

# Royal Westminster Regiment Association

## NW EUROPE

Paris - Arras - Ypres - Arnhem - Putten - Otterloo - Amsterdam

April 24 - May 7, 2025 (14 days)



### Highlights:

- 80th anniversary Liberation of the Netherlands Tour
- See many of the great historical locations of two world wars, and follow in the footsteps of our Canadian veterans through France, Belgium and Holland, accompanied by a Military Historian.
- Visit the war cemeteries of Essex Farm, Adanac, Tyne Cot, Pozieres, Villers Station, Holten, Givenchy Road, Groesbeek, and Nine Elms.
- Explore the beautiful cities of Arras, Ypres, Bruges, Arnhem and Amsterdam.



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## Welcome

Along with our Commanding Officer, Lieutenant - Colonel Greg Chan, The Royal Westminster Regiment, I invite you to join our tour to Northwest Europe. We are hoping to have members of our Regimental family comprising retired members and serving members of the Regiment along with some senior Cadets from our afflicted Cadet Corps as well as family members attend this tour.

During the First World War the 104th Westminster Fusiliers of Canada, New Westminster recruited numerous soldiers that served in various battalions of the Canadian Expeditionary Force. In particular, the 47th Battalion (known as the Fighting 47th) was the main battalion raised by the 104th and fought in France and Belgium.

During the Second World War, The Westminster Regiment (Motor), again raised in New Westminster fought in Italy and The Netherlands.

This Regiment has battle honours from both the First and Second World Wars. This trip will be a series of battlefield tours as well as a series of commemorations to honour our soldiers who are lying at rest in France, Belgium and The Netherlands.

This tour is also coinciding with the 80th Anniversary of the Liberation of The Netherlands and we are planning to take part in the commemorations and celebrations.

The visits to the cemeteries in France and Belgium will be to those which have members of the 47th Battalion. Unfortunately, we will not be able to visit everyone as they are 76 different cemeteries. If you have a family member that is not at one of the cemeteries that we will be visiting please let us know and we will try and arrange a separate visit for you.

Bill White

President

The Royal Westminster Regiment Association



## Military Historians

### ROBERT MITCHELL HARLEY

I was born in Vancouver B.C. on the 1st of May 1967. Growing up my Family and I lived in several places such as Vancouver Island, Squamish, Haida-Gwaii, the Lower Mainland and Edmonton, Alberta. I joined the Army Cadets (2316 Royal Westminster Regiment) when I was twelve years old. When I was seventeen, I joined the Royal Westminster Regiment. My interest in history has always been there. The Great War really took over when I received our family's Medals from my Grandmother. I then realized that I had many Great Uncle's, Great Grandfathers and Grandfathers who served and were killed in the Great War 1914-18. My main interest was what Canadians roles were in the Great War, and the many Regiments my family served with, which includes the 10th Battalion (Calgary Highlanders), 16th Bn (Cdn Scottish), 18th Battalion (Highland Fusiliers of Canada), 2nd CMR (British Columbia Dragoons), 6th Field Engineers, 47th Battalion (Westminster) 72nd Battalion (Seaforth Highlanders) and 58th Battalion (Royal Regiment of Canada). I visited my Great Uncle's Grave in 2005 where Cpl Harry Garnet Miner was awarded the Victoria Cross for his actions in France 1918. I have been back to the Battlefields many times since 2005, and have been on many tours with local guides, with Norm Christie and on my own. In 2016 and 2019 I led two tours; the one in 2019 started at the Hill 70 dedication ceremony, when the Canadian Monument was officially opened.



I was employed in many roles in the Canadian Forces, as The Regimental Quartermaster of the Loyal Edmonton Regiment and the Royal Westminster Regiment, which gave me the opportunity to work with the Museums of both Regiments. While serving as RQMS Royal Westminster Reg't I was able to write and have published A History of the Regiment, For King and Country published in 2012. I retired from the Canadian Forces in 2019 and now Visit the Battlefields when I can and work part time at Rogers Arena.

### JOHN GOHEEN

John has been introducing Canadians to sites of meaning and memory associated with Canada's rich military legacy since 1997 as the guide and historian for the Royal Canadian Legion's Pilgrimage of Remembrance. With family members who fought and died in both the Great War and Second World War, visiting sites of sacrifice are a deeply personal endeavour. An educator for almost 35 years, John offers participants "gateways" to the past that allows each individual to connect to the people and events of the past and find their own meaning. For his long and dedicated service John was awarded the Sovereign's Medal for Volunteers, the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal, the Minister of Veterans Affairs Commendation, and the Royal Canadian Legion's Meritorious Service Medal.



