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WNSR page on Facebook is called: West Nova Scotia Regiment

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2016 Reunion Report



Padre EE Hill is ready to start the Memorial Service at the WNSRRA Memorial Cairn east of the Regimental Headquarters in Aldershot. As you can see, there were about 50 people there. About 190 people participated in the reunion activities this year which is an excellent turnout. We're continuing to grow every year because members are telling their friends. Wouldn't it be great if the attendance at the Memorial Service was the highest of all the activities? There were also about 50 currently serving all ranks there as well.

- This was the third year for the Friday evening barbeque, and it was combined this year with Departure with Dignity ceremony for Cpl Bob Rowe which made for a good mix of serving and retired members. Attendance on that evening was up to about 170 with about 40 of those being serving members.
- The ticket seller who will not be denied (Helen Clarke) was in attendance for the whole weekend and sold tickets for two successful 50/50 draws as well as the raffle prize, a mini-fridge decorated with the design of our Regimental Flag, won by Ash Keddy from Kingston. Helen does great work in helping to support our RA, and we really appreciate her hard work.
- Again, this year, the Atlantic Canadian Military History Association was on hand with an outstanding display of weapons, uniforms, and artifacts that they have accumulated for display throughout the province. We really appreciate the support shown by their volunteer members, especially Dave Crocker and Darrell Avery. You can visit their website at <http://tacww2lha.weebly.com/>
- Our Banquet was organized the last few years by Peter Bailey, and it went off without a hitch, serving over a hundred people. This is fantastic. Don't miss out in 2017 when our reunion is set for 15-17 September in Aldershot and Kentville. Let us know you're coming, and we'll save a seat for you. See the article on the next page about the "Italian Connection" at the banquet
- After about 18 years as WNSRRA Secretary, Bill Goodwin relinquished that post to Tom Tupper who will be the RA Secretary for at least the next three years. You can reach Tom at the address in the blue column to the left or at RASECTY@gmail.com
- To all who helped to make the 67th Annual WNSRRA Reunion a success by attending or organizing, thank you.

New Executive and Directors for Regimental Association

Every three years, there is an election of the Executive Officers of the Regimental Association at the Annual Reunion, during the AGM. Twenty-sixteen was an election year and a new executive was elected.

We want to thank the previous Executive members for the important contribution they have made over the last six years. Under the leadership of Doug Allison, our RA has grown significantly and has remained an important part of the Regimental Family. We have continued to grow each year. If the incoming Executive is as successful, we'll be in fine shape for years to come. Last year, we had 110 members, and almost a dozen have paid their annual dues so far this year.



Over the last several years, the association and the serving members of the WNSR have been cooperating more closely than ever before. At the annual Spring meeting of the RA Executive Committee and Directors, two new directors from the serving members of the Regiment were appointed unanimously. It is hoped that this will result in more timely input from the currently serving members.

Here is a list of the incoming Executive and the Directors of the RA for 2016-2019:

<p>Executive President - J. Ron Stonier Past President – Doug Allison Vice President – Tom Stinson Secretary – Tom Tupper Treasurer – Bert Fitzgerald</p>	<p>Ex Officio Members: Honorary Colonel JG Leefe Honorary Lieutenant Colonel EK Meisner</p>
<p>Directors: Peter Bailey Wayne Blenkhorn Hugh Cuvilier</p>	<p>Kel Hancock Willis Kinsman Garry Randall John Ryan</p> <p>New Directors: Capt Mike Bobbitt MCpl Garry Maddison</p>

The Italian Connection



Over the last year, we have been part of some connections to the town of Castel di Sangro in Italy. Castel di Sangro is an Italian town that was liberated from the Germans by the West Nova Scotia Regiment in November 1943.

It was 22 November and it had been raining for about two weeks. It was miserable and cold living in the outdoors. The recce had been done by the 3 Bde Comd, Brigadier Gibson and the WNSR CO, Lt.Col Pat Bogert. The monastery on top of Point 1009 (the high feature in the photo) had become a German strongpoint, and they could see up and down the Sangro River. We had to get them out of there and capture Point 1009 as anyone could see that it was the Vital Ground in that area.

