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CANADIAN MILITARY HISTORY

BOOK REVIEW

SUPPLEMENT

Spring 2007



Issue 19

Wayne Ralph, **Aces, Warriors and Wingmen: Firsthand Accounts of Canada's Fighter Pilots in the Second World War** (Toronto: John Wiley & Sons, 2005), \$34.99, 272 pages, ISBN 0-470-83590-7.

Norm Shannon, **From Baddeck to the Yalu: Stories of Canada's Airmen at War** (Ottawa: Esprit de Corps Books, 2005), \$21.99 paper, 224 pages, ISBN 1-895896-30-4.

Cynthia J. Faryon, **Unsung Heroes of the Royal Canadian Air Force: Incredible Tales of Courage and Daring during World War II** (Canmore, AB: Altitude Publishing, 2003), \$9.95 paper, 126 pages, ISBN 1-55153-977-2.

One of Canada's best aviation historians has done it again with this fascinating account of Canadians in aerial fighting during the Second World War. What makes *Aces, Warriors and Wingmen* so effective is that it's not a traditional narrative that attempts to follow the course of the war in chronological order. Instead, Ralph builds the book around a number of biographical sketches that cover the breadth of the war experience, from Canadians in the Royal Air Force in 1939 to their readjustment to civilian life

after the war. But even so, Ralph changes things up by starting with J.F. "Stocky" Edwards' exploits in the Western Desert and Canadians in the siege of Malta, returning later to the fall of France and the Battle of Britain.

The effect is to create something rather like a scrapbook. The reader can go through it cover to cover, or randomly flip through the biographical sketches, each of which contains a personal profile, wartime and recent photographs, reminiscences, and excerpts from other historical accounts. Scattered throughout are other items of special interest, such as portions of the letters of Battle of Britain veteran Willie McKnight.

The clue to Wayne Ralph's approach can be found in his prologue, which will strike a chord with anyone who has done oral history interviews. Memory is a curious thing, sometimes muddled and confused, sometimes frighteningly sharp. In interviewing airmen over the years, Ralph came into contact with many types of memories, from the man who was determined that only he could set the historical record straight to the man who said "I think I got the Croix de Guerre. But I don't remember." In *Aces, Warriors and Wingmen*, Ralph has

gathered together dozens of different memories and woven them into a powerful and effective book that is "more about people than campaigns, about humanity rather than fighter aircraft, about sociology rather than technology" (xiii).

Norm Shannon, a veteran of fifty-two B-25 Mitchell operations during the Second World War, takes a more traditional approach with his narrative history of Canadian military aviation. He begins at the very beginning, with the refusal in 1910 of Canada's Militia Council to consider the airplane as a possible weapon of war. From that point, he takes us through three wars (and two periods of peacetime reduction in the strength of the air force) in prose that could perhaps only have been written by one who had flown in combat himself. Well illustrated (in colour as well as black and white), it covers much familiar ground but will provide a good read for the non-specialist looking for a good survey history.

Younger readers will find equal interest in Faryon's *Unsung Heroes of the Royal Canadian Air Force*, a collection of twelve accounts of Canadians in the air war. They are well written and engaging, and the only complaint one can make about the book is its balance. Despite the

title and the photograph of an echelon of Spitfires on the front cover, ten of the twelve chapters deal with men in Bomber Command, the other two are about fighter pilots, and there is no mention of Transport Command, Coastal Command, the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan, or air operations in the Far East (all of which produced their fair share of unsung heroes, courage, and daring). The book is a good start, but perhaps a second volume is in order.

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Katherine Wilson-Simmie, **Lights Out!: The Memoir of Nursing Sister Kate Wilson, Canadian Army Medical Corps, 1915-1917** (Ottawa: CEF Books, 2004 [1981]), \$19.95 paper, 199 pages, ISBN 0-896979-27-0.

Individual accounts of women at war are rare. This book by Katherine Wilson-Simmie on her active duty during the First World War as a Canadian Nursing Sister in England, France, and Greece is a fine addition to military literature. Following her discharge from the army, Wilson-Simmie used her diary to write a book for her children as a souvenir. Upon learning that no books had been written by her fellow Nursing Sisters, in her own way she attempted to "provide a clear picture of the life of a Canadian Army Nursing Sister during the 1914-1918 World War" (7). *Lights Out!* is the memoir of an educated, strong-willed, determined, and proud Anglican woman. The book, written with an air of confidence and formality, describes the Nursing Sisters' wartime impressions of hospitals, soldiers, the environment in which they worked, and their recreational activities.

Bursting with patriotic pride and affected by the fervor of the time, Wilson enlisted in her hometown of Owen Sound, Ontario. Proudly dressed in her Canadian Army Medical Corps uniform, she was ready to serve her nation and left Halifax on the troop ship *Hesperian*, which carried her to Liverpool.

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She served at various hospitals, including No. 4 British General Hospital in France, No. 3 Canadian Stationary Hospital on Lemnos Island in the Mediterranean, and No. 44 Casualty Clearing Station in France. In the latter hospital, she illustrated her experiences of attending to the wounded men, including a young German prisoner. At first she detested the very idea of helping the enemy but, upon looking at his terrified face, she realized that "he was no longer a hated Hun, just a small wounded boy without a friend on any side" (129). Eventually, the reality of nursing sick, wounded, and shell-shocked men took its toll on Wilson, as her mental health started to be affected by this environment of death. Nevertheless, the book is about Wilson's life rather than the death that surrounded her, and she tends to focus on positive nostalgic memories rather than the devastation of war.

LI

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Albert P. Clark, **33 Months as a POW in Stalag Luft III: A World War II Airman Tells His Story** (Golden, CO: Fulcrum Publishing, 2005), \$17.95 US paper, 207 pages, ISBN 1-55591-536-1.

There has long been a fiction that Hollywood "Americanized" the story of the Great Escape to make it more attractive to cinema-goers in the United States. In fact, as "Bub" Clark's new autobiography makes clear, American airmen were involved in every aspect of the escape organization, some in senior positions, and it was only their transfer to a separate camp that kept them from taking part in the escape.

Clark was one of the first members of the US Army Air Force to reach Stalag Luft 3, downed on 22 July 1942 over the coast of France. He recalls being terribly embarrassed by the situation: "Here I was, the second most senior and experienced pilot in our group, responsible for the training of our young pilots, and I had become the first battle casualty" (26). He was a sen-

ior lieutenant-colonel, a graduate of West Point, and now he was in the bag after firing only a few shots in anger. But his war was far from over. When X Organization began the operation to construct the three tunnels that would eventually culminate in the Great Escape, Clark was made head of security, in the inner circle of the escape leadership. He continued to play a leadership role after the USAAF POWs were moved to a new camp in September 1943, and when the prisoners were marched away from the advancing Russians in January 1945. Liberated in May 1945, Clark remained in the service, eventually retiring as a lieutenant-general in 1974.

Clark's memoirs will be of interest to anyone who has followed the story of the Great Escape, for he is one of the last survivors of X Organization's inner ring of top decision-makers. He has some unique insights into the personalities involved and the plan that eventually resulted in the escape of seventy-six Allied airmen, and relates them with the mixture of commonsense and cockiness for which he was known in the camp. Perhaps more importantly, it should put to rest the hoary old myth that film-makers did violence to the history by inserting Americans into the story of the Great Escape.

JFV

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Russell A. Hart, **Clash of Arms: How the Allies Won in Normandy** (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2004), \$24.95 US paper, 488 pages, ISBN 0-8061-360-5-7.

An excellent example of the "new military history," *Clash of Arms: How the Allies Won in Normandy* places an operational analysis of the campaign within the cultural, economic, and political context of its combatant nations. The book is divided according to country and chronology. By tracing the development of the German, American, British, and Canadian armies within context of the interwar years

and early phases of the Second World War, Hart provides the reader with a superb historical understanding of how the armies fought the way that they did, and, perhaps more importantly, why.

Hart argues that the benchmark for success in Normandy was an army's ability to adapt both doctrinally and operationally to the challenges of the battlefield. The United States Army, which emphasized "bottom-up" operational research, was the best at adapting, a process that entailed not only observing and analyzing combat operations in Normandy, but also ensuring that the appropriate lessons were effectively disseminated. Although enjoying a wealth of combat experience and capable of exhibiting sublime tactical skill and flexibility (especially in the defence), the German forces in Normandy were prevented from strategically and operationally adapting to the battle as well as the Americans by the inculcation of a stifling Nazi political doctrine that discouraged experiment and variation. As a result, US forces were able to outfight gradually the Germans in their sector and force a breakout after the success of Operation COBRA.

However, despite their inherent weaknesses the *Wehrmacht* and *Waffen SS* were still superior to the Canadian and British forces. Both Commonwealth armies consistently utilized obsolete or inappropriate tactics and could be painfully slow to adapt to the realities of the Normandy battlefield. These failings, along with the effects of interwar neglect, a strong desire to avoid casualties, and an over-emphasis on tradition, contributed to the repeated failure of the Anglo-Canadian offensives designed to penetrate the German lines in the eastern half of the battlefield. Although Hart notes that the Canadians, less laden with tradition, generally learned more quickly than the British, they could not overcome earlier deficiencies in time to prevent fully the German "escape" at Falaise.

Hart's melding of operational and non-military factors, the reha-

bilitation of the tactical acumen of the United States Army (with the concomitant dispelling of the myth of the German "super-soldier"), and emphasis on the impact of Nazism on the German forces place his analysis at the forefront of the new wave of Second World War historiography. From the perspective of the Canadianist, Hart's work is further refreshing and rewarding in that it, unlike almost all general analyses of the campaign, treats the Canadian Army in Normandy as a separate entity from the British. This is likely reflective of the *Art of War* series in which *Clash of Arms* was originally published by Lynne Rienner Publishers. John English, author of *The Canadian Army and the Normandy Campaign: A Study in the Failure of High Command*, the most comprehensive and erudite dedicated operational study of the Canadian Army's performance in Normandy, is an editor of *The Art of War* series. Together, they represent two of the best studies of the Canadian Army's performance in the seminal battle of the campaign for north-west Europe.

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Adrian Hayes, **Pegahmagabow: Legendary Warrior, Forgotten Hero** (Huntsville, ON: Fox Meadow Creations, 2003), \$19.95 paper, 96 pages, ISBN 0-9681452-8-0.

Supported by a wide variety of sources, including Pegahmagabow's personal papers, photographs, archival documents, magazines, and published accounts, Adrian Hayes delivers a short, clear, and interesting analysis of one of Canada's forgotten heroes.

Through the life story of Pegahmagabow, Hayes successfully pulls together details that connect local, national, and international history during the First World War and after. The author describes the difficult social and physical environment in which the people of the Parry Island band – now the Wasauksing First Nation – were living before the outbreak of the Great

War, and how they saw that conflict as a way to prove their courage and loyalty to Canada in order to gain civil rights when they returned from the front. If the goal was to prove bravery during the war, Francis Pegahmagabow clearly qualified as an outstanding warrior by receiving a Military Medal and two bars. Canada, the Department of Indian Affairs, the press, and the aboriginal community received him with honour upon his return, but that did not last.

The second part of Pegahmagabow's life in Canada would be as hard as that in the trenches of the Western Front. His sacrifices, medals, and courage in the past would not prove to be good enough to win the respect of the Canadian government and to erase some of the selfishness among local Indians. Pegahmagabow's return marked the beginning of a new set of struggles in a still difficult economic situation on Parry Island, where he had to work with the Indian agents at Parry Sound, who seemed to be obstacles to the natives' material progress.

One of Hayes' main theses is that Pegahmagabow became one of the most important native leaders who fought for native self-government in the postwar years and that native political activism in Canada was not an extension of the American civil rights movement of the 1960s. On the contrary, in 1943 Pegahmagabow was "a member of a national delegation that demonstrated on Parliament Hill in Ottawa for the exemption of natives from income tax and conscription," writes Hayes, and "he later became a member of the National Indian Government after it was formed in Ottawa in June 1945 and served two terms as supreme chief" (10).

The legacy of Pegahmagabow is clear and should be recognized today by Canadians. Since the 1960s, aboriginal associations have been encouraged as partners in the governing process and today, the Assembly of First Nations receives about \$6 million a year from Indian Affairs. All this accomplishment was in part due to the efforts of a

great warrior who survived the war, and helped others to survive it, a restless warrior who returned home to continue the fight.

HGM

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David Mackenzie, ed., **Canada and the First World War: Essays in Honour of Robert Craig Brown** (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), \$35.00 paper, 452 pages, ISBN 0-8020-8445-1.

Robert Craig Brown was an historian at the University of Toronto who made significant contributions to the study of the Canadian experience in the First World War. *Canada and the First World War*, edited by David Mackenzie, is a collection of essays offered up in recognition of Brown's contribution and as a tribute to the eminent teacher and historian.

Canada and the First World War offers a unified collection of essays by friends, colleagues, and former students of Brown. These articles re-examine how Canada may, or in some cases may not, have been affected by the Great War, and the authors approach the question by examining factors as diverse as gender, ethnicity, class, and region. In many of these essays, traditionally accepted arguments are revised. For example, Douglas McCalla argues that the war was not the great transformer of the Canadian economy as many previous historians have claimed. Rather, McCalla argues that the war was more of a disruption than a transformation to the Canadian economy. By the same token, Joan Sangster believes that the credit attributed to the Great War for transforming the lives of women has been largely over-exaggerated. Sangster provides insights into the actual number of women employed in the munitions industry, noting that familiar photos of women in the factories were taken mostly for purposes of propaganda. Sangster notes that increasing numbers of women in the workforce was simply a pre-war trend that continued through the war years and beyond.

Besides providing new insights to re-examine old arguments, this collection is also significant for its attempts to provide historical context. Especially noteworthy are essays by Terry Copp and John English. Copp examines the events of 1914-1918 and states that while Canadians may have supported the war for different reasons, they were well aware of the possible consequences. John English looks at the issue of political leadership, asking "What did leadership mean to [Prime Minister Robert] Borden in his own times?" (78). In a fascinating article that provides both clarity and context, English notes that while Borden's political leadership and language may be considered "traditional," it was a political style that was well-suited to Canada at the time.

Overall, this is a collection of essays that both stand on their own, and provide a unified portrait of the Canadian experience in the First World War. Arranged in sections entitled "Fighting the War," "The War at Home," and "The Aftermath," and including essays by some of today's most prominent Canadian historians including J.L. Granatstein, Margaret MacMillan, and Jonathan F. Vance, this is an essential collection for both students and enthusiasts of Canadian and military history.

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H.P. Willmott, **The Battle of Leyte Gulf: The Last Fleet Action** (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), \$35.00 US, 398 pages, ISBN 0-253-34528-6.

H.P. Willmott's newest book is a detailed account primarily concerning the October 1944 naval battles fought between American and Japanese forces in and near the Philippine Archipelago. The text features factual material interwoven with substantive analysis. This book divides roughly into two conceptual elements: the battle itself, and two larger discursive sections.

