

Honouring Our Local Veterans

2001

Bill Grainger

Birthdate: February 4, 1919

Rank / Branch: Colonel, Canadian Army

Unit: 27th Armoured Regiment, 2nd Armoured Brigade,
1st Hussars

Region: Canada (various locations for training), Great
Britain, and France

Served: 1940-1945

Community: St. Mary's, Listowel, Stratford, London, Port
Stanley, Toronto, and Owen Sound

Medals / Decorations:

- Officer of Saint John Ambulance
- 1939-1945 Star
- France and Germany Star
- Defence Medal
- Canadian Volunteer Service Medal with Clasp
- Victory Medal
- 125 Confederation Medal (1867-1992)
- Canadian Defense Medal with two Clasps



Military Service

Mr. Grainger attended Basic Training in Kitchener, Ontario in October 1940. He was then able to return to his apprenticeship while also joining the militia in Stratford. In September 1941, Grainger enlisted in the Army in London Ontario, and spent a week at Woolsley Barracks. One year after his first round of basic training, he began three months of training at the Regular Officer Training Centre in Brockville, and in January 1942, began another three months with A8 (Armoured Corps) at Camp Borden near Barrie, Ontario.

Mr. Grainger was stationed with the 27th Armoured Regiment (the Sherbrooke Fusiliers) at Debert, Nova Scotia and then in England from April 1942 until June 1944. On June 7, 1944 he landed on Juno Beach in France while posted with the 1st Hussars of London, Ontario. It was here that Grainger was injured and immediately sent back to England. He landed back in Canada on September 16, 1944 and was sent to Westminster Hospital in London. In January 1945, Grainger was again transferred due to his injury and this time moved to the Convalescent Centre in Brampton, Ontario.

He left the Royal Canadian Army in 1945 and joined the Owen Sound Militia in 1950.

Arthur Haley

Birthdate: September 13, 1915

Rank / Branch: Private, Canadian Army

Unit: North Nova Scotia Highlanders

Region: Canada (various locations for training), Great Britain, France, and Holland

Served: 1943-1946

Community: Burlington, Hamilton, West Flamboro, and Wiarton

Medals / Decorations:

- 1939-1945 Star
- France and Germany Star
- Defence Medal
- Canadian Volunteer Service Medal
- War Medal 1939-1945



Military Service

Mr. Haley enlisted on October 27, 1943 into the Royal Canadian Army in Toronto, Ontario. He began his initial training in Brantford on November 20, 1943 and then continued to train at Camp Borden until January of 1944.

Haley arrived overseas on April 11, 1944 and journeyed on to Aldershot, England on May 3, 1944. He remained there for two months until he was sent to Borden, England to be trained as a sniper with plans of becoming a member of the Queens Own Rifles. However, on June 29, 1944, he went to France and was sent to join the North Nova Scotia Highlanders. It was here that Haley became a stretcher-bearer, enabling him to see action at Falaise, Boulougne, and Gris Ney in France, as well as Sheldt Landing in Holland. Mr. Haley was badly burned on his right arm and had to be sent back to England. He returned to Canada in 1946.

Tommy Holmes, VC

Birthdate: October 14, 1898

Rank / Branch: Sergeant, Canadian Expeditionary Force

Unit: 147th Grey Battalion, 4th Canadian Mounted Rifles

Region: Canada (various locations for training), France, and Belgium

Served: 1915-1919

Community: Montreal, Toronto, and Owen Sound

Medals / Decorations:

- Victoria Cross
- Distinguished Service Order
- Military Cross

Military Service

Holmes enlisted with the newly organized 147th Grey Battalion in December 1915... at the age of 17! Having lied about his age, Holmes entered the service and took up training at Niagara Falls, Ontario; at Camp Borden (near Barrie, Ontario); and at Amherst, Nova Scotia. In April 1917 he suffered an arm wound while at Vimy Ridge in France and was transferred back to England for hospitalization before having even gotten to the front lines. Upon return he was transferred to the 4th Canadian Mounted Rifles.

On October 6, 1917 near Passchendaele in Belgium, the fighting commenced for Tommy Holmes. On October 26 of that same year Holmes fought in the battle that would later earn him his Victoria Cross. Pinned down in holes by German pillbox fire, Canadian soldiers were quickly learning that the pillbox was impervious to shellfire. The right flank of the Canadian attack was held up by heavy machine-gun fire from a pillbox strong point and heavy casualties were producing a critical situation. It was at this time that Private Thomas Holmes, on his own initiative and single-handed, gathered bombs from his peers trapped in his hole and ran forward, popping in and out of the man-holes by listening to the changing sounds of the pillbox machine guns. The two bombs that he managed to throw killed and wounded the crew of two machine-guns. He then fetched another bomb and threw this into the entrance of the pillbox, causing the 19 occupants to surrender.

