The GROUNDSHEET

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'

Special Edition – Part I of II
Trip to Europe
24 April - 07 May 2025

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Past President's Introduction

Hello all, this is Part I of II of a special edition of the Groundsheet which covers the Association trip to Europe from 24 April to 07 May 2025. This particular time period coincided with the 80th Anniversary of the Liberation of the Netherlands on 05 May 1945.

The trip comprised visits to battlefields, a number of cemeteries as well as commemorations at towns and villages the Westminster Regiment (Motor) assisted in liberating. At the cemeteries we visited we had a ceremony which consisted of a prayer from the Padre, some words spoken by one of the cadets about one of our soldiers that was buried there. Then via portable speaker we had the Last Post played, two minutes of silence and then Reveille. Then members of the tour party, based on pre-assignment, were then asked to visit a soldier and place a small Canadian Flag to the left of their headstone. A photograph was then taken of the headstone for our archives.

We were able to bring 7 senior Cadets from our 5 affiliated Cadet Corps. As part of their education, they were asked to provide an article on their experiences from the trip. These have been included in this edition as the first seven articles.

The first part of the tour was dedicated to visiting were the 47th Battalion had fought. The second part of the tour was dedicated to where the Westminster Regiment (Motor) had fought and to participate in commemorations related to the 80th Anniversary of the Liberation of the Netherlands. Articles related to second part are included in the Part II edition.

At the a few cemeteries in France and Belgium we discovered that there were headstones identified as “A Soldier of the Great War – 47th Bn Canadian Inf – Known Unto God”. This came as a surprise and now needs some follow up research to identify all such headstones and perhaps identify who they may be.

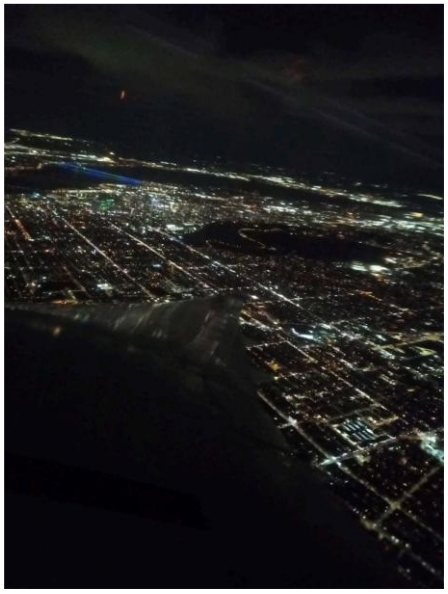
Thanks for all the numerous photographs that were contributed. Unfortunately, all of them can not be included in this edition; but my thanks to Armel Dorion, Ernie Bodrogi, Bob Drummond, Rhonda Hall, Tamara O’Dea and to Judith Roozenbeek of the Roozenbeek family.

I would also like to recognise the efforts made by both the Board of the Association and the Tour working committee and the staff at Special Travel International for planning of the tour, with special thanks to Pedja Markus, Jacob Kos (who accompanied us on the tour) and Herbert Gall, our guide in Europe, and Nico van Domburg our bus driver.

Bill White
Past President

Photo Front Cover – Vimy Ridge – courtesy Armel Dorion

Vimy Ridge
by
Cadet Warrant Officer Grafu



My name is Danielle Grafu. I am 16 years old, currently about to finish grade 11 and I was one of the 7 cadets who attended the North West Europe trip. I have had the greatest opportunity, and privilege to go on the North West Europe trip. This once in a lifetime trip will stick with me forever, and is shaping who I am today and who I will be tomorrow. Going on this trip has shown me how it is to be truly time efficient, and disciplined. Our schedules were continuously filled with adventure, and responsibilities, In this article I will cover my highlight of the trip being Vimy Ridge. The battle of Vimy Ridge was truly a very changing battle in Canadian History. Now before I go into all the glory details on this magnificent part of the journey I will share with you a small snippet on the History behind the battle of Vimy Ridge.

History: The Battle of Vimy Ridge took place on April 9-12, 1917 during World War one as part of the infamous Battle of Arras . The battle was fought by German, British, and Canadian troops in Northern France. The battle of Vimy occurred because Canada was tasked with occupying the German owned high ground by the British. Earlier the French and British attempted to take over the strategically placed land earlier but failed to do so. The occupation of Vimy Ridge was a big part of the Battle of Arras as it drew the German troops away from the French, and gave the Allies a great advantage. The Canadian Troops did successfully attain Vimy Ridge, but at a high cost of approximately 10,600 Canadian, and 1,400 German casualties with almost 4,000 German soldiers taken prisoner.

On the Fourth day of the trip, we visited the Notre Dame de Lorette (French) Cemetery, and the ring of honour which was both shocking and sickening to see because of the sea of graves, just never-ending rows.

Afterwards we visited the Carbaret-Rouge Cemetery, and the Givenchy Road Cemetery. After seeing all that I saw at those destinations I didn't want to see graveyards/memorials anymore. All the cadets, including myself, thought the bus was taking us back to the hotel, until we saw one of the captains look to the left of the bus and sign towards what looked like a yard of sheep.

We weren’t surprised until we took a closer look, and almost went into tears looking at the famous Vimy Ridge Memorial that we all had only seen in pictures. The photos all cadets could just dream of seeing in person, though out of all of them we were the ones to see the Vimy memorial face to face.