Willmott introduces a chronometric approach to the various ac-

tions as a whole, noting that other accounts have treated these battles chronologically but in separated frameworks. The advantage, and creativity, to this is that Willmott outlines where events in one action influenced another event, a dimension often missing from previous accounts. Willmott re-conceptualizes the Battle of Leyte Gulf as "a series of actions, not a single battle" (2), gives greater focus to the preliminaries and follow-up actions, and attempts a relatively concise account of the event.

Leyte Gulf is deserving of this historical attention for two reasons: its unusual character, and because it was the last fleet action. With respect to the latter, the oddity is that the battle was fought even though the strategic turning point of the war had long passed. This relates to Willmott's larger discussions, what he titles "The Nature of War and of Victory" and "To Pause and Consider: Blame, Responsibility, and the Verdict of History." These sections are more thought-provoking than the discussion of the battle.

The major concern is with Willmott's vague promotion of the conventional brute-force theory: "the outcome of operations was never in question" (3), "Age of Mass" (7), "massive superior American power" (8), "American forces moved to overwhelm Japanese forces" (9), and so on. This theory sits uncomfortably because it ignores the complexities and contributions of land battles. Indeed, the least desirable conceptualization here is that "the basis of American success lay primarily in sea and air power" (239), an assertion that is not necessarily incorrect, but far too simplistic. Note, Guadalcanal saw inferior numbers of emaciated US troops – with inadequate naval support – victorious. Peleliu saw the 14th Regiment break the tough 1st Marine Division. And Iwo Jima's battle casualty ratio was four Americans dead, missing, and wounded for every five Japanese killed or taken prisoner. Naval and air can do only so much until an individual must pull a trigger and settle the issue permanently – brute-force theory

and its reliance on vague national economics is not sufficient to explain military victory. Another reading would argue that Willmott is stimulating discussion, and admitting that brute force has “some academic antiseptic” (9). His work is quite advanced, but drawing conclusions about the Pacific War as a whole from naval and naval/air battles alone is problematic.

Overall, however, this book is superb. The anglophile tone in Pacific War history is irksome, and Willmott uses “shoulds” too often. But the research included satisfactory American archival sources (even allowing for the problematic *The Barrier and the Javelin*, 1983) and the charge of extensive detailing that has dogged Willmott for many previous monographs is, thankfully, not warranted here. He writes solidly, with strong flow and captivating narration. A must for naval and Pacific War historians.

DAC

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Aidan MacCarthy, **A Doctor's War** (Cork, Ireland: Collins Press, 2005), £9.99 paper, 160 pages, ISBN 1-903464-70-6.

When Aidan MacCarthy graduated from medical school in Ireland in 1938, he faced a situation that is unheard of in twenty-first-century Canada: there were too many doctors and not enough positions for them. After working at various part-time jobs, he took the route that many of his contemporaries did – he joined the peacetime Royal Air Force. Like many men in the same position, he got much more than he bargained for.

MacCarthy served first in the campaign in France in 1940, then, after a short stint in England, was transferred to the Far East, only to be captured at the fall of Java. As a medical officer, he watched the physical deterioration of the men under his command due to the lack of food, especially vitamins. He was astonished at how quickly they declined, and also at how rapidly they could improve with fairly basic foods and medicines. There are

also some pretty grisly descriptions of the consequences of a diet of poor food – his account of what happens when the eggs in worm-infested rice hatch in a person's stomach is not to be read near meal time.

Later in the war, MacCarthy was moved to Japan, and eventually to a camp in Nagasaki. The prisoners could tell from the demeanour of their guards that the war was drawing to an end. Then, one day in early August, two bombers passed overhead and dropped what looked like small parachutes. “There then followed a blue flash, accompanied by a very bright magnesium-type flare ... Then came a frighteningly loud but rather flat explosion which was followed by a blast of hot air” (125). They looked out of their dugout to a scene of absolute devastation in an eerie atmosphere – “Most frightening of all was a lack of sunlight – in contrast to the bright August sunshine that we had left a few minutes earlier, there was now a kind of twilight” – and MacCarthy's description of travelling around Nagasaki over the next few days is powerful and harrowing: “We all genuinely thought, for some time, that this was the end of the world” (126).

Originally published in 1979, this reprint is long overdue, for MacCarthy's is one of the best accounts of captivity in the Far East. It is a remarkable testament to a man who never lost his humanity in the most inhuman of situations.

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David Clarke, **The Angel of Mons: Phantom Soldiers and Ghostly Guardians** (Etobicoke, ON: John Wiley & Sons, 2004), \$35.99, 278 pages, ISBN 0-470-86277-7.

In this fascinating piece of historical detective work, David Clarke deconstructs the legends of ghostly interventions on the battlefields during the First World War, of which the Angel of Mons is only the best known example. There were legions of archers, figures of St. George, clouds of ethereal mist, lines of medieval cavalrymen,

Christ-like figures in white – all of which were said to have appeared at various places and times on the battlefield to lift the spirits of British soldiers when all seemed lost.

According to Clarke, much of this myth can be traced to one man, Arthur Machen, who published a short story called *The Bowmen* (reprinted in an appendix to the book), about a ghostly rank of archers that materialized on the battlefield during the retreat of the British Expeditionary Force in 1914 to help stem the German offensive. From the very beginning, Machen insisted that his story was pure fiction, but his protestations were ignored by virtually everyone. Over time, his original story was embellished, adapted, and transformed by journalists, ministers, and soldiers, to the point that, if one were to believe all the various sightings that were reported, it would have to be conceded that there were more ghostly apparitions on the Western Front than soldiers.

Clarke does an excellent job of tracing the growth of these myths, all of which were based on hearsay. As Machen wrote, “Someone (unknown) has met a nurse (unnamed) who has talked to a soldier (anonymous) who has seen angels. But THAT is not evidence” (162). But the absence of evidence was irrelevant. People desperately wanted to believe that supernatural forces had intervened on Britain's behalf, and would accept no argument to the contrary.

The author would have benefited from casting his net a little more widely. Horne and Kramer's book on German atrocities in Belgium in 1914 has much valuable information on the extreme psychological stresses experienced by soldiers in battle and the ability of those stresses to create delusional states in which normally rational soldiers might see visions. He mentions Sir Oliver Lodge's foray into the debate, but hasn't consulted Rene Koller's *Searching for Raymond*, which examines the Church of England's official response to the popularity of occultism after the First World War. And

regrettably, there is no mention of Katharine Hale's very influential poem "The White Comrade" or Cecil Francis Whitehouse's poem "The Archers of Mons," which brought these legends to Canada.

Still, this is a fine book. Clarke's analysis is judicious and fair-minded – he concludes that there is not a single piece of first-hand evidence to support the existence of any of these apparitions, and makes a convincing case for how and why they became so deeply ingrained in the public consciousness of many nations. Ultimately, he argues, people believed what they wanted to believe, and the facts weren't allowed to get in the way.

JFV

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Craig B. Cameron, ed., **Born Lucky: RSM Harry Fox, MBE, One D-Day Dodger's Story** (St. Catharines, ON: Vanwell, 2005), \$18.95 paper, 216 pages, ISBN 1-55125-102-7.

Although the cover of this book shows the cap badge of the Queen's Own Rifles, Fox spent most of the war with the Hastings and Prince Edward Regiment, a situation that wasn't entirely his own choice. He had responded to a call for volunteers for key soldiers to transfer to front-line units, gain combat experience, and then return to their units to take part in the invasion of France. When Fox left the QOR on such a posting on 3 October 1943, he had no idea he would spend the entire war with the Hasty Ps.

Fox's memoir is not so much a chronological narrative as a series of short vignettes that are strung together in mostly chronological order. That he always considered himself a member of the Queen's Own doesn't mean that he failed to fit in with the Plough Jockeys; on the contrary, Fox seems to have been an immensely effective RSM almost from the day that he joined the unit in Italy on 14 January 1944. Not quite the typical fire-and-brimstone RSM, Fox knew he had to tread carefully to be accepted as a re-

placement for his very popular predecessor (who went on to become the top Warrant Officer in the 1st Canadian Army).

Born Lucky (the title refers to Fox's many brushes with death, perhaps more than the average infantryman would have encountered) intersperses narratives of battles and patrols with thematic sections dealing with combat stress, the treatment of POWs, relations with Italian civilians, and the troops' opinion of prime minister Mackenzie King. Hand-drawn maps complement the battle narratives, but the book is more about the men who fought than the battles they fought. And by the end of the war, after his unit had been moved to north-west Europe, Fox admits that he was getting close to the end of his rope. But on 23 April 1945, the regiment fired its last shots of the war and by October Fox and the unit were back in Ontario. For anyone interested in the Italian campaign or the experiences of a regimental sergeant-major in a front-line unit, *Born Lucky* will be a real treat.

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Milly Walsh and John Callan, eds., **We're Not Dead Yet: The First World War Diary of Private Bert Cooke** (St. Catharines, ON: Vanwell, 2006), \$18.95 paper, 184 pages, ISBN 1-55125-087-X.

It is difficult to appreciate fully how the First World War affected the lives of the soldiers who directly experienced its horrors. The daily struggle to stay dry, get rest, and find provisions was a large part of that experience, but it is rarely conveyed in secondary sources with the same amount of detail or insight that a first-hand account can offer. Private Bert Cooke of the 75th Battalion, Canadian Expeditionary Force, kept a written record of his experiences in the First World War, and it is through his diary and letters that the reader can come closer to appreciating the day-to-day life of a soldier. Stories of days spent marching in knee-deep mud, shivering nights sleeping in barns, and

the terror in the trenches are generally well known, but Bert's account of his years in France and Belgium provide much more than just these details. Despite the hardships he had to endure, Bert maintained a curiosity about the people he met in the towns in which he and his company were billeted, felt pity for those who had lost their homes and livelihood, questioned the logic of war, and, above all, did not waver in his sense of duty or the responsibilities that came with it.

Bert kept a written record of his experiences so that his family would know how he had managed during the difficult years he served in the CEF. Fortunately, his diary has been published as part of the Vanwell Voices of War series, and it provides a valuable account of the war as seen through the eyes of one man. The Great War has been thoroughly studied and analyzed, but the publication of Private Bert Cooke's diary reveals that there is still much to be gained from first-hand accounts of the war.

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John Boileau, **Half-Hearted Enemies: Nova Scotia, New England and the War of 1812** (Halifax: Formac, 2005), \$19.95 paper, 176 pages, ISBN 0-88780-657-0.

The War of 1812 lasted for thirty months. As John Boileau puts it in his aptly titled book, "if the United States and Great Britain had only been the half-hearted enemies that Nova Scotia and New England were, it would not have been necessary to go to war at all."

The introduction to the book outlines the causes of the War of 1812 and five chapters deal with incidents related to it. At first, Nova Scotians saw no reason to stop trading with New Englanders just because the United States and Britain were at war. As the conflict accelerated, Nova Scotian privateers took American prizes and British troops invaded Maine. Boileau puts a fine edge on some well told tales, such as the encounter between the Royal Navy's *Shannon* and the

American *Chesapeake* off Boston harbour in June 1813.

Half-Hearted Enemies reveals, in detail, how battles were fought and prisoners treated during the War of 1812. As a former Canadian military officer, Boileau is particularly good at describing how commanders disposed their troops. He has a neat way of summing up events with short, insightful observations. Captain Philip Broke won sea battles because "he was ... a rarity among British naval officers: he believed in continuous gunnery and constant practice." Boileau notes that the *Chesapeake* sailed under a banner proclaiming "Free Trade and Sailors' Rights," and writes of the plight of black slaves who moved to Nova Scotia during the war. Some fought bravely with the British, but had a hard time making a living in their new home; Boileau draws on the work of Robin Winks to explain the reasons, which included racism. He links the past to the present, telling how the White House in Washington got its name, how Deadman's Island, on Halifax's Northwest Arm, became a memorial site for American prisoners and others who died in nearby Melville Island military prison, and where the money to launch Dalhousie University originated.

This lively, readable book validates the claim of the French economist Frédéric Bastiat: "Where goods do not cross frontiers, armies will."

JL

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J.L. Granatstein, **Hell's Corner: An Illustrated History of Canada's Great War, 1914-1918** (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2004), \$50.00, 198 pages, ISBN 1-55365-047-6.

"It had been a long, bloody road for the Canadians from the outbreak of war in August 1914, and the Canadian Corps' road past Vimy was destined to be bloodier still." In this 2004 publication, one of Canada's most respected historians provides the reader with a chrono-

logical record of the Canadian experience in the First World War. In a mere 198 pages, Granatstein traces Canadian involvement in the Great War from the outbreak of the conflict to its conclusion and the eventual demobilization of Canadian soldiers. Although Granatstein does not provide the student of Canadian history with any new information, he successfully and concisely describes the transformation of Canadian troops from untrained and ill-disciplined recruits into elite soldiers who could hold their own against professionals, enhancing the reading experience with a total of 135 images illustrating the Canadian experience.

Through the first two chapters, Granatstein describes the mismanagement and scandal surrounding Sam Hughes' mobilization strategy and choice of suppliers of equipment to the "ill-disciplined" Canadian troops. It is in the opening chapters that the reader is reminded of Hughes' practice of awarding lucrative contracts to his cronies and of the ill-fated Ross rifle. Furthermore, the author discusses the superior equipment and training of the German forces, leaving the reader to question how the poorly equipped, rag-tag Canadian contingent was able to achieve ultimate victory. However, despite a "brutal introduction to the Western Front in 1915," in the following chapters, Granatstein recounts the Canadian Corps' ability to overcome the various obstacles and realize a number of stunning victories at Vimy, Passchendaele, and Hill 70.

Throughout this survey account of Canada's involvement in the First World War, Granatstein provides the reader with effective descriptions of individual battles and their outcomes. Although he does not provide a detailed account of strategy that may be lost upon those without a strong background or interest in military history, he does put a human face on Canada's defeats and victories. The use of soldiers' personal accounts and the judicious use of images supplied by the Canadian War Museum allow the reader to understand the horrors

and suffering experienced by those who fought, both through their words and through their faces. It is Granatstein's masterful use of soldiers' stories and images that makes *Hell's Corner* a valuable addition to the national narrative.

JC

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Erik Somers and René Kok, eds., **Jewish Displaced Persons in Camp Bergen-Belsen, 1945-1950: The Unique Photo Album of Zippy Orlin** (Seattle: University of Washington Press [distributed in Canada by UBC Press], 2004), \$44.95 paper, 232 pages, ISBN 0-295-98420-1.

Bergen-Belsen is best known as the concentration camp in which the Nazis committed unimaginable atrocities against its primarily Jewish inmates, but the camp had a double life. After its liberation in 1945, it was converted into a holding facility for Jewish Displaced Persons, most of whom were waiting for transport to their new home, the soon-to-be state of Israel. While they waited, aid workers from a variety of organizations were in the camp to provide institutional, administrative, practical, and psychological support. One of those people was Cecillia "Zippy" Orlin, a social worker with the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee. The daughter of a Lithuanian Jewish family that had emigrated to South Africa in 1928, Zippy left Johannesburg in May 1946, reaching Bergen-Belsen in July.

