

NEWS and views

The Quarterly Newsletter of the Simcoe County Historical Association
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Simcoe County Historical Association Remembers



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Get To Know your Long Ago

Why I Remember Them!

By Ted Duncan SCHA President

I was born in 1946 after World War Two. As a child growing up in the 1950's, I heard stories of the war, it was fresh in everyone's mind. There were lots of books, war movies, magazine and newspaper articles, and personal stories of the Veterans. A young boy's imagination was stirred by the great events and famous people in a war that ranged over the whole world.

I started to read personal survival stories by the people who participated directly in the battles. That's when I gained respect for the ordinary people involved, the sacrifices they made and lived were contrasted with the feelings they had of the losses that were endured by many of their comrades. Their dedication to the ideals that caused them to volunteer and to their friends in battle were what gained my



Canadian Veterans rode on WWII vehicles in the parade to commemorate the Dutch Liberation.

“It was such a moving experience to see how the Dutch brought their young children out to touch the Canadian Liberators.

They will never forget how they were saved from starvation by our soldiers. How can we forget them?”

Ted Duncan

My family was not involved directly in the military forces. Both my father and mother's families were farmers and so worked on the land to produce the food necessary to carry on the war. So why did I take a personal interest in those ordinary men and women who did extraordinary things?

Early on in my great appetite to find out more about the war, I read books written by generals and politicians. They told the facts as they saw them often justifying the decisions they made in battles. Ordinary soldiers, airmen, and sailors were just numbers. Many survived, many were wounded, and many died but they paid the price for the decisions of others.

respect.

War wasn't glorious! War was brutal!

After I retired, I went on a number of trips to Europe to tour the places and battle fields that I had read about. England for the Battle of Britain; France for D-Day, Dieppe and the World War One battlefields; Italy and Sicily to follow the route of the Canadian Army north to Ortona; Holland for the final battles of the war and finally to Germany and Berlin to confront the holocaust.

Why we fought was clear!
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The battlefields were defined in many cases by the many well cared for cemeteries near them. You could see the most difficult terrain that we asked our young men to attack and the sacrifices they made.

It was for the freedom from war that my generation has had in Canada for the last 75 years.

Freedom to live and raise our families in peace.

The word Freedom should not be used in a trivial way. It has a deeper meaning and should be kept sacred. It has come to Canada at a high cost.

And that's why I remember them!



“This is a picture of Harry Watts, Canadian Vet of the Italian Campaign. He was a Dispatch rider. He rode his motorcycle all over Italy. I asked him after I took this picture what he was thinking about as he looked through the Arch? He said that he could see his comrades from 70 years before at the liberation of Remini Italy and not what I was seeing. It was a very moving experience for me to see him here. He remembers and how can we forget them?”

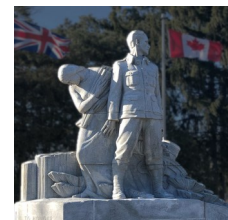
Ted Duncan

Statuary of the Great War—a virtual tour

Join Bruce McRae as he uncovers outstanding examples of sculptures commemorating the sacrifices of the Great War.

15 November 2022 7PM

Register [here](#) or contact us at news@simcoecountyhistory.ca



Preserving Their Memory:

WWI Military Personnel from South Simcoe County

Jan Coward was a member of both the Bradford West Gwillimbury Local History Association and the Tecumseth and West Gwillimbury Historical Society. In 2015 she began a World War I Centenary project. Her objective was to locate and record the names and personal details of all WWI military and medical personnel, veterans and war dead, who had a South Simcoe connection. In total the database now contains 1127 personnel, with eighteen women identified who volunteered as nurses. Jan created individual files for each person from whatever additional details she could find.

Ultimately, Jan's goal was to share the information with the public, and especially with relatives of the personnel. She wanted her database to be hosted by the Bradford West Gwillimbury Public Library Digital Archives and any other interested Libraries, Archives, or Museums.

All this turned out to be a very ambitious project. To find the relevant names and personal information, Jan consulted community war memorials; local histories; memorial lists and plaques from churches, schools, and clubs; Women's Institute Tweedsmuir histories; clippings from local newspapers; and any existing public digital archives. Jan's criteria for inclusion was broad: people who were born or had ever lived in South Simcoe County (Adjala-Tosorontio, Essa, New Tecumseth, Innisfil, Bradford West Gwillimbury, and Clearview), whose parents or family lived there, who married into family there, or whose family later became South Simcoe residents.

