



# THE MAROON BERET

## MAGAZINE FOR THE CANADIAN AIRBORNE FORCES ASSOCIATION



March 2025

[www.canadianairborneforces.ca](http://www.canadianairborneforces.ca)

## CAFA PRESIDENT'S UPDATE

### COL (RET'D) RICK HATTON

Greetings Jumpers and friends throughout the Canadian Airborne Brotherhood and welcome to our periodical Maroon Beret Newsletter. Congratulations and thanks to our amazing CAFA Communications team comprising Scott Moody and Adam Winnicki for another excellent edition.

The Canadian Airborne Forces Association (CAFA) is the umbrella organization for military airborne associations in Canada and we are there for all Canadian military parachutists – both active and former. CAFA is a well-organized, efficient and relevant military association that respects and promotes the legacy of Canadian Airborne forces from WWII to the present and we actively promote the maintenance of Airborne operational capabilities in the Canadian Armed Forces. We are all volunteers and former serving Airborne members. If you are not a member of CAFA yet you should really consider joining us– details are on our website at [www.canadianairborneforces.ca/membership](http://www.canadianairborneforces.ca/membership).

Since the publication of our previous Maroon Beret edition (September 2024) we have continued to be very active. Work has started to solicit applications from CAF units with airborne-tasked elements for the 2024 Airborne Soldier of the Year. All past selections have been amazing examples of the finest qualities we find today in our Airborne warriors [www.canadianairborneforces.ca/soldieroftheyear](http://www.canadianairborneforces.ca/soldieroftheyear)

We will also start in the coming months to receive applications for the \$3000 Canadian Airborne Forces Scholarship that is awarded each year to the most deserving eligible applicant entering or enrolled in a post-secondary academic programme. Information regarding eligibility, application procedures and past recipients is found at: [www.canadianairborneforces.ca/scholarship](http://www.canadianairborneforces.ca/scholarship) and we are pleased to encourage and help launch one student each year as a future contributing citizen of our great country.



**Photo: CAFA President Col Ret'd Rick Hatton and former CAFA President MGen (Ret'd) Walter Holmes in Cyprus during the 60th Anniversary Event**

With the coronation of our King Charles III, various military associations and civic groups throughout the Commonwealth including Canada were allocated a limited number of King Charles III Coronation Medals to award to deserving persons. CAFA was allocated thirteen medals. Based on exacting criteria and personal accomplishments, a special CAFA selection committee selected 13 eminent and highly deserving persons, from within CAFA and the wider Airborne community.

CAFA was proud to be associated with the Cyprus 2024 Pilgrimage and Commemoration, conducted 5- 12 November 2024. Planned and coordinated over the previous four years, the event was extremely well-organized, and was a huge success. It will surely be an example to any other military association of how to do it right. No doubt, participants will be talking about for years to come. CAFA has also been proud to promote and help support the excellent work of skilled CAFA member Roger Chabot with his various Bravery in Arms projects, including war art and documentaries, most recently his documentary "Path to Total Victory" [www.braveryinarms.ca/pathtototalvictory](http://www.braveryinarms.ca/pathtototalvictory).

CAFA members will feature in many other events in the coming months – the Airborne Luncheon at the Royal Canadian Military Institute in Toronto on 11 April, our Annual General Meeting to be held at the Canadian Army Advanced Warfare Centre at CFB Trenton 23-25 May and various commemoration events.



# CANADIAN VETERANS' PILGRIMAGE TO CYPRUS

BY MGEN (RETD) WALTER HOLMES, COL (RETD) JAMES HOLSWORTH, CO-CHAIRS CYPRUS 2024 COMMITTEE

The Cyprus 2024 pilgrimage to Nicosia, from 5 to 12 Nov, was a tremendous success. 92 Canadian Veterans and their family members, plus Veteran Affairs Canada (VAC) national delegation of Veterans and officials, gathered to remember the contribution of Canadians over the 60 years of peacekeeping on the island. The program included site visits to the Buffer Zone, cultural excursions to see the island, a Cypriot panel discussion to understand Cyprus today, British and Canadian Remembrance Services and endless sharing of memories.

Our Embassy in Athens, VAC, the United Nations Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) and the Consulate in Nicosia were in full support, and the arrangements made by Special Travel International and the Hilton Nicosia were first class. Mr. Colin Stewart, a Canadian, Head of UNFICYP, and MGen Erdenebat Batsuuri, the Force Commander, joined us for many of the activities, as did Karine Asselin, our High Commissioner to Cyprus.



