

A RARE OBJECT SPOTTED AT VIMM



The Museum has lots of old interesting objects on display and some that are worn by volunteers. Indeed some volunteers describe themselves as old interesting objects!

Long-time VIMM volunteer John Pierce sports a special lapel pin that has an interesting history. As a member of the Sergeant's Mess of the Recce Squadron of the Royal Canadian Dragoons stationed in Rafha, Gaza, Egypt in 1962, John came up with a plan for disposal of the Mess bar profits. It was decided to have a gold lapel pin made – something unique. The Palestinian steward of the Mess was asked to translate “reconnaissance” into Arabic and write it out in Arabic script. The steward said there was no one word that would do, but suggested the phrase, “They who seek the way”.

John Pierce, long-time volunteer—and rare object.



Another Rare Object –They Who seek the Way

Royal Canadian Dental Corps technicians then made up one solid gold model pin (using dental gold) with the inscription. John took the model pin to a goldsmith in Port Said and 12 pins were made up in solid gold. After John picked up the new pins, the original was returned to the Dental Corps technicians and it was melted down.

Ten of the pins were given to the sergeants, one went to the RCD's commanding officer, and one went to the RSM. John Pierce often wears his rare lapel pin when on duty on Tuesday mornings.

MUSEUM DIRECTORS AND STAFF

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Phil Harris, Secretary/Treasurer

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VIMM Newsletter

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FIRST WORLD WAR CENTENARY AND RAYMOND COLLISHAW

The Museum has a new exhibit on the Great War, featuring items not before on display and also some loaned from the Nanaimo Archives. The emphasis is on Nanaimo veterans and on Raymond Collishaw, Nanaimo's own fighter ace. Collishaw (1893 – 1976) shot down 61 enemy aircraft, sixth most for all pilots on both sides in the war.

The new display on Collishaw features his Air Vice Marshall (RAF) uniform, medals, biography, and a model of his fighter – the Sopwith Triplane, "Black Maria." The permanent display on Collishaw is

Collishaw display at the Collishaw Terminal, Nanaimo Airport (YCD)



The new Great War Centenary display

still there, and the VIMM has set up a satellite display in the Collishaw Terminal at Nanaimo Airport.

In 1916 – 1917, Collishaw was the flight leader of the "Black Flight" flying Sopwith Triplanes. He was the first pilot to shoot down six enemy in one day and the highest scoring ace flying the Sopwith Triplane. Flying was a deadly business and the life expectancy of pilots was short.

Each pilot in the Black Flight named his aircraft with black in the name:

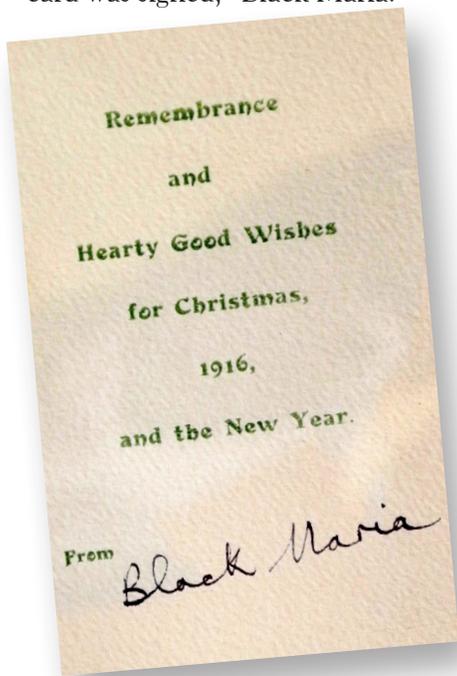
Raymond Collishaw Black Maria
Ellis Reid Black Roger
James Sharman.. . . Black Death
Gary Nash Black Sheep
Mark Alexander .. Black Prince

Over a two month period in the summer of 1917, the Black Flight shot down 87 enemy aircraft, 29 by Collishaw.



DISCOVERY IN THE ARCHIVES

While researching in the Nanaimo Community Archives for materials to use in the Great War Display, Museum Vice President Brian McFadden made an interesting discovery. He found a Christmas card sent by Collishaw to his Nanaimo friend Arthur Leighton, serving in the 72nd Battalion. The card was signed, "Black Maria."



Collishaw's 1916 Christmas card.

