



*The Three Rivers Veteran's Association
12th Canadian Armoured Regiment
Perpetuated by*



12e Régiment blindé du Canada

NEWSLETTER

May 1st, 2009

Dear 12th CAR Veterans, Families and Friends,

I begin this *NEWSLETTER* on a very sad note:

On April 13th 2009 our Regiment grieved as Trooper Karine Blais, 21, became de second female soldier to die in combat in Afghanistan, and the first in our Regimental history. She lost her life in the mountainous district of Shah Wali Kowt, north of Kandahar city, when the COYOTE she was driving struck a deadly improvised explosive device (IED). She had only been in Kandahar for two weeks. Three of Trooper Blais' comrades were also injured in the blast, two are still in hospital.

Words written by Major Jean-François Cauden – Officer Commanding B Squadron FO 1-09:

“It is with great difficulty that I am writing this note in your memory, as it was difficult to write a simple letter to your mother and spouse. This tragic event has hit hard all the members of the squadron. Throughout our preparation for Afghanistan, you supported so wonderfully your co-sisters and comrades of the squadron. With your sense of humour, that was so characteristic and that stood out by its veracity, you always had the people that surrounded you laugh, even in the most difficult times. On your behalf, you can be sure that we will take care of the other members of your crew that were seriously injured at the same time.

You were frank, direct, and demonstrated leadership qualities, and never hesitated to undertake new challenges that pushed you to develop your professionalism. You were respected and loved by all members of the squadron; we will miss you terribly. I will always remember your contagious smile!

The squadron will continue its mission and fight valiantly in your honour. You will not be forgotten.”

She is the second member of the 12e RBC to be killed in action in Afghanistan – Corporal Richard Renaud died on January 15th 2008. The days and months ahead will be difficult for our *BROTHERS IN ARMS*, and all of us must stand together to support our Troops and Regiment.



Trooper Karine Blais was posthumously promoted to the rank of Corporal

NEWS

Thank you to all of you who have sent me letters of appreciation and suggestions, as well as your telephone calls, which came from coast to coast and the US – it is always a pleasure to chat with you and give you information about your *Band of Brothers* as well as updates of our Regiments in Valcartier and Trois-Rivières. Please continue to write (my mailing and Email address, as well as my telephone number, is at the bottom of this letter), I will continue and make it a duty to reply.

Your suggestions have been heard! Please find enclosed a nominal list of all 12th CAR Vets that we are still in contact with – some are missing and we have lost trails of others – could you please verify this list and advise me of corrections to be made – additions and ways to improve it. Please advise us if you ever change address.

The other good news is that the Regiment in Trois-Rivières will host the 12th CAR Vets REUNION ON OCTOBER 9 – 10 (THANKSGIVING WEEKEND) – Vern Dowie and Tojo Griffiths, on your behalf, will be sending out an invitation to Captain Pascal Croteau and the former members of Troop 32, who are the new generation of Veterans that saw action in Afghanistan. With their participation to this reunion there surely will be some discussions about tactics and yesteryears performance of the SHERMAN TANK versus the use of the new LEOPARD! This new generation of *Band of Brothers* is writing another chapter to the already glorious history of the 12th CAR as they rekindled the passion for tanks with pride as well as the wearing of the black beret.

Formal invitation as well as the detail programme of the activities will be sent to you in time for you to plan your trip. It will include a general meeting – commemoration ceremonies at the Regimental (inside the Armoury) and 12th CAR (Cathy) Memorials – informal dinner (few speeches) and time to exchange between yourselves and the new generation of Veterans. We hope that many of you will attend. The *Mother House* has been revamped. It is now easier, for

those who's mobility is restraint, to enter the building – an elevator has been installed to have access to the second floor. More information will follow.

I wish to thank all of you Vets that generously donated to make the project of the stained-glass windows above the Memorial “LE 12e SE SOUVIENT” a reality - enclose you will find a picture of the mosaic (2 feet x 4 feet) which acknowledges the contribution of each individual and identifies the window for which they have contributed. The 15 windows can be seen on looking up upon your entrance in the building – a work of art by the local renowned artist Jean Beaulieu – the same one that made the stained-glass windows in the Amiens Salon.

