

# Toasting the 85th

Continued from pg. 6

"But as bad as he wanted to go, and rejoin with all his comrades who died over there, he felt he just couldn't afford it. Times were tough then with the Depression, and having a job was just too important. He also had six kids at home to feed. He decided to let it pass."

As the rest of us sat and reflected upon the story we'd just heard, we once again realized that the sacrifices were not all made at Vimy on April 9, 1917. There were many more made in the later years, all by the same generation.

Mildred told us how she was there for her dad—and he was with her in spirit.

There would be countless others there that day who had similar stories, but riding in the bus, one has an opportunity to hear the story so poignantly from the sons and daughters of those heroes from Vimy.

As we later traveled around Ypres, Belgium, and visited local graveyards and battlefields, we made a stop at the monument erected to honour the 85th Battalion, Mildred's father's outfit.

We had a short ceremony and a moment's silence at the monument. Mildred convinced all members of the group who had uniforms, to don them for the day in honour of the 85th, and even brought along a recording of the *Last Post* and *Revelry*, which was played during the service.

It was perhaps the most colourful and poignant service of all I've attended in Europe, as a band of 50-odd people gathered around that monument situated in the middle of a freshly planted grain field, to salute the 85th, with flags billowing, followed by the traditional folding of the Canadian flag by Second World War veteran Ed Buscombe, and Capt. Alison Murray



The Memorial of the 85th Canadian Battalion is located in a farmer's field near Ypres, Belgium.

Photo by Ted Brown

of the Canadian Reserves.

And that night at the hotel, the Irvines 'issued' a rum punch to everyone there, 'because Dad would have insisted on having a 'stand to' with rum'.

Taking that rum was about as close to being an 'order' as one would want it to be.

As we tossed back the rum, and toasted the 85th, and that rum burned a path down our throats, we all agreed on one thing.

You never cross the daughter of the RSM.

# Recalling two who made the sacrifice

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Sacrifice.

It's a word that will resonate with many that attend this week's school, church and community Remembrance Day (Nov. 11) services.

For Canadians too young to have lived through the First World War (1914-18), Second World War (1939-45) or the Korean War (1950-53) the concept of forfeiting one's life for country remains abstract.

For young men joining Canada's war effort was something they did out of their love of country.

As Canada has gone to war, thousands of Halton men have contributed to her effort. They have found themselves on ships heading far from home and burdened by some of the most unbearable conditions humans have endured.

Many of them died to preserve freedom. Their names are inscribed on Halton cenotaphs and monuments to ensure we never forget. As Remembrance Day draws near we remember two local soldiers for their bravery and willingness to sacrifice for our sake.

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Private Frederick Elkington (Acton—died Oct. 26, 1917): Fred Elkington was born May 10, 1884 in Manchester, England but eventually immigrated to Canada.

According to enlistment papers he completed in Toronto on Jan. 25, 1916, Elkington worked as a farmer and cement worker in the Acton area where he was also recorded as a resident in the 1911 Census.

Although he initially enlisted in the 169th Overseas Battalion, his death was attributed to action at Passchendaele when he was 34 years old and a private in the 58th Battalion, Canadian Infantry (Central Ontario Regiment).

Although Elkington has no known place

of burial, his name is recorded on the Ypres Menin Gate Memorial on Panel 18-24-26-30. The Menin Gate Memorial bears the names of 55,000 men who were lost without trace during the defence of the Ypres Salient in the First World War.

Carved in stone above the central arch are the words:

*To the armies of the British Empire who stood here from 1914 to 1918 and to those of their dead who have no known grave.*

Over two staircases leading from the main Hall is the inscription:

*Here are recorded name of officers and men who fell in Ypres Salient but to whom the fortune of war denied the known and honoured burial given to their comrades in death.*

The dead there are remembered to this day in a simple ceremony that takes place every evening at 8 p.m. All traffic through the gateway in either direction is halted, and two buglers (on special occasions four) move to the centre of the Hall and sound the Last Post. Two silver trumpets for use in the ceremony are a gift to the Ypres Last Post Committee by an officer of the Royal Canadian Artillery, who served with the 10th Battery, in Ypres in April 1915.

(Sources: CEF 58th Battalion Members Who Died Overseas; Veteran Affairs Canada)

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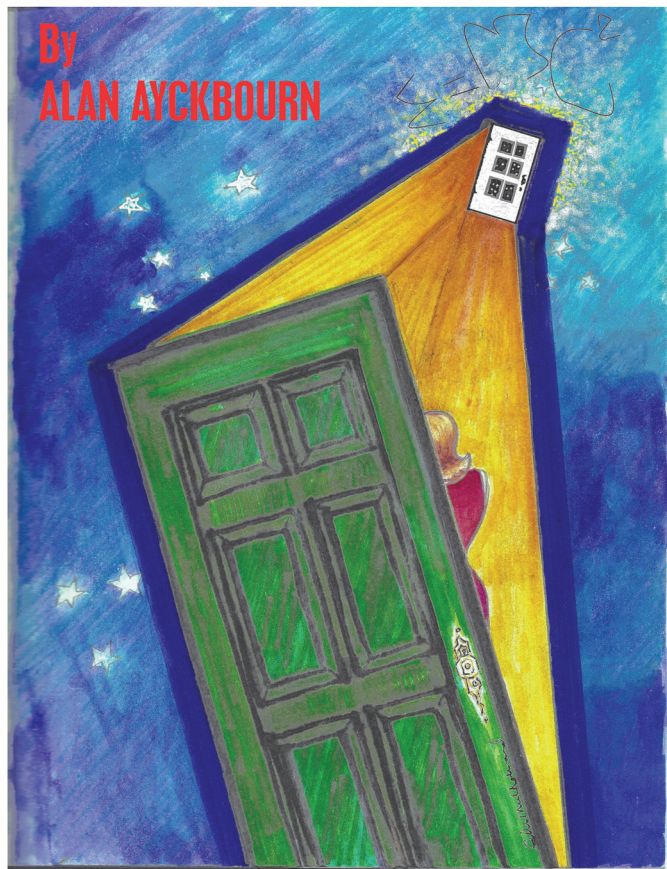
Sergeant Hubert Frank Tost (Georgetown—died June 15, 1942): Bert Tost, son of Georgetown's William and Florence Tost, was 32 when he died in Europe, while serving with the Royal Hamilton Light Infantry during the Second World War.

He is buried in Brookwood Military Cemetery in Surrey, UK in an area of an existing cemetery set aside in 1917 for the burial of men and women of the forces of the Commonwealth and Americans, who had died, many of battle wounds, in the London district.

## COMMUNICATING DOORS

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Directed by Mike Butterworth



Produced by Nancy Sorge

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