



WNSR REGIMENTAL ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

Perpetuating the 69th and the 75th Regiments and the 112th and 219th Battalions CEF

Summer 2020

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We only have 690 "Likes" and 706 followers, but you can change that.

WNSR page on Facebook is called: West Nova Scotia Regiment and has 921 members

If you got your newsletter by mail, we don't have your e-mail address. Please help us save paper, printing and postage costs by sending the editor your e-mail address. Thanks.

2020 - Times to Remember

This newsletter was scheduled for April; however, I avoided writing it until I was sure of our plans. Our Reunion Committee members met on the phone several times about plans for the 71st Reunion. Schools and businesses were closed, and people in NS were told to "*stay the blazes home*" for their own protection. Reservists were called out on Class C to be prepared to respond.

Then we discovered that we could not get a commitment for a place to hold the events. This inspired us to look for a Plan B or C. Considering all the uncertainty which still exists about larger gatherings, we reluctantly decided that it would be best to look forward to our 71st Reunion in the coming year 2021.

One of the overriding factors is that we have members with existing health concerns, many over the 70 year mark which puts an individual at increased risk. We realize that some members will be quite disappointed and wonder why we appear to be so afraid of risk. The answer is simple – this is not a common cold – it kills people. Even if social distancing and mask-wearing rules were relaxed or put aside at that time, there's a significant chance that we'd have a small turnout. We won't hold a reunion where people are afraid to attend, and we don't want to fail because of poor attendance.

If someone became ill, was hospitalized or died as a result of being in a large gathering at a reunion, that would be a tremendous failure. So, it is out of an abundance of caution that we must wait a year. *If it's safe to gather in the manner of our reunions at that time*, we'll plan a grand gathering with plenty of reasons to celebrate.



There was discussion about conducting the AGM and Memorial Service online through videoconferencing. We'll discuss that possibility which would allow us to invite all members to make time to participate in the meeting and to recognize the sacrifice of those West Novas who have put service above self to serve our country. There will be more to follow on this topic most likely by newsletter in July.

Command Team Letter from HQ - 14 June 2020

Dear Friends,

Earlier this year, your Command Team wrote to you to provide insight into how your Regiment was responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. It was a very uncertain time, and we asked you to do your part by listening to the Government; stay inside and only go out for groceries and or necessities. We also asked you to maintain contact with your friends in the Regiment and to reach out if you needed assistance.

Sixty-one West NSR soldiers answered the call to full-time service and participated in OPERATION LASER – Pandemic. Maj Mike Bobbitt and Capt Mike Hobb formed the operation team for the Territorial Battalion Group; Maj Ed Ormond, Capt Chris Robinson and Warrant Officer Dave Morse formed the Command Team for Domestic Response Company Alpha (DRC A). Sergeant Andy Everett led the support team for DRC A. We also formed a rifle platoon led by Lt Jonny Barkhouse. Your CO and RSM worked in the Land Component Command Headquarters alongside former CO, LCol Todd Harris.

On the home front, Maj Mike Smith assumed the duties of Acting Commanding Officer and Warrant Officer Curtis Baglee Acting Regimental Sergeant Major – this team kept the Class A soldiers well informed and administered. It is also worthy to note the efforts of our Battalion Orderly Room, led by Sergeant Tracy Caldwell, who kept everyone paid and ready for operations! Toughest job is sending others away and possibly into harm's way.

As a province, we experienced great tragedy with the shootings in PORTAPIQUE, NS. During the recovery operation, the RCMP asked for support assistance and DRC A, led by your West NSR Coy Command Team, responded. This was a difficult task but a task supported with compassion and professionalism. We were very proud to see our soldiers

servicing alongside our RCMP during this very tragic period of time.

Most of the time during OP LASER was spent preparing, learning new skills and generating scenarios that we may face. We are very confident that our soldiers have learned some very valuable lessons that we may need in the near future.

