



The Military History Society of Manitoba
134 Marion St. Winnipeg, MB R2H 0T1
www.mhsm.ca

April 2015 Newsletter

Editor's Message – Warren Otto

Welcome to the April 2015 MHSM newsletter. It is once again full of information and I hope you find something of interest to you.

The Society's Annual General Meeting will be held at Legion House Museum (address above) on 6 May at 7:30 p.m.. Since we do not have many chances to meet each other, the AGM provides a great opportunity. The meeting is typically quite short and then it is on to rubbing shoulders with fellow military historians.

Speaking of meetings, if anyone would like to assume a volunteer position organising guest speakers and informational events two or three times a year for the membership and public, our president would be happy to hear from you. Bruce can be reached at tasconab@mts.net.

MHSM member Jody Perrun is leading a Canadian Battlefields of Europe Tour in May. Further details are below.

Some of you are aware of my involvement with the Maple Leaf Legacy project, founded by MHSM member Steve Douglas of Ieper Belgium. I have a brief story of one Commonwealth War Grave in Clear Lake IA. Lew Kirby, or Lew Wren as the case may be, was one of approximately 40,000 US citizens (the official number agreed to by the United States and Canada is 35, 612) to join Canadian forces between August 1914 and April 1917.

Remaining with the theme of US citizens serving in the Canadian Expeditionary Force, Chris Dickon's *Americans at War in Foreign Forces* is a featured review. Chris is a writer and veteran television and radio producer/reporter/writer with most of his previous work in public broadcasting, and current efforts in book and article writing and research. His work has been broadcast nationally on PBS stations and on National Public Radio, and internationally on the Voice of America. Awards for his broadcast work have come from Columbia University, Ohio State University, the University of Missouri, the Virginia Association of Broadcasters, and included an Emmy from the Capital Region Chapter of National Academy of Television Arts and Science.

MHSM President Bruce Tascona has a short pictorial essay on CFS Beausejour, which was located approximately 90km north-east of Winnipeg. The station still exists and now serves as a medium-security correctional centre for the Province of Manitoba

Political Studies students at the University of Manitoba have provided a summary of the conference they organised, *The Great Wars: Marking History and Humanity*. The two events I was able to attend were extremely well done and left one considering events surrounding wars in a different light.

The Down Under Club of Winnipeg invites the public to their ANZAC Day event on 25 April at 2:00 p.m. Details close out this newsletter.

If you have story or an interesting snippet you would like add for the next newsletter (perhaps late June or September), please email me at mhsmeditor@gmail.com.

President's Message – Bruce Tascona

Norwood Legion has made a decision not to provide regular annual grants to help fund the Museum Activities. They indicated lack of tours with students as the main reason. The Military History Society of Manitoba would like to thank the Branch for its ongoing commitment to support the Museum to house the many exhibits.

- The Association of Manitoba Museums undertook a Conservation / Environment Assessment—the inspection took place in summer of 2014. The only concerns verbally relayed were that LED Lighting should replace current lighting. The issue of insect or pests was non-existent; nor were environmental or security concerns a problem. Storage issues were addressed as typical problems for a small museum. Overall we probably are in good form with conservation issues.
- In October, 2015 plans are in the works to have another symposium on the First World War in conjunction with the University of Manitoba and Camp Hughes Heritage Day.
- A late 2014 donation of 20+ First World War Posters was given to the museum by a member of Branch #43. Plans are being made to develop a special exhibit surrounding this donation.
- Recent 2015 donations consisting of a Canadian Hate Belt and Great War badges from Branch #43
- A D-Day Royal Winnipeg Rifles kit bag named to RFN E Tayler was donated by a member of Branch #43
- The David Ross Archival Collection is being processed into Archival Correct Storage containers.

- Two Tours are planned in April, one by an out of town family and a Winnipeg Modellers Club.

European Tours

In spring 2015, Dr. Jody Perrun of the University of Winnipeg will lead a tour focussed Canadian battlefields and memorials of the First and Second World Wars.

Canadian Battlefields of Europe, 2-16 May 2015 (sold out)

<https://www.insightvacations.com/ca/special-offers/expert-hosted-collection/battlefields-of-europe>

Dr. Jody Perrun will lead this tour with Insight Vacations to celebrate the 70th Anniversary of the Liberation of Europe and explore Canada's rich military heritage in the Netherlands, Belgium and Northern France. This year's tour is sold-out, but interested persons may join the waitlist for 2016.

Day 1: depart Canada.

Day 2: Arrive Amsterdam.

Day 3: Amsterdam to Arnhem via Holten. John Frostbrug and Airborne Museum.

Day 4: Arnhem: Wageningen excursion for VE anniversary celebrations

Day 5: Arnhem to Bruges via Adegem Canadian-Polish Museum.

