

TRUMPETER APRIL 2011



The Royal Canadian Hussars Association

Saturday May 14th 2011
Annual General Meeting

The meeting will be conducted in the Sgt's mess starting at 10h30, we have a new slate of officers for positions in the association executive, we encourage all members to attend, and finger food will be served.

Saturday June 4th 2011
Annual Association Reunion

It's that time once again Hussars to meet and greet old and new friends. The cost per person is 30\$ non members 55\$. The reunion will be held on Saturday June 4th at Noon. The Museum will be opened at 11 am. Our curator Don Greene has made some new displays. Then join us in the Combined Mess for a great meal. A green reply slip has been attached to the Trumpeter please fill out the slip and send to the address indicated.

If you wish to reserve a table, contact Steven Barrette
514-496-2024 extension 232, or via e-mail at
steven.barrette@sympatico.ca

We hope to see you in great numbers!

A word from our President



Greetings to all

I hope this issue of the Trumpeter finds you all in good health. By the time you read this issue, spring should have arrived with warmer temperatures, greener grass showing, cleaner streets and sidewalks, and tulips rising in the garden. Although we still have to content with the pot holes for some time in Montreal.

Our Association Executive had their first meeting of the year on Monday, April 11 at the Armoury. It was a very productive meeting with many different ideas coming up for the future and welfare of the Association. Some of these recommendations require consent by the membership at our next AGM on May 14.

One of the recommendations is to raise the annual dues from \$10.00 to \$15.00. The other recommendation was to give old and new members the opportunity to become Life Members for a flat fee of \$100.00. If passed both motions will be effective January 1, 2012. Don Greene has accepted the task of Nominating committee Chairman for the 2011-2012 elections, the proposed slate in this issue.

Positions still open are, Treasurer, Membership Chairperson and Editor for the Trumpeter. We are looking for dedicated members to join our team, if you have the time then please join us. I must admit that there are no benefits and neither a pension plan just the joy of working as a team for your association. Denis Gilbert has volunteered to work on The Association Web Site page on the regimental Web Site. Sometime in the future the site will contain activities of our Association.

Our coffee breaks are back on for every last Thursday of the month at "Pj's Pub 6910 St-Jacques West Montreal" we experimented to have them on a Saturday hoping to attract more members from the regiment join us but with the busy work schedule it was not feasible.

Our Institute lunches are back on every first Friday of the month. All are welcome to join us.

Our main association events coming up are the AGM and reunion and dinner. I encourage everyone to attend to make these activities a success.

For future planning, don't forget the Late Cecil Hamilton corn roast in Hemmingford on August 20th mark your calendars.

In this issue of the Trumpeter you will find two slips one **Blue**, for the renewal of annual dues, still at \$10.00 per year. You will also find a **Green** slip which is for the Annual Reunion we would encourage you to fill them out and forward them to Steven Barrette.

In closing, I wish everyone a happy spring and hope to see most of you at the AGM and Reunion. Our next Trumpeter should be out in July. Any comments, articles and photos are welcome.

Annual General Meeting

The following personal have been nominated for position on the RCH Association Executive Committee 2011-2012.

- President:** Karl Kramell
- 1st Vice:** Steven Barrette
- 2nd Vice:** Vacant
- Secretary:** Michel Abourousse
- Treasurer:** Vacant

Officers

- Museum: Don Greene
- Trumpeter: Steven Barrette
- Web Site: Denis Gilbert
- Membership: Vacant
- Public Relation: Richard Ayoub

- Executive member:** Stan Highway
- Doreen Riley
- Michel Vezina

- Past-President:** Alan Canavan

MEMBERSHIP

Paid-up and Life Time Members	66
Outstanding	100
Total:	166

SICK PARADE

Cyril Martin, Alex Muir, George Yorgan,
 St. Anne’s Hospital, Montreal, Quebec

Peter B. Waud
 Brampton, Ontario

LAST POST

- Joseph Oswald Melanson June 18, 2010 Moncton, N.B.
- Malcolm C Faille March 13, 2011 Canmore, AB

LOST TRAILES

We will begin to publish in the next issue the names of those association members whose we have loss contact with, they may have changed there address but have not informed us of said change. We encourage our members to drop us a line in order for us to keep in touch. If you know of someone who may have moved please let us know;

Camping in WWII by Alan Canavan

A short camp history of the 17th (7 Canadian Reece) camped during the war.