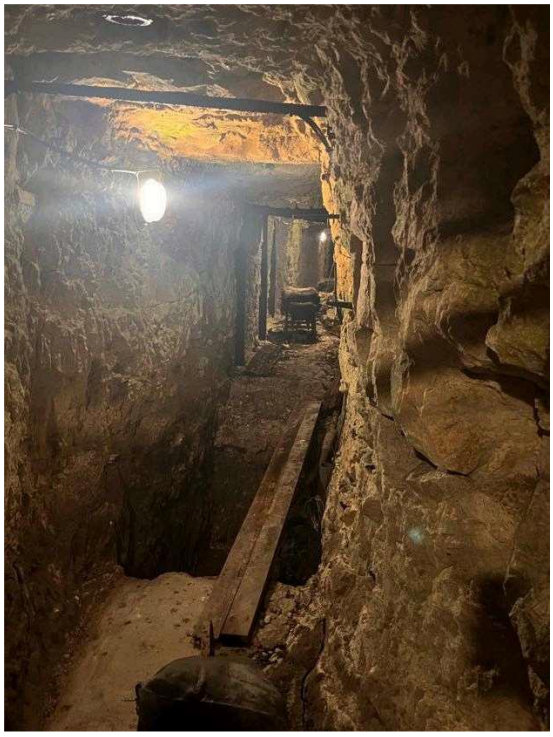
We couldn't run out of the bus, we felt as if our feet were glued to the floor. The only thing we did was walk slowly to the memorial in astonishment, excitement, and eagerness to see it close up. The minute I walked up the stairs in a stage of disbelief, and terror. Knowing that I was standing on a battle ground was already crazy enough but to be where all four Canadian divisions fought together for the first time felt so much more different. Seeing the view from the picture to the left felt unreal. I didn't feel worthy enough to even step foot on the memorial, the cold touch of stone shot me back into reality and made me realize I wasn't dreaming nor was I in a movie. We didn't have much time at the memorial, but we spent more time over the trip looking at the many cemeteries for those who lost their lives in the Battle of Vimy Ridge like the Givenchy Road Cemetery, Petit Vimy British, Canadian Cemetery No. 2, and La Chaudière Cemetery.

The 47th Battalion during the Battle of Vimy Ridge:

Sir Julian Byng was the commander of the Canadian Corps during the Battle of Vimy Ridge, and had the 47th, and 44th Battalion take over British lines and send out battle patrols before the main assault. So, he knew when to send his men in. Overall, the 47th Battalion lost many of their faithful soldiers once crossing what was known as "No Man's Land". As did many of the other battalions fighting in the battle. Though some of the men still survived, there were still complications with the amount of artillery being used against them by the Germans as they almost literally flooded their surroundings. Weaponry wasn't the only impairment, even though it was the middle of April there was a huge blinding snowstorm, and mud that was waist deep. No matter how many men were lost, or tired anyone was the Canadian troops kept pushing until victory was finally theirs... In the end all of the Canadian troops did their part in attaining Vimy.

"No Man's Land" = Areas between the very deep trenches filled with mud, sharp barbed wire, shell craters, and enemy fire.

After seeing the Vimy Memorial, we explored the Grange Tunnel which was used by the Canadian troops for protection from enemy fire, and transportation of soldiers, and materials in the Battle of Vimy Ridge. I had never known about the tunnels until I was a Sergeant, and I never pictured myself actually seeing it. The walk down those steep steps were a bit frustrating, and trying to fit everyone through was a bit challenging, but then I realized… During the battle soldiers didn't have the luxury of these stairs, or the amount of space in the tunnels, or even the safety of the tunnels. It made me realize that not one of us was able to fully understand how hard it must have been for them to use the tunnels for transportation, and protection. The moment I exited the tunnel I felt like a whole new person, with new knowledge. We didn't have much time at the Vimy Memorial, but it was more than the average person ever got, and for that I am forever grateful. Though I'm more than glad I had a lot of time in the Grange Tunnel.



Thank you to everyone who gave me the opportunity to represent my Corps at the NW Europe trip, and a special thanks too: Col Bill White, CI Keeton, Captain Savoie, Captain Jackson, and my parents who supported me through all of it. I would also like to thank all of the cadets, and others on the trip who made it fun and gave me life-long memories I will cherish forever

Living in the Present, Driving the Past
by Cadet Warrant Officer Mikaela Payumo

How close are you to history? On the ground you walk on, how often are you reminded of the past that shaped the present. Or on your regular walks in the city, do you walk past any memorials, or is it another stone with writing to you. This article goes on a little more about a family, specifically Leo Roozenbeek whose interest in driving vehicles started him and his family's hobby and interest of WW1 and WW2, and how a hobby can start as small but in the end, hope the next generation remember and never forget those who fought and contributed to the war.

On my recent trip to Europe with the New Westminster Regiment Association, specifically to the Netherlands. We had the honor of meeting the Roozenbeek family in Putten on May 3. The family welcomed us with open arms and open minds, proudly showing us the military vehicles they have owned for over a decade.

(From the back, left to right; Sjoerd Roozenbeek, Thijs Roozenbeek, Judith Roozenbeek, Lisa, Hanneke Roozenbeek, Leo Roozenbeek. Front left to right; Cheryl Chong, Mikaela Payumo, Hudson Ridout)

In the morning of our arrival to an area in the town of Putten, we met the Roozenbeeks who seemed to be dressed in uniforms from WW2. As we chatted and talked amongst them, they displayed vehicles where Leo, Sjoerd, and Thijs gave me and the other members of the association a ride in. Throughout the rides and while being driven to the events, a lot of questions such as how they got cars, why do they continue driving such cars.

(From left to right; Jeep, Staff car, Dodge WC52, Ambulance (Dodge WC54))

I've asked Thijs regarding when the vehicles been bought and how his dad happened to end up with them. "The Dodge WC52 was fully restored about 40 years ago by my dad, the Staff car was my mom and dad's wedding car and after that my grandfather bought it because he already had the Jeep, and that jeep was bought a long time ago as well, also around 30-40 years ago"

(Photo taken by Judith Roozenbeek)
I had the pleasure of talking with Judith and Thijs Roozenbeek asking questions the vehicles their father owns. They have four; the Dodge WC52, Staff car, the Jeep, and the Ambulance.

Leo Roozenbeek's journey into vintage military vehicles began simply—with a few friends, some cars, and a shared love for car events. It was never meant to be more than a hobby, but it quickly became a passion. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, Leo began collecting parts and restoring vehicles, starting with a Dodge WC52. He even sourced tires from Greece, a detail that shows the dedication behind each project. With the help of his friends, countless hours were spent in the garage, wrenched in hand, bringing the WC52 back to life. That vehicle was fully restored nearly 40 years ago—and it's still going strong. Later on, he'd meet his wife, Hanneke. She started going along with him.

A couple of years later, Leo bought the ambulance however at the time, because of the costs he had to sell it. He'd say to Judith, "It's still such a pretty car, right?"

Then around 2022, he saw one and bought it again. It was mechanically alright but the paint and inside wasn't in the best condition, so the family's been working on the ambulance for a couple months and restored it, and now present day they've been driving it to many events.

