



Lord Strathcona's Horse (Royal Canadians) NEWSLETTER

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B SQDN STRATHCONA'S IN AFGHANISTAN

By MAJOR TREVOR CADIIEU, OFFICER COMMANDING "B" SQUADRON

The first group of B Squadron soldiers departed Canada on 10 October, and a larger group who endured two successive flight delays followed them soon after. On arrival at the Kandahar Airfield, we joined the 1st Battalion Royal Canadian



B Sqn Leopard firing in Afghanistan

an Regiment Battle Group under unfortunate circumstances, as they mourned the loss of two of their soldiers killed in combat the day prior. In true Strathcona fashion, B Squadron soldiers joined the Battle Group at a ramp ceremony to show their support for fallen comrades.

Our group of soldiers has achieved an incredible amount of work in an extremely short period of time. Immediately following kit

issue, we zeroed personal weapons and completed a training package to further hone the skills of our soldiers prior to joining the Battle Group in operations. Extensive work has also been achieved on our tanks. All Leopard tanks

have been kitted, bombed up and maintenance has been conducted to ready our team for the harsh environment of Afghanistan. Preparations of the first wave of B Squadron soldiers and tanks culminated in an opportunity to deploy to Tarnak Farms to zero our tanks and experience life 'outside the wire'. B Squadron soldiers are sharp and their drills are well developed.

Afghanistan is an extremely harsh environment, however, Strathcona soldiers have a reputation of making themselves comfortable everywhere. We have established a permanent living area in

close proximity to the tank park, and all soldiers will call home for the next four



On the move and creating a bit of dust in Afghanistan!

months a bunk bed in what we affectionately refer to as the BAT (Big Ass Tent). There are well-established kitchen

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REGIMENTAL DISPATCHES

Colonel of The Regiment



As Colonel Mark Egner noted in his column in the Spring Newsletter, the senior leadership of the Regiment went through a major change this past summer. This change took

place on 30 June during a very excellent parade orchestrated under perfect weather by the outgoing RSM, CWO Russ Ells. Before the parade I asked CWO Ells if there was a “wet weather program” and his only reply was that “it never rains on Strathcona parades!” It certainly did not and everything went off without a hitch. Despite the numbers involved, everyone managed to hand over to the right person who, in turn, proudly assumed the correct new position. LCol Demers and CWO Ross will probably disagree but I’m sure no one felt more pride than I did.

To be selected to serve as your Colonel of the Regiment is a great honour. As it is the one position that you are nominated for by “the family” and not some board in NDHQ, to me at least it is a most singular honour. When I look at the list of distinguished officers who have preceded me in the appointment, and knowing the contribution each has made, I realize that this is a position not only of honour but one that carries considerable responsibility for the preservation of all things Strathcona. I take this responsibility very, very seriously and pledge to work with all of you to continue the high standards we Strathconas have established and maintained while serving and in subsequent civilian life.

On behalf of all Strathconas I would like to extend to Colonel Mark Egner our most sincere thanks for his leadership

during his tour and for all the time and effort he put into promoting the Regiment at every opportunity that came his way. Although Colonel Mark has handed over the appointment of Colonel of the Regiment he is not going to be allowed to go into hiding. During his term Mark worked very hard at putting our various “Regimental enterprises” on a solid business footing. The Society has grown from the two or three files that I maintained in a desk drawer as the Regimental 2IC in the 70s to what Mark likes to call a “medium sized business”. Our Museum, Mounted Troop, Historical Vehicle Troop, Pipe Band, Kit Shop and Newsletter are the envy of the rest of the Army. They are well supported by friends of the Regiment and more importantly by a lot of “sweat equity” from our soldiers and members of the Association. However, they cannot survive without good management practices and financial planning and we all owe a debt of gratitude to Mark for his efforts in these areas. We will keep Mark active in these whether he wants to be or not. (He does!)

I doubt very much if there was a single person on parade or in attendance on 30 June who could have forecast the chain of events that took B Squadron from that parade square in early summer to Afghanistan in October. As many of you may know from my note on the E-News that Kathy Stephen is so good at distributing for us, I was able to visit the Regiment in Wainwright in September. Most of the unit was deployed there with B Squadron doing gunnery training, E Coy impressing us with their new TOW Under Armour Light Armoured Vehicles and most of the remainder of the Regiment supporting this training in one way or another. At the time I arrived on 3 September the Regiment’s main operational task was training a tank squadron to join a standby battle group led by 1R22eR and with a possible deployment in Feb 07. The very next day the Commanding Officer was told to accelerate the training so that the Squadron could be ready to deploy to Afghanistan in a minimum of

two weeks. I’m sure LCol Demers will deal with the effort that went into this in his column so I will not steal any of his thunder. Suffice it to say I was extremely impressed with the manner in which the Regiment, other units of 1 CMBG and, in fact, units and headquarters all over Canada, jumped in to help prepare and equip the squadron for this operation. We can all take great pride in the way our troops reacted to these changes and I spent a lot of time talking with these men and women about what could lie ahead. As I have said many times since, the only depression I encountered was with those who would not make the cut for this rotation. The members of E Coy especially regretted that their TOWs would not accompany their tanker brethren. To repeat what I said in the E-News article - Regimental life is very different from what most of us in the Association experienced and social attitudes are even more different, but that is where the differences end. The Strathcona soldiers in Wainwright reacted to these events with the highest levels of professionalism and enthusiasm and I felt very much at home with them, just as I would have felt with soldiers of the 60s, 70s, and 80s. The officers and NCOs (OK, NCMs) were doing exactly what I would have expected, and all of them, including one junior officer with less than 10 days with the Regiment, were as professional as we ever thought we were. . Yes, we have a great Regiment!!

