

Cape Breton Highlanders Association & Regimental Newsletter



Special Issue Sept. 2004

Perpetuating the 94th, 85th, 185th, CBH, 2NSH (CB)

Commemorating the 35th Reunion & Commemorating 60th Anniversary of the Italy Campaign

Reunion Program

Friday, September 17

Victoria Park Officer's Mess

1:00 p.m. – 4 p.m.

Registration and Meet & Greet

Saturday September 18

Registration open all day at Victoria Park

10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. ~ Service at Monument

11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. ~ Annual Meeting

12:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. ~ Lunch

1:30 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. ~ Meet and Greet

6:30 p.m. for 7:00 p.m. ~ Dinner and Dance



Flower Tribute

The sons of J.J. McGrath; Woodrow, William and Michael will participate to commemorate the death of their father and other CBH comrades killed overseas and those who have passed on by laying the flowers at the monument.

Message from the President

Good day to you all, and it is our wish that this pre-reunion issue of the Newsletter finds you in good cheer and hopefully, planning to participate in the Association's 35th Anniversary Reunion, September 17-18, 2004.

Ceremonies marking the 60th Anniversary of the Normandy landings were extensive and well publicized. We will do our best to inform about the Cape Breton Highlanders and the Italian Campaign. In this regard see the excerpt from the *Globe and Mail* and the "Letter from Italy" by Reg 'Boy' Roy to Mrs. Roy.

The Commanding Officer of Second Battalion, The Nova Scotia Highlanders (Cape Breton), LCol George Troicuk, has continued his close liaison and support to our Association and this is greatly appreciated.

The Cape Breton Highlanders Army Cadet Corps has also had an excellent year, and continues to perform admirably. Issues will elaborate on the Cape Breton Highlanders Memory Scholarship, a project of our Vice-President, Steve Kavanagh.

We look forward to seeing you again during the Reunion.

Siol na fear fearail,
Ian MacIntyre

Reunion Dinner 18 Sept 2004

If you are thinking of attending, drop us a line
or give dinner chairman Clyde Ripley
a call at (902) 562-1795.

Given the significance of the wartime anniversaries and particularly the interest and recognition to the Campaigns in Italy we have included with implied permission a call from the *Globe and Mail* for stories, commentary and memorabilia.

We encourage comrades to contact either the *Globe and Mail* or the Dominion Institute at 183 Bathurst Street, Suite 401, Toronto, ON M5T 2R7.



Letter from the Editor

Four hundred and ninety Canadians lie for eternity in the Agira Canadian War Cemetery in the heart of Sicily. Depression-era kids in the main, they were part of the Canadian contingent that took the picturesque town after five days of heavy fighting in the summer of 1943.

On July 10 of that year, 15,000 Canadians landed alongside General George Patton's Seventh U.S. Army and General Bernard Montgomery's Eight British Army on the southern tip of Sicily.

Starting at Pachino, the Canadians fought over mountainous terrain and amidst choking dust and searing heat in the first successful effort in continental Europe at rolling back the forces of the fascism. They took Agira 18 days later as part of their bloody 240 kilometre drive across the island. The Sicilian campaign wrapped up in 38 days and set the stage for the longer and bloodier invasion of the Italian mainland on September 3. Over the next 18 months, in some of the toughest fighting of the war, Canadians battled valiantly and successfully against the Germans.

The human toll was great. Close to 100,000 Canadians saw service in the Italian theatre. Nearly 6,000 lost their lives, with another 20,000 wounded. In addition to Agira, Canadian dead from the Italian campaign are buried at Bari, Moro River, River Sangro, Casserta and Cassino, the Beach Head war cemetery in Anzio, Rome, Forence, Ancona, Montecchio, Gradara, **Coriano Ridge**, Ravenna, Casena, Villanova and Argenta. And yet, despite this toll of destruction and a notable memoir (*And No Birds Sang*) by a Canadian junior officer named Farley Mowat, this bloody and brutal phase of the Second World War is not nearly as well implanted in our national

memory as the campaigns in France, Belgium and the Netherlands. Somehow, perhaps because of Italy's beauty and charm, it is difficult for contemporary Canadians to imagine how treacherous was the combat that took place there through 1943 and 1944.

This year we plan to change that.

For the past two years, *The Globe and Mail*, in conjunction with the Dominion Institute, has set out to mark Remembrance Day in a big way. We believe that Canadians want to learn more about our war contributions and celebrate our soldiers, both living and dead.

In 2002, we tracked down all the known living veterans of the First World War for a project we called *We Are The Living*. Last year, we launched *The Memory Project*, in which we asked Canadians to search their attics and keepsake boxes and send us pictures and letters and other memorabilia from the battlegrounds of the First World War. You responded with 2,8000 artifacts, many of them moving beyond belief.

This response to our special Remembrance Day pages has validated our belief that Canadians feel heavily invested in their past. We are a country at one with our history.

This year, the 60th anniversary of the liberation of Italy, we intend to shift our focus to this curiously under appreciated chapter of our collective experience. Many Canadians who served in Italy feel their contribution has failed to receive the recognition it deserves, overshadowed as it was by D-Day. Some even refer to themselves, in self-deprecating fashion, as D-Day Dodgers. But the record unequivocally states otherwise. They didn't dodge the enemy; they dislodged the enemy—establishing it could be done. There is more to this than just the war story, as critical as it was. The Italian campaign was not simply about defeating an enemy and going home. We largely fought the Germans, not the Italians, despite Italy's place among the Axis nations.

The hatreds often bred of war therefore didn't materialize between Canadians and Italians. We engaged them in war and they moved into our homes in peace; many among the liberated opted in the postwar years for the better life of Canada, precipitating a massive wave of Italian immigration that changed our cities and enhanced our nation.

