



# THE FALCON

ISSUE NO. 10

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE 48TH HIGHLANDERS OF CANADA REGIMENTAL FAMILY

FALL 2006

## 48th Veterans Make Video to Honour Dutch Mayor



OCA veterans in Officers' Mess, left to right: Max McDougall, Herb Pike, John Allen, Jack Smale, Gord Outhwaite, John Dunne, Sid Redgrave, Harry Wignall, Nicholas Birch, Frank Currie photo by Nick Birch

### Memories of the Padre April 12, 1945 - The Netherlands

by Major the Reverend Alex Rapson (ret'd) –  
48th Highlanders of Canada

Time is wasting away and life is getting shorter. Soon there will be none of us left to tell the real story of Remembrance Day. So spend a day with me on the battle field. Grab your hat and hang on for you may find war a bit hard to take.

To put the frame in place for you, our Regiment, the 48th Highlanders, was fresh out of Italy where we had had 250 Highlanders killed in action plus 1000 wounded. These are "round" figures. In actual fact they were a bit more. Some of the wounded were sent home with legs or arms missing or some such. Others were returned to the Regiment like my batman, who took a sniper's bullet through his upper right shoulder leaving a hole where it came out in his shoulder blade into which I could put two fingers. So the coveted "Red Patch" 1st Division and 5th Division from Italy

by HLCol Geordie Beal

On October 19, a dozen Old Comrades including many of our Second War veterans gathered in the Officers' Mess at Moss Park Armoury to make a video. The occasion was a tribute to Mr. J.H.J. van Blommestein, Mayor of the District of Voorst in The Netherlands, who was retiring in November 2006. The District of Voorst encompasses twelve towns including Wilp, Twello and Apeldoorn. It was these towns that the 1st Battalion, 48th Highlanders of Canada had liberated in the battles of 12 to 17 April 1945.

Just six days earlier, on the 13th of October, HLCol Geordie Beal had been contacted by Mr. Reitsi (Bill) Reitsma of Voorst with a request. He wondered if the 48th Highlanders could do something to recognize the Mayor's many years of service. Colonel Beal agreed immediately, knowing that Mayor van Blommestein had been instrumental in both leading and supporting the activities of the many reunion celebrations in The Netherlands including the 50th and 60th Anniversaries of the liberation of Holland. A video was suggested as the most personal way of communicating to the mayor

### From the Pipes and Drums

by MWO Iain Lang CD

As 2006 comes to a close, the Pipes and Drums are looking forward to the Christmas break after a busy summer and fall.

In September, the entire band travelled to Loon Mountain New Hampshire for the New Hampshire Highland Games. We were invited down as the guest pipe band for the three-day event. The band has traveled to these games in the past, starting back in the early 1980s. We were a regular attraction then but, have not performed there since the mid 1990s.

We were well received by both the organizers and the spectators. We had prepared a couple of different routines to perform for our spots in the program. On the Friday we performed a couple of times on the main parade grounds and had some time to see the various vendors at the games.

Saturday is the busy day with several shows as well as massed bands with the other pipe bands present to compete. It also rained. Saturday and especially Sunday were extremely

### INSIDE:

continued on page 3

continued on page 4

continued on page 2

From the CO and RSM .....	2
Memories of the Padre continued.....	3
Veteran Video continued.....	4
Domestic Response Unit Exercise.....	6

Remembrance Day Parade photos .....	7
Remembrance Day Dinner photos .....	8
Mens Christmas Dinner photos.....	10
Old Comrades Association update .....	11

A Letter from CWO Alkema in Sierra Leone..	12
The 1981 Contingent to Wembley.....	13
Confined to Barracks & Last Post.....	16
Events Schedule.....	16



photo by Marjorie Harding

## From the CO

It is my intent to build the parade strength of the Regiment, however once the soldiers are here at Moss Park Armoury we will face another issue - the lack of Regimental accoutrements. During my visit to Regimental Stores this week, it was painfully obvious that we are missing hard-to-replace and very expensive items of kit: hair sporrans, baldrics, feather bonnets, diced hose, doublets, plaids and flys, etc. I appeal to all of the members of the Regimental Family to donate any and all items of Regimental kit to support the effort to keep our soldiers in full Highland dress. The traditions of the past 115 years will not end unless we allow them to end. Please contact WO Ross at 416-635-4440 ext. 4913 or Ross.PC@forces.gc.ca, if you have something to donate.

*DILEAS*

LCOL. ANDREW PATTERSON, CD

## This issue of the FALCON published by:

**Col (Retired) Bill Jensen**  
Director

**Capt Steve Gilbert**  
Editor

**Sgt (Retired) Adam Bernard**  
Design & Assembly

If you would like to contribute to future issues please e-mail your stories and pictures to:

[falcon\\_newsletter@hotmail.com](mailto:falcon_newsletter@hotmail.com)  
or call Adam Bernard @ 416-792-9447

**THANK YOU to those who've submitted articles, letters, ideas and photos.**



photo by Adam Bernard

## From the RSM

*"In combat you do not rise to the occasion, you sink to the level of your training"*

After the Second Battle of Ypres in April, 1915, the 15th Battalion roll call listed 150 soldiers as available for duty. Today the numbers on the parade square are similar and the task is the same: to build the fighting strength of the Regiment. Recruiting and retention are the essential factors in this process and I ask that all members of the Regimental Family become recruiters. The same spirit that rebuilt the Regiment during wartime must be called upon today.

Retention of our trained soldiers is a more difficult challenge. As Highlanders, we need to maintain our distinct identity and, at the same time, continue to be the best-trained soldiers in the brigade. Tough, interesting and realistic training will bring our soldiers back weekend after weekend. As the Regimental Sergeant Major I will:

- a. develop leadership skills at all levels;
- b. enhance our physical fitness;
- c. develop soldier skills; and
- d. deploy as many personnel as possible to duty overseas.