Judith explains to me about the thoughts and feelings now that she and her brothers are older, how they learn about what the soldiers who have drove vehicles like what they owned, the feelings the soldiers must've felt.

"Now that we're older, we spend more and more time in learning the new generation about all these cars have been through, the people have been through and what we need to remember

every time we go on holidays, having drinks, party's and just living in peace. Young children only see some cool things and think it's fun to jump in, while there were lots of soldiers experiencing mostly fear of never coming home again."

(Photo taken by Anna Olteanu, Sjoerd Roozenbeek driving around the town of Putten)

(Thijs Roozenbeek next to the Dodge WC52, after driving a couple of the association members to an event)

Over a year before the trip happened, one of the association members had contact with the eldest son, Sjoerd. Since then, they have stayed in contact and planned for this day to happen. I asked Judith what goal for her and her family to keep going, she replied with, “I think it’s giving reminders why we still drive.

It’s important to never forget in the first place”. Judith, who works as an elementary school teacher, emphasized how essential and important it is to talk to young kids about what happened during the wars.

“Talking and feeling things, telling stories and letting them know.”

The conversation ends with how important it is to educate children, people young and old about the past, to ensure history doesn’t repeat itself, yet Judith mentions how sad and having such a heavy feeling with the current events of the world, witnessing the fact how the same mistakes are being made again.

She tells me how the next generation is the next ones to give the stories a voice. And I know myself she strongly means and believes it.

This experience—talking with the Roozenbeek family and riding through towns in their historic vehicles in the Netherlands—truly opened my eyes. It showed me that there are still many individuals and families deeply committed to preserving and sharing the stories of the world wars. What fascinates me most is their determination to keep history alive, to continue speaking about it with others, and to ensure these lessons are not forgotten. Their passion is a powerful reminder of how important it is to remember the past.

The Roozenbeek family continues to preserve history, offering a powerful, yet indirect reminder to those who see their vehicles around town. These vintage military vehicles stand as moving symbols of the sacrifices made by those who served and endured the hardships of war. They remind us that the peace and freedoms we enjoy today were hard-won. In many parts of the world, however, daily life is still shaped by conflict—despite the lessons of the past. History often repeats itself, and too often, leaders turn a blind eye until it’s too late.

Learning History with My Own Two Feet
By Cadet Warrant Officer Ross

April 28th began with a quiet but profoundly meaningful visit to Villiers Station Cemetery. The morning air was still and somber as our tour group walked among the rows of graves, each stone standing as a silent tribute to a Life Lost in the War. I was given the honour of placing Canadian flags at the graves of Private Folino, N., Private Fraser, A., and Private Stubblefield, G. W. Kneeling beside each headstone, I took a moment to read their names and reflect on the sacrifice they had made over a century ago. It was humbling to stand where they now rest, and to play even a small role in acknowledging their memory.

After laying my flags, I wandered quietly through the cemetery, reading names, ranks, regiments and often, heart breakingly, the ages. Many of the fallen were just a few years or older than I am now. As I continued my walk, I came across a single grave unlike the others. The inscription read "Zweiunddreissig unbekannte Deutsche" which translated, means "thirty-two unknown Germans. "A single headstone marking the final resting place of thirty-two soldiers whose names and stories have been lost to history. It was a powerful and sobering sight, one that reminded me of the shared tragedy of war. Beneath the uniforms and flags were sons, brothers, friends each life equally precious, regardless of which side they fought for.

This moment brought me back to our very first day in Europe, when we visited the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. There, we learned about the different ways in which soldiers were buried and how the headstones varied depending on their nationality. I learned that while the Commonwealth typically commemorated each Individual soldier with their own headstone, German war dead were often buried in mass graves especially when the identities of the fallen were unknown. That knowledge came rushing back to me as I stood before this single marker for thirty-two unknown men. It made the reality of war feel even more devastating.

Visiting Villers Station Cemetery, all the cemeteries for a matter of fact was more than just a scheduled stop on our itinerary it was a moment of personal connection to the past, a quiet space for remembrance, and a reminder of the immense cost of conflict. The cemetery visit to me was not about dates or statistics it was about people. And I will carry the weight of these visits with me for a long time to come.

Later that day, we visited the Hill 70 Monument near Lens, France. The park was officially opened to the public in August 2017, exactly 100 years after the battle took place, and it was fully completed in September 2019. The site stands as a solemn tribute to the 1,877 Canadian soldiers who gave their lives during the assault on Hill 70, as well as to the countless others who fought tirelessly for nearly four years to help secure the liberty of France during the First World War. Standing there, I could feel the weight of what had happened on that ground over a century ago. The air felt heavy with memory and sacrifice. It's one thing to read about battles in a textbook or hear dates and numbers in a

classroom but to stand in the place where it happened, to see the monument rising against the sky and to walk the same soil where soldiers once fought and fell, brings a whole new level of understanding. You begin to realize that these were not just names on a plaque or numbers in a Ledger; they were real people, like you and me, young men with dreams, fears, and families, who stepped forward when their country called on them.

One of the things that struck me the most was learning about the Victoria Crosses one of the highest military decorations for bravery in the face of the enemy, which were awarded to soldiers who fought at Hill 70.The medal recognizes the most extraordinary acts of courage, self-sacrifice, and devotion to duty. Out of those six recipients, two had served in the 47th Battalion, Corporal Filip Konowal and Private Michael James O'Rourke until transferred to the 7th Battalion. Corporal Konowal performed a truly amazing feat. He single-handedly captured a German machinegun position, an act that saved countless lives and turned the tide in that part of the battle. His courage under fire and unrelenting determination reflect the very best of what it means to serve.

Learning about these soldiers and their stories was deeply moving. The Battle of Hill 70 is often overshadowed by more well-known engagements like Vimy Ridge or Passchendaele, but it was a crucial turning point. It marked a moment when the Canadian Corps was fighting under their own command, demonstrated exceptional skill, strategy, and strength. It proved that Canada was not just a supporting player but leading force on the world stage.

