



23rd WFA Pacific Coast Branch Seminar Program 7, 8, 9 March 2025

“Reckoning with the Relevance of the Great War”

**Canadian Scottish Regiment (Princess Mary's) Officers Mess, Bay Street
Armoury, Victoria BC**

Friday, March 7 —Evening

6 to 9:30 pm: Check-in, Social Gathering, Silent Auction Setup,
Announcements, Collectors Showcase (For information about Collectors
Showcase contact Roger McGuire at xcv@telus.net)

7 to 7:15 pm: A spokesman for the **5th Field Artillery Regiment** will deliver
information about the regimental museum and particulars of its opening times
on Friday and Saturday.

7:15 to 7:55 pm: ***Commemoration in the Digital Era: Harnessing Emerging
Technologies to Honour the Fallen***
Ryan Mullens

Saturday, March 8—Day

8 to 8:45—Check-in, Coffee & Tea

8:45 to 9—Introductions & Announcements

9 to 9:40—***The Balfour Declaration***
Dr Martin Bunton

9:40 to 10:20—***China in World War One***
Roger Mah Poy

10:20 to 10:40—Stretch Break

10:40 to 11:20—***“To Be True to Your Comrades”: Haig and Turner’s Role
in the Formation of the Royal Canadian Legion***
Dr William Stewart

11:20 to 12:00 noon—***Voices Through Time: The Culture of the Letter***
Stephen Davies

12:00 to 1:30—Lunch Break

1:30 to 2:15—***Reckoning with Relevancy: A World War One Monument for the USA***
Mark McLain

2:15 to 3:00—***Through the Spectacle of Music: British Military Bands and Diplomacy, 1904-1918***
Harry McGuire

Saturday, March 8—Evening

MESS DINNER: jackets and ties or mess-kit for gentlemen, suits or dresses for ladies

6 to 7—Cocktails and Silent Auction

7 to 8—Dinner

8 to 8:40— Keynote Speaker: Jenny Seeman, ***Craigdarroch Military Hospital: Early Origins of Canada's Health Care System***

After 9—Socializing in Mess bar

Sunday, March 9—Morning

8 to 8:30—Coffee & Tea / Silent Auction Conclusion payments and pickup

8:30 to 9:30—ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

9:30 to 9:50—Stretch Break

9:50 to 10:40—***The Poem and the Poppy: "In Flanders Fields" Revisited***
Alan MacLeod

10:40 to 11:50—***"The Inevitable March to Forget": The Journey of Remembering the First World War***
Geoff Bird

11:50 to 12:10—Farewells

12:10 Group Tidying

2024 Seminar Presentations & Speaker Bios

● Commemoration in the Digital Era: Harnessing Emerging Technologies to Honor the Fallen

Every gravestone holds a story. This presentation explores how Memory Anchor, a Calgary-based company, uses technologies such as AI, 3D modeling, and augmented reality to preserve the legacies of those who served in conflicts spanning the First World War to today. Partnering with the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, which commemorates 1.7 million casualties from the First and Second World Wars, Memory Anchor creates immersive experiences that connect new generations to history.

Ryan Mullens is a veteran of the Canadian Armed Forces Reserves, where he served as a Combat Engineer for almost a decade. He is the Co-founder of Memory Anchor, a Calgary-based company established in 2018, dedicated to preserving the stories of those who served through innovative technologies. Ryan is a leadership consultant and public speaker specializing in emotional intelligence and leadership. He holds a bachelor's degree in applied justice studies from Mount Royal University and a master's in leadership from Royal Roads University. His diverse experience includes international aid work, social services, coaching, and counselling.

● The Balfour Declaration

In 1917, amidst the horrors of the Great War, British foreign minister Arthur Balfour committed Britain to help build a Jewish National Home in an overwhelmingly Arab country, the inhabitants of which sought self-determination. This presentation will consider in some detail the wartime context in which the declaration was crafted. It will then examine the post-war context during which, over two decades, British officials in fact retreated from Balfour's impossible promise. Born in the midst of the First World War, the Balfour Declaration would officially be revoked on the eve of the Second. What then is its overall significance for the ongoing Palestinian Israeli conflict?

Martin Buntun is Professor of History at the University of Victoria. His first book focused on the making and remaking of colonial land policies in Palestine, as did his edited nine-volume collection of primary sources on land legislation. More recent projects include the document reader *The End of the Ottoman Empire and the Forging of the Modern Middle East* (co-authored with Andrew Wender), and a revised second edition of *The Palestinian-Israeli Conflict: A Very Short Introduction*.

● China in World War 1

The role of China in WW 1 is often forgotten, despite the fact that 100 000 Chinese men were sent to the Western and Eastern fronts. How did they get to Europe from Asia? What roles did they play? Why were they particularly interested in that conflict? How did the outcomes of WW1 affect China and its place in the world? This presentation is based on published books and internet-sourced material on the Chinese Labour Corps.

Roger Mah Poy is a retired Alberta school teacher who has a passion for the history of the Chinese in Canada and abroad. He has extensive knowledge on the subject of changing public opinion regarding social policy and history. He was featured in a CBC documentary regarding Ha Ling Peak in Canmore Alberta and has had numerous articles written about him. Currently he lives on Salt Spring Island where he is actively involved in the community.