*DILEAS*

RSM (CWO) P.W.G. McINTYRE, CD

## Pipes and Drums

...continued from page 1

wet. No shows were cancelled, although some were shortened. Our dancers did not dance on the wet performance areas.

In October, we played for the opening Toronto Maple Leafs hockey game and for the raising of hockey jersey's for three retired Leaf players. Our usual quick show lasted more like twenty or thirty minutes.

On October 22, a small band participated in the RCMI Massed Band Spectacular at Roy Thomson Hall with Toronto Scottish and 400 Squadron Pipes and Drums as well as the other 32 Brigade brass bands. Each Regiment also prepared a display in the foyer of the hall with artifacts and current information about the unit and its equipment

November was also busy with the Change of RSM, Remembrance Day ceremonies throughout the city and the St Andrews Ball and dance practices.

In the coming year, our Regiment and in particular the Pipe Band are preparing for an historic parade on February 9th, 2007. Not since 1972 has the unit had a change of Pipe Major parade. Our current Pipe Major, CWO Dewar, will be retiring after serving 48 years with the pipe band, 22 years as Pipe Major. He joined when he was a 12-year-old boy, serving under his father, Pipe Major Archie Dewar. Drum Major Fullerton was also a boy piper then and he will be retiring from the CF in December, and as Drum Major, on the same night as the change of Pipe Majors. Both Highlanders have reached the CF retirement age. We expect to see them from time-to-time in the coming years, maybe even as pipers.

The following evening, February 10th, the Pipe Band has planned a retirement dinner, at the King Edward Hotel, to celebrate the contribution Pipe Major Dewar has made to the 48th and the Pipe Band.

As a reminder, we are offering an evening for anyone interested in learning the bagpipes or drums most Fridays, throughout the year. If you or anyone you know is interested contact MWO Lang ([ilang@sympatico.ca](mailto:ilang@sympatico.ca)) or WO Dewar ([idewar@rogers.com](mailto:idewar@rogers.com)) for more information.

*DILEAS!*

# Memories of the Padre

...continued from page 1

were well seasoned troops.

We had a glorious trip in March 1945 from Italy to North West Europe to join the rest of the Canadian army. In southern France the fruit trees were all abloom, unspoiled by the marks of war. There were big airplanes in the fields and a long line of burned out German vehicles. We had to go through a debugging unit, since North West Europe did not want any Italian bugs. We were given the job of liberating that part of Holland left behind when the troops pressed on into Germany.

Well let's skip the Siegfried Line, the Holland buzz bomb site and get on with that part old soldiers do not wish to talk about.

At dusk on April 11th we moved into position on top of the dyke bordering the free side of the IJssel River. By this time the bridge-head had been established on the far side of the river. And wouldn't you know! The Engineers building the Bailey Bridge across the river called for artillery support from tanks parked immediately behind our truck. I was well used to artillery fire and was not bothered by it. But "holy doodle" the concussion of those shells passing so closely over us was great enough to lift the ground sheet covering me to keep out the drizzle and then let it fall back on my face. There was no sleep while the shelling lasted.

No matter! At first light the Sergeant was there shaking me awake to lead me to the RAP jeep (Regimental Aid Post to you). The phrase "lead me" is correct. The smoke screen was unbelievably perfect. I never saw one of those tanks. You could hear them but you could not see them. How the Sarge ever got our little jeep between two of them has always been a mystery to me. Some times we were riding the crest between two of them. Boy oh boy was I ever glad to get ashore and out of that smoke.

We turned down river, passed a dead German soldier, drove through a marked off mine field and shortly arrived at the designated Dutch farm near the edge of the bridgehead. The first shells arrived while I was trying to console a stretcher bearer who had brought in our first casualty with both feet missing. I had to leave him since one of those shells had blown one of his other companions to pieces. The shell had landed dead centre in his ammunition pouches and the hand grenades, all of which exploded, literally blew him to bits, leaving his head and shoulders bare-naked like a Caesar's bust. He was buried right there since our battle grave site had not yet



been established.

Tough stuff eh? I'd forgive you, if like the stretcher bearer you said: "That is as far as I can go". What about the two companies that had to go by that armless, naked, Caesar-like bust sitting there in peace? It was sixty years ago, but I am as sure as my own memory goes, that we will always remember, and if we go down to the Legion to "histe" a few, please do not be too hard on us. Just keep in mind that we know some things we do not talk about.

The next KIA (killed in action to you) was located by a map reference supplied by the Regimental Sergeant Major. The location turned out to be a lady's garden where we dug a shallow grave up against the fence. Wonder of wonders, the lady brought us a cup of hot milk. That was much appreciated because so far that day I had only a hard boiled egg or two, for which I had traded a chocolate bar with some kids at our last staging stop. How wonderful it was to be with people who were so welcoming. The lady was thanked and assured that the soldier buried in her garden would be moved the next day to our Regimental Battle Cemetery.

Tactical Headquarters and the RAP were now located in the village in a very nice old house. Welcoming a quiet time, I sat down on the front sunny side of the house. However, Tedeski [as the Italians had called the Germans] had different ideas and his shelling started up again. Well I guess he had lots of it which he could not bring home with him. Using it was the sensible thing to do on those "ignorant" Canadians. At any rate the front porch was not the place for me. As I came around the house, the RAP sergeant was just getting out of one of our ambulances. Coming

toward me he was saying "Padre it is the CO" [Lt. Col. D. A. Mackenzie DSO, DFC], "Let us get him to into the RAP" was my quick reply, "But Padre, he's dead!" The CO had gone with the Intelligence Officer to find a place for the next move near the advancing troops. He did not need to go, but thought he would lighten the load of the "I" Officer. They had taken refuge in a ditch, but shrapnel is no respecter of rank and the CO took a fair sized piece of it right where the heart is.