This story is only to awaken memories that were made during our stay in England. When the regiment left Camp Debert Nova Scotia, we boarded a troop train to the docks where we boarded HMT Stratheden 25 000 tons. The ship formally traveled between Capetown and Cairo. The ship had not been converted to a troop ship and still had a few swimming pools aboard! There were incidents that most of us recall and some were not what you could say funny. Such things as a lack of hammocks and the fact that this ship served four so called meals a day was somewhat confusing.

Aboard with our Regiment was the Canadian Scottish Regiment as well as the Regina Rifles. There were three ships in the convoy and off we sailed into the Atlantic the RCN escorted half way across and then the RN took over. One early morning we looked out from the stern and saw what we believed was a cruiser because it was so big. It turned out to be a Tribal Class Destroyer we were all quite happy to see this vessel.

On the 3rd of September 1941 we arrived in Glasgow Scotland. The trains at the port looked like model trains in comparison to our large Canadian rail cars. We disembarked the ship and boarded a troop train for our 17 hour trip to Fleet Hants in the center of England. We then boarded buses and headed toward Haig Lines near Crookham Cross Roads, the buses had the windows blacked out we thought this was a bit odd.

This camp was constructed for 1914-1918 war, and it gave us something to think about. In the huts the beds were made of iron with steel slats with mattresses with straw. The other exciting thing in this camp was the ablution room? There was running water all cold and shaving in cold water isn't an easy task, but as good Hussars you get used to it.

When the regiment left Camp Debert we had no idea that by the 3rd of September we would be in a camp such as this one. There was a lot going on until we moved to our next camp on the 2nd December 1941 which was in Horsham. It was raining which it does sometimes in England. The green lawns in front of the homes we suddenly made into the muddiest looking places that anyone could recall. Our stay was short until we moved on

the 6th of December to Paxhill Dene Park just outside Haywards Heath.

The entrance of this camp was quite striking; there was a lodge keeper's abode and a gate, which was where the officers stayed. The rest of us were in Nissen huts, which served the purpose. One interesting thing that we did at this camp was to drain the water out of the radiators of the vehicles each night, it was felt that frost would freeze the radiators. It was not long before we received proper anti-freeze and were able to avoid draining the engines each day. Christmas 1941 and New Years 1942 were spent in this camp.

Up to this point you would think that all we did was move from camp to camp. There was a great deal of training going on. We noticed throughout the camp that each tree was painted with a number, the owner did so in order to keep track of any trees that were cut down he would then charge the government for the cost of replacement. The winter of 41 was a real cold one. Snow had fallen just before we left this camp for Petworth on January 14th 1942.

Our new camp was on Lord Leconsfields property, on his property he had his own deer herd. The number of the herd fluctuated during our stay one could hear the rifle fire – mostly at night, but our squadron never saw any deer meat. The officers stayed in the estate homes the rest of us were in the woods. This estate stretched for miles and was also walled. The house is now owned by the National Trust and contains a vast number of paintings far too many for one house.

During our stay we brought in rubble from London and constructed proper roads for our vehicles to get in and out without getting mired in the mud. It was odd to see truck loads of rubble drooped into the mud and disappear. None of this can be seen today the estate was restored after the war to its current splendor.

Petworth is a small village located between Midhurst and Pulborough. The nearest railway was 7in Pulborough that's where we picked up the rubble for the roads. Not much happened in Petworth during the war a German aircraft dropped a bomb on the only school in the village; a few were killed in the raid.

We trained a great deal in this area during our stay until the middle of May 42. We were advised that we were going on a training exercise; we did not return to our camp instead we moved to a new area around Battle. For a full week trucks traveled back and forth to Petworth to pick up equipment

left there. The lesson we learned was when you move, bring everything with you!

