



# VIMM Newsletter

Summer 2021

Vancouver Island Military Museum

## 20th Anniversary 9/11 and OPERATION APOLLO

By Greg Devenish



*HMCS Iroquois took leadership of Task Force TG 307.1 which also included HMCS Preserver and HMCS Charlottetown.*

The terrorist destruction of the New York Trade Center on 11 September 2001 resulted in a quick response by the USA and its allies. American intelligence agencies quickly deduced that Osama bin Laden, leader of the Al-Qaeda terrorist network in Afghanistan, was behind the attack. Canada's decision to join a coalition of allies came on 7 October. This committed the Canadian Army, RCAF, and RCN to the war on terrorism. The code name of the operation was *Apollo*. This operation lasted two years and involved four phases.

The RCN was the first major fleet to arrive in theatre after the USN. On 8 October *HMCS Halifax* was detached from the NATO Standing Naval Force Atlantic and ordered to the Arabian Sea to join the US Navy battle fleet carrier group. In the words of Commander Peter Ellis, "the NATO Force turned right and headed north, we turned left and headed south."

On 16 October Commodore Drew Robertson reported that Task Force TG 307.1 was ready to sail from Halifax. The

Task Force included *HMCS Iroquois*, *HMCS Charlottetown*, and the supply ship *HMCS Preserver*. Historian Richard Gimblett wrote, "*Sending the navy against land locked Afghanistan was criticized by some as going to a gun fight with only a knife...it was held to be an inappropriate Canadian response to assisting the United States in the war against terrorism. In point of fact, it fit well with the American campaign strategy.*"

Canada had no carriers or cruisers, but Canadian frigates and destroyers became crucial for escort and interdiction, and the supply ship provided sea-based logistics. Upon arrival in the Arabian Sea, Commodore Robertson found himself appointed to the role of Amphibious Support Force Defense Commander. The task force provided protection for the U.S. Marine Amphibious Ready Group including the *USS Bataan*. This was at the same time the P.P.C.L.I. arrived in Kandahar to begin operations against the Taliban.

*Continued on page 3.*

# Vice President's Message

After an extended shut down, the Vancouver Island Military Museum reopened to visitors on June the 16th with restricted hours (Wednesday to Saturday) and I think I speak for all our staff in saying we are delighted to be back in business. It's been a long haul from November 2020 due to the Covid 19 situation, which impacted travel and social gatherings. The construction of the new Marriott Plaza Hotel also severely restricted access to Piper Park, where the museum is located. The ever-increasing number of work site containers in the park coupled with fencing and restricted parking also made access difficult for anyone wishing to visit the museum. We are, however, now working with the building contractors to minimize any inconvenience to museum visitors. On the bright side, there is little doubt that having the new hotel and the adjacent conference centre as our neighbours will bring an increasing number of visitors to downtown, which should be a major boost to tourism for Nanaimo and Central Vancouver Island. On the subject of tourism, the military museum was featured along with five other important downtown tourist destinations in a recent edition of the Nanaimo News Bulletin. The decision by the B.C. Ministry of Health to ease travel restrictions has both Tourism Nanaimo and Tourism Vancouver Island advertising heavily throughout the province which, we believe, will see a steady increase in visitor traffic in the coming months. The museum advertises in publications from both organizations and fortunately, when the travel restrictions hit, we were able to delay the advertising we had planned to later in summer and fall. We are already receiving calls from groups and individuals asking when we are planning to re-open, which is an encouraging first step.

In a previous Newsletter, Editor Angus Scully researched the story of Nanaimo's forgotten WWI Fighter Pilot, Lt. Osborne Orr, DFC for which the museum subsequently created an exhibit to honour this gallant flyer. Due to the Covid restrictions Orr's family, who reside in Seattle Washington, were prevented from attending the planned Remembrance Day services in Nanaimo. James and Connie Thayer who were cousins of Lt. Orr have generously offered to donate his WWI Medals, which include the DFC, to the Vancouver Island Military Museum. This is a wonderful gesture on behalf of the family, and we are greatly honoured to be the recipient of this most thoughtful gift.

