



Port Elgin Legion
Branch 340

P.O. Box 359, 630 Green Street
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519-389-9917
www.branch340.ca



April 2012

Branch Line

Inside this issue you will find.... what is happening this month... Committee Reports.... general information and a wee bit of humor too. We welcome your articles and will be more than glad to insert them in future issues. Thanks to those who have submitted in the past.

One more reminder, that the Annual General Meeting and Elections will be taking place on Tuesday, April 03rd and the Meeting starts at 7:00 pm. All members are encouraged to attend this very important meeting. You will be voting for your 2012-2013 Executive.

The Nomination Board will be located in the Canteen for you to consider one of the positions on the Executive Committee. Pamphlets are available describing what is expected of a member on the Executive Committee so please take a few minutes to peruse.

Even if you are not planning a position on the Executive, please plan on attending the Meeting and have your vote count.

Be prepared to show your membership card or if you are a new member, please bring your paid receipt with you. If you have any questions, please contact your Elections Officer Mike Atkinson at 519-832-5542.



The Editors



MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

It is hard to believe we are close to the end of another Legion year already and what a year it has been. There has been a significant increase in all our operations and fundraising events and we have new and younger members joining. All of this would not be possible without the hard work and the involvement of many dedicated individuals who want to see our Legion survive and prosper.

The Election of Officers on April 3 is a perfect opportunity for you to show your support for your Legion by attending and giving those offering to stand for an Executive position your full support. Perhaps you would be interested in investing some of your own time for a year as an Executive member yourself to learn and grow with us; the Legion opens up so many exciting opportunities. Please join us at 7 p.m. on April 3rd.

Yours in Comradeship,

Kathryn Eastwood
President

MEMBERSHIP

I would like to say welcome to the newest members of our Branch: David and Annemarie Kinsman, David Coulter and Martin Corbett.

If you have not paid your 2012 Dues, I encourage you to do so at your earliest convenience. We value your support and encourage you to continue your membership. If you have already paid, please check with the Bar Steward to pick up your card.

If you have recently had a change of address or your contact information, please leave the particulars with the Bar Steward and the Membership Register can be updated; or, contact the undersigned.

LAST POST: Robert Minke and Robert Craig

Rhonda Harrison
Membership Chairman
519-389-4806
harrisonconst@bmts.com



EASTER BRANCH HOURS



Good Friday	3:00 pm to Midnight
Saturday	1:00 pm to Midnight
Sunday	CLOSED
Easter Monday	3:00 pm to Midnight



WHAT'S HAPPENING



General Meeting at 7:00 pm
1st Tuesday of the Month

L/A Meeting at 8:00 pm
2nd Tuesday of the Month

LADIES CARD CLUB
Tuesday Afternoons
Upstairs Hall
Start 1:30 pm

IN-HOUSE CRIBBAGE
2nd Tuesday of each month
Start 7:30 pm

BINGO every Wednesday
Doors open at 6:30 pm
Bingo at 7:30 pm –
\$700. Jackpot

EUCHRE
Thursday at 7:30 pm
Canteen

DANCE CLUB
Friday at 8:00 pm
Upstairs Hall

EUCHRE
Saturday at 1:30 pm
Canteen

JAMBOREE – April 01st at 2:00 pm
Upstairs Hall

2012 BRANCH ELECTIONS & ANNUAL MEETING
Tuesday, April 03rd at 7:00 pm
Plan to attend and vote for your incoming Executive

SPRING ZONE “C 4” CONVENTION 2012



SPRING ZONE “C-4” CONVENTION Port Elgin Branch 340 March 18, 2012

L-R **Lynn McClellan**, District C Treasurer & District C3 Deputy Zone Commander; **Patty Sargent Gibson**, Zone C4 Zone Commander; **Derek Moore**, District Deputy Zone Commander; **Stew Taylor**, District C4 Zone Commander; **Chris Blondin**, Zone C4 Deputy Zone Commander and **Brian Smith**, Provincial Vice President,



Port Elgin Legion was host to the Spring Zone "C-4" Convention on March 18, 2012. There was an excellent turn-out and 12/12 Branches were represented.