Effective 15 June 2020, our soldiers from the TBG and DRC have returned to Regimental Duty; but they are still tied to OP LASER and will remain on 96 hours' notice to move back to the TBG for taskings. Our soldiers are still on full time service until 29 August 2020

We are now planning to complete the Basic Military Qualification (BMQ) Course that was postponed early March 2020 and a follow on Development Period One (Modular One and Two) Course – both courses will be conducted in Aldershot and both courses will be staffed by members of our Regiment. Some of our junior leaders will commence the new Infantry Section Commanders Course (ISCC) and the Primary Leadership Qualification Course (PLQ). Three officers will train at the Infantry School this summer and, when successful, will command Infantry Platoons in the fall.

We regret that the annual summer concentration (you may remember ARCON and or MILCON; but now called Exercise MAROON RAIDER) will not proceed this year. Our priority remains individual training. Collective training will wait until the fall period.

In September 2020, you will see some changes in your Regiment. Maj Mike Bobbitt will assume the duties of Operation Officer and Maj Adam Parrish will assume the duties of Regimental Major – preparing for our colours (which may be delayed until 2022). Maj Ed Ormond will move to command A Coy and Maj Mike Smith will remain Officer Commanding Headquarters.



Capt Chris Robinson will remain the second-in-command of A Coy and Warrant Officer Dave Morse will remain CSM A Coy.

Maj Jeremy Wigmore will enter year two of the Joint Command Staff Course (JCSP) and remain as the Deputy Commanding Officer. Your Command team will also remain in place – hopefully for two more years!

Honorary Colonel Don Downe, and Honorary Lieutenant Colonel Craig Gibson will also remain in place for another year. We are very fortunate to have two very active and supportive members like Col Don

and Col Craig – they were major contributors during OP LASER with advice, guidance and leading the Regimental Wellness Checks!

Your Command Team is proud of the response of our soldiers; we have a very special team, who look after each other and do what is right – even when nobody is looking.

If a second wave of COVID-19 comes – we are ready to respond like West Novas of the past and those that will follow.

Semper Fidelis

K.F. Butterworth, OMM, MSM, CD
Lieutenant-Colonel
Commanding Officer



B.P. Rogers, CD
Chief Warrant Officer
Regimental Sergeant Major

Memorial Coins to Families

News of our WNSR Memorial Coins is spreading around the country as more families are contacted about obtaining the coin commemorating a family member who was a West Nova killed during WWII. Dave Gilhen of Halifax, a West Nova from 1980-86, has done a tremendous amount of research on the “Manchester 100”. He has applied those research skills to the search for family members of our Fallen and been quite successful.

When a family is contacted, they are told about our coins and offered the opportunity to receive the coin commemorating their relative. Sometimes the living relative is a son or daughter, a nephew or niece, a grandchild, or sometimes even a brother or sister. Once the family member accepts the offer of the coin, which comes at no cost to the family, we try to plan a dignified manner in which to pass over the coin. From time to time, a coin will have already been issued to an RA member, so we ask whether the member will give up the coin to the family in exchange for another coin. I’ve been very pleased with the response we’ve had where members have gladly made the exchange.

Because of COVID-19 restrictions, our options can be quite limited, but we do our best. The family gets the coin and a letter, perhaps with some information or documentation of which they were unaware. It’s a very satisfying feeling to let families know that their son, father, uncle is not forgotten. So when the West Novas say they are “Always Faithful” you can believe them and know that they try their best to repay the debt they owe to those who gave all they had.

The coin shown on the right commemorates the sacrifice of Pte Phonse Sears of Locharber, Antigonish Co. Dave connected with his niece Catherine in Sydney, NS and had the coin sent to her. Phonse is buried in the Bone Cemetery, Algeria along with five other West Novas.



Message from the Honorary Team - 17 June 2020

Dear Friends,

COVID-19 has created many challenges for Nova Scotians including the West NSR. Many of our soldiers volunteered for full time service and were tasked as part of the Territorial Battalion Group and Domestic Response Company. Seeing so many young men and women eagerly step forward and answer the call was very humbling to both myself and Honorary Lieutenant Colonel Craig Gibson. I was so proud of our response and proud that our extended family followed our government’s recommendations to stay the blazes

home!