Day 6: Bruges at leisure. Transfer to Ypres, via Vladslo German Cemetery.

Day 7: Ypres: Essex Farm, St. Julian, Passchendaele, Tyne Cot Cemetery, Sanctuary Wood and Hill 62 memorial, Flanders Fields Museum, Last Post ceremony.

Day 8: Ypres to Amiens via Vimy Ridge.

Day 9: Amiens: Somme excursion. Beaumont-Hamel, Thiepval, Peronne, Villers Bretonneux Australian Memorial.

Day 10: Amiens to Dieppe.

Day 11: Dieppe to Caen via Honfleur.

Day 12: Caen: D-Day beaches. Bernieres, Courseulles and Juno Beach Centre, Omaha and Pointe du Hoc, Beny-sur-Mer Canadian War Cemetery. Abbaye Ardenne.

Day 13: Caen-Falaise battlefields. Pt. 67, Bretteville-sur-Laize, Falaise, St-Lambert-sur-Dives, Mont Ormel, Vimoutiers, Beuvron-en-Auge.

Day 14: Caen to Paris.

Day 15: depart.

For more information on either tour, contact Dr. Perrun: jperrun@gmail.com.

Dr. Jody Perrun teaches at the University of Winnipeg, the University of Manitoba, and the Royal Military College of Canada, specializing in military history, post-Confederation Canada, and the Holocaust. He has toured Canada's European battlefields extensively, with particular focus on the Battle of Normandy. His research has produced articles and book reviews on Canada's military and air force history. He also contributed research for the Juno Beach

Centre, the official history of the Royal Canadian Navy, and a variety of historical documentary films. His first book, "The Patriotic Consensus; Unity, Morale, and the Second World War in Winnipeg", was published in 2014.

Who Was Lew Kirby? - Warren Otto

As a volunteer with the Maple Leaf Legacy Project www.mapleleaflegacy.ca I have had the opportunity to travel throughout western Canada, France, Belgium and the U.S. Upper Midwest to search and photograph British Commonwealth war graves. In Iowa itself there are nine, all Canadian, five First World War and four Second World War. This story focusses on one such soldier, Lew Wren, buried in Section 2 of the Clear Lake IA cemetery.

Lew Wren attested at Camp Hughes, Manitoba on 21 July 1916. However on 31 July 1922 his documents were changed by National Defence to indicate his name was Lew Kirby. No reason is given for this change or a reason for enlisting as Lew Wren. On his attestation paper Wren lists his father, E.H. Wren of Clear Lake, as his next of kin. At the time of attestation he was forty years of age, a widower, and San Antonio TX was indicated as birth place. Wren's trade was a musician and his height listed at 6'2³/₄", a height rarely seen around the time of the First World War, and one not advantageous for those participating in trench warfare.

While at Camp Hughes Wren trained with the 183rd (Manitoba Beavers) Battalion Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF) and embarked overseas with the battalion from Halifax, Nova Scotia on 4 October 1916. Upon arriving in the England on 13 October, the 183rd was broken up for reinforcements and Wren found himself with the 108th (Selkirk) Battalion on 20 October as the Band Master Sergeant. Wren's time with the 108th did not last long as on 10 January 1917 he was transferred to the 14th Reserve Battalion training at Dibgate Camp in England. By May 1917 Wren found himself in the Ontario Military Hospital located in Orpington with an abscessed jaw. He was well enough to discharge from the hospital on 12 June and on 27 June was taken on strength by the Canadian Army Medical Corps at the same hospital.

On 10 September Wren received permission to marry Mrs. Jessie Wren of Hythe Kent.

Military life was not kind to Wren. In addition to the abscessed jaw, he suffered from varicose veins and in November 1917 was suffering from emphysema and diagnosed with an aneurism of the aorta. The illnesses were as much a puzzle for doctor's as they were to Wren as he indicated that he had never been sick in his life until arriving in England. Foggy, damp weather exacerbated the situation as he found himself short of breath and wheezy. Wren also indicated that both his mother and first wife had died from consumption (tuberculosis) and it is possible the weather in England contributed to the manifestation of the disease. On 1 December he was again admitted to hospital and by 4 January 1918 Wren was deemed unfit for service. In February he was invalidated to Canada, arriving at the convalescent home in Winnipeg 28 February for further treatment.

Wren never did recover and on 8 March was admitted to the Winnipeg General Hospital and on 13 March the aneurism in his aorta ruptured and he died. Family members had the

body returned to Iowa for burial while the Canadian Forces settled his accounts and sent the money to his wife in England in August 1920.

It was while visiting Iowa on a weekend blitz of cemeteries in 2009 that I first came across Wren's grave on my final afternoon before returning to Winnipeg. Many Canadian war graves I have visited in the United States have interesting stories behind them. What is intriguing with Wren was the two names listed on his headstone. Accessing Wren's records from Library and Archives Canada shed no further light on the matter.

