

Halifax 8 May 1945 — One Hell of a Party!

The end of the War in Europe had been expected since mid-April 1945, when it became evident that Germany proper was being overtaken by Allied forces advancing from both the east and west. When the City of Nuremberg was captured by United States Army, on 16 April, a sacred ground of the Nazi regime served as a symbol of their imminent demise. Zhukov's Armies reached Berlin on April 21st, after having breached the Oder River defences. On April 25th, the Americans and Russians joined hands at Torgau, on the Elbe, some 75 miles south of Berlin. On the same day, the United Nations

opened its conference for 51 nations in San Francisco to create a Charter.

The first secret negotiations for the surrender of Germany started on April 26th, with Himmler attempting to arrange an armistice exclusively with Western Allies, trying to avoid a Russian takeover of German soil. Of course, this would never be acceptable to Churchill, Truman or Stalin so the negotiations went from there, with the surrender of Holland and Denmark, on May 4th, and the final unconditional surrender by Admiral Doenitz on May 5th. An official announcement was made on May 6th that the War would



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end at midnight May 8th/9th. The formalities were made on the morning of May 9th, with separate surrenders signed with both the Russians and to the Western Allies.

The people in Canada were informed on May 7th of the end of the War in Europe the next day. The night of May 7th was celebrated across the nation in rather informal and mostly improvised local events.

The day of May 8th was declared Victory in Europe Day (V-E Day), when Churchill formulated, once again, the most cogent statement of all: "We may allow ourselves a brief period of rejoicing." He was mindful, as Prime Minister of Great Britain, that the War against Japan was far from finished.

Certainly the most memorable "brief period of rejoicing" in Canada took place in Halifax, where things got somewhat out of hand. Halifax was the largest and busiest Canadian port during the war, and navies of many countries as well as the Canadian Navy used Halifax as a resting stop for the crews of Merchant Marine and naval warships. The Bedford Basin was a secure anchorage used by hundreds of ships throughout the war for the trans-Atlantic convoy system.

There were about 18,000 military
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The Friends of the Canadian War Museum

1 Vimy Place
Ottawa, ON K1A 0M8
Tel: 819.776-8618
Fax: 819.776-8623
www.friends-amis.org
E-mail: fcwm-amcg@friends-amis.org

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Editor/Content: Ed Storey

Editor/Layout: Ruth Kirkpatrick

Photographer: Bob Fowler

Mailing Team: Anthony Farrow,
Piotr Nowak, Gordon Parker

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President's Remarks

Dear readers and Friends of the Canadian War Museum (Friends), welcome to the May 2020 issue of the Torch. As I write, we find ourselves in one of the most difficult health and wellness challenges facing Canadians in more than a century. Across the country businesses and services are operating under severe constraints and our own museum is closed for the foreseeable future with essential leadership personnel working from home. We the Friends face similar challenges with access impossible and our ability to conduct face-to-face meetings of your BOD virtually impossible. Nevertheless, we strive to move ahead attempting to manage the affairs of the Corporation secretarially and remotely at present by telephone but exploring and testing other electronic options. With any good fortune, by the time you read this note hopefully matters may have improved.

We now have a successful 2019/20 fiscal year behind us and it behooves us to look forward and outward. We would be well to take advantage of the current unexpected and unwanted pause in our activities as presenting an opportunity to reflect on the role of the Friends both as a Corporation and as Registered Charity. Furthermore, we would be well to do so in the context of the challenges which present as we move forward.

The Friends exists solely to support the Canadian War Museum (CWM) both in its Corporate purpose and as a Registered Charity. In doing so, our strategy is to broaden our outreach, build constituency of support and leverage upon these to foster donation and strengthen financial position. Charities have two fundamental roles: to raise funds and to disburse them in support of the approved charitable purpose. The CWM is our sole qualified donee and raising funds is our single greatest challenge. Together with raising funds and in a manner similar to all registered charities we have a fiduciary responsibility to limit our Corporate overhead so as to maximize our capability to contribute to the approved purpose.

In these times of economic challenge, the work of charities is increasingly difficult and there are many worthy organizations competing for the same scarce resources. Our Corporate and Charitable purpose is a noble one and while there are certainly higher social needs for donation, rest assured that there is a continuing need for our support to the CWM. If I may cast the role of the CWM as a service provider to Canadians, our role through volunteer effort is to support their need principally through financial support of the CWM programs. In this regard we rely upon the annual contribution agreement to frame this effort; the agreement sets out the supported programs and the nature of the Friends support.

