

Regimental Newsletter

Cape Breton Highlanders Association
Perpetuating The 94th Regt; 85th and 185th Bns CEF;
CBH and NS Highrs (CB)



Cape Breton Highlanders Association

May - Aug 2008 Volume 1, Issue 2

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The summer, though it came a bit late, is here, and the pace of the Association has slowed, except for the regular meetings at 1400 on each last Sunday of the month. The planning and preliminary activity has begun for the 39th

Reunion, which will be covered in more detail, below. Some months ago, our strength was augmented by another draft of Highlanders from the ranks of 2nd Battalion, The Nova Scotia Highlanders (Cape Breton), and we will take the opportunity to welcome them in a subsequent paragraph. This issue also includes some more of Reg Roy's reminiscences of life in Victoria Park, before the Cape Breton Highlanders began their journey to Europe and World War II. We finally received our response from the Cape Breton University (CBU), as to the disposition of funds for the Cape Breton Highlanders Scholarship Fund, and the information is on file.

Siol Na Fear Fearail

Gerald MacNeil,
President



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The Last Post

Due to temporary technological difficulties, we are unable to list members deceased since our last issue. The situation will be

rectified by next issue, and we will update you at that time. We again solicit members, family, and friends to provide any information they may encounter or realize; data may be E-mailed to John Clarke:

johnwclarke@eastlink.ca

or mailed to The Cape Breton Highlanders Association, c/o 2nd Battalion, The Nova Scotia Highlanders (Cape Breton), 5 Garrison Road, Sydney, NS B1P 6Z2.




39th Cape Breton Highlanders Reunion 2008

This year's Reunion will be held on the weekend 12 - 13 September, and
Will follow the usual routine:

Friday, 12 September 2008

Registration at the Ogilvie Bldg, WOs & Sgts Mess, Victoria Park, Sydney Garrison 1330 Hrs; Registration Fee \$25.00.

A Quick Note



Saturday, 13 September 2008

1000 Hrs. Service at the CBH Monument
(Kings Road, Sydney, NS)

1100 Hrs. Annual General Meeting
(Ogilvie Bldg, WOs & Sgts Mess)

1200 Hrs. Mixed Buffet Lunch (WOs &
Sgts Mess)

1900 Hrs. Banquet Dinner (WOs & Sgts
Mess)

2100 Hrs. Dance (WOs & Sgts Mess)



Museum Musings

The big news with the Museum is the fact that John Clarke has been allocated a larger area with additional, much needed room for his operation. He is currently transferring his artifacts to another site on second floor, Coriano Bldg, and will provide info and pictures in our next issue.



SITREP,,,,2nd Battalion, The Nova Scotia Highlanders(Cape Breton)

(our thanks to LCol Joe Gillis for this SITREP, which has been somewhat paraphrased for this shorter Newsletter)

“ Since my last entry, we have had quite a busy time of it within the Bn. We have managed to recruit a 22 year British Army CSM and CFR him to Capt.” Captain Robin Miller has been appointed to the full-time Adj't's position, where Colonel Gillis is

pleased to report, that he is “more than earning his pay.” The Association echoes the CO’s words: Welcome aboard, Capt. Miller, and welcome to the Highlanders’ family. Other Bn news has seen promotions:



MCpl Kozera to Sgt and Cpl MacDonald to MCpl. MCpls Keigan and Fougere were successful in applying for the two newly created within the Bde Recruiting Office and were offered 3 years contracts. These two soldiers were highly valued by the Coy and we are somewhat sad to see them leave, but happy that they were chosen to fill these very deserving and important positions. MCpl McKay recently completed a Close Protection Course “which was grueling, to say the least: only the best of the best get to succeed and he performed admirably, finishing with much praise from his staff.” He is off to Afghanistan and will be providing close protection for VVIPs.

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The summer period has most Bn personnel on taskings as staff and students on various career courses in various centres. Another busy year looms,

with “expected deployments to Halifax, Virginia, Aldershot, and Gagetown planned, and trg has begun for these.

The Unit was highly involved in the 250th Anniversary of the 2nd Siege of the Fortress Louisbourg, which occurred 24-27 July. 2NSH(CB) personnel supported Parks Canada and the Town of Louisbourg in many ways and performed admirably. From 14-17 Aug, a Professional Development weekend is planned for CFB Gagetown, centred on Domestic Operations (Dom Ops), and the new Territorial Battle Group (TBG). This trg will consist of a TEWT and will include personnel from Sgt and above. The new fitness standard for the Army Reserve is the Battle Fitness Test (BFT), which is a 13 km march with 54 lbs of kit, which is to be completed in 2 hrs, 26mins and 20 secs, in “marching order” (webbing, tac vest, rifle, helmet and rucksack). LCol Gillis is confident his soldiers will handle this and remarked: “Nothing that these troops can’t handle with ease.”