One of the things she took along with her was a camera and while she was in the camp, she took over a thousand pictures of anything and everything she encountered in her work. The photographs provide a remarkable record of Holocaust survivors as they played sports, did their laundry, underwent medical examinations, took vocational training, and raised memorials to the dead. Her album, which contained some 1100 photographs, was donated to the Netherlands Institute for War Documentation in Am-

sterdam in 1986, and then became part of a congress on Jewish Displaced Persons convened in Washington in 2000. Somers and Kok then selected a small portion of the collection for publication, and also commissioned a series of essays on Jewish Displaced Persons, the aid effort, the movement to Israel, and Orlin herself.

What comes through most clearly in the photographs is the indomitable spirit on the camp residents. There are few of the haggard, drawn faces that one would expect; instead, the pages are filled with pictures of smiling children, resolute and determined men and women, and an overall air of optimism. Orlin's photographs remind us that, although the Nazis extinguished many lives at Bergen-Belsen, they were unable to extinguish hope.

SL

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Ralph M. Rentz and Peter Hrisko, **They Can't Take That Away From Me: The Odyssey of an American POW** (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press [distributed in Canada by UBC Press], 2003), \$38.95, 236 pages, ISBN 0-87013-672-0.

The title of Rentz's memoir is a little misleading, for during his time as a prisoner of the Japanese, his captors did take much away from him – his future career plans, his physical health, his mental stability, even, at times, his essential humanity. But unlike so many of his comrades, at least he survived.

Rentz enlisted in the National Guard before Pearl Harbor, under the mistaken belief that, if war came, he would be able to stay safely in college, where he could pursue his dream of becoming a musician. But instead of a comfortable college dorm, he found himself almost immediately in basic training. A few weeks of that convinced him that, if he had to be in the service, the army air corps was a more congenial option. His first mission after training as a radio operator was a flight half-way

around the world from Florida to Australia. Then, rather than returning to the United States, he and his crew were assigned to an airfield in Java, where their B17 flew bombing raids against Japanese forces massing in Sumatra, Borneo, and the Celebes. But in February 1942, his aircraft was shot down, killing everyone but Rentz and one crewmate. Both were terribly wounded, and only the care of Dutch doctors kept them alive, if only to go from the frying pan to the fire: as he was recovering, Rentz's hospital was overrun by the Japanese.

For the next three years, Rentz lived the grimmest of existences. Not yet fully recovered from his wounds, he was put on a series of brutal work details, including cutting seaweed in shark-infested waters and building a railway for the Japanese army. By the end of the war, tuberculosis, beri beri, pleurisy, dysentery, and the injuries from his crash had taken their toll. One lung ruined, he would never have the musical career he so dreamed of; a doctor told him after the war that it would be five years before his body healed to the point at which he could do simple activities, yet he had to fight hard for a 100% disability pension from the US government. Perhaps it's a sign of Rentz's inherent optimism that he chose the title he did for his memoirs.

JFV

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James Robert Johnston, **Riding into War: The Memoir of a Horse Transport Driver, 1916-1919** (Fredericton: Goose Lane Editions and The New Brunswick Military Heritage Project, 2004), \$14.95 paper, 103 pages, ISBN 0-86492-412-7.

Originally written in 1964, *Riding into War: The Memoir of a Horse Transport Driver, 1916-1919* tells the exceptional story of James Robert Johnston (1897-1976), a Canadian horse-transport driver during the First World War. The book provides a detailed memoir of Johnston's harrowing

experiences behind the front lines in such battles as Vimy Ridge and Passchendaele.

Johnston initially joined the 145th Battalion of the Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF) at Moncton, New Brunswick. The battalion was absorbed into the 9th Reserve Battalion and used to replenish the front lines in France. Johnston was assigned to the 26th Battalion (also known as "The Fighting 26th"), and soon after volunteered for machine-gun training; he was then sent to the 14th Canadian Machine Gun Corps (CMGC) which later joined with other companies to become the 2nd CMG Battalion. Rather than operating the guns, however, he was relegated to the position of transport driver. Such a position entailed supplying ammunition and other materials to the front via mules and horses.

Johnston spends considerable time explaining his powerful relationship with these animals. The depth of his trust and respect for his horses is touching and at the same time emphasizes the extent to which these men relied on their teams. Indeed, the intuition of Johnston's two favourite horses, "Split Ear" and "Tuppence," saved lives on many occasions. Johnston goes so far as to argue that a horse "was of more value to the army than a man" (13). In a sense, then, this memoir serves as a testament to the role played by the transport horse during the Great War.

It is hard to imagine the difficulty of driving a team of horses through a rain of enemy fire, or "silent death" as Johnston calls it, and to do so unscathed. But Johnston faced these near impossible odds continually for most of his three years of active duty. This unique memoir is largely episodic in nature and recounts not only events that the author experienced in the First World War but also the inspiration and drive that sustained him during his mission.

DH

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John M. "Jack" Roberts, **Escape!!!: The True Story of a World War II P.O.W. The Germans Couldn't Hold** (Binghamton, NY: Brundage Publishing, 2003), \$29.95 paper, 237 pages, ISBN 1-892451-11-5.

This is one of those books whose title is a little misleading. It conjures up images of an intrepid escaper, held for years behind barbed, and all the while making breakout after breakout in a kind of one-man war against his captors. In fact Roberts, who served with a field artillery battalion of the 106th Infantry Division during the Battle of the Bulge, was a prisoner for just a few hours, and escaped only when the remnants of an American cavalry unit scared away the two German guards that were escorting the captives to a rear-area prison camp. These were some tense hours to be sure, but perhaps not quite deserving of three exclamation points.

That criticism aside, Roberts has written a fascinating memoir of a soldier who didn't get into the front lines until just before the German offensive in the Ardennes. A native of Hamilton, Ohio, he was drafted in February 1943, sailed for the United Kingdom in November 1944, and went into positions on the 10th of December 1944. Six days later, on the way to a forward observation post, Roberts and his party were ambushed and captured. After his escape, he found his way back to his unit, eventually won a battlefield commission, and finished the war with the American occupying forces in Austria.

Roberts writes evocatively of the shock of going from the relatively comfortable barracks in England to the back of a truck headed towards the front lines, where sleep, food, and warmth were only a memory. He captures well the confusion that reigned behind American lines during the Ardennes offensive – after his escape, he travelled around for days, trying to locate his unit, or even someone who knew where his unit might be. And he recalls the joy at waking up one morning and seeing that the skies

had finally cleared, soon to be filled with the Allied aircraft that would quickly blunt the German attack. If a little rough around the edges (for example, he follows the American tendency, apparently pioneered by Eisenhower, of incorrectly referring to the port of Le Havre as Le Harve), it is still an excellent account of a young soldier's baptism of fire.

DR

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Bruce Cane, ed., **It Made You Think Of Home: The Haunting Journal of Deward Barnes, Canadian Expeditionary Force: 1916-1919** (Toronto: Dundurn Group, 2004), \$35.00, 318 pages, ISBN 1-55002-512-0.

Although published diaries from the First World War are not particularly difficult to come by, there are some that stand out from the other volumes. Deward Barnes' diary of his war experiences from 26 February 1916 to 7 March 1919 is remarkable, not simply because of the content, but for the amount of secondary research provided by editor Bruce Cane. After several entries, which have all had proper punctuation added for clarity, Cane inserts a paragraph that explains some of the background or terms that Barnes uses in an entry that the reader may not be familiar with. Cane's information comes from a wide range of historical sources, but particularly the official history of the 19th Battalion in which Deward served. For example, on 1 April 1918, Barnes wrote: "April Fools Day.' Rain. Up at 6:00 a.m. nearly all on fatigue. Had roast meat, ho ho. Left supports for the front line. Had to stop on account of shelling. Arrived 12:30 a.m. Rain." In what could have otherwise been a rather uninteresting entry, Cane notes that Deward is likely showing sarcasm about his morning meal, and points out that Deward's entire company probably had poor rations. Moreover, by mentioning the rain twice in one account, Deward is subtly expressing the horrendous trench conditions, as they would have been

filling up with water, mud, and dead bodies.

Cane entitles Deward's war diary collection *It Made You Think of Home* because Deward wrote these words in his journals several times, usually after mentioning a particularly heavy enemy barrage. Cane explains how nerve-wracking trench warfare could be, and so a soldier might long for his home after experiencing an intense fire-fight. Though not as haunting as the title would suggest, Cane's book includes intriguing background information and photographs not only about Deward Barnes, but also of the people, places, and events that Barnes wrote about in his diaries. It is this in-depth analysis of the nuances and exact wording that Barnes used that makes this book a fascinating study of the physical and psychological impact of war.

SF

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Dan McCaffery, **Dad's War: The Story of a Courageous Canadian Youth Who Flew With Bomber Command** (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company, 2004), \$34.95, 239 pages, ISBN 1-55028-866-0.

Dan McCaffery is well known for his many books on aviation history, including *Billy Bishop: Canadian Hero* and *Battlefields in the Air*, but this one is a little closer to home. It represents his quest to find out more about the war that his father rarely talked about.

Jim McCaffrey joined the RCAF on 15 November 1943, the same day he turned nineteen – although he could easily have passed for a few years younger, as the author writes of one photograph of his father: "Above his top lip was some peach fuzz that he was trying to pass off as a moustache" (11). He trained as a tail gunner and was eventually posted to 90 Squadron, reaching its base at Tuddenham on Christmas Eve 1944. His first operation, on 5 January 1945, was a wash-out when an engine caught fire over England, but the crew got their chance to complete their first operation the

next day. Twenty more sorties followed, to Berlin, Cologne, Dresden, and elsewhere, the last one coming on 20 April 1945. The following month, McCaffery and his crew were involved in Operation Manna, dropping food to starving Dutch civilians. He was back in Canada before the end of 1945, only a couple of years older in age but many years older in experience.

McCaffery writes sensitively of his father's exploits, particularly the psychological impact they had on him over the long term. It is entirely fitting, too, that the son's pride in his father comes out clearly. The elder McCaffery was, after all, regarded as one of the most keen-eyed, and therefore one of the best, tail gunners in his squadron. But, like many other fine gunners, he never fired a shot in anger: the key was spotting the enemy aircraft at a distance and keeping away from it, rather than firing in the full knowledge that you might possibly hit it but you would certainly draw the attention of the enemy to the bomber stream. As McCaffery well knew, the bomber's best defence was not its machine guns, but its ability to avoid being seen.

JFV

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Ulrich Straus, **The Anguish of Surrender: Japanese POWs of World War II** (Seattle: University of Washington Press [distributed in Canada by UBC Press] 2003), \$24.95 US paper, 282 pages, ISBN 0-295-98508-9.

The statistics regarding Japanese POWs during the Second World War have always had the power to shock: of the 5000 defenders of Tarawa in late 1943, only seventeen survived as prisoners; of the 21,000 Japanese troops on Iwo Jima in early 1945, just 216 allowed themselves to be captured; the defense of Bougainville resulted in 16,497 Japanese dead and only 233 POWs. In each case, many of the dead were killed in the *gyokusai*, or suicide charges, that were deemed the only honourable

way for a soldier's life to end if victory was not possible.

And yet there were enough Japanese POWs – starting with Prisoner #1, a naval ensign captured when his midget submarine malfunctioned during its suicide attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941 – for the US forces to devote considerable efforts to utilizing them as intelligence sources. Rick Straus' book covers these two dimensions: the experience of POWs whose training had told them that to surrender was the ultimate dishonour; and the operation set in train to interrogate them.

In both instances, the reader is in for a few surprises. Japanese servicemen, whose training consisted of large dollops of physical and verbal abuse from superiors, and even subordinates in rank, were astonished to encounter captors who treated them humanely, decently, and respectfully. The smallest kindness shown by an American soldier often went a long way to convincing them that the "surrender is not an option" doctrine in which they had been trained was perhaps not quite right. Of course, there remained a good number of hardcores – the *gyokusai* mounted in a number of prison camps attest to that – but the majority of Japanese captives soon reconciled themselves to their incarceration, and ceased to believe that they had dishonoured themselves, their families, and their nation by being taken prisoner.

Furthermore, American interrogators (either Nisei or Caucasians who had received language training) found that some prisoners were so keen to please their captors that they would tell them anything they could of military value. Because most of the prisoners were grunts who had little useful information, there were limits to what could be learned, but there were enough success stories – valuable intelligence that captured NCOs or officers were only too happy to share – to justify the time and effort that went into training interrogators in the Japanese language and customs.

The Anguish of Surrender, then, is a valuable corrective to what we thought we knew about Japanese POWs, written by a man who lived for twenty-one years in Japan, both before and during the war, and who is better able than most historians to understand the mentality of the Japanese POW.

JFV

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John McKendrick Hughes, **The Unwanted: Great War Letters from the Field** (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2005), \$32.95 paper, 395 pages, ISBN 0-88864-436-1.

If a history student were asked to submit a list of typical items that could have been found on the battlefields of Europe during the First World War, it is unlikely that potatoes would top that list. Yet, as early as 1915, millions of potatoes and other vegetables were cultivated on army farms as food for soldiers. It is from the perspective of an Agricultural Officer tasked with growing foodstuffs for the British 2nd Army that John McKendrick Hughes writes this refreshing memoir.

A young farmer from the western Canadian prairies, Hughes did not falter under the weight of the immense task – he embraced it. He chronicles his disillusionment as a lieutenant in the Canadian Expeditionary Force, lost within a burgeoning officer cadre that found few openings in Britain because the officers lacked combat experience. Hughes and his fellow officers were, in effect, unwanted. When opportunity knocked in 1917 for a position to command a farming operation for the British Army, Hughes jumped at the chance.

He recounts his experiences by drawing heavily on letters that he had written to his wife while he was stationed overseas. Hughes' narrative is intermingled with excerpts from these letters, which provide an interesting and unique perspective on army life as a noncombatant soldier. The memoir also comprises several appendices, which

include a biography of Hughes, scanned images of his letters, and further information on wartime agricultural work. The appendices, coupled with an extensive notes section, add more body to this already well-developed story.

Anyone with an avid interest in the First World War will heartily embrace *The Unwanted*. Although a tad confusing to read because it is written in first-person plural, Hughes' lively recollections of the challenges he faced to help grow food for one million soldiers will no doubt satisfy any reader.

DG

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Blake Heathcote, **A Soldier's View: The Personal Photographs of Canadians at War, 1939-1945** (Toronto: Doubleday Canada, 2005), \$45.00, 340 pages, ISBN 0-385-66000-6.

I always flip to the pictures first anyway, so I'm naturally drawn to photographic histories. Blake Heathcote's *A Soldier's View* is an excellent collection of personal photographs of Canadians in the Second World War. Readers of *Canadian Military History* are probably familiar with the standard collection of Canadian wartime photographs that one sees in most books and television documentaries about the war: the wrecked Churchill tanks at Dieppe, the bicycle-carrying troops wading ashore at Juno, the column of infantry threading its way through rubble at Caen, and so forth. What distinguishes this collection is that Heathcote has selected them from their hiding places in the scrapbooks of veterans (including, it would seem, some veterans from the other side: there is an extraordinary photograph here of Canadians going down before a German machine gun). Heathcote, director of the Testaments of Honor project that has been recording veterans' stories since the late 1990s, selected the photographs "by the simple method of taking ones that elicited the most powerful memories from their owners."