The FCWM BOD is charged with managing our activities in support of the Corporate and Charitable purpose. In these difficult times we face particular challenges and we look to generate the necessary financial liquidity while at the same time conducting our business with austerity of overhead to maximize our support to the CWM. We invite you, dear readers, to offer any helpful suggestions you may wish to present. To be specific please support your elected BOD in its efforts to strengthen financial position through broadening outreach, focussing its messaging, developing and exploiting its communications platforms and all the while reducing overhead to liberate for application to CWM support.

Your comments may be directed to me president@friends-amis.org.
Yours aye, Robert Hamilton



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personnel in Halifax on May 8th, mostly from ships crews, but also naval, army and air force personnel of all types were attached to HMCS Stadacona, the main Canadian naval unit servicing the naval facilities of Halifax, or to the nine other local units. A large number of personnel were housed through a system of 'Lodging and Compensation,' by which commercial establishments and private houses provided beds and meals to resident and transiting sailors, who were compensated for the expense. Dry and Wet Canteens could be found all over the city for the enjoyment of service personnel, officers or enlisted.

Unfortunately, civilian and military leadership decreed, some time in advance, that commercial establishments would be closed for a day of celebration at the War's end. Very little thought was given to the surge in needs for entertainment that would happen on this very special day. This became particularly acute for alcoholic beverages, in a town that saw a lot of drinking on a normal day.

On 8 May 1945, thirst indeed became a prevalent factor in the behavior of many in uniform and civilians who could not postpone "One Hell

of a Party" that they had been imagining for years if they came out of the War alive. Groups of revelers soon became angry at the lack of planning by the Haligonian authorities for their legitimate appetite for libations.

Eventually so much pressure was applied on the doors of the liquor stores and bars that a crashing was heard which echoed down the streets. People simply broke windows, seized what they wanted and left. This expanded to become a tumultuous affair that the Shore Patrols and Military Police could no longer control. The City went wild with mixed feelings: bursting of joy at seeing the war over, and great anger at seeing that nobody had foreseen a need to express that joy with immoderate partying.

What became known as the Halifax Riot, with its large page in the Canadian history book, was documented in the Kellock Report, produced on the incident, in July 1945:

The 'Material Loss and Damage...' amounted to 6,987 cases of beer... 55,392 quarts of spirits were looted from the [several] establishments of the Liquor Commission... 30,516 quarts of wine and 9,816 quarts of liquor... [in Halifax]... 564 firms suffered damage, 2,624 pieces of plate and other glass...

were broken and 207 of these firms suffered from looting in some degree.'

The damage caused to Halifax on the two days of mayhem was an embarrassment for the Canadian naval service and became the focus of much criticism, for which the Commanding Admiral, L.W. Murray, became the lightning rod, ending a remarkable career in public shame.

The phenomenon was also attributed to the fact that 90% of the officers and sailors in the Canadian naval service were members of the Royal Canadian Navy Volunteer Reserve (RCNVR) who had enlisted for the duration of the war. They had brought to the RCN a spirit of a new age in which mutual trust between leadership and crew had been fostered in the small ships culture of a Canadian "Corvette Navy." The lack of confidence expressed by senior and more conservative leadership in locking up the booze on the Last Day was resented and punished.

The Halifax Riot can be seen as the rambunctious manifestation of a "Citizens' Navy" having done its work well during the hard years, but determined to regain its freedom when the job was done.