The most noted thing about being in Battle was the Abbey. This is where the Battle of Hastings took place; King Harold was defeated by William the Conqueror. Battle Abbey is a school today during the war the army used it; B squadron used it during our stay. A squadron was down the road a few miles and C squadron was in Vinehill on the road to Hastings.

When we arrived in Vinehill one of the features was a large swimming pool. It happened to be empty when we arrived, it didn't take long before we were filling it up. The first night some of us thought it would be just great to hop in the pool for a swim. A few of us went to the pool and hopped in only to find out that the water drained out due to a large crack on the side of the pool which dampened our spirits a little. After the war the school built an indoor pool which is used all year round without cracks.

While in Battle I and seven other drivers worked for the Headquarters Squadron. We slept in a room not too far from our vehicles which were parked in a garage a Corporal was in charge. This was like a court yard across from the individual who looked after the grounds. Oddly the duty sergeants were never really informed as to our whereabouts. This of course was not too good for us as we all slept in and missed our breakfast we hardly had enough time to jump into a pair of black coveralls and get on parade for 8 am. We were lucky and got away with this for sometime.

While in this area of Sussex, we turned in our wedge hats and received new Black Berets. At first it looked like one size fits all, it was soon rectified we boiled up some water and did some beret shrinking. We also began infantry drill no more forming up in two's we now formed up in three's we started to feel like we belonged in the Armoured Corps.

Our next camp was in West Grinstead, we moved there on August 7th 42. This camp was under canvas, which didn't excite us at all, we stayed here until October 7th when we moved to Brighton. Our stay at Preston Park in Brighton was the longest of any camp. Brighton was an exciting city; The Dome was an interesting place to go so was the skating rink. We had the odd raid as well just to keep us active, there was a war on you know. The general feeling from the unit was that we all liked Brighton a lot.

On the 6th of May 43 we moved to Hastings, we were all put up in water front hotels. The view of the English Channel was terrific. We were stationed near a long pier at the end was an anti-aircraft gun manned by the Royal Artillery. Hastings had a lot to offer as well, our stay there was marred by an air raid on the 23rd of May. It was a Sunday around 13:00, when about 15 FW-190's came flying in just above the water. As they reached our area they pulled up and released their bombs.

A 250 kilo bomb went through the intelligence office on the second floor of the Queen's Hotel. Our clerk Ernie Jonas happened to be in the room when the bomb entered. It crossed the room leaving a deep mark on one of the tables before exiting through a window and crossing the area before landing in the Albany Hotel, where it blew up. The blast shattered the Hotel and compressed five floors into a pile of rubble.

11 Hussars were killed in this raid and a number were injured. One of those being the intelligence section's clerk, Ernie Jonas who was quite badly wounded as well, in fact he didn't return to the unit after that raid. A total of 25 were killed and 85 injured. It was one of the worst attacks of WW II for Hastings.

I was on the third floor of the Queen's Hotel and saw the flight of Focke Wulf 190's coming in for the raid. The anti-aircraft gun on the pier must have fired all of the rounds before going silent? Looking out and seeing a bunch of enemy fighter's flying below your level was a most interesting sight, you could see the guns on the wings firing in our direction. Standing by a window was not the best place to be during a raid, in short order my window was shattered by the attack everything seemed to happen at once.

After the bomb had gone off, those that could began to remove our troops from the rubble. Those that were hurt were laid on the grass in front of the Albany Hotel, or what was left of it. You could tell who was around the hotel they were covered in grey dust. That afternoon our padre was kept very busy. The city of Brighton heard of the raid and was ready to send in vehicles and anything else to assist us.

Those that were killed were buried in Brookwood Cemetery after services were conducted in Hastings.

On the 5th June 43 we left Hastings and went to West Chiltington where we camped until September 15th. West Chiltington was off the beaten path somewhat? It was about 2 miles east of Pulborough and not far from the South Downs. The village didn't have much to offer, only one "Pub" a golf course not five minutes away.