# The Royal Westminster Regiment - A Brief Synopsis

## 1st World War

The 104th Westminster Fusiliers of Canada was a training unit for Battalions (Bns) of the Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF). Drafts were supplied from the 104th to the 7th (150 officers and men) 9th, 13th, 29th (250 officers and men), 72nd as well as other Bns. The 47th Bn and the 131st Bn were native to New Westminster.

On 13 November 1915, the 47th Bn sailed to the United Kingdom. It arrived in Belgium with 36 Officers and 1,115 Other Ranks on 11 August 1916 and became part of the 10th Brigade of the 4th Canadian Division. They went into the line on 25 August 1916 and stayed in Belgium attached to the British 9th Corps.

The 47th Bn participated in many trench raids and minor engagements in Ypres. On 3 September 1916, the 4th Division moved to the Somme in France. The 47th experienced heavy fighting on the Somme, with Ancre Heights being their first big fight. In this battle the Bn would eventually capture "Regina Trench". In January 1917 the 4th Division was now with the rest of the Canadian Corps at Arras - Vimy Ridge. The 47th would participate in many trench raids and patrols leading up to the assault on Vimy Ridge 9-14 April 1917. The 47th was in reserve for the actual battle of Vimy Ridge, but they were needed on 12 April 1917 to help the 46th Bn capture the "Pimple" on the left flank of Hill 145 (Site of the present-day Monument).



On 18 October 1917, the Canadian Corps started the Battle of Passchendaele. The 47th fought in the first phase of the attack and captured "Abraham Heights" and "Decline Copse". By 27 October the 47th had fought its way to just below Passchendaele ridge and on 28 October 1917 the 72nd Bn relieved the 47th Bn. The 47th lost 97 killed and missing in a day and a half of fighting at Passchendaele. On 10 November the Canadian Corps finally captured Passchendaele, after losing over 4,000 Canadians killed.

The 47th was in the thick of the fighting in the last hundred days of the great war, fighting at Amiens, Scarpe, Drocourt-Queant, Hindenburg Line, Canal Du Nord, Cambrai, Valenciennes and Sambre Canal. In the last 100 days the Corps sustained 45,830 casualties, the 47th alone suffering 271 killed from 8 Aug to 11 November 1918.

With the coming of peace in 1919, the C.E.F. Bns were disbanded and the 104th Westminster Fusiliers of Canada reverted to its peacetime militia role as New Westminster's regiment.

## First World War Record

The 47th Bn had 14 Officers and 144 other ranks killed in action. 8 Officers and 144 other ranks died of wounds. 48 Officers and 1,918 other ranks were wounded. Amongst the awards conferred, on members of the Bn, were 1 Victoria Cross, 7 Distinguished Service Orders, 39 Military Crosses and 166 Military Medals.

## 2nd World War

In the Second World War the Westminster Regiment (then Machine Gun) was mobilised and became the Westminster Regiment (Motor).

## Deployment to Italy

For the purposes of this brochure, the campaign in Italy is very briefly summarised.

In November of 1943 the Regiment deployed from England to Italy via Agiers to near Naples. In January 1944 it went into the line on Bianco ridge, Salarola ridge and Chiamato ridge in the Adriatic Sector. There were periods of very active patrolling and the unit was in and out of the line three times.

On 14 March, the Regiment was moved for the upcoming push up the Liri Valley. On 18 May, the unit was moved forward and again on 19 May, at 0130 hrs (along Club route) crossing "Swindon Bridge" (Bailey bridge) over the Gari (Rapido) river, to a harbour area to the west.

On the 24th May, during Operation Chesterfield, (the attack on the Hitler Line), the Regiment, as part of Griffin Force moved forward to the Melfa River. By 1615 hrs, the coy was across and the bridgehead was established. The Germans counter attacked with tanks. At 1800 hrs, B Coy and C Coy were ordered to cross. C Coy was unable to advance but B Coy to the east reached their objective across the river. However, due to a garbled message B Coy pulled back across the river. A Coy and the LdSH held onto the bridgehead overnight despite German coun-

terattacks. On the 25th May, the bridgehead was reinforced with attacks at 1130 hrs from B and C Coy on the right and the Irish Regiment on the left. The unit was then involved in fighting to capture Pofi on 29 May.