The President's Meeting commenced at 10:00 am and the Conference at 1:00 pm. There was good discussion and nice to see a lot of blue and grey uniforms in the room. Thanks to the Ladies Auxiliary for preparing an excellent lunch. Sgt-at-Arms Robert Harrison did an excellent job with the Color Party.

To My Friends:

- ❖ **I have been in many places, but I've never been in Cahoots. Apparently, you can't go alone. You have to be in Cahoots with someone.**
- ❖ **I've also never been in Cognito. I hear no one recognizes you there.**
- ❖ **I have, however, been in Sane. They don't have an airport; you have to be driven there. I have made several trips there, thanks to my friends, family and work.**
- ❖ **I would like to go to Conclusions, but you have to jump, and I'm not too much on physical activity anymore.**
- ❖ **I have also been in Doubt. That is a sad place to go, and I try not to visit there too often.**
- ❖ **I've been in Flexible, but only when it was very important to stand firm.**
- ❖ **Sometimes I'm in Capable, and I go there more often as I'm getting older.**
- ❖ **One of my favorite places to be is in Suspense! It really gets the adrenalin flowing and pumps up the old heart! At my age I need all the stimuli I can get!**
- ❖ **I may have been in Continent; but I don't remember what country I was in. It's an age thing.**

Life is too short for negative drama & petty things. So laugh insanely, love truly and forgive quickly!



WHO IS HE?

This gentleman joined us for the November 11, 2011 Remembrance Day Services.

In the December 2011 Branch Line there was a request that if anyone knew who this gentleman was, then to please contact us. Cde Ron La Flamme is a personal friend of this gentleman and gave us his identity. His name is Jack William Gross and with the permission of his daughter Mary Gross I will let you read his story.

Gross family

Jack Gross, uncle of filmmaker Paul Gross, became Belgian knight in Second World War

By Jonathon Jackson, Owen Sound Sun Times
Posted 3 years ago

It turns out Paul Gross isn't the only member of his family who can tell war stories about Belgium.

Gross has received a great deal of attention and acclaim for his recent film "Passchendaele." He wrote, directed, co-produced and starred in the movie, inspired by his maternal grandfather's experiences in the First World War.

But Jack Gross, the filmmaker's uncle, was also in Belgium at wartime. It was a different war and his duties were somewhat different, but a lasting impression was made on the young soldier who was later honoured by Belgium for his bravery at the Battle of the Scheldt.

"I shouldn't even be here to tell the story today," Gross, 89, said in an interview at his Port Elgin home.

It's a story he has kept largely to himself since it happened, in the fall of 1944.

Compared to the Battle of Passchendaele, the Battle of the Scheldt has not received a lot of attention from historians. Other Canadian campaigns and achievements during the Second World War have also overshadowed it.

But Gross has always remembered it, if for no other reason than because it resulted in his being invested into a Belgian military order, the Order of Leopold II. He received a knighthood in the order and was simultaneously awarded the Belgian Croix de Guerre (Cross of War).

"I am, in fact, a knight," he says, smiling, without a trace of arrogance.

The Battle of the Scheldt has its roots in the Normandy landings on June 6, D-Day. The further Allied forces pushed into Europe, the further they moved away from friendly ports through which they received much-needed supplies. The Allies needed another safe port that was closer to the front lines; Antwerp, the capital of the Belgian province of Flanders, would be that port.

The city was liberated in early September, but the port could not be used until the German occupiers were also pushed off both sides of the Scheldt River Estuary, which connects Antwerp to the North Sea. The task was assigned to the First Canadian Army, and it completed the job with four distinct operations over a period of 38 days.

During Operation Switchback, the 9th Canadian Infantry Brigade was told to cross the estuary's Braakman Inlet from west to east, using Terrapin and Buffalo amphibious vehicles to make the half-mile crossing and surprise the Germans. Brigade commander Brig. John Rockingham wanted a communications line laid down across the inlet first, if possible. He turned to the brigade's signal officer, Capt. John William (Jack) Gross.

"He said, 'Jack, we've got a big, big job to do,'" Gross recalled, adding it was to be an "extremely secret" mission involving the Royal Navy. It would also happen at night so as to not tip off the Germans.