Members of 3 RCR take a moment to pose with UNFICYP Veterans

Four years of history collection and research, started by the late Col (Retd) John Joly, culminated in emotional visits along the Buffer Zone to recount the actions of peacekeepers since 1964, with a focus on the 1974 war. 1 Commando Group was in the Nicosia sector during the Greek Cypriot coup d'état and subsequent Turkish amphibious landings and airborne assault near Nicosia. The remainder of the Canadian Airborne Regiment (CAR) reinforced from Edmonton prior to the Turkish second offensive which effectively divided the island.

The CAR took many casualties, including two killed, Para Berger and Para Perron. The Regiment's defence of key terrain, such as the Nicosia Airport, Ledra Palace and Central Prison, was credited for a ceasefire and arguably saving Nicosia. Emotions ran high, as many Veterans from 1974 recounted their stories 50 years later.

British, Finnish and Swedish Veterans, who were also marking their contributions to UNFICYP over 60 years, joined the Canadians. The British Veterans and spouses added their experiences from the 1974 defence of the Airport and events at Dhekelia sovereign area. The Finns shared stories of their evacuation, by Canadians, under fire from Kykko Camp. All activities were recorded and, along with the many video interviews, will form the basis of a documentary of Canadians in Cyprus.



Picture: Members of the Cyprus 60 delegation on parade.

Canadians attended the UK Remembrance Services at Waynes Keep and Dhekelia Cemeteries on 10 Nov, with the Canadian service held on the 11th in Wolseley Barracks. Organized by VAC, about 300 Canadian, UN and international officials, Veterans and soldiers attended. A contingent of Canadian soldiers were on parade, being on the island with a task force preparing for a possible evacuation of Canadians from the region.

The Airborne connection! Maroon berets of 3 RCR Para Company, Veterans of the CAR and the UK 16 /5th Lancers, The Parachute Regiment, together honoured our fallen and Airborne legacy. Indeed, the 1974 war, unknown to many Canadians, was considered by many to be a battle honour never awarded to the CAR.

The Cyprus 2024 anniversary plaque, honouring Canadians who served with UNFICYP over 60 years, and funded by the National Wall of Remembrance Association, was unveiled. It was the last of three memorial plaques, the prior two being dedicated 4 June 2023 in Edmonton and 8 May 2024 in Petawawa. They will remain as testaments to honour Canadian service in Cyprus for generations to come.

The Cyprus 2024 pilgrimage was a success on many levels, not the least of which was the camaraderie and rekindling of memories of Canadian peacekeeping service and sacrifice in Cyprus. Mission accomplished!





Rick Hatton and Walter Holmes unveil the commemorative plaque marking the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the start of the UNFICYP.



Photo: Members of the Canadian Cyprus 60 Contingent



Photo: Members of the Cyprus 60 Executive with colleagues from the UK.



L-R Jerry Robertson, Brad Mills, Karl Ozols



Photo: Lana Holmes, Walter Holmes, Rick Hatton and Clay Samis sing "We'll Meet Again"



Photo: Canadian Troops in Cyprus past and present.



Photo: Rick Hatton, Staff Sgt Leduc laying CAFA wreath at the Canadian cairn



# HONORING THE LEGACY: 1ST CANADIAN PARACHUTE BATTALION IN NORMANDY

By LCol **Éric Richard**

June 6th, 2024, Last June marked the 80th anniversary of one of the most crucial moments in Canadian Airborne military history—the airborne operation (Op Tonga), France, where the 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion (1st Can Para Bn) were the first Canadians soldiers to set foot on the French soil on 6th June 44 and played a critical role in the Allied invasion of Nazi-occupied France. To commemorate this anniversary, I had the pleasure of visiting the battlefields where these daring paratroopers fought, offering a rare occasion to reflect on their legacy and the profound impact of their contributions to the liberation of Western Europe.

