

VOLUME 95 / ISSUE 3

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, B.C. V3L 4Z8

OCTOBER 95

1914

1918

1939

1945



## NOT FORGOTTEN

## EXECUTIVE

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## EDITOR'S CORNER

### 50 Years of Nostalgia 1945 to May 1995.

It would seem that the year of 1995 spanned the savagery of 1939/45 era. This was a grand anniversary of the peace in Europe and seemed none to soon. For many of the 1939 members it seemed long indeed. To those who rushed to THE COLORS of The Westies it is significant that many Westies volunteered for the raging battles in the Pacific, World War 2, as such had not ended with V.E. Day - and it would not be over until August 1946. The Korean "Police Action" saw many grave sites in Europe and Asia, it must have seemed like voices from the past. Those veterans from Sicily, Italy must have been proud "D" Day Dodgers. To all those fortunate to have returned it must have been a period of deep emotions. The Plethora of Canadian Headstones would evoke strong memories of what we had done... The marked reality of what we had done, as Canadians in the quest for freedom. Remembrance Day 1995 draws nigh, and as we honor our fallen comrades, perhaps it would be appropriate to honor also our survivors. We have grown old and for many the years have condemned many to a variety of illnesses. For many serving Westies "The Golden years have turned to Brass." Let us then salute the "Living and the Dead".

Ron Hurley



## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The year of our Lord, 1995 is drawing to a close. This has been a busy year for your association and we have been side tracked somewhat in planning for the future because of this being the 50th anniversary of the end of W.W. II. Fifty years is a lifetime and long enough to see two generations flourish and "takeover" roles of government and all those institutions which control our lives. We had the pleasure and honor, this year of telling the war story to these newer generations and we think we did a good job.

Your association was quite busy with the fiftieth anniversary events. At home, we participated in a massive commemoration by the Dutch Canadian Community. Some of the activities included a dinner at the Seaforth Armoury, hosted by the Dutch Canadians Remember 1945 Society. Ten veterans who served in Holland represented our association. A plaque commemorating the 50th anniversary of W.W. II and honoring our Peace keepers was placed by the City of New Westminster at the cenotaph immediately in front of the City Hall. Our Melfa dinner was well attended, but the number that do not answer the roll is painfully noticeable. Overseas, we were well represented at ceremonies in Holland. Bill McIntyre, Vernon Ardagh and Joe Bush carried the Westie colors at ceremonies in Holland. Bill McIntyre informed me that in Holland he spotted a Westie Cap Badge in the Honor Guard and said hello to MCpl Mike Milne. From reports received, it appears that a number of our members went to Holland on their own and experienced the remarkable hospitality of the Dutch population. Some reported that once it was known that they were Canadian, they just couldn't spend any of their own money at the bars. Our final tribute to the end of W.W. II will occur on November 11, at the Remembrance Day ceremony.

The Regiment has had some changes in orders this year. We were scheduled to send a complete TOW platoon to Bosnia, but things in that part of the world have changed and or boys will not be going - as of this date. Members of the regiment who are also serving on the board of directors of your association are making their presence felt. I am happy to report that the Chairperson of Melfa 96 will be a serving member. New, and contributing quickly to our activities, is Master Corporal Rob McTavish. MCpl McTavish has just assumed the duties of PMC of the Junior Ranks Club.

Last year the 1st Annual Turkey Shoot was held at the Jr. Ranks Christmas party and the Trophy awarded was named in honor of L/Sgt Len Bailey, MM. Len presented the trophy to the winner himself. We have been advised by the new RSM, CWD Day that the competition will be repeated this year. He has also advised me that all members of the association are invited to come for dinner. The executive is requesting a show of force from our association. See details elsewhere in the Groundsheet.

Best wishes for a Merry Christmas and have a good 1996.