It was the DRC staffed by members of our Regiment that answered the call to support the Royal Canadian Mounted Police in Portapique, NS. Maj Ed Ormond and Sgt-Major Dave Morse were the right team and led with compassion and from the front.

When the CO and RSM were tasked to support the Land Component Headquarters in Halifax, Major Mike Smith stepped up as the Acting Commanding Officer. He hosted weekly updates and briefings with

the rear party and both HCol Gibson and myself participated in these updates. We were tasked to be part of the weekly “West NSR Wellness Calls” – quite frankly, it was these daily chats with our soldiers that helped me keep busy and your Honorary Team got the chance to interact with every member of our Regimental Team.

Our Regiment is preparing to start summer training with a target date of 30 June 2020. This date is condition based, but we have a target and we know what training our men and women need. We are

working in a new environment, and everyone is focused on following the health guidelines and staying safe. Your Honorary Team will be ever present and available to our Regiment. We all need to do our part and we need to help each other. In the near future, we will once again gather and join together to toast the finest regiment in Canada. Until then, stay safe, active and healthy and remember our soldiers who, like soldiers before, stand ready to serve our community and country.

Donald R. Downe
Honorary Colonel

Semper Fidelis



Craig Gibson
Honorary Lieutenant Colonel

Quick note from the Honorary Colonel



Fellow West Novas,
I want to say first how proud I am to be part of such a professional team. The photo to the left is of the CO, myself, HLCol Gibson, and the RSM during one foggy day at the Granville Range. Getting to see soldiers train and fire their personal weapons was impressive. Then, for me to have the opportunity to fire the C-7 was a real treat. I'm told I didn't do too bad at all. Having the chance to fire Canadian Forces service weapons myself is a great experience and a bit of a highlight for me.

Semper Fidelis,
Don Downe
Honorary Colonel

WNSR WWII Military Medal Recipients

In the last newsletter, I said I'd pass on the stories of some of our wartime heroes; here's the first one.

Private James Warner Marshall, MM (bar), son of



Mrs. Clara Marshall of Harwich Twp., Kent Co., ON., and husband of Mrs. Lillian (nee Howe) Marshall of Wallaceburg, ON, joined the Kent Regiment (MG) (later the Essex and Kent Scottish Regiment). He was transferred to the WNSR and went overseas with them.

Text of the citations for his Military Medals (MM and Bar) appear below:

A49541 Private James Warner Marshall – MM On 17 Dec 43, the West Nova Scotia Regt was attacking enemy positions before Casino Belardi (MR 316131). In the attack C49541 Pte Marshall, J.W., a Bren gunner, was severely wounded in the right shoulder, when his Pl met heavy enemy fire. Despite this fact he continued to provide covering fire for the advance.

Subsequently this platoon was ordered to take up an alternative position in anticipation of a counter-attack. Pte Marshall remained behind and again providing covering fire until the move of the Pl was completed. He then made his way with his Bren gun across bullet swept ground to his platoon.

Through his courage, indifference to pain and devotion to duty, the Pl was able to reorganize in the new position and repel the enemy counter-attack.

Source: <http://www.cmp-cpm.forces.gc.ca/dhh-dhp/gal/cao-aco/index-eng.asp#sr-rr>

In May of 1944, his family saw the presentation of the medal on a newsreel at the Capital Theatre in Chatham. James was later promoted to L/Cpl. and then to Corporal.

A49541 Corporal James Warner Marshall - MM (bar) On 15 September 1944 'A' Company of the West Nova Scotia Regiment was attacking the feature San Lorenzo (MR 8691), Corporal James Warner Marshall, MM, was a section commander of 8 platoon.

The advance was made under heavy shell fire and stubborn machine gun fire from German tanks and dug in infantry. The platoon commander and sergeant of 8 platoon were both wounded and evacuated. Corporal Marshall as the senior NCO immediately took command of the platoon, re-organized it and led the remainder to the objective and captured ten prisoners. His initiative and coolness in collecting the remnants of the platoon under heavy shell and mortar fire steadied the men and enabled them to push on despite the enemy fire.

