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Dedicated to the ideals and Comradeship
We knew in Wars and Peace and in
Our services both Home and Abroad.



THE GROUNDSHEET

The Official Publication of

The Royal Westminster Regiment Association
P.O. Box 854, New Westminster, BC V3L 4Z8

February 2001

IN SERVICE FOR OUR NATION IN THE LAST
MILLENNIUM

The Royal Westminster Regiment

Westminster Regiment
Westminster Regiment (Motor)
Westminster Regiment (MG)
Westminster Regiment ((INF))
47th Battalion
131st Battalion
104th Westminster Fusiliers of Canada
Seymour Battery of Garrison Artillery
New Westminster Volunteer Rifles
Royal Engineers

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Editor's Corner

Jerry N. Gangur Email: jgan@telus.net

Greetings to all members! Wearing my hat as the chair of the **Future Fund**, may I extend my sincere thanks , on behalf of the executive, to those who responded to our appeal for donations to the **Future Fund**. We have a ways to go, but we will get there. You will hear from the chairman one more time later this quarter. Would just like to say, there is no more important project for our association than securing funds for the Future Fund. It is the income from this source which will ensure we have the financial means to function in years to come.

Received a call from a member reporting that **Chuck Cousins** died. I'm sure that those who knew him would agree that he was a wonderful man and always a perfect gentleman. The Regiment's Honorary Colonel **Bill McKinney** passed away earlier this month. He was a devoted family man and testimony to this statement is that he and his wife Beryl spent an amazing 60 years together as husband and wife. We will remember them.

Judging from the success of our Xmas Lights Tour, the executive is planning to repeat the venture in December 2001. We got snowed on, but it was fun!

See our plans for the Jack Mahony booklet on page 9. Editor

Happenings !!

Westminster Regiment (M) & Canadian troops in Italy (News article thanks to Jack Hogarth)

In November 2000, the War Amps released a video as part of its Never Again! Series. The video **A War of Their Own: The Canadians in Sicily and Italy** is comprised to two parts, each 60 minutes in length. Part I : Sicily to Ortona covers the campaign from the Sicily invasion to the battle for Ortona and has now been released to community channels across Canada. Part II: The D-Day Dodgers follows the Canadians as they take part in the battles in Northern Italy such as the Gothic Line, Coriano Ridge and the Savio River.

The series shows how the Canadians in Sicily and Italy faced tremendous odds never before experienced by the Canadian Army and developed innovative techniques to fight in an inhospitable terrain against an experienced enemy force during almost two years of steady fighting. A War of Their Own tells the story of another D-Day almost a year before the Normandy Landing , on July 10, 1943 when Canadian troops landed on the southern shores of Sicily. War Amps Chief Executive Officer Cliff Chadderton stated "It should never be forgotten that 93,000 Canadians fought their way toward Rome and beyond and that almost 6,000 are buried in cemeteries from Sicily to Northern Italy."

The two-part series can be purchased at a price of \$14.00 by calling toll free 1-800-250-3030, fax 1800-219-8988 or visit web site at www.waramps.ca

Memorial Book Project - Regimental Museum

Much of the work and many of the projects completed in the museum , while in progress, go unnoticed. Here is one such project. During the last many months, under the direction of volunteer George Challenor ex RCNVR, a list of all members of the 47th Bn in WWI and Westminster Regiment (M) in WWII, killed in action has been accumulated. George Challenor's father served in the 47th Bn. When completed the Memorial Book will be displayed in the Musuem and Curators Basil Morgan and Herb Hamm say a page will be turned over on a regular basis.

Westies in Bosnia

20 Dec 2000 Brian Woodcock

Hello again. Life in Bihac is good. It is a happening place to say the least. Lots of stuff for soldiers to do there. The only down side of it is that there is no internet in the whole friggin place. Another interesting thing is there is no interact or credit of any kind in the whole country. Cash is the only medium of exchange which puts robbery at a high on market days cause everyone shows up with at least some money.Had a contest on the radio show to see what the stupidest gift was that someone was given. This guy got these boxer shorts with a dwarf on them. He won but he didn't understand that we would use the honor system and take his word for it so he walked down to the radio show in his boxers to prove it. Kind of an interesting day to say the least.

