



Memorial Gardens



Veterans Remembered In Qualicum Beach

Branch 76 Qualicum Beach of The Royal Canadian Legion is one of the few, perhaps the only Legion Branch in Canada that has three distinctive outdoor cenotaphs, plus an indoor portable cenotaph at which Remembrance Day memorial services are held to recognize and honour those who have fallen in the various wars and peacekeeping engagements in which Canada has been involved.

The first cenotaph was erected in the Qualicum Beach Cemetery by the Legion, with a flagpole and concrete base engraved, "Lest We Forget". A brass plaque was placed bearing the inscription, "Erected By the Canadian Legion No.76, King George V Jubilee, 1935. The first service was held there in 1935. Prior to 1935, Qualicum Beach Branch members attended Remembrance Day ceremonies in conjunction with Mount Arrowsmith Branch 49 at their stone cenotaph, which was originally in the Parksville Community Park.

The second cenotaph at the foot of Memorial Avenue was constructed from beach stones gathered and assembled by Legion branch members, on the beach side of Highway 19A. Dedication was held on May 24, 1949 and the first Armistice Day service at that location took place on November 11, 1949. Attendance at the Qualicum beachside cenotaph declined after a few years as cold and stormy winds off the Strait took their toll of aging Qualicum branch members. However, a service is still conducted there following the Remembrance Church Parade held on the Sunday before November 11th.

In the early '70s it had been decided to construct a new cenotaph on the First Avenue (now known as Veterans Way) side of the new branch building that was nearing completion. The new structure was constructed of yellow cedar logs, hand cut by volunteer Legion craftsmen, and carefully aligned in a unique angular style to radiate from the base. Each branch symbolizes a particular phase of Canadian history. Dedication of this third cenotaph took place on October 6, 1973. A plaque was attached inscribed, "Lest We Forget - In Memory of Our Fallen Comrades - We Will Remember Them", to recognize veterans of World War I, World War II and the Korean War. A bronze plaque was added and dedicated on November 1, 1993 bearing the wording, "The Peacekeepers - We Will Remember Them". On November 10th each year, a Candlelight Tribute to veterans and loved ones is held at the Branch 76 Cenotaph at which branch members and the general public may place candles.

Years later, in 2008 it was agreed by both the Town and Branch 76 that the flagpole and base in the Cemetery would have to be replaced due to deterioration. Financial assistance was obtained from The Department of Veterans Affairs; and the Town of Qualicum Beach undertook the work. Permission for the demolition of the old cenotaph was granted by BC/Yukon Command, upon receiving assurance that some parts of the original structure would be included in the new memorial. Dedication of the renovated structure was conducted on December 10, 2008.

Remembrance services are held each year at a church parade on the Sunday prior to November 11. Wreaths are placed at the cenotaphs at the beach and cemetery locations, with the Branch Executive, colour party, Branch members present.

In addition, a public service is conducted at the Town Civic Centre on November 11, at which more than 600 veterans, Legion members and Town citizens have been in attendance. Wreaths are placed at a temporary cenotaph on the stage by Government dignitaries, Veterans and Service organizations, local businesses, and citizens on this occasion, to remember those who have served, and are still serving, our country. The general public is welcome to attend any or all of these services.

Information sources:

- 1) ***"Veterans Remembered in Qualicum Beach"*** by Bud Stevens (2008).
- 2) ***"We Will Remember - a history of Qualicum Beach (Pacific No. 76) Branch The Royal Canadian Legion"*** by Eswyn Lyster (1976).

Historical Glimpses - No.1

The Beginning

In this, the 85th anniversary of the founding of Qualicum Beach Legion Branch 76, it might be of interest to new members and even to many long-time members to review some of the highlights, and a few lowlights, of how the branch became what it is today.

If you have examined the Branch Charter that is displayed on the West wall of the Auditorium, you should be aware that the 15 World War 1 Veterans whose names appear on the Charter are the founding members of Branch 76. The Charter was issued by the Canadian Legion of the British Empire Service League to Qualicum Beach (British Columbia No. 76) Branch 76, and is dated "sixteenth day of November, 1926".

The Canadian Legion had been created at a convention in June 1925 that included representatives from a great number of veterans' organizations formed at the end of World War 1. The largest of these was the Canadian Legion of Ex-Servicemen.

