



GLEN LESLIE CHURCH & CEMETERY REMEMBRANCE TOUR

September 29, 2018

By Wanda Zenner



September 29, 2018 brought to a close the summer-season that the Glen Leslie Church would be open to the public. As such, it was decided that an event should be planned for the last day and what would be more fitting than a "Remembrance Tour" of the Cemetery. In preparation for the tour, the Cemetery grounds had been manicured to perfection and the Church had been cleaned and decorated.

As it would not be possible to include all of the veterans' graves in one tour, a poppy was placed on each headstone in an effort to honour all of them. A list was taken from the Smoky to Grande Prairie History Book and cross referenced to the burials in the Cemetery to come up with 40 veteran names.



As there were originally five school districts in the area, it was decided to pick one veteran from each school district to research and present on. As well, it only seemed fitting that the tour would start with a member of the Leslie family. It was very interesting to trace the history of the veterans chosen – although each had a specific story to tell, there was a common thread amongst all of them – to answer the call of duty to Country to uphold freedom.

Corporal Norman Leslie (1888-1972) – Regimental # 101212, 66th Battalion/4th C.M.G.Coy, enlisted in September 1915, served in France. He received the British War Medal & the Victory Medal. Norman was discharged on demobilization on April 5, 1919. During WWII, Norman became a member of the Veterans Guard of Canada.

Bezanson

Private/Lance Corporal Vernon (Bud) Patterson (1917-1958) – Regimental # M/56286, enlisted in the army in February 1942 and served his country in Sicily, Italy, France, Holland and Germany. Bud was



discharged on demobilization in January 1946. Bud received the 1939/45 Star, Italy Star, France/Germany Star, the Defense Medal, Canadian Volunteer Service Medal & Clasp. Bud passed away in a farm accident in 1958.

Somme

Sapper John (Jack) Wales (1916-1985) – Regimental # M/67154, enlisted in January 1942 and trained as an engineer. Jack served in the United Kingdom and Continental Europe. He was sent to France with the invasion of Normandy in June 1944. Jack was discharged on demobilization in November 1945. He received the Volunteer Service Medal and Clasp.

Lindsay

Private Roy Robideau (1889-1984) – Regimental # 3207274, enlisted in June 1918. He served in England with the Canadian Army Medical Corps. Roy was discharged on demobilization on October 24, 1919. Roy received the British War Medal. During WWII, Roy was an orderly for 1 ½ years in the hospital of the Royal Canadian Army Medical Corps at the Barracks in Grande Prairie following which he became a Veteran Guard.

East Kleskun

Private Ray Boyer (1924-2012) - Regimental # K737, enlisted in November 1943 with the Seaforth Highlanders. He served in the United Kingdom, Italy, Netherlands and Germany. Ray was discharged on demobilization in May 1946. Ray received the 1939-45 Star, Italy Star, France & Germany Star, Canadian Volunteer Service Medal & Clasp.

Fitzsimmons

CWAC Bertha Dillabough (1919-1986) – Bertha enlisted with the Canadian Women's Army Corps. She received her training in Kitchener, Ontario where she met and married Jeff Dillabough. Upon demobilization, they returned to the Fitzsimmons area in 1946.



Following the walking portion of the Remembrance Tour, everyone congregated in the Church where information was presented on the six men who never made it home. Framed certificates that are available from the Commonwealth War Graves Commission were displayed. The certificates included pictures of the exceptionally well-maintained cemeteries that they are buried in. It was a very poignant display as you realized the magnitude of the ultimate sacrifice these young men had made.



During WWI, 620,000 Canadians enlisted in the Canadian Expeditionary Force with 420,000 serving overseas and 200,000 in Canada. 60,000 lives were lost with 172,000 being wounded. Many more returned home broken in mind and body. During WWII, 1.16 million enlisted with 42,000 casualties and 60,000 wounded. It is interesting to note that during WWII more men enlisted per capita from the Peace Country in Northern Alberta than anywhere else in the Dominion.

