

BARRAGE

The RCA Museum News

THE RCA MUSEUM
CANADA'S NATIONAL ARTILLERY MUSEUM



October 2022

In the Service of Peace: Canada's Peacekeepers



RCA Museum staff created a new in-house temporary exhibit on peacekeeping which opened on 1 September 2022. The senior curator, Jonathan Ferguson, created the exhibition with the help of our other curators and summer students. In the exhibit, museum staff covered Canadian peacekeeping from the 1950s to the present, from classic peacekeeping missions in the Middle East to the Balkans. Our museum last did an exhibition on peacekeeping in the late 1980s, and it was time to do another one.

Staff traced the long history of Canadian peacekeeping that doesn't receive the attention it deserves. Canadian peacekeeping continues to be a source of pride, but it's also complicated. They show the iconic blue headdress on the mannequins, which started with the creation of the United Nations Emergency Force in 1956.

Curators covered the major peacekeeping topics by location, such as Southeast Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, Cyprus, the Balkans, and the Middle East. They included an actual peacekeeping checkpoint and an observation post. During many missions, it was common for soldiers to operate them. They display three vehicles, a white UN Iltis, an AVGP Grizzly used in the Balkans, and a white UN tracked Lynx used in Cyprus.

Staff included many personal artifacts from soldiers who participated in peacekeeping missions. Notable artifacts include a white tropical patrol tunic worn by Capt H. F. Leggett at an official wedding in Laos in 1957. They have a display on Capt Ian Anderson's combat shirt, cut off when he was wounded in Bosnia in 1994. They also have Izzy Dolls from MCpl Mark "Izzy" Isfeld, who served in Croatia from 1992 to 1994. He was killed during his tour in 1994. The exhibit will run until May 2023.

Leggett's White Patrol Dress Uniform

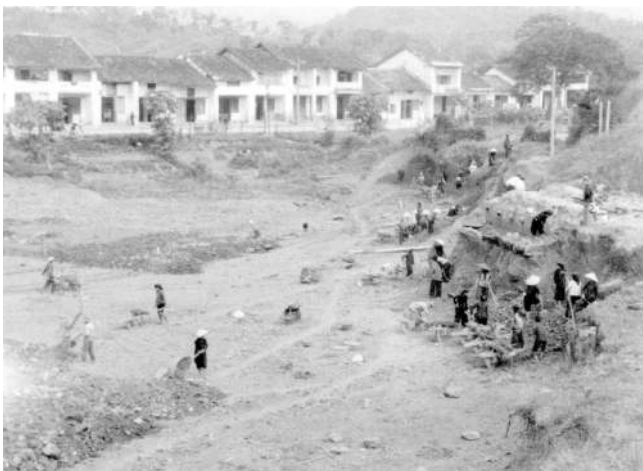
Staff at the RCA Museum have combed the archives in search of artifacts connected to Canadian peacekeeping for the current temporary exhibit. They found a white patrol dress uniform belonging to LCol H. F. (Bert) Leggett, worn when he served with the International Commission for Supervision and Control (ICSC) in the former French Indochina in the late 1950s.

LCol Leggett had an adventurous career in the Canadian military, serving with 2 RCHA and 4 RCHA, with the ICSC, as an Air OPs pilot and instructor, then in staff appointments before retiring in 1984. Museum records show that he wore the white patrol dress uniform at the Royal Wedding of Princess Savivanh Savang Manivong in Luang Prabang, Laos on 21 September 1957. Note the photo of him wearing a battle dress uniform to the right and of the white patrol dress uniform below.



The First Indochina War (1946 to 1954) ended with the defeat of France Colonial Troops. The North Vietnam fought to gain independence, which they achieved through the Geneva Accords in August 1954. These were three separate agreements calling for reunification, national elections and the creation of an international commission (ICSC) in Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam.

At the RCA Museum, we have two photos taken by Canadians in Indochina in 1956. One showing North Vietnam with the caption, "Women of Tien Yen in Communist North Vietnam Build a Sports Field." The second shows Canadian soldiers standing next to a group of local children, shown below.



ICSC participant nations, including Canada, helped enforce compliance of the Geneva Accords. In August 1954, Canada pulled together a contingent of soldiers and civilians for peacekeeping in Indochina. Initially, Canadians went on one-year tours with conditions generally rough and unpredictable. While Canadians were able to assist with the transfer of power, they had little, if any, authority to stop violations of the accord. Canada participated in the ICSC from 1954 to 1974.