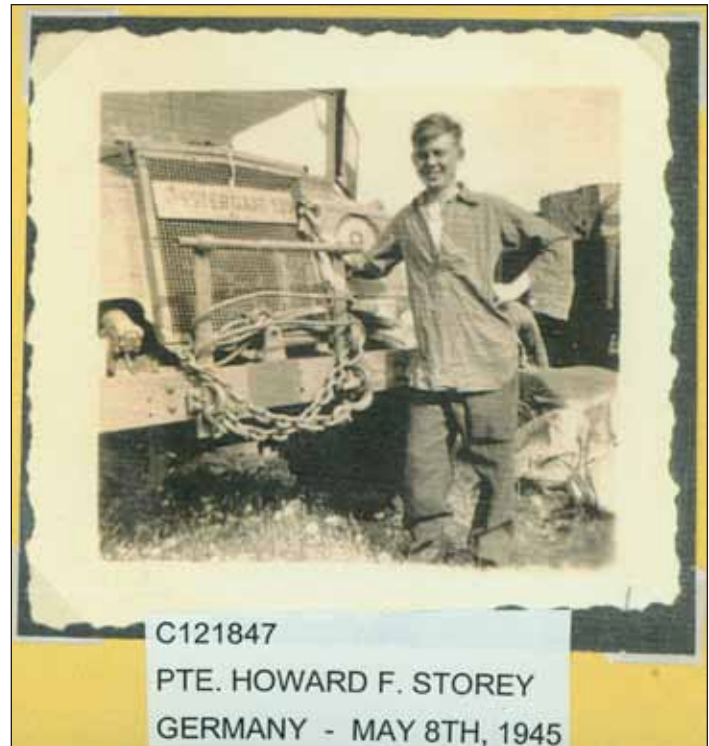


Editor's Comments

A war has been raging, the war on Covid-19 and while I assemble the content for this May edition at home I cannot help but wonder when the whole crisis will pass and what will be the cost in lives. Perhaps there is a bit of a silver-lining to these events as the self-isolation has meant that many Canadians have found out what it is like to reconnect with family and enjoy a slower pace of life. It has also given the governments at all levels a chance to put aside their party partisanship and work together for the betterment of Canadians. As well we should all take a minute and reflect on those people who remain at their jobs to keep the country healthy and functioning during the pandemic.

The generation who fought the Second World War experienced the same unknowns for six long years, and not only did they work hard supporting the war effort and sacrificing on the home front, but most had family serving in the armed forces. No-one could predict when the war would end, so for the Allied nations VE-Day on -8 May 1945 was a light at the end of the tunnel. Italy had been knocked out of the war in 1943 and with Germany defeated it was only a matter of time before Japan would also fall, with many predicting that perhaps it would take another year for the Allies to be victorious. Due in part to science, the war against Japan ended much sooner with VJ-Day declared on 15 August, 1945.

My Father's oldest brother Howard served in the Second World War with the Royal Canadian Ordnance Corps in the 4th Canadian Armed Division. He was just 19 when he sailed overseas to England in early 1944 and he was with his division as it fought in the liberation campaign from France through the Low Countries and into Germany.



Following the end of hostilities, Howard served with the Canadian Army Occupation Force in Northern Germany, finally returning home to Napanee, Ontario in mid-1946. Howard was 87 when he passed away in September 2012 and I was fortunate that my cousins entrusted me as the keeper of much of his wartime artifacts and memorabilia.

Uncle Howard would mention how friendly the Dutch were towards their Canadian liberators and unfortunately he never got to return to The Netherlands to see that they had

not forgotten. I was 25 when I went to the Netherlands for the 40th Anniversary of VE-Day. I met up with British FCWM member John Marchant from the British Military Vehicle Conservation Group (MVCG) and we joined their western Holland tour driving around in his restored Canadian Heavy Utility Wireless (HUW) truck. His wartime manufactured Canadian Military Pattern HUW was unique as it was a veteran vehicle and had fought through Europe with the 2nd Canadian Infantry Division's Toronto Scottish Regiment. I brought along a complete reproduction Second World War battledress Royal Canadian Engineers uniform to wear for the two weeks and got to experience a little of what my Uncle had known four decades earlier. In each town we visited the streets were lined with cheer-

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ANAVETS in Canada - Dominion Command, Ottawa, Ontario

ANAVETS Unit 217, New Waterford, Nova Scotia

Canadian Association of Veterans of U.N. Peacekeeping
(Col John Gardam Chapter), Ottawa, Ontario

Ladies Auxiliary - Royal Canadian Legion Branch 370 (ON), Iroquois, Ontario

Polish Combatants' Assoc, Br. 8, Ottawa, Ontario

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Royal Canadian Legion Branch 638 (ON), Kanata, Ontario

Royal Canadian Legion Everett Branch 88, Chester Basin, Nova Scotia

Royal Military Colleges Club (Ottawa), Ottawa, Ontario

Walker Wood Foundation, Toronto, Ontario

ing and clapping people, our convoy of vintage vehicles was showered with flowers and we were all fêted as heroes. John is still a member of the FCWM and now some 35-years later we still fondly look back at that May 1985 in Holland.

Once again the production of *The Torch* is dependent on the work of so many volunteers who are striving to provide what I believe is a quality publication fitting of the FCWM. VE-Day is the theme of this edition so to that end we have returning author Allan Bacon, who has not only shared with us his experiences and some ephemera collected as a child while growing up in wartime England with us, but has also written a book review. Jean Morin is also back and has written an article which encapsulates the events which sparked the Halifax VE-Day riots. Acting Director of Research, Tim Cook from the Canadian War Museum has also graciously provided us with a synopsis of his new book "The Fight For History" which explores the way in which Canadians have remembered, commemorated, and talked about the Second World War. Without these authors who contribute content, *The Torch* would not be as interesting or topical.

Producing *The Torch* is truly a team effort involving a number of people whose work is done behind the scenes. From the helpful staff of the CWM's Military History Research Centre who have provided me with fascinating

images and background material, to Mike Bedford who collates all of the FCWM in-house 'housekeeping' details, to MJ Tremblay who handles the translations and Ruth Kirkpatrick who lays out each edition; everyone assists me with my requests and to them goes the credit for helping me get *The Torch* published on time.

