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### Canadian War Museum

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The mission statement of the Canadian War Museum is: "To share in the remembrance of, and serve as a memorial to those Canadians lost in, or as a result of war; to examine the war and war related history of Canada and its effects upon Canada and Canadians; and to document Canada's commitment to peacekeeping and the maintenance of international security." To this end the CWM maintains an exhibition facility with three floors of galleries, and a collections building housing close to half a million artifacts.

### The Laurier Centre for Military Strategic and Disarmament Studies

The purpose of the Laurier Centre for Military Strategic and Disarmament Studies (LCMSDS) is to foster research, teaching, and public discussion of military and strategic issues of national and international significance. The Centre is intentionally multi-disciplinary; it has strong commitments in military history, with emphasis on the Canadian experience, and in strategic and operational studies, with emphasis on disarmament. LCMSDS supports both basic and applied research as well as teaching at the undergraduate and graduate levels. In addition, the extensive program of LCMSDS workshops, conferences, public lectures, and publications encourages informed discussion of international security and of Canada's national interests in military and strategic issues - past, present and future.

The Laurier Centre for Military Strategic and Disarmament Studies was founded in 1991 as a Research Centre affiliated with Wilfrid Laurier University. Its primary support has come from the Department of National Defence and from Wilfrid Laurier University. The Director of the Centre is Dr. Marc Kilgour, Professor of Mathematics, and the Co-Director is Professor Terry Copp, Professor of History.

# From the Editor

There is an old military adage that goes, "Time spent in reconnaissance is seldom wasted." And so it is with battlefield tours. This truth was brought home to me again last spring when I lead the Canadian Battle of Normandy Foundation 1997 Study Tour of Canadian battlefields in France, Belgium and southern Holland. It was an unsurpassed learning experience for me and the 14 others on the Tour. We worked long days, endured hours of driving in noisy and stuffy vans, ate lunch on the fly - or skipped it altogether - and yet their enthusiasm remained as we walked battlefield after battlefield.

One of the lasting benefits of battlefield tours is that they shake comfortable notions of what occurred. Military history read in the comfort of your living room, even with the maps laid-out and the photos to hand, can never capture the perspective of a battle viewed from the ground. In a glance all the problems begin to make sense - and all *too* often the literature suddenly appears nonsensical. Certainly, no one from the '97 Tour will ever read military history with the same naive acceptance again. Thus, apart from the sentimental value of the Tour and the act of remembrance it represents, the Canadian Battle of Normandy Foundation is to be commended from kindling a critical interest by a new generation in their military heritage.

The other value of the '97 Tour was the perspective it gave us all on the business - if that's not too harsh a word - of remembrance and how the Canadian story may get lost in the shuffle. For in Normandy the events of 1944 are big business. No it is not yet a theme park. But much of the tourist trade depends on aging veterans and eager history buffs visiting the scenes of battle. And it is clear where the money is: Brits, Americans and Germans. The locals nurture that traffic for good reason, but the results are not always happy. Most recently, St. Aubin-sur-Mer has been "captured" by the Royal Marine Commandos. This may come as news to the veterans of The North Shore (New

Brunswick) Regiment who actually landed ahead of the Commandos.

Suffice it to say that the spirit of capitalism will not serve Canada well in this new "Battle of Normandy." We're just too few and too far away to make much of an impact. Rather, the Canadian story will have to be told by Canadians, and much remains to be done. The route from the beaches inland to Caen and Carpiquet is well posted, with memorials and signs. And that beyond Falaise appears to be "under development." But glaring omissions remain.

Perhaps the most obvious is commemoration of the events which transpired on the long slopes south of Caen, that stretch which witnessed Operations "Atlantic," "Spring," "Totalize" and "Tractable." If the Canadian army in Normandy had a calvary, surely this was it. Verrières Ridge, the ground around Tilley, the long, flat plain towards Cintheaux, the valley of the Orne and the rolling fields running down to the Laison River cost Canada dearly.

In fact, the gentle slope up to Verrières witnessed the second bloodiest day of the war for Canada: 25 July 1944. Nothing marks that sacrifice: no cairns, no monuments, no interpretative viewing points - nothing. The ground where the South Saskatchewan died in the standing grain during "Atlantic," hunted by stalking Panzers and Grenadiers, remains a featureless crest, marked only by power pylons. Just to the east, the gentle slope up which the Black Watch charged to their deaths in "Spring" is being eroded by creeping urbanization. And even Verrières village itself, where the Royal Hamilton Light Infantry stuck their finger into the eye of the 1st SS (Liebstandart Adolf Hitler) Panzer Division and then fought them to a bloody standstill, bears no evidence of the deeds done there.

This absence of remembrance moved the students of the '97 Tour deeply. The knowledge that they knew and understood - however inadequately - what was done on those grassy

plains, while nothing permanent bore witness, weighed on them. Who else would ever know?

Further down the Caen-Falaise highway the situation is little better. The Bretteville cemetery broods over the high open ground beyond Point 122, but the only marker of note between Caen and Falaise - other than the dead, Canadian and Polish - is the lonely, ill-kept and vandalized memorial to the British Columbia Regiment which died on Point 140. Traffic races down the four lane N158 and, frankly, there is no reason why anyone other than a student of *Canadian* military history would give much thought to the ground.

More's the pity. As Charles Stacey commented in *The Victory Campaign* nearly 40 years ago,

if the traveller [down the N158] be Canadian, he would do well to stay the wheels at this point and cast his mind back to the events of 1944... Well may the wheat and sugar-beets grow green

and lush upon its gentle slopes, for in the now half forgotten summer the best blood of Canada was freely poured out upon them. (p. 174)

A bit of hyperbole, perhaps, but the words hushed the students viewing the battleground from atop Point 67.

No other government or veterans group will build a monument to Canadians on the slopes of Verrières Ridge or amid the quiet of Quesnay Wood. And no local entrepreneur looking to attract hordes of (Canadian?) tourists will build a museum and interpretative centre. If that dreadful summer was half forgotten in 1960, how much further from the Canadian consciousness must it be now? As the Tour of '97 wondered aloud, "if we don't remember, who will?" Good question.

Marc Milner  
November 1997