Leggett's white patrol dress uniform is a curious Canadian peacekeeping artifact from the late 1950s. Our accessioning file indicates that the uniform came with accoutrements. Staff have added them to the uniform for our peacekeeping exhibit. We believe the uniform reflects the RCA's and Canada's proud history of peacekeeping which includes participation in the ICSC in Indochina.

By Andrew Oakden

Early Camp Shilo Photos

I recently found a collection of rare photographs depicting Camp Shilo in the 1930s. The photos represent snapshots of the early history of Shilo, with militia units from across Manitoba participating in summer training camp showcasing canvas tents, summer dress uniforms, and a few permanent buildings.

In 1910, the Canadian Militia selected the Shilo territory for training purposes, but the ground was impassable during summer due to having no access road. Consequently, the militia found lands north of Shilo for the initial training camp, and Camp Sewell opened in 1910. Following WW1, the Canadian Militia underwent a retrenchment period and shelved or cancelled most building projects. However, Camp Sewell was not ideal as a training camp due to potentially unsafe land, and the Canadian Militia sought new ground to the southwest.

Fast forward to the mid-1920s, and the Canadian Militia wanted to build a new training camp in the previously selected Shilo territory. Some early developments occurred in 1925, beginning the long process of moving the camp southwest of the Spruce Woods Forest Reserve on lands between Onah and Shilo. The new land comprised 70 square miles, ranging from open plains to parklands, along with small bluffs. The new territory was free of dangerous obstacles such as bogs and swamps.

The first camp cost an estimated \$148,000 to construct. The new base required an access road across the muskeg and swamp—the five-mile road cost \$5,000. They needed truckloads of earth and rock to fill the muskeg to create the route. Along with the access road, they needed the necessary approvals from the Province of Manitoba and the Federal government to create a new military training site in Shilo.

In September 1927, the military recommended abandoning Camp Hughes and moving the camp southwest to Shilo. On 25 July 1928, Maj-Gen J. H. Elmsley proposed naming the new site Camp Shilo. In 1933, the Province of Manitoba granted the DND the right to use lands outside the Spruce Woods Forest Reserve in the Shilo area. Six months later, they received approval to use some land inside Spruce Woods Forest Reserve for training purposes. Camp Hughes held its last camp in 1933.

On 25 June 1934, Crown lands representing portions of the Shilo training area transferred to the DND. The first Camp Shilo summer training camp for artillery, machine gun, and mounted units occurred in 1934, with only a small number of permanent structures until the outbreak of war in 1939. During the late 1930s, camp development expanded under the Depression-era Relief Act. The early camps were under canvas; by 1939, the military had erected 25 permanent buildings. With the outbreak of war, Camp Shilo started significant building programs and started to take its current shape.



The Origin of the Canadian Airborne Regiment

Canada first went airborne in the 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion and the First Special Service Force in non-artillery roles in July 1942. They served in significant campaigns, including the D-Day Landing.

In June 1944, Canadian Gunners assumed artillery roles with 1, 2 & 3 Forward Observation Units in the British Airborne Division. Their primary purpose was to direct ground artillery fire and assist with counter-mortar operations.

In 1947, Canada created the Special Air Service Company with parachute units. Over the next twenty years, they reorganized the units, renaming them "Mobile Strike Force" and later "Defence of Canada Force."

On 26 July 1949, Canada formed its first airborne battery, B Light Battery, 1 RCHA in Shilo, Manitoba. In July 1950, they renamed it 1st Light Battery (Para), then Z Battery (Para). From 1949 to 1956, the battery provided airborne support and deployed with 4.2 Inch Mortars and 75mm Pack Howitzers.

In 1968, the Canadian Forces created the Airborne Regiment stationed in Edmonton, Alberta. They represented Canada's rapid reaction force, an independent brigade composed of two infantry commandos, one artillery battery, and other support units.

The artillery battery served in Edmonton from 1968 to 1977, with 80 members operating 105mm L5 Howitzers and 81mm Mortars. In 1977, the Canadian Airborne moved to Petawawa, Ontario, and E Battery (Para), 2 RCHA became the artillery component.