The whole of 1st Division was on the South side of the Sangro because it had swollen because of the incessant rain. It wasn't terribly deep, but it posed a significant obstacle for a Divisional level crossing in full view of the enemy in the monastery, especially since the entire south bank of the Sangro had been sown with anti-tank and anti-pers mines. Many of them were the wooden shoe mines,

quite a few of them booby-trapped as the Germans needed to slow down the advancing Allied Army in any way possible; that's why all the bridges had been blown by the retreating Germans.



LED ATTACK — Capt. Hugh Burns

Yes, the West Novas would take Point 1009. They would attack under cover of darkness in the pouring rain. H-hour was 0100 on 23 Nov, and that's when they would "set off in the pouring rain and the utter darkness for the hill". B Coy would do the job, led by Capt Hugh Burns of Kentville; he had worked with his father on the Kentville Advertiser before joining up to do his part in the War.

The lead Pl was commanded by Lieut JA Blackie Blanchard (below right) of Charlottetown, PEI. At 22 years of age, he hadn't lived much, but he knew his craft, and he was well-respected by his soldiers.

That's Point 1009 in the photo (sometimes referred to as The Castle), and the monastery is at the very top. It would be a difficult climb even in the daytime without the rain, but the noise of the rain would, to some degree, cover the sound of their approach. There was only one clear path, but even on the path there was a lot of loose rock which was made even more dangerous

by the water running down the slopes.

As one might expect, the communications between the attacking company and the Bn HQ failed shortly after the company left unit lines, so they were on their own for the whole of the operation, and the HQ was in the dark in more ways than one.

It was so dark and the weather was so miserable that Lieut Blanchard's men passed through the German lines unnoticed, and, before they knew it, they were making a rush on the monastery to do house-clearing with grenades, rifles, and Bren Guns. However, the Germans caught them in their withering machinegun fire from both sides of the plateau. Several West Novas were killed or wounded and the lieutenant was mortally wounded and shouting for his men to go back before they were all killed. He died on that hill on that night, and some of his men were able to escape because of his courage and leadership.

The remaining platoons tried the impossible task of reaching the top, but they were often turned back with showers of grenades as they attempted the ascent. The defender unquestionably had the advantage.

It wasn't until about 0700 that the remainder of the company were able to return to WNSR lines under cover of a heavy morning mist.

There's much more to the story but no room to tell it here. On 24 Nov, several regiments of field and medium artillery began a heavy concentration of fire on Point 1009. Five thousand rounds from eight of the artillery regiments fell on the position within half an hour. This time, using the thundering artillery barrage to cover their approach, A Coy of the West Novas conducted a flanking assault while C Coy provided covering fire support from the front. By late afternoon, Point 1009 was ours, and A Coy didn't have to fire a shot to get it. When they arrived on the objective, the enemy was nowhere to be seen, having withdrawn the night before.

For more detail on this battle, see the Regimental history, *West Novas*, by Thomas Raddall, pp. 143-152.



At our 67th Reunion, the Guest Speaker was Mike Conway, nephew of Lieut JA Blanchard, and the Guest of Honour was Signore Alessandro Teti, an engineer and author from Castel di Sangro who came to meet and speak with Mike and with Victor Dukeshire who was in Lieut Blanchard's platoon on that night. Victor was with his brother that night on Point 1009 when his brother, Garth, was wounded in that battle in the dark and the rain. Talk about a reunion; it was fabulous. Signore Teti was hosted at a reception by Kentville Town Council on the Monday after the reunion, and a process was set in place to establish a twinning between the Town of Kentville and Castel di Sangro.