Technology plays such a big part in our everyday lives and producing *The Torch* is no exception. Usually a small *Torch* team meets on a quarterly basis with Bob Argent to talk over ideas, hash out who can write which article and look at the production schedule. Bob is very supportive of *The Torch* and the format changes made in the last 18 months to the newsletter so these meetings generally consist of brainstorming over content. Other than this initial meeting, everything else is done via the internet and in light of current events even the recent discussions concerning content and timelines have been conducted on-line.

I would also like to draw your attention to the FCWM webpage for not only will you find a digital copy of *The Torch* but also the "Aliquem certiorem facere" which contains additional content not published in *The Torch*. Go ahead, have a look and tell me what you think. *The Torch* is your quarterly, so if you have an idea for an article, want to comment on something we have published or wish to contribute content, please feel free to e-mail me at edstorey@hotmail.com.

33rd Annual General Meeting

Friends of the Canadian War Museum

Barney Danson Theatre,
Canadian War Museum

Thursday, June 11, 2020 1900 hours

1900 - Registration and a meet and greet with light refreshments

1930 - Business Meeting

Business will consist inter alia of:

- Approval of the Minutes of the 32nd AGM
- Appointment of Accountant
- Recognition of the Silver Friends for 2020
- Election of Directors
- Presentation of the Volunteer of the Year Award
- Update from Director General CWM
- The President's Report
- Other Business
- The Financial Report

Nominations to fill vacancies on the Board of Directors should be sent to the Secretary by mail at 1 Vimy Place, Ottawa, ON K1A 0M8, or by email to sec@friends-amis.org.



8 May, 1985, to mark the 40th Anniversary of VE-Day, Ed Storey poses reading an original copy of the 9 May, 1945 KAPUT edition of *The Maple Leaf* newspaper beside a wartime Canadian CMP HUW truck while touring western Holland. W.E Storey Photograph

Donations

Covering the period January 1, 2020 through March 31, 2020, plus contributions made through CanadaHelps for the period December 18, 2019 through February 29, 2020.

Donations made through the CanadaHelps website after February 29, 2020 will be recognized in the next issue of the Torch.

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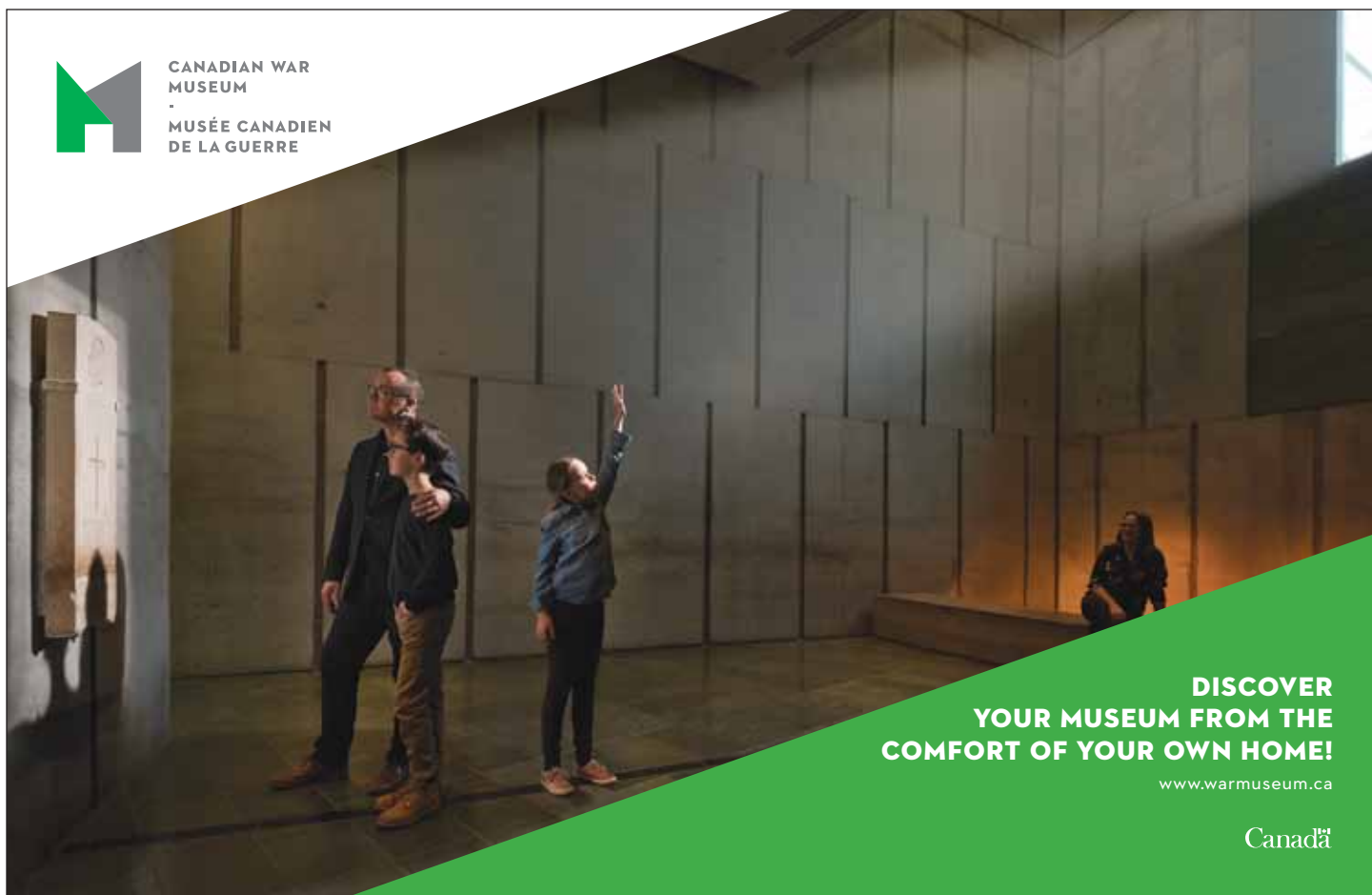
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Growing Up in Wartime England in Retrospect

