

This account of Calgary's 137th battalion is a reasonably solid work detailing the formation of the battalion in November 1915 until its return to Canada in 1919. The 975 men who made up the battalion were primarily labourers and farmers from southern Alberta. The book traces the training of the battalion at Sarcee Camp and in England, describing the partial dismemberment of the battalion in August 1916 with elements of the 137th being sent to France. Through two years of fighting, 179 men of the 137th were killed, and 392 wounded, which translates into a 60 per cent casualty rate for the battalion.

The text is divided into three sections. Part I, the weakest portion of the book, provides an historical overview of the entire Canadian contribution to the Allied effort throughout the First World War. Part II, by far the strongest part of the text, is based on the diaries of one of the principle authors, Dr. Harvey Duncan, who served as a private in the battalion. Bagley integrates the memoirs of the young 20-year-old Duncan into the text, and this provides a fresh and realistic account of his experiences from the time of his enlistment in 1916 until his return to Canada in 1919. Through his writings, the reader can share in Duncan's initial fear at Vimy Ridge in April 1917, then his, and the battalion's sense of accomplishment following the Canadian victory. The reader also shares in Duncan's sense of disillusionment following his participation at Passchendaele, where the battalion suffered heavy casualties, among them Duncan who was wounded by mortar fire.

The final section of the book documents the efforts by some members of the battalion to organize annual reunions of battalion survivors, the strong involvement of the battalion in community projects, and the

A Legacy of Courage

Fred Bagley and Dr. Harvey Daniel Duncan. *A Legacy of Courage: Calgary's Own 137th Overseas Battalion, CEF.* Calgary: Pulp Street Books, 1994. 247 pages, \$19.95.

work of 137th Battalion Association to establish memorials and parks throughout Calgary to honour the memory of the servicemen of the 137th.

Unfortunately, the chronology of Bagley's text is difficult to follow. The book constantly jumps back and forth between 1916 and 1918 making it very confusing for the reader. The text could have been much stronger had Bagley simply followed a precise and coherent chronological order. Instead,

Bagley's organization confuses and detracts from the historical account. The book would be of primary interest to those most familiar with the strong military tradition associated with the city of Calgary. However, the memoirs of Duncan are both insightful and passionate and would appeal to those with general interest of a Canadian perspective of "life in the trenches."

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