This NCO's bravery and initiative undoubtedly kept his platoon as a fighting unit and was the spark which enabled his platoon to complete successfully its gallant action and secure all its objectives.

Source: <http://www.cmp-cpm.forces.gc.ca/dhh-dhp/gal/cao-aco/index-eng.asp#sr-rr>



After he was presented the Bar to his Military Medal, James was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant for which he had applied. James returned as a 'stretcher case aboard the "Lady Nelson"' which was expected to dock at Halifax on Sunday, 16 Sep 1945.

Senior Serving West Nova Awarded Order of Military Merit

Perhaps you didn't know that the Regiment's Senior Serving West Nova is Brigadier George Thomson, OMM, CD.

BGen Thomson began his time in uniform in the West Novas as an SYEP soldier, and he must have liked it because 34 years later, he's still in uniform and being successful. Along the way BGen Thomson was consistently promoted and demonstrated an aptitude for leadership. He commanded the West Novas 2009-13, then he was promoted to Colonel and appointed Commander 36 Canadian Brigade Group 2013-15. He then was posted to 5 Can Div HQ as Assistant Chief of Staff – Operations and Training 2015-17, and he was next appointed DComd Canadian Combat Support Brigade 2018-19. BGen Thomson was then promoted to his current rank and appointed DComd 5th Canadian Division on 18 Aug 2019.

During the time of all of the above, he was employed full time as Occupational Health and Safety Officer at the Annapolis Valley Centre for Education. He also completed the United Kingdom Territorial Army Command and Staff Course (2004) at the Royal Military Academy, a UN deployment to Haiti on OPERATION HAMLET (2012-13), as well as the National Security Programme (2017-18) at the Canadian Forces College in Toronto.

In December 2019, BGen Thomson was appointed to the Order of Military Merit in the rank of Officer. I couldn't get an official portrait, so I selected a newspaper clipping from MILCON '89 from my files.

Congratulations, General, you've done very well.



BEST IN THE BUSINESS — West Nova commanding officer Lt. Col. Ron Stonier congratulated 2/Lt. George Tomson, Middleton, after the subaltern's platoon placed first in the infantry platoon competition at Milcon '89 at CFB Gagetown earlier this month. Units from all over Atlantic Canada participated in the 10 day militia concentration. (DND)

Do you have letters, documents, news clippings, books, pictures, stories, items of uniform, badges, etc? Please consider donating to the West Nova Collection. We are also interested in West Nova medal groupings from WWII to be displayed with the name of the soldier who earned them.

Army Cadet News

Army Cadet Training in September was on time and on target as all five West Nova Army Cadet Corps began their training year. Throughout the Fall and Winter, progress was made until training was abruptly halted in mid-March due to the spread of Corona Virus. One of the big disappointments was cancellation of training at the Summer Cadet Training Centres across the country. Some cadets have lost opportunities to do Para Training or Shooting Competitions at Connaught and Bisley, as well as International Exchanges to Europe.

That's where good leadership comes in. I'm pleased to tell you that the five West Nova corps have excellent leadership in place: 603 Weymouth is led by Capt Robbie Sweeney; 686 Passchendaele in Bridgetown is led by Capt James Skafte; 1714 Annapolis Royal is led by Capt William Wallace; 2444 Kings County in Aldershot is led by Capt Mandy Forbes, and 2688 Bridgewater Kiwanis is led by Capt Bruce Barteaux.

During the social distancing period, corps met on *Zoom*, *Google Meet*, and other online platforms to conduct virtual meetings and award ceremonies. They've also used *Facebook* to keep in touch with cadets to maintain interest in the program because this isolation **will** end at some time, and we'll resume training in the best leadership and citizenship program in Canada. There have been games and challenges, training videos,



word searches, knowledge quizzes, and all kinds of other activities.

One important announcement is that each year the Provincial Branch of the Army Cadet League of Canada selects a cadet as the Outstanding Army Cadet in the province to be the recipient of the Branch President's Trophy. This year's recipient is Cadet CWO Sara Lynn Greenough from RCACC 2688 in Bridgewater, a West Nova Corps. I don't have a photo of her, but I've included one of the trophy which will be presented when restrictions have been lifted.

