

**‘For each dear life of sacrifice’
Post-war Commemoration**

War memorials are important features in communities across Canada. They take many forms – cenotaphs, cairns, statues, rolls of honour, church windows, buildings, avenues, trees – and provide a physical place for communities to honour those who gave their lives in the service of their country. They offer a place to remember the impact of war on those left behind, celebrate surviving veterans, and educate each new generation about conflict and peace. Post-war commemoration is also practiced in Canadian culture in many other ways, such as street names, scholarships, postage stamps, medals, veterans’ license plates, literature, art and music. Museums, archives, publications and websites are used to record, interpret and share the collective and personal experiences of war. Public ceremonies of remembrance are held annually and the associated visual symbol – the poppy – is recognizable to all Canadians.

Through the use of oral history interviews with veterans and the examination of a local post-WWI memorial project, this paper will provide a comparison of historical and contemporary commemorative initiatives and show that the mechanisms by which public memorials are created have remained consistent over the decades. The permanence of memorials and the responsibility for their ongoing maintenance and preservation will also be explored.

In November 2009, as part of the Veterans’ Oral History program, a joint project between the University of Victoria and the Royal United Services Institute of Vancouver Island, three retired veterans were interviewed on the topic of commemoration. Rear

Admiral Bill Hughes was interviewed about the Royal Canadian Navy's upcoming centennial and the commemorative window that will be unveiled at St Paul's Church in Esquimalt in 2010. Major General Herb Pitts described the commemorative events which are planned to mark the 150th anniversary of the Queen's Own Rifles, as well as the Korea Veterans Wall of Remembrance and the dedication of a cairn in the Rocky Mountains to commemorate the 1st Canadian Parachute Battallion. Major Charles Goodman shared his memories of the 50th anniversary of the Battle of the Somme in 1966 as well as his experience at numerous WWII remembrance ceremonies held in Europe in 1994. The narratives so generously shared by these individuals demonstrate that the activity of commemoration is very much alive in the community today.

The practice of erecting monuments and memorials associated with war and the war dead is centuries old. Obelisks, triumphant arches, pillars, temples, fountains, and statues are common forms that date back to classical times. These monuments serve to record events in a permanent and visible way. They cross language, age and literacy barriers in a way that other forms of commemoration do not. Whether portraying victory in battle, giving thanks for the end of hostilities, or mourning the loss of their soldiers, war memorials provide a powerful and compelling place to remember and reflect.

In Canada after WWI there was a strong need in communities across the nation to publicly express sorrow at the loss of so many young men and to honour the memory of the dead. During the war the focus had been on victory, but as Canadian soldiers began to return home communities realized the high price that had been paid. Canada lost 60,000 lives in WWI and it is estimated that more than 70,000 Canadians returned home with

disabilities. Meanwhile the dead left behind more than 30,000 widows, children and grieving parents.¹

Immediately following WWI, committees were formed to plan and raise funds for memorial projects. At the forefront of these efforts were veterans' organizations, such as the Great War Veterans Association (GWVA), and women's groups, in particular the Imperial Order of Daughters of the Empire (IODE).² Funds were collected through private donations from door-to-door canvassing, newspaper appeals, special events, and performances.³ Labour and materials were often donated. Private families occasionally sponsored a public memorial, as with the cenotaph in Victoria, but funds were most often raised through a wide subscription base of individuals, veterans, local businesses, and service organizations. "Erected by the People" is a frequent sentiment on memorials of the First World War.⁴

While municipalities occasionally gave, or made available, land for memorial projects, the federal government's involvement was largely limited to advice. Sam Hughes, Member of Parliament and former Minister of Militia, suggested in 1919 that a mass produced monument be created and issued to communities based on their war losses.⁵ The idea was rejected by the then current Minister of Militia who believed people would value things more highly if they had to pay or work for them.⁶ General Arthur Currie expressed concern that the names of battlefields were not being correctly inscribed on monuments but Ottawa gave little direction to organizing groups on this

¹ Desmond Morton, *Winning the Second Battle*, ix.

² Robert Shipley, *To Mark Our Place*, 56.

³ *Ibid.*, 70.

⁴ Robert Shipley, *To Mark Our Place*, 70.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 62.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 62.

matter.⁷ The federal government's position was that each community should plan, design and fund their own monuments.⁸ One such post-WWI commemorative project was Memorial Avenue on Shelbourne Street in Saanich, British Columbia.

