

VIEW FROM QUEEN'S PARK: Remembrance Day Week

By Chris Ballard, MPP
Newmarket-Aurora

It has been a moving week.

The older I get, the more powerful Remembrance Day becomes. Perhaps, with the passing of time, I more and more realize the true nature of the sacrifices made by our soldiers and their loved ones.

My Remembrance Day week began last Saturday evening at the Aurora Legion's Remembrance Day Dinner, followed by Remembrance Services last Sunday at the Newmarket and Aurora Cenotaphs, and Remembrance Day ceremonies at each location. On October 3, 100 hundred years to the day when the first contingent of Canadian troops was deployed to England, I was asked to help open the Ontario Archives exhibit, Dear Sadie ? Love, Lives and Remembrance from Ontario's First World War. It's a powerful story that tells the war-time stories of Ontarians whose lives are forever changed because of the conflict.

It tells the story of Sadie Arbuckle, an office worker, and Lieutenant Harry Mason, who wrote to each other throughout the Great War, and whose relationship grew with each letter ? until his death in action in 1917.

The Ontario Archives is located at York University. The exhibit is free. I recommend you visit.

This year I was also thinking about a relative I never met ? my great uncle James Frank Ballard. His story has been more fully researched, thanks to work done by his great-grandson, Paul Ballard.

Private Ballard, died in the Battle of Aisne, France, on September 14, 1914. Age 28.

Like many men of his era, without chance of higher education or good job, James enlisted at age 22, before WWI began. He served in numerous locations in peace time.

He did not have the chance to settle down and start a family before being sent to France ? and to his death.

His grave is lost. He was wounded in action and died of his wounds. His name is listed at La Ferté-sous-Jouarre memorial, east of Paris, along with the names of 3,700 British and Irish soldiers who fell in battle between August and October 1914 in the area.

Last week in Parliament, MPP Arthur Potts read a poem written by his uncle, Lt. Col. E.H. Shuter. Lt. Col. Shuter served in WWI and lived to his 100th year. He passed away in July. He wrote The Canadian Volunteer when he was about 90 years old.

With MPP Potts' permission, let me leave you with his uncle's poem ? a man who was there.

The Canadian Volunteers

By Lt. Col. E.H. Shuter

Let us all at this time of year ? Pause?

To remember the fallen Canadian Volunteers.

To Arms! To Arms! Our leaders cried and volunteers

In thousands promptly replied ? that they might

Join the fight in a war which was just and right.

Conscription, was not then, a serious care

Because the Volunteers were there.

They volunteered to die.

To die? Oh no, surely not you, dear comrades nor I, but-

Some other guy?

We would go to do our duty, and to win honour and glory.

Well,? honour and glory there may have been.

But the price of misery, and death were too often seen.

So many "other guys" did fall, but you as well, dear comrades all.

In unit groups you were laid to rest, wrapped in blankets G S

In roadside graves, which the Padres did bless.

Your comrades seldom saw this sad sight,

The battles raged on, and they must continue the fight.

So no pipes did wail, no bugles did call

Just a wee wooden cross with your name, that's all.
Some comrades could come later to visit the sites
To say farewell to the friends they had lost, and weep
To see the battle's cost.
Then came peace, and you were collected and moved with thousands more,
And laid to rest again in ordered rows, with crosses of stone, and flowers galore.
I saw these places, both old and new; an awesome view,
And in the search, found the grave of the kid brother I hardly knew,
He volunteered, fought and died with those other brave men.
We blessed his cross at Adagem.
So there, in your thousands you lie, a sight to bring tears to any eye.
And those who care to visit there, are wont to exclaim -
That your sacrifice must not be in vain!
True, and the volunteers that remain
Will stand at your grave and shed a tear, as they feel you near
For they remember you as you were, and weep that the lives
You should have lived were denied to you, over there.
Though in foreign fields you lie
In the hearts of those who remain, you will never die.
But, as our numbers, over the years, must shrink,
We pray that others will continue to think, ? at times,
Of the Canadian Volunteers, who lost their lives over there
To preserve the freedoms for which we care.
So give a cheer, shed a tear, but at least this once a year-
Do remember and thank those Canadian Volunteers,
Who died for you.

Our community office has moved to 238 Wellington St., Aurora, just east of Industrial Parkway North. Hours: Monday-Wednesday 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.; Thursday 10 a.m. - 6 p.m.; Friday 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. Phone: (905) 750-0019. Email: cballard.mpp.co@liberal.ola.org