During the September visit I also had the opportunity to join the RSM in meeting with most of the Strathconas attached to the very impressive new Training Center in Wainwright. Those of you who remember the Camp Wainwright of old would have a hard time locating the fixtures of the old camp. Wainwright is developing into a state of the art training facility and a large contingent of Strathconas are holding key positions in this transformation. The town of Wainwright itself is expanding also, to the point where it is

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Commanding Officer



There has been quite a flurry of activity since the Change of Command Parade of 30 June. I was able to appropriately introduce my new wife Louise to the cav-

alry lifestyle with international show jumping at the Queen Elizabeth II Cup at Spruce Meadows on 8 July. Along with the CDS, General Hillier and the US Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Pace, we viewed the jumping as well as the Feu de Joie by the Regiment's Honour Guard led by Maj Cadieu and SSM Laughlin, our Guidon Party led by MWO Dorrance, and the SMT led by Captain McMurachy and WO Seefried. Spectators also enthusiastically visited the Historical Vehicle Troop displays set up by Sgt Schall and his gang.

Not too long after we returned from Calgary we learned of a suicide bomber attack in Afghanistan which resulted in the death of Cpl Francisco Gomez, one of our E Coy Patricia's on attachment to the Battlegroup based in Kandahar. In close cooperation with Cpl Gomez's family and his parent Regiment, we supported a funeral service in Edmonton and internment at the National Military Cemetery located in the heart of Beechwood Cemetery in Ottawa. While Capt Mead, Capt Pattle, and CSM Greyeyes must be specifically recognized for their outstanding leadership, all participants contributed to services that appropriately honoured the life and service of a fine soldier.

In August, B Sqn deployed to Wainwright on short notice to join the 1st Bn R22eR on an exercise to prepare a stand-by Battle Group for a potential second line of operations. This was an armour sqn of three tank troops and one TUA platoon. Summer leave had to be cut short in order to get the sqn into the field and as things turned out, it was a good thing we

got them training quickly. During the troop live fire battle runs on the night of 4 September, Major Chris Adams called from Afghanistan to give me a heads-up that tanks were being requested for the Battlegroup in Kandahar. Early on 5 September I received a call from the Brigade Commander, Colonel Vance, giving orders to prepare a tank sqn for a deployment which could take place as quickly as within 14 days. The pace really picked up then. It was an "all hands on deck" effort to get the squadron trained and the equipment prepared. Tank/infantry cooperation ranges were run on a range built to simulate potential objective areas in Afghanistan. Anyone not in B Sqn, building ranges, or supporting the training was back in Edmonton getting tanks overhauled and ready for deployment. The entire army was supporting us, including 14 additional maintainers from across the country who joined Capt Chenard and MWO Rasmussen's Maintenance Troop for this Herculean effort. Unfortunately, it was decided that the TUA would not deploy so the "F" echelon was limited to 15 tanks. Since we had to contract the airlift of the tanks to a Russian company, B Sqn did not deploy in 14 days after all, but they were ready to go, having devastated the ranges in Wainwright in their Combat Team day and night attacks to prove their skills. The additional time available to the sqn due to the transport plan allowed more theatre specific, first aid and weapons training to be done. Under the leadership of Maj Cadieu and SSM Laughlin, B Sqn has settled in to Kandahar and commenced operations.

The RSM and I then found ourselves in Ottawa for the Corps Merit Boards. In addition to the usual reviewing of files, we of course took advantage of the opportunity of having the Director of Armour, Career Managers, and the CO's and RSM's of the Armour School and other Regiments in one room to hit them up for augmentation for C Sqn, which we clearly needed to create in order to have a follow-on sqn for the rotation after B and A Sqns. In order to fill out the ranks, C Sqn will include a troop from each of the RCD and the 12e RBC on attachment from February '07 for the start of training

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Regimental Sergeant Major



After spending two years on IR in Gagetown I naively thought I would be able to spend some time with my wife....**BOY, was I wrong!**

Let me start by saying thanks to **CWO Russ Ells** and his wife **Angie** for making the transition for Terri and I extremely easy. We wish them all the best in the future.

As this is my first article, I will keep it short. What I thought was going to be a three-year tenure has now been turned into two years. The Corps has decided that a three-year tenure would hold up the career progression of others and limits the number of CWO's available for senior positions. Although I was disappointed, as **Col (Spike) Hazelton** knows, I fully support and understand the logic behind the decision and in true Strathcona fashion, I will **Persevere**.