The idea for a memorial avenue along Shelbourne Street was put to the Victoria Chamber of Commerce by H.B. Thomson and Dr Stonier in February 1921.⁹ The plan called for a double border of Plane and Mountain Ash trees, planted alternately at thirty feet apart, to connect Mount Douglas Park with the City of Victoria. Envisioned as a province-wide memorial based in British Columbia's capital city, the avenue was to include portals or gateways for each municipality on which the names of soldiers killed would be inscribed. The intention was for one tree to be planted for each British Columbian killed in World War I and it was thought at the time that the memorial would rival the great avenues of Europe.¹⁰

More than \$2,000 was raised publicly for the iron railings and plaques. The District of Saanich and the City of Victoria cooperated through the Parks and Beaches Committee with Victoria donating the trees and Saanich providing the land. The Canadian Explosives Company Limited donated their blasting services while veterans' organizations, cadets, and service clubs such as Rotary, Kiwanis and Gyro volunteered to carry out the manual labour alongside the families, neighbours and friends of the fallen.¹¹

On Sunday October 2nd, 1921 more than 5,000 people attended the dedication of Memorial Avenue. The first tree was planted during the ceremony by Lieutenant-

⁷ Ibid., 51.

⁸ Ibid., 62-63.

⁹ Saanich Archives Vertical Files: Shelbourne Street Memorial Avenue.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

Governor Walter Cameron Nichol and an address was given by Premier John Oliver.¹² The event was described by the *Colonist* as “the most impressive within the memory of Victorians.”¹³ Ceremonial plantings along Memorial Avenue continued throughout the 1920s. General Joseph Cesaire Joffre, Marshall of France, planted a tree during his visit to Victoria on March 29th, 1922 and later that year General the Right Honourable Baron Byng of Vimy, Governor General of Canada, contributed to the memorial. Commemorative plaques and wrought iron fences were used to name the fallen soldiers and to identify trees planted by dignitaries but, unfortunately, these have not survived.¹⁴

The community effort that was undertaken to create Memorial Avenue was significant. It was a sincere and heartfelt tribute to those who had sacrificed their lives to preserve peace. Peace Day on July 19th, 1919 had been celebrated as a victory¹⁵ but by October 1921, when the Memorial Avenue dedication ceremony took place, the jubilation that had been felt following the end of the war had been replaced by a new reality. The deaths of fathers, husbands, neighbours and friends affected communities deeply around the country. Memorial Avenue, together with numerous other commemorative projects in Canada following WWI, gave focus to this grief and enabled a public demonstration of honour and respect to the survivors as well as the dead.

The memorial trees represented new life and new hope. The official program for Memorial Avenue stated, “after centuries these same trees will stand and symbolize for our children’s children the spirit of 1914-1919, and the portals which will be erected by the various Municipalities of the Province at the entrance of the section of the Avenue

¹² Memorial Avenue Program of Dedication, 2 Oct 1921.

¹³ *Colonist*, 4 Oct 1921.

¹⁴ One exception is a plaque marking the tree planted by General Joffre which is on display at Saanich Archives.

¹⁵ Jonathan Vance, *Death So Noble*, 6.

apportioned to them, will perpetuate the names of the glorious dead.”¹⁶ But, almost ninety years after these noble sentiments were written, what remains of Memorial Avenue? Where are the trees planted by General Byng or General Joffre? Where are the trees planted by neighbours and friends, such as the two planted by Mrs J.H. Todd in 1922 who at eighty-two years old said she was only doing her duty?¹⁷ They may still be there, unmarked and unknown, or they may be among the trees that fell victim to utility poles, road widening, and sewer pipe installation. William Lothian, a Victoria resident, planted a tree for his son who was killed at Ypres in 1916 and remembered the location of the tree on Shelbourne Street because it was situated by a small white gate leading into a field. Family members trying to locate the tree in 1965 commented to the *Victoria Times* that “the gate is gone, the field is gone and the plaque, if there was one, is gone”.¹⁸ The final lines of a poem written by Mr. Lothian after the dedication ceremony in 1921 reads, “For each dear life of sacrifice will grow Along this beauteous way a living tree; Now and in coming days and years to show The living cease not to remember thee”.¹⁹

The memorial of trees was never completed and the street name has remained as Shelbourne Street despite efforts over the decades to officially rename it Memorial Avenue. In 1935 the grand plan was scaled back to limit Memorial Avenue to the stretch of Shelbourne Street north of Cedar Hill Cross Road. Although spearheaded by the Chamber of Commerce and built by publicly donated funds and labour, the maintenance and preservation of the trees and plaques fell to municipal governments. There is evidence of concern regarding maintenance as early as October 1923 when a delegation

¹⁶ Memorial Avenue Program of Dedication, 2 Oct 1921.

