



City of Hamilton
HAMILTON VETERANSCOMMITTEE
AGENDA

Meeting #: 2023-05
Date: June 27, 2023
Time: 4:00 p.m.
Location: YouTube Channel Streaming for Virtual Meetings
All electronic meetings can be viewed at:
City's YouTube Channel:
<https://www.youtube.com/user/InsideCityofHamilton>

Christopher Redford, Heritage Presentation Coordinator (905) 546-2424 ext. 4688

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Hamilton
MINUTES
Hamilton Veterans Committee

Meeting #2023 - 004
May 30, 2023
4:00 p.m.
WebEx – Virtual Platform

Present: Chair: Michael Rehill
Members: Dave Baldry, Don Jackson, Terry Ryan, Robert Fyfe, Steve Waldron, Bill Cumming

Also Present: Christopher Redford (Staff Liaison), Carolyn King (Hamilton Military Museum), Moira McGuigan (Hamilton Military Museum)

1. CEREMONIAL ACTIVITIES

(i) Moment of Silence

Committee members observed a moment of silence.

(ii) Land Acknowledgement

Michael Rehill read the Land Acknowledgement.

2. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

(Baldry/Waldron)

That the agenda for the May 30, 2023 meeting of the Hamilton Veterans Committee be approved.

CARRIED

May 30, 2023

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING (Item 4)

(i) April 25, 2023 (Item 4.1)

(Fife/Baldry)

That the Minutes of the April 25, 2023 meeting of The Hamilton Veterans Committee be approved, as presented.

CARRIED

4. COMMUNICATIONS (Item 5)

(i) Argyll & Sutherland Highlander Pavilion Repairs (Item 5.1)

Staff liaison C. Redford reports that stage one of the repairs have been completed and that the pillars have been stabilized, and the work will continue in stage two.

5. DISCUSSION ITEMS (Item 10)

(i) Fourth Annual RED (Remembering Everyone Deployed) Event, 9 June 2023 Waterdown Legion (10.1)

No committee representatives are able to attend this event at this time.

(ii) Woodlawn Cemetery Regarding Veterans' Crosses (Item 10.2)

The item is deferred to the next meeting.

(iii) Decoration Day Planning (10.3)

Committee members reviewed the Decoration Day program and the Decoration Day Operating Procedure document (see attached). Discussion included: Air and Army Cadet bands to assemble a massed band under the leadership of Cpt. Pitt, MP D. Muys to attend, two City of Hamilton Councillors to attend, M. Rehill to inquire regarding a cadet piper with Branch 58 Pipe Major, B. Cumming to acquire a cadet to speak, C. Redford to follow up on accessible parking location, rain plan is the Dundurn Pavilion, Cadet Coordinators are T. Ryan, R. Fife and B. Cumming, C. Redford to bring arm bands.

M. Rehill to send out an updated version of the procedure document to all members.

(iv) Marking 2023 as the Cenotaph Centennial (Item 10.4)

The item is deferred to the next meeting

6. ADJOURNMENT (Item 15)

(Baldry/Waldron)

That, there being no further business, the meeting be adjourned at 4:28 p.m.

CARRIED

Respectfully,

**Michael Rehill, Chair
Hamilton Veterans Committee**

ARTS & LIFE

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Cadets place flowers and Canadian flags on soldiers' graves from the First World War.

JOHN RENNISON PHOTOS THE HAMILTON SPECTATOR

FLASHBACKS

DECORATION DAY

A war memorial service tradition in Hamilton going back 133 years



MARK MCNEIL
OPINION

I remember walking through Hamilton Cemetery a few years ago and being a little puzzled by all the small, red-painted stones that had been placed on top of military gravestones.

I figured it was the handiwork of some school children, which it was.

But it turns out there was more to it than that. The “poppy stones” were connected to a Canadian tradition that began in the Hamilton and Niagara area in 1890.

It is known as “Decoration Day” and on Sunday, at Hamilton Cemetery on York Boulevard, I decided to attend the annual event.

It’s a lot like a Remembrance Day ceremony, only it is mostly intended for cadets, their families, veterans and others connected to the military life of the city.