Less than a year later a small group of veterans held a meeting in Qualicum Beach, at which it was decided to seek out information on how to form a branch. Invitations to join were mailed out to local veterans and at a subsequent meeting it was decided to proceed.

In the beginning the branch had no headquarters and meetings were held wherever adequate locations could be rented. This became an increasingly serious problem for the financially-strapped organization that was attempting to fulfill its declared mandate of supporting veterans, widows, dependents and community activities.

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Historical Glimpses No.2

Early Difficulties

Almost from the time of receiving its Charter in 1926 Branch 76 experienced financial difficulties. For instance, the branch was unable to raise \$20.00 to send a delegate to the Dominion Convention in 1927. At that time the annual membership fee was \$2.00, but the membership count is unknown.

In order to accomplish its stated goals of assisting veterans and their dependents, various fund-raising events were held. In April, 1927 a dance was held in a log cabin at the beach near where the Sand Pebbles Motel is now located.

Several "smoking concerts" – a form of stag party- were held at an admission charge of .25. As a gentleman did not smoke in the presence of a lady, no ladies were in attendance.

Finances evidently improved sufficiently by 1928 that the branch was able to afford \$50. expense money to send President D. Shaw to represent the branch at a Provincial Convention in Kamloops.

Although it is not specifically stated in the Minutes or other publications, the formation of a Ladies Auxiliary in 1929 must have been a significant factor in stabilizing the financial predicament of the branch. The wives of branch members, who had always been supportive of the branch, followed through with the application process. Ten ladies are named on the official Charter in the branch auditorium.

Historical Glimpses - No. 3

The Ladies Auxiliary

The Ladies Auxiliary to Legion Branch 76 was established on March 13, 1929 by ten enterprising and committed women. Their primary goal was to augment the Legion's efforts in assisting veterans. This has been expanded over the years to include Broadmead (Veterans)Lodge in Victoria, Haven House (Vancouver) and local projects such as Hospice Society, Salvation Army, S.O.S., women's shelters as well as other worthy community causes.

What do most organizations do? They try to raise money. Our L.A. is not any different in this respect. How do they do this? First and foremost they cater memorial services for Legion members and spouses, and for veterans who are both Legion members and non-Legion members. They also cater luncheons, hold rummage/ garage sales and are involved in Qualicum Beach's annual St. Marks' Fair in July. When the branch is planning a special occasion, they turn to their Ladies Auxiliary.

The present membership stands at 55, however they would like to welcome anyone who believes that their efforts can make a difference. Don't let the name "Ladies Auxiliary" fool you, as they have a couple of brave men in the group. Please don't think that this will be a full-time job where you will be run off your feet; you can put as little or as much time into working with the L.A. as you can manage.

Meetings are held in the afternoons once a month on the first Thursday at 1:30. The annual dues are only \$19.00!

Further information and contacts... [Read More](#)

Historical Glimpses - No. 4

Picture Shows

While operating funds and monies for expenses such as community donations and assistance to veterans were raised through dances in the Community Hall, another source of funding were Picture Show nights. These started in the log cabin at the

seaside near where the Sand Pebbles Motel now stands. The rental of the cabin in April 1945 was \$2.50 per night. The owner and operator of the movie projector received 70% of the proceeds, with the remainder going to the branch. Janitorial service, liability and fire insurance were the responsibility of the Legion. The first night's profit was shown as \$14.50 and a committee was set up to handle funds and disbursements as needed. The April 30, 1945 Branch minutes show the charge for admission was \$5.00 per member, with members "on duty" getting in free and the chairman received \$0.10 per ticket. In February 1946, rental for the Community Hall, where picture shows were evidently now being held, was increased from \$5.00 to \$7.00 per evening. In the same month the convener of the hall requested that show nights be moved from Friday to Saturday, to which the Legion agreed, provided that Friday nights would be allocated to the branch in November and December each year for Whist Drives.

By September 1947, when picture shows were being shown at the Knights of Pythias Hall, admission is recorded as \$5.50 for adults and \$0.25 for children, and a better class of pictures was being provided. The Chairman of the committee set up in 1945 received an additional \$0.10 per ticket increase. This arrangement was approved for a three-month trial, and in addition a motion was moved and passed that a vote of thanks be given to the Picture Show Committee.