**Brian McFadden**

## CAPTAIN J.V.E. CARPENTER



Royal Artillery (circa 1890)

Joseph Carpenter was born in Mallo, County Cork, Ireland on February 11th, 1866 and was educated at a private school from 1872-1881. He later studied law at Lismore College in Conway, North Wales from 1881-1884.



Royal Artillery Officer (circa 1890)

Carpenter joined the British Army in 1884, serving as a Gunnery Officer in the South Irish Division's 38th Brigade. He emigrated to Canada at the end of 1886 and settled in Calgary, Alberta. There, he partnered with his cousin, Harry Spratt, bought a horse and wagon, and moved to the City of Edmonton.



Lord Strathcona Horse Regiment



Canadian Mounted Rifles Regiment



In 1900, Carpenter joined the Lord Strathcona Horse prior to the regiment leaving for South Africa to join British forces fighting in the Boer War. He returned to Edmonton in 1901 and transferred to the Canadian Mounted Rifles shortly before that regiment left for service in South Africa. Carpenter was promoted to the rank of Captain and awarded the Queen's Medal with Five Clasps; his name appeared in Dispatches in the London Gazette in May, 1902. Joseph Carpenter returned to Canada at the end of the Boer War and was married in Edmonton on April 27th, 1911 to Catherine Maud Corbett. In 1912 the Carpenter family moved to Nanaimo, British Columbia and raised three children.



Queens Medal (5 clasps) Boer War



Nanaimo Independent Infantry Company (Militia)



Royal Engineers WWI

At the outbreak of the First World War Joseph Carpenter raised and commanded the Nanaimo Independent Company of Infantry, the city's first Militia Regiment. The Nanaimo Company, like all Canadian Militia, was incorporated into Battalion formations of the Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF) for service in France. Carpenter served in the Royal Engineers from 1914-1918.



World War One Medals

Not long after he returned from the war the family moved to a small farm on Jingle Pot Road, where Joseph Carpenter died in 1943. Today his descendants still reside in the City of Nanaimo.

## Medal Mounting

The VIMM will gladly mount your medals in court mounting or in a frame. Contact us for further information and prices.





### Did You Know?

Almost 3000 people were killed on 9/11, including 24 Canadians. Our participation in the Afghanistan campaign lasted 12 years, with 40 000 personnel from the RCN, Army, and RCAF serving there. 165 were killed and 2000 wounded/injured.

*Canadian Sea Kings operated from Canadian frigates and supply ships and provided yeoman service. They were a vital component of RCN operations.*

### Apollo – Four Phase Operation

In the first phase, *HMCS Halifax* escorted American and British replenishment ships through the Strait of Hormuz. *HMCS Preserver* was kept busy in the Arabian Sea and Persian Gulf passing fuels and tons of supplies to coalition ships. *Preserver* conducted more than 120 replenishments at sea transferring 27 000 000 liters of fuel and 203 192 kilograms of stores. At the same time *Preserver* carried out surveillance and two boardings, which was unheard of in other navies.

The second phase focused on searching for escaping Taliban and Al-Qaeda terrorists. These operations were centered in the Gulf of Oman and the Strait of Hormuz. Canada took over command of this operation and it became the greatest challenge for the Canadian Task Force. The Iran navy was a special threat to allied ships and Iranian waters were used as a sanctuary by terrorists.

