

The Canadian Battlefields Foundation

La Fondation canadienne des champs de bataille

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2006 Battle Study Tours Les Voyages D'études 2006

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Back Row: Alex Carette, Jason Schouten, Kristine Williamson, John Lamming, W. Mikkel Dack, Charles Letourneau, Brandon Dimmell, Isabelle Duford, Nathan Peto, Nic Clarke, Middle Row: Meighen McCrae, Thessa Girard-Bourgoin, Anna-Marie Miller, Bottom Row: Charle Gruchy, Marc Milner, Matt Symes, Peter Tufaro

The sixteen Canadian Battlefields Foundation university students dedicate this issue to you, their sponsors, and invite you to share a few of the experiences that they universally termed “awesome.”

The Battlefields: World War II Dieppe: August 19, 1942

Mikkel Dack, 23, fourth year history graduate at the University of Calgary, intends to study towards a doctorate in history and an academic career as a professor. Although he has researched extensively on Canadian battles in Europe, he has never before been to Dieppe. He reports on his first visit:



Mikkel Dack

Allied ships; the chert beach, although welcoming, made me think only of the difficulty the soldiers and the tanks had with their landing; the colourful hotels and restaurants which lined the beachfront made me think only of the German machine gun posts which gunned down so many Canadians. It is a strange sensation, when sights of beauty and awe provoke only feelings of anguish and uneasiness.

“The years of reading about Operation Jubilee and learning about its every detail had painted only a limited picture. Now, standing on the very beach, I felt much more in tune with this tragic event and with my country’s history. I felt that I was now not just a spectator, viewing history from the sidelines, but that I was actually immersed within it, that I was fully engaged. And although I know I will never truly understand what it was like for those five thousand Canadians who embarked on the operation and for the nine hundred who died on that day, I still believe that for a moment I understood their suffering and their valour. It was the closest I have ever felt to being part of Canadian history and it is a feeling and a memory which will never leave me.”

“I went down to the Dieppe beach by myself and took a minute to let the reality of the moment sink in. An eerie feeling came over me, for although this resort town was beautiful and breathtaking, I could not help but view it from another perspective. The magnificent white cliffs which towered over the ocean made me think only of the

strategical nightmare for

John Lamming, of Prince Township (near Sault Ste. Marie), is a graduate student at Windsor University. He had family members who served in both world wars, under Canadian and German colours.

John plans to pursue a career in the Canadian Armed Forces. His presentation to his colleagues was of the Normandy battle of Verrieres Ridge, in July, 1944, and of the massacre of the Black Watch Regiment there during Operation Spring. Although he had fully researched the operation, John had never been to Normandy. After his first view, he was “forever ruined:



John Lamming

“As our tour leader Dr. Marc Milner had told us, you will never again read about a battle the same way, as there is nothing comparable to actually visiting a battlefield. For instance, Canadian historian C.P. Stacey wrote that Verrieres Ridge was an “insignificant eminence” in terms of its geography. Upon my arrival there, and thinking from a soldier’s perspective, I could by no means describe it as insignificant! The Black Watch had to walk at least 500 metres along open territory as they ascended up a ridge, exposed to artillery, mortars, and machine guns from above, as well as from the flank in the village of May-sur-Orne. This “insignificant eminence” quickly became a great field of fire for the entrenched Germans. As Dr. Milner stated, “you are forever ruined. . .” He meant that we would forever be skeptical of everything we read about a battlefield in the future. Did the battlefield actually look like that? Where were the soldiers? What was the terrain exactly? Why did the operation fail? What role did geography play? Our analytical minds would forever be racing.

Learning about Operation Spring and the Verrieres Ridge battle had that affect on me. Walking the same land that I read about, where dead soldiers were strewn about as they pressed against all odds toward enemy positions was an eye-opening experience.

I believe I gained a new appreciation learning about Canadian soldiers’ contributions to the major wars of the 20th century. The purpose of the tour became clear to me that day, as I think it did for everyone at some point on the tour, as we learnt the stories of many Canadians who fought bravely on the soil we presently traversed.”



Jason Schouten

The students study the battle of Normandy in great depth. **Jason Schouten**, a St. Francis Xavier University student, is in final year Bachelor of Education, and plans on teaching English and history. He believes that this tour will make him a better teacher, and that "Every student I have throughout my career will benefit from the experience and knowledge I will gain from this trip."