The accommodations consisted of Nissen huts, each with a wood stove in the middle of the room. The beds were plywood and straw mattresses, no springs. We did a lot of training here and also a lot of "toughening up" by this we were given for lunch each day a sandwich and a cup of tea. The sandwich was two pieces of bread with a blob of margarine; the margarine was so hard you need a blow torch to spread it! The contents of the sandwich were questionable but you ate it regardless, physical training was also used.

The anti-tank troop were armed with a 6 pound gun, they had graduated from the 2 pound A/T gun. One day a gun crew was training on a 6 pound within the lines. They used a metal cover over the back of the round to prevent it from firing; someone must have asked the instructor what would happen if the cover was removed and the round placed in the breach. Well, it was placed in the breach and by some means or other a shoot was fired through the lavatory building and kept going into the woods. That ended the training for that gun crew for the rest of the day. It was not known if anyone was in the lavatory or not?

On September 15th 43 we formed up and moved to Camp Nine Yews, which was probably the cleanest camp we came across. It had formerly been used by US troops; the camp was not far from Salisbury. We didn't stay too long on October 29th we drove in convoy to Woldingham where we were put into houses, they were empty and it was just as well. Woldingham was not too far from Croydon and London. There was a RAF station close by and the nights were not what you would call quiet?

While here we were moved back towards South Downs to train on the new flame throwers. On November 22nd 43 we returned to West Chiltington this was the only camp that we lived in twice. We knew the surroundings and started immediately into training. Watching flame throwers operate was different. They could throw up some pretty black

smoke as well as flames. Most of us were pleased to be watching and not operating these lethal machines. The flame throwers were installed in Universal Carriers which made them light and fast.

Our stay in West Chiltington lasted until June 1944 we moved to Chichester, into permanent barracks and by this time "D-Day" was about to take place. B Squadron was already to leave for France and they would be followed by A Squadron. The rest of the regiment stayed behind until early July. A convoy consisting of C and RHQ Squadron drove to London escorted by the Metropolitan Police to the Tilbury Docks. The ship we originally were going to use had a damaged bow, so we waited until another vessel was allocated to us. Our ship turned out to be the "Fort Covington" some 10 000 tons built in Canada we were surprised in a way, but felt right at home. While waiting to make our departure we had a number of "Buzz bombs" fly overhead, those "Doodlebugs" were nothing but a nuisance. They of course created a lot of havoc as well as damage upon landing in built up areas. We did feel sorry for those who had to stay in the city and just take it.

After staying at Tilbury Docks for a couple of nights it was time to leave for France. One evening before it got dark, we moved out into the River Thames and sailed downstream. On the way we passed a Canadian destroyer coming upstream, you should have heard the "cat calls" and language that passed between the two ships, very exciting.

We sailed down to the mouth of the Thames and then turned to starboard and passed Dover and other areas on the south coast. By this time it was pitch black and most of us wondered what lay ahead?

In the early morning we were off the coast of France and it was time to unload and start to get ready for what we had spent years of training. Our real war was about to start.

Camping anyone?

Alan Canavan



Important Dates

- April 28th Thursday Breakfast @ 09h30 followed by visit to St-Anne's Hospital
- May 6th Friday Luncheon @ noon
- May 7th Saturday Regimental smoker @ noon
- May 9th Monday VE Day Ceremony Hemmingford @ 10h30
- May 14th Saturday @ 10h30 Sgt's Mess
- May 14th Saturday Candle light dinner Combined Officer & NCOs' Mess, Invitation Only
- May 26th Thursday Breakfast @ 09h30
- May 30th Monday Executive meeting @ 10h00
- June 3rd Friday Luncheon @ noon
- June 4th Saturday Annual Reunion @ 11h00
- June 20th Monday Executive Wrap-up Meeting @ 10h00
- June 30th Thursday Breakfast @ 09h30
- July 16th Saturday Hemmingford Legion Golf tournament, 60\$ (includes supper, prizes)
- August 7th Sunday UN Peacekeepers Ceremony Hemmingford @ 14h00
- August 20th Saturday Annual Association Corn Roast Hemmingford @ noon

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