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"Treasures" from the Canadian War Museum's Backlog

Dan Glenney, Eric Fernberg, Harry Martin, Phil White, Jim Whitham, Carol Reid

In the 1970s Canadian War Museum curatorial staff decided they needed to bolster the scope of the museum's national military collection. Consequently, they placed ads in *Legion* magazine and enclosed flyers in veterans' pension cheques inviting veterans to send in military or military-related items they had in their possession that they thought would be of interest to the museum. The response was overwhelming. In the end, a grand total of 24,400 objects poured in; many more than was anticipated and much too large a number for the museum's small staff to properly register and catalogue. The only option was to carry out a basic inventory and then pack the objects away in boxes (which occupied a total of 197 pallets) pending the day when sufficient resources would become available to process them adequately, so that they would become properly identified and usable museum artifacts.

The boxes were still in storage and the objects not properly catalogued when Jack Granatstein arrived as CWM Director General and Chief Executive Officer in 1998. When it was pointed out to him, this backlog became one of those outstanding museum issues that he determined to resolve. The problem received additional impetus with the announcement of funding for a new museum building in 1999. Many duplicate and unusable materials were in the backlog and there would be no point in moving them all into a new museum building. Consequently, resources were provided by the Corporate Work Planning Process to resolve this long-standing museum problem. Four contractors were hired to methodically go through the items and, together with CWM registration and curatorial staff, determine what each and every item was, to ascertain its origin if possible, and then decide which ones were of interest for long-term preservation in the CWM's collection. The remainder would be recommended to the museum's Board of Trustees for deaccessioning, and then distributed amongst interested museums with which the CWM had completed a Memorandum of Understanding. This includes most of the military museums in Canada.

Begun in September 1999, the project was finally completed 28 months later. In the end, a total of 18,250 objects were deemed surplus to CWM needs and slated for deaccessioning. Only 1,000 of these were so deteriorated that they had to be disposed of, including a box of 1970s-era Canadian Army boots, some rotting army shirts, and decomposing synthetic gear. The CWM's Living History Collection, which maintains items that have a more active and hands-on role in the museum's educational programming, took 3,000 items, while the remaining 14,250 items were set aside for distribution amongst other museums. Throughout the process, items that seemed of special interest were identified, photographed and a short description written by members of the CWM collections staff noted above for the benefit of the Board of Trustees. A selection of these are presented here, as interesting momentoes of Canada's military experience and as noteworthy artifacts that are now a part of the national military collection and available for display and/or study in the new Canadian War Museum.

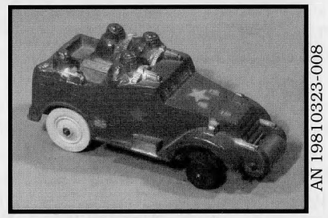
© *Canadian Military History*, Volume 11, Number 2, Spring 2002, pp.44-52.



AN: 19810581-010

Gas Hood, 1916

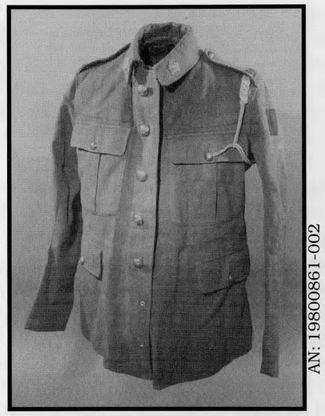
A very good example of an early war gas protection garment. The First World War saw the introduction of gas as an offensive weapon and the Canadians first encountered it at the Second Battle of Ypres in 1915. The earliest form of gas protection was a urine soaked rag placed over the mouth and nose. This hood was the first real attempt at protective equipment and consisted of a treated flannelette hood with glass eyepieces. Most of the remaining examples of this type of hood are extremely worn. This piece was probably never used in the field, which accounts for its almost pristine condition.



AN 19810323-008

Toy Scout Car c.1945

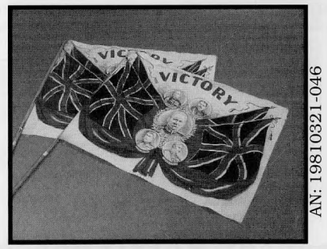
This toy is made of cast rubber and was modeled after the White scout-car, which was used by Canadian and American forces in northwest Europe during the Second World War.