With a crew of two men, Gross set out across the inlet in a Buffalo. The vehicle moved underwater, with just the top poking out above the surface, and the cable was laid as they went along. But disaster struck about three-quarters of the way across when the tide went out of the inlet, leaving the Buffalo trapped on the muddy bottom, unable to move. It was a sitting duck for the Germans, who sure enough began to open fire on the vehicle once daylight came and they saw it.

"It was too far for machine-gun fire (to hit us), but they were firing mortars," said Gross, who realized he and his men had two options. One was to wait inside the Buffalo, where they had some protection from fire. When the tide came back in, they would be able to move the vehicle and get back to their own side.

The second option was to evacuate the Buffalo and try to get back on their own. "I chose to not wait," Gross said.

The crew got out of the Buffalo and Gross hauled out a waterproof kapok mattress which they would use as a raft. One man began to cut the weights that had been intended to secure the communications cable to the bottom of the inlet. This became the men's lifeline, and Gross used it to pull the mattress and its occupants across the water. He passed out from exhaustion perhaps 25 or 30 feet from shore and was dragged to safety by his men.

"It was not a successful venture," he said of the attempt to lay the cable. "I was lucky to get myself back."

But the brigade still managed to cross the inlet and drive out the Germans. Rockingham recommended to the Belgian government that Gross be honoured for his actions, and he received his knighthood and Croix de Guerre two years later, in November 1946.

His citation was issued on the approval of Prince Charles, who reigned in Belgium at the time in place of his exiled older brother, King Leopold III. It reads as follows:

"The Minister of National Defence has the honour to announce that, by decree of . . . the Regent Prince of November 3, 1946, he appoints John William Gross Knight of the Order of Leopold II, with the decorations and attributes of the Cross of War 1940 in recognition of services rendered in Belgium, for the courage and bravery he demonstrated in the glorious battles that brought about the liberation of Belgium. (The Regent Prince) considers it his pleasure to be able to extend his congratulations regarding this nomination."

By that time, Gross was back in Ontario and on his honeymoon. His father-in-law contacted him with the surprising news.

Gross had been overseas for most of the war; he had joined the reserve army at age 16 in 1935, in his hometown of Kitchener, and was a 20-year-old sergeant when war was declared in 1939.

He was accepted for officer training in Kingston and earned a commission as a lieutenant, despite not having the educational criteria. He remembers having to meet with a brigadier in Toronto and explain why he wanted to be an officer rather than just an enlisted man in the signal corps.

"I told him, 'I thought I might get lost in the shuffle.' He looked at me and said, 'that's a beautiful answer,'" Gross said, laughing.

Lt. Gross was the signal officer attached to the 12th Field Regiment of the Royal Canadian Artillery on D-Day, landing at Juno Beach at 8:20 a.m. He was Mentioned in Despatches for his work in quickly establishing communications between the front lines and divisional headquarters on the beach. He was

promoted to captain less than a week later and assigned to the 9th Canadian Infantry Brigade. He remained with the brigade until the end of the war.

There were lots of experiences, some that were pleasant and many that were not. Gross witnessed two deadly "friendly fire" incidents less than a week apart in Normandy, one involving U.S. Army Air Force bombers and one involving the Royal Air Force. In both cases, Canadian and Polish soldiers were the victims.

"I can still see the Poles running out of there," Gross said, referring to the second incident, which happened in a quarry near Haut Mesnil. "It was a horrible mistake."

That said, "I have an awful lot to be thankful for. If I had to do it all over again, I'd do the same thing."

Gross remained with the military after the war and was a major by the time he left the reserves. He went into sales with Firestone and retired as a company vice-president in charge of sales. Then he and one of his sons bought a Firestone retail store in St. Catharines, and they ran it together until he retired again a few years ago. John Gross still operates the store.

Jack Gross spent five weeks in Europe during the 40th anniversary celebrations of D-Day and retraced his steps through France, Holland and Belgium. He visited every Canadian war cemetery all the way up the coast of the North Sea. "It was an incredible trip," he said.

But he never thought to try to use the Order of Leopold II for his own benefit while he was in Belgium.

