

50th Anniversary of the Korean War



Commemorative Supplement

The Korea Book of Remembrance, displayed in the Memorial Chapel of the Parliament Buildings in Ottawa, contains the names of 516 Canadians who died in the Korean War. It is hoped that this supplement will remind members of the Friends why and how they fought and died in that far-off country.

At the end of World War II, Korea, which had been under Japanese rule, was divided at the 38th parallel into American and Soviet spheres of influence. The Soviets established a communist regime in North Korea and the Americans supported a fragile democracy in South Korea.

On 25 June 1950, North Korea invaded the South in an attempt to unify the peninsula by force, and within days captured Seoul, South Korea's capital city. The American and the sparsely equipped Korean army were pushed back to the Pusan perimeter. The United Nations called on its members to restore peace and security in the area. The US forces were augmented and 15 other non-communist countries sent troops to fight under the UN banner.

On 13 September, the US effected a brilliant amphibious landing at Inchon, which led to the retaking of Seoul and played a key part in turning the war around. By mid-October, UN forces had pushed deep into North Korea itself,

prompting the intervention of 300,000 Chinese troops in support of the North. The UN forces were driven south, but by early 1951 the UN had returned the front line to the 38th parallel. Months of difficult truce negotiations followed,



Brigadier Rockingham with PPCLI officers
(Public Archives 114890)

punctuated by heavy fighting, and on 23 July 1953 an armistice was signed. However, to this day the peninsula remains divided.

Canada's Contribution

Canada initially sent three destroyers and a squadron of transport planes and in August 1950 the Canadian Army Special Force, a brigade-sized formation was created.

The Royal Canadian Navy

The destroyers HMCS *Cayuga*, *Sioux* and *Athabaskan* left Esquimalt for Korean waters on 5 July 1950. During the war eight RCN

warships served on a rotating basis, three at a time. Their duties included minesweeping, rescuing downed fliers, capturing enemy supply vessels, and supporting troops in capturing and defending coastal islands.

In early December a UN task group (including the RCN destroyers) under the command of Capt Jeffry Brock of the *Cayuga* covered the evacuation of the 8th US Army at Chinnampo, a river port near Pyongyang, destroying the railway yard, fuel and munition dumps, and port facilities – which may well have been the most critical naval operation of the war.

The Canadian Army

Recalling the 1941 Hong Kong disaster, Canada, wary of committing troops, responded slowly. The all-volunteer Special Force would eventually become 25 Canadian Infantry Brigade Group comprising three infantry battalions, a tank squadron, an artillery regiment, engineer and signal squadrons, an RCASC transport company, a RCEME workshop, a field ambulance and a CProC detachment.

25 CIBG became part of the British Commonwealth Infantry Division in Korea. The first soldiers arrived in 1950 and the last left in 1957, well after the war was over.

The Royal Canadian Air Force

426 (Transport) Squadron, RCAF was placed at the disposal of UN Forces in July, 1950. Flying North Stars, the squadron moved troops and supplies to Japan, returning with casualties or troops on rotation. By June, 1954 the squadron had completed 599 round-trips, logged 34,000 flying hours and carried 13,000 personnel and 3,500 tons of freight. In addition to 426 Squadron, the RCAF attached twenty-two pilots to USAF Sabre squadrons, in which they destroyed nine MiGs. A dozen Canadian Army officers served as pilots and observers with USAF and Commonwealth tactical units, directing artillery fire and air strikes. A number of flyers were shot down and became prisoners of war.

Operational Units

During the war, the 1st, 2nd and 3rd battalions of the Royal Canadian Regiment (RCR), Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry (PPCLI) and the Royal 22e Regiment (R22eR), a tank squadron of the Lord Strathcona's Horse, artillery of the 1st and 2nd Regiments of the Royal Canadian Horse Artillery (RCHA) and the 81st Field Regiment served in Korea. Brigadier John Rockingham was the first brigade commander followed by Brigadiers MP Bogert, Jean-Victor Allard, and FA Clift.

Following the cease-fire, other units stationed in Korea included the Black Watch, the Queen's Own Rifles and the Canadian Guards.