With no other identification, the Archives was unaware of the connection to Collishaw. They kindly loaned the card to VIMM, where it is now part of our new display.



SOPWITH TRIPLANE

Flown mostly by squadrons of the Royal Naval Air Service, the Triplane was immediately successful and is said to have encouraged the Germans to produce the famous Fokker Triplane. However the Triplane only had one machine gun and was slower than its German foes in a dive. It was also difficult to maintain and in several, the wings collapsed in dives. Only 147 were built. The superior Sopwith Camel replaced it in operations before the end of 1917.

PERFORMANCE

Maximum speed: 117 mph (187 km/h) at 5,000 ft (1,830 m)

Endurance: 2 hrs 45 min

Service ceiling: 20,500 ft (6,250 m)

Time to 6,000 ft (1,830 m): 5 min 50 s

Time to 16,400 ft (5,000 m): 26 min 30 s

Armament

Guns: 1× .303 in Vickers machine gun

Manfred von Richthofen	Germany	80
René Fonck	France	75
Billy Bishop	Canada	72
Ernst Udet	Germany	62
Edward Mannock	United Kingdom	61
Robert Collishaw	Canada	61
James McCudden	United Kingdom	57
Andrew Beauchamp-Proctor	South Africa	54
Erich Löwenhardt	Germany	54
Donald MacLaren	Canada	54



MUSEUM PLANS & EVENTS



Brian McFadden, Vice President

A “work in progress” is a term often used when describing a museum and certainly it’s an accurate description of the day-to day activities for those of us who work behind the scenes at the Vancouver Island Military Museum. In 2014, we completed two major projects, the South East Asian and World War I exhibits, both of which were enthusiastically received by our visitors. This coming year we have a number of ideas under review which we believe will enhance two of our current exhibits and create one new additional display (space permitting).

If all goes according to plan, the RCMP Exhibit will have the history of the “Mounties” iconic Arctic Patrol Vessel, St. Roch

including a model of this famous ship added to the display. The original St. Roch is now housed inside the Maritime Museum in Vancouver.

We also plan to add a section on the Pacific Coast Rangers to the Aboriginal Exhibit. This will tell the early history of the Rangers on the B.C. coast. This history will link the old Home Defence organization to the present day Canadian Rangers who currently patrol the High Arctic region and are a permanent militia in the north.

One project which we had not planned for was the Collishaw Exhibit at the Nanaimo airport. The main terminal is currently undergoing renovations which involves relocating the Collishaw display to the arrivals area. This works in our favour as the new location gives us an opportunity to update the exhibit which will now more closely mirror the Collishaw display in the museum’s WWI exhibit.

Lastly, much has been written about the 1942 Dieppe raid!! A great deal of the reasoning for this raid has been kept secret for many years. We hope to set the record straight with a display telling the true story of Dieppe and Canada’s role in this ill-fated operation.

STAN MACKAY’S LAST SHIFT



Stan MacKay

After 9 years of extraordinary service Stan Mackay worked his last shift as a volunteer on Saturday January 31. Stan started with the museum in 2005 and has volunteered hundreds of hours. His efficient cheery manor was much appreciated by all those that worked with him and he will be greatly missed. We wish him well and hope that he drops in once in a while to chat with old friends. Thanks again Stan for your time and your enthusiasm and for honouring our service personnel - the Saturday morning shift will never be the same. Stan was a retired RCMP member and a CPR police officer.

Good Luck in your retirement!



Honour and Remember the Veterans in your family or that of a family friend

The Vancouver Island Military Museum is proud to present...

The Veterans Wall of Honour

Available now, we are offering granite plaques that will honour and keep the service and memory of the veteran in your family or that of a family friend alive for decades. These granite plaques will be mounted on the exterior wall of our downtown waterfront location and will honour those that served Canada and helped preserve the freedoms we all enjoy today.

These honour plaques will be engraved with your family members or friends name, the dates of service and the crest and branch of the military he or she served in.

This plaque offering is open to all commonwealth service members both past and present as well as members of the RCMP and Merchant Navy. These honour plaques are 6"x 9" quality granite with details etched on a shiny surface. Drop into the museum for complete details and view a sample.