By 1971, three-quarters of a million Italians had come to Canada, comprising 70 per cent of our postwar immigration to that point. The veterans of these great events are aging quickly. Therefore, we want to bring

attention to this understated chapter while they are around to participate. So this year, again in partnership with the Dominion Institute, we will bring you Memory Project II.

Like last year, we are issuing a call for personal letters, photographs and other mementos related to Canada's participation in the Italian campaign. We are hoping to hear from veterans and their families, but, given the unique connection, we are also hoping to collect artifacts from Italian-Canadians with their own record of the Canadians who arrived in their midst in 1943 and 1944. Who knows, some of you may have even gone home with one of those soldiers.

Between now and October 10, the Dominion Institute will be cataloguing submissions. These will be reviewed by a blue-ribbon panel of historians. The best of the artifacts will appear in our special Remembrance Day newspaper package, which will include the stories behind these materials. Yet more of the material will appear on the globeandmail.com/website.

Please send your submissions preferable by registered mail, to The Dominion Institute, 183 Bathurst Street, Suite 401, Toronto, ON M5T 2R7. Your materials will be returned before the end of the year.

These expressions of our history matter to us as a nation. Canadians want to share in your memories and they want the chance to deepen their own understanding of our defining events. It is worth noting that last year's top artifact, a teddy bear given to First World War soldier Lawrence Rogers by his daughter, Aileen, and found on his body in France, will be a permanent feature in Canadian War Museum's new galleries, scheduled to open in May, 2005.

Edward Greenspon,
Editor-in-chief

Notes of Interest

- The Kings Road reconstruction project will not be completed by the time of our Annual Service at the Monument but the contractor has assured us that the area will be in good order.
- Commemorative mugs will be included in the registration package for those registering for the Annual Reunion.

Letter to home by Reg Roy

December 26, 1944 Northern Italy

Well, it was my first front-line Christmas and I do hope that the next one I'll be having will be home with you. Christmas Eve was rather nasty. I had to go on what is called a Reconnaissance Patrol with soft hats, blackened faces, etc. That lasted from 9 p.m. to 12 p.m. Christmas Eve. At times I was within 5 to 10 yards of Jerry and other times didn't quite know where he was. However, he didn't see us and all's well that ends well. The patrol ended just as Christmas day was starting. A cold, starlit night and on to headquarters reporting our safe return. Everyone greeted us with Merry Christmas and a cup of hot tea and tot of rum for the two scouts I had with me and very often generous slices of fruit cake. Slithering through a vineyard, we would be challenged by our sentries, exchange the password, and then we would toddle into the Major's house, his headquarters. It reminded me of a triumphant journey back. It wasn't Canada, it hadn't snowed, the country was foreign and always dark and stuff but those men on guard in slit trenches and ourselves carried a warmth of feeling and such memories of better Christmases in Canada that I hadn't forgotten them for a long time.

Upon arriving "home," my batman had another hot cup of tea ready and after having that I went to bed and woke up about eight o'clock Christmas Day. Then along came breakfast. A nice breakfast too for a change. It was nice and sunny outside. No rain or snow. Fairly cold out and best of all no shelling or firing of any type. The main part of the day was dinner naturally. We had it at 3 p.m. Everyone piled in a carrier and away we went to a large house where the cooks had set up shop to keep dinner warm. We had chicken with dressing, potatoes, beets, gravy and such, bread and butter, tea, fruitcake, raisin pie, beer, cigarettes, an orange and some candy and other things. All in all it was very nice dinner with the bag-pipes playing and everyone quite cheery and happy toasting a merrier Christmas back home next year.

Cape Breton Highlanders Association

495 Westmount Road
Sydney, Cape Breton, NS
B1R 1A9 Canada

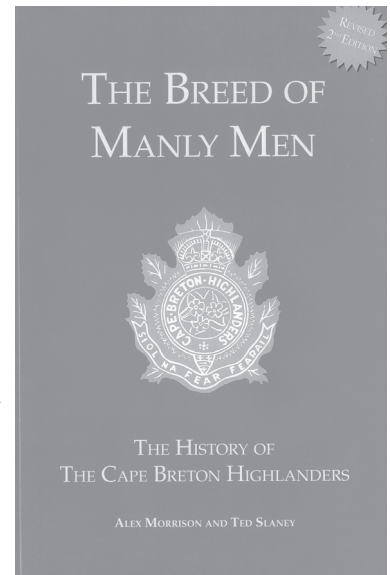
Phone: (902) 567-1772 (h)

Fax: (902) 562-0273

Email: steve_kavanagh@ucb.ca

The Breed of Manly Men

The regimental history of the Cape Breton Highlanders is now available. The history can be ordered by contacting John Clarke either by telephone 902.567.2284 or mail at 16 Keefe Avenue, Sydney, Nova Scotia B1R 2C7. Cost is \$20.00 plus postage and handling.



Cape Breton Highlanders Memory Scholarships

At the Annual Reunion members approved a motion to establish a scholarship fund to perpetuate the memory of the Cape Breton Highlanders. It is the intention of the Association to raise sufficient funds to provide for up to five scholarships of approximately \$1000 each year to students entering the University College of Cape Breton.

Donations to the CBH Memory Scholarship Fund can be made either through the Association or directly to:

Office of Advancement, University College of Cape Breton, PO Box 5300, Sydney, Nova Scotia, B1P6L2 Tax receipts will be issued.

The Executive is pleased to note that due to the work of some members we are starting the Memory Scholarship drive with initial secured funding of approximately \$15,000.

A VERY NICE START!

**Scholarship
contributions
NOW at \$20,000!**