"Immediately the outcome of the battle seems a miracle. Hitler's Atlantic Wall appears to be

impenetrable, not to mention the huge cliffs and hills that are a common feature of the Northern French coastline. I find myself in constant state of disbelief, my mind puzzled by the allied victory. How in the world did our soldiers successfully attack against such devastating odds? How could they dare step out of landing crafts that were under such heavy fire? How could they charge long sandy shorelines under heavy machine gun fire? How could they take out the daunting German strong points? How? How? How? After all these repetitive questions I must have started getting on our leaders' nerves. But I had to ask, not for the sake of an answer, but because of the mystery of our victory. No answer really mattered; strategy was nearly irrelevant. On this day, as the architects of the attack knew all too well, failure was not an option. Victory was the only possible outcome and our soldiers fought that way."

Adam Lajeunesse is an MA student at the University of Calgary. Adam's passion for military history began in high school years when he began a collection, now almost completed, of one newspaper for every day of WWII from 1939 to 1945. Adam came up with an answer to Jason's 'How, How, How?' of the beach landings:

"With the small American contingent in our group (the CBF-supported Cantigny Foundation battle study)* we went out to Omaha Beach in the afternoon. The mind is bogged by the magnitude of what was attempted here. The cliff walls were as imposing as at Dieppe and at low tide the beach must have been a quarter-mile between the water and the seawall. In the spirit of understanding what exactly the American serviceman had put himself through sixty years ago, we walked out beyond the water's edge and with our American officer yelling at us we raced back towards the beach. Up for a second, then plunging back into the wet sand to avoid the imaginary machine-gun fire, we spend an exhausting few minutes making very little ground. Drenched and intimately acquainted with Norman sand, every one of us had a far more personal idea of what a Herculean effort it must have taken to make that run on D-Day, let alone take those cliffs in front of us. Saving Private Ryan almost made it look easy."



Adam Lajeunesse

Peter Tufaro of Mississauga, Ontario, a history major at York University, writes about the ceremony at Beny-sur-mer as one of the most memorable:

"The unveiling of the new monument was a wonderful tribute to our fallen. It commemorated nine soldiers of the 14th Field Regiment, Royal Canadian Artillery, who on D-Day, stormed the beachfront and helped liberate the town of Beny-sur-mer. The moment when deceased Captain Barclay's daughter walked up to the podium that was the most emotional for me of the entire tour. She mentioned over the PA system that she never quite got a chance to meet her father as he was sent overseas just prior to her being born. She looked up towards the cool, blue Norman skies several times. At that moment, she had a direct link to him no doubt. She expressed her sorrow and grief at not having a father, nor a grandfather for her own children and her children's children. The long stretching arms of war became evident to me once more at this time. This war seemed to touch all of us at some point."



Peter Tufaro

The Canadian Paratroop landings on D-Day and the Pegasus Bridge museum fascinated **Charles Létourneau**, Université du Québec à Montréal:



Charles Létourneau

"When historians study the Normandy landings, they usually write about the simultaneous amphibious assault on the four beaches, coordinated by three countries. This emphasis on the landings means that the general public knows very little about the fact that many allied soldiers jumped into Normandy. Their task was as crucial as that of the soldiers landing on the beaches. It is true that an assault coming from the sea to liberate Europe from the Nazi regime had a Hollywood touch. But the deployment of hundreds of soldiers, lightly equipped, whose mission was to take and protect strategic points, was as important."

* CBF-Cantigny tour

For the first time, the CBF partnered with the U.S. Cantigny First Division Foundation for a battlefield tour. The Cantigny Foundation was established in 1957 with the principal mission of promoting the history of the Big Red One, the famed 1st Infantry Division of the U.S. Army. The tour was led by the University of New Brunswick's Dr. Lee Windsor (former CBF Alumnus)/ The group spent a week in Sicily studying the 1st Canadian Division and Big Red One, then liaised with the CBF tour in Normandy to study the 1st US and 3rd Canadian Divisions landings there.

The Battlefields: World War I

The Somme:

Nicholas (Nic) Clarke is a PhD history student whose goal is a professorship. Formerly from New Zealand, Nic, 32, is anxious to maximize his knowledge of the history of his adopted country. Nic's wife, the great-niece of a VC recipient who was the last Canadian killed in WWII, is expecting their first child early next year.

