



# REGIMENTAL LINES

GOVERNOR GENERAL'S HORSE GUARDS ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

Summer 2014

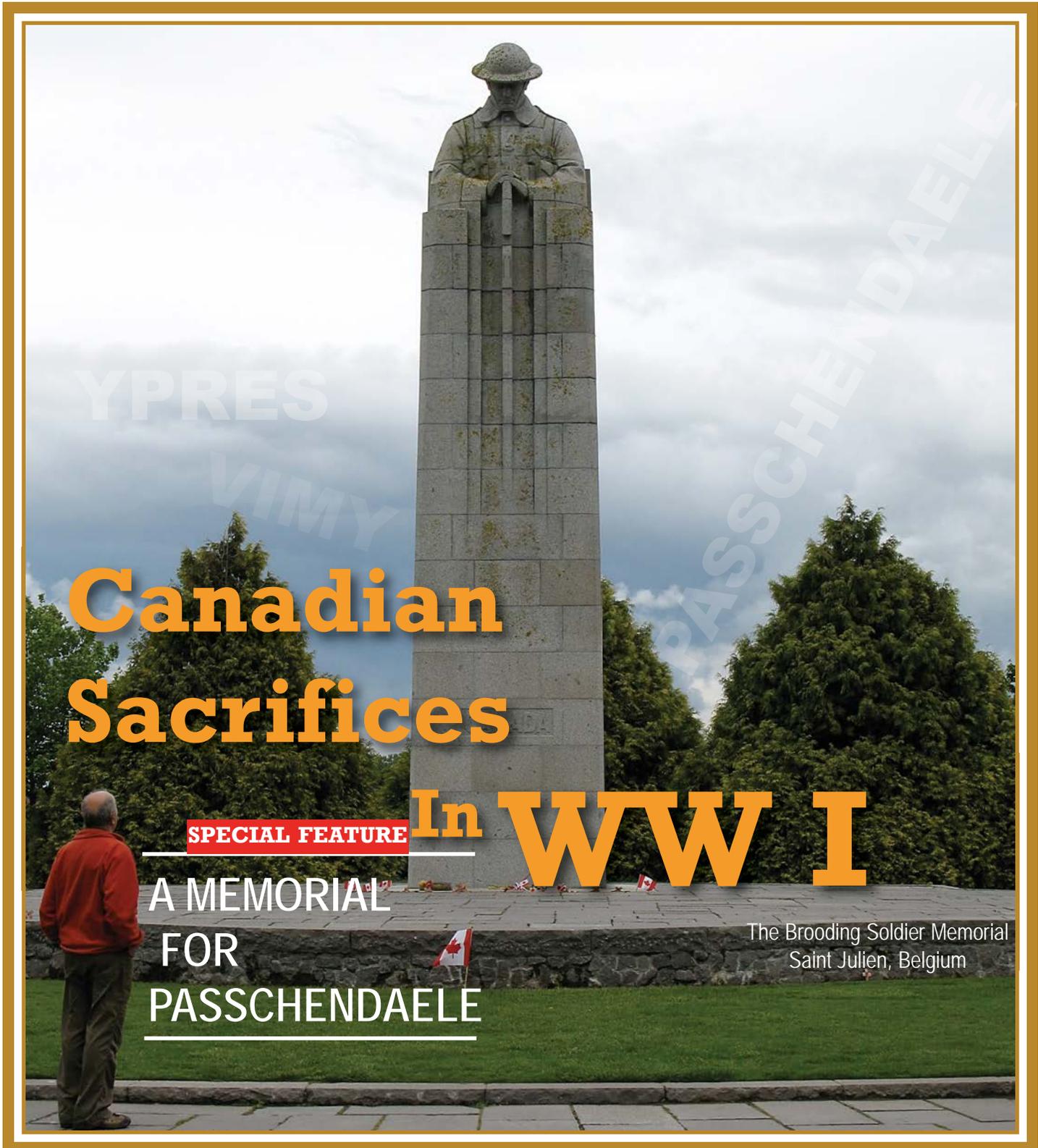
## Canadian Sacrifices

SPECIAL FEATURE

In **WW I**

A MEMORIAL  
FOR  
PASSCHENDAELE

The Brooding Soldier Memorial  
Saint Julien, Belgium





# The GGHG Memorial Project

Passchendaele Memorial  
dedicated in June 2014

In 2013, The GGHG Calvary and Historical Society and the GGHG Board of Trustees, under the direction of Col (Ret'd) Claggett commenced the GGHG Memorial Project. The aim of the project is the commemoration of the members of the Regiment who have served throughout its storied history.

