

Canadian Battlefields Foundation Study Tour Edition



2007 Battle Study Tours

The Annual University Students' Tour

The Cleghorn / U de M Tour

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The Annual University Students' Tour



Dr. Geoffrey Hayes, Associate Professor, Department of History at the University of Waterloo and Lt. Col. David Patterson were the tour leaders of the University Students' battle study tour. Dr. Hayes records his impressions:

This year's CBF student tour was another great success. The Foundation chose 16 keen, curious and enthusiastic students from across the country. With former tour alumnus and tour leader Lt. Col. David Patterson in the lead, our first days found us exploring the battlefields near Arras and the Somme.

At Vimy Ridge, Kyle Hogaboam discussed the battle in the shadow of Allward's spectacular monument. We stood in Lichfield Crater where Alex Souchen and Simon Theobald told us of two fatalities in General Burstall's 2nd Division. One of them was Ellis Sifton, who won the Victoria Cross at Vimy. Todd Hoffman told us about Max Luloff, a native of Todd's Ottawa valley who is buried in the Bully-Grenay Extension. At Chaudière cemetery, Nicole Gale related the story of her relative, Arnold Gale, who also died on the Western Front. In Cabaret Rouge cemetery, Allan O'Hagan introduced us to George Miller, killed in the second day of fighting on Vimy Ridge. Jon Baker told the group of Allan Hamacher, one of the thousands of missing Canadians whose name is inscribed on the Vimy memorial.

The weather turned gray and windy as we headed to Dieppe, where the group contemplated the decisions that led to the costly raid of 1942.

Andrea Quaiattini's discussion on the main beach well introduced the big picture. Shantel Keys' grandfather covered the withdrawal of the South Saskatchewan Regiment from Pourville. He survived the battle. Shantel's presentations at the Merritt Bridge in Pourville and in the Dieppe cemetery told of the human cost of that terrible day 65 years ago.

Our students were fine ambassadors throughout the tour, but never more so than when they represented the Foundation on 6 and 7 June. Lt. Gen. Belzile [Past President of the CBF]

led the Foundation's ceremonies on 7 June at Le Mémorial, l'Ancienne Boucherie and l'Abbey d'Ardennes. All three were very well organized and well attended, thanks in part to the work of Céline Garbay, the Foundation's vice-president in France.

Our days in Normandy were long, but instructive. We explored carefully the invasion beaches, learning from CBF director Alec Douglas about the Canadian minesweeping flotilla that opened the sea-lanes into Omaha Beach. Zach Mantle is a lieutenant with the present-day Queen's Own Rifles of Canada, so his uniform drew much comment as we gathered at Bernières-sur-Mer, where Zach's regiment came ashore on D-Day. Inspired by Marc Milner's recent work, we also followed the steps of the North Shore (New Brunswick) Regiment who fought into St. Aubin sur Mer on D-Day, and then into the village of Tailleville, where an ambush decimated one of its companies. Chris Hyland told us about Archie McNaughton, the 41-year-old company commander who was killed in Tailleville that day. Richard LaMontagne related the story of Bruno LeBlanc, another New Brunswick native who also lies in the Beny-sur-Mer cemetery.

In the days that followed, the students learned of the significance of such places as Putot-en-Bessin, Authie, Buron, Carpiquet, Point 67 and Tilly la Campagne. We talked of artillery barrages, nebelwerfers, reverse slope positions, TEWTS and the effects of air power. We walked the battlefields of Operations Spring, Tractable and Totalize. Tour alumnus Mackenzie Brookes related the awful struggle of the Algonquin Regiment and the British Columbia Regiment on Hill 140 in August 1944.

All of these discussions made the stories of individual Canadian soldiers that much more poignant. Kyle Harris told us of Thomas Albert Lee Windsor, who was shot after capture at the Abbey d'Ardennes. Alyssa Cundy and Amy Fallis introduced two young Canadians who were killed on 14 August 1944 in the fighting south of Caen, and who lay together in Bretteville cemetery. Through presentations, readings and songs (more than once could Jennifer McFarlane's lovely voice be heard amidst the headstones) this group of fine young Canadians came to understand better the contribution of earlier generations to the liberation of Europe.



Jennifer McFarlane, from Stony Plain, Alberta (west of Edmonton) is entering her fifth and final year of a B.A./B.Ed combined degree at the University of Lethbridge, majoring in history. As an up and coming teacher, she examines the role of Vimy Ridge in Canadian nationalism.

“On Vimy Ridge today stands a giant monument. The structure is very impressive and beautiful with its towering white pillars. However, it is the statues around it that make it unique because they display pensiveness, mourning and suffering. Most of the other nations involved in the World Wars choose to glorify their dead and pay tribute to their victories. Canadians however choose to show mourning and loss in our monument, while the size and brilliance of the structure adds glory in a different way. Apparently, the British government would have preferred that the Vimy monument conform to Commonwealth monument standards, but the Canadians insisted that Vimy be unique.

“On this spot, in April 1917, Canadian troops were fighting. They advanced 1200 meters up the flat side of the hill (not the steep ridge as the monument’s position might indicate). There were four objectives to be reached, which corresponded roughly with the three German lines of defence. The troops knew the ground well, as they had trained and practiced the attack on a full-scale replica hill. In order to help the infantry hold their position against heavy defensive fire, the engineers advanced with the infantry, carrying ammunition in canvas bags. The battle lasted three days, costing 3998 Canadian lives, but all four objectives were gained.

“Vimy Ridge was neither the most important battle of the war, nor the most costly one, but there are a few other factors that make it an appealing event on which to hang our nationalism. It was the first time that all four Canadian divisions fought together. It was also the first time that a Canadian Officer, General Arthur Currie, was promoted to supreme commander. Furthermore, over half the Canadian troops were volunteers. As a result, winning Vimy Ridge was seen not as a British victory which Canadians were part of, but as the first real Canadian victory. There is a single phrase that defines the myth: ‘We went up to Vimy as Nova Scotians and Albertans and we came back Canadians.’

“Our favourite Remembrance Day phrase is “We Will Remember”. The question is, what do we remember? As realistic Canadians, and certainly realistic history scholars, we remember the *what* very well. Statistics like how many

men went to battle, how many came out again, what the strategies were, and what kind of ammunition was used are permanently preserved in our memories, or at least in our text books. But we rarely consider *why* we remember. Why was Vimy Ridge, or any part of the World Wars important to Canadians? Why else would we honour this place as much as we do if not for some small part of us that believes that Canada took its first steps here?

