



# VIMM Newsletter

Fall 2022

Vancouver Island Military Museum

## No. 1 CANADIAN SPECIAL WIRELESS GROUP SECRET CODE BREAKERS

By Angus Scully

The VIMM has on display a book of badges for Canadian units in the Second World War, and this unit triggered an interest – what did this unusually named outfit do? Where did it serve? A little research uncovered a top-secret signals unit that was the only Canadian Army unit to serve in the Pacific theatre of war - outside of North America - after the fall of Hong Kong. It was kept secret until 1986 and even today its history is obscure. Two signallers died and are buried in Australia. Then, there is this connection to VIMM. Museum volunteer Doug Hogg's uncle, Glenn Jordan of Port Alberni, who served with 1CSWG.



*Adelaide River  
War Cemetery,  
Northern  
Territory,  
Australia*

Signals intelligence was crucial to winning the Second World War. The story of the Enigma machine and those who used it at Bletchley Park in England is well known and the subject of many books and movies. Less well known is the use of signals intelligence against Japan in the Pacific theatre. Japan developed a coding device similar to the Enigma, called the Purple machine. The Americans were able to copy it in 1940, using stolen plans. The Japanese Kona code was also broken. Then it was essential to intercept Japanese radio traffic, and some of that was done at stations in Canada. In July 1944, No. 1 Canadian Special Wireless Group, Royal Canadian Corps of Signals, was formed at Gordon Head on Vancouver Island, near

Victoria. There had been radio intercept stations there since early in the war. Equipped to intercept Japanese signals, the group had radio signal analysts and Japanese speaking cryptographers who were the children of former Canadian missionaries in Japan. With support troops, the group had 336 men. The unit was originally to be a fully mobile and self-contained unit, designed to operate close to the Japanese lines.



*Private Dermott Joseph  
Green, 1CSWG, was  
from Halifax*

No. 1 CSWG left Canada in January 1945, travelled to San Francisco by train, and then on to Australia, by way of New Guinea. They arrived in Brisbane, Queensland in February 1945. After acclimatisation in Brisbane, the group travelled by rail and road to Darwin in the far north of Australia, in April 1945. It was a remote, isolated, extremely hot place that had been attacked by Japan early in the war. In late 1945, it was a huge Australian military base (with no air conditioning), in the middle of a jungle.

Signallers, who called themselves swiggers, were required to type at 60-75 words per minute and communicate in Morse code at 25 words per minute. They sat in shifts at radio controls listening to Japanese transmissions. The Kona code was transmitted in two letter combinations – BA, BE,

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ZI etc. Each combination represented one of 72 Japanese writing syllables. Once these were transcribed, they were sent to the Intelligence section and then on to Brisbane for computer analysis. In Darwin, the 1CSWG group collected enemy wireless traffic at the rate of 80 000 groups of messages per day.

Two men from the RCCS died in Australia and are buried there. Private Dermott Joseph Green of Nova Scotia drowned while on leave near Brisbane. Green and another signaller were being hosted by an Australian family who took them surfing. A local news report stated,

*He had been surfing for some two hours when he was suddenly drawn into a deep gutter. His companions swam to his assistance, but the undertow had become so strong that all three were in danger of being engulfed. In the last effort Green slipped from their grasp and disappeared. Some 27 men and 3 officers of the deceased's unit attended his funeral.*

Private Green, age 26, was buried at the Woombye War Cemetery, about 130 KM north of Brisbane. His wife, Catherine Marie Green lived in Halifax.

The Technical Maintenance Officer and Sports Officer of 1CSWG was 28-year-old Lt. John David Miller from Kingston, Ontario. A graduate of the Royal Military College in Kingston, Miller was remembered as a strict but fair disciplinarian. It would have been interesting to hear his reaction when a shipment of sports equipment arrived in Darwin – for hockey.

