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Look Backward to 1943

I was thinking about the events of 75 years ago, July 1943, not that I was there, but I've read about what was happening. The planners called it OPERATION HUSKY, and it was the operation that would launch the West Novas into combat during World War Two.

The West Novas had completed their years of training and waiting. They had guarded the south-west of England and had exercised there for just over three years. Then they trained in Scotland for about three weeks in March 1943, returning on 1 May to complete 90 days of mountain training in the rugged Scottish highlands, where their training was overseen by Norwegian mountaineers. They also concentrated on practising assault landing drills. On 6 June '43, they are inspected by Maj-Gen Guy Simmonds, then the new 1 Can Div Comd, and on 21 June, they are given their first shots of mepacrine, an anti-malarial drug (Some things don't change). On the 28th, they were at sea and were ordered to wear the tropical gear they had been issued and to put away their battledress. Their orders were sealed and secret, so the rumours must have been very imaginative.

At 2115 on 28 June, the convoy put out to sea, and on 1 Jul, 3 Bde Comd announced that they were part of General Montgomery's 8th British Army on their way to invade Sicily in the "biggest combined operation ever conceived." Can you imagine being on that ship and hearing that announcement as you steamed toward the Mediterranean?

Before the West Novas landed on the beach at Pachino on the southern coast of Sicily, the *Devis* was torpedoed and sunk carrying many West Nova vehicles to the bottom. This was not a good start to the operation, but within the next 55 days, the West Novas would earn six battle honours. It's an incredible story, and I encourage you to read about it if you haven't already done so.



Seen here, on the left, is a West Nova soldier in tropical kit on guard duty with a Thompson machine gun aboard a ship in convoy on the way to Sicily for OP HUSKY in early July 1943. Most of the West Novas made this voyage on the *Batory*.

Look Forward to the 69th WNSRRA Reunion

What does the 69th Annual WNSRRA Reunion have in store for you?

You can meet with old and new friends from the West Novas at the always popular Friday night BBQ at the Borden Hall Combined Mess (BHCM). Please don't forget to "Let us know you're coming" with the RSVP links so that we'll be ready for you.

The Registration Desk will be set up, the Kitshop will be open, and we'll have a display of military kit available.

You'll have a chance to meet two guests from Castel di Sangro, Italy, a medieval town that our Regiment liberated from the Nazis during WWII. The WNSR is the only Canadian unit awarded the battle honour "Castel di Sangro".

For more detail on the Reunion Schedule, see the [last page](#) of this newsletter.

News from the Unit

Bluenose 10K in Halifax



Here are a few of the West Novas who participated in the Bluenose 10K in Halifax as part of 5 Div on the third weekend in May. It was a bit rainy that day, but overall a great run was shared with some fit people.

Thank you, Sgt Keith, for bringing the WNSR flag. Above (l-r): **Sgt Nicholas Dauphinee**, **2Lt David Witherow**, **Cpl Lisa Grandmaison**, **Sgt Tim Keith**, and **Sgt Cameron Morse**.

United States Meritorious Service Medal

The US Meritorious Service Medal is presented by the American Forces to members of the US Armed Forces who perform outstanding meritorious achievement or service to the United States. From time to time, Canadian Armed Forces personnel who work with American formations are recognized for outstanding service by the award of this medal. Since our last newsletter, two West Nova commanding officers have achieved this honour. **LCol Todd Harris** and **LCol Ken Butterworth** have both been awarded this medal in recognition of excellent service working with American units. When worn by Canadian soldiers, this medal will be placed after the CD.



Congratulations to both officers on these awards.

West Nova Soldiers in Latvia



In early July two West Novas returned from an operational NATO tasking in Latvia. **Cpl KDH Himmelman** and **Cpl DW Baltzer** were part of 2nd Bn The Royal Canadian Regiment for just over seven months (02 Jan 18- 07 Jul 18). They were part of Operation REASSURANCE, the CAF contribution to NATO assurance and deterrence measures in Central and Eastern Europe. Specifically, they were part of the Enhanced Forward Presence Latvia (eFP). [Welcome back](#) and thank you for your service on this NATO task.