Jerry N. Gangur  
President



**ROYAL CITY MARKS 50TH ANNIVERSARY V.E. DAY AND HONORS PEACE KEEPERS**

Master Corporal Mike Milne, a United Nations peace keeper, addressing the audience at a ceremony on May 7, in recognition of the 50th Anniversary of Victory in Europe.

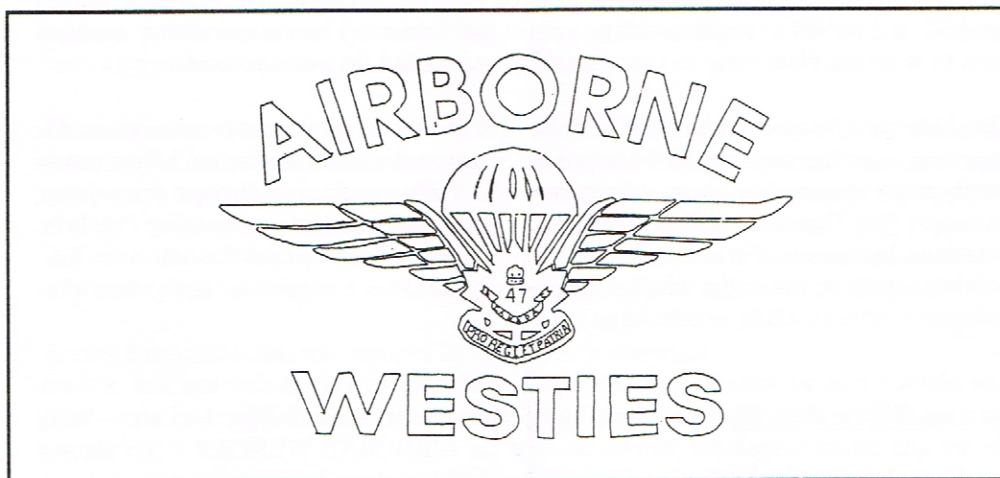


Commemorative plaque mounted on the cenotaph in front of City Hall, in the City of New Westminster.





A British Columbian Airborne Chapter comes to a Close



The interior of the of the C-130 Hercules drowns out the nervous conversation of the "cherry" jumpers and focuses the thoughts of the experienced. The aircraft from CFB Edmonton 435 Transport Squadron bucks and pitches as it heads toward Drop Zone (DZ) Abbotsford, B.C. The Jump Masters (JM) Sgt's John McLaren and Perry Fiedler are awash in the red glow of the interior lights. The **"ONE MINUTE"** is given. The jumpers strain to remain standing with full kit and await the next command. **"STAND - BY"**! Tense attention is focused on the jump lights. The light goes green. Like a rifle shot, the command **"GO"** is given. The grate and snap of static lines the shuffling of feet and equipment is heard. Each jumper **JAB'S** and exits into the night. The paratroopers are snapped and buffeted by the 120 mph prop blast. The distinct odor of spent JP-4 fuel wafts through their nostrils. Each jumper counts and waits to see his olive drab bundle blossom into a perfect chute. **"CHECK CANOPY"**! Another parachute descent has been completed by members of the Airborne platoon of The Royal Westminster Regiment.

Form 1985 to 1993, FMC HQ (Army Headquarters, St Hubert, Que.) had tasked four Militia units: Le Regiment du Saguenay (Chicoutimi, Que.), The Queens Own Rifles of Canada (Toronto, Ont.), The Loyal Edmonton Regiment (Edmonton, Alta.), and the Royal Westminster Regiment (New Westminster, B.C.), to provide and train an Airborne Platoon to augment The Canadian Airborne Regiment.

For the first couple of years, the members of these militia units, such as The Royal New Westminster Regiment (R WESTMR R), were entirely reliant on their Regular force brethren to support this task. During the short eight year tasking members of these platoons participated in: Regimental and Commando level exercises, the Airborne Indoctrination Course (AIC), and Tactical Airlift School Taskings.