¹⁷ *Victoria Colonist*, 22 March 1922.

¹⁸ *Victoria Times*, 10 Nov 1965.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

from the Victoria Chamber of Commerce attended a Saanich Council meeting to request that the municipality take over the care of Memorial Avenue within the limits of its boundaries.²⁰ After discussion, council agreed to take up the question of maintenance with the Beaches and Parks Committee, a joint Victoria-Saanich committee set up before the establishment of a Saanich Parks Department, which was tasked with the maintenance of the memorial. Preservation of the memorial eventually fell to Saanich and in the late 1950s there was a renewed effort to complete the plantings with a rededication service held on November 11, 1961. However, the scheme was never fulfilled. The *Saanich Review* on Jan 20, 1971 wrote "...it now seems that the once admired Memorial Avenue must finally be obliterated in the name of progress."²¹ A small cairn was erected in 1976 to commemorate the remaining trees, although it omits any reference to the South African War, which was an integral part of the original commemoration, or any reference to WWII and the Korean War which were included in the rededication of 1961.²²

When it came to honouring the sacrifices of Canadians it was often veterans' organizations who led the way and this tradition continues. In 2010 the Royal Canadian Navy will be celebrating its centennial. To mark the occasion, retired Rear Admiral (RAdm) Bill Hughes has initiated a memorial window project for St. Paul's Church in Esquimalt. When interviewed about the project, RAdm Hughes explained that the

²⁰ Saanich Council minutes, 4 Oct 1923.

²¹ Saanich Review, 20 Jan 1971.

²² Along Shelbourne Street just south of Cedar Hill Cross Road is Saanich's War Memorial Park, now known as Gore Park. It was dedicated on July 19, 1919 and was later the site for a memorial cairn. Like Memorial Avenue this park has also been a victim of urban development and neglect. In the 1960s a fast food restaurant was built nearby and, feeling the site lacked the dignity and peacefulness it deserved, the memorial cairn was moved to the lawn of the Saanich municipal hall on Vernon Avenue where it still stands today.

inspiration for a memorial window came from attending a window unveiling dedicated to the Princess of Wales Own Regiment and the 21st Battalion at St Paul's Anglican Church in Kingston, Ontario. His grandfather, Brigadier General William St Pierre Hughes, had commanded both units. When RAdm Hughes' son, also a naval officer, suggested that a similar project be undertaken for St Paul's in Esquimalt for the navy's centennial, RAdm Hughes made the suggestion to Andrew Gates, Director of St Paul's Naval and Garrison Church, and the idea was favourably received. As RAdm Hughes describes in the interview, St Paul's was the obvious site for such a project because of its long association with the Navy.²³

A committee was established comprising of retired naval officers and representatives from the church, as well as the curator of the Naden Naval and Military Museum.²⁴ Mercer & Shafer Glass Studio, known for its work on similar projects, was chosen to design and create the window.²⁵ Working from a list of criteria supplied by the committee, they created a draft design for a four panel window. The final design includes ships, divers, airmen, submariners, women, reserves, the merchant navy, Fisguard Lighthouse, the white ensign, the Canadian flag, St Nicholas the patron saint of seafarers, the badges of the ships Sackville and Haida, and, intriguingly, a message in Morse code that RAdm Hughes would not divulge.²⁶ The design also includes symbols of twenty-four ships sunk in WWII and one ship sunk in WWI. Below the window will

²³ Bill Hughes Interview, 4:55 and 7:45.

²⁴ Ibid., 5:38.

²⁵ Ibid., 2:32.