By Allan Bacon

When war was declared in 1939 I was a small boy, living in Richmond Buildings, a street in what today would be regarded as a slum area of Brighton, on the south coast of England. Checking the 1938 Street Directory, I see that there were 62 houses in all, including 36 shops or businesses, along with a large parish church hall. All occupations were represented, from undertaker and doctor, to horseflesh dealer, coal merchant, grocer, fishmonger, cycle engineer – and of course, a pub. The houses were small, and shopkeepers lived behind or above their shops. There was no electricity and only the downstairs rooms had gas lighting. Toilets were at the end of the garden. Overall it was a close-knit and friendly community. As children our playground was the street.

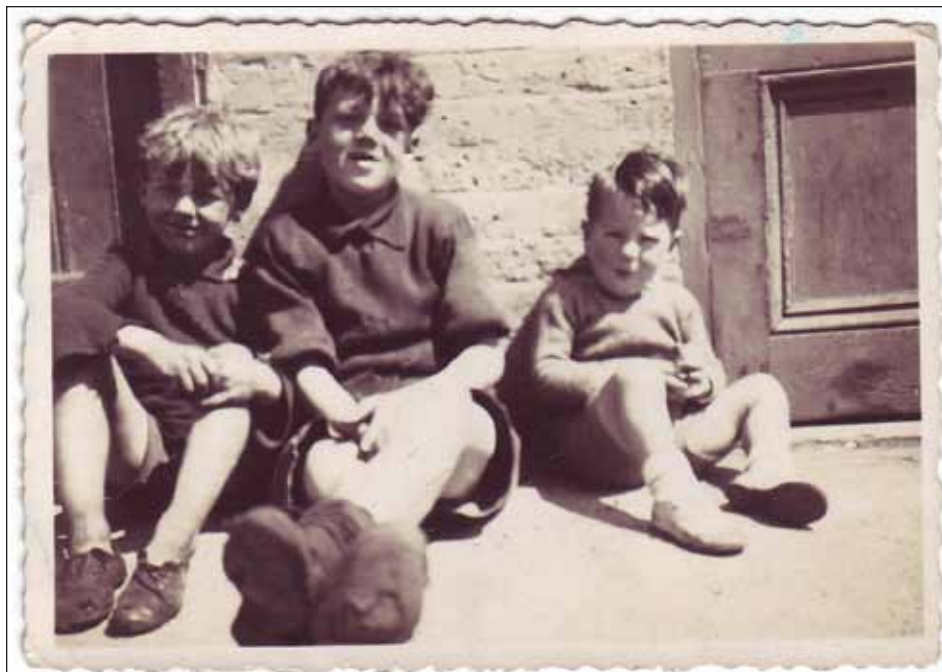
My earliest, and still vivid memory of the war, is the day (February 23rd, 1940) when my mother was making my birthday cake and the postman delivered my Dad's summons to military service. I remember my mother bursting into tears, grabbing my hand, and hurrying to my Dad's place of work (a wholesale grocery warehouse). Twelve days later my Dad enlisted in the Royal Engineers. After a short period of training he came home for four days of embarkation leave and then embarked for France. Most of his unit had no boots and embarked wearing civilian shoes. None of them had ever fired a rifle. A few weeks later he was evacuated from the beaches of Dunkirk. Subsequently he was posted to the school of military engineering at Ripon in Yorkshire, and spent the rest of the war as an instructor, teaching bridging, demolitions, map reading

and later escape and evasion skills to RCAF bomber crews. He was not demobilized, as a Sergeant, until March 1946, and during the years that he was away I had to learn how to cook and do chores and look after

my siblings if my Mum was ever ill.

