

Despatches

A Transmission Of The 32 Signal Regiment Family Council



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November 2023



Lest We Forget

REMEMBRANCE DAY CEREMONIES

32 Signal Regiment was busy throughout Remembrance Week attending a number of parades in and around the GTA.



On the Eleventh Hour of the Eleventh Day of the Eleventh Month 2023, 32 Signal Regiment participated in the Remembrance Day Ceremony in Unionville.

With the Toronto Signals Band out front, the Regiment lead the parade to the Unionville Memorial where they were joined by the good citizens of Unionville to commemorate those who have served and fallen in defence of freedom and the safety and wellbeing of all Canadians.

The citizens of Unionville welcomed the soldiers of the Regiment who have returned to their community for the Remembrance Day Ceremony.

After the Ceremony, a number of citizens 'swarmed' the soldiers and members of the Band asking to take photographs with them.

It was truly an inspiring day of commemoration and appreciation for those who have, and still, serve Canada!





LCol Moore, CWO Santos and HLCol Regan laid wreaths on behalf of the Regiment at the Memorial.

After the Ceremony HCol Lloyd and HLCol Regan thanked Unionville Executive Ms Sonia Chow for making the Regiment feel so welcome once again.



AT THE EAST YORK CIVIC CENTRE CENOTAPH

Signallers also laid a wreath at the Remembrance Day Ceremony held at the East York Civic Centre Cenotaph.

WO Duncan Lloyd, 4th Canadian Division Signaller, laid a wreath commemorating our Fallen from Afghanistan.



REMEMBRANCE WEEK CEREMONIES



On Saturday, November 4th, 2023, HCol Lloyd was the Reviewing Officer for the Bronte Cenotaph Remembrance Day Ceremony in Halton Region where he retold the story of the Despatch Rider Cpl Hugh Patterson, 2nd Division Signals, who passed away in September 2023. Present at the ceremony was MP Anita Anand, President of the Treasury Board of Canada, and former MND. *(previous photo)*



Korean War Naval Signaller Andy Barber with HCol Lloyd at the Bronte Cenotaph Ceremony.

32 SIGNAL REGIMENT REMEMBRANCE DINNER 2023

The Regiment held our annual Remembrance Dinner at Fort York on the evening of November 11th, and had the pleasure of hosting Major-General (retd) Richard Rohmer OC CMM DFC K.StJ O.Ont OfL QC BA LLB JD LLD DScMil Chevalier Legion d'Honneur, the Honourary Lieutenant-General of the Canadian Armed Forces, as our guest of honour.

A Second World War Fighter Reconnaissance Pilot, who has played many significant roles in almost every aspect of Canadian society, HLGEn Rohmer graced us with words of wisdom from his 99 years – more than 80 of which were in uniform service to Canada!





Bottom Of Previous Page
HLGen Rohmer & LCol Moore

Upper Left
The Mess Guests

Upper Right
HLCol Regan & CWO Santos



Left
The Head Table
Maj Rangel-Bron
Ms Quinn
HLCol Regan
HCol Lloyd
HLGen Rohmer
LCol Moore
CWO Santos
Mrs Lloyd

**If you have a story
and photos to share
with the Regimental
Family, please contact
HCol Lloyd so we can
include it in the next
transmission of
Despatches!**

709 TORONTO SIGNALS RCACC

The Cadets of 709 Toronto Signals have been busy over the last few months with a variety of activities. Here are a few images of them out and about...



Following the best concepts and traditions of military training....

If it ain't raining, it ain't training!!



Bowling Night at Playtime.

Everyone enjoyed hours of bowling and of course, PIZZA!!



Assisting Fairbank Branch 75 Royal Canadian Legion Distribute Poppies



ONTARIO'S CEREMONY OF REMEMBRANCE, QUEEN'S PARK, TORONTO



Ceremony presenters Cdt Sgt Kyazike | Cdt Sgt Rajbally | Cdt WO Darawsha | Cdt MCpl Darawsha behind VIP's at the Ontario Veterans' Memorial



Cdt Sgt Kyazike reciting In Flanders Field (in English)



Cdt MCpl Darawsha reciting The Youth Pledge (in French)



Cdt Cpl Welner assists Premier Ford lay a wreath on behalf of the Province of Ontario

PICTURES ON THE WALL



Honorary Colonel John M. Catto MBE ED CD 1899 – 1990

The visitors to Fort York Armoury, in Toronto may be forgiven for not knowing why ancient faces adorn our walls and Messes. The “Picture on the Wall” series aims to open a window into the lives of these ancients and to learn a little about their contribution.

John Catto flew bombers against the Kaiser and protected Canadian codes against the Nazis. Honorary Colonel John Catto MBE, ED CD was born in 1899; he joined his School Cadet Corps at the age of 11 years and continued to serve King and country until 1979. John passed away at the age of 91 in 1990.

In WW1 John joined the Corps of Guides and unable to find war service with the U of T Overseas Company he sailed from New York to England in December 1917. After joining the Royal Naval Air Service and training as a Pilot he transferred in April 1918 to #115 Squadron of the R.A.F. in France.