\$195.00

Keep their honour and memory alive

"Lest we forget"



MEMORIAL WALL DEDICATED

The VIMM Memorial Wall was opened in conjunction with the new display marking the centenary of the First World War. Plaques on the Wall honour the service of members of the Armed Forces, Merchant Marine, and RCMP. The wall honours the living and the dead.

HMCS Nanaimo etc.)

No ranks will be on the plaques. As VIMM Vice president Brian McFadden said, “Death is a great leveller. It doesn’t matter whether you were an admiral or a private, it’s your service that we are honouring. Regardless of what you did or where you went, you



VIMM President Roger Bird and Nanaimo Mayor Bill McKay inspecting a new plaque.

The unveiling and official launch took place on December 12, 2014 and was attended by museum staff, volunteers, Bill McKay the Mayor of Nanaimo, MLA Leonard Krog, and MLA Michelle Stilwell.

Plaques will have the name of the person honoured, their branch of service, and dates of service. Purchasers will have the option of just naming a service in general (Army, RCN etc.) or a specific unit (Queen’s Own Rifles,

served for a period of time and you were prepared to go where ever you were asked to go, do what you were asked to do.”

Memorial Plaques are 6x9 inches, and cost \$195.00. There are 264 available. Contact the VIMM office to make your order.

THE NANAIMO GENOTAPH OLDEST AND YOUNGEST

Our Museum records include information about the men from Nanaimo killed in the First World War. For the next four years there will be increasing focus on that war and its impact on Canada and the world. Here, from our records, are two brief biographies.

The Oldest – Age 46

Arthur Herbert Charman was born in London, England on Dec. 22 1871. He came to Canada and found work as a miner in Nanaimo. At the time he enlisted he was living at 717 Wentworth St. He was single and gave his father as his next of kin. When he joined the army in January 1917 our records show he was 5 feet 6 inches tall (cm), had blue eyes and brown hair, and was a member of the Church of England. He was killed that same year, on June 2 – a private in the 47th Battalion (the Western Ontario Regiment). Private Charman is buried in the Villiers Station Cemetery, Village au Bois, Pas de Calais, France.

The Youngest – Age 19

Robert Henry Hastie was born in Nova Scotia on May 8, 1897. He moved west to live in Nanaimo with his half-brother, A. Skinner. He was single and worked as miner. We do not know when he enlisted, but he was killed on the 23rd of November 1916 – a Pioneer (private) in the 67th Pioneer Battalion.

Robert Henry Hastie’s name is listed on the Vimy Memorial along with 11 284 other Canadians who were posted as “missing, presumed dead” (there are also another 6 994 names of Canadian missing on the Menin Gate Memorial).



FIRST WORLD WAR CENTENARY – TRENCH ART

*By Angus Scully, Museum
Volunteer*

The VIMM has a nice collection of Trench Art on permanent display, next to the new display on the First World War Centenary and Raymond Collishaw.

For centuries soldiers have produced art while they were waiting or resting– and they always have waited. During the First World War millions of soldiers on both sides made souvenirs and other mementos of their service and experience that was called Trench Art. The name now applies to similar objects from later wars. Each object is a unique work of art, the product of one man's creativity and labour.

Trench art was made from found materials – mostly brass shell casings, bullets, badges, and buttons. But how could soldiers in the trenches make art from metal, given the conditions in the trenches? Trench art was probably



not made in the front lines – even “quiet” sectors were dangerous places. Troops were regularly rotated out of the front lines for rest so that might provide an opportunity. But even then they were kept busy with training, work parties (usually carrying supplies into the front lines at night), and inspections. Producing trench art required tools and sources of heat. The best equipped for trench art production were the Engineers, black smiths (huge numbers of horses were right behind the lines), battalion shoe makers, and the men in rear depots. Soldiers in convalescence could also produce art. Where ever it was produced, hundreds of thousands of items survived the war and were taken home.

Typically, small trench art items were letter openers, button hooks, shoe horns, ash trays,

sugar scoops and other objects that could be easily mailed home or carried in a kit bag or pocket. Larger objects were made from whole shell casings and usually today we see vases, often so well worked that they are barely recognizable as shells. Common decorative themes for the art were unit names, battles (e.g. Somme), a town or city, or military images such as tanks, ships, or airplanes. Some models of tanks or airplanes have survived and are highly sought after.