A question of conduct during picture shows was raised at the January 6, 1947 Executive Meeting, held at Secretary James Graham's residence with five members present. The nature of the subject discussed was not indicated nor was it revealed in the Minutes of the following General Meeting.

In January 1948 a vote of thanks was again extended to the Picture Show Committee. At the following meeting a vote was taken and carried to purchase \$5.00 gifts for both of the ushers at the picture shows. At the February 23, 1948 General Meeting in the Pythias Hall, advertising for picture shows was to be "divided between Arrowsmith Branch".

Ads for the shows later appeared in the Parksville-Qualicum Progress.

An objection by the Fire Marshall with regard to attendance at picture shows is mentioned in the December 1, 1948 minutes. It is further stated that this was expected to improve next year.

At the January 31, 1949 General Meeting an amount of \$100.00 was approved for gifts to the Picture Show Committee for "wonderful work during the year". The gifts were presented during the February 17, 1949 meeting at Pythias Hall with 35 members in attendance.

At the October 6, 1949 Executive Meeting held at President H.G. Hood's home with Executive members present, gifts to the Picture Show Committee were again recommended. These were presented at the December 15, 1949 General Meeting, held in the Community Hall. Club Room.

Legion Picture shows ended with the opening of the Village Theatre in 1949.

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Historical Glimpses No.5

Pillar to Post

Throughout the fifties and sixties the Branch and its Ladies Auxiliary continued to struggle with financial shortfalls, in order to enable them to carry on with their primary role of supporting veterans, dependents and the community. Fund- raising events included teen dances in the Town Recreation Hall, occasionally with live bands at which it is reported that as many as 200 attended. On a number of occasions these events had to be moved to the school gym due to duplicated booking times. To encourage attendance offers were extended to teen-agers to join these Friday night dances at a reduced charge of \$.50 for members – non-members paid \$.75. For a time these teen dances were the main source of income for the branch, but further restrictions eventually forced the closing of teen dances completely.

Chinese dinners proved popular for a couple of years with the Chinese cook from Parksville delivering hot food right to the branch. (These were again attempted in the early 1990's with members having to go to Parksville to pick up the orders.)

Bingos were re-started in July 1969 with over 70 in attendance, but these again had to be discontinued as attendance declined due to competition from other organizations.

At the community hall the B.C. Fire Marshall required that fire doors and stairs had to be installed at the Legion's expense, a cost estimated to \$800.00. Taxes and other insurmountable obligations were encountered and the Village eventually withdrew the lease for the Community Hall from the Branch.

However, the principal cause of the Legion's difficulties appears to have been the lack of a consistent location under the Legion's control and at a uniform cost, where members could gather for meetings, socials, entertainment and fraternization. Un-

fortunately further records of these years, including the Branch Minutes, were mostly destroyed when the branch basement was flooded in 1998.

From some information retrieved of the forties, fifties and sixties era", finances continued to be of concern. Attendance declined as the locations for General, Executive Meetings and entertainment functions were frequently changed. Rental rates increased and dates of events conflicted with a sports club. More stringent Fire Regulations forced meetings to be re-located from the Community Hall to the Pythias Hall. Some Executive meetings were held in the small hall beneath the Community Hall, and occasionally at the "Water Co office, and residences of Secretary James Graham and President H.C. Hood. A further blow came when it was announced that the Pythias Hall could not be purchased – evidently feelers had been put out in this direction.

However, the culmination of all of these problems imperiled the overall financial stability of the branch. Although no nominal roll or membership count is available for this period, indications of declining membership were evident.

The need for a permanent location for the Branch became urgent. The consequences will be contained in the next segment of "Historical Glimpses".

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Historical Glimpses No.6

Brink of Disaster

In previous "Glimpses" it has been shown that, despite various efforts to raise operating funds, other problems - costs of renovation to rental premises, fire doors and stairs having to be installed, withdrawal of the community hall lease and frequent re-locations of meetings, the branch continued in a very precarious financial position. The actual membership numbers in the '50s and '60s are not known, but membership dues at these times were only \$4.00.