²⁶ Ibid., 24:34.

be two books, one which will explain the symbolism and content of each panel and, the other, a book of remembrance.²⁷

The committee made a deliberate decision regarding financing. They did not want to see church funds used, because of the financial hardship facing many churches, nor did they seek any government funding²⁸. It was felt that all funds should be raised by private donation. When asked about the government funding decision, RAdm Hughes explained that it was unlikely government would agree to make a contribution, that their involvement would be too problematic, and, most importantly, a government contribution would have no meaning to the people who approved the funds.²⁹ It was important to RAdm Hughes to have a broad base of support and for each donation to be meaningful to the giver.³⁰ Brochures were sent to about 600 people across the country and in other parts of the world and donations have come from all parts of Canada from coast to coast as well as the UK and the USA.³¹ A website about the commemorative window project was set up and donations were accepted online. The fundraising efforts were very successful and the committee reached its goal in under a year, receiving three hundred and seventy individual donations.

The project began in 2007 and the window will be unveiled in a dedication ceremony in May 2010. Guests at the special service will include donors, mayors, retired senior officers and church dignitaries. A gold coloured curtain (the Navy's colours are blue and gold) will be pulled open by a senior member of the church on one side and a navy representative on the other. The naval hymn will be sung and prayers recited.

²⁷ Ibid., 7:00.

²⁸ Ibid., 2:04.

²⁹ Ibid., 29:38.

³⁰ Ibid., 4:64.

³¹ Ibid., 6:04.

“That’s my navy,” is what RAdm Hughes hopes people will think and feel when looking at the window.³² When asked about the preservation of the window, RAdm Hughes acknowledged that although churches have been closed recently through the amalgamation of parishes, he is confident that St. Paul’s will survive. He noted that St. Paul’s is a heritage building and, as such, will be protected. The church and the diocese will have ongoing responsibility for the maintenance and preservation of the window.³³ RAdm Hughes ended the interview with a story about one of the donors, a widow of a master seaman wanting to donate \$2,000 to the project. When RAdm Hughes remarked to her that it was a very large sum, she explained that she and her husband had been saving for a holiday but now that he had passed away, she wanted the savings to go toward the window in memory of her husband.³⁴

The importance of private as opposed to government funding as well as issues surrounding the maintenance and preservation of memorials are also voiced in the interview with retired Major General (MGen) Herb Pitts, speaking about three commemorative projects he has been involved with: the upcoming 150th Anniversary of the Queen’s Own Rifles, the Korea Veterans Wall of Remembrance dedicated in 1997, and the dedication of a 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion memorial in 2000.

The Queen’s Own Rifles is Canada’s oldest continuously serving infantry regiment with soldiers serving in conflicts from the Fenian raids of 1866 to the Boer War, WWI, WWII, Korea, Somalia, Bosnia and Afghanistan. The Colonel-in-Chief of the regiment, Princess Alexandra, will be participating in the sesquicentennial celebrations. In addition to a cairn to be unveiled by Princess Alexandra at Work Point

³² Ibid., 19:00.

³³ Ibid., 13:50.

³⁴ Ibid., 29:37.

Barracks in Esquimalt, a second monument, also a cairn, is planned for the University of Victoria's Gordon Head campus. This location is significant because, as MGen Pitts describes, the 2nd Battalion of the Queen's Own Rifles were the last regiment at the Gordon Head Army Camp when it closed in 1957.³⁵ The cairn at UVIC will be located near the old entrance to Gordon Head Army Base, which is still marked by two pillars and a monument that describes the history of the barracks and the Queen's Own Rifles as the last unit to be stationed there. Other remnants of the army barracks and a few army huts are also located near the proposed cairn site.³⁶

MGen Pitts makes it clear that the events surrounding the anniversary are self-funded by the regiment and its local branches. There is no provincial or federal government support, with the exception of the accommodation that Princess Alexandra will receive at Government House.³⁷ The regiment is responsible for the carving and placement of the cairn, but the planning committee was able to secure the support of Canadian Forces Base Naden for the laying of the foundation.³⁸ This pattern can be seen in earlier monuments: private funds raised through the community by veterans, regiments, societies, or private individuals with occasional assistance limited to land or specialized labour from the military or a level of government.

MGen Pitts goes on to describe the Wall of Remembrance in Brampton, Ontario dedicated to Korea Veterans on July 27th, 1997. He remarks that Korea was often referred to as the forgotten war and that prior to the monument there was no national

³⁵ Herb Pitts Interview, part 1, 01:30.

³⁶ Ibid., 12:19.

