



# Royal Niagara Military Institute

22 Timber Lane  
St Catharines, ON  
L2N 7R7

April 2018

Editor Art Tilley

e-mail: [atilley@cogeco.ca](mailto:atilley@cogeco.ca)

## THE BATTLE OF VIMY RIDGE APRIL 9 to APRIL 12, 1917

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In April 1917 the Canadian Corps was ordered to seize Vimy Ridge. The ridge is an escarpment 5.0 mile north-east of Arras on the western edge of the Douai Plains. The ridge rises gradually on its western side and drops more quickly on the eastern side. At approximately 4 miles in length and culminating at a height of 200 ft above the Douai Plains, the ridge provides a natural unobstructed view for tens of miles in all directions.

The task would not be easy – previous French attacks had failed with over 100,000 casualties. To capture this difficult position, the Canadians would carefully plan and rehearse their attack. To provide greater flexibility and firepower in battle, the infantry were given specialist roles as machine-gunners, rifle-men and grenade-throwers. These same soldiers underwent weeks of training behind the lines using models to represent the battlefield, and maps crafted from aerial photographs to guide their way. To bring men forward safely for the assault, engineers dug deep tunnels from the rear to the front. Despite this training and preparation, the key to victory would be a devastating artillery barrage that would not only isolate enemy trenches but provide a moving wall of high explosives and shrapnel to force the Germans to stay in their deep dugouts and away from their machine-guns.

In the week leading up to the battle, Canadian and British artillery pounded the enemy positions on the ridge, killing and tormenting defenders. A nearly limitless supply of artillery shells poured down on the Germans destroying hardened defences and barbed wire. The Canadian infantry would be well supported when it went into battle with over 1,000 artillery pieces laying down withering, supportive fire.

British Lieutenant-General Sir Julian Byng, later to become Governor-General of Canada, was in command. Attacking together for the first time, the four Canadian divisions stormed the ridge at 5:30am on 9 April 1917. More than 15,000 Canadian infantry overran the Germans all along the front. Incredible bravery and discipline allowed the infantry to continue moving forward under heavy fire, even when their officers were killed.

There were countless acts of sacrifice, as Canadians single-handedly charged machine-gun nests or forced the surrender of Germans in protective dugouts. Hill 145, the highest and most important feature of the Ridge, was captured in a frontal bayonet charge against machine-gun positions. Three more days of costly battle delivered final victory. The Canadian operation was an important success, even if the larger British and French offensive, of which it had been a part, had failed. But it was victory at a heavy cost: 3,598 Canadians were killed and another 7,000 wounded.

The capture of Vimy was more than just an important battlefield victory. For the first time all four Canadian divisions attacked together: men from all regions of Canada were present at the battle. Vimy became a symbol of sacrifice for the young Dominion and it has often been said that Canada became a nation on that blood soaked battle field.

In 1922, the French government ceded to Canada in perpetuity Vimy Ridge and 250 acres surrounding it. A little piece of land that will forever be Canada is where the iconic Vimy monument now stands.

## CALENDAR 2018

DATE	TIME(S)	2018
Mon April 9		101 Anniversary of the Battle of Vimy Ridge
Wed Apr 18	1930	<b>General Meeting – Brock University History Lab</b>
Sat Apr 21		103 Anniversary of the Battle of St Julien's
May1 – May 7		Western New York MOAA, Armed Forces Week
Sun May 6		Battle of the Atlantic
Mon May 7		<b>Executive Meeting</b>
Sat May 12	1830 for 1900	<b>50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Dinner – Club La Salle</b>
Wed May 16	1930	<b>Annual General Meeting</b>
Sun June 3	1230	Decoration Day Service, Victoria Lawn Cemetery
Mon June 4		<b>Executive Meeting</b>
Sat June 23		<b>Joint Function with MOAA – Lock 3 Museum</b>

## BROCK UNIVERSITY HISTORY LAB

At our April 18, 2018 General Meeting, Brock University Professors Maria del Carmen Suescum Pozas and Elizabeth Vlossak will tell us about their Brock History Department initiative called *The History Lab*.

Through *The History Lab* initiative, professors and students at Brock University seek to liaise with organizations such as the RNMI, to better understand the military history of the Niagara area.

The History Lab facilitates Brock University student engagement through field trips to museums, historical societies and military organizations. The History Lab also organizes Brock University student engagement through seminars and talks at Brock University. The students interact with the community through events co-organized with the Brock University Historical Society.

The History Lab organizes special annual commemorative events including International Holocaust Memorial Day, Canada Day, International Day of Peace, and the Day of the Dead.

# THE BROCK UNIVERSITY SPEAKERS

## Dr. Elizabeth Vlossak, Ph.D

Elizabeth Vlossak (B.A., Mount Allison; M.St., Oxford; Ph.D., Cambridge) teaches 20th-century European history, including courses on Weimar and Nazi Germany, nations and nationalism, and gender in modern European history. She has taught at the University of Ottawa and at the Queen's University International Study Centre, Herstmonceux Castle, England. Her research interests include the cultural history of the two world wars, women's history and the history of European feminisms, border studies, gender and nationalism, and memory and the politics of commemoration. She has presented her work at conferences in Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, and New Zealand. She is currently working on a project entitled 'Remembering Forced Conscripts: The Politics of Memory in Postwar Europe', which focuses on French, Belgian and Luxembourgger veterans of the German Wehrmacht.



## Dr. Carmen Suescun Pozas, PhD.

Maria del Carmen Suescun Pozas trained as a visual artist (B.F.A. Concordia University), art historian (M.A. and Ph.D. McGill University), and historian (Ph.D. McGill University). Her teaching at the undergraduate level focuses on the social and cultural history of Latin America from the sixteenth century up to the present, in particular the Colonial and Republican periods; revolutions; and race, class and gender. At the fourth-year and graduate level her teaching focuses on Canada-Latin America and Caribbean relations; social change; narrative and the visual field; multi- and/or inter-disciplinary approaches; and comparative analysis.



## 103 ANNIVERSARY of the BATTLE OF St. JULIEN'S

SATURDAY APRIL 21, 2018

The first use of gas in by the Germans in World War One



# The Royal Niagara Military Institute 50th Anniversary Dinner

Saturday May 12, 2018  
1830 for 1900  
Club LaSalle  
111 Arthur Street  
St. Catharines, ON L2M 1N8



Meal: Main course Prime Rib. Please advise any dietary considerations.  
Dress: Mess Kit, Black Tie or Business Suit  
Cost: \$75.00/person, payable in advance to hold your reservation.  
Send cheque to: 22 Timber Lane, St. Catharines, ON L2N 7R7  
or E-transfer to [daffern@sympatico.ca](mailto:daffern@sympatico.ca)

**Please Note:** There is limited seating.

## ROYAL NIAGARA MILITARY INSTITUTE and MILIARY OFFICERS of AMERICA JOINT FUNCTION ST. CATHARINES MUSEUM, WELLAND CANAL CENTRE

Saturday June 23, 2018