● “To Be True to Your Comrades:” Haig and Turner’s Role in the Formation of the Royal Canadian Legion

By 1925, the Canadian veterans’ movement had splintered into fourteen feuding organizations with limited political influence and funds. It took the intervention of Sir Douglas Haig and the executive efforts of Richard Turner to break the logjam to form what became the Royal Canadian Legion. Arthur Currie, despite his prominence, turned down an offer to lead the process. This presentation highlights Haig’s and Turner’s instrumental roles in establishing the Legion.

Bill Stewart earned his PhD from the University of Birmingham (UK) in 2012, after a thirty-year career in senior marketing management positions in high tech. His research focus is on the tactics, operations, and administration of the Canadian Expeditionary Force. He has published three books including *The Embattled General: Sir Richard Turner and the First World War*; *Canadians on the Somme: The Neglected Campaign*; *The Hardest Battle: The Canadian Corps and the Arras 1918 Campaign*. In addition, he has written multiple articles and chapters. He lives in Ladysmith B.C.

● Voices Through Time: The Culture of the Letter

This talk will explore the culture of the war letter, and what it can and cannot tell us about the experience of war. Correspondence permits us to understand soldiers at a very personal level rather than as simply statistics, and it gives back an element of humanity to those otherwise ordinary and forgotten participants. Letters provide a unique opportunity to see the war through their eyes and their words.

Born in Hamilton, Ontario, **Stephen Davies** completed an MA at the University of Warwick and a PhD at McMaster University. Currently a Professor of History at Vancouver Island University, he previously taught at Memorial University, Nipissing University, Concordia University, and the University of Ottawa. In addition to his teaching, he is also the founder and Director of The Canadian Letters and Images Project, a digital archive of the Canadian war experience, housed at Vancouver Island University.

● Reckoning With Relevancy—A World War One Monument for the USA

World War 1 is now more than one hundred years old. Only in the last year was an official federal monument finished in Washington DC. This talk offers an American take on Reckoning with the Relevancy of the Great War.

Mark McLain has given several presentations in the past at WFA seminars. A retired optometrist, he served in the US army, gaining the rank of major. His interest in WW1 is longstanding from his days as a young captain serving in Europe in the 1980s. An Oregon State University graduate with a professional degree from Southern California, he returns today after leading a vision clinic trip to the Philippines where over 4000 patients were seen.

● Through the Spectacle of Music: British Military Bands and Diplomacy, 1904-1918

During the First World War, British military bands went on tours to Paris (1917) and Italy (1918) to generate support for the Allied war effort. These “propaganda tours” marked the culmination of a trend that emerged at the end of the nineteenth century: the deployment of military musicians to project British power abroad.

Harry McGuire is a legislative staffer on Parliament Hill in Ottawa and serving member in Canadian Army Reserves. He holds a master’s degree in international history from the London School of Economics and an undergraduate degree in history from the University of Victoria.

● **Craigdarroch Military Hospital: Early Origins of Canada's Health Care System**

Having operated as one of many military hospitals across Canada for returning soldiers at the end of the Great War, Craigdarroch Castle stands today as an important record of Canada's efforts to care for wounded and disabled veterans. In commemorating this through individual stories of hospital staff, patients, and from Dunsmuir family members' experiences, museum visitors recognize how the benefits and support services we take for granted today have their roots in the nationwide commitment to care for veterans.

Jenny Seeman is currently the assistant curator at Craigdarroch Castle in Victoria, B.C. She has more than twenty years of collections management experience in government, religious, and academic archives across Canada. The recent switch to museum curation reflects a passion for heritage sites preservation and interpretation. Jenny has been immersed in the Dunsmuir family story for close to a decade, which necessarily includes a deep interest in the history of Victoria and Vancouver Island. Complimenting her interest in local history, Jenny currently serves as member of the Colwood Heritage Commission and is Vice-President of the Victoria Historical Society.

● **The Poem and the Poppy: "In Flanders Fields" Revisited**

It is now 110 years since John McCrae penned "In Flanders Fields" to honour his fallen friend and comrade, Alexis Helmer. This talk will offer a then-and-now comparison of the significance of these remembrance emblems during the war, its immediate aftermath, and in our own time.

Alan MacLeod is the author of four published books, two having to do with the Great War and remembrance. MacLeod is a long-time member of the Pacific Coast Branch and has given a half dozen presentations at previous Branch seminars. He spent two years as a graduate student in English literature at Dalhousie University. During that time the war poems of Wilfred Owen, Isaac Rosenberg, and Siegfried Sassoon were among his favourite subjects.

● **"The Inevitable March to Forget"? The Journey of Remembering the First World War**

With the passage of time, there is an inevitability of forgetting the past. This presentation focuses on the conference's theme, reckoning with the relevance of remembrance to take stock of the state of cultural memory of the First World War in 2025. The presentation focuses on the trends, challenges and opportunities concerning remembrance and commemoration as we step forward into the fifth generation since 1918.

Dr. Geoffrey Bird is an anthropologist and professor at Royal Roads University. In 2015, Geoff launched the War Heritage Research Initiative, dedicated to public education through free short films focused on sites of war memory and their storytellers. He has written, directed, and produced over 35 documentary films. His prior career included working overseas in Vietnam and Malaysia, serving as an officer in the naval reserve, and working as a guide at Vimy Ridge. In May, he will release his next film entitled "Story Pole: Indigenous Veterans and the Tallest Totem in the World."