Remembering that this is still day one for us, the CO was buried in a shallow grave in the flower bed at TAC HQ [Tactical Headquarters]. During the burial service, the blamed shells had to come in again. Since I never mastered the art of telling exactly where they were going to hit, one shell I was sure would be close. There was only one place to go, and since nobody would move if I did not, I immediately piled down on top of the CO. I was not far wrong since that shell hit just the other side of the house. The next day, of course, the Regimental Cemetery was established and the soldiers in temporary graves were moved to it, wrapped in blankets ready to be eventually taken to Holten Canadian Memorial Cemetery.

Hang in there! I am almost through!

The last two hours of daylight were spent in a futile search for a soldier whom I knew quite well. Even before we left the front line in Italy, he was sure he was not going to get home. The map references for a body were always accurate and reliable. But the body was not there. For the next two hours I went over the whole area from stem to gudgeon without finding him. Supper was missed as the ration truck had come and gone, while there was

continued on the next page



nothing for me but worry to no end for that body had to be accounted for.

Memory does not tell me where I slept that night. However, there is a first light picture in my mind of being surrounded by echelon soldiers, among whom were my driver, my batman and a civilian, telling me in perfect English that he had my missing Highlander in his garage. Thanks were given with the request that he leave the war to us and that I was now eight hours behind the troops.

One day in Battle! Is that enough to let you know what is in the minds of thousands of veterans this "Remembrance Day" sixty-some odd years after the war. Would we do it again? You bet your life we would! We would because we love this land and we would give our lives to keep it free.  
THANK YOU.

DO NOT FORGET TO TURN THE PARADE BACK TO WHOEVER IS IN CHARGE.

Major The Reverend Alex Rapson, born 25 November 1907, was padre of the 1st Battalion, 48th Highlanders of Canada in northern Italy and Holland from mid 1944 to the end of the war in 1945. Due to the dedication of its padres during the war the 48th Highlanders never lost the body of one soldier on the battlefield.

Padre Rapson was on parade to give these remarks to the current battalion on 11 November 2006 at the 48th Highlander monument at the head of Queen's Park Circle. As he talked, the memories came back with even greater clarity as he added details to the above material which he had penned in preparation.

When giving us his article the Padre wrote: "My quandary is whether or not I should submit this for publication. I live, like hosts of others, with these memories! Has the time come when oldies like me should speak out to say that the price of freedom is high and always will be but is worth the price?"

The applause of the troops on parade and of the crowd of Torontonians gathered at the ceremony gave the answer strong and clear. Thank you Padre.



*Sid Redgrave, Gord Outhwaite and Bill Dance practicing their remarks before the camera rolls. Photo by Nick Birch.*

## 48th Veterans Video...

...continued from page 1

at his retirement celebration.

Contacts were made promptly with Harry Wignall - President of the OCA, Lt Wally Moore - Secretary of the Life Members and retired RSM Doug Chappell, with the goal of getting the request to as many of the OCA as possible. The date of October 19 was set. Doug Chappell volunteered to shoot the video and work on editing. Geordie Beal wrote a shooting script for the session. Wally Moore sent out a bulletin and Harry Wignall got on the phone. At 1400 hours on 19 October, a dozen veterans, dressed in blues and greys with medals, assembled in the Officers' Mess.

The video shoot took almost three hours.

It opened with a welcome to the Officers' Mess by Colonel Beal and then an introduction of the veterans by Harry Wignall. As the camera pulled back it revealed our veterans seated at the main table in the mess with the oil painting of the Gordon Highlanders' battle at Dargai in the background. Each spoke to the Mayor thanking him for his support to 48th Highlanders and their families. Each told a personal story of their experiences in Holland during the reunion celebrations. Stories included: the creation of Mackenzie Plaatz in the town of Wilp to honour Lt. Col Donald Mackenzie, DSO, DFC who had been killed in action at Wilp on 12 April 1945; the placing of a plaque to Mackenzie; accommodation in

continued on the next page



*Frank Currie and Tom White. Photo by Nick Birch.*

Holland with Dutch friends; the Anniversary parades and celebrations; tending the graves of our fallen; teaching the children about Canada and the 48th Highlanders. Many mentioned the friendships that had been created both in The Netherlands and in Canada. Then to the call of Herb Pike all the veterans rose to the words: "They shall not grow old". As the video closed the portrait of Colonel Mackenzie appeared with the voices finishing with "We will remember them."

The following day, Doug Chappell and Geordie Beal edited the footage using a powerful software package that was new to both of them. A mere eight hours later, it was completed, with scenes dissolving into each other, special effects, a music track and captions. Early in November, Bill Reitsma reported back from The Netherlands with the news that the mayor, known for his stoic demeanor, had to reach for his handkerchief to dab his eyes. Mayor van Blommestein said to Bill that he wished he could thank each veteran in person.

For those who would like view the video on their computer, they can do so at FotoTime. The run time is approx. 15 minutes on a DSL connection. Go to: <http://www.fototime.com/inv/E60E55E33AA8477>

*Top Right: HLCol Geordie Beal.*

*Photo by Nick Birch.*

*Right: Lt. Co. D.A. Mackenzie DSO, DFC*

*Commanding Officer,*

*48th Highlanders of Canada*

*KIA 12 April 1945*

*This portrait by Charles Comfort,*

*war artist, hangs in the Officers' Mess*

*Photo by HLCol Geordie Beal.*

*Below: Harry Wignall and Jim Raffan.*

*Photo by Nick Birch.*





# Domestic Response Unit, 01-03 Dec 06

article and photos submitted by Sgt Jason Vienneau

On what was supposed to be a training weekend, the 48th Domestic Response Unit exercise went operational when the power went out in the area of northern Shelbourne east of highway 10. Members of the 48th (3PL ACOY 32BGD) were given the task of aiding the local OPP by canvassing locals and handing out information flyers.