Again this year your Museum will be open for its summer exhibition (see below for more news) from June 11th to August 23rd – this year theme is “The Canadian Militia and Trois-Rivières Military History” – it will coincide with the 375th Anniversary of the City.

Sherman “Cathy” and the LYNX Light Armoured Reconnaissance Vehicle, will soon have company on the front lawn of the *Mother House*! A refurbished COUGAR tank with its 76mm master weapon will be shown on a permanent basis, between the two others – its is ready for display and is in storage in Shawinigan Armouries, however as the flags poles have to be relocated and a cement base built, at the expense of the Department of National Defence – no funds has yet been found by DND to cover the cost.

THE LAST TRUMPET CALL

Conrad Horace Beach - October 02nd 2008

William “Bill” Steward – December 05th 2008

Ian MacDonald Grant – March 17th 2009

(He was Frank W. Johnson 2 i/c in “C” Squadron)

AFGHANISTAN

Corporal Richard Renaud – January 15th 2008

Corporal Karine Blais – April 13th 2009

MAY THEY REST IN PEACE

WORD FROM YOUR PRESIDENT – VERNON DOWIE

Dear Friends, Comrades,

It is always a pleasure to take this opportunity to write a few words to my comrades of the 12th CAR Veterans Association.

As much as I can, I attend, along with our companions living in the Montreal area, and represent you to most of the 12e RBC ceremonies either in Valcartier or Trois-Rivières. Graciously the Regiments ferry us to assist, for which I give them my sincere thanks! We are well remembered and our history is in good hands, as they continue in writing new chapters to it. The 12e RBC is still being deployed and is suffering casualties. In your name I salute their courage and may they all rest assured that the 12 CAR Vets are very proud of them!

The “*LAST TRUMPET CALL*” list more names of the *BAND OF BROTHERS*, plus those *KIA* in Afghanistan – we all grieve their departures and I offer, in your name, our condolences to the families.

I am presently in the stage of packing boxes and getting ready to move – effective June 4th 2009 - here is my new address:

185, Thornhill Street, Appt. 317,
Dollard-des-Ormeaux, Qc H9B 3M7

Again this year the Regiment in Trois-Rivières are hosting our REUNION and taking care of all the logistic and administrative work. Much preparation is involve - I incite ALL 12 CAR VETS to make an effort on OCTOBER 9th and 10th to attend.

MAY AS MANY VETERANS CHANGE THE WORD *ABSENT* TO

ADSUM!

Your President Vernon Dowie

WORD FROM EDMUND “TOJO” GRIFFITHS

Here is the latest about our Memorial in Ortona – It is hoped that final construction of a permanent base for the 12 CAR tank ‘Athena’ will be completed by 1 June 2009. A long rainy spell last fall made the ground too soft for construction to begin. Then recently the ground dried out. And work was to start when the earthquake destroyed L’Aquila, just northwest of Ortona. Ortona itself was shaken but no damage occurred. Most persons in the construction business at Ortona moved to L’Aquila to help in restoration. The latest report from 12 CAR agent at Ortona says that workers are moving back and work on the base will start soon. The Dillon family of London, Ontario donated \$24,000 to pay for the permanent base. This is in memory of then Captain “Dick” Dillon, RCR, who was wounded at “Dundee” crossroads outside Ortona. He later became Honorary Colonel of the RCR and died last year. A plaque acknowledging the donation will be affixed to the tank when the base is built.



12 CAR lost one of its most faithful supporters recently when Maria LaSordia died. For those who have forgotten who she was, let me remind you of the

immediate aftermath of the Ortona battle. Maria and her sister Franscesca, as teenagers, did the laundry of our members, and those of the Seaforth's too. In exchange we gave them food from the ration packs. The two sisters faithfully placed fresh flowers on our "Price of Peace" monument from the day it was unveiled and their dedication to the memory of Canadian troops so influenced the then Canadian Ambassador, Bob Fowler, (who has now been liberated, being a prisoner of a rebel group in Africa) that he had a silver tray engraved for the LaSorda sisters. The tray was presented to them by then Governor General Adrienne Clarkson in 2004. Francesca, now alone, continues to place flowers on our monument. Frankly, I don't know how they managed to get the flowers as they are as poor as church mice. In spite of their poverty, they have remained dedicated to the memory around **CANADIAN "BOYS"**.