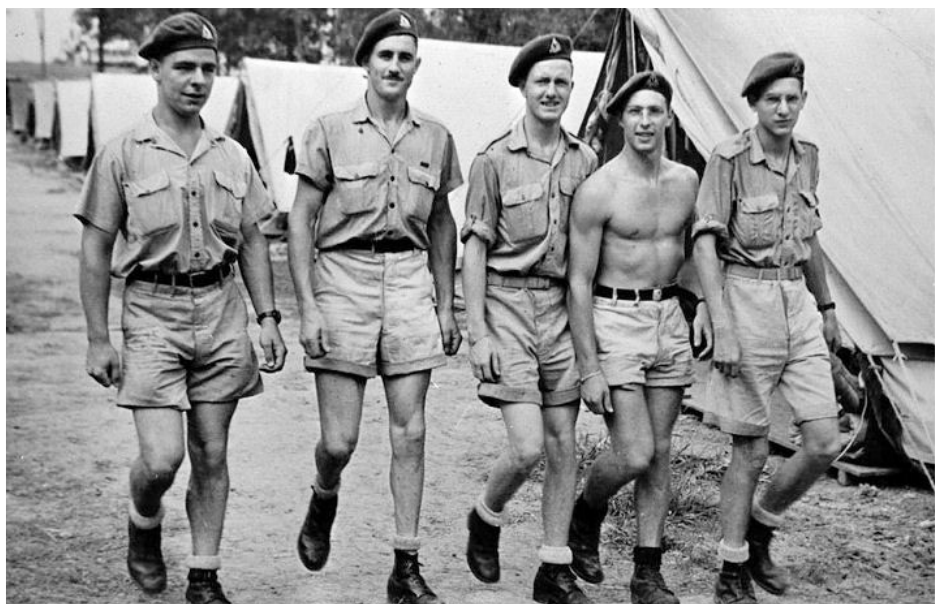
Lt. Miller died in 107 Australian General Hospital in Darwin on 16 September 1945 of acute encephalitis. He was buried at Adelaide River War Cemetery, Darwin, on 18 September 1945. The funeral party comprised 8 members of the Technical Maintenance Section as bearers, 8 Unit officers as pall bearers, the Chief Signal Officer (CSO) of the NT Force, a member of the CSO Staff; two buglers, two drummers, and a firing party of approximately 40 unit personnel. The grave is 12 200 kilometers from Vancouver. His wife, Mary Jean Dorothe Miller (nee Beach), lived in Kingston.

After the war ended in August 1945, some members of the Intelligence Section were sent to New Guinea, Timor, and other places, to act as interpreters at peace negotiations and surrender ceremonies. Another six men were sent to Manilla to be part of the Canadian Repatriation Group, and four men were sent to Japan to be members of the Canadian Recovery Team. The rest of the group set off in a 96-vehicle convoy for the 1290 km road trip to Alice Springs. From there, the trip to Adelaide was by train, and from there, the group returned to their trucks for a road trip to Melbourne and Sydney. The total trip was 4643 km.

After two months in Sydney, the group was loaded onto a tramp steamer and sailed for Vancouver, arriving home to a huge welcome on Feb. 26, 1946. But, not a word about the real job done by 1CSWG was to be said for the next thirty years.



*1CSWG signaller transcribing Japanese radio transmissions.*



*Men of 1CSWG in camp, Darwin, Australia, 1945*



## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

We are now in October and through another year of reduced museum hours and road closures which restricted our access to the museum. We can, happily, see the light at the end of the tunnel with the new hotel opening in January 2023. Hopefully we will get back to our Monday to Saturday Museum hours.

We also welcome back our volunteers who were away for the summer months. We have two new volunteers, John Taylor and Richard Lee who will take the Friday afternoon shift. This year we have had many visitors from the mainland BC as well as international visitors. Our numbers will be up this year compared to last year.

The workshop is still busy with medals and framing and, with Remembrance coming up, this will indeed increase. We will be open on Remembrance Day and with free admission to the public. Volunteers are invited to join us to assist with the crowds that have been large in recent years.