“In actual fact, Vimy was one of many accomplishments by the Canadians in a long curve towards achieving independence and a sense of nationhood. As well, the memory of Vimy is just one of many things that Canadians can be proud of, and a small but important piece of who we are”.



Kyle Hogaboam, a second year MA student at the University of Calgary in Canadian political and military history, intends to complete an education degree and become a social studies teacher. He examines, ‘How We Remember: Beaumont-Hamel, Vimy, and Neuville St. Vaast’

“Canadian memory, and connecting with our past, can present the greatest challenge to a historian. How can one correlate what occurred in the First World War ninety years ago with the present day, particularly when the survivors of that event have now passed away and the war takes its place in the annals of military history? A still tougher question is whether Canadian historians can take into perspective German memory. Yet, by walking in the footsteps of those who fought, and by visiting the memorials and cemeteries



Jennifer McFarlane takes time to collect her thoughts at a Canadian War Cemetery.

that have been erected, those of us who were a part of the Canadian Battlefield Tour have managed to understand what it takes to remember.

“Beaumont-Hamel was the First World War site we experienced with the greatest depth, and is also amazingly preserved. Trench lines, shell craters, and other aspects of the field of battle are still visible today. Walking the path laid out for visitors, (led by the extremely knowledgeable Canadian guides at the interpretive centre) one cannot but feel the presence of history. As historians in training, we are taught to ignore emotion and to seek objectivity, but it is impossible to stand on the same ground where the Newfoundland Regiment was almost decimated in 1916 and not imagine what it must have been like to be there, to see your comrades falling, and yet to push on because that is all you can do. That is how Canadians today make the connection with the past: by honouring the fallen in memorial and by visiting the sites of battles. That is why a monument such as the one on Vimy Ridge exists: Canadians have a place to go and connect with their past, and to remember.

“But a tour of Canadian battlefields would only represent a fragment of memory on the First World War. It is just as important to attempt to understand the German soldiers who fought and died in the same places that Canadian soldiers did. We were fortunate enough to visit Neuville St. Vaast, the final resting place of 44, 830 German soldiers and the largest German First World War cemetery in France. At the end of a long, weary day, we tried to grasp the significance of the site; why the tombstones were different, what the significance was behind them. Perhaps we only captured a small measure of the site’s importance, but even to walk among the rows of crosses and to somehow attempt to fathom so many dead served as a reminder that not just Canadians suffered the loss of so many. For us as young Canadians, and those who must bear the torch of remembrance, the immense amount of lives lost cannot be forgotten.

At the interpretive centre at Beaumont Hamel, a verse remained with me that is a fitting conclusion to how we remember, for we don’t choose how we remember, but that we simply must.”

Remembering

A Man’s destination is not his destiny,
Every Country is home to one man,
And exile to another.
Where a man died bravely
At one with his destiny, that soil is his.
Let his village remember.



Alex Souchen, of Ottawa, Ontario, is in his final year of undergraduate studies at the University of Ottawa. He is very interested in the Second World War and would like to continue on to get his MA in military history. A highlight for Alex was his tour of the Thiepval Memorial to the Missing.

“The Thiepval Memorial stands on a crest of a ridge overlooking the Somme region, where countless British soldiers fought and died during the balance of the Great War. It is a massive monument, whose size is imposed on you as you move closer to it and as you are swallowed up in its shadow.

“The size of the monument is by far its most striking characteristic. It tells you a lot about the British mentality towards the Battle of the Somme and also about its cost. To the British, the Battle of the Somme signifies the destruction of a generation – the flower of British society was stolen during the entirety of the campaign, which began in a terrible and bloody fashion on 1 July 1916. It was in this experience that the British came to collectively see the Battle of the Somme as the symbol of all of Britain’s sacrifice during the Great War. The size of the Thiepval Memorial both reflects and imposes this idea of sacrifice on each visitor who stands in awe of its height and depth.

The next most striking characteristic of the Thiepval Memorial is its 16 pillars – listed on which are the 73,367 names of those soldiers who “the fortune of war denied the known and honoured burial given to their comrades in death.” With tears filling the corners of my eyes, I made my way through and was humbled by what I saw. It seemed as though the names went on forever. They stretched from the bottom of each pillar up to the ceiling – which was so high above me that I could not read the top few names. Intertwined with the idea of the Thiepval Memorial as a symbol of Britain’s collective sacrifice during the war, was a degree of individuality. Behind each name there was a story and a life that was cut short by war. The sheer number of names and stories left untold and the enormity of the individual sacrifice was overpowering and is something that I will never forget.

“The size of the monument could also denote the size of the battle itself. The Battle of the Somme was by far one of the largest and most important battles fought during the course of the Great War. The British had never deployed an army so large on the field of battle. The number of British and Commonwealth soldiers deployed in the Somme Campaign

dwarfed the numbers sent to face Napoleon a century earlier and Hitler decades later. In this sense, the size of the Thiepval Memorial reflects the enormity of the Battle of the Somme in terms of manpower and materials.”



Shantel Keys, from Abbotsford, BC, is going into fourth year of her undergrad co-op degree in history at the University of Victoria. Military history has been a significant part of her life because her grandfather fought at Dieppe. The CBF tour was an opportunity to experience a part of her family's history.

“The most powerful part of the CBF trip for me was visiting Pourville, a French village just west of Dieppe. Designated “Green Beach,” it was the objective of South Saskatchewan Regiment in the Dieppe Raid, on August 19, 1942.

“I have always been proud of my grandfather’s contribution in the war effort but never more so than while I was giving my presentation at Pourville. This trip was a pilgrimage for me, an opportunity to finally see where that important moment in my family history took place. Sharing my presentation was a tribute to my grandfather and other soldiers who fought on that tragic day in the Dieppe Raid.

“My grandfather fought, was wounded and was captured on Green Beach. While the South Saskatchewan Regiment corporal rarely shared his stories with the grandchildren himself, my Dad often repeated the account of how his father earned the Distinguished Conduct Medal at Dieppe. During the withdrawal to the landing crafts, Corporal Herman Keys and other soldiers were huddled behind a culvert where the River Scie emptied into the Channel. Enemy fire was heavy so Granddad took his Bren gun, along with as much ammunition as possible, and stretched out across the culvert in a fully exposed position, firing for 20 minutes. This temporarily pushed the enemy back, allowing some of his men to retreat. When Granddad stopped to adjust the gas regulator, a sniper’s shot threw him off the culvert and ended his chance of making it back to the landing craft. Granddad was captured and spent the rest of the war in a P.O.W. camp.

