



TORONTO TREE

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Branch meetings in 2011 will be held in the Burgundy Room, North York Memorial Hall, North York Centre (North York Centre Subway Station) Meetings begin at 7:30 p.m.

TORONTO BRANCH MEETINGS

WIKIS AS GENEALOGICAL INFORMATION TOOLS

Marian Press

24 January 2011

Wikis as genealogical information tools are being used by such institutions as the LDS Church (FamilySearch Wiki), the Allen County Public Library (We Relate Wiki) and by individuals such as Dick Eastman (Encyclopedia of Genealogy). This talk will cover the technology of wikis, the location of the major genealogy wikis, as well as providing information on how to establish one's own wiki.

Mini-presentation: Michele Skehill – "Dearly Beloved"

THE NEW FAMILYSEARCH

Gwen Armstrong

28 February 2011

Current databases, lessons and information. What is the future of *FamilySearch*?

Mini-presentation: Hilary Dawson – "Alumni Ancestors: Resources at the University of Toronto Archives"



New Toronto War Memorial Database – see p. 5

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IN THE FOOTSTEPS: WORLD WAR I SOLDIERS *Linda L. Reid OGS 13240*

Have you obtained an ancestor's military record and then wondered what next? It is possible to follow in your ancestor's footsteps and see and understand the places where he fought. If the standard packaged tours to European battlefields don't meet your needs, consider a custom tour.

For five days in mid-August our family group (my 89-year-old mother, our two thirty-something children and Pierce and I) toured the World War I battlefields of Northern France and Belgium with Major Ian Gumm of *In the Footsteps Battlefield Tours*. Ian was our guide/driver in his seven-seater SUV with a luggage compartment on the roof. For larger groups he will rent a larger vehicle and, if necessary, hire a driver. We flew to Paris and took the train to Lille (one hour on the TGV from a train station at Charles de Gaulle airport). We gave ourselves one day to recover and then Ian picked us up at our hotel.

I specified places I wanted to see when I booked the tour and Ian developed the itinerary. I asked for a Lille pick-up but Ian is totally flexible. He would have picked us up in the UK or at a different location in France. For World War I tours he recommends starting in Lille or Arras as they are easily accessible by train but he will pick up in Paris (for a price). If interested, you can ask for different scenarios and prices. Our package covered the pre-trip research, the guiding, the driving, and hotels and breakfasts. We paid ourselves for lunches and dinners at places

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he selected based on our wishes. The tour was expensive for the first two people, but after that very reasonable for additional participants. We stayed one night at Hooze, east of Ieper (Ypres), Belgium and three nights at Albert, France (near the sites of the Battles of the Somme).

I had what I thought were ambitious plans: the places where my grandfather Ernest Polley fought with the Australian Imperial Force (the Battles of the Somme in France and 3rd Ieper in Belgium and Bullecourt in between), some sites associated with his brother Robert who served as an officer with the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers at the Somme and Ieper and the grave of their brother-in-law Eric Ardern (whom they never met) who died fighting with the Canadian Expeditionary Force near Ieper. I also wanted to visit Vimy and attend the sunset ceremony at the Menin Gate in Ieper.

We saw far more. Most soldiers were buried close to where they fell so battlefields usually have adjacent cemeteries. In some cases small cemeteries have been consolidated. We visited many cemeteries ranging from the Commonwealth War Graves Commission's largest at Tyne Cot to small ones enclosed by low red brick walls surrounded by fields. We saw the German cemetery at Fricourt, where the Red Baron was buried before being moved to Germany and a combined British/French cemetery at the Thiepval Memorial. We visited the Irish Peace Park where the 16th Irish and the 36th Ulster (my great-uncle's division) fought side by side (Catholics and Protestants). The Australians have put up excellent interpretative markers at their memorials, including one at the spot where the Red Baron was shot down (by the Australian front lines). The Vimy memorial is stunning and made us very proud to be Canadians. It has good restored tunnels and trenches you can visit. Some battlefields, such as Beaumont-Hamel where the Newfoundland caribou memorial stands, have markings indicating what group fought where. But many battlefields are now just farmers' fields.

Ian researched the battalions (fighting units of about 1000 men) of my grandfather and great-uncle and took us to the very locations where they had fought. He prepared maps of the battlefields showing where the different battalions were located and their paths of advance. He gave us spiral bound booklets of relevant maps and pictures to take home.

At the September 26, 1917 Battle of Polygon Wood, for example, the 5th Australian Division attacked through what remained of the wood itself. The 4th Division attacked immediately north of the "wood".

The 16th battalion of the 4th Division (with my grandfather) was in the lead with the 14th and 15th battalions following for the second wave. They started the assault at 5:50 in the morning, having to keep within metres of the creeping barrage shells fired from their own artillery "protectively" landing just in front of the attacking troops. At 7:30 the 16th battalion stopped and dug in and the 14th and 15th battalions swept past to carry on the assault. We stood at the northern edge of Polygon Wood and looked at the cornfield on the land the 16th battalion fought through. Ian had pictures of what the battlefield looked like at the time and maps that indicated where the 16th battalion dug in, literally just in front of us. We had similar experiences at other locations.