Date: Thu, 11 Jan 2001 04:27:45 -0800

Hey dudes, its me again. Well now its on to the second half of the tour. Looks like we will all be home in the first week of April. Not bad news at all I would say. Hope everyone enjoys the ski trip with out me. Yeah right. Its starting to warm up over here. Due to our geographical location winter is much shorter here that Canada. I have bought so much stuff from these local markets that I have so far sent 40 kilograms of stuff home. More to follow. Now we have started to think about coming home and what that will be like. Its exciting and scary at the same time. It will be great to see everyone (and really great to see a certain someone) but what am I going to do with all my free time. Road trip anyone.

Bihac is getting better and better by the day. I have three interpreters to choose from for my radio show and it gets interesting to say the least.

From: "Pte.R.Watson, "

To: "Capt Mackinnon

Date: Wed, 31 Jan 2001 04:38:27 -0500 (EST)

..... Thanks for the update I was wondering what was going on back home. About the questions you asked, I think I am on one of the last flights back to Canada April 2. I guess they don't like the idea of Operations going home too soon. Ha,Ha. By the sounds of it over here(working in BGHQ and all) the westies will be leaving at completely different times. I love the idea of being at the airport at the same time, but I am not sure it will work. We've just received our leave memo. It states we'll be kept in Winnipeg for two days after our redeployment. That means from March 25 to April 9 people will be arriving back in Vancouver and of course some are getting there flight somewhere else(to visit family).....Anyways, I can find out anything you need regarding that sort of stuff. I'll inquire to the dates of the rest of the Westies. That way I can confirm when we all get back.

I can't believe it's gotten to the point where you look forward to having your two daily cold beers. Maj. Bartlett is my boss over here, he's ok. We went on a 10km ruck march the other day in 1hour 32min and had to run the last km. I still feel like crap. I go on patrols with Mortars and I am the turret gunner. Well, I should go for now. Talk to yah later.

From: Pte. Craig Goldsby
 Date: Wed, 29 Nov 2000 06:49:23 -0800 (PST)

Hello again Captain Mackinnon & members of the regimental association

Now that the moratorium on communication should be lifted, how is everything at the unit? Any interesting news to pass on? As promised here is the November writeup for the millennium book/newsletter/etc.. ..

ROTO 7 month 2

The second month of Roto 7 here in Bosnia Herzegovina has seemed to fly by (at least when looking back at it). The usual routine of our patrols through our AOR has continued as before, although every now and then new, interesting sights present themselves. For example, on a few occasions we have spotted vehicles sporting Canadian license plates, with Ontario plates being the most prominent. They were not imported the 'legal way' no doubt, as we have strong doubts Canadian tourists decided to drive to Bosnia for their vacations. Occasionally we even see a local repainted Iltis driving through Tomislavgrad, its regular green finish exchanged for a new yellow and bright green half and half combination. October 31st also brought with it its own set of new sights, although they were not the usual costume wearing children and pumpkin and witches decorations you would find in Canada to celebrate the occasion. Instead, here on All Saint's Day it is believed that the spirits of people who have departed this world come back to walk the earth on that night. If they see that they are still remembered they go back to rest in peace, but if they are not they are doomed to walk the earth. That being said during that day there are ceremonies to remember the dead and flowers and candles are left at gravesides to remember them. It is quite amazing to see the many small graveyards that we pass on our patrols during that day and on the following days overflowing with flowers left for the occasion. As well on that night the number of candles placed in these cemeteries make each area almost appear as a sample of certain rock concert crowds.

Another interesting sight that broke up the usual patrol routine was the discovery by one of the local Bosnia NGO demining organizations of two large 'sea mines' far back into a field that borders one of the roads we regularly use. We however politely refused the offer to walk into the field and take a look for ourselves. Our view through our binos was quite sufficient for us, as despite the assurances by the official that it would be safe, we did not wish to discover anything else in the field that had been previously cleared long before this recent discovery. For a 'city boy' such as myself, watching the slaughtering of a pig on a local farm by a butcher in the owner's driveway while keeping watch over the grizzly was another new experience.