*continued below*



Cpl Hilscher & Hldr Young seen here speaking with locals about the flyer and the power outage. After all of the locals were canvassed, info was compiled and passed up through the chain of command. And then supplies were delivered to those who needed it by the Domestic Response Unit.



# REMEMBRANCE DAY PARADE SATURDAY 11 NOVEMBER, 2006

*Photos on this page by Adam Bernard*





# REMEMBRANCE DAY DINNER, SATURDAY 11 NOVEMBER, 2006



*Some familiar faces near the front of the dinner hall. Photo by Adam Bernard.*



*The Haggis Master - Eric Chambers & friends from Br. 66. Photo by Nick Birch.*



*Col John Lowndes speaking.  
Photo by Marjorie Harding.*



*Brendan and Sharon Furlong.  
Photo by Adam Bernard.*



*Eric Chambers – Ode to the Haggis. John Stephens in front. Photo by Marjorie Harding.*



*Photo by Adam Bernard.*



*Ian Sergeant & his wife, Bill & Donna Jensen. Photo by Adam Bernard.*



*Tommy Thompson.*



*Carolynne Dewar & the Pipe Major with Jim Raffan & Phyllis Lee. Photo by Nick Birch.*





*Ther 39ers - Herb Sershall, Wally Moore, Sid Redgrave and Bill DeHarte. Photo by Adam Bernard.*



*Gord Outhwaite & Herb Pike.  
Photo by Adam Bernard.*



*Frank Currie and Douglass Chappell. Photo by Adam Bernard.*



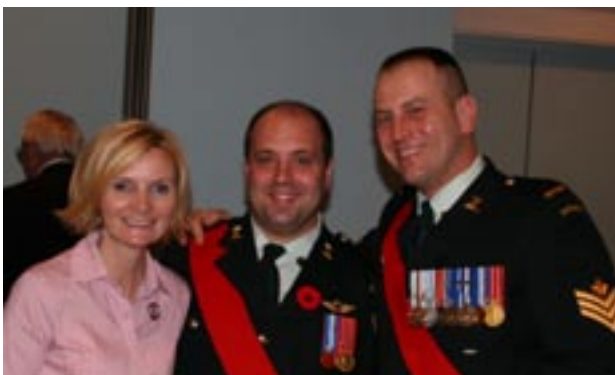
*Al Kowalenko & guest, Herb Pike, Kevin McGuffin. Photo by Adam Bernard.*



*Col Patterson, HLCol Beal and HCol Darling. Photo by Adam Bernard.*



*The Dewar family. Photo by Adam Bernard.*



*Sheila & Shawn Bush & Jason Vienneau. Photo by Adam Bernard.*



*MWO Paul McIntyre and friends. Photo by Nick Birch.*



# THE MENS' CHRISTMAS DINNER, 8 DECEMBER, 2006



*Above photos provided by Sgt Shawn Bush and Sgt Jason Vienneau*



# Old Comrades Association

by Harry Wignall

Wednesday, October 11th was cold and wet when 25 family members of the OCA boarded the Segwun at Gravenhurst for her final cruise of the season. We were not on board long when we were joined by Pipe Major (ret'd) Reay MacKay and his beautiful wife Joan. It was like old home week, we saw very little of the fall colours, other than those reflected in the amber and golden liquids in the tall plastic cups of coke and gingerale, but we sure enjoyed the renewal of old friendships and the stories that emerged. What a way to spend a rainy day. John Dunne did an excellent job in his first attempt as Sports & Entertainment Chairman. Incidentally, the food was great too.

On Thursday, October 19th/06, veterans and other members of the OCA, who visited Holland during their 60th Anniversary Liberation Ceremonies, gathered in the Officers Mess to produce a video to honour the Mayor of Wilp who is retiring after many years in office. The video, under the direction of HLCOL Geordie Beal and produced by Doug Chappell, is a thank you for all that the Mayor has done. Mayor Blommenstein was instrumental in setting up Mackenzie Platz, the plaque to honour Mackenzie in Wilp, in arranging accommodation for our Highlanders and in co-ordinating many festive events during our visits. Photos of all those in attendance were taken, but alas, our photographer forgot the producer. Sorry Doug, you did an excellent job, and the Mayor of Wilp was pleased with your presentation.

The OCA held their Annual Memorial Service at Mount Pleasant Cemetery on Saturday, November 7th, 2006. The weather was great and we had an excellent turn out. The parade was taken by RSM (ret'd) Kevin McGuffin and our Padre, Capt. Greg Bailey, who gave his usual excellent service. WWII Veterans Gord Outhwaite and Herb Pike laid the wreath on behalf of the OCA.

Remembrance Day, Saturday November 11th, 2006 proved to be a busy day for the Regiment as well as the OCA. For years, the Regiment and OCA have formed up in front



*Above: Reay MacKay enjoying a photo op with Herb Pike, Wally Moore, Gord Outhwaite, John Dunne, Bill Dance & Harry Wignall.  
Photo by Shirley Fisher.*



*Left: Wally Moore braving the elements before boarding the Segwun for our cruise.  
Photo by Shirley Fisher.*

of the Legislative Building at Queen's Park prior to marching to the 48th Highlanders Monument, but as the Province was holding a Memorial Service at the new Veterans Memorial Wall, we formed up at the rear of the building on Wellesley St. The Scarborough Pipe Band took the lead again this year and set the pace for the OCA, which was followed by the Regiment.