“Decoration Day began as a way to mark the sacrifice of Canadian militia members killed during the Battle of Ridgeway in the Fenian Raids in 1866,” Maj (Ret) Mike Rehill, of the Hamilton Veterans’ Committee, told the gathering at the “Cross of Sacrifice” war memorial at the cemetery on Sunday. “Families would gather and place floral tributes on veterans’ graves and war



The colour party marches off after Decoration Day in Hamilton Cemetery Sunday.

memorials as a symbol of respect and hope.

“Today we are fortunate to have air, army and sea cadet to carry on the tradition for us,” he said.

The ceremony also included a “call to worship” by Padre William Thomas, wreath laying and music by the “Combined Band of the 62 RHLI Cadets and 779 RC Air Cadets.”

Interestingly, the “poppy stone”

component — which has been an add-on activity of recent years — was handled differently for 2023. Instead of placing stones on the graves, the ones from last year were removed to be repainted for next year by children visiting the Hamilton Military Museum in Dundurn Park. However, the tradition of a Canadian flag and flower placed on each grave was continued this year. Decoration Day, which was at-

tended by more than 150 people on Sunday, doesn’t tend to get much attention from the general public that focuses on Remembrance Day to commemorate the sacrifice of Canada’s military. In 1931, the Government of Canada proclaimed November 11th as the national “Remembrance Day,” which put an end to the Decoration Day tradition in most communities.

SEE FLASHBACKS, G2

G2 | ARTS & LIFE



Mike Redhill, chair, of the City of Hamilton Veterans' Committee, leads the service for Decoration Day in Hamilton Cemetery Sunday.

JOHN RENNISON PHOTOS THE HAMILTON SPECTATOR

Flashbacks

CONTINUED FROM G1

But not in Hamilton. The annual event continued and continues because of efforts by the Hamilton Veterans Committee and local branches of the Royal Canadian Legion. This year also featured military history displays at Dundurn Park that included military vehicles, vintage communications equipment as well as appearances by First World War and War of 1812 re-enactors. The Royal Hamilton Light Infantry Brass Band also performed.

Historical Notes

The impetus for Decoration Day — the Battle of Ridgeway on June 2, 1866 — involved a group of several hundred Civil War-hardened Irish American “Fenians” who attacked pre-Confederation Canada in the village of Ridgeway that is now part of Fort Erie. A fighting force that included militia soldiers from Hamilton’s 13th Battalion (later known as the Royal Hamilton Light Infantry), Niagara’s 19th and 20th battalions as well as Toronto’s Queen’s Own Rifles were rushed by train to the site.

In the end, the Fenians won although they soon returned to the U.S. Nine militia soldiers from Canada were killed as were four to six Fenians. No 13th Battalion troops died but four would later die from disease or wounds.

Two of the 13th Battalion soldiers — Pte. Daniel Laker and Pte. James Cahill — were buried at Hamilton Cemetery. Pte. James Henry Morrison was interred in St. Luke’s churchyard in Burlington with Pte. Laratt Smith being buried in Toronto.

Canadian military personnel who died overseas in the First and Second World Wars were usually buried in cemeteries near where they fell in Europe. The graves at Hamilton Cemetery, and other Canadian cemeteries, with military headstones generally remember veterans who died after their military



Padre William Thomas talks about the tradition of memorial stones.



Cadets parade through Hamilton Cemetery.

service, often from wounds or disease they contracted during their service. In the case of Hamilton Cemetery, there are numerous graves for veterans who died from tuberculosis.

Among the more than 200 military gravestones in Hamilton Cemetery, is one for a soldier from Hamilton who has been deemed by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission Canadian Agency as the last Canadian to have died in the First World War.

Sgt. Nassau Briggs died in Hamilton on Aug. 31, 1921, at the age of 40,

from health complications from gas attack injuries he received during the war.

The war graves commission established Aug. 31, 1921, as the last day for war honours eligibility because it took until that date for all peace treaties and the armistice to be ratified by all countries involved.

So, while the guns fell silent with the armistice on Nov. 11, 1918, the Great War was not technically over until two years and nine months later, on the same day that Briggs died.

MARKFLASHBACKS@GMAIL.COM



A flower and a Canadian flag with a First World War soldier’s lead cross in Hamilton Cemetery.



Cadets Ewan Wilson, 11, and Inara Ryan, 11, place flowers and Canadian flags on the graves of soldiers from the First World War.



Ed Sculthorpe, vice chair, places a wreath for the City of Hamilton Veterans’ Committee Sunday.