Land Operations

Canada's first major land engagement in Korea was the battle of Kap'young. In April 1951, the Chinese and North Koreans launched a counter-offensive which drove the UN forces from North Korean territory. 2 PPCLI, with 3rd Battalion, the Royal Australian Regiment (3 RAR), (then part of 27 Commonwealth Infantry Brigade Group) were tasked with stopping the communist advance and keeping open the withdrawal route through the Kap'young valley north of Seoul. They held vital positions on the hills dominating the valley but after two days of hard fighting 3 RAR was forced to withdraw.



Vandoos slog through the Korean mud
Public Archives 129114

The Chinese began to infiltrate around the Patricias and on the night of 24 April intensified their attack. 1 PPCLI was served well by New Zealand artillery and managed not only to hold their position but to break the back of the Chinese offensive. For their stand at Kap'young 2 PPCLI, 3 RAR and the

US 72nd Tank Battalion were awarded the United States Presidential Unit Citation.

Following its commitment to operations, 25CIBG advanced from Uijongbu north to a position beyond the Kansas Line. On 30 May 1951, 1RCR attacked the Chinese at Chaili, but the attack failed due primarily to a UN failure to protect the brigade's right flank.

Intermittent fighting and aggressive patrolling continued right up to the armistice, punctuated by pitched battles for key hills and ridges.

From 23 to 25 November 1951, 2 R22eR successfully defended a long spur of Hill 355 from four attacks despite intense enemy artillery and rocket fire and a temporary withdrawal from the main feature by the US army's 2nd Bn 7th Infantry Regiment.

On the night of 23/24 October 1952 a heavy Chinese attack led to the overrunning of a 2 RCR company position on the shoulder of Hill 355. The enemy were then defeated by defensive fire by 1 RCHA, and a company-sized counter attack.

On the night of 2/3 May 1953 the Chinese overran a 3 RCR company position on the shoulder of Hill 187, the highest hill in the sector but were driven back by artillery fire. During this battle, 3 RCR suffered the heaviest casualties of any Canadian unit in the War.

Throughout the war, Canadian troops distinguished themselves under difficult circumstances, often holding isolated positions against vastly superior forces. 25,000 Canadians served in the war; 1,500 were casualties, of whom 516 died.

“Friendly” Fire on Hill 97

The following extracts from the citation for the award of the Military Cross to then 2nd Lieutenant Ed Hollyer give a graphic description of an attack by a Chinese force of battalion-plus strength: “On the night of 2/3 May 1953, C Company, 3rd Battalion, The Royal Canadian Regiment sustained a heavy attack by superior enemy forces which was accompanied by an intense preliminary bombardment. The brunt of the attack was borne by 7 Platoon of C Company occupying a feature known as Hill 97 commanded by 2nd Lieutenant Hollyer. The platoon had occupied this position for 13 days prior to the attack during which time the position was subjected to constant shelling and mortaring with devastating effects on the defences.

“As the battle progressed he called for artillery fire on the enemy within a few yards of and on all sides of his positions with great skill and accuracy. Leaving his bunker as necessary and with complete disregard for his personal safety to observe and report the results. On one such occasion he was blown back into his bunker and on another was personally engaged by the enemy which he drove off. Eventually, as a result of the weight of the attack, his position was over-run. Lt Hollyer remained at his post driving off the enemy with grenades, at the same time calling for fire on his own position”.



Lt Hollyer with a captured burp gun after the battle. (Photo: Joe Bray).

The artillery officer who brought down the “friendly fire” on Lt Hollyer’s position was 2/Lt Reg Redknap. When he received the order to fire (DFSOS) on the platoon position, he queried the order and was told to “Bloody well do it”. Concentrations of proximity-fuzed rounds were fired, fuzed to explode 60 feet above ground in order not to inflict casualties on those in trenches. LCol (ret’d) EH Hollyer, MC, CD is now a member of the Friends, as is Maj (ret’d) Reg Redknap who remains a close friend of Colonel Hollyer’s to this day.