“For many people the Somme has become a byword for horror, futility and massed slaughter. It is conservatively estimated that between July and November 1916 the total casualties for all nations involved in this battle was over 1,000,000 men. Yet if it were not for the monuments and cemeteries that cover the countryside, few people would recognize the Somme valley as a place where so many men fought and died. In most places (the Newfoundland Memorial at Beaumont-Hamel being an important exception) trench systems and shell craters have long been filled in and any remaining vestiges that might hint at their past existence are hidden under a sea of green and gold. The grass, or, to be more specific, the wheat, has done its work well. At least at first glance. While the Somme's wheat crops may be able to hide the earth's scars, they cannot digest metal. Anyone who walks along the edges of the fields that now cover this battlefield will quickly



Nic Clarke

come to discover physical, and possibly lethal, reminders of the Great War at their feet. After walking for less than twenty minutes along a country lane near the village of Courelette, we had discovered two shells and a Mills bomb, all of which were still potentially live. As well as discovering these quietly corroding canisters of death, we also found spent bullets and numerous pieces of shrapnel. For me it is the war detritus littering the Somme that underlines the grim realities of this battle and of the greater conflict of which it was part, even more so than 73,357 names carved on the Theipval Memorial to the missing. To say this is not to offer disrespect to the fallen, or to imply that their memorials are irrelevant. Indeed, it is quite the opposite. The fact one can still find large amounts of ordnance on the Somme some eighty-eight years after the end of the Great War is indicative of horrors and hardships for those at the front. Soldiers faced both artillery barrages and small arms fire of such magnitude that even today the iron and lead hail stones of these 'storms of steel' have yet to melt away.”

Nathan Peto, 22, graduated from Brandon University with a BA in History, and is currently enrolled in a four-year Honours History course. He is an officer with the 26th Field Regiment in Brandon



Nathan Peto

“Vimy Ridge will remain one of the most memorable sites on our tour for me and it truly is a sight that every Canadian should see. The sacrifices of Canadian soldiers in the past will not be forgotten. We will remember them.”

Perhaps the most striking feature, when entering the battle site, is the physically imposing geography. It is not hard to understand why this point on the Western front was such a difficult objective to overtake. The imposing slopes of the ridge, still heavily cratered today, must have appeared all but impossible to surmount.

The sheer scope of the accomplishments made by the Canadians at this defining moment in Canadian history has always been of great personal interest to me. While at the site, on our tour through the Canadian trenches and the underground bunkers, one could not help but be proud of the bravery and ingenuity shown by Canadians in this effort.”

Elaine Young, 22, from Fergus, Ontario, is in fourth year Honours History at Trent, with a goal of becoming a post-secondary history teacher. Both of her grandfathers served in the Canadian Military in WWII.

“Our first stop of the day was at Beaumont-Hamel. It was a cloudy, cold morning which seemed somehow fitting for our visit to this sad place. As at Vimy Ridge, the shell holes were still clearly visible, giving the area an otherworldly feel – I can only imagine how alien it must have seemed to the men who fought there.

The memorial to the Newfoundland Regiment at Beaumont-Hamel was very moving in its simplicity and originality. There is a mound covered in shrubs and bushes native to Newfoundland, crowned by a huge bronze Caribou, the emblem of the Regiment that was decimated in this place so long ago. Giving my presentation near the summit of the monument was a very moving

experience. As I described the events that had unfolded, I was able to look over the field of battle with its trenches and shell holes and could almost see the young men advancing and being mowed down by enemy fire. The so-called danger tree still exits, marking the midway point between the opposing trenches and the place where so many Newfoundlanders perished. This memorial remains one of my most moving experiences and will stay with me for a long time to come.”



Elaine Young

Christine Williamson, from Peterborough, Ontario, is in fourth year Honours History at Trent University, moving on for a Masters degree. Her focus is on Canadian art during the First World War, and the national identity that rose out of it.

“Today we visited several battlefields of the Somme, including Courcelette and Regina Trench and I felt really close to the French countryside. With my art books in tow, I thought of all that the First World War meant to Canadians, and how we chose to remember it in the paintings of the Canadian War Memorial Fund (which commissioned over 500 paintings of WWI). We started the foggy morning at Beaumont-Hamel where the Newfoundland Regiment was sent to its death. I have tried several tactics to imagine the horrors that took place here, and other battlefields. I close my eyes and try to block out the sound around me. I think of