Our regular patrol routine is broken up by the even less exciting platoon duty of gate guard and QRF (quick reaction force) every five to six weeks or so. Gate guard consists of two eight-hour shifts of boredom for the twenty-four hour period that your section is tasked with gate. Highlights of this duty include escorting around various civilian vehicles (such as the shitter-truck, a favorite of any such duty), logging in and out vehicles and the various camp staff, checking the Ids of civilian workers and issuing both staff and temporary Ids, and conducting roving patrols of the camp during night hours. However I feel a tinge of irony when I salute an Iltis or Grizzly at the gate, especially when I have not had to salute an officer during my two months here so far. However, I cannot complain at all about our 'no saluting below Colonel' policy and rather quite like it. Gate guard is followed by a day of QRF. The section's grizzly is at the front gate, unlocked and ready to go and the section is on notice to move if some emergency should occur. This day is the best of gate week, since you can

usually just carry on with whatever you want to do as long as you are in combats and write down your location in case some emergency such as a mine strike did occur. The only specific task the QRF always carries out is the daily burn of classified waste, although occasionally other specific tasks come up such as VIP escort as one example.

Through our patrolling I have had the chance to see in further detail certain areas of our AOR outside of our section's prime area. The area that is the most striking is the northern most part of the Livno valley. This area was the predominate Bosniac part of the valley before the war. As such it is the prime area our DPRES have returned to. The widespread destruction caused by the Croat forces to drive out the Serbs from this area is clearly evident. Not a single house remains untouched, with most having been torched during the war and all sport extensive damage. Such feelings of resentment are still illustrated today by the local administration's view of this area's few inhabitants that have moved back after the war. There is no power or water supplied to the area. Although there are telephone poles already erected in the area their power lines have long since been cut, leaving dangling, powerless wires to hang down to the ground. This cut in power lines matches the abrupt boundary between paved road and gravel and dirt track. Also comparatively much more of this area still remains mined. In one stretch yellow mine tape demarks mined areas on either side of the road while some buildings in the area simply have 'mines' spray painted on their stone walls with painted arrows pointing into entrances and doorways. All of the people who have come back to the area are elderly, in some cases very much so. Some live in mere tents or shacks while they work to rebuild their homes. They all sport a determination to not let barbarism prevail and to rebuild their lives and are always very eager to see us. Anti-armour platoon, which is also based in TSG, has as their main tasking CIMIC duties, and as one are helping DPRES to rebuild their roofs and their houses before the burnt of winter arrives.

Beyond our regular patrols there are other tasks we carry out which brake up the usual routine. Wednesday morning is market day in Livno, and so regularly one section patrols the market that day. This gives us not only a chance to be offered various wares by the local vendors, but also a chance to hand out SFOR local-language newsmagazines, notices, such as to the date and locations to vote for the local elections, and other propaganda. We also converse with the local people during such patrols as well as other foot patrols through the city and surrounding villages. Locals have stopped me more than once upon recognizing the Canadian flag on our shoulders to relate how their relatives have moved to Canada, most often Toronto, or to either thank us with a smile or much less often make a snide remark about SFOR's presence here. We have also continued to carry out our various humanitarian efforts here to help the people of our area. Examples include the delivery and the chopping of wood for local DPRES and the delivery of school supplies and sports equipment to local schools. We have also begun to help the people here rebuild the school previously mentioned which was in so dire of shape. They have knocked the old roof of the school and are in the process of starting to build a new one. We are helping them to clear the debris from both inside and around the school and have arranged for a bulldozer and dump truck for the purpose as a first step. We will also begin to build a fence for another school here in a week or so.