The Memorial Project will recognize all the various units that the current day Regiment has the privilege to perpetuate or has been directly associated with through its contribution of soldiers and officers to the defense of Canada.

## Project Objectives:

1. Catalogue, picture and maintain current inventory of GGHG memorials;

2. Build GGHG memorials to commemorate Regimental Battle Honours and/or Key Regimental Events;
3. Establish and maintain a digital database of all Regimental Fallen

## The Project

The memorial project is being rolled out over a number of years in order to achieve key historical milestones.

The approach of the 100th year anniversary of WWI (The Great War) will see the Project placing memorials commemorating the efforts of the 4th Canadian Mounted Rifles and the 3rd Battalion (Toronto Regiment).

## 2014 to 2020 - World War 1 Memorials

- St Julien (*Completed 2013*)
- Passchendaele (*Completed June 3, 2014*)
- Mount Sorrel (*Planned 2014*)

- Ancre Heights
- Vimy
- Scarpe
- Flers-Courcelette
- Hill 70
- Amiens
- 100 Day Offensive (*Hindenburg Line, Canal du Nord, Cambrai, Valenciennes*)

2019 marks the 75th year anniversary the Italian Campaign of WWII and the Project will be placing key memorials across Italy to mark this important campaign for the Regiment.

### 2017 to 2019 – World War 2 Memorials

- Liri Valley
- Gothic Line
- Melfa Crossing
- Misano Ridge
- Lamone Crossing
- Fosso Munio
- Ijsselmeer

### 2015 to 2020 – Canadian and ‘Other’ Memorials

- South Africa
- Northwest Canada
- War of 1812 - Canada
- Toronto Memorial

### Memorial Design

A project has various memorials designed that will be custom tailored to the historical significance of a site and recognizes key architectural or natural features of the surrounding area. The memorials are being appropriately situated at a Battlefield or within a community to highlight the significance and historical meaning of the location and its relationship to the Regiment. Each memorial includes a description of the battle or event that occurred and the Regiment’s contribution to that effort.

Where appropriate, combined memorials with other units are being undertaken.

The GGHG Memorial Project is the combined efforts of various members of the GGHG Board of Trustees, serving Regiment and volunteers supportive of the GGHG Regimental Family. Please see the GGHG Historical Calvary and Historical Society Website for regular updates on the progress of the GGHG Memorial Project.

<http://iwdclient.com/gghgsociety/>



Col Jay Claggett

The Memorial Project is funded through the gracious donations from the Regimental Family and the general public. Should you wish to support this project please do so at <http://www.gghgsociety.org/>

RL



St. Julien Memorial completed in 2013

3rd Battalion (Toronto Regiment)



## A MEMORIAL FOR PASSCHENDAELE

*On June 3 2014 a Memorial was dedicated to the 4th Canadian Mounted Rifles and the 3rd Battalion of the Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF) at Vine Cottage, the site of the final objective of the World War 1 battle of Passchendaele. Major Scott Duncan and HCol and Mrs David Friesen attended for the Regiment.*

### THE GREAT WAR

**W**hen Britain went to war in 1914, Canada was a young country with a population of 7 million. The army comprised a small permanent force of cavalry, infantry, artillery, engineers, service, and administration totaling just over 3,000 men and 700 horses. Its principal role was to train militia and to man a few coastal garrisons. The militia was located in virtually every community of any size in Canada, and included close to 60,000 men.

Canadians, particularly those of British descent, felt a strong connection to Britain. Many were first-generation Canadians, who had family in the old country, and identi-

fied with the Empire with pride and a sense of obligation.

Between 1914 and 1918, 245,000 Canadians joined the CEF. Sixty-five thousand died, and 150,000 were wounded, many several times.

Forty-seven thousand of the dead are buried in hundreds of cemeteries that lay along the Front occupied by British Army over four years, stretching 100 kms from the Somme north to Ypres and 15 kms beyond. On the Menin Gate (6,998) and Vimy Memorial (11,995), the names of the remaining Canadians are inscribed.

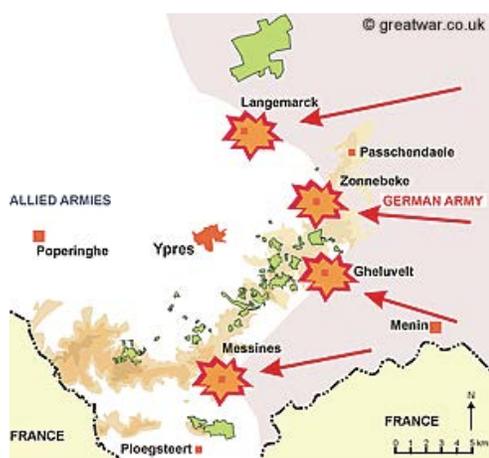
### YPRES SALIENT

At the outset of the war, the German Army drove deep into

Belgium and northern France, and were finally stopped at the Marne on the approach to Paris, and then pushed back to a line running from central Belgium south to the France – Switzerland border.