REGIMENTAL SITREPS - JAN - MAY - 09

Valcartier

Commanding Officer- Lieutenant Colonel Stephen Tremblay, CD

Regimental Sergeant Major – Chief Warrant Officer Philippe Trurbide. CD

Abroad or at home, members of the unit have been busy on mission, exercises and Regimental duties. From Afghanistan to Wainwright, the colors of the 12e RBC have flown high and proud to honor the hard work and dedication of our members. Sadly, this commitment has been dearly paid, as often before, with losses throughout our history; more recently with Cpl Karine Blais on the 13th April 2009. Despite all hardships, accidents, and tragedy, members of the 12e RBC continue to work toward the mission achievement with the same level of professionalism.



Cpl Blais

OPERATIONAL DEPLOYMENT

Beginning of 2009 saw B Squadron moving toward its operational readiness status for TF 1-09. They have participated in their final continuous training with Ex. RÉFLEXE AGUERRI at Fort Bliss (Texas). The goal of this training activity was to maintain their collective skills. Then, in accordance with the deployment table, B Sqn and their reinforcements have recently completed their deployment to the Theatre of Operations in Afghanistan. They have started to operate in their assigned area of responsibility.

GARRISON EVENTS

From 2008 to present, the Regiment took an important part in the planning and support from troop to combat team level exercises to forge

cohesion of TF 1-09. It offered the opportunity to practice all the TTPs and the essential combined arms tactics needed for their deployment to Afghanistan.

On December 5th 2008, the 5th CMBG organized an obstacle competition (Commandant's challenge) where all of the major units of the brigade had to provide teams for the exercise. Headed by the 5th RALC, competition consisted of an orientation exercise at the section level, a combat shooting course, first aid, and endurance.

Socially, a passionate group of soldiers of all trades and units participated in the Brigade Winter Games, which took place the 19th of February. The Winter Games were immediately followed by a Bde Officer Mess dinner, offering an opportunity for all to bid one last farewell and good luck to fellow comrades departing shortly. An inter-mess took place the 26th of February at the Officers Mess, with the intent of reaffirming the bond between Officers and NCO's.

Finally, an OPREADY parade was held the 27th of February to officially highlight the departure of TF 1-09. Many dignitaries marked the day's events, such as Minister Verner, the Mayor of Quebec City, and the parade's reviewing officer was BGen Laroche.

As well, the individual and collective instruction, and training for Task Force 6-09 is underway. Ex MAPLE GAURDIAN 0901, May-June 2009, will be the culmination point of this training.

12^e RBC EVENTS

Even with a taxing scheduling in 2008, multiple courses were run within unit: four driver courses, two turret operator (25mm) courses and one serial 105mm gunner's course. The Regiment was also responsible to conduct four Tactical Combat Casualty Care courses (TCCC) throughout the summer and fall as part of the Bde School.

The period before the holidays saw a large number of social activities. The Regimental Ball proved to be a great success and saw more than 700 guests attending to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the 12e RBC being in the Regular forces.

The Regiment will continue to prepare and teach courses on individual training, such as Turret Operator and Surveillance Operator in order to reinforce our Ops reserve, and start the preparations for the A Sqn deployment as part of TF 3-10. As well, the Regiment is preparing to assume control of Domestic Task Force (DTF) starting 01 May 2009. Recently, another TCCC was initiated by the Bde, with the 12e RBC spearheading both the support and tactical aspects. The Regiment has now continuously fronted this task since its inauguration and is now considered the "Subject Matter Experts" within the brigade.

