

Halton Hills remembers its war dead

World War I veterans recall "the great war"



Members of the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 120 led off the Remembrance Day parade in Georgetown Sunday afternoon. The parade left the Legion Hall shortly before 2 p.m. and proceeded by a roundabout route to Remembrance Park, where services were conducted by Rev. Peter Barrow of

Knox Presbyterian Church. Also marching in the parade were representatives from numerous community organizations.

(Photo by Lori Taylor)

Local Legion marks 50th anniversary, Georgetown has over 500 members

Royal Canadian Legion Branch 120 celebrates its 50th anniversary this year. One of the oldest organizations in Georgetown as well as one of its best known, the Georgetown Legion has between 450 and 500 members according to its vice-president Maurice McLean.

Old time legion members like Walter Louth and Bill Gibbs say it was far different in the beginning. Mr. Louth belonged to the Great War Veterans Association an organization somewhat like the Legion but without any nationwide governing body. It was first set up in 1919 and each town apparently had its own little group with no connection to the group in neigh-

boring towns. Earl Haig visited Canada in 1925 with the purpose of forming a Canadian organization as part of the British Empire Service League. The idea spread quickly and the Georgetown branch was organized at a meeting in the town hall on March 14, 1928. Mr. Louth estimates that there were 80 members in the beginning.

Increased membership forced the branch to purchase its present home at the corner of Market and Mill Streets for \$1200 (\$600 in cash) in 1935. Bill Gibbs remembers the building when the Legion first purchased it. "It used to be an implement shed in the front and a garage in the back," he says. "There was a fellow upstairs who used to make fire escapes."

The meetings were held in what is now an apartment at the north corner of the upstairs. It was in this small space that the mortgage burning ceremony was held and Mr. Gibbs says each member

By MAGGIE HANNAH
Herald staff writer
It is 60 years since Kaiser Wilhelm and his men surrendered to the British to end the Great War of 1914 to 1918. At Soldier's Memorial on 15 Sideroad and the Guelph Line Saturday five veterans of the conflict stood in the grey afternoon with 45 other veterans of the Second War and members of the community listening and remembering as the names of the "glorious dead" from both wars at a service organized by the Acton Legion were read aloud.

Willard Britton, 83, is a Nassetagwaya native. He joined the artillery in Guelph in 1915 and served as a driver. He was wounded at Vimy in February 1916 and spent from that time until his return to Canada in 1918 in hospitals in France and England.

Bill Middleton, 84, was a signaller in the army. He joined from Harriston in 1916 and was wounded Sept. 1, 1918, after spending two years in France. He was wounded in both thighs and his right hand and was operated on in France, then spent six months in a hospital in England before he came home.

Mr. Middleton is reluctant to discuss his experiences although he says they helped him to grow up.

GOT HOME:
"A hell of a lot didn't come back," he says. "I was one of the ones privileged to get home."
He makes his annual trip to the cenotaph in Nassetagwaya "for the sake of the boys who didn't come back."

Jack Milne, 85, still lives on the family farm at R.H.I. Moffat, which he called home when he enlisted in the infantry in 1915. Mr. Milne had already gone to camp at Petawawa for three summers, he says. There were three men from the township all enlisted together, and all survived the war although the other two are now dead.

Mr. Milne was struck by a shell Oct. 11, 1915, in France. "Shells spread pretty badly when they hit, you know," he says. "I was hit in the head, and the arm and the hand. I wasn't unconscious but they had to carry me."

Seven operations on his ears followed and Mr. Milne is now totally deaf in the left ear. "I was wounded the day before they shot Edith Gavel," he says. "Have you ever heard of the nurse who was helping the British escape back over the lines? The Germans shot her when they caught her."

Mr. Milne says the 34th, which was his regiment, were a reinforcement group. They understood they were to go overseas as reinforcements for the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry but a couple of days before they sailed out of Montreal they all got new insignias. They were going to reinforce the 1st Battalion.

IN TORONTO:
He was back in Toronto on New Year's Day 1917. Mr. Milne says.