“Seeing the beach where so many young men were killed and injured also made me very grateful that Granddad was not silent about his experience overseas. During the final weeks of the war, Granddad secretly kept a diary. My strongest memories of this trip is the deep flood of emotion I felt when reading Granddad’s entry that stated “I only write this down because some day someone might find this interesting to

read and to realize how I feel now.” As his words reached out from the past, I felt intense gratitude, both for Granddad’s efforts as a soldier and for passing his stories along to other people. Presenting Granddad’s story on my first visit to Pourville was an incredible experience.”



Simon Theobald also wrote about his grandfather, an officer whose noted actions with the Fort Garry Horse throughout WWII were the inspiration for his presentation on Operation “Totalize”. Simon, of Quispamsis, New Brunswick, is a graduate student at the University of Ottawa. He is currently researching the experience of African Canadians in the military and on the homefront during the Second World War

“Before the tour began, I decided to examine Operation “Totalize”. I had some familiarity with the topic because I had the benefit of talking with and having a number of stories passed down to me about my grandfather, Col. Harvey E. Theobald MC. Still, I had never studied the operation in great detail. After reading various interpretations of the events and analyzing the maps, I felt that I had a better understanding of what succeeded and what failed during those four days of August, 1944. Nevertheless, it was still clear to me that my comprehension was based solely on the words written and arrows drawn on a page. No matter how many photographs I had seen or even films I had watched depicting (some more accurately than others) particular events, it all seemed imaginary to me.

It was not until I actually stood on the open ground between Lorguichon and Cintheaux that I felt like I had a truer perspective on “Totalize” and the campaign as a whole. Surrounded by the vast farmland, you can visualize the waist-high wheat that soldiers had to navigate through the dark night. From the ground, you can understand why every slight incline (something that is just a number on a map) in the terrain was so crucial to the planning and outcome of an operation.

I tried to envision the trepidation and confusion that the men must have felt as, during the late night hours of August 7th, over a thousand RAF and RCAF bombers barraged the enemy’s positions before the armoured and infantry regiments made their attack. Despite the use of tracer fire, coloured smoke and artificial moonlight, it was almost impossible for the soldiers to see and navigate through

the dust and darkness. While there, I kept thinking about what how my grandfather had described the coordination of the first phase as being like the blind leading the blind. Suddenly, the horrible experience of the British Columbia and Algonquin Regiments becoming lost and caught in an open field at night without support became that much more understandable to me. Ultimately, I was able to appreciate more fully the effort and sacrifice required by men like my grandfather to complete their dangerous and difficult task.

Although I still debate General Simonds' tactics employed in "Totalize" and whether he was ultimately responsible for missing the opportunity of catching the Germans in a vulnerable position, I am now able to conclude a number of important issues from the operation. Firstly, that carrying out the offensive at night, combined with the heavy bombers, led to a great amount of confusion and missed objectives. Furthermore, despite the fact that the operation failed to close the gap, the Canadians, Brits, and Poles still managed to break through the Caen-Falaise highway effectively, which was critical to the later success of Operation "Tractable".

Historians will never be able to truly understand what the soldiers went through and what they felt at the time. Yet, from an academic and personal viewpoint, setting foot on the soil of Normandy, encircled by colleagues, mentors, and friends, offered me a greater understanding and appreciation of the sacrifice made by Canadians and of their role in the country's history."



Richard LaMontagne from Campbellton, New Brunswick, took an entirely different approach to the assignment. Richard is a second year MA student in Conflict Studies at Saint Paul University in Ottawa. For the past four years he has been an enlisted member of the Governor General's Foot Guards. His

presentation topic was on Private Bruno LeBlanc.

"One of the aspects I liked the most about the Battlefield study tour was to learn about someone and to tell their story.

For my soldier presentation I gave myself two selection criteria: First, I wanted be able to meet the family of the person I would present. Secondly, I wanted to offer a presentation on someone who was ordinary. By ordinary I mean someone that led a simple life, like you and me. I wanted to talk about somebody that would be coming from a humble background and someone who remained anonymous

throughout the events of the Second World War. I wanted to learn about someone who was representative of the average Canadian male at the time. In doing this presentation I set myself a goal; I wanted to be able to appreciate the tragic reality of the Second World War through the eyes of a person who fought and died in it.

I must confess, however, there was a certain bias inherent to my cultural origins. Being a Francophone, an Acadian and coming from the Restigouche County on the North shore of New Brunswick, I feel a particular attachment to the soldiers of the North Shore Regiment (New Brunswick), initially recruited from back home. The members of my current regiment, the Governor General's Foot Guards, naturally, were also of particular interest to me.

"With a little help from LCol. David Patterson, I finally decided to follow the tracks of a soldier from the North Shores. My presentation was on Private Bruno LeBlanc, a cheery, but shy Acadian lumberjack, who grew up in the small town of Balmoral, New Brunswick, just a few houses away from both my grandparents LaMontagne and Fontaine.

"In preparing this presentation, and while walking on the beaches of Saint-Aubin and setting foot on the land surrounding Carpiquet, I came to understand that national identity and politics aren't sufficient to explain how thousands of people like Bruno LeBlanc joined the Canadian Forces. Far too often it is a mixture of multiple factors, ones that may seem quite insignificant to us today, which best serve as the way to explain why and how thousands of young people formed Canada's battalions.

"Albeit the mysteries and the personal motives that help to explain service for the country, we can't deny the bravery and the altruism of the thousands of anonymous Canadians who, like Bruno, died on the frontline. The memory of their sacrifice, selflessness and dedication outlives them and, I hope, will outlive us all."