A Mess Dinner for retirements took place on March 21st 2009, marking an occasion to allow the Regimental officers to celebrate the departure of the following comrades: LCol André Drouin, Maj Karl Leclerc, Maj George Vanasse, Maj Gerry Gaudreau, Maj Don Macneil, Maj Marcel Duguay, and Maj Louis-Bernard Dutil.

Finally, the change of command between LCol Stephen Tremblay and the LCol Steve Lacroix will take place on 19th June 2009, as well as the changeover

of RSM between CWO Philippe Turbide and CWO David Tofts - with invitations to follow.

FAMILY LIFE

The Salon Ortona also organized a brunch for the Regimental officers on the 22nd of February. The event was meant to replace the mixed dinner usually held in December.

SPORTS

Physical condition is a premium within the Regt and as such, the traditional regimental hockey game between the officer's and NCO's took place on the 12th of December, 2008. The NCO's took their revenge for last year defeat and gave the young officers a good lesson in playing hockey, with a final score of 5-2 in favor of "Club 86."

During the weekend of the 7th to 9th of February, the Regiment held its annual Ex PLEIN CONTACT. A total of 15 teams were present for the 3 various sporting events. The ice hockey event was won by the 12e RBC from Trois-Rivieres, and both floor hockey and volleyball was won by the 12e RBC Valcartier. The day ended with a 'smoker' in the building Major-Francois-Xavier-Lambert. The next activity of interest will be the Regimental Duathlon on 5th of June 09.

NOMINATIONS/HONNOR&AWARDS/PROMOTIONS

A member of the 12e RBC family will occupy the position of CCmdt of the 5 CMBG, Col Jean-Marc Lanthier, and effective 03 July 2009. The current Cmdt, LCol Tremblay, will be taking the position of Vice Chief of Staff Ops for Ops CROCODILE. Also this summer, our RSM will be occupying the position of Chief Warrant of the Canadian Forces Leadership and Recruit School in Saint-Jean, while Chief Warrant Belcourt will become the new Chief Warrant of the Support Unit of the CF (over-seas) in Ottawa.

As for Honor & Awards, many members have received honors last February. Maj Stéphane Boivin received an honorable mention from CANCOM for his work at LFQA. Capt François Perreault, Master Warrant Dave Tofts, WO Stéphane Daigle, WO Dave Malenfant, MCpl Martin Bédard, and Cpl Hébert also received honorable mentions from CEFOM. Not only this, but Warrant Officer Mario Doiron received an honorable mention from the Cmdt of TF Afghanistan ROTO 5. Congratulations to all!

ADSUM !

Captain Steve Lessard – Captain/Adjutant – 12^e RBC – Valcartier

Trois-Rivières

Commanding Officer – Lieutenant Colonel François Chevrette, CD

Regimental Sergeant Major – Chief Warrant Officer Richard Boisclair, MMM, CD

On December 6th was held the Christmas Troop dinner. As per tradition, it gathered non-commission members, NCOs, officers, retired commandants, RSMs and Friends of the Regiment. It was an occasion to strengthen unit cohesion while following the Regiment's history and customs of the traditional Christmas dinners held during War operations. Earlier was held a Regimental parade, at which time promotions and awards were distributed. One of these awards was the "Lieutenant-colonel Frank W. Johnson, DSO, ED, CD Trophy". This shield is mounted with LCol Johnson cap badge and collar insignias that he wore while on active service during the last war. This trophy is presented yearly to a member of the Regiment which distinguished himself, by his involvement, availability, professionalism and leadership. This year recipient is *Master Corporal Martin Robert* and is accompanied by a cash prize of 100\$, donated by your 12 CAR Veterans Association.



The Lcol FW Johnson Trophy is presented to Master Corporal Martin Robert, by LCOL François Chevrette accompanied by CWO Richard Boisclair. A 34th shield has now been added to it.

On February 7th, the Regiment participated in Ex Plein Contact. This activity is a friendly sports competition amongst units from the Armoured Corps. The 12e RBC – Trois-Rivières won first place in ice hockey, and participated in volleyball and floor hockey. This year, the units present at the competition were: the Royal Canadian Dragoons, 12e RBC - Valcartier, the Sherbrooke Hussars, 12e RBC - Trois-Rivières and the Armour School.