Later in September the Bn was involved in attacks on the Gothic Line (Operation Olive). This involved the Battle of Misano ridge. Then there was the advance to Rimini with the battles of Coriano Ridge and Casale.

For most of November 1944 the Bn was part of Porter Force with active patrolling and fire fights up to the Montone River. This was followed in December by the Battle of the Lamone Crossing (as part of Operation Chuckle), then a push onto the Senio with Battles of Naviglio Canal, attacks across the Fosso Munio.

#### **Move to France**

The move to France was called Exercise Goldflake. On 22 February the unit moved via Florence to a staging area near Leghorn and Pisa. The carriers were loaded on Liberty ships on 25 February. On 26 February the troops loaded onto two Landing Ships Tank. On 27 February, the convoy of 5 ships sailed at 0715 hrs for Marseilles, France, arriving at 1100 hrs on 28 February 1945.

#### **The Westminster Regiment (Motor) - Northwest Europe 1945**

On 01 March 1945 the Bn left Marseilles and moved to Meulebeke, Belgium. On 18 and 19 March the Bn was moved to Vught, Holland. Sten Machine Guns were issued on 20 March as the replacement for the Thompson Machine Guns which had been turned in when leaving Italy. On 21 March, the Bn came u/c of the British 49th (West Riding) Infantry Division and took over positions along the river Waal.

#### **Operation "Destroyer" and the "Island"**

On 04 April, the Bn came under command of 11 CIB, 5 CAD and was moved on 05 April, to Elden within the "island" an area surrounded by the rivers Neder Rijn (Nederrijn) and the Waal. Clearing of the SE sector of the "island" was the first phase of the Operation "Destroyer".

Then the Bn was issued of 6 Wasp flame throwers, 28 used half-track vehicles replacing the White Scout cars and 13 "Honey" Stuart tanks to replace the anti-tank gun towers of Sp Coy.

#### **Operation "Cleanser"**

Operation "Cleanser" was the plan to clear out of the enemy from western Holland. The Operation was launched on 15 April and 5 CAD was to capture high ground north of Arnhem, Otterloo and high ground to the west, Barneveld and cut the Apeldoorn – Amersfoort road and capture Nijkerk and exploit to the Zuider Zee (Ijsselmeer).

On the first day A Coy cleared the woods north of Arnhem. B Coy u/c 8 Princess Louise's (New Brunswick) Hussars (8NBH) (left) cleared the Deelen Airport while C Coy u/c BCDs (right) captured Terlet. On the second day A Coy cleared the area west of Otterloo while C Coy now u/c the LdSH reached and bypassed Barneveld. On the third day, C Coy with the LdSH went on to Nijkerk. Later B Coy and A Coy joined up with 8NBH for the push toward Putten. On the fourth day C Coy cut off the road to the west of Putten sealing off the town from the west and north-west. B Coy and a squadron of tanks, 8 NBH moved into Putten and captured numerous prisoners including Russian POWs.

When the operation ended on 18 April 1945, the unit had covered 33 miles (53 km) and participated in cutting off thousands of German troops in the Amsterdam area.

Following a move on 21 April to Tolbert, (west of Groningen), the Bn was given a sector approximately 35 miles by 15 miles to include the defence of Groningen. The main task was to patrol the area and prevent any attempt by the enemy to land troops from the Friesian Islands.

#### **Delfzijl Pocket and Operation "Canada"**

Operation "Canada" was the attack on the "Delfzijl Pocket". The unit received orders on 23 April to take over from the Royal Winnipeg Rifles in Oostwold and the Irish Regiment of Canada at Nieuwolda.

Once in place the Bn was ordered to get north of Woldendorp. This led to an attack on the town in the early hours of 27 April. The town was captured and secured by 28 April. The Bn was then ordered to press towards the sea. On 29 April B Coy pushed through to Termunterzijl, with A Coy moving up on the right to Termunten to capture the gun battery. C Coy remained in Woldendorp. Relentless pressure from the Westminsters forced the abandonment of the gun battery(s) and the withdrawal of the remaining German forces.

#### **World War II record**

During the Second World War 4,236 men passed through The Westminster Regiment (Motor). Of these 134 were killed in action. Amongst the awards conferred on members of the Regiment were, 1 Victoria Cross, 3 Distinguished Service Orders, 6 Military Crosses and 18 Military Medals.