Following an extended Memorial Service at the Monument, the Regiment reformed and marched back to Moss Park Armoury, while the Scarborough Pipe Band and the OCA broke off at Wellesley St. The OCA boarded our bus to return to the armoury, where we reformed and fell in with the Regiment upon their arrival. We were then marched off to the tune of The Boys From The Old Brigade. It's a very proud moment, particularly for our veterans, but they would prefer to march off to Heilan Laddie

The OCA Remembrance Dinner was held at the York Reception Centre again this year and, although we were shy a few from last years event, we still had 125 in attendance. We had a number of guests this year, which

included CWO Sandy Dewar, who was forced to play for his supper, CWO Ron Alkema, who is not allowed to play the Pipes, and our Guest Speaker, HLCOL Geordie Beal, who threatened not to speak until he had had his supper. All kidding aside, protocol was followed to the letter. Our Master of Ceremony, James Cassie, ran an excellent program and an excellent dinner. Following a Toast to Her Majesty by John Dunne, Col John Lowndes' "Toast To The Veterans" was a true evaluation of our veterans and came from the heart. Eric Chambers' "Address Tae A Haggis" was excellent as usual, but this year he did not catch the Bearers unaware. Following Dinner, our Guest Speaker, HLCOL Geordie Beal had his audience all wrapped up. He is an excellent speaker and everyone enjoyed. All in all, it was a great night.

*DILEAS GU BRATH*

# A LETTER FROM CWO ALKEMA

from Sierra Leone: 21 Dec 2006

Things here are well. The temperature hovers around the mid-30's during the day here, with lots of sun. It is also very hazy – to be more accurate, the “haze” is actually very fine sand that is blown in from the Sahara Desert from late Nov to Jan each year. So we should start to have clear days in the next 3 to 4 weeks.

I should probably start by telling you what I am doing here. I am working as part of IMATT (International Military Assistance and Advisory Team), which is a multi-national force comprised of Brits / Canadians / Americans / Nigerians and Jamaicans who are here to assist the RSLAF (Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces) develop into an armed force that serves the democratically elected government, and people of SL. This is a step forward as for many years the people served the army. The army is also subordinate to the SL Police within the borders of SL – also something new here.

IMATT advises / mentors / trains all levels of the RSLAF, starting at the Ministry of Defence level, continuing down through their Chief of Defence, the brigades, battalions and companies. IMATT has both a military and civilian component, although the civilians only work at the Government / MOD level. The military component works at all levels. The basic structure that facilitates this is the BAST (Brigade Advisory Support Team). There are BAST Teams for each of the 3 brigades, the Force Reconnaissance Unit, the engineer battalion and the service battalion. There are also advisors for the Maritime Wing (Navy) of the RSLAF.

Each BAST for the 3 Infantry Brigades is comprised of between 8 to 10 members. I am assigned to 3 BAST – which is the advisory team for 3 Infantry Brigade, headquartered in Kenema. Kenema is the capital of the eastern province, and is about a 5 or 6 hour drive from Freetown. It is close to the borders of both Guinea and Liberia. For a better picture, try “Google Earth” and zoom in on Sierra Leone. Each Inf Bde (they only have inf brigades – no artillery or armour at all) is comprised of 3 infantry battalions. There are no other supporting arms or supporting units (except Military Police) in the brigades. Each battalion has 3 rifle companies, and a support company (transport, stores, a couple of medics and the orderly room or office).

Our BAST Team has 10 members – a British Lieutenant Colonel as the team leader, 2 Majors and a medic who works out of the Brigade HQ, 2 Mobile Teams consisting of a Major and a Sergeant Major, a medic who travels with one of the Mobile Teams, and a Sergeant Major who works at the Brigade Battle School. We are a multi-national, multi-talented bunch – a Brit Army pilot, a logistics officer who used to be a mechanic, a US Marine helicopter pilot, a US Navy

medic, a Jamaican infantry officer, and a couple of Canadians. The Team has the skills and training to advise and mentor any and all of the leadership positions at the brigade, battalion and company levels.

All BAST Teams work on a 21 day “Up-Country” Rotation. We depart Freetown on a Monday, and head to Kenema. As the drive is about 5 ½ or 6 hours at the best, we normally stay in Kenema that night. The next morning, the Mobile Teams head further up-country to one of the 3 battalions where we spend 2 ½ or 3 days – normally going further up-country to one of the forward company or platoon positions. These forward companies / platoons are located only 2 or 3 kms from the borders with either Guinea or Liberia. While there, I train / mentor / advise the Regimental Sergeant Major, Company Sergeant Majors, the Regimental Quarter Master Sergeant, and the rest of the Sr NCO's. On Wed or Thurs we move on to the next battalion and repeat the procedure. On Fri afternoon we return to Kenema and conduct a debrief of the week's activities and draft our report. Saturdays are Maintenance Days – vehicles, weapons, laundry, shower, etc. Saturday afternoons and Sunday mornings are “off”. We pack, brief and prepare for the next week on Sunday afternoon, and head off again on Monday morning. This goes on for 2 ½ weeks. On Wed of the third week, we return to Freetown where we hold a BAST meeting to discuss what went well, what we can improve, and where we need to focus our efforts.

We also send our trusty “wagon” – a Landrover Defender in to the mechanics for some well deserved “professional” maintenance, get a haircut, pick up our mail, do some banking and any other personal administration that we need to do. The Canadian Contingent also gets together to debrief and prepare our after action report. We get a couple of days off during this time to sight see, send emails, go out for dinner and recharge. Then we're back up-country for another 17 days.

The country is fantastic – right out of a National Geographic magazine. The jungle is thick and lush. Fertile valleys and mountains that rise up out of nowhere. The jungle is so thick that all movement is on roads. The local population does not live or travel in the jungle. At every location where a stream or river crosses a road there is a village. The stream serves as the source of drinking water, the local laundromat, a play place for the kids, the bathing station and the public washroom. Often, all at the same time. All the locals wear bright clothing – purples, reds, oranges. The women (mostly) carry large loads on their heads, and often have a baby strapped to their backs with a wrap. That's because there is nothing – and I mean nothing, else to do in rural Africa after the sun goes down at night – around 1830 hrs.