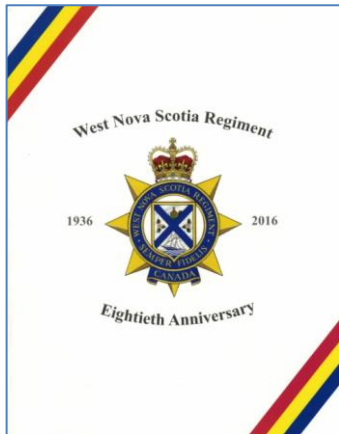
A ceremony will be held in Castel di Sangro this summer to honour the West Novas who fought to save their town. It will be attended by the Her Worship, Mayor Sandra Snow of Kentville.. Also attending will be a delegation of West Novas from the RA, including Garry Randall, former CO George McGrath, and RA President Ron Stonier, all paying their own way. As well, LCol Harris, currently serving in an American HQ in Iraq, hopes to be able to attend if duty permits.

Please note that the opportunity to attend the ceremonies in Castel di Sangro is open to any other interested members or soldiers of the WNSR Regimental Family, but decisions must be made very soon. Please contact Garry or Ron if you would like to attend.

WNSR 80th Anniversary Magazine

The 80th Anniversary of the formation of the WNSR from the Annapolis Regiment and the Lunenburg Regiment occurred on 15 December 2016. The Regiment celebrated with cake and a get together at Camp Aldershot, but 80 is a special milestone. In the past, we have marked the occasion of reaching a new decade by the publication of an anniversary magazine. We began the tradition in 1986 on the 50th Anniversary and followed suit on the 60th and 70th Anniversaries. Our publication date wasn't until February of 2017, but that's because we wanted to get all the news of

the previous ten years in. We've included stories on the serving members, the Regimental Association, and the WNSR affiliated Army Cadet Corps.



Through the combined efforts of the Unit and the RA, we were able to produce a commemorative publication of which we can be proud, and I think we've done that, but you'll have to be the judge. Some of the Regular force units produce such a magazine on a more frequent basis, but they have several full strength battalions to support them as well as many more resources. I think the West Novas can stand tall and know that they lead the way in this regard.

We printed 500 copies and have distributed a number to organizations and people who have supported our project through advertizing. We have distributed copies to the unit so that every soldier will have one. The five cadet corps have received a number of copies, and copies were passed to the Valley and South Shore Memory Clubs. We've mailed copies to members who have paid postage, and we'll do the same for you if you want. We plan to have enough copies on hand for the reunion in Sept so that members can have their own copy.

We hope you enjoy the magazine; it's part of the history that you've contributed to making for our Regimental Family.

WNSR Army Cadet News

2017 Annual Cadet Reviews (ACR) for West Nova affiliated RCAC Corps

Please see page six "Dates to Remember for RA Members" for times and locations for ACRs for all of our affiliated Corps.

All members of the WNSRRA are encouraged to attend any of the ACRs and to wear your RA kit if you have it. It would be appropriate for you to wear your medals to an ACR.

Introduce yourself to the staff and ask questions of the cadets during their demonstrations. You'll enjoy seeing these fine young Canadians demonstrate their skills, and they'll be pleased that you came to see them. It's a way to demonstrate your pride in being a West Nova and to support our cadets.



Regimental Kitshop is Online 24/7

• The RA Kit shop is online at wnsr.ca/catalog/24 and you can order kit at any time. Many members plan to attend the Reunion in the proper RA Kit (Blue blazer with crest, white or light blue shirt with Regimental tie, and gray trousers with black shoes). **Go online and order your kit today.** wnsr.ca/catalog/24

• We still have some copies of the Regimental history, *West Novas*, by Thomas Raddall.

The Kitshop now operates online in a hassle-free, convenient way to get the kit you want without hiccups or snags. All items we have in stock are included with photos and descriptions. We have Blazer crests, Regimental ties, genuine brass cap badges, crested ball caps, licence plates, and much more.