Our Spitfire display has new additions thanks to Pat Murphy. Brian McFadden is finishing up a display on our local WW1 aces which will be officially opened on November 3 at 4pm, along with the launch of the new book, *In Our Youth*, by museum volunteer Angus Scully. Museum staff, volunteers, and spouses are invited. Refreshments will be served.

I'm sad to report the passing of Jack Ziebart this summer. Jack was a volunteer since 1995 and a director.

We had a summer luncheon this year at the Grand Hotel, after a two-year hiatus, and we will be having a Christmas luncheon this year in December, if all goes well. We will inform everyone about the dates when we confirm them.

Thanks to all the volunteers who stayed with us during the tough times over the past two years. Again, stay safe.

*Roger Bird*

## WELCOME NEW VOLUNTEERS



*John Thomson (left) and Richard Lee*



## Medal Mounting

The VIMM will gladly mount your medals in court mounting or in a frame. Contact us for further information and prices.

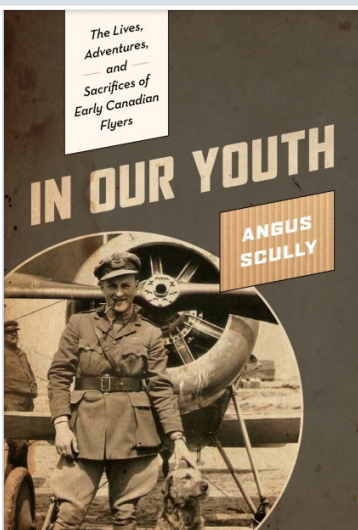


# ACE ISLAND

## MAJOR NEW DISPLAY AND BOOK LAUNCH

By Brian McFadden

The month of November, and Remembrance Week in particular, is always a special time at the Vancouver Island Military Museum and, this year is no different, with two special events happening during the month. In early November we had the book launch of Angus Scully's WW1 book, *In Our Youth*, the story of Canadian aviators, many of whom were fighter aces from the (RNAS) Royal Naval Air Service and the (RFC) Royal Flying Corp. In conjunction with the book launch, the museum will be unveiling a new exhibit titled "Ace Island," dedicated to four of the aviators mentioned in, *In Our Youth*.



In 1914, Canada's population was approximately eight million, however, in Central Vancouver Island it was little more than ten thousand. To have four fighter pilots who achieved the classification of "Ace" from this one small community is nothing short of remarkable. These "Aces" were Osborne Orr and Charles Hickey, who were both born in Nanaimo, and Joseph Fall from Cobble Hill, just a few miles south. The fourth

member of the group, and the most famous and well-known air ace of World War One, was Nanaimo-born Raymond Collishaw, who is honoured in the Canadian Aviation Hall of Fame. Also on display are the newly discovered medals of Osborne Orr that were generously donated to the museum by the Thayer family of Seattle.

Collishaw and Fall flew with No. 3 Naval Squadron (later RAF 203) while Orr joined Hickey at RAF No. 204. During the First World War, Canadians aviators played a role in the air war out of all proportion to their country's population. In fact, one in every five airmen who flew with the RAF was Canadian.

### Canadian Army 11th Canadian Mounted Rifles Royal Naval Air Service (RNAS) 1917 Royal Air Force



Capt. Charles Roberts Reeve Hickey

World War I Vancouver Island Flying Ace, Charles Hickey, was born in Nanaimo on September 10th, 1897 and grew up in French Creek. Charles was raised in Parksville and attended school in nearby Nanaimo. After graduation he studied medicine for two years at Nanaimo General Hospital. In 1916, at the age of 19, he enlisted as a private in the 11th Canadian Mounted Rifles, before the regiment sailed for England, aboard the passenger liner SS Lapland. Fascinated by the air war on the Western Front he transferred to the Royal Naval Air Service for training in 1917.



Troop Ship SS Lapland leaving Victoria BC, 1916.