Kristine Williamson

young men running and screaming and pressing forward. I open my eyes and all I can see are the remnants of their trenches and the undulating hills left by their mortars. It doesn't always work, but when it does I get the impression of an A.Y Jackson painting. Brown mud and brush strokes overlay my vision and I somehow feel closer. The afternoon brought us the hunt for shrapnel; something that Professor Mark Milner had told me was possible. Nothing could have compared, however, to such an experience. I fell behind the group in order to be alone for a bit. Getting down on my hands and knees to search for ninety-year-old chunks of metal that may have killed someone seemed both morbid and wonderful. My first piece brought a rush of pleasure I hadn't thought possible. Holding this small piece of rusted metal in my hand brought me more joy than I had hitherto experienced on the trip. I felt closer to those who fought, I felt closer to my past and to my own grandfather who traversed these fields in 1916. I slowly made my way to Regina Trench, where the others had gathered in the Canadian cemetery to hear presentations. I gave my own, and I passed around my book *Canvas of War* (which has remained in my hands since leaving the plane). I marked several paintings, namely Louis Weirter's "The Battle for Courcelette." Although the painting is very traditional in it's content, Weirter witnessed the battle as a soldier and so his depiction deserves some attention. I also pointed people to sketches of the first tanks to be used in warfare here at Regina Trench. I walked along the peaceful rows of gravesites at the Somme, taking time to consider the magnitude of the battle. Between the offensive for Courcelette and Regina Trench, Canada lost some 24,000 soldiers. I could not help but think of the waste. These men were my age; they had lives ahead of them, families at home. How on earth could these men face death a world away from their homes? You try to think of the last moments, the closing of their eyes, but then you look around and all you can see are the gravestones and immaculate lawn. Someone told me before the trip that it was a great purpose to pay homage to these men's lives, but all I felt today was numb. Closer to where I think I should be, but numb.”

“We Shall Not Sleep: The War Cemeteries of France

The author, **Brandon Dimmel** of Windsor University, has a Masters degree in history, and is aiming at a doctorate. His grandfather served in Canada's navy, but Brandon had never seen the beaches of Normandy.

“Some of my most unforgettable images of the 2006 Canadian Battlefield Study Tour are the cemeteries. Without a doubt, these places act as the definitive war memorials, blending the dark mystery of death with the acknowledgment that a crucial historical event occurred on nearby grounds. Many of the cemeteries visited during our two weeks in France acted as emotional catalysts for our group of young historians.

Our first stop was the De Lorette cemetery near Vimy Ridge, whose ivory tower stretching out into the French sky was a sight like nothing else, overlooking the once-critical ridge a few miles from Vimy. The visitor is left with a unique feeling of respectful calm and solemnity often only reserved for the funeral of a close relative. First World War Canadian cemeteries exist in small alcoves across the landscape around Arras and Vimy. With a solitary maple leaf carved within the white stone, the graves are simple and yet dignified tributes to the soldiers who paid the ultimate sacrifice.

Canada's Second World War graves are much the same, demanding visitor attention and respect but carefully avoiding a spectacle that might cheapen the message. Bretteville-Sur-Laize, Beny-Sur-Mer, and the Dieppe cemeteries all follow similar architecture. Avoiding extravagant statues or over-emotional messages, the artistic imagery is clear: in both wars, Canadians served for the cause of honour, democracy, and the good of humanity.

This imagery clashed the most when our group visited the Second World War cemetery at La Cambe, home to German casualties since 1947. This provoked issues amongst our group that would be aired with our historian leaders. Later in the day, I would talk to another graduate student who would simply remark that the Germans made a conscious decision to eradicate a peace just years after the “War to End All Wars”. While they might deserve a proper resting place, it should not be within the borders of a nation whose freedom they intended to sacrifice for their own glorification.



Brandon Dimmel

In the end, it is the cemeteries that will forever act as the distant voices of the now long departed dead of the First and Second World Wars. Individually, many of the graves are simple and do not instantly grab the attention of a visitor, but massed across the landscape – sometimes in the tens of thousands – they are a collective cry, a desperate, deafening scream that seeks to ensure that we will not break faith with those who fell.”

Ceremonies

CBF President, MGen Clive Addy, conducted ceremonial services of remembrance on June 6th and 7th, at Juno Beach, at the CBF's Canadian Memorial Garden, at l'Abbaye d'Ardenne and at Caen's Place de l'Ancienne Boucherie, where local citizens first met their Canadian liberators.

Meighen McCrae, *University of Calgary*, is in second year in a Master of Arts program and has interned at the Canadian War Museum. Her focus is on the impact of war on civilians. She has completed major research on the diaries, memoirs and letters of Canadian soldiers in the First World War.