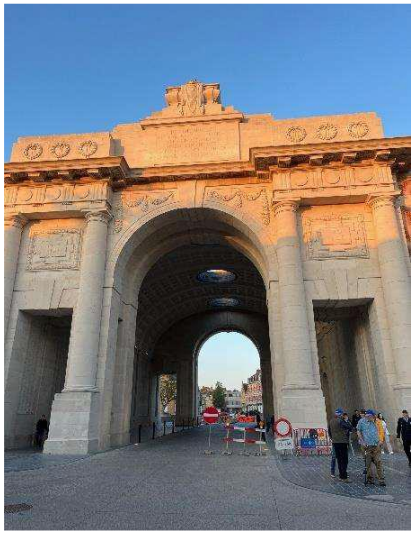
The Second Battle of Ypres stands as one of the most harrowing and defining moments in Canada's early military history. Fought in the spring of 1915 near the Belgian town of Ypres, this battle marked a terrible and terrifying first: the first large-scale use of poison gas on the Western Front. The Germans released a thick, greenish-yellow cloud of chlorine gas that drifted silently over the trenches, catching the Allied troops completely off guard. Among those caught in the chaos were nearly 18,000 Canadian soldiers, many of them young and experiencing combat for the first time. The Canadians held a key position at a site now known as Vancouver Corner; a name given in recognition of the strong Canadian presence there over the course of those days, more than two thousand Canadian soldiers were killed and many more wounded, physically and mentally scarred for life. Many of the fallen were buried close to where they fought and died. The soil around Vancouver corner holds their remains as a silent witness to their bravery and suffering.

To honor these sacrifices, a solemn monument now rises at Vancouver Corner: The Brooding Soldier Memorial. Designed by Canadian sculptor Fredrick Chapman Clemesha, the monument is both simple while deeply moving. It depicts a lone Canadian soldier, his head bowed in sorrow, hands resting on the butt of a reversed rifle; a traditional symbol of mourning, there is no grand display of victory here, no glorification of war just quiet dignity, reverence and grief.

For lunch that day, we visited De Oude Kaasmakerij, an old cheese factory that now includes a museum. As we stepped into the beautifully decorated dining room, we were welcomed by a table overflowing with cheeses, cured meats, and a small but colourful selection of fruits and vegetables. I had the chance to sample a wide variety of cheeses—each one delicious in its own way. Grafu and I also tried *Fristi*, a strawberry yogurt drink we'd never heard of before, and it quickly became one of our favourite drinks of the trip.

As we were leaving, we noticed several large stainless steel milk cans hanging outside. They were setup so people could hit them and make music, and of course, we all gave it a try, even Captain Bodrogi joined in before we boarded the bus for our next stop: checking into the hotel.

After we settled into the hotel, the nerves of preparing for our first ceremony quickly kicked in. The first challenge? Finding an iron for our pants. Grafu and I set off on a mission, only to be told by the front desk that all the irons were currently in use. At first, it was discouraging but we adapted. We got creative and started using a flat iron meant for hair. Thankfully, just in time, the front desk managed to find us a proper iron.



That night, all the girls came together to help one another get ready. We took turns doing each other's hair and made sure our uniforms looked perfect. Honestly, it turned into one of the most fun and memorable parts of the day. We laughed, we helped, we practiced drill together, it was a beautiful bonding moment that brought us closer as a team.

While we practiced, I could feel the nerves creeping in. Both Grafu and I were anxious standing in formation, waiting to be marched on, knowing there would be a large audience watching. The pressure not to mess up was heavy. But with a few deep breaths and a reminder to myself that I was here for a reason, the command came, and the anxiety disappeared.

Marching into the Menin Gate was something I'll never forget. Of all the places we visited, that ceremony touched me the most. Being under the arch, surrounded by thousands of names carved into the walls, and hearing the bugle's call echo around us. It was overwhelming in the most powerful way. Between the haunting beauty of the music and the immense pride I felt in that moment, I was moved to tears. It's an experience that will stay with me forever, and without a doubt, my favourite part of the trip.

It's hard to believe I almost didn't make it on this trip. I'm incredibly grateful to everyone who helped make it happen. This truly was a once-in-a-Lifetime experience I had the chance to meet amazing people, build lasting friendships, and take part in opportunities most cadets never get. For me, this was the perfect way to end my cadet career an unforgettable chapter that I'll always carry with me.

Battles of the Ypres Salient

By Cadet Warrant Officer Cheryl Chong

The Ypres salient during WWI was a protruding section of the Allied line, surrounded on three sides by enemy forces. It was in this area that a series of particularly brutal battles took place, marking both pivotal moments in the first world war and some of the most bitter conditions the soldiers braved.

The First Battle of Ypres and the Battle of the Yser

The First Battle of Ypres took place around the ancient city of Ypres, Belgium, following the Race to the Sea. There, British, French, and Belgian soldiers formed a united front against the advancing German forces, each side having failed to outflank the other on their hasty advance northwards. By October 19th, 1914, the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) had joined the French and Belgian in Ypres and the Allies had dug long lines of trenches to shield themselves from German-occupied ridge positions to the east. While they were safe from bullets, German artillery was superior at the time and the trenches were still vulnerable to artillery shelling.

The German commander, General Falkenhayn, planned to capture several seaports, but doing so would require control of Ypres. Thus, on October 20th, the Germans launched their offensive.

The Belgian army, holding a section of the line across the Yser River and Leperlee Canal between the two towns of Diksmuide and Nieuwpoort, was the first to receive the attack. Even though they were exhausted from prior months of fighting, the six-division Belgian army was large enough to halt the German advance. They courageously held the line as long as they could, but the German army was fresh, well-armed, and larger, overwhelming the Belgians and causing 18,000 casualties. In the end, with no other choice, the decision was made to open the seawater gates during high tide, letting the water flood in and creating a mile-wide stretch of impassable terrain. The German advance was temporarily halted, but five days later, on October 30th, the Germans attacked again and managed to overpower the Belgian forces, reaching the village of Ramskapelle.

Together with the French, the Belgians managed to reclaim the village. The Germans had planned one final attack there, but when they fully realized that the land was flooding, they called off the attack and retreated that same night. This battle that took place near the Yser River is known as the Battle of the Yser and happened at the same time as the First Battle of Ypres.