Around our camp in Tomislavgrad itself there has been a building frenzy to prepare the camp for the winter. Although there were many doubts as to when, or even if, it would ever happen, the thick wavy plastic roofs over our platoon lines around camp have been replaced with more substantial roofs for the winter over the last two weeks of November. It could not come at a better time, as the weather here is definitely becoming colder and we recently received the first snow of the winter in the higher elevations. November also brought with it the loss of our potable water, although I have the feeling it is more likely just a new discovery of certain items in our

water supply and that it has been questionable all along. It did take some mental effort with this change in the beginning to resist the natural, practiced urge to simply run your toothbrush under the tap and instead only use bottle water for brushing your teeth. The later part of the month also marked the final arrival of the promised computers for the Internet. With the four hundred and fifty or so soldiers of the camp now sharing seven instead of one it is much easier to get a chance to answer email or write such as this. Although, even these can create some angst, due to the loss of information during the relatively brief power outages we regularly have here two to three times a week. As well it seems every second week or so some new entourage of a visiting colonel or general or commander of this or that makes their way into the camp for a few days visit, with their frequency almost becoming part of the regular routine. The biggest source of excitement on the camp itself must be the very competitive floor hockey league here that has the 'Skoal Cup' at stake for its winner, a trophy made out of a tower of chew cans.

The prime focus of our tour during the first month was to prepare for the local elections on November 11th. Much of our intelligence gathering was aimed towards this, such as locating and conducting reces of the various schools and buildings that would be used as polling stations and asking local inhabitants what they had heard about the election and if they knew where to vote. Although we practiced procedures for JCO extraction and were well briefed on what we would do if something flared up, the elections ended up being as much of a non-event as expected. It ended up simply being a very long and extended day of patrolling. The week before the election also marked a large simultaneous raid by our company on every civpol and special police station in our entire AOR. This not only set the tone for the elections that followed, but also led to the seizure of over seven hundred weapons as well as surveillance and communications equipment and other 'goodies' they were not supposed to have. With the elections on the eleventh, our Remembrance Day ceremonies were pushed back to the twelfth of the month, although we still recognized the two minutes of silence at eleven. However, it marked the first time in memory I have not been at such ceremonies. Instead during them I was on a patrol through the northern most part of the Livno valley and the shattered remains of the villages that once stood there. In its own way it was indeed very fitting.

This month also saw our eventual return to Mostar to complete our exchange with the reconnaissance squadron from the Spanish Battalion and this time the exchange was not cut short. Our four days at their camp in Mostar gave us an opportunity not only to note the differences between their camp, weapons and equipment and ours but also a chance to see a new area of Bosnia through our patrols with them. Our arrival coincided with the beginning of the last week and a half for their current four-month tour. Their soldiers were just as eager to return home as you might expect. Although their tours are regularly six months in duration, similar to ours and like the next Spanish tour will be, their tour was only four months due to the same type of budget cuts they were experiencing that would ring true to anyone in the Canadian military. This saved their government the expense of sending their troops home twice. Instead of receiving both a four day and a seven day break over a six month tour, they only received one four day break and our sympathy. This gave us new appreciation for the two '96s' we will receive with our nineteen-day HLTA during our seven months here. The fact that the Spanish iso-trailers house four men and parade every morning was also a reason for us to count our blessings. However, hearing drill called out in another strange language on the two times I paraded with them sounded strange in the least. As well the large bulk of their personal equipment is issued just for the tour. Through our patrols with the Spanish we had a chance to not only view Mostar and its surrounding areas but also to show the Spanish what an Iltis can do over rough terrain and to stand in no-man's land between the Croatia and Bosnian borders. Mostar itself is one of the largest cities in Bosnia and it saw very heavy fighting during the war. It has the extensive damage that illustrates

this. The majority of buildings show some form of damage, with many splatter painted with potholes and indentations from bullet-holes.