The Commanding Officer and I have hardly had an opportunity to spend quality time in Edmonton largely due to the pace of activities that started in Sept with the announcement that we would be sending Troops and Tanks to **Afghanistan** in Oct 06. This, coupled with all the road trips we have done, has greatly reduced the flexibility in our schedules. Who would have ever thought that we would be doing this? When we received the official word, I was extremely impressed with the level of excitement and enthusiasm displayed by not only our Troops, but from the **Army** as a whole. It was incredible to see everyone united as one and all focused on the same task at hand. To **EVERY** member of the Regt, regardless of the hat badge you wear or the rank on your epaulette, I say **Well Done and Thanks**. Without your support and dedication to this mission, we could not have had the success we did.

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**Colonel of The Regiment -
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expecting the arrival of a Wal-Mart and, are you ready for this? – TIM HORTONS!

To continue my visit to familiar sites I made a side trip to Calgary to meet with WO Ted MacLeod and Sgt Todd Giberson on the Museum Staff, Gary Lee on the Association side and LCol Rick Williams, who fortunately will stay on as our Regimental Secretary. We are still a strong presence in Calgary and this was certainly confirmed later that day when I attended one of the famous “ID MacKay monthly lunches”. I won’t name all in attendance because I’m sure to miss someone but it was a great opportunity to quaff an ale with a number of “Regimental buddies”. It is times like that when I regret that there is so much geography between Ontario and Alberta.

Geography aside, the Strathcona contingent in Ontario seems to be growing in leaps and bounds. Col Des Deane-Freeman has now taken up residence in Pembroke and that has certainly added credibility to Ontario’s claim to being a Strathcona location of some significance. Any of you finding yourselves in this part of Canada risk great bodily harm if we learn that you have been in the area and have not “checked in”.

Unfortunately the duties of a Colonel of the Regiment are not always happy ones. On 22 July, Cpl Francisco Gomez, a member of E Coy on attachment to the Force in Afghanistan, lost his life when his vehicle was attacked by a suicide bomber. I attended the Ramp Ceremony at CFB Trenton honouring the repatriation of the remains of Cpl Gomez, along with those of Cpl Warren of the Black Watch who died in the same attack. Although there has been considerable media coverage of previous ramp ceremonies, you do not really appreciate the significance of the occasion until you have attended one and seen for yourself the honour that is bestowed upon our returning dead and the compassion and support that is extended to their families from the highest National levels. The Governor General, accompanied by the Minister of

National Defence, attended the ceremony. To those of us who may be naturally skeptical, let me assure you that Her Excellency was not there for a “photo op”. She is a very gracious lady who arrived early and spent the time prior to the ceremony consoling the family members in a private reception area. The military presence, led by the CDS, Gen Rick Hillier and the Chief of Land Staff (CLS), LGen Andrew Leslie, was also very significant. Later I was able to join the CDS, CLS, and the CO and RSM and a strong contingent from the Regiment for Cpl Gomez’ internment in the National Military Cemetery in Ottawa, another moving tribute to one of our own. Cpl Gomez was one of 40 members of the Regiment attached to various elements of the Canadian Forces in Afghanistan and, fortunately, the others have now safely returned to Edmonton and their families. The world is a very different place since the Cold War and we cannot in good faith minimize the risks that face our soldiers now and in the future. That said I hope that you will join me in offering prayers for the safety of all who are and will be deployed in the war on terrorism, not only our Strathcona colleagues but all members of the Canadian and NATO forces serving on this mission.

I think this article has gone on long enough and I will close off by saying once again that I am very honoured to serve as your Colonel of the Regiment. I have set personal goals to work on advancing our communications within the family and, because of my personal interest, to give our seven Cadet Corps positions of greater prominence within the family. In addition to their contribution to good citizenship, the Army Cadets have always been one of the best sources of recruits for the Army. We desperately need recruits so we should take every opportunity to promote service in the Canadian Forces and the Regiment in particular. If any of you have any suggestions that you would like to put forward in these areas or, for that matter on any other issue, I’d be pleased to hear from you.

**Perseverance,
John Roderick, Colonel (Retd)
Colonel of the Regiment**
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**Commanding Officer -
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until the end of their tour in February ’08. Our thanks to Colonel Hazleton and the Corps for their support.

On return to Edmonton, it was time to join A Sqn in Wainwright. Led by Maj Broomfield and SSM Crabb, A Sqn’s training plan followed B Sqn’s plan, except that the best 17 tanks (15 plus 2 operational stock) had been sent overseas, so A Sqn was left with some pretty rough wagons. A Sqn also had the opportunity to train at CMTC with the 2nd Bn RCR BG that they will operate with in theatre. Wainwright in November is a very cold place to train for a deployment to Afghanistan, but the sqn took it in stride and persevered.