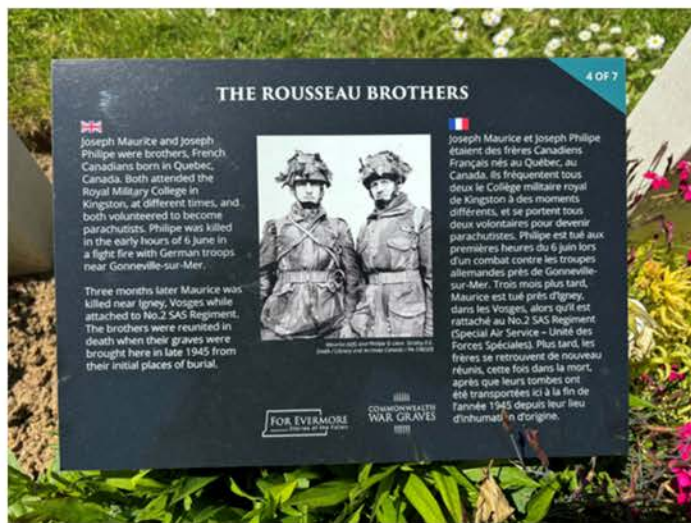
## The 1st Can Para Bn: A Legacy of Courage

On June 6, 1944, in the early hours of D-Day, the 1st Can Para Bn—part of the British 6th Airborne Division—was dropped behind enemy lines, one hour in advance of the rest of the brigade, in order to secure the DZ. Their mission was to secure key objectives, including road bridges over the river Dives and its tributaries at Varaville, to protect the left flank of the 9th Bn (para Rgt) during that unit's attack on the Merville Battery. Facing a determined enemy and treacherous terrain, the battalion performed their tasks with distinction such as seizing vital ground at the centre of the ridge at the Mesnil crossroads. In the days that followed, they fought alongside their British counterparts in some of the most intense and harrowing combat of the campaign, particularly in ground operations to strengthen the bridgehead and support offensive operations toward the Seine River. The battalion's sacrifices in Normandy remain engraved in the annals of Canadian military history. At the end of the battle of Normandy, 367 of its soldiers were either killed in action or gravely wounded, but their efforts were indispensable in the overall success of Operation Tonga and in a larger scale, Overlord.

## Commemorating the 80th Anniversary

As I walked the in the area of the rivers Dives and Divette where these brave paras once fought, the atmosphere was charged with a sense of respect. The 80th-anniversary commemoration drew veterans, current serving members, and military historians from around the world, alongside local French citizens whose towns and villages still have hundreds of Canadian flags flying in the wind.

Among the key locations visited was the drop zone near Ranville, where the first waves of paratroopers landed on D-Day. The landscape today is markedly different from the chaos and destruction that unfolded there in the summer of 44. Yet, the echoes of battle still seem to remain in the air as visitors reflect on the sufferings faced by the paras who fought on these grounds. The Ranville War Cemetery on rue des Airbornes, where many members of the battalion rest, was another poignant stop. The rows of white Commonwealth headstones and the two Rousseau brothers' markers, serve as a solemn reminder of the ultimate price paid for freedom.



A central part of the anniversary commemorations was a moving ceremony held at Le Mesnil, attended by Canadian and British veterans, local dignitaries, and military officials. The service, which included a wreath-laying and a moment of silence, honored not only the 1st Can Para Bn but also all paratroopers who participated in the campaign. For me and my wife, both currently serving in the CAF, it was a moment of emotional reflection—a connection to the paratroopers, “des petits gars de chez-nous” whose bravery had changed the course of history.



## Reflections on Sacrifice and Airborne Brotherhood

With an academic background in Military history and having worn the maroon beret for couple years, walking in the footsteps of the 1st Can Para Bn, it was impossible not to feel the weight of history. In the quiet tranquillity of the battlefield, it's hard to imagine the chaos, fear, and esprit de corps that must have existed. Yet, this is precisely what makes the visit so impactful.

Even though my Master degree thesis was fully dedicated to the Canadian Airborne, seeing the battlefield in person creates by far, a permanent link to the past. These were not just soldiers; they were brothers-in-arms, facing the unimaginable together. As I stood before the memorials and grave markers of Lieutenant Philippe Rousseau, I thought of the young men who parachuted into Normandy with the chance of survival were 1 in 4 but at the same time, their sacrifices had forged a ferocious reputation for the Canadian paras' fighting spirit and efficiency on the battlefield.