The country has amazing natural resources – diamonds, gold, bauxite, rutile; and is fertile beyond belief. Yet most of the population is

poor beyond description. The vast majority are subsistence farmers. The major crops are rice, tangerines, bananas, potatoes, onions, coffee, cocoa, pineapples.

The roads are generally very poor. There are approx 350 kms of paved roads in a country the size of New Brunswick. The resr vary from gravel roads that we expect to see in rural Ontario to 2 dirt tracks with grass growing in between. Bridges also vary – from structural steel and concrete decks to a couple of logs thrown across the river. The locals live in anything from grass hut, to mud houses to mud/straw bricks, to concrete block houses. Roofing material is anything from thatch, to plastic tarp, to wood to corrugated steel sheeting – and is often a combination of any or all of them. Gravel is produced by chipping a boulder out of the side of a hill or mountain, and then breaking it into consecutively smaller pieces using a sledge hammer. Kids as young as 4 or 5 are often involved in this. They hold the cobbles in place with their feet and smash away – it's a wonder they have any toes left.

Garbage is routinely burned in the gutters of Freetown. Animals – dogs, goats, chickens, cattle, are every where. They wander the streets and are sheltered in the same building where the family lives. They are fair game as you drive – but don't hit a duck, because that's a harbinger of disaster – it means you'll hit a person next. Kids under 5 are also fair game. If you hit a kid “it's God's will”. One child in 4 doesn't live to the age of 5 (not all die by being hit by a vehicle). Disease is rampant – malaria, typhoid, yellow fever, the usual gamut of other diseases as well. The average life expectancy of males is 42 and for women its 46. There is no sewage collection system. Every thing flows into Cockerill Bay – everything – medical waste, garbage, sewage, the whole shooting match. Then they swim in the water and fish for food!

I have a hockey sock of pictures, but forgot my memory stick back in Kenema. When I go back in few days, I'll bring it back and post them on our photo-site. I'll be sure to email you the address so that you can all have a look-see if you want.

My schedule for the next couple of weeks is as follows – I am “off” until 27 Dec. Of course there's the usual steady parade of “must attend” events over Christmas. I go back to Kenema on the 27th, and return to Freetown on the 30th or 31st. I then go back up-country on 03 Jan for the rest of our “normal rotation”, returning to Freetown on 18 Jan.

Well, I've gone on long enough for tonight. I hope that you all have a great Christmas, and a Happy New Year. Please remember Ruth and the girls in your thoughts and prayers over the next couple of days and weeks, as I obviously will not be able to be home with them over the Christmas Season this year.

TAKE CARE,

RON





## THE 1981 CANADIAN CONTINGENT TO WEMBLEY – “THE CANADIANS”

Respectfully submitted by  
Brian W. MacInnes, CD  
Director of Music, Captain (Retired)  
The 48th Highlanders of Canada  
Military Band

*The Canadian Contingent, Wembley 1981, photo submitted by Brian MacInnes*

In 1981, a combined band of 150 musicians departed from Toronto to England. They would participate in a show that would leave an indelible memory for all concerned. On this, the 25th anniversary, it seems appropriate to relate the story of the Canadian Contingent which went to The Military Musical Pageant held in Wembley Stadium, England in 1981.

The show was touted as the “largest military band display in the world” and this account shares the highlights as I remember them. In my time in the 48th, there have been many moving experiences, but this show was unbelievable and will always remain a major event in my life. This trip was undoubtedly the highlight of my thirty-four years of involvement with military band performance and, I dare say, quite likely this single occasion would be listed as the most significant musical event in most of the Canadian musicians (brass, reed, pipes and drums) lives. And, we in the 48th proved ourselves most professionally; we were indeed Dileas.

The Military Musical Pageant at Wembley was a bi-annual presentation organized in aid of the British Army Benevolent Fund. This

Fund assisted many causes but particularly the families of army servicemen. British Army unit bands participated and preformed to capacity attendances in the gigantic British football Mecca of Wembley Stadium (in a suburb of London, England). (This would be, for those aware, the “old stadium” as a new stadium has since been constructed and opened). Up until 1981, all of the shows of mammoth proportion included only units and bands of the active British Army. I stress this point! In the preparation for the programme of 1981, the “powers-that-be” decided to go further a-field and include bands from the Commonwealth. We can only imagine what the discussions were and what lobbying was undertaken and, in a significant gesture, Canadians should feel extremely honoured that they turned to our nation first. As you may recall the Canadian Armed Forces in 1981 was under the cloak of “unification”. What this meant was that the Bands of the Canadian Forces that might have been considered would have been very much less than “resplendent” standing in their dark green uniforms and white belt beside the spit and polish, diversity and colour (!!!) of the British Army bands. So, and by far a major point of double significance, the Pageant producers decided to by-pass the Regular Force of Canada and approach the Primary Reserves units in Toronto. For three of our from the Primary Reserve Regiments to be represented there was indeed a coup.

The invitation was extended to three units – The Royal Regiment of Canada, The 48th Highlanders of Canada, and The Toronto Scottish. Within these three units there were

four bands of capability – two brass and reed bands, and, two pipe and drum bands. The fact that the bands were well known and from one Canadian city would prove important for logistics – planning, programming, practicing and transporting.

There can be no understating the excitement of the invitation and the prospect of participation in a musical show that we had all highly regarded along side the likes of the Edinburgh Tattoo. Meetings and negotiations ensued; national and local approvals were secured from Commands and the ball was indeed rolling. I was personally involved in the planning. My designation in the Military Band of The 48th was as the Band Sgt. Major and I was responsible for various duties that consumed a multitude of hours for both myself and all of the senior personnel.