The City of Ypres in present day. Photo taken April 30, 2025. Photo credit: Cheryl Chong

At the same time the Belgians were holding off the German advance, the French and British armies were still engaged near the city of Ypres. The Germans attacked and the Entente defended, with rifles, machine guns, and artillery firing from both sides. Heavy losses were suffered by the Entente and the Germans; despite superior German artillery, they could not break the line and the battle deteriorated into a stalemate. The Entente lost about 100,000 men, and the Germans, 130,000. The German offensive was successfully halted and the line was held, but Britain's highly trained soldiers were effectively wiped out over the course of the battle. The First Battle of Ypres was largely characterized by artillery fire, immense casualties, and German offensives followed by Entente counterattacks. As the first winter frosts settled in, the battle wound down to a standstill, with both sides exhausted. Some of the senior British officers were killed by German shelling, bringing instability to the command structure that they played large roles in. By the time the First Battle of Ypres ended on November 22nd, both sides knew that it was going to be a long and cruel war.

The Second Battle of Ypres

By 1915, the Ypres salient had been fully formed due to previous battles, creating a bulge in the Entente line that left the French and British soldiers exposed to the enemy on three sides. Certainly, it was not an easy job to defend the salient, but the soldiers braved the conditions and endured brutal German offensives.

In April 1915, the German Fourth Army planned and executed an offensive with the goal of capturing the city of Ypres. It was here that a never-before-seen tactic was used for war–chlorine gas, released in massive clouds. The Germans hauled almost 6000 gas cylinders to the front lines and unleashed the chemical weapons at the Entente line on the 22nd of April. The French were the first to encounter the gas cloud; defenseless, nearly 18,000 French casualties were inflicted on that day alone, with soldiers drowning in their own lung fluid and coughing up blood. The Germans took thousands of prisoners and dozens of guns with this very successful first attack.

With so many French soldiers having succumbed to the poison gas, a gaping 6-mile hole was opened in the Entente line. The Canadian soldiers filled in this gap and were ordered to counterattack, but as no reconnaissance had been done, the attacking 10th and 16th battalions ran into the enemy at Kitcheners' Wood and had to improvise a bayonet attack. Though they managed to clear the area, they suffered very high casualties.

Just a few days following the initial gas attacks, the Entente soldiers were advised to urinate into a cloth and breathe through it in order to neutralise the effects of the chlorine gas; the invention and distribution of effective gas masks was put in the makings.

St. Julien was a village located at the rear of the Canadian flank, but after the gas attack, the Entente line was pushed back so that the village became the new front line. Two days after the first gassing, on April 24th, the Germans unleashed another gas attack at this new front line where the Canadian soldiers were. Though they knew to hold urine-soaked cloth over their faces, it was not enough to fully counter the effects of the gas, and it made it difficult for the soldiers to fight. The Germans captured the village of St. Julien, forcing the line back further despite attempted counterattacks.

The Canadian memorial at St. Julien in present day. Photo taken April 28, 2025. Photo credit: Cheryl Chong

By the end of the battle, the Entente front line had been pushed back 3 miles, and the city of Ypres was mostly destroyed by artillery shelling. The Germans were successful with their gas attacks; the Entente lost twice as many soldiers than their enemies and were pushed back. However, this battle led to the development of proper gas masks, distributed just a few months later, and improvements to Canadian weapons (such as the Ross rifle) which had proved unreliable during the battle.

The Third Battle of Ypres

The Third Battle of Ypres, also known as the Battle of Passchendaele, was one of the bloodiest and bitterest battles of the First World War. With the goal of controlling the ridges near the village of Passchendaele, the Entente attacked the fortified German defenders who were already positioned on high ground. The Germans were able to take advantage of their topographical position, picking off attacking Entente soldiers while sheltered in the concrete pillboxes that they had built prior to the engagement. As a result, the attacking soldiers struggled immensely against the solid defences, but as the battle wore on, new tactics were employed and artillery barrages were used to cover advancing Entente soldiers. Though the shelling inflicted significant casualties on the enemy side, the weather proved to be against the attackers, with heavy rain and constant shelling working together to turn the whole battlefield into a quagmire of deep, sucking mud. Horses and soldiers were unable to advance through the mud, and many were picked off by German defenders. Plank walkways had to be laid just for soldiers to walk and supplies to be delivered. The battle wore on, with many individual feats of bravery from the soldiers, but in the end both sides lost more than 250,000 men. The extremely limited gain of the battle did not justify the number of casualties inflicted, as well as the cost of resources and the horrific conditions that the soldiers endured; the Third Battle of Ypres became known as one of the most senseless, brutal conflicts in the war.

The battlefields of Passchendaele in present day. Photo taken April 29, 2025. Photo credit: Cheryl Chong

The Ypres salient saw many of the First World War's cruelest battles, as well as the evolution of military strategy and weaponry as the war evolved. Beyond the first three battles of Ypres, there were additional conflicts and battles that displayed both the bravery of the soldiers as well as the agonizing nature of war.

Now, in present day, the demolished city of Ypres has been restored using some of Germany's post-war reparations, and memorials have been erected across northwestern Europe to commemorate the soldiers who gave their lives fighting in the Ypres salient. Among them, one of the most notable memorials is the Menin Gate in Ypres, Belgium, its walls engraved with the names of over 500,000 Commonwealth soldiers with no known grave.

Author's Note

The trip to France, Belgium, and the Netherlands in April/May of 2025 inspired me to write this paper on the battles of the Ypres salient. It was not only the sheer number of casualties inflicted there that moved me, but the conditions that the soldiers faced–poison gas, muck and mire, bitter attrition. While I was on the bus moving from place to place, I read several books about the second and third battles of Ypres, and though I found the readings interesting, I was simultaneously horrified about what I was learning. Seeing the cemeteries of the fallen soldiers filled with rows of headstones, participating in a Last Post ceremony under the never-ending names carved into the Menin Gate–these experiences made me reevaluate the war in a way history classes never could. I thought of the hardships that the soldiers endured and the broken families they left behind, pondered the heartlessness of war and the soldiers' courage, fighting for peace at the cost of one's life, and it came to me that I was truly incredibly fortunate to be born in a time and place where freedom was something people took for granted. I believe that this tour has made me even more thankful and appreciative of all those who had fought and died defending the freedom that I now enjoy, and I shared the knowledge that I had learned about the

war with my family and friends so that we might reflect more on the freedoms we already have instead of ruminating on daily inconveniences, bringing about a more positive outlook on life.