In keeping with the standards of the Airborne Family, members of the R WESTMR R Airborne Platoon attended a minimum of three Regimental/Commando exercises, passed the AIC, and served a minimum of one year in the platoon. These requirements qualified them to wear the silver clasp to their parachutist wings and the maroon beret.

The Airborne platoon of the R WESTMR R had to overcome many obstacles in the beginning: getting authority to be issued the parasmocks, and the maroon berets (many members purchased their own); registering new DZ's; getting an airplane for a jump; learning about Canadian Airborne Standard Operating Procedures; arranging for JM's, Parachute Instructors, Parachute Riggers and DZ Controllers for each descent; the B.C. weather; getting the entire platoon para - refreshed, on a weekend, at the Canadian Airborne Centre (CABC) in Edmonton.

The platoon like all units had to rely on its leadership to help it develop into a team. Warrant Officer Rob Gilmour, Sgt's Tom Duke, Terry Killam, John McLaren, Perry Fiedler and others helped the platoon become the AIRBORNE WESTIES. The platoon developed into a quiet professional organization with a sharp focus on the task at hand. This quality of training led to the Airborne platoon becoming a strong attraction for new recruits to the R WESTMR R, as well as, a home for many ex-regulars and ex-professional soldiers from other nations (2 Para, Royal Marines, South African Defence Force and the US Rangers). Regular Support Staff Officer's Captain's Don Haisell, Rob McIlroy, and Simon Rushen (all members of the Royal Canadian Regiment) provided the main administrative thrust for the platoon to become self sufficient (except for air crews, aircraft and riggers the platoon did complete some parachute descents with all of its own resources. This included conducting para-refresher in New Westminster, B.C.).

The R WESTMR R Airborne Platoon achieved some milestones which are worthy of mention: 21 para drops in 1 year; para dropped into Hawaii via C-141 Starlifter aircraft; para dropped into Reno, Nevada via Sky crane helicopter; at one time the R WESTMR R had at least 94 parachutists qualified (40 paratroopers current); 3 qualified JM's; and 50% of the platoon had served in the former Yugoslavia.

During the Airborne Platoon's existence in the Westie's it would not have survived without the strong support of the following units and personnel: 435 Transport Squadron; Canadian Airborne Centre; Canadian Forces Parachute Depot; Canadian Forces Aerial Training & Development School; The Canadian Airborne Regiment; Colonel Holmes and LCol Nette; and the unit's own Regular Support Staff.

**Respectfully Submitted,**

**MCpl R McTavish**



### A report from the "D" Coy. branch of the Regimental Association

Former "D" Coy members and their wives met at the Royal Hotel in Chilliwack, President Jerry Gangur and wife Angie were honored Guests.

This was our annual meeting and it was also the fifty sixth anniversary of our mobilization date for W.W. II, fond and also sentimental memories were revived and discussed, some remembered spending their subsistence allowance in that very same place in 1939, (it was probably the best subsistence allowances some of us had seen for some time), it was the end of the Dirty Thirties. We also remembered our Comrades that are no longer with us by standing and bowing our heads for the remembrance prayer by John McConnell.

A very congenial lunch was enjoyed by all sixteen in attendance.

Next years meeting will be at the Royal Hotel in Chilliwack, May 5th at 1:00pm, (see you there), R.S.V.P.



**Attending "D" Coy Dinner, standing form left to right,  
Bruce Eaton, Jack Hartley, Ed Shannon, Fred West and John Coughlin.  
Seated, from left to right. Lyn Edmonds (Sec), President RWRA, Jerry N. Gangur,  
President "D" Coy Branch, John McConnell and Hugh Shannon.**

**REMEMBRANCE DAY - NOVEMBER 11, 1995.**

**FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY - END OF WORLD WAR II**

The ceremonies marking Remembrance Day will model the pattern of previous years. A service held in the Armoury, will be followed by a Cenotaph ceremony in front of City Hall. Respective messes will be open after completion of official ceremonies.