Enhanced Forward Presence Battlegroup Latvia

In June 2017, the CAF deployed about 450 Canadian Army members to Latvia. The Canadians are leading a NATO battlegroup comprising military members from several nations, including: Albania, Canada, Italy, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Spain.

This battlegroup works as part of the Latvian Land Forces Infantry Brigade, based at Camp Adazi, Latvia. The current group of Canadian Army members is primarily from the 2RCR, based in Gagetown, NB. Canada's contribution includes headquarters staff, an infantry company with light armoured vehicles, military police, and logistical and communications support.

Some CAF members deployed as part of the eFP BG Latvia took part in Exercise CLAYMORE SOARING from April 4-6, 2018. This air mobility exercise took place at Camp Ādaži, Latvia. Soldiers from Canada, Italy, and Spain—all BG members—took part during different parts of the three-week exercise. The US Army assisted the BG by providing three UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters and air crew. This exercise aimed to foster interoperability and strengthen NATO's deterrence and defence posture.

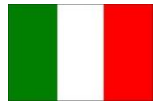
Throughout the month of May, eFP BG Latvia continued to conduct a broad range of training, and participated in numerous community and outreach events.

NATO has deployed four such battlegroups to the Baltics and Poland. These battlegroups demonstrate the strength of the NATO alliance, and aim to prevent conflict and protect stability in the region.

WNSR Italy Day Ball May 2018



In May the unit hosted the Annual Italy Day Ball which was quite well attended; there was a delicious spaghetti meal and a good number of door prize draws, including three mini-fridges with the WNSR Camp Flag emblazoned on the door. This was followed by some photos in front of the Canadian and Italian flags flanked the



Regimental and Queen's Colours, and then there was the dancing. What a great opportunity to get dressed up and share some top quality social time with your fellow West Novas. There were about a dozen Association guests there who would be sure to recommend this event in the future.

This was also a time for the Regiment to show their gratitude to two retiring Honorary appointments. Presentations were made to both **Colonel Eric Meisner** and **Honorary Colonel John Leefe**. Both had served as HLCol and HCol respectively for the past six years. At this time, both HCol Leefe and LCol Butterworth welcomed the new **Honorary Colonel, Don Downe**. There was a brief exchange at the Ball, but a more formal ceremony is in the works for the near future. HCol Downe lives in Wileville, and he is a farmer and a former Member of the Legislature of Nova Scotia. He served as the representative for Lunenburg West 1993-2003, during which time he served as Minister in six different Cabinet posts as well as Deputy Premier. After this, in 2008, he was elected the first Mayor of the Municipality of the District of Lunenburg and served in that post until 2016. Welcome HCol Downe.



Royal Nova Scotia International Tattoo

The Royal Nova Scotia International Tattoo in Halifax benefitted this year because they had some West Nova help. **LCol Butterworth** was selected to be the Tattoo's CO, and **CWO Brad Rogers** was at his side completing the team at the RNSIT. Anyone who saw the show will tell you that they did a fantastic job. Another opportunity for West Novas to lead the way and set the example. In late June, we received news that former Chief Superintendent of the RCMP **Craig Gibson** has succeeded Colonel Eric Meisner as the Honorary Lieutenant Colonel of the West Nova Scotia Regiment. That's him in the middle as the CO and RSM hosted him at the Tattoo in his first public appearance in his new role. HLCol Gibson started off his life in uniform as a young West Nova at Aldershot on a summer program several decades ago. A few years later, his career choices led him to the RCMP where he enjoyed a very successful career, rising through the ranks to retire as a Chief Superintendent in 2015. The next day, he attended the funeral of West Nova WWII veteran Ernest Doucette in Amiraault's Hill, Yarmouth County. Welcome back to the Regiment **HLCol Gibson**.



WNSR Museum Exhibit Opening

The West Nova
Scotia Story

**Museum expands
regiment's
heritage exhibit**

This was the headline on the front page of the *Aurora Newspaper* about the permanent West Nova Exhibit, **West Novas in Peace and War** which opened on 6 May 2018 with a group of about 140 people in attendance. Sgt James Cowell of 14 Wing Imaging was on hand to take photos and collect information for the excellent article he wrote.