His photos are fascinating, funny, grisly, and wrenching in about equal proportion. One striking fact that emerges from them is the extraordinary breadth of Canada's war effort. We see infantry down in the mud and blood in Normandy, bombers in flames over Germany, corvettes on the North Atlantic (you can *feel* the cold spray), but also Chinese-Canadians who would fight in Burma, sailors in New York City, airmen posing for photos in front of the Sphinx in Egypt, CWACs in Southern England.

Some readers may find Heathcote's accompanying text rather parsimonious, but I think his decision to keep the commentary to a minimum was a good one. Photographs, he says, "don't answer our questions; they show us why questions should be asked." Looking at them in 2007, they remind me of how grateful I am that my generation has been spared all that.

GB

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Wilfred Brenton Kerr, **Arms and The Maple Leaf: The Memoir of Wilfred Kerr, Canadian Field Artillery, Canadian Expeditionary Force, 1918** (Ottawa: CEF Books, 2005 [1943]), \$22.95 paper, 147 pages, ISBN 1-896979-52-1.

As the number of living veterans of the Great War dwindles to a mere handful worldwide, the memoir becomes an increasingly important window into the personal attitudes, experiences, and emotions of the conflict. A fine example is Wilfred Brenton Kerr's *Arms and the Maple Leaf*. Compiled from letters and notes at the end of 1918, it chronicles Kerr's experiences in the 11th Battery, Canadian Field Artillery, in the last year of the war. The book served as a sequel to Kerr's *Shrieks and Crashes*, in which he included an account of the experience of the battery in the Battle of Passchendaele. *Arms and the Maple Leaf* recounts the experiences of a battery that had come through the darkest days of the war, and

reveals the fears, hopes, and intermittent banality of life at the front. The terrible losses at Passchendaele had caused the battery to replace English-, Scottish-, and Irish-born troops with Canadian recruits, and Kerr described the "heightened Canadianism" felt by the battery in the summer of 1918, a sentiment that would be strengthened during the final engagements of the war.

Kerr does not hesitate, however, to express a general distaste for the military caste system, and revealed the cynical reaction of the rank and file to Arthur Currie's rallying call of 10 July. He reveals a Canadianism forged not through patriotic rhetoric or individual heroism, but through rank-and-file solidarity and camaraderie. It was a sentiment strengthened in the final weeks of the war, as the battery moved through towns recently abandoned by the Germans, to be greeted as liberators by French villagers. He skillfully reveals the unique psychology of the front during that period: the fear replaced by boredom, the joy by sorrow, and despair by optimism and hope.

Kerr's balanced, sober, and honest recollection of life at the front in 1918 provides the modern reader with a revealing glimpse into the final year of the war, and is a valuable contribution to our understanding of the Canadian experience in the Great War.

AC

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G.B. McKean, **Scouting Thrills: The Memoir of a Scout Officer in the Great War** (Ottawa: CEF Books, 2003 [1919]), \$20.00 paper, 128 pages, ISBN 1-896979-37-8.

Scouting Thrills by George B. McKean is an insightful, descriptive, and engaging story of the life and adventures of a scout during the First World War. McKean's memoir is appropriately titled, since he dedicates each chapter to a different adventure that he and his scouts participated in, such as traveling through No Man's Land in an attempt to locate German posts,

saving wounded scouts, attacking villages occupied by German troops, blowing up “mysterious” tunnels, rescuing prisoners, charging German trenches with bayonets, and, above all else, being lost in No Man’s Land.

McKean was born in England in 1888 and emigrated to Canada in 1902. After Britain declared war in 1914, he enlisted for service in January the following year. Once overseas, he quickly moved up in the ranks until he eventually became a lieutenant. His story emphasizes the role of scouts in war on a daily basis. The reader is quickly made aware of how critical a scout was to the Allied war effort. Whether they were gathering intelligence on enemy movements, locating posts, or participating in reconnaissance missions, the information that scouts gathered was crucial to the Allies’ success in battle.

McKean’s memoir also reveals numerous themes about scouts and their involvement in the war. Comradeship among scouts is most evident. For example, it was the scouts’ honour not to leave an injured or dead scout behind, as McKean dramatically demonstrates in one of his chapters. Moreover, the scouts’ enthusiasm for missions is another theme that is evident throughout the memoir. McKean does not fail to mention how enthusiastic many of his scouts were as the war progressed. Often, they were eager to charge into battle or volunteer for a reconnaissance mission. Lastly, McKean discusses a youthful and playful atmosphere among the scouts. This jovial atmosphere helped to keep the morale of these brave men high.

McKean’s adventure story is a great first-hand account of the life and duties of a scout during the First World War. Its dramatic descriptions, attention to detail, and enthusiasm make it a vivid and enjoyable story that does not depict the gruesome horrors of war that many other studies have a tendency to do.

BR

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Desmond Morton, **Fight or Pay: Soldiers’ Families in the Great War** (Vancouver: UBC Press and the Canadian War Museum, 2004), \$39.95, 326 pages, ISBN 0-7748-1108-0.

Desmond Morton’s *Fight or Pay: Soldiers’ Families in the Great War* outlines the popular response of Canadians to the First World War. Morton argues that, through the Canadian Patriotic Fund (CPF), Canadians who could not fight had a responsibility to pay in order to contribute to the war effort. He analyzes the effectiveness of the CPF in its fund-raising efforts, administration, and distribution of funds to the families of soldiers fighting overseas. In doing so, Morton provides a voice to the soldiers’ families.

Morton offers a detailed account of the CPF and its activities across Canada. For the most part, it was left up to the organization of the CPF, and its private donors across the country, to support the soldiers’ families. Because the CPF was a private charity, it was compelled to defend its donors’ interests and, as a result, it was believed that some form of discrimination and tact was necessary. Generally, those people who were not French, Belgian, or British in origin stood much less chance of receiving aid from the CPF. There were certain restrictions that dictated who received money, as well as investigations into the personal lives of the soldiers’ wives, in order to assess and determine need. Morton asserts that this discrimination was not hidden and that the CPF felt no need to explain it.

The book goes on to discuss the physical and mental disabilities that plagued soldiers, as well as their families, when they returned home unable to function normally or make a living. As Morton points out, “wives and children bore the brunt of men’s adjustment and for the most part, they bore it silently” (163). The CPF extended support to some disabled soldiers but debates quickly emerged as to whether pensions were the responsibility of the CPF or the federal

government. There were also difficulties in defining exactly what constituted a “disability” (145). Morton highlights the plight of many disabled soldiers and their families who often lacked the leverage to get results.

In *Fight or Pay*, Morton does an excellent job of assessing the role of the CPF in the lives of the wives, mothers, and families who remained in Canada during the war. Not only is the book a comprehensive and revealing account of the successes and failures of the CPF, but it also highlights the impact of the Great War on Canadian families, their day-to-day survival in the face of low income, high rates of inflation, and the absence of a father, husband, and breadwinner.

AS

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Jeffery Williams, **Far From Home: A Memoir of a 20th Century Soldier** (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2003), \$24.95 paper, 373 pages, ISBN 1-55238-119-6.

Although he never ceased to regret that he had not seen battle during the Second World War – “Until you’ve had your hair parted by a bullet, you don’t know whether you’re a soldier or not,” one veteran told him – Jeffery Williams surely had one of the most varied careers of anyone to serve in Canadian uniform during the war. A pre-1939 member of the Calgary Highlanders and a platoon commander early in the war, Williams was soon tabbed as being potential material for staff duties. He must surely have been sent on every training course and duty that the Canadian military had to offer (including running a three-week course for officer cadets of the Canadian Women’s Army Corps and attending the 9th Canadian War Staff course at Kingston in early 1944). When one considers his temporary postings to various units (for example, he learned to drive a Ram tank while on temporary secondment to the Canadian Grenadier Guards) and the fact that he spent many of his leaves on operational patrols on Royal Navy ves-

sels, it's hard to imagine that many people had as much familiarity with the inner workings of the Allied forces than Williams.

As one would expect, he is an engaging and fair-minded memoirist, lauding those who deserve it and not hesitating to be honest about the deadwood under which he served. His anecdote about a certain commander's insistence that securing a replacement for the brigadier's personal caravan was more important than re-equipping a fighting unit with armoured cars speaks volumes about the priorities of some officers in the Canadian army.

After writing so many fine books about other aspects of military history (including his acclaimed biography of Byng of Vimy), it's high time that Jeffery Williams told his own story, and he does it here with refreshing verve, insight, and frankness.

JFV

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Joan Snelling, **A Land Girl's War** (Ipswich, UK: Old Pond Publishing, 2004), £4.95 paper, 94 pages, ISBN 1-903366-67-4.

Olive Fisher Campbell, **Shattered Dreams** (Renfrew, ON: General Store Publishing, 2005), \$19.95 paper, 129 pages, ISBN 1-897113-12-9.

Cynthia J. Faryon, **A War Bride's Story: Risking it all for Love After World War II** (Canmore, AB: Altitude Publishing, 2004), \$9.95 paper, 112 pages, ISBN 1-55153-959-4.

During the Second World War, the British government reactivated the Women's Land Army, first created in 1917, to free up male agricultural labourers for military service and to ensure the continued production of food in a country that had seen its imports of foodstuffs drastically reduced by the German submarine campaign. The Land Army peaked in size in July 1943, when 87,000 young women were employed on Britain's

farms; they surely made a significant difference in a nation that, before the war, had relied on imports for 70% of its food.

Snelling joined up in April 1941, and worked on farms in Norfolk, on England's east coast. It was a difficult transition for her – she was not a country girl, but a city girl whose family had left London to escape the bombing – but through hard work and a willingness to take on any task, she eventually gained the respect of the male farm workers who hadn't been called up.

Her memoir is candid and genuine, and she willingly admits the difficulties involved – it's not easy to learn to drive a variety of tractors all at once. But she is also clear about the value of their work. To cite just one example, in prewar Britain sugar was manufactured from imported sugar cane but with that supply cut off by German submarine operations and the need to divert shipping space to war materials, another source had to be found. The answer was sugar beets, planted and harvested by the women of the Land Army. So, the fact that Britain remained able to feed itself was due in large part to the girls of the Land Army.

Olive Fisher, too, joined the Land Army, working as a tractor driver on farms around Stratford-on-Avon from May 1944 until after the end of the war. But her memoir is focused much more on the personal tragedies of war, in particular her experiences as a war bride. Her family lived in Birmingham, a target of German bombing raids that forced them from their home and killed a number of family friends. Her brothers both enlisted and, although they survived the war, both lost childhood friends in action. And Olive herself lost her first suitor, killed in action while flying with the Royal Air Force. She eventually married a Canadian soldier and emigrated to Canada, hoping that she might find a better life there. Sadly, it turned out to be the war-bride-experience-from-hell. Her new in-laws, a Prince Edward

Island farm couple that could have come straight from the pages of a Frederick Philip Grove novel, made little attempt to disguise their loathing of her and regarded her as something of a slave; her mother-in-law, particularly, never seemed to get over the belief that Olive had stolen her son from her. Olive's husband eventually joined the air force, and for the next few decades they moved from base to base, not always in the happiest of circumstances.

Shattered Dreams is also a candid memoir, perhaps a little too candid – indeed, one often wonders why Olive didn't chuck the whole thing and return to her family in England. We've always known that the war-bride experience wasn't necessarily a happy one, but rarely has it been described with such honesty.

Gwen Haskell's experiences were a little more positive than Olive Fisher's. Unable to join the Women's Land Army because of chronic asthma, she instead took a volunteer position as a clerk at the Air Ministry in London. In November 1943, she met Larry Cramer, a Canadian pilot officer who hailed from Arborfield, Saskatchewan. Eleven weeks later they were married and in May 1945 their first son was born, a month after Larry had been discharged home to Canada. It was almost another year before Gwen was able to follow him. There followed a similar experience of unrealized expectations. Their first stop upon reaching Arborfield was a trim, well kept bungalow with all the modern conveniences, and Gwen was pleased that she would be living in civilized circumstances. Soon after, though, she discovered that Larry's family home was a dilapidated farmhouse six miles from town with no running water, a wood stove, and an outhouse to boot. It was a far cry from Gwen's relatively affluent home in England.

But she persevered, even after admitting that she could never become a farm wife and despite all of the awkwardness of getting used to the social customs of the rural

west, and the family, which eventually grew to include five children) moved to the more civilized surroundings of Edmonton. Not all of the roughly 48,000 war brides who came to Canada after 1945 suffered the same tribulations as Fisher and Haskell, but their stories reveal the clash of cultures that even wartime love had trouble conquering.

SL

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Robert Rutherford, **Hometown Horizons: Local Responses to Canada's Great War** (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2004), \$29.95 paper, 331 pages, ISBN 0-7748-1014-9.

Traditionally, historians of the First World War in Canada have looked at the struggle mainly from a military or international relations perspective. However, Robert Rutherford's *Hometown Horizons: Local Responses to Canada's Great War* is an important work that contributes to a social and cultural understanding of the war. Rutherford's book examines how the war impacted the home front through an analysis of gender, race, religion, and class. These paradigms are intertwined to create a picture of the popular response to the Great War at the local level. This book stands out in the literature by offering a microcosmic view of the struggle.

Rutherford has chosen three smaller Canadian cities – Lethbridge, Alberta, Guelph, Ontario, and Trois Rivières, Québec – to illustrate how their specific “hometown horizons” constructed similar yet unique responses to the outbreak of war in 1914. The geographical, industrial, political, social, and ethnic composition of each of these communities creates a diverse sampling of the local response, thereby allowing for a broader and even a national examination of the issues at hand. These issues are covered in eight chapters, including the initial response to the call to arms, the enlistment and organization of troops, the ensuing fluctuation in enlistment numbers, the waning in

patriotism as the war dragged on, the conscription issue, the role of women both at home and abroad, and finally the trials and tribulations of the returning soldiers. Within each of these facets of the war at home, Rutherford paints a colourful comparative picture of how each community responded and contributed by using specific examples of people or organizations.

Overall, Rutherford's book is important in the uniqueness of its localized approach. It offers a wealth of information and the depth of the author's research is impressive. Individuals from each community are brought to life and this work goes a long way in highlighting the importance of the local response to the Great War. *Hometown Horizons* is useful not only within the historiography of the First World War but also within the study of French-English relations, gender history, and rural and urban history in Canada.

BB

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Wilfred Brenton Kerr, **Shrieks and Crashes: The Memoir of Wilfred B. Kerr, Canadian Field Artillery, 1917** (Ottawa: CEF Books, 2005 [1929]), \$22.95 paper, 157 pages, ISBN 1-896979-50-5.

Shrieks and Crashes is a riveting personal memoir of the First World War, written in 1929 as both a personal testament and a historical record for future generations. It vividly documents the life of Canadian soldiers in the Great War, particularly at the Battle of Vimy Ridge, using as its foundation Kerr's personal letters, diaries, and recollections of his service.

