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ACROSS THE ISLAND

Gunners Dine Here; Is 50th Anniversary

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THE SURVIVING Island members of the 2nd Canadian Heavy Battery met here a few days ago to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the organization of their unit. Eleven of the 14 surviving originals turned up for the dinner which was held at the Canadian Legion Home here.

There were 67 men in the original Island contribution to the 2nd Canadian Heavy Battery and they were on their way to service on August 5, the day after war was declared in 1914. The story of how they were ready so quickly is interesting.

Bruce Wonnacott, one of the Island originals tells me the two Island batteries, No. 3 and No. 4 of the P.E.I. Heavy Artillery were on their way to Petawawa for annual summer training in shooting and had reached Campbellton, N.B. when the war scare struck with such impact they were ordered back to the Island.

So the men and equipment were ready to ship to Nova Scotia which they did on an old coal boat, the Cacouna. One battery went to Sydney Mines to guard the cable station there and the other to Canso. The nucleus of the P.E.I. section of the 2nd CHB came from those units, and they left for overseas on November 14, 1914 Bruce tells me.

A history of the battery prepared by the 2nd Canadian Heavy Battery Old Boys Association describes some of the experiences while on active service.

During the 11-day period, June 2-13 in 1916, for example, the battery historian reported that five guns were knocked out in 10 days and the men carried on with set teeth through night and day, with practically no sleep and very poor meals. It was impossible to maintain telephone communications with their observation post.

Chateau Attic Proves Useful

TO REGISTER the guns, he said, the battery was forced to use an attic window of a Belgian chateau. In the period May 10 to 20, 1917 five guns were condemned but five new ones were received in the next few days.

Originally the battery had 4.7 inch guns but it was equipped with 60-pounders, about one month before the battle for Vimy Ridge which started on April 9 at 5:30 in the morning.

The battery fired its first rounds in France, apparently, on Bois de Mereaucourt on September 26, and there was subsequent firing; but they learned on October 3 that all shooting to that date had been a washout as corrections had not been made because range tables had not been issued. The entry would seem to indicate to artillery men that there must have been confusion in the organization and administration in that part of the Allied lines at the time.

There is frequent reference to gas being used during the latter part of 1916 and one entry indicates the 2nd Heavies moved in back of the Princess Pats Regiment, a unit

which won glory in the First Great War for heroism during the first gas attack which had been launched by the Germans. The old story said that Canadian troops moved into a gap left when a unit of French Senegalese troops broke and ran for the rear under the misery which the gas caused. There are veterans of that war who still suffer from the effects of gas, though most of those more seriously exposed to the attack have long since died.

Christmas Has Magic Effect

ONE ENTRY tells of an armistice being declared temporarily so both sides could clear their dead from No Man's Land. But Bruce tells me that this was not unusual.

What was unusual, though, was the armistice the troops declared themselves on Christmas Day 1914 when the men from both sides met in No Man's Land, exchanged cigarettes and greetings and sang Christmas carols. The act was not repeated on later Christmases because it was seriously frowned on by the senior officers who ordered a strict "no fraternization with the enemy" order.

The Islanders from the battery are George A. Burch, Borden; Walter E. Carver, Austin Gallant, MM; John F. Gordon, Harry A. MacDougall, MM; Russell MacDougall, Fred G. Moore, Clayton Shaw, James F. Strain, Charles C. Toombs, Bruce S. Wonnacott, Henry Woolridge, all of Charlottetown.

Others are Roy Howlett, Annandale, and Eli Vatcher, Lower Montague.

Judge Bell Has Fine Shorthorn Herd

MEMBERS OF the Charlottetown Rotary Club chose wisely when they selected Judge R. R. Bell as chairman when they honored the farm men and women who won distinction in and for this province during the year.

It was back in his days as an active politician that Mr. Bell first started his farming operation at New Glasgow. Political opponents suggested he was merely trying to get the farm vote, for this man was provincial leader of the Progressive Conservative party for a number of years. Criticism of that type is one of the penalties a man must sometimes pay for offering his services in political life.

But Mr. Bell was serious about his farming operation. He purchased some excellent foundation stock and he has brought in some top notch sires since then for his herd of pure bred Scotch Shorthorns. Thus he has made a useful contribution to the livestock of this province.

His herd runs to 200 head or more during the summer months and he is wintering this year approximately 150 animals.

Mr. Bell abandoned politics when he accepted an appointment to the Supreme Court bench in this province a few years ago. But he has retained his interest in good cattle and good farming. He spends much of his time in the summer months at his beautiful farm home in New Glasgow, in the heart of the Second District of Queens which he represented so efficiently in the provincial legislature for upwards of 20 years.

Citation For Mack Dixon

MACK DIXON, Clyde River was one of the 16 rural people the Rotarians honored on Monday of this week, and that reminds me that a few days ago I came across the citation which was written by the Atlantic Winter Fair board in November when the 15-year-old school boy was deemed worthy of special mention in the selection of the best herdsman at the fair. I don't believe I published it before, though I did report on his selection. Here is the citation:

"Special mention to Mack Dixon, 15 years old, Clyde River, P.E.I., one of the youngest breeders at the fair. He showed his own steer this year to the Reserve Grand Championship, and also won a first prize with his own heifer. He's a tremendous competitor and veteran showmen rate him as the toughest man to show against at the Fair."

I'll admit Mack that I was the man who first suggested you for special mention. But these words were written by the fair secretary, Watson Maxner who was expressing his own admiration for your performances at Halifax early last month.

Strong Man Story Completed

AN ITEM in the column of December 3 was incomplete. It said that William Acorn, grandfather of Roland MacDonald, Southport used to hold a 56-pound weight on his little finger. The missing part was that Mr. Acorn used to hold his arm out straight, with the weight on his little finger, and write his name on a wall with a piece of chalk. That's a good stunt for some of you to try, if you think you are strong. Mr. Acorn was a miller who lived in Pownal.

The reference to the Belfast strong man should have read Rory "Mor" MacLeod, and Dougald MacKinnon, former member of the government here, tells me he'll give me the entire story on Big Rory in the near future.

MANY THANKS to the many people who sent me cards and other messages from all over the Island after my hospital column. I feel almost guilty because I thought I made it clear that I was not really sick at the time the column was written, though I had been ill previously. The trouble has cleared up and I feel better than I have for many months.

I only wish I had some magic power to convey the same measure of good health to the many friends I made in the hospital, who were still there when I left. Many of them will be there for some time. Some of them suffer horribly and virtually all of them bear their suffering with the courage one cannot help but admire.