The unit was noted for never having failed to make an objective assigned. The Commander of the 5th CAD, Major General BM Hoffmeister, said that "the Westies had earned for themselves a most enviable reputation as a highly efficient fighting organization." He also said that the unit had spent more time in action than any other in the Division, being at one time in continuous contact with the enemy for 43 days. He commended "the record of particularly outstanding accomplishment." Throughout the campaign in Italy and later on in North-West Europe, The Regiment never failed to take an objective and never yielded a position to the enemy. Throughout the war, only three Westies were taken prisoner.

# ITINERARY

## Day 1 / Thu, Apr 24: DEPART CANADA

Departure from Canada for France

## Day 2 / Fri, Apr 25: ARRIVE PARIS - ARRAS

Morning arrival Paris, then transfer to Arras where we check in to our hotel, enjoy dinner and a free evening (D)

## Day 3 / Sat, Apr 26: ARRAS

This morning, we visit the Pozieres British Cemetery, then the Courcelette Canadian Memorial at the Somme. Then after lunch will visit the Lochnagar crater and the Albert Museum (Somme). Return to the hotel for dinner and free time. (B,D)



## Day 4 / Sun, Apr 27: ARRAS

Today we travel to Notre Dame de Lorette Cemetery, the Ring of Honour, Cabaret Rouge and Givenchy Road Cemeteries. In the afternoon we will visit the Vimy Memorial and tour the Grange Tunnel. (B,D)

## Day 5 / Mon, Apr 28: ARRAS- YPRES

In the morning we visit Villers Station Cemetery and Hill 70 Memorial before journeying on to Ypres. Enjoy an afternoon of free time or opt in for a city tour. After an early dinner, we will be participating in the Last Post Ceremony at the Menin Gate which starts at 1900 hrs. (B,D)

## Day 6 / Tue, Apr 29: YPRES

In the morning, we will visit the Tyne Cot Cemetery and Crest Farm. In the afternoon there will be a visit to the Zonnebeke Passchendaele Museum. After dinner, enjoy free time this evening (B,D)

## Day 7 / Wed, Apr 30: YPRES

We begin our day at Essex Farm where John McCrae was inspired to write "Flander's Fields" while stationed there. Next, we visit Vancouver Corner before we tour the Hooge Crater Museum. This afternoon we visit Hill 62 (Mount Sorrel) and Nine Elms Cemetery. (B,D)

# ITINERARY

## Day 8 / Thu, May 1: YPRES - BRUGES - ARNHEM

Today, we travel to Bruges, and then onwards to Arnhem following the route taken by Westminster Regiment. Arriving in Arnhem, we will check into our hotel, have dinner and then time to explore or relax (B,D)

## Day 9 / Fri, May 2: ARNHEM

Visit to the Airborne Museum in Oosterbeek and then visits to sites on the first day of Operation Cleanser including the memorial at Otterloo (B,D)

## Day 10 / Sat, May 3: ARNHEM

We will travel to locations captured during the second and third days of Operation Cleanser. This will include visits to Barneveld and Voorthizen in the morning and Putten in the afternoon. At Putten we will visit the memorial 4 soldiers (3 being Westminsters). (B,D)

## Day 11/ Sun, May 4: ARNHEM

This is Remembrance Day in The Netherlands. We will be attending the ceremonies that day at Holten Canadian War Cemetery in the morning and at the Groesbeek Canadian War Cemetery in the evening.(B,D)

## Day 12 / Mon, May 5: ARNHEM

Liberation Day in The Netherlands. We will visit locations of the fighting during Operation Canada (Delfzijl Pocket) and the advance of the Westminsters to capture the guns at Termunterzijl. In the afternoon we will participate in celebrations in the area. (B,D)



## Day 13 / Tue, May 6: ARNHEM - AMSTERDAM

Travel to Amsterdam for some sightseeing and time for a walk down the Damrak before checking into our hotel and farewell dinner (B,D)

## Day 14 / Wed, May 7: AMSTERDAM- CANADA

This morning we travel to the airport for our flight home (B)

**Minor adjustments may need to be made to our programme due to the scheduling of local events and security arrangements for ceremonies.**

# REGISTER TODAY

## 2 Ways to Register

### 1. Scan the QR Code

OR

### 2. Visit our website [sticanada.com/rwr25](http://sticanada.com/rwr25)



## GROUP FLIGHT OPTION

We will offer a group flight option based on the tour dates from Vancouver - Paris and Amsterdam - Vancouver.