The 12e RBC – Trois-Rivières hockey team – winners of this year's competition

During the January to March period, two individual training courses were led by the Regiment. First, roughly 40 soldiers were trained in basic winter warfare. The purpose of the course is to produce a soldier, with the skills and knowledge that will enable them to conduct basic winter warfare operations in a contemporary operating environment. Second, the first 2 modules of the Crew Commander course was given, which trained crew members to be able to operate as crew commanders within an armoured reconnaissance squadron.

On March 21st, the 138th anniversary of the Regiment was celebrated - a sport event was organized in the afternoon, followed by a dinner which was well attended by all of the Regimental Family.

BRIGADE AND REGIMENTAL EXERCICES

During the first week of January, the Regiment deployed in Mississippi to train reconnaissance operations in Exercise Noble Guerrier 09. During this week-long exercise, the personnel performed a variety of tasks, from traditional route, area, point and zone reconnaissance to tactical security tasks such as convoy escorts within a battle group reconnaissance squadron context. In the first week of March, the regiment deployed a section in Kuujuak as part of Exercise Guerrier Nordique 09. This brigade level sovereignty exercise is to both insure a presence in the Great North and also increase the experience of our soldiers in extreme cold weather conditions.

UPCOMING EVENTS

The change of command between Lcol François Chevrette and Lcol Steve Young will take place on May 9th, as well as of the changeover of RSM between CWO Richard Boisclair and CWO Paul Léger-Frechette.

Captain Noah L. Calkin – Operation Officer – 12e RBC – Trois-Rivières

SITREP FROM THE “OLD” TANK TROOP LEADER 32

Good day to all 12 CAR vets, it has been a year since 32 troop is back from Afghanistan and life goes one amongst the boys. The good thing is that almost everybody stayed together in C sqn 12e RBC and they work hard to reestablish the tanks at the Regiment. For now, Warrant Yves Curadeau, Cpl Laurent Proulx (driver of Cyclop 32A) and cpl Étienne Turcotte (loader of Cobalt 32B) and myself were posted out of the unit to be employed at the Armour school in Gagetown. We mostly teach or support any courses that are given at the school (tank and recce). Our experience is well received at the school so we are employed a lot. We currently have 8 tanks at the school and 5 at the Regiment. All other tanks are kept out West with the LdSH (RC). We are anxious to receive the new Leopard 2 and still waiting for the decision from the government.

At the Regiment, guys are working hard to rebuild the tank capacity of the Regiment and start to get ready for an other mission in Afghanistan on tanks. Most of the 32 guys will return but in different roles. Most of the loader are already Master corporals and some of them will be Crew Commander Charlie tanks for the next mission. All drivers should be used as loader for senior tanks or at the squadron HQ. The young vets of 32 are in demand and everybody is relied on them and there experience to make do. So we have now Master corporals Marc Murphy (gunner of Commander 32), Christian Michaud (gunner of 32A), Guillaume Poirier (loader of Commanche 32C) and Éric Gauthier (loader of 32A). Cpls Étienne Turcotte, Laurent Proulx and Pat Lavoie (driver of 32) are now on their PLQ (primary leadership qualification) and should be promoted to Mcpl in the next year. Warrant Dave Malenfant should be posted to a recruit center down town Quebec and Sgt Pat Lepage should be posted to St-Jean at the recruits school next summer. Myself, I should become 2IC B sqn at the Armour school. Warrant Curadeau will go in St-Jean for is ILQ (warrant officer garrison course) and will be in Germany next fall as a course warrant for Leopard 2 qualification. So as you can see, life goes on and my guys have been on or supporting courses since there are back from tour.