From January 1915 a stalemate situation existed between the Allied and the German armies. The British sat firm in a defensive semi-circular Front Line around Ypres. This was Ypres “salient” a bulge, into the German Front Line here. To the advantage of the Allies it forced the Germans to provide extra manpower to hold a longer section of Front Line.

However, a serious Allied disadvantage was that the Germans had knowingly secured good positions along the edges of this salient. From the south of Ypres there is a naturally occurring spur of high ground which continues around the eastern side of the town of Ypres. It runs in a north-easterly direction from Messines in the south to Passchendaele in the north.



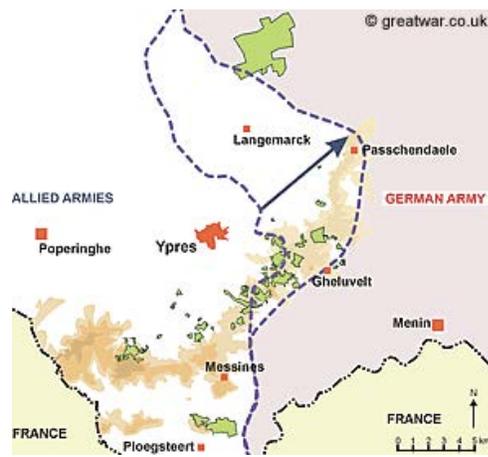
The advantages to the Germans were many. Not only did it provide a view across our positions and rear areas, but also the daily life of the German soldier was

affected by the better drainage of the positions located on higher ground. For the British, the area of Belgian Flanders was low-lying and prone to flooding due to the heavy, clay-based soil. The 3 years of bombardment turned the ground into a horror - a morass of craters and mud churned to a slurry which was impossible to cross.

### PASSCHENDAELE, THE 3RD BATTLE OF YPRES

From early in 1916 it was the intention of the Commander-in-Chief of the British Expeditionary Force (B.E.F.), Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig, to break out of the Ypres Salient. Having successfully secured the high ground of the Wytschaete-Messines Ridge in the Battle of Messines (7th-14th June 1917) the plan for the next operation was to advance against the German Front Line east and north-east of Ypres. On reaching the strategically important high ground of the Passchendaele Ridge, the intention was to continue to push eastwards, cutting off access for the German forces to the Belgian ports, used for shipping and submarines (U-Boats).

A British offensive in Flanders before the autumn weather closed in would also draw the focus of German Army commanders away from the French battlefields in the south. A large-scale offensive by the French, in April of



1917, failed. Very high casualties resulted in a struggle to maintain discipline in some of the French units and soldiers mutinied.

In Flanders, the Third Battle of Ypres was launched on 31st July.

The British Fifth advanced in a north-easterly direction away from its positions near Ypres with the Passchendaele Ridge in its sights. The French First Army was on its left. The British Second Army, was on its right, holding the ground won during the Battle of Messines a few weeks earlier. Some ground, approximately two miles, was gained on the first day, but that night rain began to fall. The ground all around the British attackers quickly turned into a quagmire

Churned up by the artillery bombardment of the German Front Line and rear areas, the ground the British were now having to advance across was badly damaged and filling up with rainwater which could not drain away through the heavy clay soil. Added to this, several small streams flowing through the area had their natural drainage channels destroyed. Due to persistent rain over the next few weeks the whole operation became literally bogged down in thick, sticky Flanders mud. Conditions were so bad that men and horses simply disappeared into the water-filled craters.

The British advance turned into a series of battles, inching closer to the Passchendaele Ridge in a series of actions with limited objectives. The capture of the Passchendaele Ridge eventually took over 8 weeks to achieve. The Canadian Corps, following their success at Vimy Ridge, had become known as the “shock troops” of the British Army. It fell to the Canadian Corps to wage the final 4 weeks at Passchendaele Ridge.

The great tragedy for the British Army and the Imperial Forces of Australia, New Zealand and Canada, who suffered so many losses in the fight for the few miles from Ypres to the Passchendaele Ridge, is that only five months later almost all of the ground gained in the mud and horror of the battles for Passchendaele was recaptured by the German Army during its April offensive in 1918.