The title *Shrieks and Crashes* is evocative of the daily life of an artilleryman stationed on the front. Soldiers had to cope with the tremendous noise of continuous bombardments and the constant and overwhelming fear of a shell landing on their position. As Kerr himself attests, it was his personal fear that the sacrifices and horrors of the First World War might be for-

gotten and neglected by successive generations. He believed that his personal memoir can endure as a way of explaining and preserving the essence of what the First World War was to so many young men like himself. He also hoped that his memoir would prompt other soldiers to make records of their own personal experiences. The book, he claims, represents “... an attempt to describe the experiences of one soldier, in so far as they were typical, ... against a background of the story of the Corps, its vicissitudes, its feelings and its thoughts during 1917” (foreword).

Kerr enlisted in 1916 in the Canadian Field Artillery, and served as a signaller during the course of his service. His job primarily involved observing what was taking place on the front using a telescope or field glasses; this kept him in constant telephone contact with the brigade. He also served at a series of observation posts and as a liaison at the infantry headquarters. Kerr was responsible for laying and repairing phone lines, which was absolutely critical to military communications. Despite these crucial duties, he recognized that his job, though important, entailed less danger than men in the front lines experienced; it was they who bore the brunt of the casualties. He vividly recalls the deplorable existence of a soldier residing in the trenches, overwhelmed by death, carnage, disease, and destruction. He presents a clear portrayal of trench life from its lulls and times of boredom to its dangers and unsanitary conditions.

As the war progressed, many soldiers like Kerr began to question the conflict. He sees the Battle of Passchendaele as a turning point in soldiers' morale. The gain of a mere ridge cost more than 16,000 Canadian servicemen their lives, and the deaths of so many men appeared unproductive and senseless.

This book represents the dichotomy between initial feelings of enthusiasm for the war to later feelings of despair and disillusionment. Soldiers began to question what it was all about. Men in com-

mand seemingly played with their lives like they were pawns on a chess board, and some in the Poor Bloody Infantry may have questioned their authority. The book stands as a testament to the horrors of war and what daily life entailed as a Canadian soldier fighting in the First World War.

AO

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Kenneth H. Joyce, **Snow Plough and the Jupiter Deception: The Story of the 1st Special Service Force and the 1st Canadian Special Service Battalion, 1942-1945** (St. Catharines, ON: Vanwell, 2006), \$49.95, 320 pages, ISBN 1-55125-094-2.

As suggested by the title, Kenneth Joyce's new history of the First Special Service Force emphasizes a connection between plans for an Allied invasion of Norway – Operation JUPITER – and the formation of this combined US-Canadian commando unit. Anxious to relieve pressure on the Soviet Union in its bitter war on the Eastern Front, in late 1941 Winston Churchill helped to promote the idea of a landing in Norway by an international force of paratroopers, specially trained in winter warfare and equipped with armoured snow vehicles. Originally designated Operation SNOW PLOUGH, a codename that was later shortened to PLOUGH, Churchill alternately envisioned the raid as an elaborate diversionary scheme or as the initial phase of a larger Allied effort to “roll-up the map of Hitler's Europe,” beginning with an invasion at the top. Either way, Churchill viewed the creation of an international raiding force as essential. He appointed Lord Louis Mountbatten to plan the raid and to the design the snow vehicle, an effort that led ultimately to American, Norwegian, and Canadian involvement in the scheme. In the summer of 1942, the raiding element of Operation PLOUGH developed into the First Special Service Force, its formation being the result of a tangled web of international negotiations. On paper, the

Canadian contingent of the Force was designated the 1st Canadian Special Service Battalion, but in practice Canadians soldiers were completely integrated with their American counterparts. When the original PLOUGH scheme was cancelled, the Force was retained by the United States as an elite light infantry formation – one that ultimately became renowned for its fighting spirit in a series of sustained combat operations under the most difficult circumstances.

Both Library and Archives Canada cataloguing information and pre-publication advertising for Joyce's book cite its original subtitle as “The *true* story of the 1st Special Service Force” [italics mine]. This leads the reader to contemplate what was “untrue” about earlier renditions of the unit's history. Introductory comments on the book jacket provide a partial answer: “Author Ken Joyce reveals the truth behind the enigmatic 1st Special Service Force. Although it is commonly believed that the formation of the 1st SSF was almost an entirely United States-Canada venture, in fact the Force continued to be monitored, and to a certain extent controlled, by Britain.” Indeed, while most coverage of the Force to date has considered the unit within the context of the United States or Canadian war effort, Joyce's work skillfully portrays the extent of British political engineering that led to the creation of the Force. He outlines the roles played by Geoffrey Pike, an eccentric British scientist, diminishing interest in the plan by Lord Louis Mountbatten, Winston Churchill's characteristic enthusiasm for commando forces, and the British prime minister's long fight to retain the Force for another task after Operation PLOUGH fell through. While early stages of the planning also involved the Norwegian government-in-exile, the hesitation of its leaders to support an operation aimed at the destruction of their country's economy and infrastructure led them to withdraw support for the plan at roughly the same time that Canada became involved.

As the book proceeds, Pyke, the Norwegians, Mountbatten, and Churchill gradually disappear from the story as the Canadians take up a combat role in the reorganized First Special Service Force, fighting in the war-torn hills of Italy alongside their American comrades.

Joyce's work goes beyond earlier accounts to reveal a new “truth” about the Force. When compared to the existing literature, most notably Robert D. Burhans's *The First Special Service Force: A War History of the North Americans* (1947), Joyce's new history owes a great deal to his use of government documents that have only recently become available to historians. Personal correspondence between the author and retired Canadian Lieutenant-Colonel Jack Akehurst adds valuable commentary and further dimension to the author's excellent coverage of operational detail. Beyond his account of operations at the front, the unique *esprit de corps* of the unit, the frustration of Canadian soldiers over matters of pay and decorations, and a slowly developing impression on their part that they had been abandoned by the Canadian military authorities, all come through in Joyce's account.

Another area in which Joyce departs from the established truth is in his chapter on “Hill 720 and the Unhappy Fate of Colonel Williamson.” In reference to the dismissal of the senior Canadian officer of the Force following shortly upon the unit's entry into combat, Joyce argues that “there is no doubt that Williamson was denied due process when he was returned to Canada without a proper military inquiry into the accusations made against him” (180). Reading Joyce's account, one could easily be left with a strong impression that Williamson was a victim of Colonel Robert T. Frederick's “one man show” (179), particularly if we accept the author's claim that affidavits signed against him were decidedly “nasty” in tone, as well as the author's hints that jealousy on the part of Williamson's subordinates played a role in his dismissal.

While Joyce is correct in his assertion that the affair was swept under the carpet and that a careful assessment of the incident is long overdue, a more balanced treatment would also have noted that when Williamson's predecessor left the Force owing to injuries sustained in training, he expressed serious misgivings regarding "Windy" Williamson's suitability for command, pointing to his lack of "level-headedness" and refusing to recommend his promotion as senior Canadian officer of the Force.⁶ It needs also to be borne in mind that the First Special Service Force was an elite unit from which officers and men were dismissed for only the slightest failure to measure up to its exacting standards. Williamson may have been denied "due process" in a unit that was notorious for its lack of concern for the finer points of bureaucratic process, but charges that he behaved erratically during the advance on Monte la Difensa, becoming "spooked" and firing in the darkness at unseen snipers (and uncomfortably close to his own men), may indeed have led subordinates to lose confidence in him. As the American commander of the Force, Frederick could hardly have subjected the matter to a full inquiry without elevating something that he probably viewed as a case of severe anxiety and nervousness to the status of an international incident. Joyce presents the details of Williamson's dismissal and is convinced that accusations made against him were "disingenuous" (180), but the fact remains that officers and men of the Force could be – and often were – sent home for less than the charges brought against Williamson. No hidden conspiracy is necessary to account for his dismissal. This is not to say conclusively that none existed, only that proving one will require more evidence than is presented here – something that Joyce appears to have recognized when he omitted reference to the "true" story of the Force from the subtitle of the book.

On a less controversial note, *Snow Plough and the Jupiter De-*

ception revives celebrated aspects of the First Special Service Force, including the uniqueness of its bi-national composition and the hard-fought victories it achieved during the Winter Line campaign, along the Mussolini Canal at Anzio, during the breakout to Rome, and in the invasion of Southern France. The narrative is complemented by the author's use of historical artifacts, a product of his studies at the Algonquin College of Museum Technology from 1992-95, as well as his use of previously unpublished photos and interviews with surviving Force members or their families. He employs archival material from the United Kingdom, Stanford University's Hoover Institution and Archives, the Library and Archives Canada, and the Directorate of History and Heritage in Ottawa, all of which provide a richness of detail on the unit's formation, training, operations in the field, and the administrative jumbles which contributed to its disbandment at the end of 1944. Overall, Joyce helps to keep the "Black Devil legend" alive and deepens our understanding of this unique product of the North Atlantic Triangle – a combined effort arising from the wartime co-operation of Canada, the United States, and Great Britain.

JW

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Graeme F. Somerville, **An Honourable Sacrifice** (Saint John, NB: privately published [available from Centenary-Queen Street United Church, 215 Wentworth St., Saint John, NB, E2L 2T4], 2005), \$10.00 paper, 12 pages, ISBN 0-9681649-6-X.

Geraldine Chase and Bill Beswetherick, **Gananoque Remembers: A Tribute to the Men Who Gave Their Lives for Freedom** (Gananoque, ON: privately published [available from wilbert@kos.net], 2005), \$28.00 paper, 176 pages, ISBN 0-936469-0-X.

Alan Mann, **"No Return Ticket": Wallaceburg's War Casualties and**

Selected War Memories (Wallaceburg, ON: Mann Historical Files, 2002), \$22.95, 280 pages, ISBN 0-9694304-4-2.

In 1997, the eminent historian Jay Winter called for more local histories as a way to understand better the impact of war upon societies. Academics have not yet taken up the challenge in any great numbers, but amateur historians certainly have.

Sometimes their work has taken the form of a simple honour roll, of the kind that was published widely in the years after the First World War. *An Honourable Sacrifice* consists of short biographical sketches of the twenty-nine men of Centenary-Queen Street United Church in Saint John, New Brunswick, who died in the two world wars, and was published in response to the desire of parishioners to learn more about the men whose names were read out before the congregation every 11th of November. As one would expect, there are more than twice as many names from the First World War as the Second. In the list of burial places for the latter, we see the breadth of the Canadian war effort: Northern Ireland, Halifax, Sierre Leone, Labrador, England, Ortona.

The histories of Gananoque and Wallaceburg are much wider in scope, and also deal with a larger number of casualties. Chase and Beswetherick have provided the same kind of short biographies that appear in Somerville's booklet, but have added photographs, excerpts from letters and newspaper articles, and poetry. It makes for a very moving combination and an excellent tribute to the eighty-three men whose names are listed on the Gananoque cenotaph, including Private W.E. Dailey, killed in action on the Somme in September 1916 at age fifteen and Flying Officer W.H. Thompson, who was forty-six years old when the Lockheed Hudson he was flying in went down near Dartmouth airport.

Alan Mann has gone a step further, beginning with the names on the Wallaceburg cenotaph but add-

ing an impressive range of other material: reproduced articles from the *Wallaceburg News*, documents, letters, advertisements, hundreds of photographs, and a month-by-month diary of the war in Wallaceburg, again taken from the *Wallaceburg News*. One particularly interesting element concerns the men who enlisted for service from the Walpole Island reserve during the First World War. Of the natives who died in uniform, it is worth noting that the majority of them died of disease rather than in action, a sad commentary on the state of aboriginal health in early twentieth-century Canada.

Even if the reader is not from Saint John, Gananoque, or Wallaceburg, these books will still be of interest. In some ways, each of them tells of men and women who were entirely typical; at the same time, their stories are unique.

WT

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Michelle Kaiser, **Willi: Diary of a Young Lieutenant** (London, ON: Valhalla Publishing, 2006), \$40.00 paper, 201 pg. ISBN 0-9739574-0-9.

If one can overlook the fact that the subtitle is misleading (this isn't in fact a diary, but a third-person narrative based on a diary), *Willi* is an interesting account of a young man's journey through the Second World War. A native of Hamburg, Willi Kaiser was called up in December 1940 and was eventually transferred to an assault artillery unit. The narrative picks up in July 1941, with Kaiser's unit deep inside Russia, and his service on the Eastern Front continued until September 1942, when he was seriously wounded in the fighting around Stalingrad and sent back to Germany to recuperate. This section of *Willi* offers some fascinating insights into conditions on the Eastern Front, such as the psychological impact of facing apparently unlimited numbers of Soviet troops.

The other valuable portion of the book deals with the bombing of Hamburg in July 1943, something that Kaiser experienced first-hand.

The sheer destructive power of Bomber Command and the Eighth Air Force is evident, and it is interesting to see it from ground level instead of from the air.

Willi's main weakness is that it is not a first-person memoir, and so it lacks the immediacy and authority of other Eastern Front accounts, such as J.M. Bauer's *As Far As My Feet Will Carry Me*. Still, because of the paucity of personal accounts (from either side) of the campaigns in Russian, *Willi* is a very useful contribution to the literature.

WT

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David B. Flemming, **Explosion in Halifax Harbour: The Illustrated Account of a Disaster That Shook the World** (Halifax: Formac, 2004), \$24.95 paper, 96 pages, ISBN 0-88780-632-5.

Explosion in Halifax Harbour provides a vivid account of life on the shores of Canada's east coast port before, during, and in the aftermath of 6 December 1917. Since 1989, however, 6 December has become familiar to many Canadians as the anniversary of the Montreal Massacre. In this very manageable read, Flemming does an outstanding job by recounting the human story behind the explosion, thereby restoring the earlier meaning of 6 December not only in Halifax, but in the Canadian narrative as well.

Divided chronologically into six chapters, *Explosion in Halifax Harbour* depicts the devastation, rescue, reconstruction, and legacy of the collision between the French vessel *Mont-Blanc* and the Norwegian ship *Imo* on that fateful December morning. In the opening chapter, "Setting the Scene," Flemming describes the industrial growth and potential in Halifax's North End prior to the outbreak of the First World War. The next three chapters recount the horrors of the explosion, in which more than 1500 people perished, as well as the immediate rescue and recovery efforts. Although Flemming briefly de-

scribes larger issues present at the time, namely the inquiry into the explosion and the numerous conspiracy theories, he does not stray from the true focus of his story, the experience of the average Haligonian. The final chapter reveals Flemming's attempt, and perhaps purpose of the book itself, to identify the legacy of this event. In his own words, the author concludes that "People helping people, neighbours caring for neighbours, this is probably the lasting legacy of the disaster" (89).

The illustrations are also noteworthy because they complement Flemming's descriptive account of the explosion and its consequences. Using photographs and graphic images of Halifax's North End before, during, and after the explosion, Flemming is able to embed the reader into every facet of this tragedy. The final pages of the book are devoted to a map and description of historic sites relevant to the Halifax explosion, the implication being that a visit to these sites is perhaps the only way to understand the human story Flemming so powerfully articulates in this work.

JEW

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Sandy Antal and Kevin R. Shackleton, **Duty Nobly Done: The Official History of The Essex and Kent Scottish Regiment** (Windsor, ON: Walkerville Publishing, 2006), \$59.00, 828 pages, ISBN 0-9731834-8-9.