As a young child I don't recall ever having been scared. War was something that was exciting – until the bombs started to fall. Although

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Richmond Buildings - L to R - Beck, Jimmy Beck, Allan Bacon




A couple sleeping in a Morrison shelter during the Second World War

Some wartime sounds remain with me today – the Rolls Royce Merlin engines of the Lancasters as they passed over on their way to attack Germany; the air raid sirens; the V-1 rockets (Doodlebugs) sounding like a badly tuned motor cycle engine; and the crump of bombs falling, accompanied by ack-ack fire. I watched with excitement the vapour trails of fighter planes and bomber streams high in the sky, and studied avidly my small Penguin paperback “Aircraft Recognition” (which I still have.) I have had a lifelong fascination with the Lancaster bomber, the Spitfire and the Short Sunderland Flying Boat. Some tastes acquired during the war remain among my favourites today, such as corned beef, Spam, and powdered egg. Not so the cod liver oil! My Mum used to remind us always that merchant seamen risked their lives to bring these foods to us.

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W. W. BARNETT

We were a Salvation Army family and on Sundays members of our church congregation used to take it in turn to host a German POW, Johann. He was also a Salvationist, and while serving in the Wehrmacht had been captured and was put to work on a farm several miles north of Brighton. On a Sunday he had permission to walk into town to attend church. One of my most cherished memories is having meals with him, sometimes with my Dad also at the table with us. I still have a wooden tank made by him that was my Christmas gift in 1941. As children we did not learn to hate. I remember, too, in February 1943, a funeral with full mil-



The weekly ration of an adult during WW2, of course if the items were available (and often meat and bacon were unobtainable) The monetary value of each item is shown by the English coins placed next to them.

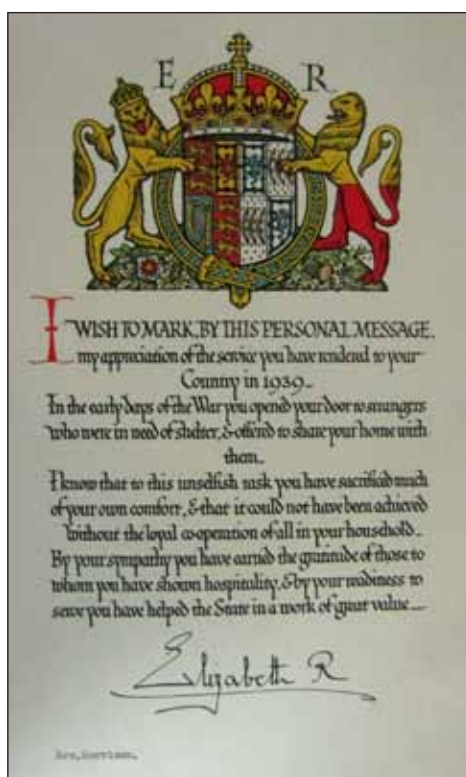
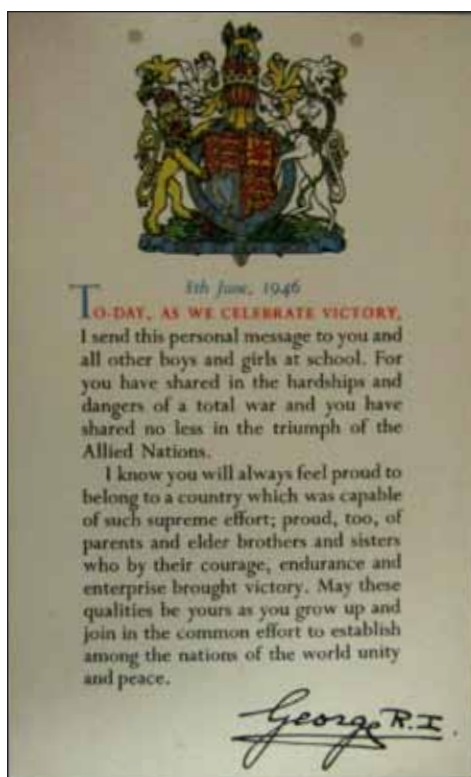
itary honours of four crew members of a German Dornier bomber that had been shot down nearby. Sitting outside on the sidewalk one morning a hit and run raid occurred and the sirens did not sound. Bombs were dropped on the brewery at the end of the street and flying glass severely cut my friend Jimmy Beck who was sitting next to me. I was unscathed.