In reasonably short order, the planning team<sup>1</sup> (made up of 2 Directors, 2 Pipe Majors and 4 Drum Majors) decided that the programme should be uniquely Canadian, something the British audiences wouldn’t have experienced before. So, in what proved to be a most exciting and daunting task, we set out to prepare an entire 20-minute routine using only Canadian musical content. We generated a most comprehensive list of tunes composed by Canadians. You should try it. Then there was the added challenge that everything had to be “combined” and needed to be keyed for use with both bagpipes and brass/reed instruments. Now the job was becoming more difficult, indeed. At the same time, there needed to be a designation for the size and “balance” of the musicians. It was decided that

*continued on the next page*



*"Salute from Canada" - Maple Leaf above "Canada", photo submitted by Brian MacInnes*

the two brass/reed (Royals and 48th Military Band) would each supply bands numbering 40 musicians and that the Pipes and Drums (48th and Tor. Scots) would supply 40 and 30 players respectfully. For effect, each band supplied a Drum Major thus involving D/M Larry Fullerton and myself.

From the outset, the show being planned was uniquely "Canadian". And, given what we knew of presentation to an audience, it could not be "static" (stationary). Oh no; that would emphatically "never do". So, in addition to the music content, we needed to design a routine that would be synchronized to the music and reinforce where we had come from. We would be known as the Canadian Contingent and our show was eventually titled, "Salute From Canada". Rehearsals started as early as the rosters of personnel were committed. The initial rehearsals took place inside Fort York Armoury in the early new year of 1981 and subsequent gatherings were, as the weather improved, in a large parking lot at Base Downsview. Bear in mind that our intention was to effectively use the full area of the soccer 'pitch' in Wembley Stadium that is much larger than local and available football fields and far larger than the parade square at Fort York Armoury.

In part, the music involved such nationally known pieces as The Maple Leaf Forever, Alberta Bound, Huron Carol, St. Catharine (Regimental March of the RCR), and They All Call It Canada (but I call it home) but, there was a need for some original selections or less known pieces like Whiskey Runner, Duncan Macrae, Toronto Exhibition Park. The 'routine' included several spectacular moves involving circles and stars utilizing the colour of our uniforms and climaxing with the spelling of CANADA below a

very large formation of a maple leaf. It truly was amazing, or in today's lingo, "awesome".

There will be nothing said in this article about the hassles and roadblocks put forward by various sources in the system. Don't forget, the Regular Force was not participating and they were not anxious to assist us Reservists. The Canadian Contingent an Officer from the Toronto Militia Districts to co-ordinate logistical matters. Major Traverse was overwhelmed, to say the least, but the job got done and with our thanks.

We got to England via bus from CFB Downsview to CFB Trenton and then by plane to Lahr (Germany) and Gatwick (England). Our ultimate destination was the military barracks in Aldershot, England where we would be based for the week. The Pageant secured us dedicated rehearsal time on the Tuesday and we arrived with mouths wide open given the enormity and spectacle of the stadium with its "sacred turf" and real grass surface. On reflection, it was tremendously exhilarating as we were finally there, AND with everyone who had committed to the show, rehearsing our "Salute From Canada".

Typically, this was the very first run-through with 100% attendance. We all knew full well that there were many eyes from the British Army, on location at the same time, curiously scrutinizing and assessing our every move; this would be our first test. As we headed home later that day we were confident of how well we had done. From Wednesday through Saturday afternoon, the entire musical cast rehearsed in the stadium – 1500 musicians and about 500 artillery, riders/cavalry, bell ringers, timpanists, etc. etc. Working as part a very large cast we found, the long days both exciting and taxing.

We were up very early each day for breakfast and the bus from our barracks in Aldershot – over an hours drive to Wembley.

Just about all of the non-Canadian cast were VERY interested in who we were. There was lots of pressure, for sure, for the Canadian Contingent. The days of rehearsals occurred with military precision and of course, we fit in very well. By at least the second day the shock had worn off and we Canadians had "smart and very acceptable drill". Eventually our military precision was finally noted by the British "rank and file" that we were not 'regulars' but equivalent to their 'TA' bands (Territorial Army of UK = Primary Reserve of CDA). This was a tremendous plumb for the Canadian Contingent as we had been carrying ourselves at such a customary high level of professionalism that they never caught on. Other musicians commented to us that there was "no way" that any of their TA Bands could ever do what we were doing.

The two shows were set for Saturday evening and Sunday afternoon in June. We knew that Prince Charles and his fiancée, Lady Diana Spencer, would be in attendance at the Saturday evening performance. And, we knew that there would be a sell-out audience. The two bands of the 48th were assigned, as kilted bands, to participate in an act entitled, "The Shamrock and Thistle". As the title would suggest, the participating bands were kilted and typically from Scotland and Ireland. In this instance, though, we were delighted and honoured to be standing shoulder to shoulder with our Allied Regiment, The Gordon Highlanders – the Regimental Band and the Pipes and Drums.

*continued on the next page*





*Massed bands, photo submitted by Brian MacInnes*

Even before we rehearsed this act in the parking lot of the stadium, several introductions took place - the Director of Music, the Band Sgt. Major, and the Senior Drum Major. They were exclusively and conveniently all from the Scots Guards. The politics of this you can ponder, but the results were extremely welcome to the 48th. To explain, the Director of Music was Major Duncan Beat (then Sr. Director of Music for the Guards Division) and he spoke to the act participants at the early morning assembly. After the introductions of the others, he very eloquently welcomed the kilted Bands from Canada, adding, with emphasis, that he knew very well the high calibre of our abilities, as he had worked with us at the Scottish World Festival in Toronto.