Charles Hickey 1916  
Royal Naval Air Service



Hickey in France  
in Flying G



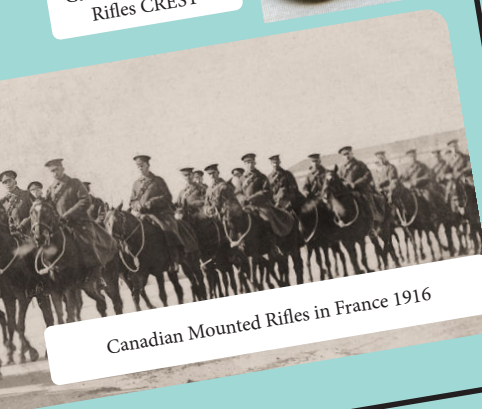
Canadian Mounted Rifles. 1916  
Royal Air Force (RAF) 1918

Hickey.



He joined No. 4 Naval Squadron based at Vandome, France, and scored four aerial victories on his first operational sortie.

Canadian Mounted Rifles CREST



Canadian Mounted Rifles in France 1916



France 1917  
Flying Gear

Hickey in uniform  
Royal Airforce 1918.



"The Somme" 1916



Joseph Fall with his mother & wife for  
DSC Presentation Buckingham Palace, 1917



## RNAS - RAF Joseph Fall World War I 1914 1918

Joseph Stewart Temple Fall, was a World War I Canadian pilot and flying ace credited with 36 aerial victories. He was awarded the DSC-2 Bars, and the AFC. Fall was born into a farming family on Vancouver Island, British Columbia, on November 17th, 1895. He attended Cowichan Public School and later Quamichan Lake Private School; the latter establishment prepared boys for entrance to the Royal Military College.

Fall was keen on aviation and at the outbreak of WWI applied and was accepted by the Royal Naval Air Service (RNAS) in August, 1915. The Canadian Government at the time had no flight training school so Fall paid his own passage to England to train. In February, 1916 he was posted to No. 3 Naval Squadron based at Dunkirk, France. The squadron was equipped with the Sopwith Pup aircraft and Fall flew this on a succession of bombing and strafing operations. He scored his first aerial victory in April, 1917 and followed that with 10 more victories before

changing planes to the faster Sopwith Camel. In August, 1917 he was transferred to No 9 Squadron as a Flight Commander. In April, 1918 he was sent to the School of Aerial Gunnery and Tactics as Acting Squadron Commander and instructor until the end of the war in November, 1918.