The Spanish camp is much bigger than ours in TSG, housing two infantry companies, the recce squadron, a signals regiment, a headquarters regiment, and various other odds and sods. Their mess was a marked contrast to ours in many regards. Instead of plates, thick metal trays resembling those found in a meal lines in a Hollywood movie were used. This elicited many comments in conversations as to what their effectiveness would be either used as weapons in a brawl or as replacements for ceramic plates in our flak vests. As well, their much larger mess gave us not only the new experience of trying their various tastes in food, with squid tentacles being the hands down winner in the least favourite category, but also eating with the small birds who would dart around to clean up any spilled crumbs or food. Their camp contains its own café and its own bar. The café has the best steaks to be found in all of Bosnia so far, and members of our platoon must have devoured a small herd of cows in our brief time at their camp. The bar gave us the opportunity to not only make friends with the local Spanish soldiers, but also with the Argentina MSU, a contingent of SFOR's riot police who happened to be in Mostar at the same time. However, such exchanges in the bar were cut short by the camp's mandatory 11pm curfew and a touch of prodding by the Spanish who were responsible for enforcing it. Our stay at SPABAT's camp turned out to be a rewarding experience, however by the end of the four days we as a platoon were all glad to be 'home' in Tomislavgrad to see what is next to come.

Pro Rege Et Patria

Editor: Decision made to print email as received. It was felt that the thoughts of our soldiers in the midst of their tour, veterans and serving members of the bn would appreciate the descriptions of personal experiences.

Returno Canada

The current tour of our troops in Bosnia will be ending soon and we expect to see all Westies safely, at home by the end of April . With good fortune, Melfa 2001 will give us an opportunity to have some interesting conversations with these peacekeepers.

Dues are Due

If you are not a life member and you overlooked sending us your dues for 2001, pick up that pen now and write out a cheque for \$15.00. We would appreciate hearing from you.

Melfa 2001

*First Dinner of the New Millenium
May 25, 26 & 27*

Warning Order

Want to have great time, come join us at Melfa 2001 and help launch the new Millennium.

A detailed outline of activities planned for the weekend will be provided in the April issue of the Groundsheet. Here is what we can tell you now:

- a. Friday - Golf Tee Off: 12 noon
Mylora Golf Club
- b. Saturday: Dinner in the Armory
Cost \$30.00 per person
- a. Sunday: Brunch in the Armoury followed by the
Annual General Meeting.

Housekeeping

Advance notice: It is the intention of the executive to present for your consideration, in the next issue of the Groundsheet, a motion to amend the constitution by creating a category of "associate" or "honorary" membership. Membership to this category will be could be approved annually at an AGM 2001. We invite your views, pro or con.

Letters to the editor are always welcomed. If there is a thought, suggestion or improvement you might be thinking of for the Groundsheet, just drop us a note and we would be most pleased.

Jack Mahony V.C. Booklet

Since the unveiling of the VC plaque, on 6th Street, in 1997, your regimental association has been planning to publish a booklet on the life of **Jack Mahony, V.C.** President **Len Wohlgemuth** informed the executive that he expects to have the booklet ready for distribution at Melfa 2001. This will compliment the booklet already published on the life of the regiment's World War I Victoria Cross recipient, **Filip Konowal, V.C.** Come to the Melfa weekend, get your Jack Mahony, VC booklet and participate in this historic celebration.

VC Plaque Memorial Beautification

Your regimental association is proceeding with Phase II of the program for our memorial to our regiment's two Victoria Cross recipient's. Phase two entails installing a lamp post behind the monument for night time illumination. President **Len** says that if the light standard is not completed in time for Melfa 2001, we will have an event sometime in October to mark the occasion. Our monument is certainly an attraction to passersby and completion of this phase will enhance an already magnificent monument.

Cadet Corps News: *Cadets Visit the Vets*

Many of us can trace the geneses of our interest in the military to our exposure or service in Cadets. Well, we have very active cadet corps affiliated with the regiment and on most occasions the community service or extra services performed go unnoticed. Our cameraman was present on one such occasion captured below. *From them the future!*



Visiting Westminster Vets at George Derby Center. Left to right: C/MWO Nikko Steenhuisen (1922 Abbotsford RCACC), C/Sgt Colian Amyot (1922), Walter Jackson, Bill Thorarison, C/Sgt Amanda Weber (2822 Surrey Delta) and C/Sgt Chris Quin (2316 New Westminster)



Group Photo of visitors to George Derby: Cadet Corps commanding officers, extreme left standing,