For three days in April 2002, *HMCS Ottawa* tracked an oil tanker (ROAA) which was suspected of breaking U.N. oil sanctions. The oil tanker stayed in Iranian waters and *Ottawa*, in international waters, remained in contact until the vessel broke for the open sea. The “take down” of the smuggler ship culminated in a night boarding, catching the vessel completely by surprise. Captain Patrick Moulden stated, “*Ottawa screamed in at 30 knots...It was intimidatingly fast. They illuminated ROAA with the xenon, the ship’s high power search light. The guy’s (ROAA’S) bridge must have been stunned.*”

In the third phase in February 2003, following the invasion of Iraq, Coalition Task Force 151 was placed under Canadian command. Commodore Roger Girouard led this multi-national naval force in the Gulf of Oman as it inspected and protected shipping through the Strait of Hormuz. This was the largest naval area of responsibility in an active theatre held by a Canadian senior officer since 1945. There were many boardings and inspections. In May, *HMCS Fredericton* conducted the 1000th boarding by Coalition ships.

The fourth phase was a winding down phase which ended in December 2003. This marked the end of the largest RCN operation since the Korean War. It is also important to recognize the RCAF which operated Sea Kings off the decks of Canadian warships. They flew a total of 6463 hours. RCAF Aurora aircraft completed 507 missions over the Gulf of Oman and the Persian Gulf.

The RCN can be proud of its contribution, professionalism, and active participation in the Coalition naval war on terrorism. The RCN worked seamlessly alongside its coalition partners such as USN, RN, RAN, and RNZN. Fifteen of The RCNs surface combatants were deployed, manned by 4700 sailors and pilots. RCN ships provided 50% of the hails and 63% of Coalition boardings.

Historian Richard Gimblett wrote, “*In private conversations, USN Admirals... will admit that the Canadian Navy manages frigate navies of other nations better than they could hope to...Canadian command of the Coalition naval forces was critical to its success. No other navy could have performed this role as effectively.*”

# The Long Career of Nanaimo's Raymond Collishaw

By Angus Scully

Ray Collishaw was one of the great aces of the First World War, with 60 (or more) victories. Nanaimo is proud of its greatest warrior and the VIMM is proud to have displays on his accomplishments that continue to inform new generations and visitors.

Collishaw had another great career that is often overlooked. At the end of the Great War in 1918, Collishaw stayed in the Royal Air Force and was sent to southern Russia as commander of RAF 47 Squadron to support the "White" Russians against the "Red" Bolsheviks. He then served in Iraq and Iran, before being sent to the RAF Staff College in 1924. In 1929 he was promoted to Wing Commander and placed in command of the aircraft on the carrier *HMS Courageous*. He had returned to his naval roots and served at sea for nearly three years. At the time the planes and pilots on Royal Navy aircraft carriers were supplied by the RAF. It was, however, a comfortable posting for Collishaw, and he got along very well with the Royal Navy then, and later during the Second World War. His service on the ships of the Canadian Fisheries Protection Service before 1914, and his years in the Royal Naval Air Service stood him in good stead with the RN.

During the Ethiopian crisis of 1935-36, when Britain came close to war against Italy, Collishaw was in command of RAF forces in Sudan, which bordered on the area of conflict. He was then promoted to Air Commodore and posted to command of No. 5 Wing in Egypt and was involved in organizing RAF operations in Pales-

tine. He was well experienced and familiar with the conditions in the Middle East when war started in 1939.

The Egypt command was a bit of a backwater compared to Europe and the RAF aircraft there were obsolete. When Italy declared war against Britain in June 1940, the British in Egypt were outnumbered by Italian forces in neighbouring Libya, which was an Italian colony. The British had to defend Egypt and the strategically important Suez Canal. The Italians had an army of over 200 000 as opposed the British army strength of 36 000. The Italian Air Force had 200 fighters and 200 bombers. Collishaw, in command of 202 Group in the desert of western Egypt, had one Hurricane fighter, 63 biplane Gladiator fighters and 72 Blenheim bombers. The obsolete Gladiators were slower than the Italian bombers, never mind the Italian fighters. But Collishaw was up to the task. On the day Italy declared war, Collishaw ordered an attack, and his Blenheim bombers caught the Italian air force on the ground, actually on parade listening to the announcement of the declaration of war. Collishaw worked to keep the Italians off balance, using his single Hurricane (called *Collie's battleship*) in different places every day to fool the Italians into thinking there were many more of the superior RAF fighters. Collishaw's orders were to, "hit 'em hard, hit 'em again, don't let 'em know where you're going to hit."