Amy Fallis gives a presentation in Dieppe



Andrea Quaittini is a Master's student at the University of Ottawa, where she is studying the Canadian media's portrayal of the Korean War. She examines the topic of the anonymity of so many of our fallen:

"I was excited when I started researching Mrs. Mary Climpson, the woman whose story I told at the Dieppe Cemetery. As a prominent member of the British Salvation Army, she was undoubtedly a contributing factor that led to the Salvation Army creating a web page dedicated to Mrs. Climpson. The site gives a fairly detailed biography of Mrs. Climpson's life as well as providing her obituary and a magazine article, published at the time of her death. With such a wealth of information, as well as her unique role in the Second World War, I assumed that someone on a previous tour must have told Mrs. Climpson's story. Yet, after my presentation, LCol. Dave told me that, despite coming to the Dieppe Cemetery year after year, he never knew who this lady was. He told me that he encouraged students to look at her grave because it is quite distinctive: a British woman killed in 1940, buried with Canadian soldiers, the majority of whom died on 19 August 1942. But that was the extent of anyone's knowledge of this lady. I found the entire situation to be rather paradoxical. On one hand, Mrs. Climpson was well-known because of when and where and why she was buried at the Dieppe Cemetery. Yet, like thousands of others, she was anonymous and unknown, just another name, on another headstone, in another cemetery. An overwhelming and hopeless feeling...

This feeling of anonymity stayed with me for the rest of my time in France. Historians have often been criticized for not delving into the personal lives of the soldiers. Instead, they examine brigades, battalions, divisions and the other major formations in order to understand the war. Studying war on a large scale provides a sense of continuity and progression, important concepts that are difficult to achieve when examining conflict on a more narrow scope. I realize that, more recently, historians have made a concerted effort to examine war and conflict on a much smaller, more intimate level. The soldier presentations we gave are simply a part of that. And yet, it never felt like enough. We will never know all the stories; we will never know all the names; we will never visit all the graves and all the cemeteries. But those that are there deserve nothing less. I realize that these points can never be reconciled, and that in my own way, I am

helping to pass on the memory of these soldiers by sharing my experience with others. But it still does not make the reality any easier."



Amy Fallis of Whitby, Ontario, is currently studying History in her fourth year at St. Francis Xavier University in Antigonish, Nova Scotia. Although she has studied the role of the Canadian armed forces in the Second World War, she is primarily interested in the wartime experience of local populations and their resistance movements. The overwhelming gratitude of the people of Normandy and Amy's own participation in the D-Day ceremony at Bernières-sur-mer, however, brought to life the magnitude of Canada's wartime contribution in France and in both world wars in general.

"6 June 2007 dawned cold and gray. Perhaps as a somber testament to the date's 1944 predecessor, a bitter wind rattled the flag pole of the Maple Leaf that stands guard over Juno Beach and whipped through the skirts of the six Canadian girls who stood, teeth-chattering, in solemn remembrance of that day's events of sixty-three years ago. Although the morning dawned uncharacteristically cold for late spring, not even the most violent of shivers could take from the Canadians present the knowledge that to stand on one of history's most hallowed battlefields and to touch the sand that is one of our country's greatest monuments is a gift bestowed upon few. Nor, it seems, could the biting wind dissuade the French townspeople from paying tribute to the thousands of Canadians who, one early June morning, arrived on their doorsteps to tear down the first stones of Fortress Europe.

"Such is the way of a people, however, who have been toughened by time and war and now bear their battle scars with pride- pride and gratitude, as they know that it is only because of the sacrifice of thousands of Canadians that church bells ring in the villages that dot the Norman countryside between Juno Beach and Caen, and that the French *tricolore* flutters atop many a *hôtel de ville*. Indeed, the French memory of the Canadians is such that the Maple Leaf waves alongside the *tricolore* in places like Bernières-sur-Mer, Authie, Buron and Bretteville-L'Orgeuilleuse, and monuments to the Queen's Own Rifles, the North Shore Regiment, and the Royal Winnipeg Rifles stand erect in countless "*Place des Canadiens*".

"Even on the coldest of June mornings, the French bundle

their children in winter knits and place in their tiny fists an equally miniature Canadian flag to honour the thousands of foreign lives that were lost in the fight for their freedom from tyranny. Like we few Canadians who are privileged to be present for the anniversary of the D-Day landings, they too understand exactly what was won and what was lost on the beaches of Normandy on 6 June 1944 and in the Battle of Normandy that ensued thereafter.

“The gratitude of the people of Normandy is a constant and unwavering force that will live on in perpetuity, defying the indomitable force of time that has already buried so much in the fields of France.”



Zachary Mantle from Stouffville, Ontario, attends Ryerson University in third year Aerospace Engineering. It is with his “other hat” on, as a lieutenant with the Queen’s Own Rifles of Canada, that Zack conveys his impressions on D-Day:

“I saw the Regimental colours flying before I noticed that my uniform resembled the very flag flying outside their house. Through the crowd that encircled this small house I could see so many Canadians—a Durham Police Officer, a Mountie and children carrying Canadian flags—all gathered at this simple seemingly normal residence. But this wasn’t any ordinary house. Sixty-three years ago this place housed machine guns, rifles and young German men determined to hold their enemy, the allies, in the sea.

“Maison de Queen’s Own Rifles of Canada”, standing just five steps from the beach, is owned by an outstanding



Maison De Queen’s Own Rifles, Bernieres-sur-Mer

French couple. The Hoffers open up their home each and every 6th of June to any Canadian in France. Every year they remember: ‘Here on 6th of June 1944 Landed the Queen’s Own Rifles of Canada’ reads the plaque etched into the brick of their home. It was sobering to stand on the very sand and to walk the very steps of the men and officers who wore the same cap badge as I do. I was honoured to stand where these men bled and to taste the same salty sea air that they tasted so many years ago.

“I became an instant celebrity. Everyone knew my cap badge. Within minutes I had shaken hundreds of hands, been in dozens of pictures, and been thanked --- all for something I had no part in. These people remember. There were several speeches by both the mayor of Benières-sur-mer, and the Hoffer family, before the National Anthem and *Last Post* were played. I stood in full salute on the place where my regiment fought and died. There are no words to describe it: admiration, respect and honour do not come close.

“It surprised me how many kids were around. I handed out the small Canadian bracelets and pins I’d brought from home, and the children were overwhelmed. They would run up, cling to my legs, ask for a hug and a chance to say thank you to me, the Canadian soldier. Somehow these children, a generation removed from the war, remembered.

“If you’re a Canadian and have never been to Juno beach, it is a trip that you must make. Even though many of the people who now live in the small town by the sea never saw the actual War, the aftermath of it is everywhere. They have kept the bunkers, the tank obstacles, and the barbed wire. They have kept the house. They remember.”