In July 2013, while returning from a Texas vacation, my children and I stopped to pay our respects to Wren. My youngest daughter Ashleigh is always a help in searching larger cemeteries for headstones, as a number are family headstones and not the standard one issued by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. Although I had visited the cemetery previously, she was the first to locate the gravesite. We took a couple pictures and left behind a loonie and lapel pins of the Canadian and Manitoba flags so that others will know that Wren is not forgotten in Canada.



Ashleigh Otto pays her respects to Lew Wren in July 2013

Book Review – *Americans at War in Foreign Forces*, by Chris

Dickon – Warren Otto

As part of my research related to American neutrality and US citizens in the Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF), I was directed to Chris Dickon by Melanie Morin-Pellitier of the Canadian War Museum. Chris had published his latest book a few months previous, and it was a remarkable find covering a topic where the information is quite thin.

All of us are quite aware of the impact the United States had on both wars, however it is interesting to read how individual Americans went against government wishes and joined up to fight with foreign forces. During the First World War, this entailed a loss of US citizenship upon joining the CEF, as one pledged allegiance to King George V., a foreign sovereign. However this did not stop tens of thousands from enlisting. There were as

many reasons for enlisting as there were men willing to enlist and Dickon covers a few of these in his book.

Making extensive use of archival material from Canada, the United States and newspapers of the time, Dickon describes the men who joined to fight with Canada, France and Great Britain during the First World War, in China and Spain between the wars, and finally with foreign forces during the Second World War. Again we see many Americans crossing the Canadian border to train with the RCAF in the British Commonwealth Air Training Program.

The story of 1st Lt. Allen H. Cherry of the Royal Navy Volunteer Reserve, who ended up wearing a pair of woman's red panties won in a card game, during the Normandy invasion, is one of those stories that could only happen in war time.

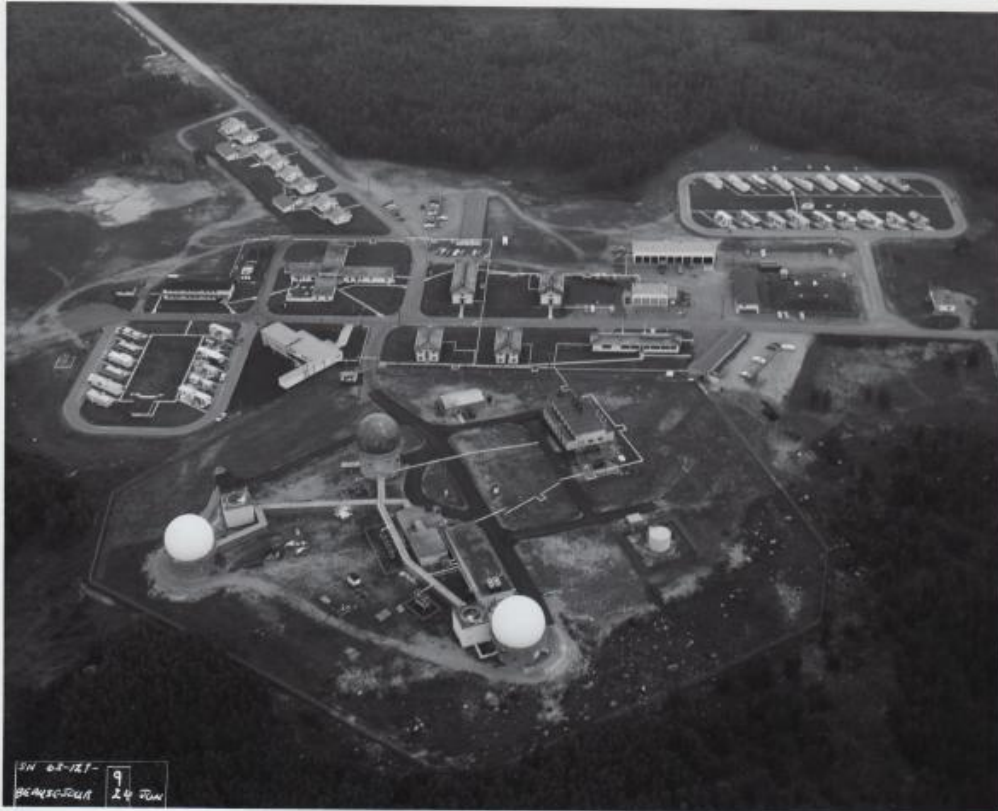
Those interested in an unfamiliar area of military history as it relates to Canada will find Dickon's book both an enjoyable and fascinating read.

Canadian Forces Radar Station Beausejour –a pictorial glimpse c 1963 - Bruce Tascona

Electronic Photos were received from the Air Defence Museum CFB North Bay from the MHSM Archives



Ground View of towers.