AN: 19800861-002

Jacket, Service Dress, 1916

Gunner H.L. Walsh, Royal Canadian Artillery, wore this khaki wool service dress. It bears the maroon patch of the 5th Divisional Artillery. In addition, the jacket also sports two wound stripes, indicating that Gunner Walsh was wounded on two separate occasions. One was at the Battle of the Somme, 1916, where he was hit with 22 pieces of shrapnel. He was sent back to England and hospitalized for a year.

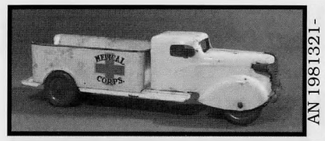


AN: 19810321-046

Boer War Souvenir Flags, 1902

Set of silk-screened patriotic flags from the Boer War. These are typical of mass produced souvenirs that celebrated the end of the Boer War 1899-1902. They are emblazoned with the images of popular military leaders such as Lord Roberts V.C., Lord Wolseley, and Lord Kitchener.

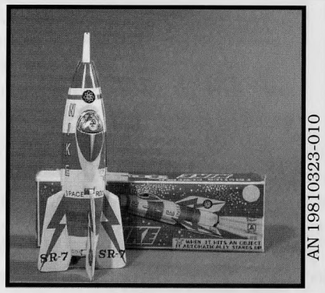
Published by Scholars Commons @ Laurier, 2002



AN 1981321-003

Toy Medical Corps Truck. c.1945

This toy truck is made from pressed tin and modeled after trucks and ambulances used by Allied forces during the Second World War. The Canadian War Museum has trucks similar to this in its collection.



AN 19810323-010

Toy Missile c.1960

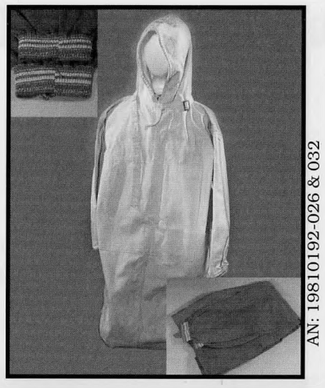
This wind-up toy missile was fashioned in pressed tin to represent (loosely) a United States Nike Missile of the Cold War era. It is in near mint condition, with its original box.



AN: 19810641-001

Pennant, Royal Canadian Artillery, 1943

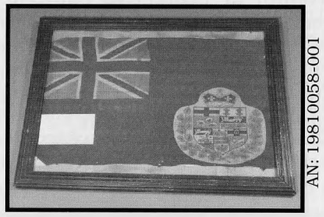
This homemade pennant was crafted by Canadian prisoners of war detained at Stalag VIII B in Germany. In the summer of 1943, the prisoners organized a softball league, and some prisoners from the Royal Canadian Artillery fielded a team. They made this pennant using a towel and yarn from unraveled worn clothing.



AN: 19810192-026 & 032

Ski Trousers & Smock, Canadian Army, c.1950

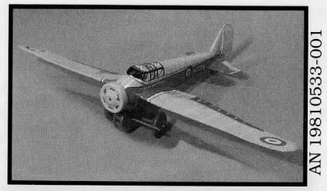
A unique set of Canadian Army clothes from the early 1950s. Though military clothing is often designed for environmental protection, this particular set is specific to use by ski troops. The Canadian Army did not, like the Norwegians and Finns, place great emphasis on the tactical military use of skis. Instead, Canada developed a sturdy winter combat snowshoe, which is still in use today. This ski troop version of Pattern 49 battle dress reminds us that Canada, a cold-weather county, did take an interest in ski warfare.



AN: 19810058-001

Flag, Canadian Red Ensign, 1918

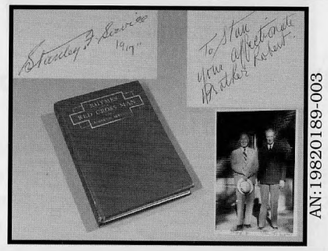
A Canadian red ensign flag reportedly carried into Mons by a British dispatch rider accompanying Canadian troops entering the city on Armistice Day, 11 November 1918. A small cotton flag, in relatively good condition, it is a pre-1871 version because it bears the shields of only five provinces. The dispatch rider held onto the flag afterwards, and he gave it to a Canadian couple visiting his home in England in 1928.



AN 19810533-001

Toy Airplane c.1945

This pressed tin toy represents aircraft (no specific model) flown as part of the British Commonwealth Air Training Program in Canada during the Second World War.



