

# NEWS RELEASE

Wilfrid Laurier  
University



## **Three local students to retrace steps of Canadian soldiers**

*Laurier students selected to be on the first Cleghorn Battlefield Fellowships Tour in France*

**For Immediate Release**

**August 20, 2004  
55-04**

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WATERLOO – Three university students from the Hamilton-Burlington area will retrace the steps of Canadian soldiers – some of them relatives – who fought in France during the First and Second World War. Michelle Fowler, Paul Wheaton and Drew Franklin will join five other Laurier students next week on the first Cleghorn Battlefield Study Fellowships Tour.

Fowler and Wheaton have family ties to both world wars. Fowler’s great-grandfather was killed in the First World War and her great-uncle died on D-Day as a member of the First Hussars. She is also the granddaughter-in-law of a major in the Royal Hamilton Light Infantry who participated in the liberation of Holland. Wheaton’s maternal grandfather served in the Second World War with the Royal Canadian Regiment from the beginning of the war. He trained in England and fought in Italy and the Netherlands.

“My goal is to try to understand, by being on the ground that Canadians fought on, just what it was like for so many of my grandfather’s generation who fought and died for Canada and the Allies,” says Wheaton. “I think as young adults, we have an obligation to remember and honour the memory of people like my grandfather who fought, and in many cases gave their lives for our lifestyle today.”

Fowler is a master’s of history student who is completing her thesis for this December. Wheaton and Franklin are both undergraduate business students.

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“These men walked the same hallways and sat in the same classrooms as I did,” says Franklin, who co-ordinated Remembrance Week activities when he attended Westdale Secondary in Hamilton. “Having spoken with several local veterans of the Normandy campaign and Dieppe, I feel it is my duty to carry on the memory of Canada’s fallen heroes.”

The Cleghorn Fellows also include master’s student in history, Teresa Iacobelli; three undergraduate honours history students, Elissa Marion, Evan Habkirk and Mary Duncan; and undergraduate business student, Daniel Sosna.

The eight students will travel to Paris, France, on August 25. They will visit two of the major First World War memorials – Beaumont-Hamel and Vimy Ridge. They will then travel to Dieppe to study the beaches where Canadian soldiers landed in the infamous raid of August 19, 1942, and will stay overnight in a hotel that overlooks the beach.

They will also spend seven nights in Normandy, based just outside Bayeux. From there, the students will visit the most important Canadian battlefields, as well as D-Day sites such as Omaha Beach and the airborne landing areas. The tour returns to Paris on September 4 and ends in Toronto on September 6.

Throughout the two weeks, fellows will participate in daily on-site discussions and participate in tactical exercises without troops (TEWTs), which put the students into the shoes of those who fought for Canada.

The Cleghorn Battlefield Study Fellowships are funded by a generous donation from John Cleghorn, former chairman and chief executive officer of the Royal Bank of Canada and past chancellor of Wilfrid Laurier University, along with his wife, Pattie, and their children. The family donated \$1 million to Laurier last year to fund five initiatives, including the fellowships.

The Cleghorn Battlefield Study Fellowships program supports efforts to expose students to Canada’s role in world conflicts by touring famous battlefields. The fellowships are designed to foster greater understanding of military history and, in particular, battles in which Canada played a significant role.

The Laurier Centre for Military Strategic and Disarmament Studies (LCMSDS) fosters research, teaching, and public discussion of military and strategic issues of national and international significance. Founded in 1991, LCMSDS supports classroom teaching and educational programs at Laurier in the departments of history, political science and mathematics. For more information, please visit [www.canadianmilitaryhistory.com](http://www.canadianmilitaryhistory.com).