Joseph Fall at the Controls of his  
Sopwith Camel Aircraft, 1917



Joseph Fall (Far Right) with Pilots from  
103 Squadron France, 1917



Joseph Fall in Naval Uniform, 1916

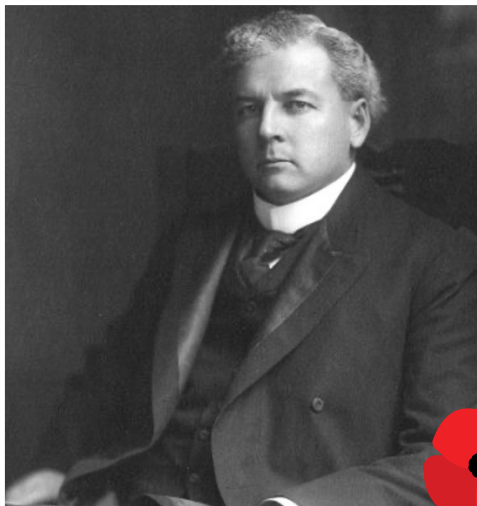


# RCN'S FIRST SUBMARINES – 1914

By Greg Devenish

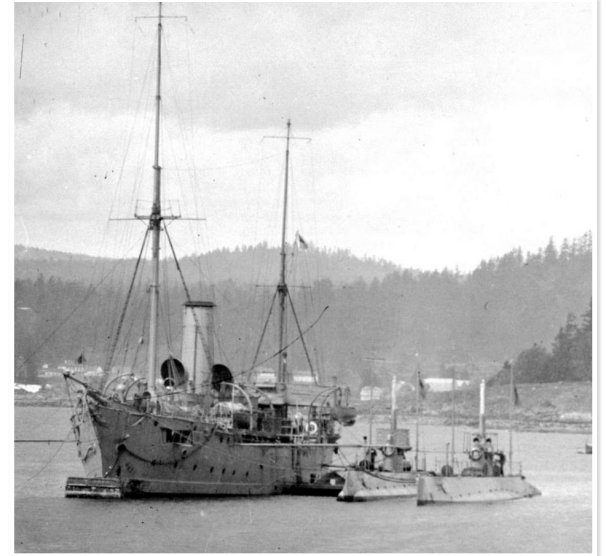
In the early hours on 5 August 1914, tensions were high as two submarines appeared off the entry to Esquimalt Naval Base. Britain had declared war on Germany the day before, and Canada was at war. Was this a German attack? Guns guarding the naval port were trained and readied for action. At the last second, a Canadian officer avoided catastrophe by ordering the guns to stand down. The two boats were, in fact, the newly purchased CC1 and CC2, arriving from Seattle for the RCN. The purchase had been shrouded in secrecy and could have resulted in an international incident with the USA. So began the first attempt by the RCN to create a submarine service.

The subs were originally ordered by Chile, at a cost of \$824 000, from the Paterson Seattle Construction and Dry Dock Company. These small boats, armed with 18-inch torpedo tubes, measured 150 feet long with a beam of only 15 feet. Displacement was 421 tons. Surface speed was 13 knots, 10 knots submerged. The boats could reach a maximum depth of 200 feet. Each submarine was crewed by 20 submariners and three officers. But, after their initial sea trials the Chilean navy refused to accept them.



British Columbia Premier Sir Richard McBride. He counted among his friends, Prime Minister Sir Robert Borden, Winston Churchill, and Royal Navy Admiral "Jacky" Fisher, father of the modern submarine.

James Patterson, owner of the Seattle company, fearing a huge financial loss, arranged a meeting in Victoria with officials, the BC Premier, and Capt. W.H. Logan, surveyor to the London Salvage Association.



HMC Submarines CC1 and CC2, next to their tender, HMCS Shearwater, in Esquimalt harbour

Premier McBride was enthusiastic about the discussions and saw some political points could be made with the electorate. Six days prior to the declaration of war he had received a telegram from Ottawa. *"Relations very strained with Germany,"* it stated, *"Guard against surprise attack."* McBride was also a strong supporter of the British Empire. Historian Julie Ferguson wrote, *"...his confidence was rooted in a surprisingly deep knowledge of Imperial Defense, naval history....The premier had continually rubbed shoulders with leading men of the day. He attended three Imperial Conferences."*

In 1914, the RCN was in its infancy and numbered just 330 officers and ratings, none with submarine experience. However, McBride began negotiations with Patterson. Ottawa and the Admiralty supported the purchase, provided the subs could be manned. On 4 August, negotiations were completed. The purchase price was \$1 500 000 - more than the \$330 000 that Chile had originally agreed to pay!

The next move was to arrange an immediate stealthy departure from Seattle. President Wilson, on the heels of declaration of war by the British Empire, had signed a series of neutrality declarations, endangering the sub deal. So the submarines departed Seattle in darkness and fog, manned by skeleton crews under the direction of Captain Logan. Running on the surface with their electric motors, they cleared Seattle's harbour and sailed to Esquimalt, where no one had been warned.



The RCN selected two experienced Royal Navy submarine officers to command CC 1 and CC 2. They were Lt. Adrian Keyes (Ret) and Lt. B. Jones. They quickly secured 36 RCN personnel. Fifty RCN sailors were mustered. Lt. Keyes addressed the men for volunteers, *"All those not wishing to serve in submarines fall out."* No one moved.