³⁷ Ibid., 15:12.

³⁸ Ibid., 19:10.

commemoration.³⁹ The Wall grew out of a visit to Korea by two Canadian veterans who were asked to take pictures of the headstone at the cemetery in Puson. The pictures sparked interest in having replicas of the headstone plaques located in Canada. A Wall Committee was established to raise funds and the Meadowvale Cemetery in Brampton Ontario was chosen as the site. The completed monument is a gently curving structure about 200 feet in length and displays 516 individual bronze plaques - replicas of the grave markers in Puson – in memory of the Canadian lives lost in Korea.⁴⁰ The placement of the monument within a cemetery allowed for its maintenance and preservation. MGen Pitts coordinated the dedication ceremony.⁴¹ A memorial book describing the monument and listing the name, rank and regimental number of each of the dead was published as part of the commemoration and is “intended to serve, along with the Wall of Remembrance, as a permanent reminder to all Canadians of the sacrifice made by 516 young citizens in the cause of Peace.”⁴² Funding for the monument was raised through donations and a full list of donors can be found in the memorial book.

The practice of publishing the names of contributors was also common during fundraising efforts for WWI memorials. Appeals for funds were often published in newspapers and monument committees emphasized the privilege of contributing funds to honour the fallen, contrasting the great price paid by the fallen to the small amount being sought in the appeal.⁴³ Contributors in the post WWI era included a broad range of individuals and groups – widows, workers, veterans, public servants, churches,

³⁹ A second national monument to Korea Veterans, known as the Monument to the Canadian Fallen, was unveiled in 2003. Two identical statues were made, one for Puson, Korea and the other for Ottawa. MGen Pitts was involved in the dedication ceremony, speaking on behalf of the Veterans. (Pitts Interview, filename Pitts_Nov2009_part1.wav, 41:03).

⁴⁰ The Korea Veterans Association, *Memorial Book*, 16-17.

⁴¹ Pitts Interview, part 1, 33:00.

⁴² The Korea Veterans Association, *Memorial Book*, 18.

⁴³ Robert Shipley, *To Mark Our Place*, 70.

businesses, youth clubs, women's organizations – and the same base of support can be seen in the Korea Veterans Association Memorial Book, which lists many hundreds of donors in categories such as Legion branches, veterans, regiments, police forces, businesses, service clubs, political representatives and individuals.⁴⁴ But the largest category by far is individuals.

The third commemorative project MGen Pitts describes is that of the 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion for which he is the national patron. The unit served in the British 6th Airborne Division during WWII and was among the first on the ground during D-Day.⁴⁵ A memorial to the battalion is located in Siffleur Falls Provincial Park in Alberta where four mountain peaks have been named Normandy, Ardennes, Rhine and Elbe after the battles in which the battalion fought. The monument, dedicated on September 8th, 2000, is carved with a depiction of the mountain peaks, the Battalion's emblem, and a description of their history and battle honours. M Gen Pitts describes in the interview how each year three or four containers of the ashes of paratroopers are taken by a climbing party to be sprinkled at the top of Normandy Peak, and in this way it has become somewhat of a shrine.⁴⁶ While the Government of Alberta made the land available for the monument, the dedication program gives thanks to “numerous members and friends who have contributed financially, and, those who have contributed in many other ways, to the success of the monument project.”⁴⁷ This pattern of a veteran – and community - driven project is similar to the other commemorative projects described in the interviews, and to the historical pattern seen in WWI monuments.

⁴⁴ The Korea Veterans Association, *Memorial Book*, 60-94.

⁴⁵ Pitts Interview, part 1, 52:40.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 1:00:40.

⁴⁷ Ex Coelis Mountain Dedication of Monument program, 8 September 2000.