Late November finds us running PCF courses to train more tank drivers and gunners, both to give A Sqn more dual qualified soldiers and to convert our Recce Sqn guys into tankers for C Sqn. We are also running a LAV TUA ITAS Section Commanders’ Course to continue to develop our TUA ITAS capability in preparation for the day when it is realized that this superb system would be of great use overseas. Recce Sqn is temporarily a very small sqn, but I am confident that we will rebuild it as more personnel flow into the Regiment. For the time being, we are focussed on preparing the best tank squadrons possible for service in Afghanistan. All ranks and all trades are performing brilliantly.

On the home front, the wives have begun a “Tastes of Canada” initiative to collect gifts and treats for our deployed soldiers for Christmas. Clearly the family is well!

All the very best to Strathconas everywhere.

**Perseverance
Lieutenant-Colonel P.P.J. Demers, CD
Commanding Officer**

*Regimental Sergeant Major -
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I must say, from an RSM's perspective, the members of "B" Sqn are a strong and competent organization that will perform to the highest degree, led by the **Officer Commanding, Maj Trevor Cadieu** and **Squadron Sergeants Major, MWO Walter Laughlin**.

Having watched the last of the "B" Sqn tanks and personnel depart for Afghanistan on Fri Nov 3, we now turn our attention to the next rotation scheduled for Feb 07. "A" Sqn is currently at CMTC progressing toward their training completion date of 18 Nov. Following that, they will be moving directly into the DLOC training phase. For those who don't know, the **Officer Commanding is Maj Dave Broomfield** and the **SSM is MWO Bill Crabb**. They too have a strong organization and are as equally up to the task as "B" Sqn.

At this very moment in time, we are in the process of standing up a 3rd Tank Sqn, "C" Sqn. It will be augmented by a troop from both the **RCD and 12^e RBC** respectively. The Corps is alive and vibrant.

It is an exciting and historical time for the **Regt** and the **Corps** as a whole. We are focused on deploying troops and tanks for a type of mission not seen for some time, while continuing to provide the same amount of attention to everything else we normally achieve. This includes our support to the Strathcona Society. To the Families of those deployed, you are not alone. This Regt is a Family and I give you my personal assurance that we will do everything we can to assist you. Just give us a call.

*Perseverance,
CWO (RSM) D.A. Ross, CD*

**B Sqn - Afghanistan-
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facilities on base, however, soldiers can choose to take a break from mess food by visiting Burger King, Subway, Pizza Hut or Tim Horton's on the 'board walk'. I am certain the airfield will seem a paradise when we deploy forward with the Battle Group. The smell of sewage constantly lingering in the air takes some getting used to though.

We now anticipate eagerly the arrival of

remaining B Squadron soldiers and our tanks. Our entire team will continue to prepare equipment for operations and we will conduct further training prior to deploying on operations. The Battle Group has been extremely supportive and all infantry soldiers we have talked with are keen for the tanks to join the team.

Our ability to deploy to Afghanistan could not have been achieved without tremendous support from many people at home and those deployed in advance of our group to Afghanistan. On behalf of all B Squadron soldiers, I wish to sincerely thank all soldiers and maintainers at the Regiment who have spent countless hours facilitating the training of our team and preparing vehicles for deployment. We are also extremely grateful for the efforts of the Tank Activation Team, a group of soldiers and technicians who deployed two weeks in advance of the squadron to receive and kit Leopards on arrival at the airfield. Most importantly, it is the families of B Squadron soldiers who have made this deployment possible. Without your unconditional love and support on the home front, our mission would not be achievable.

***NOT ANOTHER BOOK
YOU SAY !
By EARL CADY***

Yep, but this work was not put together by pure historical research. It is to be the culmination of a lot of hard work and personal expense by one Roland Bernard Edward Clark, affectionately known to all who knew and worked with him as just plain old "Nobby".



I first became acquainted with Nobby in '58 or '59 at the Armour School. He was a small man, in stature, that is. As I came to know him better over the years it became increasingly evident, that, in many ways, here was a person who ran a lot deeper than was apparent to his peers. He had a strength of resolve that came to the surface when firm action was required of him. His determination to see difficult tasks brought to fruition was a trait that brought the work of which I speak

to completion.

Given the kind of person of which I speak, it came as no surprise that when "Shad" Shadbolt offered me this huge two part manuscript to peruse I knew instinctively that I was looking at something very special. As far as I know, nobody outside his immediate family knew that he had undertaken this venture. Nobby made at least two trips to his native South Africa at his own expense to visit family. He was born in the former Rhodesia, served with the Royal Rhodesian Rifles as a young man, and immigrated to Canada in 1953. There was an obvious ulterior motive to his trips.

Nobby left no stone unturned in his quest to produce a reference that would be as close to fact as possible. He and his brother, Reg, searched out long neglected graves of Strathconas who died in the war and did what they could to give them the attention that they deserved. After a lot of lobbying with Canadian, South African and British Government Agencies, he was instrumental in having the graves relocated to an appropriate location, to be maintained by The Commonwealth War Graves Commission. A contingent from the Regiment visited the site in 2000.