At the General Meeting on April 28, 1969 with 30 members present, President G.E.Dawburn reported a net loss of \$61.42 at the Spring Dance. Twenty-one members had not paid their dues and it was felt that a proposed amalgamation with Mount Arrowsmith Branch in Parksville would cause other problems. Firstly it was believed that each member would have to apply to transfer, and even if a majority of members agreed to this it was felt that Branch 49 would have to agree to a proposal to alternate year-about on the election of Presidents from one branch and the other. Dues could be

expected to double, a solution that had previously been resisted by our members. In his summation President Dawburn concluded that the branch's present financial condition made it impossible to continue to operate.

Three alternatives were put to the members for a vote by secret ballot:

1. Retain Charter and finance a new hall;
2. Retain Charter and raise dues; or
3. Surrender Charter.

Results - #1 - 5 votes; #2 - 2 votes; #3 - 19 votes. With 26 voting members in attendance and 21 unpaid, the branch's total roster may have been in the 60-70 range, considering that there obviously would have been some paid members absent and 2-year unpaid members had been dropped from the nominal roll.

Pacific Command recommended that the President call a Special General Meeting, which was held on May 12/69 with 35 members present, including the President, 1st and 2nd Vice Presidents and Past President.

Also in attendance were the President of Pacific Command Cde. D. Hunter, Command Officer Joe Cates and, representing NCVI Zone, Deputy Zone Commander Norm McLaren.

A lively debate took place on the pros and cons of the branch's past experiences. A letter from Moreen Harford, President of the Ladies Auxiliary was read, offering assistance in funding as, it was pointed out, without a Branch their organization would cease to exist. Command and Zone officers also offered assistance if required.

Branch President Dawburn suggested,

"An active installation and party be held, should the branch continue". During discussions it had been remarked that Pacific Command had already rejected a change in the Branch By-Laws to change Installation and Election dates, so no action could now be taken until the Fall. Comrade Hunter stated that he would use his official position to allow the election of new officers at the next General Meeting, with Installation sometime in June.

A Motion to Rescind the previous vote to close was passed and secret ballots issued, following an examination of membership cards. The results were 18 YES, 12 NO. The meeting adjourned just 20 minutes short of 2 hours. Qualicum Beach Legion No. 76

survived this near calamity and, like the mythical symbol Phoenix, "arose from near death to revive from the ashes.

On May 26, 1969, at a General Meeting held in the Small Hall (Den) of the Recreation building, a letter from Pacific Command was read which allowed necessary changes to the Branch By-Laws. A new Executive was elected with Comrade D.J. Price voted as President-elect, to replace Comrade Dawburn for the 1970 term. All elected and appointed positions were filled, including Honorary members.

A positive sign for the future!

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Historical Glimpses - No.7

Making Progress

As a result of the new breath of life afforded the Branch at the May 29,1969 meeting, members of the Executive were able to set about seeking a piece of property on which a building could be constructed. It was not until the General Meeting on April 27,1970, held at the United Church hall, that a letter was presented in which the Village Council offered Lot 5 to the Branch for purchase at \$2500.00 or a 50-year lease at \$50.00 per annum. The members voted to lease.

Exactly what negotiations took place in the ensuing months is not stated in the Minutes. However, at an Executive meeting on June 8,1970 again held at the United Church hall, it was announced that the Village would not consider selling part of the Lot - lease or buy the entire property were the only options. The Executive decided to recommend purchase for the stated amount, to the general membership.

A copy of an agreement between Branch 76 and the Village of Qualicum Beach was read by Past-President Dawburn at a General Meeting on December 14, 1970, in the Small Hall of the Recreation Centre. A vote was taken and it was carried to proceed with the purchase for the sum of \$2500.00.

As the lot was heavily forested with major trees, brush and deadfall, some of the clearing was contracted out to Jenkins Bros. for bulldozer work. Some financing was provided by a Local Initiatives Program and paid workers were reimbursed from this source.

Progress was reported by President S.B. Harford at the February 22, 1971 General Meeting, held in the Small Hall, Community Centre. Building ideas and designs were discussed, including pre-fab construction.

The Executive Committee held a meeting on May 18/71, at which a Finance Committee was established. Its objective was to conduct a feasibility study for the construction of a Branch building, targeted for September 1971.