Meighen McCrae

"At the ceremonies I saw many veterans who had come to honour their comrades with such dignity, but I did not see many civilians. The saddest part of the ceremonies was this lack of attendance. A central focus of the speeches was how happy the French people were to be liberated, so where is this representation? Where were the French people of Normandy? Are we fail-

ing as a society to impart a spirit of commemoration? I was particularly upset at how many people in downtown Caen paid little respect to the war dead. Many people talked during the ceremonies, and neither vehicles nor people stopped when passing by. It seems that remembrance in France is more a tool of politicians rather than existing in the hearts of the people."

Isabelle Duford, 23, a fourth-year history student from Ottawa University, shares reflections of the Abbey D'Ardenne:

"My grandfather served during the Second World War. We don't have a lot of information about his time overseas because he never talked about it." Her goal, on the battletour, was to somehow imagine what a soldier in the First or Second World War had to go through, no matter what formidable task was being asked of him. At the Abbaye d'Ardenne in Normandy, in a very moving meeting with Monsieur Jacques Vico, a member of the French Resistance, Isabelle realized her goal:

"The Abbaye is the site of the murder of 20 Canadian soldiers, who were made prisoners by troops from the 12th Panzer Division between June 7th and 17th 1944. During the war, Monsieur Vico lived at the Abbaye d'Ardenne with his family, until he was forced to flee.

After the June 6th Allied landings, he returned home and in the weeks following the landings, Monsieur Vico and his family witnessed atrocious acts of violence. Once the area was liberated, the Vico family found the remains of Canadian soldiers. Monsieur



Isabelle Duford

Vico recounted details of cold-blooded executions. Afterwards, we climbed the same steps the prisoners had so many years ago and stood in a quiet garden surrounded by towering trees, delicate flowers, and the warm air still... a place where some of the murders had taken place and where a memorial now stands. It was overwhelming. This intimate meeting with a living, breathing primary source is a rare opportunity for a history student...and for me the very personal nature of Monsieur Vico's story at the Abbaye d'Ardenne proved to be the highlight of this incredible battlefield study experience."

Thessa Girard-Bourgoin, *University of Ottawa*, has completed her honours degree in history and is pursuing a doctorate in the study of the role of Canada in international affairs.

She writes: "On June 6, except for the strong waves that strike the Normandy coast, silence reigns on Juno beach. The flags float with the wind that carries the heavy memory of the war. As the trumpet played the Last Post, I was moved to see these men with wet eyes standing at attention with some difficulty, carrying out the military salute with their trembling hands. I felt shivers looking at these veterans with their white hair, walking slowly with their canes, on this beach where 62 years before they had emerged from the ocean to run and escape death. Though they were lucky then, death is now catching up. They are getting older. Each year, there are less and less who can make the pilgrimage. To remember still hurts them after all these years, but they see it as their duty to share their stories, each wearing a poppy on the heart, because soon there will be no one with living memory to commemorate and bear tribute to their experiences. I believe that they are afraid of being forgotten. I feel admiration for these men. Despite every-



Thessa Girard-Bourgoin

thing, they have remade their lives after having seen such an amount of horror. I was fortunate to meet Mr. François Guerin, a man who retains all my respect. "La peur n'empêche pas la douleur," he said to me. He appeared to be a good humoured, almost mischievous, old man, though he carries many dreadful memories. It would have been impossible for me to guess by simply looking at this French man that he had been a prisoner of one of the most terrible concentration camps under the Nazi regime. My short meeting with him was memorable and made me realize the purpose and significance of my trip. Despite being late, we advanced slowly in the direction of the next ceremony. Even with the assistance of his cane, he hobbled and moved with difficulty under the overpowering sun. I supported him by holding his arm. Suddenly, he stopped walking. His eyes blurry with tears, he looked at me and I was able to see appalling memories. He thanked me. He told me that it was because of the young people, especially young Canadians such as me, that he is still there. He wants everybody to know that we have been important to him. He thanked me cordially as if it were I who had liberated him. Feeling impotent in spite of a certain pride, I told him not to worry because we are still here and we will continue to fight for a better world."

Matt Symes is a MA candidate in the Department of History at Wilfred Laurier University. He holds two Honours BA degrees, in history and in education. His grandfather fought in Korea with the 2nd PPCLI, and Matt spent last year there teaching English and trying to understand from the ground the realities of that war.