In my humble estimation, the most notable achievement of all is the fact that Nobby traveled the same route that the Regiment did during their deployment to South Africa. Training areas, camp sites, battle locations and many other very interesting facets of the day to day life of the soldier are revealed.

Ever wonder about the "White Flag Incident" or how come the RSM that left Halifax did not arrive in South Africa as the RSM, or about the shell marks that are still evident on rock faces in certain areas from the "Long Toms" that were fired at our guys. The answers to these questions and much more will be revealed.

Nobby's family has graciously agreed to having the tremendous amount of time and effort that he devoted to what obviously became a work of love, preserved in the form of a book.

It must be appreciated that Nobby would never seek any sort of recognition or praise from any quarter. We are indeed blessed with the discovery of the fruits of his endeavours and hope that in the not to distant future we will have a very important work to enjoy.

MELFA REVISITED - 2006

By **BUD McLEAN**



I had visited the battle site of Melfa River in 1991 and again in 2001. In 1991 I met the man who now lives on the site where we made the river crossing. His father and his family lived there in 1944 but had gone away to avoid the battle. The house where we took the prisoner was originally a convent when his dad acquired it. I have been sending the man Christmas cards since 1991.

In 2004 several representatives of the Westminster Regiment visited the battle site to consider the possibility of erecting a plaque to honour Major J.K. Mahony VC. The farmer, Ricci Carlantonio, gave one of the Westminster delegates one of my Christmas cards. The fellow lived in Calgary and contacted me when he returned from Italy. It was through my discussions with the man from Calgary that I became aware of the intentions to have a plaque erected. For some time I tried, without success, to get more specific information of the trip. Eventually I made contact with the committee chairperson, Jerry Congur. He was a retired Colonel of the Westminster Regiment. He would forward more details by letter when the planning stage was finalized. In November 2004 while in Ottawa I advised LGen (Ret'd) Bill Milroy of the planned venture. I also kept our Association President Don Crossman of the situation (he was already quite ill at the time). Once the plan came together I informed the Col of the Regiment, Mark Egener.

When I knew the ground work was finished I kept in touch with the Westies and they eventually sent me more details of the plan through the Westminster Association. Now that something firm was set out I contacted the travel agent that would handle the trip. I had a great deal of difficulty getting details on what I felt was a very important trip and a historic event for the Strathconas and the Recce Troop. However, as Col Griffin would have said, "Push On!"

Of the 15 men of Recce troop who got to the river on the 24th, only 14 of us made the initial crossing, I believe I am the only one left living today. I felt that Lt Perkins, Sgt Macy and Tpr Funk should not be ignored or forgotten if the battle was to be remembered, and it was my responsibility as the only survivor to make sure they weren't. Consequently, I made arrangements with the travel agent for myself and my son, Brad. I had to have my son accompany me because of my health and he can carry more than one suitcase.

The trip to Italy was to leave on May 21 and return June 1, 2006. On the night of May 19th the controls of my washing machine broke down and my apartment and the one below were both flooded. For the next two nights and during the flight over I did not get any sleep. Three nights of no sleep pretty well did me in and then I caught a virus on the plane. I was pretty sick. I felt like I should go on "Sick Parade".

The plaque was to be erected on a church on the left of, and close to where we made the crossing. The night before the ceremony, Col Congur asked me if I would make some comment during the ceremony I agreed to do so despite the fact the I felt physically terrible. Besides myself there were two other Strathconas at the service. Al McGuire and Warrant Officer Brian Talty. Al McGuire was with our "A" Squadron at the Melfa and also was on the planning committee of the Westies. Warrant Officer Brian Talty was about to retire from the service. I was certainly pleased that Brian was able to be there. He assisted in handling many details that my health would not allow. Thank You Brian. Brian is another good Strathcona who tells it like "it is!"

I'm disappointed more Strathcona's couldn't have attended. We should have had some form of communications go out but this did not happen. Italian dignitaries were there, the local mayor and others from the Italian organising committee and the general public were also in attendance.

I was pleased that Lt Perkins was the first name mentioned on the plaque. Recently, and prior to the trip I had read that both Perkins and Mahoney had been recommended for the Victoria Cross. In his comments during the dedication ceremony, Colonel Congur confirmed that this was the case. However, it seems that whoever hands out the awards claimed they could only award on VC for the action and they presented it to the senior officer. I certainly do not want to take anything away from Major Mahoney but I felt that the greatest contribution to the battle was made by Lt Perkins. I know as I was there. Perkins was all over that bridgehead several times before Mahoney got there and by this, knew where the Major should put his men into defensive positions.

Pursuant to the service at the church the Italians provided everyone in attendance with lunch down on the river bank of the Melfa. This was by the grotto or shrine close to where we crossed the river. I guess that is the fourth and last time I will be there. Following lunch we went to the Canadian cemetery at Cassino. I visited the Strathconas' graves. This is probably the best kept cemetery of all those I have visited over the years. It is quite an emotional experience to visit the graves of so many friends and comrades.