Arial views of CFS Beausejour



Headquarters Building



Living Quarters

The 31st John Wesley Dafoe Political Studies Students' Conference

"The Legacy of the Great Wars: Marking History and Humanity" was the theme of this year's John Wesley Dafoe Political Studies Students' Conference (JWD-PSSC). The conference, held January 28-30, 2015, at the University of Manitoba, was the highest attended JWD-PSSC conference in its history of thirty-one years. With the confluence of anniversaries of the three great wars – the start of World War One (100), start of World War Two (75) and the end of the Cold War (25) - the theme of this year's JWD-PSSC was suitable. The conference showcased local, national, and international scholars over the course of five panels.



Allan Levine, a Winnipeg writer and historian, opened the conference with a lecture at McNally Robinson. His presentation, "The Impact of World War I and World War II on Canada and the West," focused on the themes of militarism and nationalism, human rights, and the impact on Canada. Dr. Levine's presentation focused on the evolution and history of World War I and World War II, and the transformation of human perspectives

throughout the century.

Held at the Great Hall in University College at the University of Manitoba, five interdisciplinary panels spanned Thursday and Friday. The panels allowed the scholars to present for fifteen minutes, with a large window at the end for a question and answer period. The first panel, World War One, featured three scholars. Gene Walz (University of Manitoba) spoke on how there are very few Canadian films on the First World War. Clips were shown from the films, like the 1928 *Carry on, Sergeant!* Dean Oliver (Canadian Museum of History) gave a broad overview of the factors that caused World War One. Dr. Oliver emphasized how the crisis leading to WWI was one of the most complicated crises, and emphasized the importance that all explanations of the war have political and social bias. David McDonald (University of Wisconsin) gave insight of Russia's imperial period before World War One and their position during the Great War.

The Second World War Panel featured Robert Young (University of Winnipeg), Iain Johnston (Cambridge University), Catherine Chatterley (University of Manitoba) and Stephan Jaeger (University of Manitoba). Topics included the political and social origins of World War Two, Canada's contribution and the significance of the war in museums across the Western world. The Thursday of the conference concluded with The Cold War panel, with the intellectual insight of Jim Fergusson (University of Manitoba), Andrew Burtch (War Museum of Canada), and Kyle Haddad-Fonda (Middle East Institute). The implications of Mutually Assured Destruction, the Civil Defence of Canada during the Cold War, and the Chinese/Arab perspective during the Cold War made the audience aware of the reason why we include the Cold War in the category of a Great War.

On Friday, two panels concluded the conference. Adam Chapnick (Canadian Forces College), Melanie Morin-Pelletier (War Museum of Canada), James Hanley (University of Winnipeg), and Jody Perrun (University of Manitoba) presented topics on the theme of “The Impact on Humanity” during Panel Four.

The different institutions that came from the Great Wars, the advancements made to medicine, the effect on family morale, and women’s impact during the Great Wars informed the audience on how the history of the Great Wars does not stop at the battlefields.

The impossible question of “What is the Future of War” was asked to the four presenters of the fifth and final panel. Brigadier General Ploughman (Commander, 2 Canadian Air Division) spoke on how future engagements and conflicts are uncertain and will be unstable, and present a challenge to western militaries due to the frequency of non-state conflicts. War in the 21st century also demands increased precision with minimal collateral damage. Brigadier General Hyde (Deputy-Commander, Canadian NORAD Region - 1 CAD) explains the risk of predicting the future of war, for it is much easier to critique and plan based on hindsight. Brigadier General Hyde emphasized that the nature of war hasn’t changed, just the means available to those involved. Technology was a recurring theme during this panel. Emmanuel Goffi (University of Manitoba) spoke on the impact drones and robots will have on the future of war. Bryan Peeler (University of Manitoba) spoke on the Geneva Conventions and the implications the law of war during conflict.

The John Wesley Dafoe Political Studies Students Conference was an overall success. The conference organizers would like to thank all who attended and the numerous sponsors! For detailed notes on each panel, please email pssc@umanitoba.ca. For a list of sponsors and to keep updated on next year’s conference on “Elections”, please go to http://umanitoba.ca/faculties/arts/departments/political_studies/3607.html.

ANZAC Day with the Down Under Club of Winnipeg

On 25 April the Down Under Club of Winnipeg invites everyone to the 100th anniversary commemoration of ANZAC Day. The event takes place at 2:00 p.m. at the Royal Aviation Museum of Western Canada, 958 Ferry Rd., Winnipeg. Following the memorial service will be a tea reception and panel presentation of the film *Gallipoli*. Further information on the club is located here <http://downunderclub.mb.ca/>



Military History Society of Manitoba AGM

Wednesday May 6, 2015, 7:30 p.m.

Legion House Museum, 134 Marion St. Winnipeg

Mark Your Calendar