> of June 1948.

*Involvement of the militia on Domestic Operations from 1950- 2000s were greatly reduced because of the size of Militia/Reserve Force versus Regular Force and that the role was amended to civil defence and student employment. It wasn't until the 2000s with reduction of the Regular Force as well as amendments in training for reservists and terms of service (Class C contracts) that reservists were allowed to be used in Domestic Operations.*

### **Are Your Dues Up To Date?**

The Royal Westminster Regiment Association depends on your dues and donations. Yearly dues are \$20 and a Life Membership is \$200.

Send in your dues today to;

[Treasurer@royal-westies-assn.ca](mailto:Treasurer@royal-westies-assn.ca)

Thanks.

### **What became of Kelly?**

(Help us reconnect with former members)

How about reaching out to your friends that you soldiered with and persuade them to join the Association.

## **Health & Welfare**

It would be appreciated if all members of The Regimental family would report births, marriages and deaths within our membership and their families. I am sure with such a young Regiment there will be lots of babies born. So please drop us a line if you know anything.