One particularly moving moment was spent at the Merville Battery, which recounts the story of the battalion's daring mission (Maj Wilkins' A coy) to protect the left flank of 9th Bn during the attack on the battery—the first objective of the D-Day landings. The destruction of the bridge over the Divette stream in Varaville and the bridge over the river Dives were both, a remarkable feat of precision and bravery, highlighting the specialized nature of the Canadian Para Bn and their vital role in the Operation Tonga.

## Legacy and the Importance of Remembering

The 80th anniversary of the 1st Canadian Para Bn's involvement in Normandy is not just an opportunity to remember those who served, but also to reflect on the enduring values the Canadian paratroopers embodied: courage, sacrifice, and commitment to a just cause. These are values that remain as relevant today as they were during the Second World War. As conflicts continue to shape global geopolitics, it's vital that we understand and preserve the lessons learned from our Canadian Paratroopers who fought from France to Germany during WW2.

During the celebrations, I had the chance to meet with a specific group of 1st Can Para Bn historical reenactors such as Mr Alain Grumelart ([www.historium.net](http://www.historium.net)). We have a similar group in Canada but here in France, it was such a surprise. Their pride in our forebears' legacy was palpable, but so too was their sense of responsibility to carry our Canadian heritage and memory forward. The stories of the 1st Canadian Para Bn in France live on through historical events, and over many monuments that dot the region such as the plaque dedicated to the memory of six men of the Battalion who were killed in the gatehouse on the road to Varaville during the first hour of D-Day.



The heritage of the 1st Can Para Bn is almost unknown in Canada but my battlefield tour in France highlighted the importance of maintaining the ties between Canada and France, nations united by their shared history and commitment to freedom.



The relationship between us and the French remains strong, and amateur hobbyists and history event like historical reenactment serve as a testament to the enduring bond between us, formed through the sacrifices made during the war.

### Conclusion

As I shook hands to these young 1st Can Para Bn French reenactors upon my departure from Normandy, I was reminded of the debt we owe to the 1st Can Para Bn and to all those who fought alongside them. Their contributions to the success of Operation Overlord and the broader 2 months + Battle of Normandy were vital in securing victory and ensuring that successful liberation of German-occupied Western Europe.

The spirit of the 1st Canadian Para Bn lives on—not just in the battlefields of France, Belgium, Netherland and Germany, but in the hearts and minds of those among us in Canada who remember



## WAR ARTIST ROGER CHABOT - HOT DZ

During the Siffleur Falls D-Day Commemoration War Artist and CAFA member Roger Chabot unveiled his newest painting Hot DZ depicting the 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion landing on Drop Zone "V" near Varaville, Normandy, in the very early morning hours of D-Day 06 June 1944. If you are interested in purchasing this painting or any of his other work you can do so here <https://www.chabotwarart.com/>



## AIRBORNE KIT SHOP

The new Canadian Airborne Forces Association Kitshop can be found at [cafakitshop.com](http://cafakitshop.com). The Canadian Airborne community has been without an official kitshop for over a year. We now have a new online kitshop operated by CPGear. A percentage of every sale using this website goes to supporting the Canadian Airborne Forces Association (CAFA) to support initiatives like the annual Airborne Forces Scholarship bursary and the Airborne Soldier of the Year award.

Items are manufactured & fulfilled from CPGear in Fredericton, NB. A percentage of every single sale on this website goes right back to supporting the Canadian Airborne Forces Association. If you have any feedback, suggestions or questions on how to order through this website, we would love to hear from you. Reach out to us at 506.444.8959 (CPGear, 8:30-5 PM Atlantic Time, Mon-Fri) or email us at [orders@cpgear.com](mailto:orders@cpgear.com).



HOODIE W/PEGASUS



HOODIE W/WINGS & "AIRBORNE PARATROOPER"



CYPRUS 80TH HOODIE (LOGO IN WHITE)



# CAFA-NOMINATED RECIPIENTS OF THE KING CHARLES III CORONATION MEDAL

## COL (RET'D) RICK HATTON

A Canadian commemorative medal has been created to mark the coronation, on 6 May 2023, of His Majesty King Charles III. The medal was created as a tangible way to recognise outstanding Canadians of all ages and from all walks of life who have made a difference in their communities. On behalf of the Canadian Airborne Forces Association, I am very pleased to announce the names of thirteen distinguished persons who were nominated by a special CAFA committee and were awarded the King Charles III Coronation Medal. All thirteen medal recipients were selected for their outstanding service and significant contributions to CAFA or to the wider Canadian Airborne family. All medals were presented in-person either by the President or by a senior CAFA person at events with family members and others in attendance.