Canada 150: West Novas in Peace and War

Last year, the Regimental Association, with the help of the Regiment, was able to mount an exhibit of WNSR weapons, uniforms, and artifacts to showcase our history, specifically the Scout-Sniper Platoon of the Second World War. By all reports, people liked what they saw, and so the WNSR History Committee accepted the challenge of mounting a significantly expanded exhibit at the Annapolis Valley Macdonald Museum in Middleton, another Valley town where the West Novas have had a presence for a long time.

This year's exhibit is called *Canada 150: West Novas in Peace and War* and it will have its official opening at 1400 hours on 07 May 2017, and all West Novas are more than welcome to attend. Please join us for the official opening. If you can't make it then, the exhibit is on during regular hours until 30 September. The team planning, organizing, and executing this exhibit is led by former CO, Col (Ret'd) Tom Stinson and includes members; Garry Randall, Duke Davidson, Jo Bishop, and Ron Stonier. Many others have contributed to make this the best exhibit we've put on so far.

Included in the exhibit will be the Scout-Sniper display from last year, a display on 18 West Novas from WWII who were also members of the 1st Special Service Force (the Devil's Brigade), a display about the West Nova contribution to the War in Afghanistan that earned us a new battle honour, and a display about six West Novas who started off in our Regiment and went on to achieve very successful careers in the military or RCMP.



Regimental Memorial Coin Project Completion



At the recent Executive Committee Meeting at Aldershot, it was agreed that we will order the remaining 108 Memorial Coins for West Novas killed in WWII alphabetically from Pte DJ McLean to Pte WB Zwicker. Some are already spoken for, and we will publish a list of available coins in the next newsletter. This completes the project which began in 2014 to strike a Memorial Coin for every West Nova killed overseas in WWII.

Every member of the Regimental Association receives a Regimental Memorial Coin as part of his or her membership. However, you can also purchase additional coins for yourself or for friends and family for \$25 each without joining the RA.

Actual size 1 3/4 inches

There are three variants of the coin: Memorial, Blank, and Cadet. If there is a special soldier you wish to honour by the purchase of his Memorial coin, you can send a request by email to bertf@eastlink.ca. Memorial coins will each be one of a kind; that is, a soldier's name will not be used a second time.

All former West Novas are encouraged to join the Regimental Association to help support soldiers who have served or are serving. To join, go to www.wnsr.ca/ra/docs, complete and send the application.

Regimental Association Offers Operational Deployment Certificates

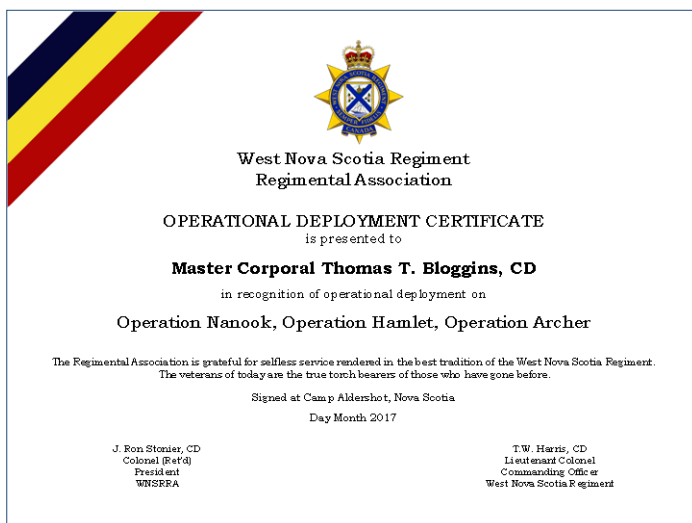


Canada
Domestic Operations

At the last Regimental Association AGM in September 2016, Honorary Colonel John Leefe moved to establish an "Operational Deployment Certificate" to be issued to qualified West Novas. It was decided that either international or domestic operations would be included as well as service in The Second World War and the Korean War. The motion as amended passed unanimously.

Qualifying service may be completed prior to, during, or after service in the West Nova Scotia Regiment. Personnel attached to the WNSR would also qualify for the certificate.