Allan O’Hagan of London, Ontario, just completed his Masters degree at the University of Western Ontario. He wrote a biography of his great grandfather, who served in the 4th Battalion of the Canadian Expeditionary Force during the First World War. Allan’s grandfather also served in the Royal Canadian Air Force during the Second World War. He writes as follows about the D-Day ceremonies:

“On the morning of June 6th we proudly attended the D-Day ceremonies held at Bernieres-sur-Mer. As I looked out on the beach I found it hard to envision the thousands of Canadian soldiers landing on such a beautiful beach some 63 years prior. The short ceremony took place directly in front

of the first house that was liberated in France by Canadian forces on June 6th 1944.

Visible to all, a Canadian flag hung boldly on the second story balcony. Following a short ceremony, the owners of the home, in keeping with their yearly tradition, invited all in attendance for post refreshments. It was a unique and truly wonderful experience to be extended such warmth and hospitality. Inside, sitting quietly in the corner, was a veteran of the landing, Mr. Bill Ross. His son explained that his dad had almost lost his life, narrowly avoiding a land mine in his approach inward across the beach.

Following the warm welcome, we continued down the beach to attend additional D-Day observances. The next ceremony was presided over by the mayor of the town. Our very own Amy Fallis said a reading during the service and Bill Ross laid a wreath in honor of his fallen comrades. This was followed by coffee at a bar near the beach. Interestingly it was the very same bar that had sold wine to Canadian soldiers the morning of June 6th 1944. In the midst of remembering and honouring history, it was moving to notice that across the road, near the D-Day CBC broadcasting headquarters, tank track impressions from a Sherman tank were still visible on the curb some 63 years later.

After a short post-ceremony reception at the nearby community center we traveled to Courseulle-sur-Mer, the second most heavily defended landing beach next to Omaha. This was followed by lunch at a beach front restaurant. Ironically, it was built on top of a German 88mm gun emplacement which had been in place during the landing. Subsequent to an assessment of the landing, we ventured to the nearby Juno Beach Centre, a museum dedicated to the Canadian D-Day landings, where we attended a memorial service. An honorary guest at the service was Phil Cockburn,

a veteran of the 1st Hussars. It was so humbling to converse with the many veterans in attendance. The museum incorporated illuminated display boards, artifacts and short video presentations into its representation of the Canadian D-Day landings. Later we journeyed to Beny-Sur-Mer war cemetery where many of the Canadian soldiers killed on D-Day were buried. Honorary wreaths were again laid at the ceremony by Phil Cockburn and Bill Ross.

It was a truly remarkable experience for all of us to see and hear these two men. Walking among the countless rows upon rows of tomb stones, we saw first hand the ultimate price Canadian forces paid in the battle for Normandy. It was even more poignant to recognize that many of us were roughly the same age as the soldiers who fought on D-Day and who now lay for eternity among their comrades in cemeteries like Beny-sur-Mer. The sacrifice and hardships that these soldiers endured is truly immeasurable. It was an experience that all of us will definitely carry with us for the rest of our lives.”



Alyssa Cundy, originally from Vancouver, British Columbia, graduated this spring with an Honours BA in History from the University of Western Ontario. She is currently a graduate student at UWO with the aim of a career in the defence department. Several of Alyssa's relatives, including her grandfather,

served in the British Expeditionary Force during the Second World War. Alyssa writes about the German Second World War Cemetery, at La Cambe.

“During the course of our visit to various U.S. military sites, we also confronted the tragic reality of ‘total war’. But to speak of the conflict, and in particular, the Battle of Normandy, in such a grand strategic sense, does not do justice to the millions of individuals who lost their lives in the fight against Nazism. Each cemetery we visited was another small piece of the puzzle, aiding us to understand the war on a more personal level. Whether they were Commonwealth, Polish, American, or German graves, each site was entirely unique, and highlighted the varying ways in which countries involved chose to commemorate their war dead.

“What was intended as a brief stopover to the German War Cemetery at La Cambe, in my opinion, turned into the most vital debate of the tour. One of the questions raised was whether or not the *Volksbund Deutsche Kriegsgräberfürsorge* (German War Graves Commission) had accurately reflected



CBF Students, among others, gathers for the ceremony at the Canadian War Cemetery in Beny-sur-Mer.

the German war experience, both in the design of the cemetery and its Information Centre. More correctly, ‘did the Commission have a responsibility (as the country of the historic dictatorship involved) to speak of enemy atrocities on-site?’ ‘Was their failure to do so a glaring omission?’ Standing outside the gates at La Cambe, we crowded around one another, engaged in a debate that felt as relevant as any discussion on global politics or current affairs. The more inglorious a regime’s actions, historically, the further they ought to be discussed and constructively debated. That was the overwhelming message I took from the cemetery, both as a student of military and German history.



Kyle Harris is completing his MA at the University of Waterloo in his hometown of Kitchener-Waterloo. His Major Research Paper is on the battle of Passchendaele, where the Canadians fought in 1917. Kyle found the American Omaha Beach cemetery was remarkably different from both the

Commonwealth and the German cemeteries in Normandy:

“On first impression the American Omaha Beach Cemetery was dominated by grandeur. The size of the land that it stood on, its new interpretive centre as well as the effort that went in to maintaining the property was obvious. Even more striking were the sheer numbers of visitors at the site. While many of the other cemeteries had school groups, families and tour groups present when we visited, at Omaha, hundreds, if not thousands of individuals were there, visiting the well-kept gardens or walking around the inner parts of the cemetery. The grounds, while immaculately kept, immediately struck me as being very ‘American’. The layout, vegetation, and architecture seemed like a combination of Washington and Disney Land, which is not meant negatively. The site is laid out with a large open lane down the middle that leads to a pool, set before a Romanesque structure and statue of a man who seemed to be offering himself to the heavens. The open lane before the statue is flanked on either side by the graves, while the entire property is then surrounded by large gardens that help isolate the American feel of the cemetery. At the Romanesque structure, music plays while several well-constructed and detailed maps on the walls show the D-Day landings and the battle which followed. The site is nothing short of impressive.

“As one leaves the cemetery, one then visits the newly built interpretation centre. Perhaps as a sign of our times, the interpretation centre, while being free, has security and a metal detector which visitors must pass through before being allowed entry. This small building, as well as the security measures at a cemetery, left me with a strange feeling. While the site was remarkably beautiful it was astonishing how Americanized it was. This stood greatly in contrast to the Commonwealth, Canadian, British, German and Polish cemeteries we visited which seemed to have very little, if any overtly nationalistic symbolism. Those sites had no music, no security at the interpretation centers, and left the visitor without any of the strong patriotic feelings that the American cemetery created.”