Other memories come flooding back. Every day at school we had one lesson where we wore our gas masks that we had to carry with us everywhere. During air raids we filed into the shelters under the playground and had our lessons, or sang lustily such chart busters as "Ten Green Bottles Hanging on the Wall!" Every week we bought a savings stamp to help the war effort, or embarked on scrap collections. Nothing was ever wasted, and food leftovers were col-

lected by the municipality as 'pigswill' to supply the local pig farm. There was of course strict rationing, introduced in January 1940 (gasoline had been rationed in September 1939), and many food items were unobtainable. (Some items remained rationed until 1954.) Many people grew vegetables in their back gardens ("Dig for Victory" was the order of the day), and I often rushed out into the road after horse-drawn vehicles had passed, to pick up the horse droppings with a small shovel and a bucket. I took these to Mr. Greenfield, a fruiterer, at the end of the street, to put on his garden. He always gave me three pence, a princely sum for me at that time, as I could get a farthing's worth of candies (if available) and give the rest of the money to my Mum "to help out." Twice-weekly fire drills were held at the timber merchants (Gates

and Sons) two doors down from us. I was often allowed to operate the stirrup pump, pumping a small stream of water on to an imaginary blaze, and did I feel proud!

The small port of Newhaven was just along the coast from Brighton. I can remember seeing soldiers returning there from the disaster at Dieppe, the fast RAF motor boats based there that rescued aircrews ditched in the English Channel, and, on all the roads leading down to the coast, the huge array of vehicles and equipment as D-Day approached. I liked especially the friendly Canadian soldiers who were stationed in the area, even though one of them did manage to flatten a member of our church congregation by running him over with a Bren gun carrier. I often saw servicemen who had been severely burned and were patients ("guinea pigs") at the hospital in East Grinstead. I was especially impressed by the courage of one of them who, after the war, worked as a bus conductor in the town, his face completely rebuilt. By the time that VE-Day came we had moved to another street close by and I was well established in a Junior School. There was the celebratory street party, with eats, ice cream and bunting, but my memory of that day is of the sadness of our next door neighbour, whose son was still a POW in Japanese hands, having been captured at the fall of Hong Kong. When he did return some time after VJ-Day he was a broken, shell of a man, and he never recovered.



Above is the certificate presented to all schoolchildren (including me!) soon after the end of the war. Below it is the certificate presented by the Queen to households that had taken in evacuees at the start of the war - in fact the first wave of evacuations took place just prior to the war's outbreak. As far as I am aware these certificates went only to those who opened their homes in 1939. Allan Bacon Collection

Deceased Friends

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The Fight For History

The Fight for History explores the way that Canadians have remembered, commemorated, and talked about the Second World War. The enormous struggle to defeat the fascists and free the oppressed was a Necessary War, as I titled a previous book. It was a war that had to be won.

Canada provided a staggering contribution to the Allied victory, with almost 1.1 million Canadian men and women in uniform, fighting around the world on multiple battle fronts. And yet Canadians for decades had a hard time celebrating these achievements. I found that strange and I wanted to know more about it. So I wrote the book.

The idea for the book also emerged out of my research for Vimy: The Battle and the Legend (2017), which revealed how the Great War overshadowed the Second World War through much of our history, and especially in the commemorative landscape. Our national memorials – the monument in Ottawa, the thousands of local memorials, Vimy and Beaumont Hamel – tend to be linked to the Great War, and have their origins in dealing with the loss and grief of that war. The poppy, Remembrance Day, and most veterans' organizations all emerged from that war too.

Why, for example, was there no Vimy for the Second World War? Why do so few Canadians know about our achievements in Italy, where 100,000 Canadians served, or the crucial role of Canadians in the Battle of the Atlantic, or the air war over Germany? Many know of Canada's landing on D-Day

(I hope), but almost nothing of the fighting beyond.