There were military vehicles on display from 36 Service Bn in front of the museum and a recruiting display/demonstration at the Middleton Armoury. This display had been in the morning at Gerald's Your Independent Grocery Store parking lot by invitation of the owner, Gerald Heisler. WWII Veterans **Ken Keddy** and **Ernest Doucette** were on hand for the opening as they were for the opening for our 2017 exhibit. We regret to inform you that Ernest has since passed away; he was faithful in attending reunions and in supporting the Regimental Association. Rest in Peace, good friend.



Today's West Nova Scotia Regiment set up its own displays outside the MacDonald Museum in Middleton May 6, as the regimental association launched its new heritage exhibit inside.
Sergeant J. Cleveland Cowell, 14 Wing Imaging

Also in attendance at the opening were: the Honourable **Leo Glavine**, Minister for Communities, Culture, and Heritage; Mayor **Sandra Snow** of Kentville, Mayor **Anna Allen** of Windsor, Mayor **Sylvester Atkinson** of Middleton, and Board Members of the Annapolis Valley Historical Association.

Janice Slauenwhite, the Museum's Executive Director, was very pleased with the exhibit and the turnout for the opening. The Regiment was represented by the CO, DCO, and RSM. The Kitshop was onsite with **Donna Tidd** on hand to help with any Regimental Kit requests.



How can you support this noble cause?

Contact a committee member to offer your services to assist with this ongoing initiative, or contribute artifacts or information to help us expand on the Post-WWII part of the exhibit. We want to expand our exhibit to include UN and NATO service or Domestic Operations to help tell what contemporary West Novas have done or do in the service of Canada. Don't be modest; help us tell the story. Contact me: stonier@live.ca

Regimental Memorial Coin Project Connections

In the last newsletter, I listed the names of West Novas killed in WWII for whom we were able to find a family member. These connections are pretty special; it means a lot to the families and to the Association. We had listed 18 connections, but I inadvertently left one off the list. That exchange was arranged by **Wayne Blenkhorn**, President of the Valley Memory Club and a member of the WNSRRA Board of Directors. He passed the coin of **Pte JW Corkum**, KIA 8 June 1944 to Pte Corkum's Aunt for whom we have no name, but the coin was reunited with the family. Thanks to Wayne; this was the second such connection he has made.

Rally Point Retreat Rucksack March



In the last newsletter, we had an article about the Rally Point Retreat Rucksack March (13.6 km) scheduled for Yarmouth on 14 April. This was a first time event in Yarmouth to bring awareness to OSI. Cadets, serving members and retired members along with the general public took part. The organizers set their goal at 30 participants. Over 90 showed up with 11 being members of the WNSR Family, including **Brenda Hattie**, a former top-quality WNSR cook sergeant, current President of the Yarmouth Legion who organized food service after the march.

◀ After the march, the West Nova Family proudly display their Regimental Camp Flag. Some serving members from the Bridgewater area showed up to support the cause and the Regiment, including **Cpl Eichel** who travelled from Gagetown for the march. He was also most helpful in the setup of the WNSR Exhibit at the Macdonald Museum in the month of March.

◀ In the lower photo are (l-r) **Craig Leonard**, the event organizer, **Garry Randall**, a member of the WNSRRA Board of Directors; **Duke Davidson** RA member and museum project volunteer; and Cadets from **RCACC 110 Yarmouth**.

RPR is in the process of expanding after acquiring 200 acres of land to build cabins for homeless veterans and first responders. If you think you could do more, please contact **Craig Leonard**. He's a WNSRRA member, and he's also a strong supporter and the Vice-President of the Board of Directors for

Rally Point Retreat. Find more information at <http://www.rallypointretreat.org/>

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 as well as *Times to Remember* by Bill Thexton.

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 at wnsr.ca/catalog/24



Better still, come to the Reunion, get all the kit you want, and save to postage.