While the Recce Troop crossed the river, let us not forget that had it not been for our fighting squadrons we could well have been wiped out and off the bridgehead. Recce only lost one man, wounded, just before we crossed the river, but the squadron lost about 24. The success of the battle belongs to the whole Regiment not just one troop. It goes without saying that those of us in Recce Troop were certainly happy when the Westminsters arrived across the river to support us. They too are a great regiment and supported us in a number of battles.

THE MELFA REVISITED

BY KAREN STORWICK KOONAR

Editor's Note: Karen Storwick Koonar is the Military Museums, Volunteer Research Assistant. See her letter on Page 6 for information concerning a Veteran's Tour of the Italian Campaign being planned for May 2007.

On May 21st, 2006 I had the great honour of traveling with a group of 29 Canadian veterans of the Italian Campaign of World War II, their family members and a number of interested historians. As an aspiring historian myself, the opportunity to walk the battlefields with the men who participated in the liberation of the land was incredible. I knew this trip would be interesting from a historical perspective. What I could not have anticipated was the depth of emotion that we would experience as a group as we traveled through the villages, battlefields and cemeteries with these old soldiers. Many knew it would be their last time back. So many of the men came with heavy hearts, determined to tell stories needing to be told, to find closure for unresolved memories. Throughout this tour we listened.

During our stay in Cassino, we visited the battlefields of the Hitler Line and the Melfa River, made all the more meaningful by the unique opportunity to meet with local historians and villagers. We were fascinated as we toured through old German defensive positions and points of Allied advance.

On the morning of May 25th, on the 62nd anniversary of the Melfa River crossing, the town of Roccasecca hosted a lovely ceremony to honour the veterans and unveil a plaque to commemorate the battle. We listened intently to the impassioned stories of some of the veterans as they spoke of the historical events. Major Jack Mahoney, Commanding Officer of A Company, Royal Westminster Regiment, had been awarded the Victoria Cross for his heroic leadership during this action. Despite being under heavy shell-fire for five hours and using weapons that could only be packed across the river on their backs, the Westminsters, with the help of the Lord Strathconas' Horse reconnaissance force, held the bridgehead. Lieutenant-Colonel P.A. Griffin, Commanding Officer, Lord Strathcona Horse, and Lieutenant Edward Perkins, Commanding Officer, of the reconnaissance troop, which crossed the Melfa River in advance of the Westminsters, were awarded the Distinguished Service Order. Private Culling of the Westminsters was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal (DCM) for taking out a German Mark IV tank and killing its crew while Trooper Jacob Funk of the Strathconas was awarded the Military Medal for taking out a menacing German self-propelled gun with a PIAT gun. This action effectively cut Highway 6 to Rome and was the last major battle before the Allies entered Rome on June 4, 1944.

The ceremony was particularly meaningful for our group, as most of the veterans on the tour were from the Royal Westminster and Lord Strathcona's Horse regiments. We were privileged to have Strathcona veterans Bud McLean and Al McGuire along with us, both of whom had been directly involved in the battles at the Melfa.

Al McGuire, of White Rock, B.C., was the bow gunner with the 4th troop tank Algonquin. His troop was under the command of Lieutenant MacKinnon and came under heavy fire as they advanced toward the river. At one point Lt. Perkins hopped on their tank and ordered them to engage two Panther Tanks. During the intense firefight Lt. MacKinnon was seriously wounded at which time they disengaged to get him to their Regimental Aide Post. When they returned to the river Major Mahoney had arrived and crossed.

Calgarian Bud McLean was with Perkins' Strath Force when they made the charge toward the Melfa from the Mancini Farm. McLean gave covering fire as Perkins hastily went back and forth across the Melfa under attack, preparing the ground for the Honey Tanks to cross. Once across, the Strathconas established the bridgehead and cleared a farmhouse on the north bank. McLean was responsible for collecting the prisoners. The prisoners were taken back across and Perkins decided to go back as well leaving McLean in charge of the three tanks on the north side for two hours while they waited for support from the Westminsters.

Following the ceremony and the unveiling of the plaque, the commemoration guests were led back to the old farmhouse at the river. The owner greeted the guests and reunited with the veterans who had been involved in the action at the farm. He remembered well the Canadians that had gathered there when he was a boy during the attack at the Melfa.

Later, we were led down to the banks of the river underneath the new highway where the residents of Roccasecca had prepared a beautiful feast. As we watched my son and my traveling companions' son playing in the river, we reflected on the innocence of youth, at liberty to splash in the river due to the great sacrifice of the men who had fought here 62 years ago. As a poignant finale to the mornings' events, our two boys were given the honour of tossing rose petals into the river as a tribute to the fallen.

Our last stop of the day was at the Commonwealth War Cemetery where the veterans formed up and marched to the cenotaph. Pristine and peaceful, each cemetery in Italy has its own beautiful atmosphere. One who has not been there cannot understand the visual power when standing amid the graves. We had a wide variety of people on our tour coming to Italy for touching personal reasons and it was in the cemeteries that most of these feelings emerged.