Korea Pilgrimage – 30 Sep to 15 Oct 1998 (by Maj (ret’d) Bill Watt)

I was honoured to be the Intelligence Corps representative on the pilgrimage to Korea together with some 45 other Korean War veterans. The delegation, headed by the Hon Fred Mifflin, included representatives of all three services as well as veterans’ organizations, two senators and three MPs, students and Army Cadets. Sgt Smokey Smith, VC was also an honoured participant. Before flying to Korea, parades and remembrance services were held at the Meadowlands cemetery in Brayton, Ontario where the Wall of Remembrance built by Korea veterans is located; the Canadian Memorial Church in Vancouver; the Field of Honour at Mountain View cemetery; and the Veterans’ Cemetery at CFB Naden in Victoria, BC.



The Commonwealth Memorial, Kap’yong, Korea Photo: Bill Watt

In Japan a formal ceremony was held at the Commonwealth War Graves Cemetery, Yokohama where Canadian Korea casualties and 137 prisoners of war captured in Hong Kong are buried. In Korea, a ceremony was held at the Korean War Memorial monument and crypt, where the names of 102,000 soldiers who have no known grave are inscribed. The group visited the Demilitarized Zone and the truce area of Panmunjom, where US and ROK troops still stand face-to-face with the North Koreans. Each Korea veteran was presented with a medal and a scroll proclaiming each to be an Ambassador for Peace.

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Korea Pilgrimage (continued from Page 3)

A commemorative service was held at the Commonwealth Memorial at Ka'pyong, where 2PPCLI had earned the Presidential Unit Citation in 1951. This was followed by a major ceremony at the Canadian War Memorial Garden in the Naechon Valley, where the original PPCLI monument, with bronze plaque and regimental cap badge, is now accompanied by a stone tablet listing the CF units which participated in the war and a large monument erected by the Korean people to the memory of Canadians who served in Korea.

The final ceremony was at the only United Nations Memorial Cemetery in the world, in Pusan, where 2,300 of the 37,895 UN war dead are buried (most from the British Commonwealth). Almost all of the war dead of other nations were repatriated and all but a few of the ROK army dead rest elsewhere in the country.

378 Canadian soldiers are buried here – each grave marked with a bronze plaque and a small Canadian flag. At the head of the cemetery the flags of the UN countries who participated are displayed with a representative number of graves from that country at the base of each flag. In the case of Canada, twenty-four soldiers of 2PPCLI, my battalion at the time, rest there. Wreaths were laid and we were handed roses by our youth representatives to place on individual graves – our last farewell to those with whom we had served.

To me it is very important that Veterans Affairs Canada continue to organize these pilgrimages. It was also a wonderful idea to have the youth representatives as part of the delegation. I am sure that they gained a greater understanding of the veterans' experiences, and their memories will undoubtedly outlast those veterans.

The War Memorial Of Korea



Contributed by Les Peate

Unlike most war museums, this one is dedicated to a single conflict – the Korean War, which we consider ended on 27th July 1953 but for which a peace treaty has never been signed. The museum, in South Korea's capital city of Seoul, was funded by a private group (mainly veterans) with support from its own government and its United Nations allies.

The grounds contain an awesome array of aircraft, armour, vehicles and artillery pieces used by both sides in the war. Aircraft range from a giant Globemaster and a B-29 Super Fortress to light liaison planes and the Texan in which many Canadian army officers flew as target spotters. Corsairs, MiGs and even the troublesome Polikarpov "bedcheck Charlie" trainer which disturbed our sleep with forays reminiscent of Errol Flynn's last flight in *Dawn Patrol*, all are there. There are enough tanks, APCs and other vehicles to keep armour buffs occupied for hours, as well as an extensive and varied artillery collection.

We have Adolf Hitler's automobile – Seoul captured North Korean leader Kim Il-sung's Russian-built ZIS limousine. As a reminder that that the armistice is a fragile affair, a replica of North Korea's infiltration tunnel, one of several constructed beneath the De-militarized Zone, is also on display.

Inside the building a display of photographs, documents and artefacts tell the story of the war. Contributions were received from the twenty-one nations who participated in the war, and each country has its own display case. (The Canadian War Museum donated among other items, a Bren LMG and a Canadian army uniform). South Korean memorabilia and captured enemy weapons and equipment complete the collection. Although Seoul may be off the beaten track (except for returning veterans), the Seoul museum is a definite must for military buffs visiting the Far East.

(Other material on the War Memorial of Korea was donated by Colonel Chi-hun Li, Korea's Defence Attaché)



Kim Il-sung's Russian ZIS was seized by the ROK