AN:19820189-003

Rhymes of a Red Cross Man by Robert W. Service (signed by the author)

When the First World War broke out in August 1914 Robert W. Service was living in France, already famous and financially successful due to the huge popularity of his earlier volumes of poetry. An early application to join the British army was rejected due to health reasons, but he served as a driver with the American Ambulance Unit of the Red Cross from September 1915 to June 1916, when health forced him to leave. Later he served as an officer with the Canadian Intelligence Corps. During his period of convalescence from the Ambulance Unit, he composed a volume of poetry based upon his experiences, entitled *Rhymes of a Red Cross Man*, dedicated to his youngest brother Albert, killed on the Somme in August 1916 with the 52nd Battalion, Canadian Expeditionary Force. Published later in the year by Barse and Hopkins in New York and by William Biggs in Toronto, the book became a best seller.

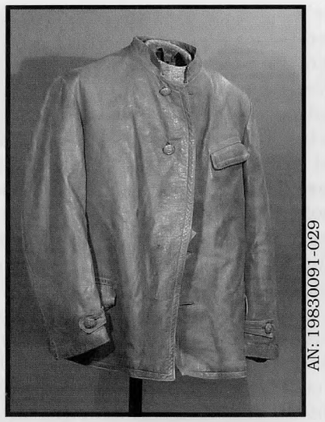
The inside front cover of this copy, found in the CWM backlog, bears the inscription in pen: "Stanley F. Service 1917," who was Robert Service's younger brother. The Service family followed Robert to Canada when he emigrated from England in 1904, eventually settling on a farm near Vegreville, Alberta. Stanley attended medical school in Toronto and became a doctor, practicing in both Toronto and Ottawa. Robert helped subsidize Stanley's medical school expenses, but the two for a time lost touch. They were only re-united in August 1940 when Robert and his family arrived by steamer in Montreal, escaping war-ravaged Europe. Stanley met them at the dock, and they went for a time to Stanley's house in Ottawa. Robert stayed in Canada until the end of 1945. It was probably during this period that he inscribed the book's flyleaf with its second and perhaps most interesting inscription: "To Stan. Your affectionate Brother Robert." Thus, this copy of *Rhymes of A Red Cross Man* contains not only the signature of Service's Canadian brother, Stanley, but an inscription in the hand of the poet himself.



AN: 19830407-003

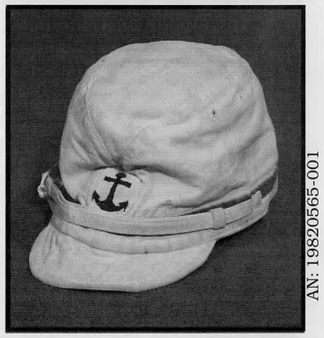
Blouse, Polish Air Force, 1943

After the capture of Poland by the Germans in 1939, many members of the Polish Air Force escaped to France to continue the fight flying alongside the French Air Force. When France fell in 1940, they were once again forced to find refuge, this time in England. Recognizing the talent and fighting ability of the Poles, the Royal Air Force formed these exiled pilots into Polish Squadrons. They were supplied with RAF clothing, such as this blouse, but wore Polish insignia to indicate their nationality.


AN: 19830091-029

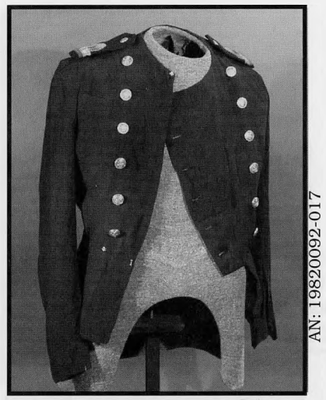
Jacket, Leather, U-boat Crew

A very rare German U-boat engine crewman's leather protective jacket. This was one of two types issued to submariners. Its short length and small collar were designed to reduce the possibility of its getting caught in moving machinery. The other type, intended for deck duty, was longer and afforded more protection.


