

Ottawa Military Memorial Tours

Springtime in Ottawa means getting out and about whether on foot or by bike. Both Rob Collins and I have volunteered at the Museum as Voluntary Interpreters and both like to cycle around Ottawa in our spare time. A casual discussion led us to the observation that there are quite a few military memorials scattered around the city. Some are obvious while others are rather obscure. We also felt that the military memorials, while numerous, were often overlooked or bypassed by locals and visitors.

It took little encouragement for us to set out to see how many we could locate. The result was a surprising collection which we felt would make for an interesting tour for both locals and visitors to the city. The memorials were divided into three tours which could easily be accessed by young and old alike. As well, it was decided that information should be provided wherever possible. In order to make the experience even more memorable, we decided that there might be a question associated with some of the memorials which could lead to more investigation or opinion. A favourite example concerned the National War Memorial which was the focus for all three tours. Why do so many memorials here and abroad incorporate arches or gates into their memorials?

As you can see, we do not provide the answer!

The Citizen article itself provides a commentary about the project. As well, anyone can access the tours at the following site: ottawamilitarymemorialstour.wordpress.com Note that the tours are self-guided and only require a phone and the internet. My favourite is still the memorial recognizing those people who volunteered at the laboratory on John St. and Sussex between the Wars. The research into chemical weapons was ground-breaking and little known at the time. The memorial is located behind the National Research Council near the Rideau Falls.

An interesting aspect of our project became apparent as the Memorial Tours took shape. We were looking to see if there was any interest in sponsoring the Tours. The Federal Government, the City of Ottawa, the Museum or the Friends of the Museum.

Everyone thought it a good idea but there was no interest in sponsorship, hence the fact that Rob created the site and brought it online on his own initiative.

Rob has had the opportunity to participate in the Jane's Walks which take place in the spring. Rob may be taking group this year if the Walks go ahead as planned. Having to rely on our own initiative has made it all that more worthwhile and certainly reflects the spirit of the Volunteer Interpreters who give of their time and expertise at the Museum. Please let us know what you think of the project. Rob continues to get feedback and information about memorials that we have missed or neglected. Good walking, running or biking!

Larry Capstick