**Timings:**        0945 Hrs - Indoor Service  
                      1030 Hrs - Form up in front of Armoury and march to Cenotaph  
                      1045 Hrs - Cenotaph Ceremony

**Dress:**         Blazers, Berets and Medals.

Editor encourages you to be at the armoury at 9:15.

Messes Open immediately following completion of Cenotaph service.

**WE WILL REMEMBER THEM!**

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**JUNIOR RANKS CHRISTMAS DINNER**

**SATURDAY DECEMBER 16, 1995**

**TIME: 1700 HRS**

**COST; \$5.00**

The winner of the L/Sgt Len Bailey Shooting trophy will be announced. The Regimental Sergeant Major, CWO DAY, has extended an invitation to all association members. Your executive has accepted the invitation and is encouraging a show of force. If Len Bailey is able, he will present the trophy personally as he did at the inaugural presentation.



## CITIZENS OF PUTTEN, HOLLAND REMEMBERS WESTMINSTER'S

Quote from page 192 Westminster War Diary. "Many heavy battles were fought on April 17th (1945) and it would be desirable to record them all in detail. However, the nature of the mobile operations such as these prohibit the recording of anything more than sketchy outlines. Only brief reference can be made to C Company's "battle of the road blocks" from Barneveld to Voorthuizen and B Company's struggles south of Barneveld and their difficult night operation in Voorthuizen. In the course of these actions the Battalion lost three killed in action - Cpl C.L. Pewtress, Pte J. Wakula and Pte. F.L. Waters."

President Jerry Gangur received a telephone call followed by a letter from Kay Lemay, the sister of Charlie Pewtress. This is his summary of the communications. Kay attended a plaque unveiling, in Putten, and the invitation of the local community, honoring the above Westies and Pte John Wallace of the 8th Princess Hussars (also killed in this action).

**Flash back.** On Sunday October 1st, 1944 in reprisal for an attack by the resistance in an incident where a German officer and a couple of soldiers were killed, German troops, assisted by the Dutch SS, arrested 661 men and after releasing 59, sent the remainder to the concentration camp and only 49 came home after the liberation. Others died while trying to escape. It is recorded that 13 men jumped out of the train on their way to Neuengamme.

**On April 17, 1945.** the Westminsters noted above were KIA. On April 18 the Germans withdrew from Putten. On the morning of April 18, Mr. Bennemeer found the body of Pte J. Wakula. I was told that the Canadians were buried and their graves tended until the War Graves Commission moved the remains to a War Graves Cemetery.

Some years after the wars end, The Foundation "October 44" was formed among its' many objectives was to establish a Memorial Hall to honor those victims of October 1944 and those who died in the liberation of the Netherlands. A plaque, with the names of the soldiers of the Westminster Regiment (M) is located in the memory room.

Kay was invited to the 50th anniversary celebration marking the Liberation of Holland and while there she met two other Westminsters, Art Fisher of Ottawa and Len Welch of Peterborough. The group of Canadians were escorted down a quiet lane in Putten where the four men were killed and there the Burgameister unveiled a plaque on which their names are engraved.

Kay related to me numerous incidents in which the Dutch community show their gratitude towards Canadians. Listening to her talk about how the Dutch remember caused a lump to form in my throat. Holland is a nation that is grateful for Canada's war effort and the personal sacrifices of its' soldiers and they show it in so many ways.

The "October 44" Foundation has not appealed for donations, but while in Putten, Kay Lemay did learn that some of the work on the Memorial has been put on hold due to lack of funds. Should you wish to make a donation to this cause, you may do so either through the association or send your donation direct. The address is:

**C/O Mr. Jan Bennemeer  
Klaproos 14  
8141 DC HEINU  
THE NETHERLANDS**



**Plaque unvailing - Putten: Left to right  
Art Fisher, Len Welch, Ethell King (Pewtress),  
Kay Lemay, Frank Pewtress and Margaret Welch**



## FROM THE POST

Editor's Note: Due to publication dates, much of the correspondence relates to 1995 Melfa - but as promised, I will acknowledge all letters referred to me by the executive.