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My Reflection: Remembering the Fallen in France

By Cadet Warrant Officer Liam Brown

My name is Liam Brown, I'm 16 years old. I'm a cadet with the Royal Westminster Regiment. I was lucky to be chosen, along with six other cadets, to go on a tour through Europe. We visited France, Belgium and the Netherlands. It was truly a once in a lifetime experience. I learned a lot about our history and gained a deep respect for the soldiers who served before us.

During the trip, we wore the red beret of our regiment — the same one worn by our soldiers in World War II. We also had custom polo shirts and rain jackets that showed we were representing our unit. Everywhere we went, I felt proud to wear the same colors as the people who fought and died so many years ago.

One of the most powerful parts of the trip was visiting the war cemeteries in France. These places were calm and quiet, but also full of sadness. Every grave had a story. Just walking through the rows of headstones reminded me of how many lives were lost. Three cemeteries really stood out to were Pozières Memorial, Cabaret-Rouge British Cemetery, and Notre-Dame de Lorette.

Our first visit was to the **Pozières Memorial**, in the Somme region of France. This memorial honors over 14,000 soldiers who died in the Battle of the Somme and have no known grave. Their names are carved into long stone walls. I stood there, reading name after name. It felt heavy. So many lives, so many families who never had a grave to visit. Many of the soldiers were just a bit older than me — some were even my age. I thought about how I train in fitness, leadership and discipline as a cadet, but these young men had to go into real battle. Some had almost no training. It made me think a lot about bravery and how lucky I am to live in peace.

The second place we visited was the **Cabaret-Rouge British Cemetery** in Souchez. It's one of the largest cemeteries from World War I, with over 7,000 graves. A lot of the soldiers buried there died in the battles near Arras. The cemetery was really well looked after. It felt like each grave was still being respected, even after more than 100 years. The headstones were simple, each with a small cross, and they were lined up in perfect rows. It was quiet, peaceful, and sad. What stood out to me most was seeing graves of soldiers from around the world places like Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. It reminded me how World War I wasn't just one country's fight. Soldiers came from all over the world, and many of them never made it back home.

Our next stop was **Notre-Dame de Lorette**, in the Pas-de-Calais region. This is the largest French military cemetery in the world, with over 40,000 soldiers buried there. It was massive. Just seeing the number of graves was overwhelming. In the centre, there's a tall white tower. It's a memorial, and

from the top you can see the land where so many battles took place. Being even near it gave me a feeling of respect. These weren't just names or numbers — these were real people with families, friends, and lives that were cut short.

Right next to the cemetery is the **Ring of Remembrance**. It's a big circular monument with the names of 580,000 soldiers who died in the region during World War I. The names are listed in alphabetical order — no ranks, no countries. That really hit me. It didn't matter where they were from or what side they were on. They were all human. All lives lost. That monument made it feel like the whole world was remembering together.

While walking through these places, I also noticed how different countries honor their dead. The French graves have upright crosses with simple writing. The British ones have different shapes and symbols. But no matter the style, the feeling was the same — a deep sense of loss and respect. I realized that all these soldiers, no matter their language or flag, shared the same fear, courage, and sacrifice.

Visiting these cemeteries made me feel a mix of emotions. I felt sad for the lives lost, but also proud, proud to be a Canadian, and proud to be part of a regiment with such an important role in history. These soldiers fought not just for their country, but for their comrades and for the future generations — people like me. It made history feel real. Not just dates, numbers or battles in a book, but real people who stood for something bigger than themselves.

This trip brought me closer to the other cadets. We marched together, shared moments of silence, moments where we just looked around and took it all in. We didn't always have to talk we just knew what the other was feeling. Those memories will stay with me for the rest of my life.

Visiting these places changed the way I see the world. I now understand that peace doesn't come easily — it comes at a cost. I will never forget what I saw and what I felt on this trip. As a cadet, I now carry more than just a uniform. I carry the memory of those who came before me. I'll do my best to honor the Canadian legacy. - For King and Country.

(Editors: Lily Haworth, Colin Mansfield, and Griffin Larson)

The Battle of Hill 70

By Cadet Sergeant Nelson Ridout

The Canadian Corps, led by General Sir Arthur Currie, won the Battle of Vimy Ridge in April 1917. Soon after, Field Marshal Douglas Haig, Britain's commander, ordered the Canadians to plan an attack on the Germans at Hill 70 and Lens. The Battle of Hill 70 and Lens, France, occurred a few kilometres north of Vimy Ridge from August 15 to 21, 1917. Hill 70 was high ground, 70 metres above sea level. Lens was a coal-mining town located just north of Vimy Ridge. The British planned to draw German forces away from Passchendaele to the area around Lens. Passchendaele, on the English Channel coast, held German submarines and bombers. By moving Germans to Lens, the British aimed to attack their artillery. Initially, they planned to capture Lens, but General Currie also recommended taking Hill 70 to surprise the Germans from higher ground. General Currie's expertise and meticulous planning in the Battle of Vimy Ridge had positioned the Canadian Corps for an effective assault against the Germans on Hill 70. He was adamant that his primary objective in this battle was to minimize Canadian troop casualties. Troops were preparing Hill 70 by digging out deep trenches and strategically surrounding the

area with barbed wire. They had also prepared thousands of gas drums for smoke screens. Just like Vimy Ridge, General Currie had the troops practice drills and assaults on terrain similar to Hill 70.

In the early morning of August 15, 1917, the attacks began. The initial attack was the smoke screen to demobilize the German troops. In the days that followed, wave after wave of German soldiers made their way to Hill 70, but the Canadian Corps had the vantage point of the slope and the hill 70's height. In four days, a total of 21 attacks were made against the Hill, and each attack was met with successful counterattacks by the Canadian Forces. The counterattack had depleted many German divisions; approximately 20,000 German soldiers were killed. Shortly after the Battle of Hill 70, the Canadian Corps was positioned to attack the town of Lens. The town was heavily entrenched and defended by the Germans. The attack was less successful for the Canadian Corps. In total, 9,198 Canadian soldiers were killed in the Battle of Hill 70. Six soldiers also earned the Victoria Cross for their bravery and devotion to their duty. The Battle of Hill 70 marked the significance and presence of the Canadian Corps during World War 1. They earned their reputation as having the most effective war tactics by exposing the Germans, making them vulnerable to attacks.