In the last couple of months, two of the Bn’s former commanding officers were given new responsibilities. In May, Lieutenant Colonel G. W. (George) Troicuk was appointed President of the Canadian Infantry Association, and on 2 July, Brigadier-General R.G. (Rick) Parsons relinquished command of Land Forces Atlantic Area and will assume duties in Kingston, Ontario, as Deputy Commander of the Land Force Doctrine Training System. We wish them well in their new posts. Also, on 2 July, General Walter Natynczyk took over as Chief of the Defence Staff (CDS), from General Rick Hillier. Three years ago, our president and this writer spent an evening with then Brigadier General Natynczyk, at an Honorary Colonels Conference in Toronto, when we ended up at the same table during

a mess dinner. He's a very personable and obviously capable individual, and a fitting successor to his mentor, General Hillier.



Reg Roy Remembers

This is another excerpt from Reg Roy's reminisces of the early days in Victoria Park, prior to the Cape Breton Highlanders leaving for overseas and WW II. In addition to Reg's unfaltering memory, literary skills and sense of humour, it is also clear evidence of the depth of unpreparedness facing Canada (and most Allied countries) with WW II already in its infancy.



There was no pavement in Victoria Park, and only three buildings, in front of which the unit lined up for drill, ending with a March Past in front of Lt.-Col. Chisolm. We became quite good at it. Near the entrance to the Park, or camp, a couple of buildings were later erected for the district commander. Where he came from I don't know. His name was Dobbie or Dobby and he quickly got the nickname "Slobby Dobby". He had a khaki forage cap which was too large for him so he used a big safety pin, in the back, so it would fit well. The nickname was quite appropriate. Sometimes he would take the March Past as well.

Route marches were soon introduced. Rather than fool around with drill, the unit, led by the Pipes and Drums, would be taken from the Park, down the Esplanade to King's Road and out to Sydney River and beyond. Sometimes, once across the bridge near Perry (Lewis') Corner (ed. note: today the site of the Subway, and Video Store). We would then swing right and march along the harbour until we were

opposite the city, before we turned round for *home*. As we marched past Moxham's Castle, we could see some of the RCAF's aircraft sitting on the upper reaches of the harbour. These were Strainer flying boats which were used to patrol the outer reaches of the Island looking for German submarines. At the time, there were none to be found; they came later. The harbour mouth was being sealed by a net to keep subs out and emplacements were being built for harbour guns and searchlights to discourage any entries. In time, Sydney Harbour was to become a fair sized place for merchant ships gathering for being convoyed across the ocean. As it was, if any German force had landed on the shores of Cape Breton, about the only thing we could do was bite them.

Meanwhile the 1st Canadian Division was being assembled in Eastern Canada preparatory to being shipped overseas. The only Nova Scotia infantry battalion being sent over was the West Nova Scotia Regiment. We sent about a dozen men to that unit and one of our officers, who, incidentally, later commanded it. I know we were asked to contribute some things to the *West Novas* because they were lacking some items when their strength was increased to war complement of about 850 all ranks. We hated to part with what little we had, but there was a difference. Later, at the movie, we saw parts of the *1st Div* land in England and wondered when our turn would come.

The Cape Breton Highlanders had been warned for mobilization on 1 September (1939), and two days later, I had my first medical examination and a uniform was issued. I should say a few words about the uniform. We were given a kilt, sporran, a Great War (WW I) jacket, Great War webbing, a small and large pack, water bottle, white spats, red and white diced oversocks (NOTE: today we call them diced

hosetops), a Great War overcoat and that was pretty well that. Things like shirts, proper socks, boots, sweaters, etc. were to come in later in small dribbles. Outwardly we presented not a bad sight, but it was a façade. We lacked modern equipment of every sort. Recruits came in to our barracks (so called), and later “A” Company came in. But Headquarters Company, as it was called, was the largest company and on 10 September there were only 64 all ranks. Of these, only 25 had uniforms, the rest wore civilian clothes until more military clothing began to arrive in the middle of October.

Barracks, store rooms, offices, etc were in dire need and until they were built, *the powers that* be looked about for a suitable building where the troops at Sydney, at least the infantry, could be housed. It was decided that an old church next to Central School, on George Street (NOTE: roughly the current location of the Cape Breton Post building), would do the trick. Work began on it on 11 October 1939, and suitable changes were made to take care of bunks, kitchens, dining rooms and so forth. The church was not far from Victoria Park and, standing on the church steps, the regiment made a fine sight when it marched from the Park to the new “barracks” down George Street, with Pipes and Drums playing, the kilts swaying, and the men happy the day was done. The day, by the way, was from eight to twelve and then from two in the afternoon until four- thirty. All of this, of course, was quickly transferred into military time.

Meanwhile, we heard over the radio that Warsaw was being pulverized, the Germans and Russians had swarmed into Poland and that Canada was preparing to raise a Canadian contingent to send to Britain. The times I mentioned above, of course, were not when we woke up and went to bed. We were roused out of our bunks at 0600 hours and bedtime was 2230.

Once in barracks bugle calls became the norm and later, when we were in tents at Connaught Ranges, the Pipes took over from the bugle calls for Reveille or Defaulters call, or what have you. Even now, when I hear “Hey! Johnny Cope”, on the Pipes, my mind goes back many years. (NOTE: “Johnny Cope” is the traditional wake-up call in all highland regiments, and has been, and is played up to our present day.)

(Reg Roy Remembers will be continued in subsequent Newsletters)

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