Received from Len Welch of Peterborough, Ontario, noting the highlights of his 50th Anniversary trip to Holland. Your letter is most interesting Len and I wish the space allotted enabled me to print it in total. Thanks also for the colored photos. Unfortunately, I cannot reprint in color. Your story of the Pewtress Family was most interesting. I shall turn it all to the Museum... A letter from Vern Ardagh - Raponi (Italian Army Liaison Officer attached to the Westies the latter part of 1944) died in Rome May 29th, 1995. Raponi did some brave and fine work for the Regiment. He thought Gordon Corbould was the finest Officer he had met. The feeling was mutual. Many of you will recall the fine work he did leading us through enemy lines etc. To the Raponi family go our collective condolences... A thank you to Don Motzer for kind remarks re Groundsheet and your donation. Trusts this finds you in better health... Thanks to Al O'Brien re Melfa. Sorry you couldn't make it... Regrets from Len Bailey, but Len was in Holland celebrating the 50th... A kind donation from another recovering sick patient in person of Bill Jasman. Sorry to hear of your problems and it seems more and more of the old Westies are sharing similar fates... From Mort McNally and his regrets for non attendance re health problems - thanks for the Golf Donation, despite its cancellation... Scotty Low should get an award for he sent Melfa payments for no less than 6 people... Kind words from an old eastern friend in the person of Ed Lasher of Etobicoke. Always nice to hear from you Ed and many thanks for your dues... Note new address of W.J. Barret, now of 33480 Downes Road, Abbotsford, B.C. V4X 2H8. How about your phone number Bill?... Sincere appreciation from long time donations from May Shorter of 27 Hart Avenue, Scarbrough, Ontario, M1K 3H2... Thanks to Maurice Fox for dues and yes we learned about Doug Watts his name was printed in our Obituary column... A nice letter from Gerry Pickell sending Life Membership, Future Fund donation and some flattering remarks re this tiring old Editor... From old Buddy Walt Kearsley some kind remarks and we hope your skin cancer has cleared up now... A very interesting letter from Orval Bolton Unit #4- 45 Prince Edward Street, Brighton, Ontario, K0K 1H0, and addressed to Nelson Scott... Much appreciated by Nelson and the rest of us... To Isabel Smith of Maple Ridge who writes that her husband Jack Smith is in Maple Ridge Meadows Hospital... Very sorry to hear Jack is not well. Thank you again for your most recent donation to the Future Fund and to the Museum.

To all, thanks for writing.

## IN MEMORIAM

Sidney Butts.....	Westminster Regiment (M) W.W. 2
John F Brown K47793.....	Westminster Regiment (M) W.W. 2
John Chapman.....	Westminster Regiment (M) W.W. 2
Major Ian F Douglas.....	Westminster Regiment (M) W.W. 2
Anton M Loroff.....	Westminster Regiment (M) W.W. 2
Lt Ross Newton.....	Westminster Regiment (M) W.W. 2
Peter Oswald.....	Westminster Regiment (M) W.W. 2
Cecil A Pook.....	Westminster Regiment (M) W.W. 2
Capt. M Raponi.....	Italian Army (Attached to Westminster R (M)

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### 1996 DUES ARE DUE!

.....that Brigadier George Hickman (R), the treasurer of the Ontario Retired Officers League had a dream recently? According to the editor of The Veteran the dream went like this:

**"I fell asleep the other night,  
and while I had my snooze,**

**I dreamed each member stepped  
right up and promptly paid his dues.**

**But when I found 'twas just a dream,  
I nearly had a fit!**

**It's up to you to make it true -  
please remit!"**

Note: Sent in by Nelson Scott and reprinted from an article in The War Cry.