A General Meeting, slated for May 24, 1971 had to be officially cancelled as insufficient members were present to form a quorum. Some thoughts were presented, however, on developing the Legion lot into Legion Centennial Community Park, retaining a portion for construction of a Legion hall.

As that further cleanup of the lot was felt to be required, a Park Committee was set up at an Executive meeting held on September 13, 1971. This park-clearing project ultimately had to be put out to contract and on September 17 a bill for \$146.50 was submitted by the Park Committee for work done to date by a crew of dedicated volunteer members.

A Winter Works program enabled the Village Parks Department to make a plan for development of the park. Additional financing was obtained from the Federal Government's Local Improvement Project grant.

It is interesting to note, at this point, that the branch was showing some sign of affluence. The minutes indicate that the March 22, 1972 edition of the Parksville-Qualicum Beach Progress reported on the donation of a \$1000.00 cheque from the branch to the Arrowsmith Rest Home Society.

The official opening of the Legion Community Park took place on May 28, 1972, with Mayor Charles Darkis cutting the ribbon and many dignitaries in attendance.

Again as a point of interest. The Branch 76 in-house news bulletin, "The Beachead", edited by Comrade Hugh Perry (who was Branch President in 1972), won the North Central Vancouver Island Zone award in 1973 for the best Zone bulletin.

In the November 16, 1972 edition the Victoria Daily Columnist reported that the branch had put over \$6500.00 into the development of the park since purchasing the land.

In 1973 the Netherlands Flower Institute presented the Branch with a gift of 750 tulip bulbs in recognition of the Dutch-Canadian friendship that had been continued since

the liberation of Holland by Canadian troops during World War II. A tulip bulb planting ceremony was held on October 6, 1973 with the Consul General of The Netherlands, Mr. Adrian Mansvelt, in attendance, as well as Mayor Darkis, Raymond Harrison, President of Pacific Command, Maj. General George Pearkes, V.C. and many other dignitaries in attendance. Over 100 people attended a wine and cheese reception in the Community Hall and were entertained by the 3rd Battalion PPCLI and the Courtenay Branch Pipe Bands.

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Historical Glimpses - No.8

A Home - at Last!

Construction of the long-awaited clubhouse got underway in late 1973, with many volunteer members working on the basement excavation, building construction and painting. President E.A. (Art) Morley was the project chairman, while a Past President E.A. Harford was construction consultant.

On June 8, 1974 Ladies Auxiliary President Mary Morley presented a cheque for \$3000.00 to Branch President Art, after both Morleys had been installed as Presidents by NCVI Zone Commander and long-time Zone Chairman Marcus Isbister.

For a description of the interior of the new clubhouse you may refer to the section headed "The End of the Seventies" in the "Historical Chronicle 1976 to 2006", that is available in the Branch.

The downstairs lounge was completed in time for the 1975 Remembrance Day services to be held there.

It was not until December 16 that the first official meeting took place in the still-unfinished new auditorium. At that time a various collection of chairs served to accommodate those in attendance.

An official opening was held on November 19, 1976 with a Golden Anniversary Ball in celebration of the Branch's 50th anniversary. Dress was formal and admission \$5.00 per person; entertainment by Island Ambassadors Orchestra. Guest of honour for the occasion was Comrade Bill Brendon, Honorary Treasurer, Pacific Command.

It is interesting to note that, at the Dominion Convention in 1976, a Pacific Command motion to allow non-veterans a vote was defeated. It was Comrade Brendon's feeling,

however, that the majority of veterans would want their sons and daughters to continue the Legion's good work. "Within the next 10 to 15 years," said Brendon, "veterans would largely be replaced in the Legion movement by younger people".

This is the last article on "Historical Glimpses" of the early years of Qualicum Beach Legion Branch No. 76. For further historical information you may refer to 1956 booklet of the first 50 years, written by the Late Comrade Eswyn Lister.

A later history of the Branch from 1976 to 2006, "Legion Historical Chronicle", is also available at the Branch.

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Celebrating serving Qualicum Beach for 88 years in 2014
Branch Hours • Monday - Saturday 1pm - 11pm • Sunday 1pm - 7pm
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