The RAF could expect little in the way of reinforcements because in Europe France had fallen and Britain itself was facing German invasion. The British forces in Egypt would have to make do.



It was a long way from Nanaimo to southern Russia. Collishaw with White Russians, 1919.



Raymond Collishaw – RAF leader in the Second World War.

Desperate for faster fighters, Collishaw converted his obsolete Blenheim bombers into fighters, fitting them with four forward firing machine guns. Several of these Blenheims were always flying with *Collie's battleship* to create a more impressive force. In one memorable battle the Hurricane and four "fighter" Blenheims intercepted a group of Italian fighters. The Hurricane destroyed two of them and the somewhat ungainly Blenheims shot down two Italian fighters and damaged two others. Collishaw proved to be a daring and resourceful commander and the RAF soon dominated the larger Italian Air Force. Collishaw's tactics were so successful that when the RAF proposed to replace him in October 1940, his immediate commander, Air Marshall Longmore, said, "On no account do I want to release Collishaw who is doing magnificently in the Western Desert and maintaining a very high morale in the six squadrons there to a vastly superior enemy air force, I cannot risk a change."

## On Display at the VIMM

Air Vice Marshall Collishaw's uniform.

Collishaw - Ace. Medals, aircraft models, correspondence, portrait.

VIMM has a satellite Collishaw display at the Collishaw Terminal, Nanaimo Regional Airport.



Collishaw enjoyed the full confidence of the Army commander, General O'Connor, and the naval commander Admiral Cunningham. But Collishaw had strong views about the use of the RAF in combat. He was opposed to using his aircraft as close support for the army. This may have been a result of his First World War experiences, when in the last 100 days his squadron of Camel fighters had been used to strafe German trenches, with high losses. His strong opinions led him into conflict with a new RAF commander in the Middle East - Air Marshal Tedder. When the Germans sent General Rommel, the Afrika Korps, and the Luftwaffe, to help the Italians, the British suffered a series of defeats. Heads rolled, and Tedder made sure Collishaw's was one.

In July of 1942, Collishaw was recalled to Britain and promoted to Air Vice Marshall (major general equivalence) and given command of 14 Group of Fighter Command, defending Scotland. A year later he was "retired," apparently a victim of RAF command politics. Although Tedder seemed to delight in running down Collishaw (Tedder's memoirs were titled, *With Prejudice*) Collishaw never said anything bad about Tedder in his own memoirs. Collishaw moved to Vancouver in 1945 and had a successful business career in mining. He died there in 1976.

For more details of Collishaw's second career as an air force leader from 1919 to 1945 see: Mike Bechthold. *Flying to Victory: Raymond Collishaw and the Western Desert Campaign 1940-1941*.



Superhero Collishaw



Collishaw and his wife Juanita, 1935.

# The Nazi D-Day That Failed

By Brian McFadden

Britain faced its darkest hour in 1940. With the fall of France, the British stood alone in the fight to free Europe from the Nazis.

Faced with the choice of laying siege to the British Isles or to launch a full-scale invasion, Hitler issued Directive Number 16 in early July which stated: "England, in spite of the hopelessness of their military position, has shown herself unwilling to come to any compromise. I have therefore decided to prepare for and carry out an invasion of England." He gave instructions to General Franz Halder for the invasion to commence no later than August 15th, with the operation to be code-named Sealion. As the deadline drew near, the Luftwaffe began to attack the channel ports along England's south coast. Halder knew that for any invasion to succeed the Germans had to win supremacy in the air and prevent the British Royal Navy from attacking the landing force while at sea.