We visited eight different war cemeteries in Italy, each an essential stop on our tour as we continued on to the areas of Ortona and Rimini, tracing the footsteps of the Canadian Army through the Italian Campaign. Each time, as the buses pulled up, the people streamed out with a determination to find those to whom they had come to say goodbye.

For myself, each time I tour the battlefields of the Italian Campaign I find the experience incredibly compelling. I breathe in the air, look up at the mountains, out across the fields and the countryside. I see the old through the new and am filled with awe and wonder. Not so long ago this land and its people were virtually shattered by war. There is no evidence of destruction now, 62 years later. The towns and cities, completely restored, are surrounded by lush farmland. The vibrant soul of the people has emerged intact. I look forward to my next opportunity to be moved by the power of the region's history once more.

STRATHCONA ASSOCIATION BRANCH FALL 2006

By GARY LEE, TREASURER

I take pen in hand as we start our membership drive for 2007.

I have been your treasurer since 1997, and the treasurer for 2000 and 2005 Reunions, and am happy to report we have never been in the red (not bad for an old tank driver).

I would like to take this opportunity to explain how your \$20.00 membership is divided up:

\$ 4.00	Reunion
\$ 3.00	Donation to Newsletter
\$ 4.00	Postage
\$ 1.00	Donations or support for Cadets
\$ 8.00	Administration / Operating Costs
<hr/>	
\$20.00	

By this break down you can see where your money goes and how you are helping. This is based on an average membership of 350 people. This year we had 372 members.

As you can see our operating cost is \$ 8.00 @ 350 members = \$ 2800.00, this covers our letter head paper, envelopes, print cartridges, computers and a pocket calendar that will be sent out with your membership renewals. No more going to the QM (Quartermaster) for supplies folks, it's now pay as you go.

I hope this helps and clarifies just how your money is used.

In this edition of the newsletter is a membership form and a questionnaire that we require your info on. Please fill out one or both and return in the self addressed envelope enclosed.

Please feel free to contact us by phone (403) 974-2859 or email abbranch@strathconas.ca regarding any question or concerns you may have.

The Strathcona Family and its traditions are alive and well, thanks to you the member.

OKANAGAN REUNION

By KEN VOXALL

Once again Strathconas got together and enjoyed each other's company in the beautiful Okanagan city of Penticton. Eighty-two attendees sat down to dinner together after a fun meet & greet on Friday night. Also they enjoyed a full day on Saturday, prior to dinner. Ten of us experienced an interesting time on the local golf course. Moon Whyte was the star golfer, that day. The weekend finished off with a hearty breakfast on Sunday



morning.

Some people took the time to visit the many wineries around the area. No report was made about their condition on

their return. I also heard the there were partakers at the local casino. Again no one was bragging about his or her fortunes made.

It was a great day, ending up with a delicious dinner at the Penticton Legion.

Notables in attendance were many old friends, notably a group from Calgary, including Henry Wyatt and Mary, Howie Owen & Joyce, Dave

-see *Okanagan Reunion*

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Okanagan Reunion
continued from Page 8

Cathcart, Bob Bartlett, Ralph Dort & Hazel, Garry Lee & Gail, Bob Lett, Jim Remington & Islay, Shad Shadbolt & Arlene, Ellis Williamson & Jessie plus Ron Howard & Joanna. Many other from all over came but there are too many to note at this time.

People came from all over the West. It was one of the most pleasant weekends with old friend & comrades that I have experienced for many years, the memories will linger.

Next years party is scheduled for Okanagan Falls, keep tuned for further announcements.

STRATH FAMILY
GOLF DAY

By HOWIE OWEN

Go figure, it is Saturday 22 July 06 and like the previous years (2004-2005) the weather was fantastic. The sky was clear, very little wind and maybe just a bit warm for the last flight's game. It reached 33 degrees C by 11 AM, a great day for the Third Annual Family Best Ball Tournament.

Nine teams participated in this event and there were five Teams of family members who were the Spence, Rivard, Wyatt, Smith and the Owen families. Four of the teams were made up of husbands and wives mixed with individual entries to make a team. One team was from the serving members from Edmonton which included Kevin Phinney, RQMS; Fill Fitzpatrick, MCpl; Cpls Dale Cyrenne and Shane Persons. The day started at the Buffalo Run Course at 0838 hrs and the last flight tee-off was at 0945 hrs.

After the golfing was completed everyone gathered at RCL 285 on Horton Road SW for postmortems, some food and a few bubblys and the trophy and prizes were handed out by the MC, Gary Lee. When the score cards were tallied the

results were as follows:

- a. Winners: **Team Owen** - 4 under (29)
- b. Runner-up: **Team Spence** -2 under (31)

- b. Longest Drive Men - **Darcy Spence**
- c. Longest Putt - **Shane Parsons**
- d. Closest to the Hole - **Shirley Butula**

The individual and team members



Two other teams had a -2 under but countback showed the Spence team had more Birdies (3) than Deighton and Smith with the same score -2(31).