On November 4th, he embarked on a night raid over Metz in a Hadley Page and dropped fourteen 112 lb. bombs. The Hadley Page was the allies largest twin engine bomber with a 100-foot wingspan. Operating mainly at night, attacking Germany and German occupied towns and cities, with the aim of disrupting the enemy's industry and transport networks. He liked to remark that The Hun sought an Armistice 6 days later! Jeanne Shore, a relative remembered that John said that “when he was a pilot in the open cockpits, you had to make sure your “gunner” was a smart guy because the gun could rotate around completely, and if they didn't watch it they would shoot the pilot.

Also, that guy literally picked up a bomb and dropped it over the side of the aircraft. It wasn't deployed mechanically.”

Jeanne remembered “John talked about navigating home at night using the stars. It was important to know more than just the North Star in case of cloud cover. One night it was completely overcast but suddenly he saw the Big Dipper and was able to extrapolate where the North Star was based on that and got home to Britain.”

“On one of his trips flying to Paris, he was to land at Le Bourget Airport, a very small airport. When he looked down, there were people waving madly at him. He waved back. Then he realized that they were

telling him that he had no undercarriage (landing gear)...so, he belly-landed in a field and got to spend two weeks in Paris while they fixed his aircraft. Sometimes when you land those planes they could flip forward completely on their top. Luckily, he didn't do that. When they moved them, they just picked up the tail and dragged it. The aircraft were so light."

Jeanne recalls John's demobilisation taking longer than usual. "During the war he befriended a number of people (read: ladies). Irma in France, Hetty in Holland, Nancy in London, Daisy and Mary in Scotland. He stayed in touch with them even after returning post-war. In fact, he visited them for years after and so did his family." She also remembers that a lasting Catto family tradition is 13 as a lucky number. In 1918 John was one of 13 in his Squadron, he left to go to war on the 13th of the month and all 13 members of the squadron came back safely.

"After the war the Canadians were sent home by ship. As an Officer he was entitled to a specific class of berth. This class of berth was not immediately available, and availability took months." Jeanne had a feeling that John didn't mind, and he didn't come home until 1921. On his return to Canada he joined the Canadian Air Force Reserve, and when this disbanded he moved to the RCAF.

Returning to the Corps of Guides in 1925, he joined No. 2 Cyclist Company, (commanded by his former CO, now Captain CS McKee). Upon the disbandment of the Corps of Guides on 1 April 1929, many of the officers and men, including Catto & McKee, immediately moved over to join the 2nd Divisional Signals.



John Catto from a group photo of the 2nd Canadian Divisional Signals Officers Mess, Barriefield Concentration Camp, 1940.

With the outbreak of the Second World War, he went on Active Service on 4 September 1939, for the duration of the war until his discharge in October 1945. Serving first with HQ 2nd Canadian Division, he went on to become Chief Cipher Officer at HQ 1st Canadian Corps and later Chief Cipher Officer at HQ 1st Canadian Army in England, France, Belgium and Holland.

The vehicle for the Cipher HQ may have been the lorry "3 Ton Cipher Officer", a 60-cwt Canadian Military Pattern vehicle manufactured by General Motors. This was used by the Royal Canadian Signals in Divisional, Corps and Line of Communications formation headquarters as a cipher office.

The vehicle contained two cipher machines with a desk and a seat space for operators and clerks coding and decoding messages. The lorry was also equipped with a side penthouse for working outside of the vehicle.



Promoted Major in October 1942, he was awarded the MBE (Member of the Order of the British Empire) in 1945. Jeanne recalls that during WWII when he was working in highly secure circumstances, he wrote many letters and was unable to communicate his whereabouts to his family. Jeanne added "he would tell his family which of the WWI "girlfriends" he was visiting. They knew where he was as a result of this information. My mum would happily tell her school teacher that 'daddy is seeing his girlfriend in ...' I gather that was embarrassing for Granny Erie Catto. He told me that sometimes there would be high level visitors to his workplace (I am assuming Bletchley Park). He may have even mentioned Winston Churchill. When these politicians/visitors arrived, for security, all the desks had to be completely cleared so there was nothing to see. He would chuckle at this. - He alluded to a cylinder that was used for encryption. Infinite possibilities that had to be decoded."

Jeanne shared, "Remembrance Day always held huge significance and he walked in the parade for many years. He always seemed to stand up straighter when in uniform. As a result, it is highly meaningful to me too." John Catto's son was also named John. "Although John Catto Junior outranked him for some time, he was immensely proud that his son followed in Signals and was promoted to Colonel. "In May 1970, John Catto Senior was appointed Honorary Lieutenant Colonel of 709 (Toronto) Comm. Regt and in February 1976, he became the Honorary Colonel serving until 1979. He passed away in April 1990, just short of his 91st birthday."



Jeanne provided this photo of him with my dad (age 6 when his dad went away to WWII, age 12 when he came back



The official Second World War record for John Maurice Catto can be found on:

P, 232 Royal Naval Air Service
Register of Officers Service
Service # 42713-43005 Volume 24
Kew Gardens 1906 – 1918
Ref ADM 273/24/232
Date of birth: 11 May 1899
Reference AIR 76/80/63

There is much more to this story and more will be added as it becomes available.

If you wish to know more, or suggest other members for this series please contact HCol Ken Lloyd at kenlloydmediator@gmail.com