One hundred years later, in 2017, a memorial site at the Battle of Hill 70 was erected. The site represented the utmost respect for the Canadian soldiers who died in the victory of the Battle of Hill 70. Maple leaf flags engraved with the names of Canadian Soldiers who died in the battle, and an amputee named after General Currie. Memorial sites like the Battle of Hill 70 and Vimy Ridge serve as essential reminders of the courage and loyalty demonstrated during World War I. When visiting the memorial, I was surprised by how calm and peaceful I felt there. That is just another reason that I am thankful to all the sacrifices that the men took during the war.

Liberation Day - 05 May 2025

By Cadet CWO Anna Olteanu

On May 5, 2025, the Royal Westminster Regiment Association had the honour to participate in the Liberation Day (Bevrijdingsdag) parade in Wageningen, Netherlands. This year marked the 80th anniversary of freedom in the Netherlands after World War Two, rightfully making it a very big celebration. Liberation Day has been celebrated in the Netherlands since 1946, on May the 5th, which is the anniversary of the surrender of German General Blaskowitz to Canadian General Foulkes.

At the Liberation Day festival, they featured the parade, performances, debates ,and tributes to both past and present struggles for freedom. Also, a group of well-known Dutch artists, the Ambassadors of Freedom, traveled to several festivals (including Wageningen) by helicopter to perform and engage with visitors. after World War Two, rightfully making it a very big celebration. Liberation Day has been celebrated in the Netherlands since 1946, on May the 5th, which is the anniversary of the surrender of German General Blaskowitz to Canadian General Foulkes.

7 cadets from the five different Royal Westminster Regiment affiliated corps participated in the parade as a part of the Royal Westminster Regiment Association. CWO Olteanu, from the 2822 Army Cadets, CWO Ross from the1922 Army Cadets, CWO Chong, WO Payumo and Sgt Ridout from the 2316 Army Cadets, WO Brown from the 1789 Army Cadets, and WO Grafu from the 1838 Army Cadets.

Accompanying the Royal Westminster Regiment Association during the parade was Sjoerd Roozenbeek, wearing an authentic WWII Westie uniform, in a WWII Jeep with Westie Markings on it.

After the parade I met up with my Dutch family members, and we visited the different sites and events around Wageningen. The first site we visited was the Liberation Fire, which was lit around midnight to mark the transition from May 4 to 5. Kersh, 100, from the United Kingdom, and Janicki, 101, from Canada, lit the fire with Mayor Floor Vermeulen of Wageningen in the square where negotiations on the German capitulation took place 80years ago.

The Liberation Fire is also where the National Liberation Fire Relay started, in which a record of over 5,000 relay runners took the fire with torches to municipalities throughout the country.

Our next stop was to Hotel De Wereld, where negotiations on the German capitulation took place 80years ago.

On May 5, 1945, General Foulkes met the German Colonel General Blaskowitz in the current 'Grote Capitulatiezaal (Great Capitulation Hall)' to negotiate the surrender. Prince Bernhard was present as commander of the Interior Forces. The Germans turned out to be willing to capitulate, and Hotel de Wereld became a 'monument of peace and freedom' in 1945. Hotel de Wereld was the preferred place of negotiation by Canadian General Foulkes, and because of its location on the front at the time, the absence of civilians due to evacuation.

After visiting the Liberation Fire and the Hotel de Wereld we walked around and watched the music events taking place all throughout Wageningen. At every corner there was another band or DJ and the streets were packed with people partaking in the celebrations.

Thank you to the National Committee Commemorating the Capitulations of 1945 for allowing the Royal Westminster Regiment Association to participate in the parade and a special thanks to the Association for bringing all of us cadets to Europe for this once in a lifetime opportunity.

Hill 70

On 28 April 2025 we visited the new memorial at Hill 70. This is on the outskirts of Lens near Loos-en-Gohelle. In January 2017 the Association made a donation to its construction. This memorial was completed in 2019.

Of interest at this memorial there are 3 soldiers with connections to the 47th Battalion that are recognised.

The first being Corporal Filip Konowal, of the 47th Battalion, who was awarded the Victoria Cross for knocking out machine gun emplacements in the Battle for Hill “70” which was the high ground i.e. 70 metres above sea level.

The second was Private Michael James O’Rourke of the 7th Battalion. He enrolled in the 104th Westminster Fusiliers of Canada, then transferred to the 47th Battalion on 08 March 1915. He was subsequently transferred to the 7th Battalion on 28 August 1915. Private O’Rourke was a stretcher bearer and during the Battle over 3 days and nights he brought back wounded soldiers and was awarded the Victoria Cross.

The third is Private Frederick Lee of the 47th Battalion. He enrolled in the 172nd Battalion, Kamloops on 13 March 1916. He was transferred to the 47th Battalion on 01 January 1917. He was killed in action during the battle on 21 August 1917 and has no known grave.

General Sir Arthur Currie Amphitheatre with the Monument on the right

Start of the walkway

Plaque to Victoria Cross recipients

The Konowal Walk

The O'Rourke Walk

Plaque to Private Frederick Lee

Menin Gate – Ypres

On 28 April 2025 we had the distinct honour of parading at Menin Gate in Ypres. At 2000 hours each night a ceremony is held under the arches of the gate to commemorate the sacrifice of all who died during the fighting in the World War I. The bugle calls, the Last Post and Reveille, are played during the ceremony.

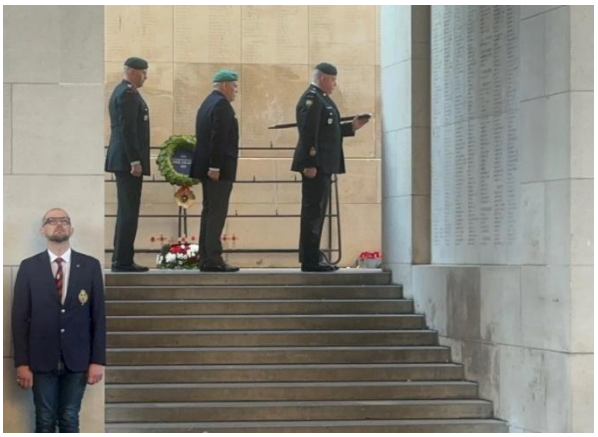
Col (ret'd) Bill White was given the honour of saying the act of remembrance;

> "They shall not grow old as that we who 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"

Col (ret'd) Bill White, Col Matthew Haussmann and RSM Dean Baron laid a wreath, with a ribbon with "47th Battalion CEF", at the north side of the Gate.