Despite the Germans' military superiority, they still faced formidable obstacles. The invasion forces would have to cross over 20 miles of open water and land on a 200 mile stretch of a heavily fortified coastline. In order to give his generals more time to prepare, Hitler postponed the invasion until September reducing the chances of a successful landing. In charge of Britain's coastal defence

was General Sir Edmond Ironside who had considerable British and Commonwealth forces in England. He could also call on the Home Guard - local defence volunteers numbering some 1.5 million men ready to fight. Ironside had devised a plan to slow the invasion and stall the German Forces on the beaches planning for a war of attrition and forcing the Germans to fight for every mile from the coast all the way to Scotland.

Meanwhile in the Battle of Britain the Luftwaffe was defeated in the skies over England by the RAF and the Royal Navy controlled the English Channel. This caused Hitler and his generals to have second thoughts about the chances of a successful seaborne invasion of England.

During a meeting at Hitler's headquarters his generals recommended the plan be revised to narrow the invasion front and give the Panzer Divisions a better chance of breaking through the British defences. The new plan would see a force of 60,000 infantry and 200 tanks land near the Thames Estuary, advance quickly, and encircle London. As problems associated with Halder's plan became clear, even Hitler began to back away from the invasion. On September 17th, Sealion was postponed indefinitely, and the Germans turned their attentions to Russia instead.



**Operation Sealion WWII** After the defeat of France in May, 1940 Britain became Hitler's next target. Operation Sealion, the code name chosen for the amphibious assault on the South Coast of England was set for September, 1940. This however would be no easy task as Britain had mobilized her defences far more efficiently than the Germans expected. A plan to fortify South-East England was well underway with pillboxes, gun emplacements, tank traps, and minefields to stall the invasion forces on the landing beaches. The Luftwaffe had lost control of the air in the Battle of Britain and the Royal Navy had complete control of the seas in the English Channel. By the end of 1940 Hitler had abandoned plans to invade Britain and turned his attention east towards Russia. In retrospect historians believe Hitler's plan to invade England would have resulted in failure.

## Remembering John Pierce

John Pierce died in April, age 91. He was a long serving volunteer here at VIMM and a wonderful man. Anyone who had a tour of exhibits with John had an informative and interesting time. John's dry wit was legendary. Many current volunteers don't know it, but the way they greet visitors and how they introduce the Museum may have been learned from those who learned from John. "I'd like to introduce you to some local heroes," he would say, then make sure that the tanker was the centre of the story.

Before he retired from VIMM on Remembrance Day 2019, John liked to say that he had already retired four other times – from the Royal Canadian Dragoons (after 25 years), from Canada Post (12 years), from the Commissionaires, and from security guard work. Although he had good anecdotes from all of them, he was most proud of his career in RCD. He retired as a WO2, having served in Korea, Germany, Cyprus, Egypt, and wherever the RCD went in Canada. John's wife

Lillian died in 2015. Their son Jim was born when John was serving with the RCD in Korea. In past issues of this newsletter, we have re-printed some of the articles that John wrote when he was with the RCD Association. They were well received by our readers. Here is one last one, from 1983. Enjoy, and remember John Pierce.

*I said that the Centurion took a lot of the "fun" out of tank driving. Since I was a driver when the Centurions arrived, I'll stand by my claim that this is so. I drove the second or third Centurion off the flatcar when they first arrived in Petawawa and I managed to get as far as the tank compound (approximately four miles) before the transmission went. I can remember when we taught tank driving at the unit, the orders were to, "stay out of the woods." The fenders mustn't be banged up. I came in one day with pinecones and needles on the back deck and fenders, but I had been teaching trail driving so I thought nothing of it. Much to my surprise I was thoroughly chewed out and told to teach trail driving on the plains. We became quite adept at imagining trees.*