Major Charles Goodman, a veteran of WWII and Korea, has participated in numerous commemorative ceremonies, including the 50th Anniversary of the Battle of the Somme and events surrounding the 50th anniversary of the Allied Landings in France. Major Goodman recalls joining the Reserves in the Signal Corps when he was fifteen years old, hoping the war would last long enough for him to fight⁴⁸. He joined the Saint John Fusiliers when he was sixteen by changing his registration documents to appear that he was nineteen. After training in British Columbia he went to France for active service in early 1944 where he served with the South Saskatchewan Regiment in France and Belgium and was wounded in Holland.⁴⁹

In 1965, Major Goodman was stationed in Europe commanding C Company of the 1st Battalion of the Princess Patricia Canadian Light Infantry (PPCLI) and was tasked with organizing a hundred-man guard of honour to take part in the 50th anniversary commemoration of the Battle of the Somme.⁵⁰ He took part in a number of remembrance services for Canadians in WWI and remembers seeing Canadian veterans of the battles, not imagining that he would one day be participating in 50th anniversary events of battles in which he himself had fought.⁵¹

Beaumont-Hamel was the site of a battle fought by the Newfoundland Regiment and is marked by a bronze statue of a caribou, the emblem of the regiment. The ceremony in 1966 to commemorate the battle stretched into the evening. In his interview, Major Goodman recalls the illuminated statue against the night sky and the

⁴⁸ Charles Goodman Interview, part 1, 1:08 and 2:45.

⁴⁹ Nancy and Charles Goodman, *Boy Soldier 1944, A Pilgrimage 1994*, 120.

⁵⁰ Goodman Interview, (filename Goodman_Nov2009_part1.wav), 9:00.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 10:40.

very moving moment when the Canadian and French flags were lowered.⁵² He goes on to describe the Ypres Menin Gate Memorial which lists the names of the thousands of soldiers whose bodies were never found. The PPCLI had been in many battles in that area and had been granted the freedom of the City of Ypres. As part of the commemorative events, Major Goodman exercised this freedom by ceremonially inviting the Mayor of Ypres to inspect the Canadian troops and then marched his men through the city with bayonets fixed, drums beating and flags flying.⁵³ He found it a great privilege to lead his men and represent his regiment fifty years after the fighting.⁵⁴

In 1994, Major Goodman returned to Europe for the 50th anniversary events surrounding D-Day. While not part of the official Canadian contingent, he felt it was personally important to revisit the location of the battles as a way of honouring fallen comrades. He also wanted to share this important part of his life with his wife, Nancy.⁵⁵ He recounts a moving story of returning to the site of the Battle of Falaise where he had experienced house to house fighting and his regiment, the South Saskatchewan, lost five men:

There was a lot of house to house fighting in Falaise. The Germans would be in a house, I was an Infantryman then I wasn't a Signaler then. So we would come up to a house and somebody would fire a machine gun or a rifle or throw a grenade out a window or door at us and so then we would go in the house and try to chase the people in the house out or kill them. And that was kind of dangerous. We lost five people... We buried them a day or two after all this quieted down. All this took place on a street by the main cathedral in the city of Falaise. These five soldiers were buried on the street by the cathedral. There's an ancient monument there... dates back to the Roman times, that pillar, and is right by where we buried the soldiers. Our Pioneer section had made crosses and they just quickly painted the names on them and put them in the ground beside them. This was only temporary because we knew that when the battle went somewhere else they

⁵² Ibid., 14:20.

⁵³ Ibid., 17:00.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 17:45.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 31:40.

would be dug up and eventually end up at a Commonwealth War Graves cemetery.

He returned to the site in 1994 for the commemoration event and found a brass plaque had been placed to honour the five Canadian soldiers who were killed.

The ceremony that I went to then, I went back to take a look at this street and show Nancy where it was. I knew that the soldiers would be gone ...but there is a big brass plaque on the sidewalk where we had buried these soldiers in memory of these five soldiers of the South Saskatchewan Regiment from Canada. Quite moving...I knew them all.⁵⁶

Standing by the cathedral watching the official party, he was invited by the mayor to march with them through the streets. This was typical of the warm welcome and gratitude he received in the towns he visited.

Major Goodman gives clear and vivid descriptions of the battlefields during the war and contrasts this imagery with the warmth and friendship of his visit fifty years later. A particularly poignant example of this is his description of the fighting near Rouen and Foret de la Londe.⁵⁷ Upon returning in 1994, he was welcomed and was taken to visit a memorial in the forest where the townspeople had planted a maple tree, the only maple tree in the area. In the interview, Major Goodman expresses his honour in laying a wreath at the site.⁵⁸ He reflects on the experience of revisiting the sites, describing it as very meaningful and emotional.⁵⁹

At the time they are created, war memorials are intended as permanent reminders of the sacrifices made in war. Sadly, future caretakers sometimes fail to maintain them. This was the case in Saanich where the grand avenue of memorial trees along Shelbourne Street has fallen victim to road-widening and urban development. In Victoria, veterans'