Gunners from 2 Forward Observation Unit, May 1945.



Bringing L5 Howitzer into action, last drop, 3 Sept 1993.



E Battery (Para) troops Sept 1993.

Canada deployed the Airborne Regiment during the October Crisis in 1970 and the Turkish Invasion of Cyprus in 1974. The invasion killed two Airborne troops and wounded 30. They completed tours of Cyprus until 1986.

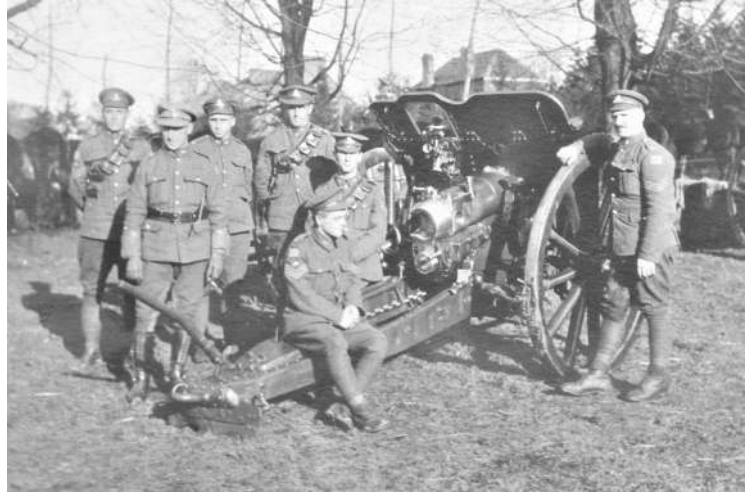
The Canadian Airborne deployed to Western Sahara in 1991 and Somalia in 1993. In Somalia, two Airborne soldiers killed a Somali teenager, leading to the disbanding of E Battery (Para) in 1993 and the Airborne Regiment in 1995. To this day, Canada maintains an airborne component in regular force units.

By Andrew Oakden

Photo Album of 35th Battery Treasures

Who were the Canadian volunteers that served overseas during the First World War?

By chance, I located in the museum archives an old album containing hundreds of First World War photographs belonging to Captain George A. Downey. The collection includes excellent photos of the 35th Battery with 4.5 Inch Howitzers in liberated Mons, Belgium, dated November 1918. The Canadian military posted Captain Downey to the 35th Battery, 8th Brigade, 3rd Canadian Divisional Artillery - part of the Canadian Expeditionary Force - in April 1916. I also located a historical record of the 35th Battery mobilized out of Sherbrooke, Quebec, in August 1915.



Officers and N.C.O.'s, 35th Battery with 4.5 Inch Howitzer - Mons - Nov 1918



Captain George A. Downey on horseback - Mons - November 1918

In 1914, the Canadian Government created the Canadian Expeditionary Force (C.E.F.), a field force recruited from the civilian population to defend Canada overseas in the First World War. The C.E.F. existed within the Canadian Corps, composed of four Infantry Divisions, subdivided by Brigades, each with Infantry Battalions, Artillery Batteries and other specialized units attached. Canada recruited 260 Infantry Battalions and over 80 field and heavy artillery batteries. Most artillery recruits went to field batteries; a smaller number went to medium batteries and heavy batteries. Each C.E.F. field battery had four guns starting in December 1914, which increased to six guns in March 1917.

From 1914 to 1918, over 620,000 Canadians enlisted, with 425,000 going overseas to fight in the First World War. These soldiers fought in France and Belgium on the Western Front. The overwhelming majority enlisted as volunteers. Canada passed the Conscript Law in August 1917 - upwards of twenty-four thousand Canadian conscripts went to France starting in January 1918.

Minority populations volunteered for the C.E.F. with an estimated 3,500 First Nations, over 1,000 Black Canadians, and over 200 Japanese Canadians, in addition to other minority groups such as Ukrainians. They came from different backgrounds, and most had never served in a military force or active militia. At least half of the soldiers enlisted were born in the United Kingdom. French Canadians also participated in lower numbers, such as most of the volunteers from the 35th Battery recruited from Quebec.