On December 31, 1918 Holmes became the youngest Canadian winner of the Victoria Cross at a presentation by the King of England at Buckingham Palace in London. He didn't even write this accomplishment in any of his letters home so that family and friends didn't learn of his feat until the following year. Holmes was also presented with the Distinguished Service Order and the Military Cross on the same day. On April 14, 1919, Thomas Holmes, now a Sergeant, returned to Owen Sound.



Austin Quinlan

Birthdate: October 4, 1919

Rank / Branch: Flying Officer, Royal Canadian Air Force

Unit: #408 (Goose) Squadron

Region: Canada (various locations for training), Great Britain, and Germany

Served: 1941-1946

Community: Toronto, Guelph, and Owen Sound

Medals / Decorations:

- Distinguished Flying Cross - awarded December 1, 1944
- 1939 -1945 Star
- Air Crew Europe Star with France and Germany Clasp
- Defence Medal
- Canadian Volunteer Service Medal with Clasp
- War Medal 1939-1945



Military Service

In April 1941, Quinlan joined the Infantry in hopes of going overseas, but ended up on coastal duty on eastern Canada. In February of 1942, he enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force in Halifax with the dream of becoming a pilot. Quinlan graduated from Initial Training School in Lachine, Quebec and Belleville, Ontario on August 1, 1942. On November 29, 1942 he graduated from Elementary Flying Training School in St. Eugene, Quebec. Finally, on April 2, 1943 he graduated from Service Flying Training School in Hagersville, Ontario, at which time he was commissioned and sent to Bournemouth, England. He arrived on one of the few days that the city was being bombed by the Germans.

Mr. Quinlan's training continued in Shrewsbury, England aboard Oxford planes; Shawbury, England aboard Wellington bombers; and in Wombleton, England aboard Halifax bombers. From February to September 1944 he was stationed with the 408 (Goose) Squadron, situated in Lintin-On-Ouse, seven miles from York. He was the Deputy Flight Commander and was acting Flight Commander when his superior was unavailable. No. 408 Squadron flew bombing missions deep into Germany to areas such as Berlin, Stuttgart, and Hamburg. They flew the Lancaster II, eventually changing over to the Halifax VII.

During his career as a Flying Officer, Quinlan successfully completed a number of sorties in four engined bombers, travelling deep into heavily defended areas such as Berlin, Stuttgart and Hamburg.

Alfred Searle

Birthdate: August 22, 1915

Rank / Branch: Chief Petty Officer, Royal Canadian Navy

Unit: HMCS Stradacona

Region: Canada (including various locations for training), North and South Atlantic, and Bermuda

Served: 1940-1945

Community: Toronto, Woodstock, Stratford, Colpoys Bay, Balmy Beach, and Owen Sound

Medals / Decorations:

- 1939-1945 Star
- Atlantic Star
- Royal Canadian Navy Volunteer Reserve
- War Medal 1939-1945



Military Service

Mr. Searle enlisted October 1, 1940 in the Royal Canadian Navy at the London, Ontario Navy Depot. Although not highly educated, he displayed a very technical mind. Rather than being sent to basic training, he was enrolled at the University of Western Ontario for advanced training in physics, electricity, and electronics. Searle spent most of his war years in the top-secret development of radar for the Royal Canadian Navy. This project was of the utmost secrecy and as such, the word "radar" could never be spoken and Searle's whereabouts were not officially recorded.

On September 28, 1941 Searle began sailing aboard the HMCS Stradacona until August of 1943. At that time he was assigned to St. Hyacinthe, Quebec where he instructed others in the use of the new radar technology. Next, Searle was assigned to Bermuda, where in addition to instructing and carrying out radar development, he did some work for Sir William Stevenson's (Intrepid) spy network at their Bermuda base.

During his stationed time in Bermuda, one of Mr. Searle's assignments included sailing in captured German U-Boats and determining the extent of development of German RADAR technology and then comparing it to Allied RADAR technology.

Alfred Searle retired from his role as Chief Petty Officer of the Royal Canadian Navy in 1945.

Hugh Webber

Birthdate: October 8, 1921

Rank / Branch: Signalman, Canadian Army

Unit: 5th Canadian Field Regiment

Region: Canada (various locations for training), Holland

Served: 1942-1944

Community: Owen Sound

Medals / Decorations:

Military Service

Mr. Webber enlisted into the Army on September 9, 1942. His training took place in Brampton and Kingston, Ontario before being sent to Europe.

He arrived overseas in March of 1943 and was attached to the 5th Canadian Field Regiment of the Royal Canadian Army. Signalman Hugh V. Webber was engaged in advanced communications work with the Signal Corps when he was killed in action in Holland on October 28, 1944. His family and friends received the news of his tragic death on November 8, 1944 but the details of his passing were unknown. While Mr. Webber's life may have come to a close much too soon, he managed to touch the lives of his family and friends and for that he will be forever remembered.