Return to normal life in the unit lines was pretty difficult for all the guys. Living a theater with real missions and the trill of combat, worked all 16 guys together for almost 2 years, worked 7 days a week for 12-16 hours a day were everything is possible with no chicken ch..t and suddenly you are at home amongst your relatives and at the unit in garrison. What a choc. You know that because all that happen to you 50 years ago. And more, you left for almost 3-5 years. I can imagine how hard it was when you came home and try to have a normal life. You are so tire and so prime at the same time. Just do a normal thing like grocery is kind of hard. The good thing is that we stay all together the first 3 months and when the four of us were posted, Warrant Malenfant and Sgt Lepage took the leadership of the troop and took care of the boys. The lost of Cpl Leduc in a car accident give a good shot to our moral but showed how close we were.

Slowly but surely, guys return to normal life physically and mentally. A year after, we still are a close group of vets and most of all keep in touch. We all miss the evening briefing at Mas'um Ghar, the good time in Germany, the bogging of younger Troopers by the old Corporals on the FOB and the trill of leading a combat team on operation toward an objective. All those memories and experiences will keep us a band of brothers for the rest of our life.

My best regards to all vets of 12 CAR

Fear the dark! And Adsum!

Capt Pascal Croteau
Old tank troop leader 32



Lithographic painting of a Leopard in the field - presented to the Museum by Troop 32 upon their return from Afghanistan – beneath a mosaic of the Troop.
Next photo – display of the first shell fired by troop 32 in combat, which is on display at the Museum.



Members of Troop 32 attending the official opening of last summer 12e RBC Museum

WHAT'S NEW AT THE MUSEUM

Since its founding in 1983, the Museum is residing in the *MOTHER HOUSE*, which is a major historic landmark that is now known as the Manège militaire Général-Jean-Victor Allard, built in 1907. Throughout the years it gathered a collection of military items that are unique, which makes it one of Canada's most impressive regimental museums. The 12th CAR Veterans, 12e RBC members, families and friends have generously contributed to its success, and you may continue to do so, as its is recognized by Canada's Revenue Agency, as a registered charitable organisation under the income tax law, and are authorize to issue receipts for tax purposes, when we receive artefacts – medals – or other items of military interest, as well as donations.

Under new management, the Musée du 12e Régiment blindé du Canada, is undertaking a new summer season exhibition, which will underline the 375th anniversary of the founding of the City of Trois-Rivières.

Mister *Daniel Robert* took over the task as General Manager of the *MUSEUM*, replacing Mister *Robert O. Gauthier*, who after almost three years of volunteer work, passed the torch to a “new and younger generation”!

The main theme of this year summer exhibition is the “Canadian Militia and Trois-Rivières Military History.” The *MUSEUM* invites you all to discover an impressive collection of objects, on loan from “Parks Canada”, bearing witness to four centuries of the history of Trois-Rivières and the Canadian militia, in a special exhibition linking the city’s past with its military heritage, without forgetting the glorious history of the Regiment.

Again this year, 12e RBC – Valcartier are sending two members of their Unit, to help us to assemble this exhibition and act as guides – their experience in the field is a great asset, and the visitors, as they did last year, will greatly appreciate their knowledge.

The *12e RBC Museum* summer exhibition is opening on June 11th to August 23rd – Tuesday to Sunday (closed on Monday), from 1000 hrs to 1700 hrs with free admission to veterans and members of the Canadian forces.

A page of our Regimental history is being written in Afghanistan – you will be able to see the first round fired since WWII by members of the Regiment, which is proudly displayed, as well as artefacts and show windows illustrating their latest mission.

Hope you, your family and friends will be able to come and see *YOUR REGIMENTAL MUSEUM!*

CONCLUSION

It is again an honour for me to write to you and my thanks goes to all the team that contributed to make this *NEWSLETTER* possible.

Do not hesitate to send me your comments and news – *YOUR BAND OF BROTHERS* will be most please to hear from you all!

ADSUM!

Your “Liaison Officer”

Lieutenant Colonel Robert O. Gauthier, CD (Retired)

950, Royal Street – Appt 604,
Trois-Rivières, Quebec G9A 4H8 Canada
Email: bobog@sympatico.ca - Telephone: 819-379-9088

Visit the Regimental Web site <http://www.12rbc.ca/>