*On the deck of CC1. Coxswain James Addison on the right.*

The boats were cramped and challenging to maintain. Much practice was needed in crash diving, watch keeping, and firing exercises. CC1 and CC2 were initially used for coastal defence in BC. It wasn't long before they were in dry-dock for costly repairs, raising many questions from the opposition in the House of Commons, and the Public Accounts Committee. The constant repairs and boring duty of "showing the flag" in BC impacted crew morale.

In 1917, the Admiralty decided to move the submarines to Halifax. This required a long voyage of 7000 miles through the Panama Canal. The repositioning took twice as long as projected because of electrical fires and engine problems. The boats survived the Halifax explosion, and

a major refit was started. The war ended before the submarines could see any action. In 1920, along with HMCS Niobe, they were sold off as scrap for \$135 000.00.

Many lessons were learned and proved helpful in the building of the much improved British "H" Class in Canadian shipyards during the war. Eleven RCN officers, who had served on CC1 and CC2, went on to serve in RN submarines. Capt. Barnes Johnson served on four RN submarines and received the DSO. Lt. William Thompson of Ucluelet BC, completed many patrols with RN submarines during the war.

Canadian submariners have served on many foreign submarines including British, American, Dutch, and Australian. Some saw action in WWI and WWII. It has been an unheralded task and one the country has not always supported. However, the work done by crews of CCI and CCII laid the foundation for submariners in our Victoria class submarines today.



*Men from the Royal Naval Canadian Volunteer Reserve, as it was then called, provided men for the submarines.*



# DISPATCHES

from VIMM

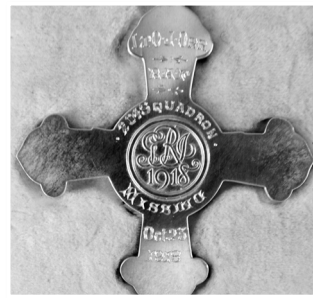


## HM QUEEN ELIZABETH II HELD THE FOLLOWING CANADIAN APPOINTMENTS AS HONORARY COLONEL-IN-CHIEF.

Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders of Canada (Princess Louise's)  
 Calgary Highlanders  
 Canadian Grenadier Guards  
 Canadian Armed Forces' Legal Branch  
 Canadian Military Engineers  
 48th Highlanders of Canada  
 Governor General's Foot Guards  
 Governor General's Horse Guards  
 King's Own Calgary Regiment  
 Le Régiment de la Chaudière  
 North Shore (New Brunswick) Regiment  
 Royal New Brunswick Regiment  
 Royal Regiment of Canadian Artillery (as Captain General)  
 Royal 22e Régiment ("The Van Doos")  
 Stormont, Dundas, and Glengarry Highlanders

## THE LAST SPITFIRE?

Museum modeller and director, Pat Murphy, is working on what he says will be his last Spitfire model. It will become a part of our very large tribute to Canadian Spitfire pilots.



*Osborne Orr's DFC now on display.*

## REMEMBERING JACK ZIEBART



*Jack Ziebart*

Jack Ziebart served the VIMM for many years as a director and as our first computer expert, retiring from museum duty in 2020. Jack served for thirty years in the RCAF, retiring as a Squadron Leader and communications specialist. He was always a quiet gentleman and will be missed.

## IN OUR YOUTH – BOOK LAUNCH

Angus Scully expanded on the story of Osborne Orr, which first appeared in these pages, and wrote a book about early Canadian flyers. The official launch was held at the museum in conjunction with the opening of the Ace Island display.

## Museum Directors

**Roger Bird**, President  
**Brian McFadden**, Vice President  
**Phil Harris**, Treasurer  
**Pat Murphy**, Armoury/Security  
**Greg Devenish**, Secretary, Library

**Bruce Davison**, Volunteer Coordinator  
**Bill Brayshaw**, Acquisitions  
**Angus Scully**, Newsletter Editor