Congratulations to medal recipients:

- Bill Dickson (St Albert AB);
- Jerry Robertson (Barrie ON);
- Dennis Stow (Pembroke ON);
- Roger Chabot (Victoriaville QC);
- Ross Mackenzie (Kingston ON);
- Marlene Schmidle (Gatineau QC)
- Ian Husk (Pembroke ON);
- Joanne de Vries (Ajax ON);
- Ed Marshall (Toronto ON);
- John Fotheringham (Etobicoke ON);
- Glen Piper (Napane ON);
- André Bilodeau (Brockville ON); and
- Captain Pam Hohner (Colbourne ON).



Photo: Ed Marshall 1 Can Para receives the KCM in Toronto



Photo: LCol (Ret'd) John Fotheringham receives the KCM in Toronto



Photo: Joanne de Vries 1 Can Para Association receives the KCM in Pickering



Photo: Capt Pam Hohner, 1 Can Para Cadets receives the KCM in Brighton, Ontario



Photo: Bill Dixon receives the KCM in Toronto





Photo: War Artist Rogers Chabot receives the KCM



Photo: Jerry Robertson receives the KCM in Barrie, Ontario



Photo: Glenn Piper received the KCM.



Photo: Marlene Schmidle and André Bilodeau receive the KCM



Photo: Dennis Stow and Ian Husk receive the KCM



Photo: Ross Mackenzie receives the KCM

**35th Annual  
Airborne Luncheon  
April 11th, 2025**




Royal Canadian Military Institute  
426 University Avenue, Toronto  
RSVP by April 1st to  
[susan.cook@rcmi.org](mailto:susan.cook@rcmi.org)



# 80TH ANNIVERSARY OF OPERATION VARSITY AND CPL FRED TOPHAM VICTORIA CROSS

BY SCOTT MOODY

On March 24th CAFA Toronto held a ceremony at Sanctuary Park Cemetery, Etobicoke to commemorate the 80th Anniversary of Operation Varsity and the actions that led to Cpl Fred Topham being awarded the Victoria Cross. Cpl Topham is buried at the cemetery. After the ceremony, a reception was held at RCL 266. The cornerstone of Legion 266 was dedicated by Cpl Topham who attended Runnymede Collegiate which is nearby. The ceremony was fortunate to have members of the Topham family present. During the ceremony a portrait of Cpl Topham created by War Artist Roger Chabot, was presented to the family.



Present was Paramedic Paul Carson and his team. He is the caretaker and historian of our Fallen Canadian Paramedic Memorial Bell. He has been traveling across Canada as well the US bringing the memorial bell to the graves and the incident sites of our fallen Canadian Paramedics to capture their energy into the bell.



## CALENDAR

- 11 April 2025 Airborne Luncheon
- 23-25 May 2025 Annual General Meeting - Trenton
- 30 June 2025 Scholarship Applications Due
- August Warror's Day Parade CNE Toronto

**AIRBORNE FORCES SCHOLARSHIP 2025**

canadianairborneforces.ca/scholarship

To join CAFA visit the website [www.canadianairborneforces.ca](http://www.canadianairborneforces.ca)

1 YEAR  
**\$30**



3 YEAR  
**\$85**



6 YEAR  
**\$160**



## LAST POST



**LIEUTENANT-COLONEL ALAIN SAINT-YVES, CD**  
(March 3, 1944 to March 25, 2025)

Former Commanding Officer of the Canadian Airborne Headquarters and Signals Squadron and 71 Communications Group



**Captain (retired) Philip Roy Berikoff** September 17, 1948 February 10, 2025 - PPCLI, CAR, INT O,



**JAMES SIMPSON** (March 20, 2025)

Korean War and United Nations Peacekeeping



**Wayne Jeffery 'Jumper' Pfeiffer.**  
November 7, 1962 – February 16, 2025



**Sgt (Ret'd) Joe Hillier**

**September 20th, 1956 - March 5, 2025**  
PPCLI, CAR, CAAWC, Cyprus and Somalia



**Steve Clayton Koppang**  
December 31, 1964 - December 8, 2024



**CWO Mike Bedel - October 8th, 2024**