⁵⁶ Ibid., 26:40.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 37:30.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 42:14.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 26:18.

organizations had to fight to keep the word 'memorial' in the name when the original Memorial Arena was replaced with a new structure and renamed after a grocery store. One extraordinary story of how a monument to Canadian soldiers is today being cared for was related by MGen Pitts. He recounts how Adrian Hovestad, who was a child in the village of Doorn in Holland when it was liberated by the Queen's Own Rifles near the end of WWII, returned to the town in 2008 and was disappointed to see the monument littered with leaves and debris. He wrote to the mayor to complain that it was disgraceful that a monument to the town's liberators was not better kept. Receiving no reply, he contacted the media and had a very positive response from the Dutch public. One such response was from a group of boys who offered to keep the area around the monument clean. As a result, a unique relationship has formed between veterans of the Queen's Own Rifles and this group of children in Holland. This story of sacrifice and remembrance has appeared on Dutch television. A veterans group of the Queen's Own Rifles will be visiting the battlefields in 2010 and will include Doorn on their itinerary in order to thank the children personally.⁶⁰

After WWI, communities across the nation felt the need to create visible statements of their sorrow and to honour the sacrifices of the fallen. These memorial projects were initiated and funded not by governments, but by communities themselves. Funds were raised through private donations and represented a broad base of support from individuals, veterans, women's groups, local businesses, churches and service clubs. These efforts were often initiated by veterans' organizations, which were committed to preserving the memory of their fallen comrades.⁶¹ This pattern is evident

⁶⁰ Pitts Interview, (filename Pitts_Nov2009_part1.wav), 19:40.

⁶¹ Morton, *Winning the Second Battle*, 67.

in commemorative projects today as illustrated by the oral history interviews with RAdm Hughes, MGen Pitts and Major Goodman.⁶²

Canada continues to suffer losses in conflicts around the world. The sad loss of former University of Victoria student Lt. Andrew Nuttall while on active duty in Afghanistan in December 2009 is a reminder of how deeply the death of a local soldier is felt in the community. The loss of each local life in WWI was similarly felt by Victorians. The preservation of memorials, such as Memorial Avenue on Shelbourne Street, honours the sacrifice of the individual as well as the grief of the community at the time. Responsibility for the care and maintenance of such memorials is a legacy that each new generation inherits and one that should be accepted with the same solemn duty with which it was bestowed. The neglect over the decades of Memorial Avenue is regrettable but there is hope for it still. Lessons from history and the observation of contemporary commemorative initiatives show where the momentum for such projects originates. Governments do not initiate these projects but through financial necessity and simple logistics often assume the ongoing maintenance for them. The original stakeholders over the decades may fall away and with them go the vision and values that created the memorial. As with the memorial to the Queen's Own Rifles in Doorn, Holland, grassroots support from the community may be what is needed to convince local authorities that memorials built by earlier generations are still relevant, meaningful and cherished. The passage of time does not diminish the sacrifice of each dear life.

⁶² When asked during the interviews about their personal involvement in Remembrance Day ceremonies in the Greater Victoria area, all three veterans remarked that attendance by the public had increased in recent years. Major Goodman related a story of his experience returning from the Sidney cenotaph where he was stopped near his vehicle and asked if he was a veteran. Replying that he was indeed a veteran of WWII and Korea, Major Goodman was then asked if he would shake hands. The stranger explained that he wanted to go home and tell his family that he had shaken the hand of a veteran that day.

Documents and Images



Image 1: Mrs Caroline Rosson at one of the fenced trees that once stood along Shelbourne Street, as part of a Memorial Avenue to those killed in the South African War and World War I, circa 1960
Courtesy of Saanich Archives (1983-006-016)