Matt writes about the Maple Leaf:

“Canadians that fought in the First and Second World Wars did so under the Red Ensign. But what truly separated the Canadian contingent from the rest of the Allies was the Maple Leaf. The Maple Leaf featured prominently in the regimental badges and acted as an identifying mark on the Canadian military vehicles. It was also carved into stone walls along the coast of Normandy by individual soldiers and posed with for



Matt Symes

photos. Every member of the Canadian Armed Forces, from the highest ranking officer to the infantry privates, identifies themselves with the Maple Leaf. The way our flag is respected and admired in Normandy remains the most influential aspect of a battlefield study experience chalked full of moving moments.

Today, in Normandy, the Maple Leaf acts as a commemorative symbol. The Maple Leaf sits atop every Canadian gravestone; the Maple Leaf is featured prominently around and on every Canadian monument; the Maple leaf flies from the windows of family homes, where fond stories are still told about a particular Canadian soldier; the Maple Leaf greets guests at every Canadian graveyard. During the D-Day ceremonies at St. Aubin-Sur-Mer, the Maple Leaf even flew from a dog's collar, whose owner understood only too well the sacrifices of Canadians in both global conflicts. The Maple Leaf remains a source of admiration for the French, especially those who reside in Normandy. Admittedly, I am proud to be Canadian and always have been, but never have I felt more proud to be Canadian or to bear the Maple Leaf on my backpack than when I walked the streets of Normandy. Back home, when I pass a Canadian flag today, be it in Blackville, New Brunswick or on Parliament Hill in Ottawa, I can't help but feel a deeper connection to our country and to the men and women who paid the ultimate price in honour of our national symbol.”

Anna-Marie Miller, fourth year history, University of Ottawa, had the honour of escorting her grandfather to the 60th Anniversary of Liberation in the Netherlands. She describes here another very moving commemoration:

“The ceremony at the Abbey D’Ardennes was a moving experience of which I am thankful for. It added the human aspect for what it means to remember. I knew this was not your regular remembrance ceremony from the moment we arrived at the Abbey. There was a hush among us students and there was not the usual banter that normally floats among us. We spoke in quieter voices, already



Anna-Maria Miller

aware of the emotion that the ceremony was to invoke in us. When handed our Maple Leaves that we were to lay on the tomb of the fallen soldiers, it was as if they were the most precious things our hands had ever touched. To us these were no ordinary maple leaves; these represented a soldier's life.

As I stood at the front of the crowd that had gathered in the garden I had the privilege of seeing everyone's faces as the ceremony took place. While General Addy told the story of what happened to the soldiers who had died in the garden I could hear the anguish in his voice and see it in people's faces. It didn't seem to matter if one was connected to a soldier who had died there; all felt the pain of loss.

When it was my turn to lay my maple leaf, it felt as if I was laying it down for a family member, even though I did not know the soldier whom I was commemorating. He was a fellow countryman and that was enough.

It was the personal story of the soldiers that died in the garden of the Abbey d’Ardennes that finally helped me realize what it means to remember the two World Wars. One not only has to remember the big picture but the small one as well. Remember the small acts of heroism and the cost that came with that. Remember the soldiers and their individual stories and the human aspect of war.

The ceremony at the Abbey d’Ardennes was a moving experience for which I am thankful. It added the human aspect for what it means to remember.”

Visit our website at:
<http://www.canadianbattlefieldsfoundation>

Blake Seward, an award-winning teacher at Smith's Falls High School in Eastern Ontario, describes the Second High School History Teachers' Battlefield Tour:

"Fifteen teachers from across Canada and 4 from the United States came together to tour the European battlefields from 7-17 August, 2006. Under the expert guidance of Dr. Geoffrey Hayes, who teaches at the University of Waterloo, the tour, sponsored by the Canadian Battlefields Foundation (CBF), Veterans Affairs Canada and Historica, was a tremendous success: a very rewarding blend of information both from a tactical perspective and from the sacrifices of individual soldiers.

In an effort to ensure that every teacher can connect their experiences to the classroom, each teacher was asked to research a soldier of either world war and make a presentation at that soldier's gravesite. Their research was excellent and the emotional connection between the group and these fallen soldiers was apparent at each presentation. At each cemetery, teachers talked about the final days of these soldiers and how 'their' soldier died.