Two students stroll in Le Cambe, the Second World War German cemetery in France

“For instance, a visit to tank ace Michel Wittmann’s shrine will naturally engender a different response from each person who stands before his grave. No doubt, however, a mixture of sadness and abhorrence will be shared by the vast majority. As I walked passed row upon row of these dark Saxon graves, I kept thinking back to the placard I had read at the entrance to the cemetery. It was inscribed: *“War graves are the best inducement towards peace.”* At that moment, I could not help but agree.

“The process of grieving is universal, but the business of analyzing collective memory is still as ‘untidy’ today, as it was in the immediate postwar decades. Discussions such as the one our CBF group engaged in at La Cambe is part of the reason why so many of us – two generations removed from the Second World War – choose to study history. I gained a new appreciation for these delicate historical issues and feel deeply privileged to have been able to experience them on French soil.”



Nicole Gale of Petawawa, Ontario is a recent graduate of Acadia University in Nova Scotia. She spent her final year researching and completing her undergraduate thesis entitled “First In, Last Out: A Century of the Royal Canadian Engineers”, which proved to be very useful in her presentation of combat engineers and the support they provided on D-Day.

Nicole writes: “Before June 7, I knew nothing of the Abbaye D’Ardenne or the somber events that took place there so long ago. By the end of the day, I had been given quite an education and had experienced by far the most intense part of the trip for me. The Canadian Battlefields Foundation’s last ceremony of the Normandy commemorations was held in a small garden near the abbey on sacred ground where Canadian soldiers were brutally murdered by Kurt Meyer’s Hitler Youth. During the ceremony, we as tour members each carried a single maple leaf representing each soldier killed there. It was truly a memorable moment that will stay with me for a long time. One of our group gave an incredibly emotional presentation of the events that took place there. I could no longer contain my composure and I was moved to tears. To think that these young men, most of them still boys, were subjected to seeing the remains of their brothers-in-arms bulldozed repeatedly by tanks until what was left of them when this atrocity was finished could only be removed by shovels was unfathomable to me. To see the very room where ten of them were held, knowing that each man would soon be shot dead, was completely overwhelming.

At the same time, the garden today can almost be described as peaceful. The local French people, like so many, have kept the memory of these events alive. I was moved at the



The monument at L'Abbaye D'Ardennes

incredible amount of historical preservation and respect that they have taught the next generation, evidence of which was found in the fact that so many schoolchildren were present with us that day. It is so important to tell them and our own children about incidents such as these in order to keep the history alive. The war veterans will not be with us forever and it is important to keep telling the experiences of all those who fought and laid down their lives for our freedom so they will not have been in vain.”



Chris Hyland is a high school teacher from Vancouver. After spending four years abroad in the orient, he returned to Canada to continue his studies at the University of New Brunswick, in military history. Chris describes a TEWT (Tactical Exercise without Troops) where the group, after studying the

ground of each battlefield, is divided into syndicates which plan a battalion level defence of the bridgehead.

“I want to thank the CBF for allowing me to participate in the 2007 Tour to Normandy. I fully appreciate the opportunity and am humbled by the experience. I learned so much about Canada’s military heritage and war in general and these lessons will be invaluable in the future. I am a better, more informed citizen for having gone on this tour and cannot wait to share my experiences with those whom I teach. Once again, you have my deepest gratitude.

The TEWT (Tactical Exercise without Troops) was one of the more interesting exercises I have ever done. As a teacher I can fully appreciate the value of putting the students in the historical actor’s shoes and trying to get them to make a decision. For the defence of Bretteville-l’Orgeuilleuse, I had to consider so many things: assets, objectives, terrain, enemy formations and direction. Later on, after walking the actual battlefield, I am proud to say our group came close to positioning the defences correctly – at least we got the artillery correct.

I was very impressed with the defence of Norrey-en-Bessin by the Regina Rifles. I had never heard of such a battle. It is amazing how C.P. Stacey and others have glossed over this engagement to suit their own theories. Norrey was a rock upon which the waves of the 12th SS crashed. Again, I was so proud to be a Canadian and hear this story. You can bet I will find every excuse to tell it to all my students.

Here are some concluding thoughts I would like to share on what I learned about the Canadian Army in Normandy. For the

Second World War, Canada sent a small army to Europe, but it played a role well beyond its four-division commitment. In 76 days, the Canadian Army played a significant role in the defeat of the German Army in France. It defeated two German armies, which is on the same scale as Stalingrad. Second and Third Canadian Divisions sustained the greatest number of casualties of all the divisions in the Normandy operations. This is not a reflection of poor leadership or soldiers, but is instead a testament to difficulties of the tasks assigned to the Canadian Army. At this point, one must remember that this is an all-volunteer force, which makes us completely unique. Many French and Belgian people I met are amazed by this fact: Canadian soldiers chose to come and fight. Citizens of Canada should not let the eventual conscription crisis overshadow the extraordinary achievements by Canadian soldiers on the field of battle. One should remember as well that the Normandy campaigns are not the end of the fighting in Europe. The Canadian Army continues on to fight some tough battles in Belgium, Holland and Germany fills another five cemeteries. Further, Normandy is a disaster for the Germans: of the 100,000 soldiers remaining, half escaped across the Dives River, but the other half did not and most of the German armour and support vehicles were left behind. To continue, for all the debate and controversy surrounding Montgomery's leadership, at D+90 the Allied forces were supposed to be at the Seine. Monty's plan, for good or ill, worked and Allied forces reached the Seine early. Finally, at this point as well one should not forget the contributions of the Russians. Without their efforts the Second World War would have been a much different story."

their penetration of Normandy. Five days previously, the Canadians, in comparison to the other Allies, were off the beach quickly. During the next few days this success would instil in the Canadians an aggressive, but at times, overly



Roger Alexandre, the mayor of Le Mesnil Patry, stands with Tjarko Pot at the memorial that honours the 1st Hussars and the Queen's Own Rifles of Canada in Le Mesnil.

exuberant fighting spirit. Bold initiatives were used in the attempt to occupy as much firm land between the enemy and the beach as quickly as possible.