"I never indicated anything about my knighthood. I don't tell anybody anything about that," he said modestly.

Gross has maintained an interest in the military and notes proudly that he pointed his "kid brother" Bob toward a career in the armed forces. Bob Gross, Paul's father, ended up outranking his brother, retiring as a colonel.

Jack has seen his nephew's latest film and came away very impressed. "It's tremendous. He went all out on that."

Gross said he met Michael Dunne, Paul's maternal grandfather, and he was well aware of the special connection between the two.

"Paul spent a lot of time with his grandfather when he was young, and he remembered everything that his grandfather ever told him," Gross said.

"He was fascinated by it. . . and he became completely dedicated to telling this story that had never been told. It was a burning desire to tell that story, and it's an absolutely complete labour of love."

I am very pleased to bring this story to you and know you are as proud of Jack as I am after reading this article. By the way, his daughter Mary tells me that her father said our Remembrance Day Service (2011) was the best that he has ever been to – and he has been to a lot.

FRIDAY NIGHT TRIVIA – 2012

Reminder of Trivia Date Nights for the remainder of the year

April 20
September 21
October 19
November 16
December 21

2012 Seniors' Fair

Tuesday, June 12, 2012

10 a.m. – 3 p.m.

Harry Lumley Bayshore Community Centre, Owen Sound

FREE ADMISSION!

65 Exhibitors

offering services and information to enhance your life

special displays, welcome bags & flower for the first 300!

FREE SEMINARS

10:30 a.m.

O.P.P. Safe Driving

1:00 p.m.

Finding Balance, Preventing a fall before it happens: Grey Bruce Falls Prevention and Intervention

2:00 p.m.

“Food for Thought” with Meals on Wheels and The Good Food Box

A special room with

**Bruce County Museum and Cultural Centre along with
Grey Roots Museum and Archives**

All day entertainment including:

Yoga Demonstrations, Taoist Tai Chi Society, OSSIA: Owen Sound Singers in Accord,
The Bluewater Chorus of the Sweet Adelines, Salvation Army Golden Ager Line Dancers
Murray Smith and Friends/sponsored by La Pastorale

**The Seniors Advocacy and Awareness Network promotes
safe environments and seniors rights.**

**We assist in the prevention of abuse through advocacy and awareness in our
communities.**

**We'd like to ensure that seniors, caregivers, relatives, friends and anyone that has an
interest in enhancing the lives of seniors attends the event. Please share this information
with others.**

**Groups are encouraged and seating for seminars is limited so please let us know in
advance for reserved seating arrangements.**

The United Way of Bruce Grey
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S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1 JAMBOREE 2:00 PM	2	3 LADIES CARD GROUP 1:30 GEN. MTG & ELECTIONS 7:00 PM	4 BINGO 7:30 PM	5 EUCHRE 7:30 PM	6 DANCE CLUB 8:00 PM GOOD FRIDAY	7 EUCHRE 1:30 PM <hr/> MEAT ROLL 4:00 PM
8 EASTER SUNDAY	9 EASTER MONDAY 	10 LADIES CARD GROUP 1:30 <hr/> IN-HOUSE CRIBBAGE 7:30 PM <hr/> L/A GEN MTG 8:00 PM	11 BINGO 7:30 PM	12 EUCHRE 7:30 PM	13 DANCE CLUB 8:00 PM <hr/> TRIVIA NITE 8:00 PM	14 EUCHRE 1:30 PM <hr/> DISTRICT CONVENTION
15 DISTRICT CONVENTION	16	17 LADIES CARD GROUP 1:30	18 BINGO 7:30 PM	19 EUCHRE 7:30 PM	20 DANCE CLUB 8:00 PM	21 EUCHRE 1:30 PM <hr/> MEAT ROLL 4:00 PM
22	23	24 LADIES CARD GROUP 1:30 <hr/> EXEC MTG 7:30 PM	25 BINGO 7:30 PM	26 EUCHRE 7:30 PM	27 DANCE CLUB 8:00 PM	28 EUCHRE 1:30 PM
29	30					

~ Please join us for our various events and help support your Branch ~