Teams of CIC Officers and Staff Cadets who would have worked at the Summer CTC in Argonaut will be employed to prepare materials for distance learning and the development of other training materials in case restrictions still apply in September.

This is also a way to honour the employment contracts to staff and students who rely on this employment to attend university or as a means of employment.

Your Army Cadet program is in good hands and will survive this pandemic. Here's hoping they'll come back stronger than ever.

One way you can help is by visiting the Army Cadet League of Canada YouTube channel and subscribing to that channel for free and subscribing at the link here:

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCt2U7Lv4LQ6AQ_arFndZ3mA

Login to YouTube and hit SUBSCRIBE

We Are Looking for WNSR History Items

In order to better tell the story of our Regiment, we're looking for documents, photos, recordings and artifacts that would help to preserve memories of those who have worn the West Nova uniform before us. Many WWII veterans have passed on, making it more difficult to preserve their stories.

If you have items you think would help us preserve the history of our Regiment, we'd be pleased to hear about them. It would help us educate the public and recognize the achievements of those who have gone before us. The RA welcomes any WWII artifacts and stories the public may have, but we're also becoming interested in items since the War as well. We need to put

some focus on the post-war history of the West Novas. We invite you to contact us if you have any artifacts to donate. Here's a sample information card we include with medal groups which have been donated.

F39873 - Private Russell Garfield Gehue
The West Nova Scotia Regiment

Pte Russel Gehue was born in Bear River, Annapolis Co., NS, lived in the Middleton area, and enlisted in the WNSR in Bridgewater in Nov 1939. He crossed the Atlantic on the Polish liner *Chrobry* with the first 800 West Novas to go overseas, trained with the Regiment in England, and landed in Sicily with them on 10 Jul 1943. Twenty three days later, on the 2nd of August, one month short of his 24th birthday. He is buried with 50 other West Novas at the Agira Canadian War Cemeterv. Agira, Sicily.

The WNSRRA Kit Shop is always there for you

• Get WNSR kit online any time. Many members attend regimental events such as parades, inspections, or funerals in the RA Kit (Blue blazer with crest, white or light blue shirt with Regimental tie, gray trousers, and black shoes). **Go online and order your kit today.**

wnsr.ca/catalog/24

• **Regimental history**, *West Novas*, by Thomas Raddall is **SOLD OUT**. Many thanks to those who purchased one of the 300 copies we had printed four years ago. We still have copies of *Times to Remember* by Bill Thexton.



WNSRRA Kitshop
Online 24/7
wnsr.ca/catalog/24

• The Kitshop now operates online in a hassle-free, convenient way to get the kit you want. We have blazer crests, Regimental ties, brass cap badges, ball caps, licence plates, and much more at wnsr.ca/catalog/24 Come in and browse around to see if there's anything you like.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, we ask that you pay your annual dues online at www.wnsr.ca/ra

Not yet a member of the Regimental Association?

Wondering how to pay your annual dues?

Want to support projects for your Regimental Family?

The Regimental Association is an active organization, preserving the past, supporting the present, and preparing for the future. We need a strong team to do this, and the task will be easier with greater numbers.

There are still many former West Novas who haven't received this newsletter and don't know what they're missing. If you know a West Nova who doesn't get our newsletter, please forward this one and encourage him or her to join the Regimental Association.

Even if you're not able to attend Reunions, you can help support the projects of the Association to preserve the memory of soldiers of the WNSR by joining the

WNSRRA and paying your \$30 annual dues.

Just go to www.wnsr.ca/ra/docs, complete the application for contact information (if you're not already a member), and pay your dues online with PayPal. You will have joined the best Regimental Association in the Canadian Army Reserve.

On *Facebook*, "Like" us at **West Nova Scotia Regiment** and join an excellent group of 921 members, many of whom you probably know. You can also support us by liking the **West Nova Scotia Regiment Regimental Association** page.

Semper Fidelis