What impressed me about the battlefields? In addition to the depressions from shells there are a few dozen huge craters. Both sides tunnelled under enemy lines and then set off explosives that left these craters, most of which have since filled with water. I was also struck by how very modest the "ridges" are. The countryside is basically flat but the slight incline to a "ridge" had great military significance. There was great loss of life in taking and retaking a ridge. Most of the war was spent fighting over a 40-mile-wide strip of land.

I was particularly moved by our visit to Poperinge, British headquarters west of Ieper, where we saw the exhibit "Shot at Dawn" that told of British soldiers executed there, for crimes such as desertion and cowardice. We stood in the holding cell and heard a tape of a sentence being read out, ending with the chilling words "for example". We also heard



a taped voice of what the padre would have said to the man before he was taken to be shot, advising him to decline the alcoholic drink offered to him and telling him of God's love. In the courtyard we saw the

post where the last soldier to be shot was tied— a 17 year-old. His picture is on the wall inside.

Our tour leader, Ian Gumm, is a major in the Territorial Army and very knowledgeable on military matters. He isn't old and stuffy as I had feared but considerably younger than us and very friendly and accommodating. Our tour guide at Vimy (a Canadian university student) took us down to the tunnels and talked about how the thousands of men had stood silently for 36 hours in the miles of darkened tunnels before the battle. Ian added later: "They wouldn't have stood. The platoon commanders would have told their men to put their packs next to the wall and sit on them."

If you are interested in a battlefields tour, I highly recommend *In the footsteps Battlefield Tours*. Ian Gumm presently lives in Herefordshire but plans to move to France. He will do both general and custom battlefield tours, ranging from one day to several days. See www.inthefootsteps.com. Many of his clients come for the World War II sites in Normandy. I would be happy to answer any questions about our experience.

Family history is linking the generations and this trip was a wonderful way to do it. Our son and daughter really enjoyed sharing this experience with their grandmother and now know more about the great-grandfather they never met. An unexpected bonus was that Ian took pictures of our family group at all the locations we visited. Family history involves creating records as well as just finding them and we have a wonderful pictorial record of a three-generational shared experience. The Remembrance Day expression "we will remember them" will always have great meaning for our family.

INACTIVE CEMETERIES PROTECTION ACT, 2010 BILL 126

Jim Brownell, MPP for Stormont, Dundas and South Glengarry introduced Bill 126 for first reading in the Ontario Legislature on 2 November 2010. First reading was agreed to. As soon as the Bill has second reading we will advise OGS members how best to advocate for adoption of this Bill. At that time we will ask that all our members, their families and friends be prepared to act quickly. There will be an election in Ontario in October 2011 and the Legislature will be prorogued prior to the campaign period. Therefore time is of the essence if Bill 126 is to be passed.

TORONTO CONFERENCE OF THE UNITED CHURCH ARCHIVES – New Publications Produced by Toronto Branch, OGS, Places of Worship Committee:

METROPOLITAN TORONTO

Fonds 1777 Bloor Street United Church
Fonds 1284 Centennial-Japanese United
Fonds 2855 St. Paul's Italian United
(formerly Presbyterian and Methodist)
Baptisms 1887-1925; 1,113 records
Marriages 1896-1925; 1,136 records
Burials 1911-1925; 162 records
2,428 records Paper \$30.00

DUFFERIN COUNTY

Mono and Amaranth Townships
(formerly Methodist and Presbyterian)
Baptisms 1831-1925; 2,351 records
Marriages 1896-1925; 746 records
Burials 1900-1925; 55 records
FONDS 2543 Camilla-Laurel-Mono Centre Pastoral Charge
FONDS 1945 Mono Mills Pastoral Charge
FONDS 2590 Rosemont Circuit 3, 238 records Paper \$35.00

MELANCTHON AND MULMUR TOWNSHIPS

(formerly Methodist, Presbyterian and United Brethren)
Baptisms 1864-1925; 1,278 records
Marriages 1858-1925; 764 records
Burials 1900-1925; 77 records
FONDS 2546 Corbetton Presbyterian Church
FONDS 2558 Horning's Mills Methodist Church
FONDS 2583 Shelburne United Brethren
FONDS 3447 Enoch Barker register 1855-1877; 536 records
FONDS 3507 Wm. J. Gallagher register 1896-1910;
14 records
Presbyterian records of Black Bank, Gandier, Mulmur and Primrose transcribed from registers in the Dufferin County Museum and Archives. 2, 468 records Paper \$30.00

To order and for more information:
www.torontofamilyhistory.org

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If the answer is yes, visit the National Archives Labs at: labs.nationalarchives.gov.uk/wordpress. This blog is intended to showcase exciting new ideas and your feedback will help the developers decide which projects should be integrated into the main web site. Plus, it is a great way to keep ahead of the learning curve when it comes to new UK resources online.