### THE CANADIAN OFFENSIVE

As at Vimy, all four divisions of the Canadian Corps would see action. However, the mud, flat terrain, and relative lack of preparation time and artillery support would make Passchendaele a far different battlefield than the one the Canadi-

ans encountered at Vimy Ridge.

General Currie took the time to carefully prepare as much as possible and on October 26, the Canadian offensive began. Success was made possible due to acts of great individual heroism to get past spots of heavy enemy resistance. Advancing through the mud and enemy fire was slow and there were heavy losses.

The following description from the memorial stone describes action by the 4th CMR and the 3rd Bn.

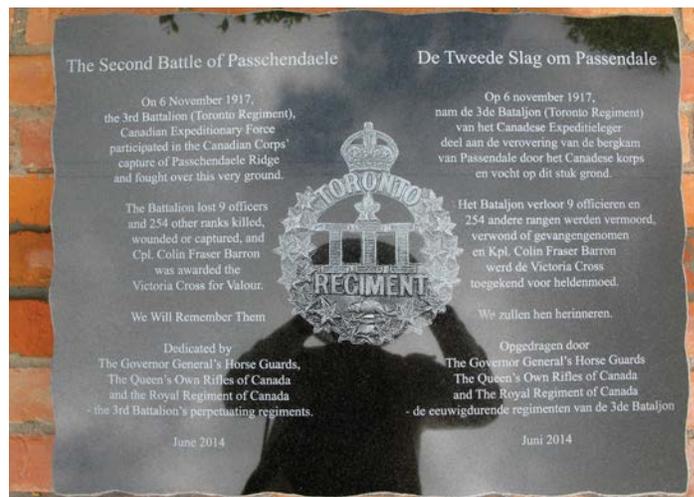
*“On October 26th, 1917, after two weeks of preliminary operations, the Canadian Corps launched a two pronged attack with the 3rd Canadian Division to the north and the 4th Canadian Division to the south. The 4th CMR, part of the 8th Canadian Infantry Brigade, 3rd Canadian Division, was on the left flank advancing upon Wolf Copse as its immediate objective.”*

*“During the fighting near Wolf Copse, Pte T.W. Holmes of the 4CMR rushed forward through a hail of bullets from German machine guns to silence the enemy block houses that had pinned down the lead companies of the advance. Because of Pte Holmes initiative in clearing the enemy block houses, 4 CMR was able to capture its objective. Pte T.W Holmes was awarded the Victoria Cross for his actions at Wolf Copse.”*



**The Second Battle Passchendaele: Dedicated by The Governor General's Horse Guards, 4th CMR's Perpetuating Regiment. June 2014**

*“On October 30th, 1917, the second stage of the Canadian Corps advance commenced with the 3rd and 4th Divisions fighting to gain a base for the final assault on Passchendaele. After a seven day tactical pause that permitted a divisional relief in place, the 1st and 2nd Canadian Divisions were ready for the final push to secure Passchendaele Ridge.”*



**The Second Battle Passchendaele: Dedicated by The Governor General's Horse Guards, The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada and The Royal Regiment of Canada - the 3rd Battalion's perpetuating Regiments. June 2014**

*“On November 6th, 1917, the 1st Canadian Division, having relieved the 3rd Division continued their advance along the northern flank of the Canadian Corps sector. The 3rd Battalion (Toronto Regiment), part of the 1st Canadian Infantry Brigade, 1st Division attacked Vine Cottages, a German strong point protecting the northern approach to the Ridge. Notwithstanding stiff resistance from the defenders of Vine Cottage, the 3rd Battalion secured their objective and set the ground work for the final attack that secured Passchendaele Ridge on November 10th 1917.”*

*“During the fighting for Vine Cottage, Cpl C.F. Barron of the 3rd Battalion rushed three German machine guns positions that had held up his company. Upon silencing the guns, Cpl Barron turned them upon the German front lines. This action was instrumental in allowing the advance to continue and for the Vine Cottages to be secured. Cpl Barron was awarded the Victoria Cross for his actions at Vine Cottage.”*

Fighting at Passchendaele took great bravery. Nine Canadians earned the Victoria Cross in the battle: Private Tommy Holmes, Captain Christopher O'Kelly, Sergeant George Mullin, Major George Parkes, Private James Peter Robertson, Corporal Colin Barron, Private Cecil Kinross, Lieutenant Hugh McKenzie and Lieutenant Robert Shankland. Two of these men, MacKenzie and Robertson, did not survive the battle to receive their medals.

**Editor's note: Part 2 of this report will be continued in the fall edition of Regimental Lines with accompanying photographs. In the meantime, please visit the GGHG Association's website where images from the visit are posted.**

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