Consideration for award of the certificate starts when the soldier completes the application form.



- Application form provides us with your contact information and information on operations served
- Only one certificate will be issued per soldier
- Certificate will show all qualifying operations
- Certificates will be personally presented to qualified soldiers at Regimental or Association functions at the earliest opportunity
- If presentation is not possible, certificates may be mailed to the recipient
- Certificate is 8 1/2 X 11" in colour and will be similar in appearance to the sample
- The Operational Deployment Certificate is a small gesture made within the Regimental Family to show that we recognize the service provided to the Nation by the veterans of our Regiment.
- The statement on the certificate reads: "The Regimental Association is grateful for the selfless service rendered in the best tradition of the West Nova Scotia Regiment. The veterans of today are the true torch bearers of those who have gone before."
- Find more information and an application form at <http://wnsr.ca/ra/docs> or contact the Association Secretary at RASecty@gmail.com

Dates to Remember for RA Members

We've made a list of Regimental Family events that we hope you might be interested in attending, and we'll list them here as a sort of a reminder that there are ways that you can show support for your Regiment.

MAY	07	"Canada 150: West Novas in Peace and War" Museum Exhibit Opening at the Annapolis Valley Macdonald Museum, 21 School St., Middleton. Opening at 1400 hours Dress: Regimental Blazer and Tie (without medals) or civilian equivalent
	13	Italy Day Dinner and Dance at the Camp Drill Hall (Bldg 222) Time: Guests arrive at 1715 and dinner is served at 1745 – Cost is \$20 per person Meal is Haybox Spaghetti and meatballs (red ticket) Vegetarian option: Veggie sauce without meatballs (green ticket) Gluten free option available (blue ticket) Side: Caesar Salad Dessert: Cake Entertainment: Casino night games followed by dancing Dress: Mess kit, DEU 2B. For Non-military business suit or equivalent formal dress. Regimental Blazer and Tie is acceptable. Please RSVP by 01 May to Wyatt.Brown@forces.gc.ca or to the BOR at 902-678-7930 Local 2103.
	27	ACR for 2688 RCACC Bridgewater at the Lunenburg County Leisure Centre, 135 N Park St, Bridgewater. Please be seated by 1345 for the parade at 1400 hours.
JUNE	03	ACR for 686 RCACC at Bridgetown at 1400 hours. Please be seated by 1345 in the Bridgetown Arena next to the Royal Canadian Legion 20 Jeffery St, Bridgetown.
	03	ACR for 2444 Kings County RCACC at the Main Parade Square in Camp Aldershot. Please be seated by 1345 for the parade at 1400 hours.
	10	ACR for the combined ceremony with 1714 Annapolis Royal and 603 Weymouth RCACCs. It is intended that the parade will occur in the early afternoon on the parade grounds at Fort Anne in Annapolis Royal.
SEPT	15-17	WNSRRA 68th Annual Reunion at Kentville and Camp Aldershot. Friday evening BBQ, Saturday Banquet, and Sunday AGM and Memorial Service

Why not join the WNSR Regimental Association?

As you can see the Regimental Association is more active than in previous years as we attempt to preserve the past, support the present, and prepare for the future. We can do this together, and the task will be easier with greater numbers.

There are still many former West Novas who haven't received this newsletter and don't know what they're missing. If you know of someone, feel free to forward the newsletter and encourage him or her to join the Regimental Association.

Even if you're not able to attend the Annual Reunions, you can help support the projects of the Regimental Association to preserve the

memory of soldiers of the WNSR by joining the WNSRRA and paying your annual dues of \$30. Go to www.wnsr.ca/ra/docs, complete the application if you're not already a member, and pay your dues online.

"Like" us on Facebook, at **West Nova Scotia Regiment** and join an excellent group of 611 members. You can also support us by liking **West Nova Scotia Regiment Regimental Association** page.

Semper Fidelis