AN: 19820565-001

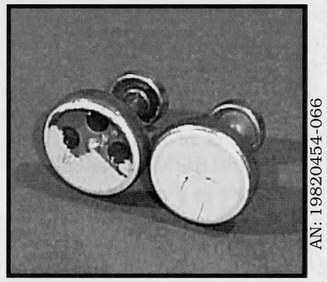
Cap, Combat, Japanese Navy, c.1941

Considering that the majority of Canada's war effort was in Europe, it is rare indeed that Japanese artifacts find their way into the museum's collection. This example of a Japanese Naval Lieutenant's combat cap was picked up as a souvenir by a liberated Canadian soldier, Sgt. Ron Claricoates of the Royal Rifles of Canada, who had been captured at Hong Kong. Claricoates donated the cap to the museum in 1982.


AN: 19820092-017

Blouse, Special Branch, RCN, c.1945

The nursing branch of the Royal Canadian Navy was the smallest group of Canadian military nurses during the Second World War. At the beginning of the war, Canada had no naval nursing sisters, let alone a medical branch. As the navy developed its own medical branch, uniform design was copied from the Royal Canadian Army Medical Corps. In January 1942, a distinctive navy blue version was adopted along with the traditional gold trimmed naval ranks insignia. This example was worn by Sub. Lieutenant Anne Cameron, a hospital laboratory technician. Technical officers in the Nursing Branch were identified by the green stripe on their shoulder boards.


AN: 19820454-066

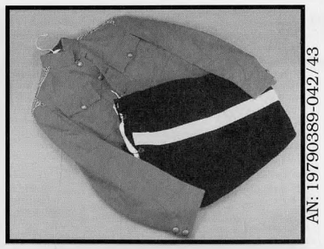
Cufflinks, Escape

These items illustrate the ingenuity and imagination applied to equipment intended to assist downed pilots to find their way on the ground. Each cufflink has a compartment containing a miniature compass. The face of the compartment is made of glass, which has been painted to resemble a mother-of-pearl inset. The downed pilot just had to scrape away the paint with a fingernail to expose the compass underneath. This pair of cufflinks was donated to the museum by Air Vice Marshal G.F. Jacobsen.


AN: 19800711-001

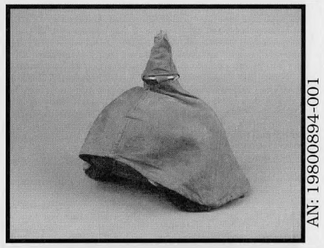
Full Dress Tunic, 33rd Huron Regiment, 1908

Founded in 1866 as the 33rd Battalion of Infantry, this Goderich, Ontario, militia unit was redesignated the 33rd Huron Regiment in 1900. During the First World War, it recruited for the 161st Battalion. This tunic, a splendid example of early 20th century Canadian militia officer's full dress, belonged to Captain Hugh B. Combe of Clinton, Ontario. After attending the Royal Military College in Kingston, Combe returned home to found the Clinton Knitting Mills and become active in the local militia. He served overseas with the British Army during the First World War, returning to Clinton after the war to become the Huron Regiment's commanding officer. The tunic is a memorial of sorts, for the Huron Regiment was disbanded in 1936, when it was amalgamated with the Middlesex Regiment to form the Middlesex and Huron Regiment.


AN: 19790389-042/43

Jacket and breeches, 25th Brant Dragoons, 1900

At the beginning of the 20th century, scarlet was still the colour of field uniforms worn by infantry and cavalry, units of the Canadian militia. British troops fighting in the South African War wore khaki, but it was still identified as dress for "foreign service." When the first Canadian contingent was mobilized for service in South Africa, however, the country had no stocks of khaki wool available. Consequently, the first Canadian troops went off to South Africa wearing brown-dyed canvas uniforms. This uniform of the 25th Brant Dragoons is a pristine example of the type still worn in the field in Canada at the turn of the 20th century.


AN: 19800894-001

German Pickelhaube, First World War

Most German units began the First World War wearing the hard leather pickelhaube, first introduced in 1842. They proved useless against the firepower brought against them in the First World War and by 1916 they had been replaced by a steel helmet, or stahlhelm. This example bears the special drab-coloured linen cover, still in pristine condition, which the troops wore into battle as a form of camouflage.


AN: 19801008-001

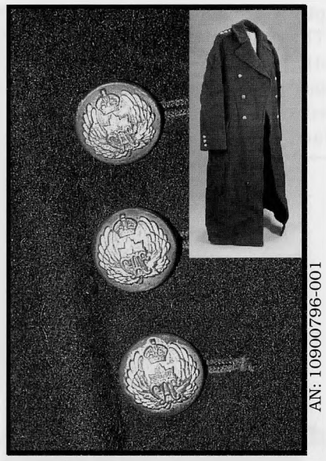
German Stahlhelm or steel helmet, First World War

The German army introduced this famous style of helmet in early 1916, following extensive tests, to afford better protection than the Picklehaube against the dangers inherent in trench warfare. This example bears one of the recommended styles of camouflage pattern, which were applied by the individual soldiers.