Every day, teachers would discuss how they could develop lessons around their experiences and enhance existing history units. The result of this tour is that every teacher that walked a battlefield, stood in front of a soldier's grave and presented a soldier's story realized the role Canadians played in both world wars. Everyone understands how critical it is that our young Canadian citizens understand the incredible sacrifice made by these soldiers."



Larry Smith, a high school teacher from Portage La Prairie, Manitoba, stands beside the gravestone of a relative at Bayeaux Cemetery in France.

Message from CBF President MGen Clive Addy:

"Thank you! From 25 universities and 39 finalists across Canada, 16 students were selected and formed the 2006 tour, joining the over 150 alumni of the Canadian Battlefields Foundation to help propagate this story of sacrifice, volunteerism and freedom. We acknowledge gratefully the financial help from the SDF program of DND. As well, the Foundation helped support the 25 selected members of the History Teachers' Tour in August, held public commemorative cere-

monies in Normandy, supported the first "credit awarding" joint battlefield tour course by l'Université de Montréal and Wilfrid Laurier University in May, and hosted members of the US 1st Division Cantigny Foundation on our tour for a period in June. A very productive year! Thank you Terry Copp, Michel Fortmann, Geoff Hayes, Blake Seward, Marc Milner, Des Morton, Shelagh Whitaker, Charles Gruchy, Alex Carette, Matt Symes and so many others... particularly our donors."

Two CBF Directors named to Order of Canada

MGen Lewis MCKenzie CM, OstJ, OOnt, MSC, CD and Mr. John Rae have been made Members of the Order of Canada. CBF President MGen Addy observed: "How well merited this is indeed for both of these deserving directors of our Foundation and outstanding Canadians.

Editor's Note: : Especial thanks to Matt Symes (one of our talented 2006 battletour students) for the splendid photography, including the design and photos of the front and back covers; to Alex Carette for translations, and to all the contributors for sharing their battletour memories. *Shelagh Whitaker, Editor*

Letter From Normandy: Revisiting D-Day in Both Languages

By Desmond Morton

Eminent historian Desmond Morton recently participated in the first ever joint Wilfred Laurier University - Université de Montréal credit course in military history. After spending two weeks in class, the carefully-selected group of nine Montreal students met up with a comparable group from WLU in Paris to tour the beaches and battlesites of Normandy. Also leading the tour were Professor Terry Copp of WLU, Michel Fortmann, a political scientist at the Université de Montréal (his colleagues in that university's excellent history department were not interested: "On n'aime pas la guerre," Professor Morton related) and Alexandre Carette, a veteran of an earlier Copp Normandy tour, who was graduate assistant for the course and, with his wit, good sense and experience, acted as a highly humane sergeant-major to the group. Of Copp, Morton writes: "No single Canadian historian has done more for our current memory of Normandy than Professor Terry Copp. While many shared in the Canadian Battlefields Foundation project of helping young Canadians to visit overseas battlefields, it was Copp who shaped and developed the program and made it happen. Annually, a couple of dozen university students visit Canadian battlefields and cemeteries of France and, more recently, of Italy. They learn for themselves how far battles are shaped by ground and weapons and, above all, by uncertainty. They come home, many of them, bound for graduate or professional schools with a special understanding of their country's history."

On May 18 we set off in rented vans for Beaumont Hamel, Courcelette and other battlefields of the Somme campaign of 1915. Next morning, slightly recovered from jet-lag, we headed to Vimy Ridge, where Canada's iconic monument is undergoing a badly needed renovation for its 90th anniversary in 2007. By the afternoon, we hurried on our way to Dieppe and the once-murderous beach at Puits. Next morning, in a roaring Channel gale, we walked the main beach and reflected on Copp's reminder of how difficult it was for the men responsible for the raid to change their minds, even as conditions vital for its success systematically vanished. Some of us collected a few of the over-sized pebbles that stalled all but one of the Canadian tanks on August 19, 1942. Finally, we paused at the Canadian cemetery behind Dieppe. Visits to war cemeteries play a major part in Copp's battlefield tours. Students confront a central issue in his teaching: how nations construct history when they commemorate their dead. Consider the contrast-

ing symbolism in the huge anonymous ossuary in the French cemetery at Notre-Dame de Lorette, and the carefully individualized monuments in the British (and Canadian) graveyards, most with a few words requested by surviving families. How does that compare with the rigidly egalitarian crosses or the soaring idealism of the sculpture in the big American cemetery above Omaha Beach in Normandy? Nearby, the crowded German cemetery, with its clumps of brown crosses, insisted explicitly on the futility of war.