Trench Art can be dated in several ways. Many were inscribed with the name of a battle, for example Vimy (1917), or the Somme (1916). Items made from shell casings may have a “Head Stamp” on the bottom. Often, the date is there, sometimes the name of the manufacturer and the calibre.

Trench art is valued for the





skills of the makers, history, and family. It is not really “rare.” Huge amounts were produced and although some were scrapped in Second World War metal drives, an amazing amount has survived.



There are few fakes. Signed pieces are very rare, some experts guessing that soldiers didn't put their names on them for fear of being charged with appropriating government property. Just as likely, they didn't sign what they made for themselves.

Anyone can start a collection. Items including large vases are available now in antique shops on Vancouver Island. A search of EBay revealed over 1000 items, many under \$5.00 . Brass acquires a natural patina that appears dull. Polishing will remove the patina and produce a nice shine, but the patina will soon reappear. Each polishing removes some metal, so is usually not recommended for antiques. Washing with soap and water and an application of wax will make the item look good for display.

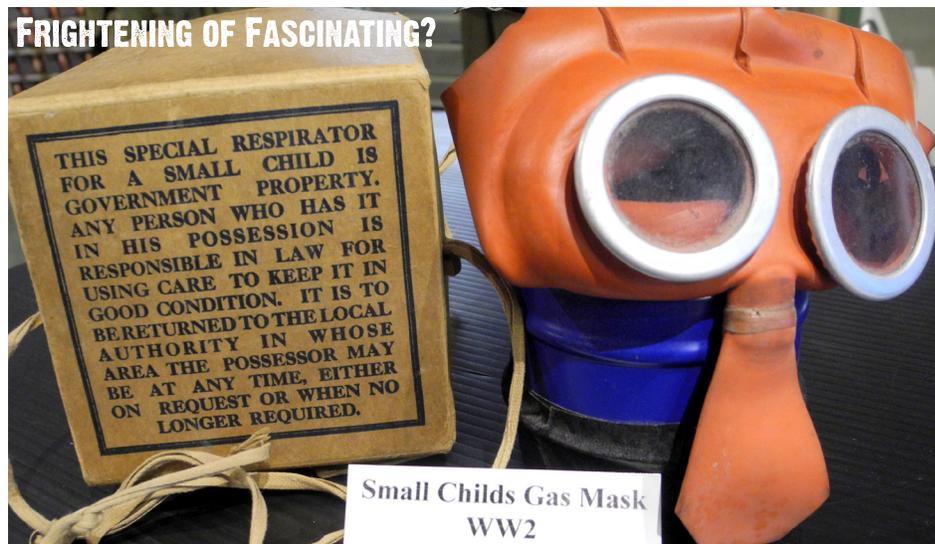
These unique old items are a reminder of the humanity and creativity of the men in the trenches.

NEW ACQUISITION— CHILD'S GAS MASK

Over ninety percent of the Museum's collection was donated by the people of Vancouver Island. Nearly every week there is a new interesting donation, and one recent object was quite special and went immediately into the Second World War Home Front display case. This child's gas mask reminds us today of the dangers faced by all people in the United Kingdom during the Second World War. A poison gas attack was a real possibility,

as well. The flapping nose would certainly allow observers to see if the user was breathing. Whether or not it made the mask more “fun” to wear is questionable – some adults today remember the mask as being scary, regardless of the colours and floppy nose.

Some sources available on the Internet refer to this mask as a Micky Mouse gas mask. It may have been called that by parents as a way to persuade young children to



given the use of gas against civilians by fascist powers in the 1930s. All people were issued with gas masks, with special sizes for children and special “containers” for infants.

Our new mask was issued to children aged 2 to 5, beginning in 1940. The red and blue colours are thought to have used to be attractive to children who were resistant to wearing the confining apparatus. At least the wearer was more visible. The floppy nose piece was the exhaust valve and was found on several models of adult masks

wear it, but it was not designed to look like Disney's mouse. However, as it became more obvious through 1941 that the US could become involved in the war, Walt Disney did design a gas mask to look like Mickey, but only one thousand of the true Mickey Mouse gas masks were produced, and only in the US. For more information about gas masks in the UK, start with www.museumoftechnology.org.uk.

This child's mask is a vivid reminder of the impact of war on all people.