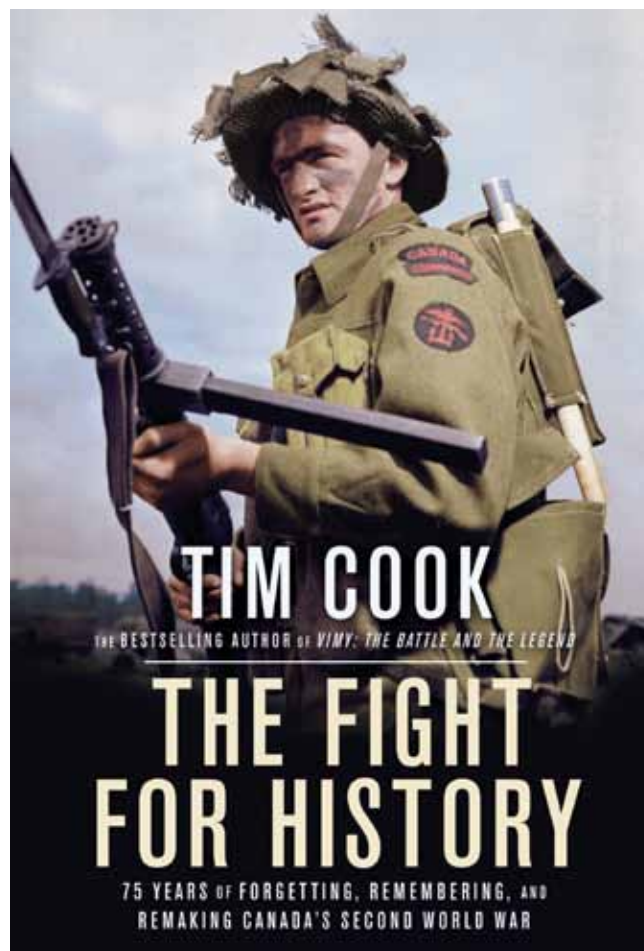
The veterans' experience also runs through the book. The return of a million veterans to Canada fundamentally changed the country. However, the stories of their service and sacrifice were not widely told. Veterans often had a challenging time talking about the war or writing about it, until very late in life. Canada's cultural producers – artists, playwrights, and authors – were also only episodically drawn to the topic. The National Film Board and the CBC created few Canadian productions to inform those who did not serve about our shared war history. Decade after decade, the memory and relevance of the war faded, with the three-part documentary, The

Valour and the Horror in 1992, being the low-point. My book follows this trajectory of fading memories among most Canadians and analyses the outrage by veterans over The Valour and the Horror and its skewed presentation of history; but also how that anger stimulated many veterans and Canadians to demand a more comprehensive retelling of the Necessary War.

The key turning point was the fiftieth anniversary of the war in 1994 and 1995, which was crucial in reminding Canadians that this was not just a country of peace, a message embraced for years, but that there were hundreds of thousands of former soldiers, sailors, airmen, nurses, and others who had served in uniform. From this point forward, there was a renewed emphasis on telling our story.

These are important stories to tell, especially now as Canada has fewer than 30,000 Second World War veterans. To mark the seventy-five anniversary of the end of the war, the book will take stock of the rise, fall, and rise again of Canada's Second World War history. The book will not be without some controversy, but, in the end, our history matters and we need to be brave in talking about it. And if we don't care about our history, no one else will. This is a book about the many fights and battles that surround, inform, and infuse our understanding of the Second World War.

Tim Cook, CM, FRSC, Ph.D.
Acting Director
of Research
Canadian War Museum



Adopt-A-Book Campaign 2020

The books adopted during this campaign will help to ensure that the Military History Research Centre's library continues to be the best collection of Canadian military history titles in the world. These books are the newest literature in the field, as well as books that help to fill in gaps in the library's subject matter to ensure a comprehensive look at the subject. This year several titles have been chosen with inter-war and modern themes, as these are becoming more heavily studied areas. There are also titles on Canada's relations with other countries, studies on foreign military powers, and new views on military theory.

The titles the MHRC library wishes to acquire are listed below. You are invited to indicate on the form below the title(s) you wish to sponsor. The form should then be forwarded to the Friends office with a cheque. An updated list of titles still available for adoption can be viewed on the Friends web site. You may of course leave the selection of a title or titles to the campaign coordinator. In the event that a title has already been

In Memoriam Donations

Mr. William Abbott, in memory of Russel Morley.

Mrs. Susan Atkinson, in memory of Maurice Alexander Enkel, Black Watch.

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Col Patrick Crandell, in memory of LCol (Retd) J.F. Cruse OMM, an officer and gentleman who walked the talk. He was an outstanding Intelligence Officer and visionary. Canada is safer because of his efforts.

BGen David Edgecombe, in memory of Major Edward Edgecombe ED.

Dr. Jack Granatstein, in memory of Rob Martin, RMC 5197.

Ms. Maureen Leaver, in memory of Pilot Officer Harry Leaver, RCAF.

Ms. Maureen Leaver, in memory of Capt Gerry Leaver, 1st Survey Regiment.

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