Canadian military historians have done themselves proud recently in the compilation of unit histories, both in terms of the content and the presentation. Robert Fraser's *Black Yesterdays* (the Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders of Canada) and Gordon Brown and Terry Copp's *Look To Your Front* (the Regina Rifles) are two examples of chronicles that combine solid scholarship with high-quality production. *Duty Nobly Done*, the new history of the Essex Scottish, follows in that tradition.

Sandy Antal, author of the award-winning *A Wampum Denied: Procter's War of 1812*, and Kevin

Shackleton, whose most recent work is the history of the 58th Battalion, Canadian Expeditionary Force, have joined forces to tell the story of the regiment from its earliest roots as a French militia unit in 1749 to its current incarnation as The Essex and Kent Scottish Regiment, the name it took in 1954.

Antal handles the regiment's early years, from the French regime through the War of 1812 and after. Both of these themes have been well covered by other historians, but Antal adds a fascinating chapter on the Patriot War of 1838, when rebels launched four separate attacks on south-western Ontario (at Amherstburg, Fighting Island, Pelee Island, and Windsor). Overshadowed by the more well known incidents at York and in Lower Canada, the Patriot War is a fascinating yet little known episode in which the Essex and Kent militia, "despite their wretched state of preparedness" (137), Antal notes, beat back the invaders. Just as interesting as the actual engagements is his account of the aftermath of the Battle of Windsor, when a number of the rebels were summarily executed, an action that caused considerable controversy in the area.

Kevin Shackleton takes care of the rest of the unit's history, from the Union of the Canadas to the present day. In this, he covers all the ground that one would expect him to (the 18th Battalion in the First World War, the Dieppe raid, the campaign in north-west Europe), but also finds some new angles to address. There is an excellent chapter on the First World War reinforcement battalions linked to the Essex Scottish (the 99th, 186th, and 241st Battalions), and another that deals with the militia unit's work on the home front during the Second World War. In all cases, Shackleton has taken the standard unit narrative and enlivened it with compelling and illuminating accounts from the sharp end.

This fine book is also notable for its quality; heavy paper stock, excellent illustrations, and a full-colour map section make for a substantial, durable, and valuable vol-

ume. Perhaps even more surprising is the very reasonable price for such a book. It definitely belongs on the shelf of every serious student of Canadian military history.

SL

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Shane B. Schreiber, **Shock Army of the British Empire: The Canadian Army in the Last 100 Days of the Great War** (St. Catharines, ON: Vanwell, 2004 [1997]), \$29.95 paper, 159 pages, ISBN 1-55125-096-9.

Shane Schreiber examines the corps and divisional levels of command to understand the decisive advances made by the Canadian army on the ground over the last hundred days of the Great War. During this time, the Canadian forces punched through the formidable German defensive positions at Amiens, the Drocourt-Quéant Line, the Canal du Nord, and Mount Huoy. Schreiber demonstrates how the organizational structure of the Canadian Corps, refined through the battles of 1915-1917, allowed for consistent and sustained major attacks that were a decisive part of the Allied advance on Germany.

Using the analogy of a symphony, which at times does become tedious, he notes that the Canadian Corps had amassed the instruments of war but still required precise coordination to sustain a concerted attack on the German lines; the enemy could not simply be overwhelmed and worn down by an advantage in men and material. Precision and coordination, centered on the command structure and corps commander Arthur Currie, were required to target effectively the entrenched German defenders. Schreiber pays particular tribute to "the various levels of staffs, those invisible minions so often overlooked by military historians because of the dull nature of their tasks, must be give a good deal of credit" (58). Increased coordination slowly helped bring the early stages of battle back under the control of the Canadian army through a complex but flexible chain of command.

While rarely going below battalion level descriptions of battle, Schreiber reveals a vivid picture of command structure in battle.

The last hundred days of the First World War were perhaps the most intense period of fighting in Canadian military history. Schreiber successfully crafts a thorough and well documented study that remains extremely readable for both the amateur and professional historian. His analysis of command and military structure in war should find its way into the library of any serious historian of the Great War.

JR

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Susan Mann, **Margaret Macdonald: Imperial Daughter** (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005), \$39.95, 304 pages, ISBN 0773-5299-93.

Susan Mann, editor of the acclaimed *The War Diary of Clare Gass, 1915-1918*, revisits the topic of Canada's military nursing sisters in *Margaret Macdonald, Imperial Daughter*. Born in Pictou, Nova Scotia, Margaret was ambitiously drawn to the profession of nursing in a combat environment, participating as a field nurse in the Spanish-American and South African Wars, and becoming the first to occupy the position of Matron-in-Chief to Canada's military nurses during the First World War. By drawing on Macdonald's devoted service to the British Empire, Mann argues throughout this unofficial biography that her life story broadens our understanding of the evolution of imperialism, the military, and the role of women in Canadian society, as well as the tensions surrounding these issues.

Mann creates a chronological narrative of Margaret's professional and private life based on her personal papers, memories of family and friends, and a variety of military documents. As the author relates, the Macdonald family has been secretive about the details of Margaret's personal life. Consequently, Mann has to draw conclu-

sions regarding certain aspects of Macdonald's personality and relationships by piecing together details from these materials, leaving the reader to decide whether or not to agree with these inferences.

Macdonald is portrayed as an efficient and talented field nurse who travelled the world to pursue opportunities in military medicine, and who later became an exacting but fair administrator during the First World War. Her Catholic Scottish upbringing and thorough education compelled Macdonald to strive for excellence, and she expected no less from her own Canadian nurses both on and off duty. Despite her utmost respect for military protocol and discipline, she was also known for her sincere concern for the safety, well being, and professional status of her nurses.

Margaret Macdonald, Imperial Daughter aptly traces the birth and development of the field of military nursing in Canada, and how women progressed through the ranks when this field was still in its infancy. It also conveys the challenges faced by pioneering nursing administrators of the Canadian military during the First World War as they dealt with shortages of resources, as well as the tug of war for power between British and Canadian authorities. As a pioneer in her field who helped pave the way for women to participate in the Canadian military, Margaret Macdonald's story is one worth reading.

CM

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David L. Bashow, **No Prouder Place: Canadians and the Bomber Command Experience** (St. Catharines, ON: Vanwell, 2005), \$60.00, 480 pages, ISBN 1-55125-098-5.

David Bashow's fine new account of Canadians in Bomber Command begins with a quotation whose irony would only become apparent years after the fact: "Give me five years and you will not recognize Germany again," said Adolf Hitler

in 1933. Twelve years later, Germany was indeed unrecognizable, but not in the way that the Führer had imagined it would be. Its great cities lay in ruins, its population was devastated. To paraphrase the American journalist Walter Cronkite, the Nazi state had sown the wind with its air attacks on civilian targets early in the war; by 1945, it had well and truly reaped the whirlwind.

No Prouder Place bears some resemblance to the official history of the Royal Canadian Air Force: the same high standard of research, breadth of sources, and completeness of coverage. But Bashow gives far more room to the voice of the individual, whether he (or she) served in the air or on the ground. His historical narrative is filled with long, often compelling recollections of members of Bomber Command, some from well known memoirs but many more from difficult-to-find veterans' magazines or unpublished accounts: Jack Watts' thoughts about trying to bomb the *Tirpitz* in 1942 (81); Jim Northrup's fascinating insights into the performance of the Halifax (280); and Clifford Black's recollection of a raid in September 1944 when a wayward B-17 joined his bomber stream and bombed his target, because the pilot had become separated from his own formation and didn't want to waste his bomb load (375).

One of the book's most interesting segments is the appendix that provides a succinct and judicious summary of the positives and negatives of the strategic bombing campaign. Bashow notes that only the U-boat arm of the *Kriegsmarine* suffered a higher overall casualty rate on a sustained basis, but that Canadians in Bomber Command, because they missed many of the high-casualty raids early in the war, suffered somewhat lower losses than the British. In discussing what the campaign achieved, Bashow distinguishes between direct effects (the reduction in production capacity of certain key industries) and indirect effects (for example, the 800,000 workers engaged in repairing bomb damage in 1944 alone). In both in-

stance, he judges that the campaign had a significant impact in hastening the German collapse.

The men who flew with Bomber Command took a hit some years ago in the execrable documentary *The Valour and the Horror*, which painted them in a distinctly unfavourable light. On the contrary, as David Bashow argues, theirs is a story of which they can be justifiably proud.

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Donald D. Tansley, **Growing Up and Going to War, 1925-1945** (Waterloo, ON: Laurier Centre for Military Strategic and Disarmament Studies, 2005), \$19.95 paper, 117 pages, ISBN 0-9688759-9-2.

Don Tansley was a child of the Depression, born in 1925 in Regina. As he writes, sociologists would have considered his family to be lower middle class, but his memories of the time are generally positive; after all, he recalls, "Everybody was in the same boat" (5).

A teenager when the war began, he spent time in the Regina Sea Cadets and the Reserve Battalion of the Regina Rifles, had a clash of personalities with a Chief Petty Officer when he enquired about enlisting in the Royal Canadian Navy, and ultimately joined the army on his eighteenth birthday, in May 1943. The personnel selection process directed him into the Royal Canadian Artillery, but after arriving in England he was re-mustered as infantry, passing through the Royal Montreal Regiment before being transferred to his old unit, the Regina Rifles, in December 1944. Over the next six months, Tansley was transformed from a greenhorn rifleman into one of the old sweats of the regiment. He was not yet twenty-one when he got back to Regina, but the photographs reveal how much he had matured during the war, an experience he calls "the most defining, the most intense, the most unforgettable, and perhaps the most satisfying experience of my life" (23).

Tansley writes in plain and simple language, with a modesty that is refreshing. He was at the sharp end as Canadian troops drove to the Rhine, and describes the experience vividly and without exaggeration. His memoir makes an excellent companion to the two published histories of his unit, Stewart Main's *Up the Johns!* (1993) and Gordon Brown and Terry Copp's *Look to Your Front* (2001).

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Bruce Thornley, **Index to Overseas Deaths of Ontario Servicemen and Servicewomen, 1939-1947**, ed. Clifford Collier, 2 vols. (Toronto: Ontario Genealogical Society, 2006), \$82.36 paper, 416 pages, ISBN 0-7779-0225-7 (volumes may also be purchased individually).

The invaluable reference guide began with one man's search for his family's history. While searching the microfilm rolls at the Archives of Ontario that list overseas deaths, Bruce Thornley discovered that it was impossible to search them by name, because the death certificates were registered according to year of death. So, he set about compiling an alphabetical listing of the more than 15,000 Ontarians who died overseas from 1939 to 1947, so that researchers could easily locate a name, find the relevant microfilm reel, and borrow it from the Archives of Ontario to consult the death certificate. Thornley's labour of love wasn't finished by the time he died in 2001, so it was taken over by Clifford Collier, who saw the project through to completion.

Space restrictions prevented the inclusion of all the information contained on the death certificates; Thornley had to confine himself to name, service, hometown, and date and cause of death. But the reference numbers make it easy for the user to borrow the microfilmed death certificates, which often contain more information for the historian or the genealogist.

As with any such reference book, this one provokes as many

questions as it provides answers. Was Richard Motkaluk celebrating VE-Day before the fact when he died of alcohol poisoning on 2 May 1945? What drove Theodore Gerigs to throw himself under a truck in February 1945? Could anything have been done to reduce the alarming number of motorcycle accidents that claimed the lives of Canadians in the armed forces? Behind each name, to be sure, is a story that is worth telling.

SL

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David R. Facey-Crowther, ed., **Lieutenant Owen William Steele of the Newfoundland Regiment: Diary and Letters** (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002), \$44.95, 253 pages, ISBN 0-7735-2428-2.

As the title suggests, this is the diary and letters of Lieutenant Owen William Steele, a proud member of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment during the First World War, who fought valiantly at Gallipoli and on the Western Front. Quickly promoted until he was commissioned as a lieutenant in April 1915, he experienced countless near misses and lucky coincidences at Gallipoli before taking part in the dramatic evacuation of the last soldiers; he was the last one off the beach, arriving at the ship just as it was about to set sail. After a brief period of rest, Steele and the Newfoundland Regiment were shipped to the Western Front, where all too many of them met their end.

Steele served in the same company as his younger brother James, as well as many others he knew from back home. His attachment to his home, family, and friends shine through in his letters home which often mention the activities of other Newfoundlanders. He also expresses great pride at the Newfoundland contingent receiving praise for working better and faster than other regiments, and expresses dismay at being confused for Canadians while in Europe.

The editor, David Facey-Crowther, does a fine job of filling

in the few gaps in the diary, fully fleshing out some of the comments made by Steele. This is especially important in what ended up being Steele's last days, when he witnessed the slaughter of his regiment while he was held back as part of the reserve at the battle of Beaumont Hamel, part of the massive Somme offensive. Steele possessed great insight before the battle, as he notes that the Germans appeared as if they were preparing for their attack. Yet he still expresses great confidence that the ensuing battle would be the greatest the world had seen, and would result in everyone being home by Christmas. A few days after the battle while away from the front line, Steele was hit by a random shell and died the following day. This is an excellent collection, well edited, and a thoroughly enjoyable story of the last two years of one of Newfoundland's finest and brightest young men.

MG

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Walter W. Igersheimer, **Blatant Injustice: The Story of a Jewish Refugee from Nazi Germany Imprisoned in Britain and Canada during World War II** (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005), \$39.95, 232 pages, ISBN 0-7735-2841-5.

When Winston Churchill uttered the famous phrase "Collar the lot!" and ordered his officials to complete the internment of thousands of German and Italian immigrants to and refugees in Britain, one of the innocents who was swept up was Walter Igersheimer, a Jewish medical student who had escaped to Britain from Germany. He had enormous motivation and desire to serve the Allied cause, but instead found himself interned first in Britain and then in Canada. His memoir is interesting on two levels. First, Igersheimer is a very keen and interested observer and effectively describes the roller coaster of emotions experienced by these young men as they alternated between despair at their treatment and hope that their release might

be imminent. On another level, he tries to make sense of the catch-22 in which they found themselves. The Canadian government insisted it was merely a custodian, with no authority to release the men. The United States wouldn't accept them because they had crossed the ocean as internees; their only option in that regard was to return to Britain, obtain an official release, and travel to the US on a civilian steamer. But Britain wasn't sure what to do with them; some were released unconditionally, while others were returned to Britain only after they agreed to join the Pioneer Corps. Igersheimer's route to freedom was even more unusual. Despite the fact that his parents were living in Boston, just a day's drive from where he was interned, the only way he could gain his freedom was to secure travel papers to Cuba; it was April 1943 before he could wangle his way into the US.

Blatant Injustice is part diary, part memoir, and it works well on both counts. The only fault in Ian Darragh's otherwise excellent introduction is his claim that this story "remains largely unknown to the general public to this day" (vii). In fact, the story has been the subject of dozens of monographs and memoirs since the 1970s, and the general public is no more ignorant of it that they are of any other historical event. But that minor criticism doesn't lessen the impact of Igersheimer's very powerful memoir.

DR

John Boileau, **Valiant Hearts: Atlantic Canada and the Victoria Cross** (Halifax: Nimbus, 2005), \$24.95, 276 pages, ISBN 1-55109548-3.