Other awards given were:

- a. Longest Drive Ladies - **Deanna Deighton**

received a Trophy or a prize or both. The prizes were donated by many individuals and businesses and they were all very good. I want to thank all those who went to a lot of effort in procuring these prizes.

YOUR DISPATCHES

I received the newsletter today. My husbands name was (R.J. Simpson) he passed away 16 Nov 04.

I have sent you my dues for the association as I still enjoy the newsletter and would still request a membership in the Association.

Sincerely Margaret Simpson.

My new address in Victoria is attached.

Editor: *Mrs. Simpson, thank you for your note and association dues and also for your address update.*

We have changed our nominal roll to your new address.

* * *

Watch for information coming out early in 2007.

Please register early for golf and motel needs, so as to assist in planning of this function.

Our Colonel of the Regt has indicated he will attend, if at all possible.

So lets get together for some good old times, as we STRATHCONAS are so famous for.

Perseverance,
E.H. Westergard
Coordinator
2007 Okanagan Reunion
email: bogey01@telus.net

VETERAN'S TOUR OF THE ITALIAN CAMPAIGN, MAY 2007

Special Travel International is hosting a Veterans' Tour of the Italian Campaign in May 2007. We will be commemorating the Crossing of the Gari River and invite veterans of the Lord Strathcona's Horse Regiment to join us. There will be an opportunity to walk the battlefields at the Melfa River with local historians and view the new commemorative plaque in Roccasecca. For further information please contact:

Karen Storwick Koonar
Military Museums, Volunteer Research Assistant
(403) 541-0889
karenandharry@shaw.ca

* * *

During my family tree research I decided to learn more about the regiment that my great uncle served with which in turn lead me to your news letter. It was with great surprise while reading the fall 2002 and spring 2003 News Letters that I find letters containing the final account of Albert George (Bert) Roper.

My appreciation goes out to Floyd Olson and Harold Boetcher for submitting their letters regarding the action at the Gothic Line and to your- self for publishing these letters. Since reading these articles I have visited the Mu-

seum of the Regiments in Calgary and was surprised to find a photo in the museum of a group of Strathconas from Saskatchewan with Bert Roper in the photo. I have attached a copy of the photo with the individuals names for you. I have also attached a photo I have of Bert Roper in uniform although



the date and location of the photo is unknown. I was also able to find a painting by Captain George Campbell Tinning entitled Canadian Graves at the Gothic Line that is located in the Canadian War Museum. In the painting by Captain Tinning, Bert Roper's freshly dug grave is shown in the front row center. Unfortunately Captain Tinning had passed away before I could meet him however I would like share the fact that my family has seen the painting in which Captain Tinning always hoped that the family's of the fallen soldiers would some day see his work. Please keep up the fine work.

Yours truly,
Stephen Roper

DONATIONS

Jim Gardner
J.P. Larose
Carl Ramostay
George Rowland
John Ashley
Carson Williams
Ken McMahon
Ian Galbraith

R. Sutherland
Edith Cade
Vic Binnie
Charles Dowling
Philip Childs
Bob Bartlett
Roy Steinke

Do You Remember When?

Conversation Circa 1961-62

Young Subaltern: “Sir, I notice that there are vacancies on the parachute course, I would like to volunteer for the course. (*Translation: The wings will look good on my uniform and impress the girls!*)”

Commanding Officer (LCol I MacD Grant): “When they make an airplane that can carry a tank, then I will consider sending you on a parachute course! In the meantime **Back to your tank!**”



Meeting the first tanks to arrive by air in Kandahar is Capt Dave MacIntyre who is in theatre on a technical visit from the Directorate of Land Requirements.

Considerably Older, now retired Ex-Subbie: Colonel, now that the airplane has been built that can carry a tank, can I go on the parachute course?



Capt Steve Moffat & Sgt “Mac” McEvoy at Christmas Dinner in ‘70s.



Strathcona Ball Team in ‘70s. How many do you remember?

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This Newsletter is published by the Lord Strathcona's Horse (Royal Canadians) Society under the authority of the Colonel of the Regiment. Opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the Society.

Last Trumpet Call

BURCH, Norman Hunter, (Norm), Regular, 3 Dec 2006, Ottawa, ON

FRANCIS, AE (Art), WW2 Regular, age 84, 21 Nov 2005, Viking AB

GALLANT Omar Joseph (Jack), WW2, Regular, age 94, 22 Sept 2006, Calgary AB

VICKERS, Wesley, 6 Aug 2006, Moose Jaw, SK

ELLIS, William Thomas, (Tom), Regular, age 57, 19 Jul 2006, Toronto, ON

HUDSON, RF, (Ronald), Korea, age 76, 3 Dec 2006, Ottawa, ON

BOND, Versal Edward, WW2, age 88, 22 Nov 2006, Arnprior, ON

*They shall not grow old,
As we that are left grow old,
Age shall not weary them,
Nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun,
And in the morning,
We will remember them.*

(My apologies for lack of details in some cases. Editor)