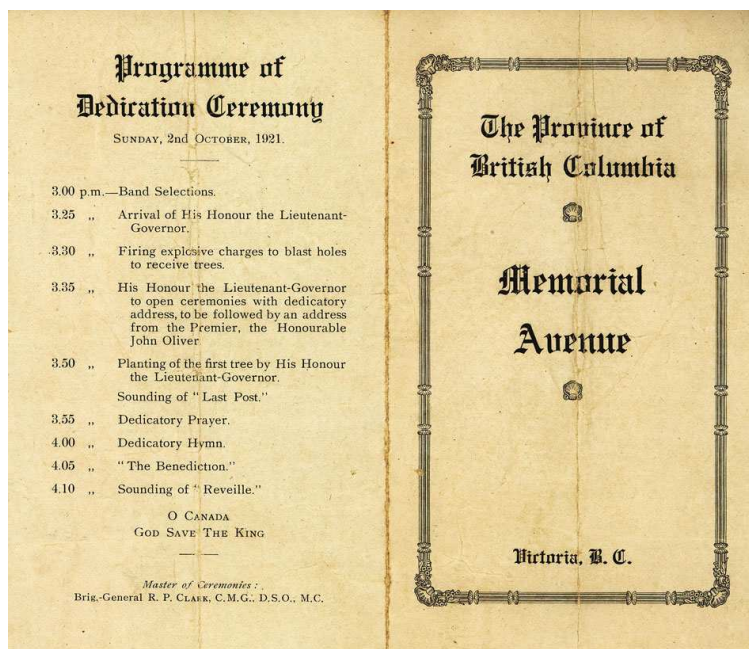


Image 2: Program of the dedication of Memorial Avenue, Sunday October 2, 1921
Courtesy of Saanich Archives

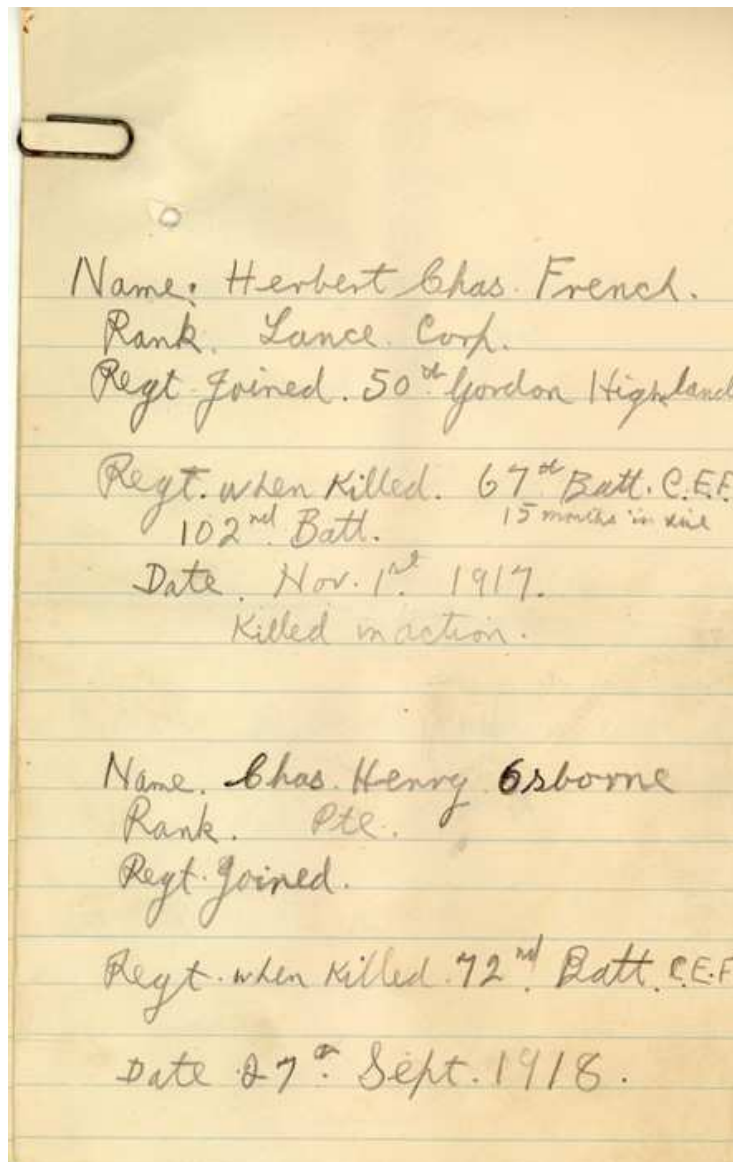


Image 3: Lists of names of the war dead, such as the one illustrated above, were submitted to the Municipality of Saanich for inclusion in the Memorial Avenue plaques following WWI
Courtesy of Saanich Archives

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