At least four other books have been written on Canadian VC winners but this one offers a different perspective on Britain's highest award for gallantry. It details the lives of twenty-one men who were born in Atlantic Canada or spent time there. The meticulous research on which the book is

based uncovers some interesting information on these men.

Most of the book deals with First World War. The author tells of the battles and the background to the award of the VC, showing the winners as very human beings, not just as the heroes they were. Private John Croak, a terrible soldier in the barracks, always being fined for misdemeanours, came into his own in battle. Lieutenant-Colonel Cyrus Peck led his men from the front and had earned a DSO and bar before winning his VC at Arras. Lieutenant Milton Gregg, a modest man, gained his medal for showing leadership over a four-day period.

Boileau, a former Canadian Army officer, writes of the enormous casualties in the First World War. The 27th Battalion "regenerated itself five times ... Only 147 remained from the original one thousand" at the end of the war. The Ypres Salient cost the Allies 570,000 casualties, 160,000 of them fatal.

Four VC winners from the Second World War appear in the book, only one of whom was born in the region. Captain Frederick Peters, born on Prince Edward Island, earned the medal for leading a suicidal mission into Oran harbour on 8 November 1942. Flight Lieutenant Bud Hornell trained on the Island and flew out of Yarmouth, Nova Scotia, and Lieutenant "Hammy" Gray, the last VC winner of the war, spent time in this province. The armed cruiser *Jervis Bay*, after refitting at Saint John, went down defending convoy HX84 against the German battleship *Admiral Scheer* on 5 November 1940. Her captain, Fogarty Fegen, VC, and his gallant crew are remembered with a monument in a city park.

Valiant Hearts has a passionate intensity to it, so it's a book to be sipped rather than swallowed whole. It contains a great deal of useful information on the medal and its winners (William Hall, the black Nova Scotia sailor who won his VC at Lucknow, was a powerful athlete), including details of where the Canadian VCs can be viewed. And

the author includes a great deal of interesting material on matters such as the difference between American and British aircraft carriers, the impact of Mauser bullets on human flesh, the award of the VC by ballot, the fate of some of the VC winners (seventeen committed suicide), and the performance of the Corsair fighter-bomber. The book has many excellent in-text photos and a comprehensive index. It lacks maps; one of Flanders would have added value to this fine book.

JL

Gary Campbell, **The Road to Canada: The Grand Communications Route from Saint John to Quebec** (Fredericton: Goose Lane Editions / The New Brunswick Military History Project, 2005), \$14.95 paper, 115 pages, ISBN 0-86492-426-7.

In 1885, it was the recently completed Canadian Pacific Railway that allowed central Canadian militia units to reach the site of the North-West Rebellion and put down the uprising. But before that, the Grand Communications Route served the same strategic purpose, enabling troops and supplies to move, with relative ease given the time, between the Maritimes and Quebec.

Not surprisingly, it was based on a route that had been used by the aboriginal peoples of the region, who paddled, portaged, and trekked along it for centuries before the Europeans arrived. During the era of the French regime, it became an important means of maintaining contact between the scattered settlement of New France during the winter, when ice closed the St. Lawrence River to shipping.

The centrepiece of Campbell's fascinating narrative is the march, in early 1813, of the 104th Regiment of Foot from Fredericton to Kingston to deal with the US threat during the War of 1812. By any yardstick, it was a remarkable achievement: fifty-two days and 1128 kilometres through the dead of winter, without a single loss of

life, even though temperatures plunged to -32 degrees Celsius (it is worth noting that three of Campbell's ancestors took part in the march). As *The Road to Canada* rightly points out, it was only one of many such troop movements along the Grand Communications Route, but it demonstrated beyond a shadow of a doubt the route's necessity to the security of British North America.

SL

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J.P. Pollock, ed., **Letters from Angus, 1915-1916** (Victoria: Trafford Publishing, 2005), \$22.50 paper, 156 pages, ISBN 1-4120-5780-9.

At thirty-four years of age, Angus Martin was older than most of his fellow volunteers when he joined the 74th Battalion in Toronto in October 1915. A well known city athlete and a man whose views had tended towards conscientious objection, he had a change of heart when two of his brothers-in-law joined up and his best friend was killed in action. Angus left his job as a compositor for *Saturday Night*, and joined the infantry. He was eventually transferred to the 52nd Battalion, and was killed by the concussion of a shell-burst in the summer of 1916.

Martin's letters reveal him to be a keen observer with an artistic eye (included are a number of poems he wrote at the front and sent home to his wife), but also a father who doted on his three small children. His letters to Flora, Fergus, and Elinore are deeply moving, and show him trying his hardest to be a father figure from an ocean away; their letters back to him (including a number that were sent after his death and were returned to his wife Cora with his personal possessions) are almost painful to read in their innocence. Angus lived for letters from home (on 7 June 1916, he wrote "Another big Canadian mail to-day but nary a thing for Martin. So I guess nobody loves him and we're going over to Flanders tomorrow to eat worms"), and reciprocated

with long and detailed accounts (as detailed as censorship permitted) of his experiences for Cora.

Pollock, Martin's grand-daughter, has added photos, postcards, newspaper clippings, and Angus' little sketches to the book, and has supplementing the details in the letters with entries from the 52nd Battalion's war diary. Taken together, it makes for a collection that is so powerful because it is at once very personal, but also universal.

JFV

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Eric Hammel, **Iwo Jima: Portrait of a Battle** (St. Paul, MN: Zenith Press, 2006), \$52.00 US, 256 pages, ISBN 0-7603-2520-0.

There are few historians as qualified to write about the United States Marine Corps (USMC) as Hammel, and probably none who can spin as compelling a story. Here, he tackles a well documented subject, the battle for Iwo Jima in 1945, but brings a fresh and new perspective. One of the bloodiest engagements of the Second World War, the landing was preceded by a seventy-four day air and naval bombardment that should have pulverized the defenders; instead, the Marines faced a thirty-four day battle that turned the tiny island into a charnel-house.

Hammel's narrative is fact-paced, succinct, and gripping – one would expect nothing less from the author of classics such as *Guadalcanal: Starvation Island* and *76 Hours: The Invasion of Tarawa*. But what really sets the book apart is Hammel's choice of illustrations. This is a story that is really told through the photographs, and there are some astonishing ones here. Most are from official sources, but few have ever been published before. They cover every element of the battle, from run-up to clean-up. In one striking sequence, two Marines search for the Japanese gunner who has set alight a nearby Sherman, find their target, and then open fire. Another photograph captures the aftermath

when a Japanese shell made a direct hit on a crater where a handful of Marine had taken cover. In a third, the moment is frozen as five USMC rocket trucks let loose a salvo of rockets against enemy positions. And in the final photograph, a haggard-looking Marine lights up his pipe while cradling his flame-thrower. With this many fine illustrations, Hammel's compelling narrative is a bonus; *Iwo Jima* can be read, or looked at, or both. Either way, this coffee-table book is one of the best around on the battle.

TG

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Irishmen in War From the Crusades to 1798: Essays from The Irish Sword, vol. I, introduction by Harman Murtagh and foreword by Tom Bartlett (Portland, OR: Irish Academic Press / The Military History Society of Ireland [distributed in North America by International Specialized Book Services], 2006), \$67.50 US, 274 pages, ISBN 07165-28169.

The main aim of this volume, and of its companion, *Irishmen in War 1800-2000: Essays from The Irish Sword*, volume 2, is a worthy one: to put before a wider public a representative sample of articles published by The Military History Society of Ireland in its bi-annual journal, *The Irish Sword*. As Harman Murtagh points out in his Introduction (ix) the Society, from its foundation in 1949 at a time when the tensions of the 1922-23 civil had far from dissipated and anti-British feelings ran high, has always "sought to attract soldiers, scholars and those with a general interest in the subject," whatever their political or military loyalties; Murtagh cites the journal's founding editor, G.A. Hayes-McCoy, to the effect that "no country as small as Ireland has achieved such a reputation as a home of soldiers" (a judgement that the Scots might query).

The nineteen articles are arranged chronologically. Several focus on particular military engagements, such as the Battle of

Dungan's Hill in 1647 (Padraig Lenihan), Cromwell's famous – or infamous – siege of Drogheda (J.G. Simms), and the Battle of Castlebar in 1798 (Richard Hayes). Two other pieces, by Paul M. Kerrigan and Hayes-McCoy, also focus on the 1798 rebellion; all were originally, presumably, part of a special issue celebrating the 200th anniversary of the event. Other papers are concerned with the composition, tactics, and equipment of various armies: see, for example, Hayes-McCoy's study of the Ulster army in the late sixteenth century, Kenneth Ferguson on King William's army in Ireland after the Glorious Revolution, and Diarmuid and Harman Murtagh on the Irish Jacobite army it faced. Two further pieces on this period (doubtless, again, the subject of a commemorative issue) focus, respectively, on the topography of the Battle of the Boyne (Donal O'Connell, in an essay lacking, alas, any clarificatory maps) and on the rôle of the French navy in the Jacobite war in Ireland (Sheila Mulloy). The importance of French and Spanish connections with Ireland is also emphasized in Caoimhin O Danachair's analysis of Armada losses on the Spanish coast, Sir Charles Petrie's study of the strategy of these two powers in relation to Ireland, and Micheline Kenney Walsh's wide-ranging discussion of the service of Irish soldiers abroad (this last including references to areas beyond France and Spain and covering, as does Petrie's article, a period of several centuries). For the mediaeval period we have Con Costello on Ireland and the Crusades, Randall Rogers on the late twelfth-century invasion of Ireland by the Anglo-Normans and the adaptation of their relatively meagre resources to meet the challenges they faced, and Katharine Simms on warfare in the mediaeval Gaelic lordships, dominated as it was by harrying, plundering, particularly of cattle, and exacting hostages and submission. As the paper neatly concludes, the High King of Ireland was therefore baffled by the appearance of Henry II and his knights: "Strongbow ar-

rived without cows" (55). Three further papers round out the collection: a study of the first guns in Ireland by Siobhan de h-Áir, a beguiling personality sketch of the famous sixteenth-century rebel Hugh O'Neill the Great by Cyril Falls, and Peter Smyth's valuable analysis, in what is arguably the best paper in the book, of the late eighteenth-century Irish Volunteers, a national armed force outside government control.

The introduction (xii) suggests that the main focus of the Military History Society of Ireland is closer to the traditional than the revisionist view of Irish History. Certainly we have here much old-school military history, with several of the papers of mainly antiquarian interest. Of course it can be argued that a selection from a span of some fifty years is bound to reflect the prevailing preoccupations of the period. Why, then, is the reader not provided with the apparatus that would enable solid judgements to be made on that basis? Nowhere is there the slightest indication of the volume number, pagination, and date of publication of the issue of *The Irish Sword* from which a particular article is taken. This is an elementary error of omission. Careful noting of dates and footnotes can give the reader some sense of period of composition, but that assumes some references are made to secondary literature – not always the case – and that there are some footnotes (there are none in Falls's essay). Nor is there anywhere a two- or three-line sketch of the contributors, an indispensable part of a collection of this sort. Brief allusion to the death dates of various Society luminaries, who turn out also to be contributors, is not enough. Moreover, some of the papers assume a thorough familiarity with the frequently very specialized or limited chronological periods and geographical areas being discussed; perhaps this was possible at the time of original publication but it is not so now, and certainly not for a general audience. This volume cries out for some heavy editorial work, not just the three-and-a-half page introduction and three-quar-

ters of a page foreword that it has. No doubt it was cheaper to present simple facsimiles of the original articles (with unfortunate consequences, however, for the quality of any illustrations) but this makes it difficult to justify the high price of the book. An editor, or individual authors, if extant, could have provided a paragraph or two containing an abstract of the argument and a context for what follows.

We are told (xii) that the "modern theme" of war and society and areas such as military art and women in Irish warfare are not neglected in the pages of *The Irish Sword* but that "space limitations" preclude inclusion here. It is, however, people who make decisions. The title of the book, also, *Irishmen in War*, is hardly inclusive. The wider public which the Irish Military History Society wishes to reach is not well-served by this book.

BCM

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Clifton J. Cate and Charles J. Cate, **Notes: A Soldier's Memoir of World War I** (Victoria: Trafford, 2005), \$22.00 paper, 177 pages, ISBN 1-41205355-2.

Gordon S. Glen, **A Memoriam to the Life of James Alpheus Glen, D.S.C. and Bar, Croix de Guerre avec Palme, Royal Naval Air Service, Royal Air Force, Canadian Air Force** (Saskatoon: privately published [available from the author at fe.gs.glen@sasktel.net], 2004), \$26.50 paper, 46 pages, no ISBN.

Gordon S. Glen, **A Memoriam to the Life of David Kenneth Glen, 2nd Regiment, Canadian Mounted Rifles, (B.C. Horse), Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force, Royal Naval Air Service and RAF** (Saskatoon: privately published [available from the author at fe.gs.glen@sasktel.net], 2004), 46 pages, no ISBN.

The boom in desktop publishing (either commercial or personal) has been a boon for historians, for it has often been the means for rescuing from obscurity stories

that might otherwise have remained untold. The biographies of Clifton Cate and the Glen brothers represent a case in point.

In the late summer of 1917, when voluntary enlistments had been reduced to a trickle, a young Massachusetts man names Clifton Cate was just what the CEF was looking for: someone with a pulse. Cate, who had joined up in the US but had been discharged because of his bad teeth, promptly headed to New Brunswick, where he was immediately taken into the 8th Field Ambulance at Saint John. But Cate was destined for a combatant role, and within a few months was transferred to the artillery (the recruiting officer, when shown his American discharge papers, responded, "Do they think you're going over there to EAT the Germans?"). He eventually ended up with the 12th Siege Battery, arriving in France in early 1918 and fighting through the Hundred Days.

His memoir, written in 1927 and intended to be read only by his family, covers his experiences in battle and in occupation (indeed, one of the most interesting parts of the book recounts Cate's time in Belgium and Germany, a subject that has received all too little attention from historians). Cate had a wry wit, a gift for spinning a good yarn, and a fondness for the absurd. He was also a fine draughtsman, and filled his memoir with small sketches of places and things he saw in his travels. It is a gem of a book, from a soldier who, were it not for the work of his son Charles Cate, would have remained in obscurity.

Gordon Glen's biography of his uncle Jim Glen is rather different. Glen, who had a distinguished aviation career during the First World War and in the short-lived Canadian Air Force afterwards, is the sort of person who should have left a rich paper trail for historians to follow. Instead, his nephew has had to piece together his life from a scattering of sources, and even then there are many holes to fill. Jim Glen was one of eight children born in Boissevain, Manitoba; his parents and younger brothers moved to

Enderby, British Columbia, when Jim was eighteen, and it was there that he finished school. He joined the Canadian Engineers in 1915, but later enrolled at the Curtiss Flying School in Toronto as preparation for entering the Royal Naval Air Service. He started on bombers, but his DSC was awarded for the twenty-odd aerial victories he scored while on fighter operations. After the war and his short stint in the CAF, Glen returned to the RAF, from which he retired in 1928.