One of the assignments for our students was to select someone buried somewhere along our itinerary and to find out all they could about the man's background and death. The presentations humanized the war. The fact that most of the dead were even younger than our students was always a poignant reminder of futures foregone and dreams dissolved. Sometimes powerful emotions came to the surface. There were obvious gaps. Thanks to course work and Ontario's school curriculum, the Wilfrid Laurier students knew more about Canada's military past than did most of the Montrealers. The breadth of their presentations made the tour more interesting. It also underlined how little French Canada's heroic contribution to the Canadian war effort is known or recognized in Quebec's history curriculum.

Inevitably and appropriately, French- and English-speaking students were paired. Without exception, the francophones spoke good English but only one anglophone tried out his perfectly adequate French. Living together worked better than I had expected. Even some committed sovereignists among the Université de Montréal students confessed that the English had not lived up to their image and really were *des bons gars*.

The Normandy phase of the tour began, conventionally enough, with a day at Juno Beach, another at Omaha Beach and the Point du Hoc, and another at Pegasus Bridge, where the Canadian Parachute Battalion had landed and where a restored Horsa glider recalled an amazing British feat of air-manship before dawn on June 6, 1944.

Routine visits to battle sites and the crumbling Atlantic Wall were interspersed with another Copp innovation borrowed from his COTC memories: "tactical exercises without troops," or TEWTS. Students were provided with photocopies of original operation orders, 1944 maps, air photos and orders of battle, plus an ample supply of the kind of hints and warnings that any officer-veteran can probably remember. Small

groups or syndicates worked out their plans and then drove off to the actual ground to see how they might have revised their troop deployments for the Royal Winnipeg Rifles at Putot en Bessin or the North Novas at Authie. Doing TEWTS was surprisingly popular, even when most syndicates routinely repeated deployments that contributed to near-disaster in 1944. The purpose, Copp insists, is not to make students into colonels but to make them understand how much easier it is to be an historian after the fact than a commander on the day.

Reconciling historical differences is not a problem that an outsider can resolve, nor can it be done quickly or thoughtlessly. What can happen is more of the sharing of experiences I observed last May. In the short run, sustaining the Université de Montréal venture in military history could benefit from benefactors able to help university students from Montreal (and from Université du Québec à Montréal, Université de Sherbrooke and Université Laval as well) to relive the experience our nine pioneers shared. Most of our students paid their own fare across the Atlantic, but their support in Europe is largely dependent on benevolent supporters. John Cleghorn, former chairman and CEO of the Royal Bank, has been a generous benefactor of Wilfrid Laurier battlefield tours; the Université de Montréal is still too much a newcomer to have mobilized such support.

There were memories to make any community proud, and they were shared with Canadians from all parts of our country. Last May convinced me that our history is best learned when both French and English are listening and trying to understand together. After all, as soldiers have discovered in two world wars, we generally like each other better when we are overseas.

Desmond Morton, author of 40 books, is a professor emeritus of history at McGill University and founding director of the McGill Institute for the Study of Canada.



Jean-Philippe Simard, Université de Montréal, gives his presentation. Simard's grand-father was the owner of Simard Marine Industries in Sorel, PQ, which built the 25 pounders guns for the Canadian Army.



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And-Made, Kristine, Jason, and Delvey take part in a challenge of the landing at Omaha Beach.
 And-Made, Kristine, Jason et Delvey participent à une compétition de débarquement sur la plage Omaha.



Gruchy, Jason, and Isabelle pose with Charles Goucy, historian of the CCF and descendant of Marshall Goucy of Napoleon's Army.
 Gruchy, Jason et Isabelle pose avec Charles Goucy, historien de la FOCB et descendant de Marshall Goucy de l'armée napoléonienne.



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And-Made, Melissa, and Kristine smile around the statue built in honor of the soldiers at Point du Hoc.
 And-Made, Melissa et Kristine se sourient devant une œuvre d'art de Point du Hoc.



Dr. Peter Huxley talks with the Commanders of the 4th and 5th Canadian Armies.
 Dr. Peter Huxley parle avec le commandant de la 4e et 5e Armées canadiennes avec les généraux Willemse et Wilkin, Hill, Goucy et Kristine.



Isabelle and Peter are looking at photos of this man who posed, as a child, with the wreckage of D-Day.
 Un instant partagé avec Isabelle et Peter des photos et des souvenirs de son enfance au temps du débarquement.