As has been stated, the Saturday evening performance was to a capacity audience. Over the two performances, approximately 30,000 people witnessed these shows. Wembley Stadium, as it was in 1981, served both a large capacity football stadium but also had a wide and sandy racetrack around the pitch for racing (and betting on) greyhounds. There was a cover over the stands, but the centre oval was open. (The new stadium will, I believe, have a retractable roof.) For these performances, there were two gigantic flags at opposing ends of the stadium and suspended inside the roof. One was the Union Jack and the other the Canadian Flag. Both had been made by British school children and the size literally covered over each end of the stadium. (After the conclusion of the Sunday show, the Canadian Contingent was presented with the Canadian Flag; it's somewhere in storage in Toronto and it took five personnel to carry away to the bus.)

The show was amazing from start to finish with one "interval". However, two people stood

out Saturday evening - Prince Charles and his bride-to-be, Lady Diana Spencer. At the interval (intermission), several of the senior positions were personally introduced to both his Royal Highness and Lady Diana. These included Captain Thomas Whiteside (Director of Music), P/M CWO Reay Mackay, and D/M WO Larry Fullerton. Photos of these introductions were displayed for many years in the Sgts/WO Mess.

Within the show was an entertaining and strong mixture of military music, common British songs, and exciting classical numbers. The Guards Division had a solo act, as did the Light Division and the "Kilties". Everything was sensational. Of particular note, aside from our "Salute From Canada", was the feature selection, the 1812 Overture by Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky. Picture, if you will, 1500 musicians playing this very well known and dramatic piece. Then, added to the musicianship is an actual carillon with bells being played by bell ringers pulling on ropes. For effect, let's have the canon fire actually take place after being delivered to the stadium floor by the Royal Artillery on carriages drawn by teams of horses. Then, at the point in the music where there is reference to Cossack warriors, have British Army riders enter dressed in Cossack period uniforms and bearing period Russian flags and circle the stadium at top speed on the dog track. Add to all of this the inclusion of a massive pyrotechnics display planned to detail the skyline of the city of St. Petersburg burning. At the end of it I would defy anyone to admit that they weren't moved. It was truly emotional and the ovation went on for many, many minutes. As a Drum Major, I had an incredible vantage position standing directly in front of a massive wall of sound.

In the finale set, there was a strategic insertion of God Bless the Prince of Wales. This too had a tremendous impact as the tune was played for Prince Charles who was sitting in the audience only several hundred feet away. Subsequently the 48th Bands had a private visit in Buckingham Palace with our Colonel-In-Chief, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

We brought home the excitement of a lifetime's experience. We brought home music that is still drawn on for performances. We took Canada to Wembley Stadium and we were well received. We led the way for other Commonwealth countries to be included. We rubbed shoulders with the most prestigious units including the Gordon Highlanders and were respected by them all. We worked very hard and it was rewarded.

In closing, there were many, many individuals involved at all stages of this excursion and they must be thanked. Many are known to us and are the "un-sung" heroes behind the scenes who had various roles to play. They all made this event 'happen' and become a success. Thanks to all.

*DILEAS GU BRATH*

*BRIAN W. MACINNES, CD*

*DIRECTOR OF MUSIC, CAPTAIN*

*(RETIRED)*

*THE 48TH HIGHLANDERS OF CANADA  
MILITARY BAND*

<sup>1</sup> Included were: Major Gino Falconi (DoM Royals), Captain Thomas Whiteside (DoM 48th MB), CWO Reay Mackay (P/M 48th P&D), CWO Ron Scott (D/M Royals), MWO Terry Porter (P/M Tor.Scots), MWO Norm MacKenzie (D/M Tor.Scots), WO Larry Fullerton (D/M 48th P&D), and BSM Brian MacInnes (D/M 48th MB)

# SCHEDULE OF THE 48TH HIGHLANDERS OF CANADA REGIMENTAL FAMILY

16 January	Next Continuing Sergeants Association Regular Meeting
21 April	Regimental Ball, 1800 at the King Edward Hotel, Toronto
27 May	Regimental Church Parade, 0900 at MPA
TBA	Continuing Sergeants Association Scotch Nosing

## LAST POST

The following Highlanders passed away recently:

Arthur H Barham	December 31/05	North Bay
William Anderson	March 13/06	Ajax
Ellis Benedict	January 6/06	Owen Sound
G.P. Bergeron	February 15/06	Toronto
Mervin Forman	April 2006	Port Carling
Richard "Dick" Kenzie		Cambridge
Joe Mancuso	June 5/06	Sault Ste Marie
Steen Caldwell	October 28/06	Arnprior
Col. Ian Douglas	October 30/06	Toronto
Charles Melvin Calverly	October 30/06	Richmond Hill
Al Ross	October 2006	London

May they rest in peace, Dileas Gu Brath  
- SUBMITTED BY HARRY WIGNALL  
OCA PRESIDENT

## CONFINED TO BARRACKS

### 1) SUNNYBROOK HOSPITAL

Only 2 left – others have past away.

- Nelson Liston, K3E, Room 21
- Norm McMurrick, K3W, Room 33

### 2) BAYCREST HOSPITAL – 3560 BATHURST ST

We have 2 members in this hospital:

- Lloyd Tucker (7th floor)
- Dave Logan (6th floor)

### 3) SPECIAL CARE UNITS

- Jack Pickering
- Keith ( K. C. ) Jackson

### 4) AT HOME – PROBLEMS GETTING AROUND

- Ed Forest
- W. (Curly) Carothers
- G. E. Colton
- Don McGron
- Jack McKenna

Visit when you can, they will enjoy your company  
- HARRY WIGNALL

## WOULD YOU LIKE TO ADVERTISE IN THE NEXT FALCON?

Full Page - \$600                      Half Page - \$300  
Quarter Page - \$150                      One Eighth Page - \$75

FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT

Adam Bernard at [falcon\\_newsletter@hotmail.com](mailto:falcon_newsletter@hotmail.com) or 416-792-9447