35th Battery, Gun Park - Mons - Nov 1918

In 1914, Canada accepted recruits between 18 and 45 years of age, with the average age being 26. Canada looked for healthy recruits at least 5 foot 3 inches tall (Gunners at least 5 foot 7 inches). Each recruit went through a strict medical exam. Canada rejected many due to failed medical. Common reasons for non-acceptance included flat feet, poor eyesight and rotting teeth. About twenty percent were married with children. Regardless of their status, they all accepted the terms of enlistment "to serve in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force," until the war ended.



35th Battery Officers, Horse Lines - Mons - Nov 1918

The Canadian Artillery equipped approximately 25% of the Field Artillery with 4.5 Inch Howitzers during the First World War (1914-1918). Canada had eleven 4.5 Inch Howitzer Batteries, including the 35th Battery. After being raised, the 35th Battery spent two weeks in Montreal before moving to Valcartier for basic training, then shipped overseas to England, destined for France and Belgium. Staff at the RCA Museum display one example of a 4.5 Inch Howitzer. The 4.5 Inch Howitzer was in Canadian service from 1911-1941, replacing the B.L. 5 Inch Howitzer. This gun was the principal field howitzer during WW1. The 4.5 Inch Howitzer included:

- A rifled steel barrel;
- A sliding breech block;
- Smokeless powder;
- A hydro-spring recoil mechanism;
- Two-part cased ammunition for quick loading and re-firing.

The gun used a steel box carriage that enabled the barrel to rest between trails to a maximum elevation of 45 degrees. The high elevation allowed the howitzer to lob shells into enemy trenches. It could fire 16-kilogram ammunition to an effective range of 7 kilometres.

Comparable to other Canadian batteries, the 35th fought in many famous WW1 battles such as the Battle of Ypres (1915), the Battle of the Somme at Beaumont-Hamel (1916), the Battle of Vimy Ridge (1917), the Battle of Hill 70 and Lens (1917), the Battle of Passchendaele (1917), and the Last Hundred Days (1918). During the First World War, the C.E.F. lost 60,661 soldiers, representing over 9% of the total C.E.F. Postwar, Canada disbanded the C.E.F. and reorganized to a much smaller military force. Canada did perpetuate some of the unit numbers, battle honours and histories of C.E.F. units that had fought during the war.



35th Battery, Horse Lines - Mons - Nov 1918

The Gunners of the 35th Battery enlisted for up to four years of service in France and Belgium. They went through "togetherness" in good times and bad times, firing their guns on the Western Front until the Armistice on 11 November 1918. The lucky ones returned home to start families, and in some cases, saved their wartime memories in old photo albums. We believe these photographs and the 4.5 Inch Howitzer help explain the history of the Canadian Gunner and are more than just relics of past conflicts. They take the place of Canadians that served long ago and stand as a reminder of our history and heritage.

By Andrew Oakden

Canoe River Memorial Park Monuments

The RCA Museum has many monuments around CFB Shilo, including some at the Canoe River Memorial Park. The park is situated at the center of Shilo and is open to the public all year round. In the museum archives, we have references to the base park from the 1950s.

The RCA Museum is responsible for three monuments at the park, with the artifacts on our registry. We also have signage at the park for each artifact.

The oldest are two 25 Pounder Guns - one is a non-converted 25 Pounder without the muzzle brake, and the other has the muzzle brake.

Shown above, the two 25 Pounder flank the Canoe River Memorial, presented to CFB Shilo by the School of Artillery in 1970. The plaque says, "In memory of the seventeen soldiers of Second Regiment Royal Canadian Horse Artillery who died en route from Camp Shilo Manitoba to Fort Lewis Washington in the tragic railway disaster at Canoe River British Columbia," 21 November 1950.

The second monument shown above is a German Leopard 1 Tank, produced from 1965 to 1979. From 1973 to 2000, over 140,000 German Army soldiers trained in Shilo. Most years they sent approximately 4,000 soldiers for training and the monument recognizes this partnership.



The third monument is a decked-out LAV III - A light armoured personnel vehicle used during Operations in Afghanistan from 2001 to 2014 by Canadian Forces. Base Shilo added the LAV III, with the assistance of the RCA Museum, back in 2018. It includes a plaque: "In recognition and memory of the efforts of approximately 40,000 Canadian Armed Forces personnel who served and the 162 Canadians who died in the cause of bringing peace and freedom to the people of Afghanistan 2001 - 2014."

By Andrew Oakden

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