Mr. Milne remembers argument in council prior to the building of the cenotaph at the corner of 15 Sideroad and the Guelph Line.

"Some people thought the money could have been spent better ways than by putting up the cenotaph," he says. "Others were in favour of it. It must have cost \$6,000 or \$7,000 in those days."

Throughout the Second War years the branch was busy raising money for the Legion War Fund and sending parcels to members' sons serving overseas. A number of members including Mike McGill and Jim Murphy, founding members of the branch, joined the Veterans' Guard doing guard duty at Canadian Prisoner of War camps across Canada.

In 1946 it was decided to renovate the building and for many months its use was carried on in makeshift conditions as the place was literally torn apart and rebuilt.

BOILER BLEW:
Feb. 8, 1948 the boiler blew up and did a great deal of damage to the newly renovated building and once again members began raising funds to restore their building.

Bill Gibbs recalls the disaster and says it resulted from someone putting the wrong type of fuel in the boiler. "Gee, it made a mess," he says.

Around 1960 it was decided that the branches should begin looking outwards towards their respective communities and since that time the Georgetown Legion has been involved in a number of community service projects including raising funds for the Georgetown and District Memorial hospital, the outdoor pool, the memorial arena and Countryside residence for mentally handicapped adults at Hornby.

The Legion looked after hockey Saturday morning for youngsters until the Town took over the project a few years ago. They also sponsor the Royalties who won the Ontario Junior Ladies Fastball tournament this summer.

The Air Cadets have been another Legion responsibility for the past 10 years and receive an outside help except for uniforms provided by the Government and the occasional transportation to some course or event.

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Ambulance nurse

Woman tells of her war past

By LORI TAYLOR
Herald staff writer
"Everybody has their memories and experiences from the war, but they're very personal, about your friends and loved ones you lost, and people don't talk about them," Audrey Martin says.

Mrs. Martin, 60, was with the St. John Ambulance Brigade Overseas during and after World War II and was assigned to a hospital in Britain, caring for civilian and military patients. She assisted the Royal Canadian Medical Corps at Winford Emergency Hospital in Bristol; the hospital had been a children's hospital, but was taken over during the war for civilian and military casualties.

town division of the St. John Ambulance Brigade. Her mother, Blanche Grieve, was one of the women responsible for the forming of the division in Georgetown. When the call came for volunteers to assist overseas, Mrs. Martin, who was 27 at the time, was the only member of the Georgetown division to volunteer.

In order to join the brigade, women studied first aid and home nursing courses, and once they had joined, they were re-examined every year. Before she went overseas, Mrs. Martin took additional training in Toronto.

Between the time she volunteers and the time she actually left to go overseas, Mrs. Martin went through a period of on-again, off-again, waiting for her travelling orders to be issued. Twice she was told her services weren't required, but each time, she was called up again.



AUDREY MARTIN



GLEN WILLIAMS REMEMBERS

Glen Williams residents marked Remembrance Day, on the weekend with wreath

laying ceremonies at the village's war memorial.

(Herald photo)

were going," Mrs. Martin says. "I had relatives in the London area, but I was sent to Bristol. I did manage to visit my relatives on furloughs, though."

Once the volunteers arrived at their respective hospitals, they started work, usually with bedmaking and bedpans, and were gradually given more responsibilities.

"The English were very strict about the way things were done," Mrs. Martin says. "I was lucky—I got a nursing sister (a head nurse) that I go along with. A lot didn't like her, but I got along with her."

There were four Canadian women at the hospital where Mrs. Martin was posted, but they were sent back shortly after she arrived.

"They called me Canada," Mrs. Martin says with a smile. The volunteers worked 12-hour shifts, and Mrs. Martin says they had little trouble with the more unpleasant side of caring for the wounded.

"You saw operations and

Acton Branch 120 of the Royal Canadian Legion held its Remembrance Day parade Saturday morning. Marchers, led by the Acton citizen's band, paraded from the Post Office along Bower Street, across Frederick Street and west along Mill Street to the cenotaph for the 11 a.m. service. (Photo by Maggie Hannah)