Lindsay

Private Donald Rooney – Regimental # M/105982, served with the Royal Hamilton Light Infantry Division, R.C.I.C. Killed in action in France on August 12, 1944 – three weeks after his 21st birthday. Buried in the Bretteville-Sur-Laize Canadian War Cemetery, France.

Sergeant Paul Smashnuk – Regimental # M/4075, served with the Royal Canadian Artillery Unit. Killed in action on November 24, 1943 and buried in the Moro River Canadian War Cemetery, Italy.

Fitzsimmons

Cook George Fish – Regimental # V/49455, enlisted with the Navy and served on the H.M.C.S. Cheogue that was torpedoed by a German U-1227 submarine on October 5, 1944. George was one of the seven casualties. George is commemorated at the Halifax Memorial, Nova Scotia.

East Kleskun

Lance Corporal John Purves – Regimental # M/17199, enlisted with the Loyal Edmonton Regiment, Royal Canadian Infantry Corps. He was killed in action on December 16, 1943 during the Ortona Battle. He was only 22. He is buried in the Moro River Canadian War Cemetery, Italy and left behind a wife and young son.

Somme

Sergeant Charles Dorscheid – Regimental # M/45559, enlisted with the 2nd Armoured Brigade Head Quarters Squadron, 7th/11th Hussars R.C.A.C. Was killed in action on August 19, 1944 and buried in the Bretteville-Sur-Laize Canadian War Cemetery, France.

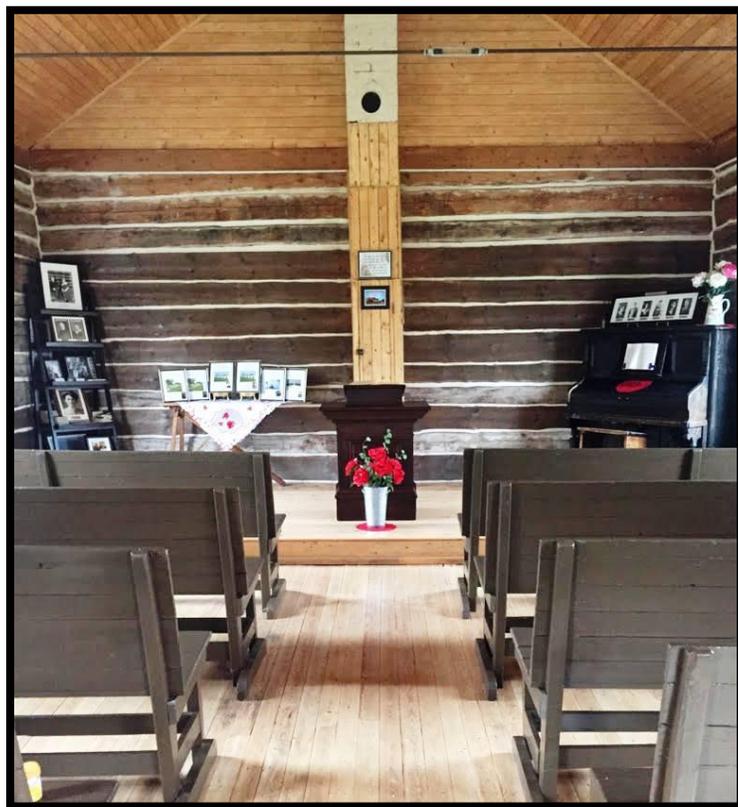
Bezanson

Corporal Willis Johnston – Regimental # 18208, enlisted in August 1914 with the 101st Edmonton Fusiliers. Transferred to 9th Battalion then to the Canadian Army Service Corps. Died from the Spanish Flu on January 3, 1919 and is buried in the Kortrijk Communal Cemetery in Belgium.

Following the presentation, 10-year-old Nelson Zenner who is the grand, grand, grand-nephew of Corporal Willis Johnston read “In Flanders Fields” that was written by Lieutenant Colonel John McCrae of the Canadian Army Medical Corps.



The afternoon continued with Anna Ladwig and another member of the "Christensen and Friends" group singing several old-time songs. All those present joined in.



The door prize of a basket filled with home-made jams and pickles was won by Anna Ladwig.

The afternoon concluded with coffee and a large selection of desserts that were enjoyed by all.