AN: 19780585-015

Smock, Denison, Camouflage, 1943

The German Army was a pioneer in developing disruptive pattern clothing as camouflage in the Second World War. By 1941, however, the British Army had developed this smock for its airborne forces (including 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion). Some were used by non-airborne troops. This particular example was worn by Lieutenant-Colonel Harry Proctor, Royal Canadian Army Medical Corps, who won the Distinguished Service Order for his services on Juno Beach on 6 June, 1944.


AN: 10900796-001

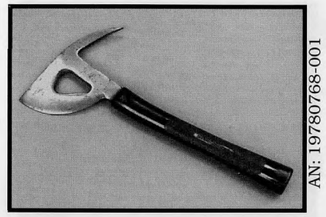
Great Coat, Canadian Air Force, 1922

Most Canadian pilots in the First World War served with Great Britain's Royal Flying Corps or Royal Naval Air Service. A Canadian Air Force was established towards the war's end, but it was abolished in mid-1919. A Canadian Air Force was reestablished in 1920, however, to be renamed the Royal Canadian Air Force in 1924. This great coat, which bears army-style rank insignia and Canadian Air Force buttons, is a very rare example of uniform dating from its short transitional period as the Canadian Air Force, before it became "Royal."


AN: 19790373-001

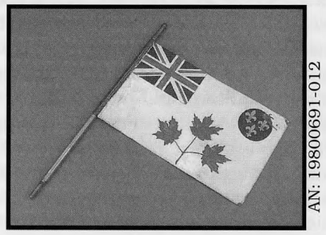
Toy Truck with Anti-Aircraft Gun, First World War

This First World War-era pressed tin toy has an anti-aircraft gun on the back of a flatbed truck. This is a very interesting example of how the influence of the war had penetrated the toy market, and shows that the importance of anti-aircraft fire had become recognized even at this level.


AN: 19780768-001

Emergency Axe

Aircraft flying over occupied Europe during the Second World War were equipped with hand axes, such as that shown here, for the crew to cut themselves free in case of a crash landing or other emergency. This particular example was salvaged from the wreck of a Lancaster bomber shot down near Vassen, Holland, on 28 September 1943, and donated to the CWM by a Dutch immigrant to Canada.


AN: 19800691-012

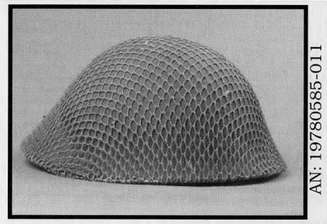
Vehicle Pennant from Lieutenant-General A.G.L McNaughton's Staff Car

This metal pennant was attached to the front fender of the staff car used by Lieutenant-General A.G.L McNaughton, commander-in-chief, First Canadian Army, 1942-43. The flag was designed by Colonel J. Fortescue Duguid, Director of the Historical Section of the General Staff, and was taken overseas by 1st Canadian Division in December 1939 as its battle flag. The flag found much favour with McNaughton, who flew it over his military headquarters. But it never evoked much enthusiasm amongst Canadian troops or politicians, and, by 1944, it had been supplanted by the Red Ensign as the Canadian military's official flag in Europe. McNaughton presented this pennant to Canadian War Museum historian John Swettenham on the occasion of the publication of Swettenham's three volume biography, *McNaughton*, in 1969. Swettenham, in turn, donated it to the Canadian War Museum.


AN: 19780582-002

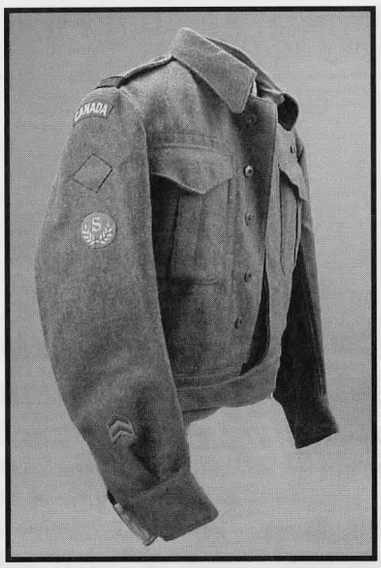
Gyrocompass

Two squadrons of Sherman tanks of the Canadian 6th Armoured Regiment that landed at Juno Beach on D-Day, 6 June 1944, were equipped with special flotation devices designed to enable them to "swim" ashore in advance of the invading infantry. Mainly due to the rough seas that prevailed on the day of the landing, seven of these tanks sank on the way in. All these amphibious tanks were equipped with special gyrocompasses to aid in navigation. This example was salvaged years later from one of these sunken Canadian Shermans.