*The old Sherman was not as sophisticated nor as "fragile" as the Centurion. Rumour had it, Canada bought them from the States by the pound – as scrap metal. Fact of fiction? I don't know but it was good for a few laughs. One of the first things we did when we were issued a "new" Sherman was to find a good stout tree and rub off those foolish little fenders along the sides. They just got in the way.*

*The 38-ton Sherman was mad to go flat out. That old lady was only happy when the pedal was to the floor. Many a wild and woolly race started at the far end of the training area and finished at the tank compound just at quitting time. I can think back and recall many "fun" hours behind the tiller bars of a Sherman as well as a few anxious moments, like the time I ended up nursing a high explosive 76mm round in the driver's compartment. That, however, is another story for another column. How about that for a cliff hanger? For now – Good Shooting.*



John Pierce and the VIMM Peacekeeping display.

# DISPATCHES

from VIMM



## Summer Hours

Wednesday to Saturday, 10am to 3pm.  
 The construction site next to the VIMM has reduced the access street to one lane. There is still parking in front of the Museum.  
 We hope to be back to full operation by September.

## Adjust Your Bookmarks and Contacts!

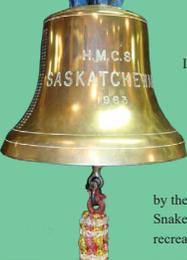
VIMM has a new website. The address is [www.vimilitarymuseum.ca](http://www.vimilitarymuseum.ca)

Our new email address is [oic@militarymuseum.ca](mailto:oic@militarymuseum.ca)

Check us out!



*New Display: Russian DShKM M1938/46 Heavy MG.*

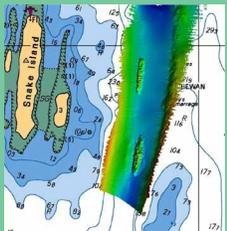


### HMCS Saskatchewan The Ship's Bell

In 1961, HMCS Saskatchewan, a Destroyer Escort DDE 262, was built in Victoria B.C. and commissioned by the Royal Canadian Navy the following year. The ship served with the Pacific Fleet for most of its career before being decommissioned in March 1994. Shortly thereafter, the vessel was acquired by the Artificial Reef Society and sunk just west of Snake Island near Nanaimo in 1997. The ship is now a recreational dive location and Naval Grave site.

Historically, the passing of time aboard ship was marked by striking the bell at intervals to mark the change of a sailor's watch routine. The first documented evidence of a ship's bell was recorded in Henry VI's Royal Squadron in 1414. In the Royal Navy and Royal Canadian Navy the ship's bell is used as a font for the christening of children born to the families of those serving on the vessel. This is seen not only to baptize the child into the church, but into the Navy and ship's company as well. After the ceremony, the name of the child and date of birth are inscribed on the bell.



In July 2019, the ashes of Canadian seamen Tom Nyberg, Greg Hewitt, and Tom Anderson, all members of HMCS Saskatchewan's commissioning crew, were laid to rest on their former ship. Three Royal Canadian Navy Divers placed their ashes on the wreck. Saskatchewan was sunk as an artificial reef off Snake Island just outside Departure Bay, Nanaimo. Prior to the ship's sinking in 1997 the ashes of Seaman Raymond Good from Nanaimo were placed on board the vessel.

*New Display: Ship's Bell from HMCS Saskatchewan.*

## Issue Cancelled by Covid

No, you didn't miss it. The Winter issue of this Newsletter was cancelled.

## "Stocky" Edwards Happy 100th

On June 5th, the RCAF and the people of Comox helped "Stocky" celebrate his 100th birthday with a parade and fly-over. In the Second World War, Stocky flew 373 combat missions and shot down 19 enemy aircraft. He flew Kittyhawks and Spitfires and is a feature in the VIMM Spitfire display.

## Museum Directors and Staff

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**Phil Harris**, Treasurer  
**Pat Murphy**, Armoury/Security  
**Greg Devenish**, Secretary, Library

**Bruce Davison**, Volunteer Coordinator  
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