The Westie Contingent marching towards Menin Gate

The Contingent formed up at Gate



Col Haussmann, Col (ret'd) White, RSM Baron

Panel 28 with names from the 47th Battalion

Wreath – 47th Battalion CEF


Buglers playing the Last Post


Menin Gate – from the Belfry Tower, Cloth Hall

Group Photographs

The following are a number of group photographs taken during the tour.

Oct Pabla and Cadets – Trudeau International Airport, Montreal

At the Hooge Crater

At the Commonwealth War Graves – Visitor Centre


The Cadets at Pozieres British Cemetery


Cadets at Villiers Station Cemetery

The Padre, on the right, about to say a prayer at Cabaret-Rouge Cemetery


Monument to the Royal Newfoundland Regiment


The Group at Vimy Ridge

The Cadets & OCdt Pabla – Hill 70

At the “Brooding Soldier”

Cdt Sgt Nelson Ridout, Cdt WO Mikaela Payumo, Cdt MWO Jaelyn Ross, Cdt WO Danielle Grafu, Cdt MWO Anna Olteanu, Cdt Sgt Liam Brown, Cdt CWO Cheryl Chong

"Round the table" – refreshment following the Last Post Ceremony – Menin Gate

Refreshments - Brugge

Parade Contingent with Jim Parks - Farmsum

Jacob Kos, STI and Herbert Gall, tour guide

Parade Contingent at Norg – Hotel Karsten in the background

Refreshments at the hotel

Parade contingent with MGen Corbould - Voorthuizen

Cadet contingent - Voorthuizen

Cadets in the “Westie” Jeep

Private Sattler and the Cadets in the back of Dodge WC 52

Padre, Craig & Dianelle Savage (in the back)

Graeme Clark, Barbara Neill, Ernie Bodrogi

Jacob Kos, Leo Roozenbeek, Hanneke Roozenbeek, Herbert Gall

Dinner at “Otterlo Events”

Nico, our driver, about to sit down to dinner

Canadian War Cemetery - Holten

Ukraine Band and with our Cadet Contingent

Prior to marching in the Liberation Parade – Wageningen

Graeme Clark & Nico van Domburg, our bus driver

Hebert Gall, Tamara O'Dea, Danielle Savage and Jacob Kos

At the new bridge - Arnhem

Staghound (F215633) Revisited

A picture, as shown below, was taken in 1945 in The Netherlands of a group of Westminsters clustered around an armoured car vehicle called a “Staghound”. This vehicle was operated by the 12th Troop, ‘C’ Squadron of the XII Manitoba Dragoons, of Brandon, Manitoba. During World War II the Dragoons were mobilised as the 18th Armoured Car Regiment (Reconnaissance).

This Canadian Army photo was taken on a street called Eykhovenstraat, Dreumel. It was included in Major W.E. Oldfield’s book “The Westminsters’ War Diary”. Based on a review of the War Diaries of the Dragoons and the Westminster Regiment, the photo would have been taken between the 19th to 21st of March 1945 when the Westminster Regiment came into the area to relieve the Dragoons during Operation DESTROYER. It was C Coy of the Westminster Regiment that relieved A Squadron, 18th Armoured Car Regiment at Dreumel.

The vehicle is identified by F215633 C-122 which is seen in the photo .

"Roadside Gossip in Holland".
Back, left to right: Capt. J. C. Calcutt, Ottawa, Ont., Lt. H. A. Stephens, New Westminster, B.C., Westminsters, Tpr. A. R. Litchfield, Winnipeg, Man., Tpr. W. J. Flanagan, Cutknife, Sask. Standing: Pte. J. A. Kingsnorth, New Westminster, B.C., Pte. S. N. Drummond, Vancouver, B.C., Westminsters, Sgt. J. D. Macgill, Saskatoon, Sask., Westminsters.

Another Canadian Army photo, shown below, was included in the book “For King and Country” and has other members of the Westminster Regiment sitting on the Staghound.

Unknown Westminster, Pte. Bruce Butler, Westminster, Tpr. Orville Delyea, and Pte. Don Drummond, Westminster.

One of the members of our trip was the son Robert (Bob) Drummond of Private Stanley Drummond, who is shown in the first picture and nephew of Private Don Drummond who is shown in the second photo.

Staghound F215633 C-122 was rescued by Marco Hogenkamp of Lichtenvoorde, (located about 40 km east of Arnhem) from a gunnery range ASK ’t Harde in the Netherlands. ASK stands for Artillery Schiet Kamp or Artillery Shooting Range. It is one of the oldest and largest ranges in the Netherlands. The Staghound was used on the LAW range (Light Antitank Weapon) as a hard target. The left side of the car was in particular bad shape as that was the side being hit. The inside of the car was badly damaged by shrapnel. The engines were penetrated by a larger calibre shell and could not be saved. The hull had to be repaired which took more then a year of cutting and welding. The hull was sand blasted and repainted, ready for mounting the mechanical parts. All the mechanical parts such as engines, transmissions, steering gear, transfer case and front axle and springs were replaced with NOS (new old stock) parts mainly coming from the UK and Italy. Despite being NOS parts, all these parts had to be dis-assembled, checked and repaired as necessary, especially bearings and oil seals. In total, Marco spent some 4500 hours to get this car operational again.

Unfortunately, due to time constraints, the tour group was not able to visit Marco. Following the tour, Bob made a separate trip and visited Marco on 10 May 2025 and was able to get the following photographs.

Marco Hogenkamp and Bob Drummond in front of the Staghound

Bob Drummond standing in front of the same Staghound as his father had done 80 years ago.

(It is interesting to note that Col (Ret'd) Bob Drummond was the team lead on the acquisition of 6 x CH-147 Chinook Helicopters for employment with Canadian Troops in Afghanistan. The current photo the Association website shows one of those helicopters in Afghanistan.)