AN: 19780585-011

Canadian 3rd Division Mark III Helmet

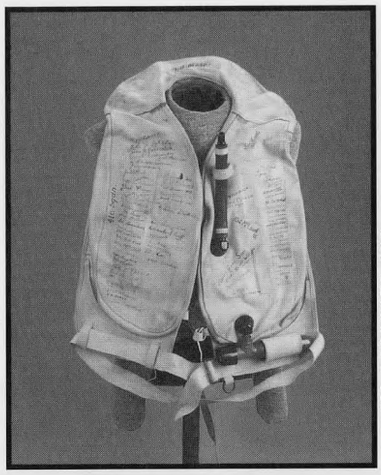
All British Commonwealth troops that landed with the first wave at Normandy on D-Day, 6 June, including the 3rd Canadian Infantry Division, wore this recently-developed British Mark III helmet. It was somewhat deeper than the earlier Mark II helmet worn by most other Canadian units. Lieutenant-Colonel Harry Proctor of the Royal Canadian Army Medical Corps wore this example. Critical to any depiction of 3rd Division units serving in the Northwest European campaign, this is one of the few authentic examples of this style of helmet in the CWM's collection.



AN: 19800966-001

Battledress Blouse, 1st Survey Regiment, Royal Canadian Artillery

Survey regiments of the Royal Canadian Artillery served in an artillery reconnaissance role. Besides producing maps, they were also responsible for locating enemy artillery batteries with pinpoint accuracy so that they could be taken out by Canadian counter-battery fire, which activities were usually very dangerous. The owner of this blouse, Private Maurice L. Gray, of Toronto, was badly wounded while serving in this role at Forli in Italy in November 1944, losing a leg as a result. His battledress blouse bears two red service stripes and one brass wound stripe and has been reinforced on the right side to accommodate the pressure of a crutch.

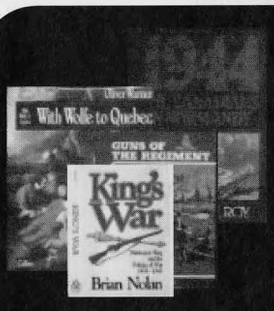


AN: 19800971-001

German Flotation Vest, 1944

On 14 July 1944, the four Spitfire squadrons of No. 127 Wing, Royal Canadian Air Force, were on the ground at their base at Crepon in France, when they were attacked by a large number of German fighter aircraft. A number of Canadian Spitfires managed to take off and brought down three enemy intruders. One German pilot baled out and, having the misfortune of landing on the Canadian airfield, was taken prisoner. The victorious Canadians seized his flotation vest, shown here, as a "trophy of war." A number of members of the wing then signed it, including H.W. "Wally" McLeod, commander of 443 Squadron, and Canada's second highest scoring ace of the war, who was to be killed in action.

Dan Glenney is Director of Collections Management and Planning at the Canadian War Museum. Eric Fernberg is Manager of the Dress and Insignia Collection; Phil White is Manager of the Arms and Armour Collection; Jim Whitham is Manager of the Transport and Artillery Collection; Harry Martin is Manager of the Living History Collection; and Carol Reid is Manager of the Archives Collection.



USED BOOK SALE

The Friends of the Canadian War Museum is a volunteer organization whose purpose is to provide support for the Canadian War Museum. One of their main ongoing activities is to raise funds to assist the CWM. In this regard, the Friends have begun to sell used military history books, donated from collections of members and others, over the internet. About sixty books have been listed as of the end of May, and more will go up as the time of volunteers allows. The current books have been categorized by the topics of naval, aviation, pre-20th century, biography/memoir and war novels.World War I books will go up soon. Please take a look at www.friends-amis.org/internetsales.html. All proceeds are used towards supporting the CWM.