An example of an individual file was that for Private Henry (Harry) Flay, who died 19 Sept 1916. Jan once explained that Henry was one of the reasons she was inspired to start her research. Although he died a soldier, he was not generally considered to be a war casualty. "His death was due to pneumonia; thus he never departed Canada to return home to England, or to serve overseas. He is one of the few soldiers who died while serving in the 157th Battalion,

because on arrival in England the 157th was broken up to reinforce other existing active battalions. Also, he is one of the few Canadian Expeditionary Force soldiers with a burial place in Canada... in Cookstown (St John's) Cemetery, his marker is a cross elevated on an engraved base. The death year of 1917 does not match his death certificate. This is his official Commonwealth War Graves Commission grave."



Before Jan passed away in 2021 she entrusted her unfinished project to an old friend and a new friend, Jan Blommaert and Tracey Melidy. A team of volunteers are working to fill in the gaps for the over 300 people whose names are known but little else. Additional assistance is desperately needed to do an edit of the database before it can be made available for public use. People with time, patience, and an eye for detail are needed to confirm facts and standardize the terminology used. If you are interested or want to learn more about the project please contact: wilsonshillguardians@gmail.com.

From the files of Jan Coward



Cookstown Monument

Cookstown Ontario Memorial Park:

The memorial, which was designed and constructed by Alfred Davis, Lefroy (who was also the builder of the memorial to the Dalhousie Settlers at the Sixth Line Cemetery, Innisfil) is erected on a concrete base. The bronze tablet, containing the names of thirty men from the community who lost their lives, is inserted in the panel on the south side of the monument. There is cobblestone facing all around the tablet. Rising above the tablet block is an octagonal-shaped cone, concrete in construction facing and tuckpointed

For the full article visit: [War Notes: Tribute to War Heroes at Unveiling Ceremony of Cookstown Monument](#)
[| Our Stories Innisfil](#) Our Stories
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Cookstown Ontario Memorial Park:

Photo of the Veterans' Memorial Park, {Cookstown} taken soon after a number of trees were planted in memory of the men who enlisted in World War 1. The park was named Veteran's Memorial Park in 1915. (OurStories 2254)



War Trophies:

Canadian soldiers captured thousands of enemy guns, mortars, and machine-guns during the course of the war. Formations overrunning enemy positions often chalked their identifiers on enemy guns to mark their success.

The gun on display at the Cookstown Memorial Park (photo left) is a German First World War 7.58-cm leichtes Minenwerfer neuer Art (7.58-cm leMW), (Serial Nr. 16214), mounted on a round iron stand at the cenotaph. This trench mortar was captured by the 102nd Battalion near Beaucourt Wood, NW of Les Quesnel on 8 August 1918.

More information can be found at:
[Artillery in Canada \(5\) Ontario: Colborne, Collingwood, Cookstown and Cornwall \(silverhawkauthor.com\)](#)
[Ontario War Memorials: Cookstown](#)

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Archives of Ontario Library Contact Frank Van Kalmthout	Historic Military Establishment of Upper Canada Contact David Brunelle	Simcoe County Museum Contact Kelly Swift-Jones 705-728-3721
Barrie Historical Archive Contact Deb Exel	Hurononia Chapter, Ontario Archeological Society Contact John Raynor	Stayner Heritage Society Contact Tom Scholte 705-517-5171
Bass Lake Rate Payers Association 12 Ward Ave Oro-Medonte ON 705-955-2262 basslakera@gmail.com	Hurononia Museum Box 638, 549 Little Lake Park Rd. Midland ON, 705-526-2844 huroniamuseum@gmail.com	Tecumseth & West Gwillimbury Historical Society Contact: Janine Harris- Wheatley 905-936-6549
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Bradford/West Gwillimbury Local History Association Contact Jan Blommaert	Museum on the Boyne Contact Katie Huddleston 705-435-4030 x. 1802	Township of Oro-Medonte Heritage Committee 148 Line 7 South Oro-Medonte ON L0L 2E0 705-487-4003 cathy.keane@oro-medonte.ca
Coldwater Canadian Heritage Museum	Orillia Museum of Art and History Contact 705-326-2159	Township of Tiny Contact Pamela Zimmerman
Collingwood Museum Contact Mellissa Shaw 705-445-4811	Orillia Public Library 36 Mississauga St. W Orillia, 705-325-2338 jturvey@orilliapubliclibrary.ca	Please contact organizations directly for current information as regularly scheduled events or meetings may be cancelled due to Covid-19
Essa Historical Society	Ramara Historical Society Contact Cathy Westcott	
Essa Public Library Contact	Simcoe County Archives 1149 Hwy 26 Minesing ON, 705-726-9331	
Friends of Fort Willow Contact Bryon Wesson		