Looking for WNSR History Items

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

If you have items you think would help us preserve the history of our Regiment, we'd be pleased to hear about them. We are interested in documents, letters, postcards, newspaper and magazine clippings, books, pictures, stories, items of uniform, badges, etc. We are particularly interested in the medal groupings of West Novas who served in WWII. The medals would be displayed with the name of the soldier who earned them. It would help us educate the public and to give a nod to the achievements of those who have gone before us.



The Regimental Association welcomes the contribution of any WWII artifacts and stories the public may have, but we're also becoming interested in items since the War as well. We need to put some focus on the post-war history of the West Novas. We invite you to [contact us](#) if you have any artifacts to donate.

Why not join the WNSR Regimental Association?

As you can see, the Regimental Association is an active organization 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

Association to preserve the memory of soldiers of the WNSR by joining the WNSRRA and paying your annual dues of \$30. All you have to do is go to www.wnsr.ca/ra/docs, complete the application if you're not already a member, and pay your dues online. You will have joined the best Regimental Association in the Canadian Army Reserve.

On Facebook, "Like" us at **West Nova Scotia Regiment** and join an excellent group of 716 members. You can also support us by liking **West Nova Scotia Regiment Regimental Association** page.

Semper Fidelis



2018 Reunion Schedule

WNSRRA 69th Annual Reunion

Kentville and 5 Cdn Div TC Det Aldershot - 14-16 September 2018

Registration Borden Hall, Camp Aldershot Fri 14 Sep 1900-2100
 Royal Canadian Legion Br. 006 Sat 15 Sep 0930-1200 and 1300-1730
 36 River St, Kentville - 678-8935 Bar will be open for general get-together
 Borden Hall, Camp Aldershot Sun 16 Sep 0830-0930

Fees Annual Dues\$30 These fees can be paid online at *Reunion 2018*
 Registration for Members..... \$20 on www.wnsr.ca by Paypal, using a credit card,
 Member's spouse or Guest.... \$20 or debit card.
 WNSR Widows.....No Charge

*** **Please let us know you're coming by sending **RSVP** online** ***
 Before 1 September -- <http://wnsr.ca/ra/2018/rsvp>

Have a good Reunion and Travel safe		Reunion Committee - Ron Stonier - Bert Fitzgerald - Peter Bailey - Garry Randall
Time	Activity	Place and Details
Friday - 14 Sep		
1900-2330	Barbeque and Social Hour Registration and prize draw	Borden Hall, Aldershot (Open bar, food costs extra)
Saturday - 15 Sep		
0930-1200 1300-1730	Registration and general get-together	Kentville RCL Br. 006 Pick up nametags, membership cards, and Regimental Coins Check out the Regimental Kitshop Legion bar will be available for socialization
1730-1930	Reunion Banquet	Legion Main Hall – Roast Beef dinner with all the trimmings Bar will be available 1630-1930 Guest Speaker: TBA
1930-2359	Social time	Borden Hall <u>or</u> Legion Dance (<i>State preference in RSVP no later than 1 September</i>)
Sunday - 16 Sep		
0830-0930	Registration	Borden Hall, Aldershot Kitshop open - Free coffee available
0930-1045	Annual General Meeting	Borden Hall, Aldershot All members are encouraged to attend. Your chance to have a voice in the WNSRRA.
1100-1130	Memorial Service	WNSRRA Memorial – Aldershot All members are encouraged to attend. Your chance to honour your fallen comrades - West Novas who died in WWII and since. Colour Party available for the service, Wreaths laid at Memorial
1130-departure	Happy Hour and Farewell	Borden Hall, Aldershot Sandwiches, sweets, tea/coffee available Bar will be open 1130-1330

**Please remember to RSVP at <http://wnsr.ca/ra/2018/rsvp>
 by Saturday 01 September (it helps us reduce costs)
 You can also pay dues and registration in advance through PayPal.**

Stay Overnight at Aldershot -

Limited accommodation may be available at Aldershot on a first-come first-served basis. To book a room, please call Garry Randall at 902-678-6899. Arrangements for payment can be made through Garry.