You may also purchase your own flights (book with points etc) and meet us at the hotel.

Should you wish to make your own flight arrangements, extend etc., availability and costs change continuously. If you wish to secure specific flights at a certain cost, you will have to book/pay for your flights at the same time.

## TOUR COSTS in CAD\*

\*based on a group size of 32-40 travellers and currency exchange rate applicable at the time of printing (March 2024)

Per person, twin-share	\$4,990
Single supplement	\$1,290

## INCLUDED

- Accommodation in superior tourist class hotels
- Meals as per itinerary (B=Breakfast, L=Lunch, D=Dinner)
- Private air-conditioned coach transportation
- Comprehensive sightseeing incl. Military Historian, local guides and admission fees as per itinerary
- Special visits
- Gratuities for drivers and guides
- Local taxes and service charges

## NOT INCLUDED

- International airfare Canada – Paris; Amsterdam – Canada
- Travel insurance (please contact our office for a quote)
- Drinks with meals
- Hotel porterage
- Items of a personal nature



Library and Archives Canada Photo, MIKAN No. 3203475

The Westminster Regiment passes the saluting base during Gen. H.D.G. Crerar's review at Eelde airport, 23 May 1945

# FACTS YOU SHOULD KNOW

## RESERVATIONS AND PAYMENT:

\$800 per person deposit due at time of booking  
2nd installment of \$1200 per person due by July 31, 2024  
Balance due by February 21, 2025  
Tour documents will be sent to you approximately 14 days prior to your trip departure, provided full payment has been received.

## TOUR PRICES:

All tour prices for land arrangements are based on rates effective at the time of printing and are expected to be in effect at the time of departure. Should these rates change, it may be necessary to surcharge the price of your vacation. Should the tour price increase by more than 10%, the passenger shall have the right to cancel within seven days of notification without penalty.

## CANCELLATION AND REFUNDS:

Notice of cancellation must be made in writing. The effective cancellation date is the date when written notification is received by Special Travel International (hereafter called STI). The following amounts are nonrefundable when cancellation is received prior to departure:

Until Jul 31, 2024	\$800 per person
Aug 1, 2024 – Feb 20, 2025	\$2000 per person
From Feb 21, 2025	100% nonrefundable

*NB: different payment/cancellation policies apply to airline tickets; you will be advised at time of booking.*

## TRAVEL INSURANCE:

STI strongly recommends that each tour participant has health, cancellation, interruption, accident and baggage insurance for the duration of his/her travels.



Photo by Capt J.H. Smith DND photo #48282.  
Acquisition 87014 RWR 53-11-341

Three Westminsters push anti-tank gun into a Dutch garden Dreumel, Netherlands, 21 March 1945  
L to R . Pte G. Moore, Williams Lake BC; Pte M. Paquin, Drummondville, QC; Pte A Stewart, Toronto ON

## RESPONSIBILITY AND LIABILITY:

STI acts only as an agent in securing all services related to the tours described in this brochure, including transportation, sightseeing and accommodation. STI shall not be responsible or liable for any loss, cost, damage, injury, delay or expense arising from the use of any conveyance, accommodation or service or from acts of God, strikes, weather, quarantine, accidents, sickness, government regulations, insufficient documents and any loss expense resulting from the above contingencies shall be borne by the tour member. In the event it becomes necessary or advisable for the comfort of the passenger, or for any reason whatsoever, to alter the itinerary or arrangements, such alterations may be made without penalty to the operators. Additional expense, if any, shall be borne by the passenger. The right is reserved to withdraw any or all tours should conditions warrant, and also to decline to accept or retain any passenger as a member of the tour. In such instances, full or equitable amounts will be refunded.

## TRAVEL DOCUMENTS, VISAS AND VACCINES:

It is entirely the passenger's responsibility to possess whatever documents, visas and vaccines are required by the law of the countries visited on the tour.

## AIRLINE RESPONSIBILITY:

Any air carrier providing transportation in connection with these tours is not to be held responsible for any act, omission or event during the time the passenger is not on board its planes. The passenger contract in use by the airlines concerned, when issued, shall constitute the sole contract between the airline and the purchase of these tours and/or passenger. Similar responsibility as noted applies to all types of carriers, including car rental companies.