Gordon Glen has pulled this story (and the separately published biography of Jim's brother Ken, who served in the 2nd Canadian Mounted Rifles and the RNAS) together from a variety of sources in Canada, Britain, and the United States. He admits that both biographies represent starting points, to be added to as further information becomes available, but they show how much can be learned even if one starts with almost nothing. Particularly interesting is the collections of family and service photographs that Gordon Glen has assembled. All in all, one can only be grateful that technology has allowed the stories of these men to reach a wider audience.

TG

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Laura M. MacDonald, **Curse of the Narrows: The Halifax Explosion 1917** (Toronto: HarperCollins, 2006), \$21.95 paper, 368 pages, ISBN 0-0063-948-92.

Relative to most other North American cities, Halifax has a long past. In recent years, however, some might argue that the city has faced more than its fair share of problems. Recently, the Rolling Stones descended upon the city, and before that it was the two Juans – Hurricane and White – in 2003 and 2004. In 1917, however, two ships – the *Imo*, a Belgian relief vessel, and the *Mont Blanc*, a French vessel loaded to the gills with munitions – collided in the harbour narrows. The result was the biggest disaster faced by the city

over the last century: the Halifax Explosion.

In *Curse of the Narrows*, Laura MacDonald weaves a detailed narrative account of the explosion that nearly encompasses the entire community affected by "the most powerful bomb the war and the world had ever produced." The result of the explosion – 9,000 homeless, 6,000 injured, and 2,000 dead out of a total population between Halifax and Dartmouth of 60,000 – is testament to the importance of the event to Halifax, and Canadian, history. *Curse of the Narrows* provides insight into the immediate effects on those in and around the city, the relief efforts from the local and international communities, the rehabilitation work that followed, and a short summary of the court proceedings investigating the incident.

MacDonald vividly reconstructs the awesome power of the blast. Her ability to describe in vivid, sometimes gruesome detail the minutiae of a phenomenon that few people have ever seen – and fewer still have lived to tell about – is a tremendous feat. On recounting the story of an ophthalmologist inspecting injured eyes, she tells us that upon pressing the eye socket, "It was as if the ball had been laid opened and then stuffed with pieces of glass or sometimes crockery, brick splinters, and, on palpitation, they would clink." This passage, along with numerous others within the book, almost made me physically ill, a tribute, I think, to MacDonald's skill as a writer and storyteller.

There is very little about which to complain in this fascinating book, with one notable exception. As an historian, I was disappointed to find that there were no in-text numerical citations to correspond with her endnotes. MacDonald has done her homework, but it seems an error somewhere in the publishing process makes that work now difficult to trace.

More a social than military history, *Curse of the Narrows* tells the story of how civilians, outside volunteers, civil servants, and the

armed forces all came together in a unified effort to bring relief to the injured and homeless. It is an interesting and important story, and perhaps the book's most compelling feature is that MacDonald tells it so well. If anything, historians will benefit most from the book by paying attention to the nuances in MacDonald's writing that demonstrate how history need not confine itself to the formulaic writing so often found in academia.

BA

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Frederick Libby, **Horses Don't Fly: A Memoir of World War I** (New York: Arcade Publishing, 2006), \$38.95, 274 pages, ISBN 1-55970-526-4.

In 1961, more than four decades after the Treaty of Versailles was signed by the Great War belligerents in Paris, Frederick Libby finally added his experiences to the annals of First World War historiography. Based solely on his memories of the war, Libby provides a captivating, highly detailed, and often amusing outlook on the first twenty-six years of his life. After becoming a pre-eminent horse trainer and working as a cow puncher in small town Colorado, Libby sought out other worldly experiences. Intending to head to South America in 1914, Libby ultimately sailed north and made his way to Alberta, Canada. It was at this juncture that a recruiter attempted to enlist Libby into the CEF. Like so many young Canadians he was promised a free trip to Europe with good pay as well as the prospect of being home by Christmas. Libby unhesitatingly joined.

After briefly serving in the trenches of France, Libby joined the Royal Flying Corps because it was "a nice way out of [the] damn rain." It was here that he flourished. In just over one year of service, Libby successfully shot down several German planes (fourteen confirmed kills) to become America's first fighter ace of the war. He also invented the butt-stock for a Lewis gun on his F.E.2b to give an ob-

server better aim, which eventually became standard military issue. However, Libby does not dwell on these achievements as he consistently underrated his own successes. Instead, he praises others for their accomplishments and teachings, including Albert Ball, a great British ace of the First World War with forty-three confirmed kills, and Captain Price, Libby's instructor and pilot in 11 Squadron.

Nevertheless, Libby passes an unfair judgement upon one man in particular. Normally introducing people by their full name (or rank), Libby refused to give the same courtesy to William Avery "Billy" Bishop. He then endeavoured to sully Bishop's claim of an early morning raid on a German airfield. It is alleged that Bishop single-handedly shot down four enemy aircraft (Libby incorrectly recalls eight aircraft) before limping back home to be decorated with the Victoria Cross for his daring and bravery. In Libby's own words, "God Almighty! Excuse me while I vomit." This was a major point of contention for a pilot who still considered air warfare a gentlemanly affair where a kill was recorded only after it was confirmed by another pilot.

Finally, unlike the war literature of Siegfried Sassoon, Erich Maria Remarque, or Charles Yale Harrison, Libby does not dwell on the ghastly or horrific events of the war. Rather, he recounts his time in the RFC with an air of sentimentality as an almost golden age of history (which speaks to Libby's elderly age of sixty-nine). Life was good in the RFC. Disillusionment only came when he transferred to the US air service: not only did the United States lack a credible air force, but the government and politicians were to be faulted for delaying American involvement in the war, the damning implication being, of course, that the United States did not win the First World War.

Horses Don't Fly was an honest attempt by Frederick Libby to retell a vital moment in world history through his own eyes. He was certainly a very able and well re-

spected pilot with the Royal Flying Corps, but he does not attempt to persuade or delude anyone, including himself, of his importance: in a most unassuming and unashamed manner, Libby leaves it to his reader to pass judgement upon his legacy.

RC

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Kenneth Radley, **We Lead, Others Follow: First Canadian Division, 1914-1918** (St. Catharines: Vanwell, 2006), \$34.95, 415 pages, ISBN 1-5512-510-00.

We Lead, Others Follow is Kenneth Radley's (Lieutenant-Colonel, retired) self-proclaimed attempt to pierce the shroud of "Canadian Amnesia" that he feels cloaks the exploits of the Canadian Expeditionary Force [CEF] in the First World War. He opens the volume by bemoaning the relative dearth of Canadian divisional histories in comparison to other nations such as Australia or Britain and goes on to state his intention to pay the First Canadian Division the historical attention that it merits. Indeed, Radley closes his preface with a virtual disclaimer for his approach, declaring that "some of what I say in this start on the history of the Great War Canadian Divisions may well be contentious, but then I have sought to speak directly as befits a soldier." However, despite this disclaimer, *We Lead, Others Follow* presents a balanced and exhaustively researched examination of the early evolution of the division that became known as "Old Red Patch," from its disorganized birth on a field outside Valcartier to its position of honour in the vanguard of the British Expeditionary Force during the early months of 1918. In particular, Radley is seeking to draw attention to the general officers, not just the divisional commanders such as Macdonell and Currie, who are already the subject of scholarly research in their own right. This top-down approach to examining the evolution of First Division is reflected in the central premise of Radley's book, which

attributes the Division's rapid progression to three primary factors: command and control, staff work, and sound training.

Indeed, the body of this volume is broken down topically into a chronological examination of the three factors outlined above. Beginning with command and control, Radley offers an analysis of the evolution of the First Division's capabilities, followed by an examination of the ways in which this progression manifested itself. He takes the same dual approach to his discussion of staff work and training. There are a number of recurring themes that run through all three of these topics. In fact, the topical-chronological structure of Radley's argument serves to highlight the degree to which success in all three of these areas was an ongoing process of trial and error. According to Radley, the First Division's success on the battlefield was due to the virtually incessant efforts of its officers to adapt and refine both tactics and training, and the increasingly effective efforts of staff officers to communicate and coordinate these refinements effectively. Similarly, he repeatedly emphasizes the extent to which this process of "trial and error" benefited not only future members of "Old Red Patch," but also the other Canadian divisions in the CEF, and to a certain degree the BEF as a whole.

It should also be noted that despite the author's inherent bias (Radley was after all, an officer in the Canadian Armed Forces), he does not fall prey to any of the more pernicious vagaries of patriotic nationalism. Indeed, if anything, he goes out of his way to ensure that the reader is firmly aware of the fact that the exploits of the First Division were carried out under the aegis of the British Expeditionary Force. Furthermore, *We Lead, Others Follow* does much to accord the less glorious positions in the Division their due. In particular, the examination of the increasing efficiency of staff duties poignantly emphasizes the integral role played by staff officers. Ultimately, Radley not only traces the successful evolution

of the First Division from a haphazardly organized and poorly trained force into a highly efficient and potent unit whose strength was forged on the battlefields of the Western Front, he also examines the ways in which this progression benefited those who came after, and highlights the dear price that was paid for the efficiency and renown enjoyed by "Old Red Patch" in the latter years of the war. Finally, when Radley states that the inadequate historiography of the First Division is primarily due to the fact "one third of the people of this country... were either indifferent or hostile to the war effort," one can't help but wonder the degree to which current events have inspired Radley's desire to "pierce the Canadian Amnesia."

NH

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E.P.S. Allen, **The 116th Battalion in France, 1914-18** (Ottawa: CEF Books, 2005 [1921]), \$22.95 paper, 111 pages, ISBN 1-896979-41-6.

Originally published shortly after the Armistice, this reprint of E.P.S. Allen's work details the history of the 116th Battalion during the Great War. The author recounted his own experience in the Ontario battalion, from his enlistment in October 1915 until his return to Toronto in 1919, and explained that he wrote this short volume for his comrades who served in the 116th, and for their families. As a result, his book resembled a small scrapbook of the battalion's experiences. By retelling the history of his battalion, Allen produced a fascinating account of a Canadian experience on the Western Front.

Allen reveals the initial enthusiasm with which Canadian troops marched to war, their quest for glory, and then the crushing reality of their experience. Initially, the 116th Battalion demonstrated a keen desire to prove itself on the battlefield to earn acceptance within the Canadian Corps, to which it had been a late addition. However, the Battalion was often placed in support or reserve positions until the

summer of 1917. Allen pointed out that troops confined to reserve positions still incurred heavy casualties but gained none of the glory that they so desired. He made an effort to explain the risks that were taken by those who did not participate in battle, but were instead charged with supplying rations and ammunition to men at the front. Allen also effectively conveyed the confusion that troops experienced throughout the war. The 116th Battalion was typically unaware of which battlefield they were being sent to, and did not know what their assignment would be until they arrived. Allen also described the conditions the Battalion faced while participating in battles and raids, often in heavy

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Allison Smith
Will Toews
Jonathan F. Vance
Shannon VanderWeerd
Jane E. Whalen
James Wood

mud while under gas attack and artillery fire. He also detailed his battalion's contribution to several Canadian victories, including Vimy Ridge, Passchendaele, and Cambrai. Photographs and maps are included in the book to illustrate

the events being described; these include pictures of various companies, successive commanders, and the landscapes in which the unit fought.

The re-publication of Allen's out-of-print account provides his-

torians and Great War enthusiasts with a valuable record of the 116th Battalion's service on the Western Front, and helps to bring a greater understanding of the soldier's experience in a Canadian context.

SP

Briefly Noted

Gerald F. Holm and Anthony P. Buchner, eds., **A Place of Honour: Manitoba's War Dead Commemorated in its Geography** (Winnipeg: Manitoba Conservation, n.d.), \$19.95 paper, 485 pages, ISBN 0-7711-1523-7.

After the end of the Second World War, the Geographical Names Board of Canada established a policy of honouring decorated war casualties by naming geographical features after them. In 1955, when the Board began running out of names, it began to honour all war dead – by 1992, about half of Manitoba's casualties had been honoured, and the program continues. It involves contacting the relatives of the individuals concerned, and to date provincial officials have located 2,889 of the 4,246 families, to present them with commemorative name certificates.

During that process, officials have collected photographs and anecdotes from the families, and these have been assembled into this commemorative volume. It is fascinating just to browse through, to read the excerpts from small-town newspapers, letters of condolence from commanding officers, reminiscences from siblings, widows, and children. Nothing is more effective as a reminder of the human cost of war.

* * * * *

Francis Patey, **Veterans of the North** (St. John's: Creative Publishers, 2003), \$22.95 paper, 326 pages, ISBN 1-894294-56-4.

In *Veterans of the North*, Francis Patey has compiled a tribute to the men and women of Newfoundland's Great Northern Peninsula and coastal Labrador who served

in the two world wars, Korea, and the Gulf War. It is not a traditional narrative, but rather a collection of photographs, poems, and brief explanatory notes, weighted heavily, not surprisingly, on the Newfoundland Regiment and the Royal Naval Reserve, in which the majority of these individuals served. Perhaps most striking about the book is how few surnames are represented – there were clearly a relatively small number of large, extended families in these communities who gave freely to the armed forces over the 20th century. Indeed, the author's own surname can be found on many occasions, in both world wars.

The photographs, especially from the First World War, are also haunting. Many of them have been culled from private collections, and may have been hanging on dining room or parlour walls for decades. There are not very many familiar names (one of the few is Victoria Cross winner Tommy Ricketts, a legendary figure in Newfoundland history), but the faces have a tragic similarity about them: two brothers killed on the same day at Beaumont Hamel in 1916; a group of pals photographed before leaving the island – half of them came home, half didn't. Taken together, they all symbolize the magnitude of the sacrifice made by these tiny villages and outposts over the century.

* * * * *

John A. Neal, **Bless You, Brother Irvin: The Caterpillar Club Story** (Renfrew, ON: General Store Publishing, 2005), \$19.95 paper, 124 pages, ISBN 1-894263-94-4.

There is an elite group known as the Caterpillar Club, whose membership is open only to men and women who have saved their

lives by using a parachute to escape from a disabled aircraft. John Neal himself is a member, having been forced out of his wrecked aircraft in April 1944, and he has assembled the stories of more than 24 of his fellow members from around the world. Each short chapter tells of a narrow escape, although some do not, strictly speaking, qualify for the book. There is, for example, the tale of Sergeant Nicholas Alkemade, who tumbled out of his Lancaster at 18,000 feet without a parachute; he survived by falling through a thick fir tree to land in deep snow. Nevertheless, it is a fascinating collection and one that allows for an almost limitless number of sequels.

* * * * *

Desmond Morton, **Billet pour le front: Histoire sociale des volontaires canadiens (1914-1919)** (Outrement: Athéna Éditions, 2005), \$27.95 paper, 384 pages, ISBN 2-922865-40-1.

In addition to publishing its own monographs, Athéna Éditions has begun to issue French-language translation of English-language classics in Canadian military history. A translation of Bill Rawling's *Surviving Trench Warfare* appeared in 2004, an edition that is now followed by a French version of Morton's *When Your Number's Up*. With a new introduction and an updated bibliography, *Billet pour le front* is a useful edition to the library of anyone who already owns *When Your Number's Up*. Now that Athéna Éditions has taken this excellent initiative, is there an English publisher out there that would take up the challenge and issue English translations of Athéna's French-language monographs?

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