"The realization that the continued use of these small scale yet demanding actions would not be able to dislodge the enemy became apparent at Le Mesnil-Patry. Here, an advanced timetable coupled with an overly ambitious plan that lacked adequate support for the advancing Canadian infantry and armour ran into a well-concealed and fanatical adversary waiting in prey. The failure of this action to meet its objective cost the Queen's Own and the Hussars close to 200 men, along with the astounding loss of thirty-four Sherman's and three Firefly's, all within two hours. With this loss it became clear to allied commanders that more in the way of tactical substance than just dash, daring and enthusiasm would be required to break the enemy. The Germans were starting to soften on their counter-offensive concept of "driving the little fish back into the sea" and beginning to think more defensively.

"Le Mesnil-Patry illustrated to both Canadian and British commanders that to penetrate through the enemy, who was now determined to hold a line of defence, better planning, support and inter-unit coordination was needed, all of which had been found wanting in the action that day. It would take nearly a full month after Le Mesnil-Patry to see the Canadians partake on such an ambitious project as that on June 11th. Henceforth, there were no more small actions, but large operations such as Goodwood, Spring, Totalize



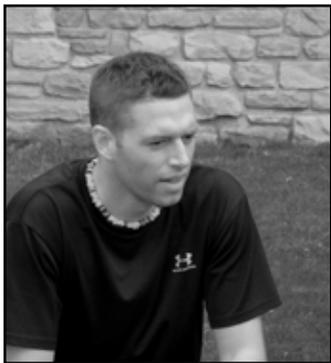
Todd Hoffman's current research interests are German-Canadians who enlisted in the CEF during WWI. Todd manages his time around his family, consisting of three vibrant teenagers and a wonderful wife, his construction company,

and his undergraduate studies at Carleton University. Here Todd writes an interesting analysis about Le Mesnil-Patry: Watershed for Victory in Normandy

"As the last of the beachhead battles, the action at Le Mesnil-Patry on Sunday June 11th 1944, involving elements of the 1st Hussars and the Queen's Own Rifles, was a watershed in terms of how Canadian commanders were forced to pause and reconsider the methods employed in

and Tractable that would utilize the “brute force” doctrine of massive artillery and bomber support to break the enemy.

“Le Mesnil-Patry has many epitaphs from an array of individuals. It has been termed as the *Black Sabbath* of the Hussars, as a brave and futile action similar to *The Charge of the Light Brigade*, as a “plan conceived in sin and born in iniquity”, and finally as a “complex and costly failure”. While the action was a costly failure, this mistake was made just once, and the Canadians learned quickly from it. Set-piece battles would now become the norm rather than the chaotic and freewheeling style that the Canadians tried to match the enemy with on that Sunday afternoon.”



Jon Baker originally hails from a farm near Brandon, Manitoba. He obtained his B.A. (Hon) in Political Science from Brandon University, and is currently in second year of an M.A. at the Norman Paterson School of International Affairs (Carleton University). Jon is also an army lieutenant in the

Canadian Forces Reserve, having recently joined the Civil-Military Cooperation unit. He will begin his pre-deployment training soon, before heading to Afghanistan in 2008 to work with PRT Kandahar, his subject for this article:

“Five Similarities between Normandy and Kandahar. As the principal “coalition” military effort of our generation, some interesting similarities can be drawn between Canada’s contemporary operations in Afghanistan and those of the Normandy campaign:

1) Despite its modest size and resources, Canada played a leading role in what was arguably the most important campaign of the war. Canadians were among the first on the beaches of Normandy alongside their Anglo-American allies, while in southeastern Afghanistan, Canada’s volunteer army once again finds itself with Britain and the US, taking on the most challenging region in the country.

2) The vast majority of soldiers were exposed to their first real taste of combat. Most of the 1st Canadian Army saw its first action of the war in Normandy (and had few veterans returning from WWI), while the Afghan mission has seen Canadian soldiers involved in combat operations such as Korea, Medak Pocket 95, Cyprus in 73, and Congo.

3) Canadian soldiers arguably bore the largest brunt of the fighting. The 1st Canadian Army’s advance was relatively slower due to the strength and number of German armoured divisions it encountered, while Kandahar province (where

the Taliban first originated) has seen amongst the fiercest fighting since the initial invasion of Afghanistan. In both campaigns, Canadian soldiers suffered the highest per capita casualties of the allied forces.

4) Despite its significant contribution, Canada was largely side-lined when it came to strategic and operational planning. Neither politicians nor force commanders seemed to have a significant impact on the decision-making process behind the Normandy campaign; American and British generals steered the ship, and Canadian soldiers dutifully obeyed, even if they sometimes disagreed. Likewise in Afghanistan, Canadian commanders appear to have little real influence, leaving soldiers on the ground to deal with the consequences of decisions made by foreign commanders—such as a deeply flawed poppy eradication campaign.

5) Each campaign led to domestic political divisions. The casualties suffered in Normandy precipitated Canada’s second conscription crisis with Quebec, while the combat operations (vice “peacekeeping”) occurring in Kandahar province has led Quebecers to voice the strongest opposition to the Afghan mission.

Clearly, this analogy has its limitations. After all, the Afghan mission, in which 2,500 Canadian soldiers serve on 6-month rotations, pales in comparison to the “total war” of the Second World War and the concomitant sacrifices on the home front. Some observers even resent comparisons of the respective threat posed by Nazism and international terrorism. Moreover, “conventional” combat operations are now merely one component of a *3-Block War* that also sees soldiers maintaining peace and delivering humanitarian/development assistance simultaneously; there was no need for allied forces to quell a Nazi insurgency during the reconstruction of Europe, or win “hearts and minds.”

Nevertheless, there are insights for historians to draw from how and why both of these important military campaigns were waged. This article has only begun to scratch the surface on an emerging historical debate that is unwinding before our very eyes.”



The primary purpose of this study tour was to introduce students to aspects of strategic, operational and tactical problems encountered in the First and Second World Wars. A secondary purpose was to examine the ways in which the combatant nations have constructed a usable memory of their experience especially in military cemeteries, monuments and museums. The focus is on the Canadians but consideration is also given to the American, British, French, German and Polish experience. The study tour was organized to allow sufficient time to visit selected sites while providing opportunity for reflection and discussion. Participants were required to prepare a biographical sketch of a Canadian soldier and be prepared to animate at least one of the discussion topics. Both the soldier biography and discussion topic were agreed upon with the instructors.

The instructors for this tour were:

Dr. Michel Fortmann, Université de Montréal
Dr. Desmond Morton, McGill University
Michael Bechthold, Wilfrid Laurier University
Alexandre Carette, Université de Montréal/Wilfrid Laurier University

In spite of the weather (rain - torrential at times and other days of overpowering heat), our tour was a great success. This year a significant focus was placed on the battlefields and memorials of the First World War. Using Arras and Ypres as bases we visited important sites such as Vimy, Beaumont-Hamel, Passchendaele and the Canadian monument at St. Julian. We then proceeded to follow the Canadian route during the Last Hundred Days (August-November 1918).

Members of the 2007 Cleghorn Battlefield Study Tour

It was very worthwhile to allow the students the opportunity to study aspects of the Canadian military experience that are too often overlooked such as the Battle of Arleux, the 2nd Battle of Ypres, Canal du Nord and Bourlon Wood. The second half of the tour was an intensive examination of the Normandy battlefields. From our quarters at the Moulin Morin outside of Bayeux we explored Juno Beach, the Abbaye d'Ardenne, Carpiquet, Verrières, and Falaise among many other stops. Great use was made of the CBF viewing stands at Point 67 and St. Lambert-sur-Dives to allow the students a good vantage point of the important battles of Verrières Ridge and the closing of the Falaise Pocket. Students were asked to actively participate in the discussions. Two TEWTs (Tactical Exercise Without Troops) were organized (the defence of Putot-en-Bessin and attack on the village of Verrières). The students excelled with these difficult exercises which forced them to place themselves in the role of a battalion commander in 1944.

The tour has left the students with a much greater understanding of the role played by Canada during the two World Wars.

Michael Bechthold (CBF Alumnae 1995)





The CBF in cooperation with Historica, Veterans Affairs Canada and Wilfrid Laurier University organised the 3rd annual high school history teacher's tour in August. Sixteen teachers from eight provinces came well prepared to deliver presentations on a soldier buried in France or Belgium. They had also prepared a mini-lecture on an aspect of the war experience ranging from music to operations. Blake Seward, one of Canada's most innovative and honoured teachers, was responsible for leading discussions on how best to integrate the battlefield study tour experience into the classroom. The classroom at the Moulin Morin in Normandy was put to good use on a daily basis. Terry led the discussions on the ground, organised two historical TEWTS and

a decision-making exercise on the Dieppe raid. Alex Carette added to the history component and made sure everything else ran smoothly. Colin Robertson the President of Historica was an active participant in all aspects of the tour and returned to Canada determined to continue and expand our partnership. Plans for 2008 include a study tour to be led by David Patterson and Alex Carette for teachers using French as their language of instruction. A second study tour for teachers in English- language schools will be led by Terry Copp and Blake Seward.

For information about applications or how you can assist us please contact Terry Copp at tcopp@wlu.ca



The Historica Teachers' Tour poses outside the Moulin Morine, a hotel that has become the home base for many of the tours.

The Graduate Students' Tour

Anyone who has ever participated in a battlefield study tour is aware of how important terrain is to studying a specific campaign or battle. In May of this year, this point was repeatedly hammered home to five graduate students who were given the opportunity to study the Italian campaign on the ground in Italy. Led by Dr. Lee Windsor of the University of New Brunswick these five students spent ten intense days learning about the D-Day Dodgers and their experiences between 1943-1945.

For those familiar with battlefield tours and the format under which they normally operate, this tour was slightly different, somewhat of an experiment, but one that was a great success. Sponsored by the Laurier Centre for Military, Strategic and Disarmament Studies, the University of New Brunswick and the Canadian Battlefields Foundation, this was the first tour where all of the students participating were graduate students; in fact, this was a prerequisite, unlike the annual CBF tours where both undergraduate and graduate students are chosen. In addition, each of the students participating on this tour were either studying the Italian campaign or had a personal connection to the campaign. As a result, the students were able to have in-depth discussions about all aspects of the campaign and were continually pushed by Dr. Windsor to look at the campaign from different angles and not simply from the traditional point of view found in much of the literature on the Italian campaign.

One of the most rewarding aspects for all of the students was the international focus of the tour. Although Canadian battles were the major concentration, much attention was given to British and American battles but also those fought by the French, the Poles and even the Italian resistance. By examining the many different battles, the students were able to better understand Canada's role in the Italian theatre.

Highlights of the tour included the Canadian cemetery in Agira (Sicily), exploring the American landing beaches at Gela, Sicily, the Italian cemetery at Monte Lungo and the story of the Italian resistance, the French cemetery at Venafro and the Polish and Canadian efforts in the 4th battle for

Cassino. As with all battlefield tours, each student adopted a fallen Canadian (and in one case an American) soldier and made a small presentation at their graveside. Among the soldiers remembered were A.K. Long and Alex Campbell, who figure prominently in the writing of Farley Mowat and Michelle Fowler's great uncle, who is buried in the American cemetery at Anzio. An exceptionally moving and intimate part of the tour was a small ceremony held at the Cassino War Cemetery honouring all fallen soldiers not only of Canada but other nationalities as well in the Italian campaign. Like the CBF ceremony at the Abbaye, students laid a leaf (Oak, as Maple trees do not grow well in Italy) to commemorate their individual soldier. From walking the narrow alleyways of Ortona and gaining an appreciation for Canadian "mouseholing" tactics, to standing in front of Assoro and the 1000 foot cliff scaled by the Hasty Ps, to finally feeling the eye of the monastery at Monte Cassino follow you as you move through the Liri Valley; the students were able to understand the challenges faced by not just by Canadian soldiers but all Allied soldiers.

To be sure, this tour was a trip that all of the students will not forget for some time to come and will influence their work on the Italian campaign (as well as other aspects of Canadian military history) in the future.

Brandey Barton (CBF Alumnae 2003)



The graduate group posing on the tank in Ortona

Memories...

A Special thanks to Brandey Barton, Richard LaMontagne, Kellen Krushinski, Simon Theobald, Chris Hyland, Alyssa Cundy and Michael Bechthold for their images and help in making this newsletter possible.



Michelle Fowler, a member of the graduate students' tour, sits at her great uncle's grave at the Anzio American war cemetery in Italy



Members of the Cleghorn / U de M tour participate in a Tactical Operation Without Troops in Normandy



Lt. Col. David Patterson leads members of the CBF in a toast to the veterans of the Dieppe Raid on the beaches in Dieppe.



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Geoff Hayes sits with his son Chris and Chris Hyland in front of the Vimy Memorial

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