



# Sabretache

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THE CALGARY MILITARY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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November 2015



**Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, Arc de Triomphe,**  
On November evenings, one journalist reported, mourning relatives were even more numerous than usual;

A man or a woman whose son did not return from the war would go to place flowers and pay homage under the Arc de Triomphe, and without knowing one another, other fathers and mothers of missing soldiers could exchange greetings and say:

“Maybe he’s *your* son!”

“Maybe he’s *yours*!”

On November 20th, 1916, in the midst of the war, the president of an organization called French Memory was among the first to proffer the idea of burying an unknown soldier in the Pantheon, an idea taken up by the members of Parliament in 1919.

*(The Pantheon has a crypt which is in the subterranean chamber which is the final resting place for many well known (and some historically famous) French writers, poets and scientists.)*

An uproar ensued over the choice of the Pantheon as the final resting place. It was pointed out that they were running the risk of seeing the glorious Frenchman who died to save his country buried next to some famous person that he would have nothing in common with. The issue became a matter of public debate and to put it to rest the government backed off from its original choice of the Pantheon and chose the Arc de Triomphe.

This concurred with many editorial views of newspapers of the day, that claimed this would provide the highest honor for the unknown citizen-soldier.

“He had to be by himself, at the summit of the triumphal avenue, symbol of the nation’s sacrifice, outshining. all those military leaders whose names are engraved in the stones of the monument. Caring on the nation’s past victories, the tomb would forever seal off the passage under the arch. No one would march beneath it any longer because the public wanted to believe that this had really been the war to end all wars.”

As from 3rd November, André Maginot, minister of the pensions, announces the directives "to exhume, a body of a soldier who is identified as being French, but whose personal identity cannot be established". The former front is divided into nine sectors: Flandres, Artois, Somme, Marne, Chemin des Dames, Champagne, Verdun, Lorraine and Alsace.

## CMHS Meeting

The next CMHS meeting will be held on

**Tuesday,  
November 17th  
2015**

**7:00 pm**

At the  
Petty Officers’ Mess  
HCMS Tecumseh



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is a non-profit registered society  
which fosters the study of the  
military and the police, and the heritage of  
Canada, the British Empire, and the world  
as well as the preservation of military  
artifacts and records.

The CMHS meets once every calendar month  
at: Petty Officers' Mess  
HMCS Tecumseh  
1820 - 24th Street SW  
Calgary AB T2T 0G6

## Notice of Next Meeting

The next CMHS meeting will be held on  
**Tuesday, November 17th, 2015,**  
**19:00 (7:00 pm)**

At the Petty Officers' Mess, HMCS Tecumseh.  
Members are reminded that an offering of foodstuffs for the Legion Food Bank is  
considered your unofficial entrance fee to our regular scheduled meetings.

The unofficial agenda of this meeting will be:  
Introduction of guests, Minutes of last meeting Correspondence, Membership re-  
port Treasurer's report, Old business / New business Break, Show & Tell  
The President, **Kevin Roberts** would like to invite everyone to remain after the  
meeting for an informal time of fellowship.

On 9th November the coffins are transported to the  
citadel of Verdun. One of the casemates is converted  
into a chapel of rest. But only eight coffins arrived  
because there remained a doubt about one of the ex-  
humed bodies.

On 10th November, André Maginot leaves Paris to  
chair the ceremony. At 3pm he arrives at the citadel.  
He presents a bunch of flowers to Auguste Thien, a  
young corporal of the 132nd Regiment who has been  
designated one day before to choose the Unknown  
Soldier and says these words:

"Soldier, you will place this bunch of flowers on one  
of the eight coffins which will then be the Unknown  
Soldier It is the highest tribute and it is not too high,  
when it concerns the one whose anonymous sacrifice  
and whose superhuman courage saved the fatherland,  
the rights and freedom."

The young corporal finally stops in front of the 6th  
coffin. Afterwards, he will explain his choice by  
maintaining that he wanted to pay tribute to his regi-  
ment (132nd) by adding up all numbers (1+3+2).

Thien selected the sixth of the eight coffins, which  
was transported to Paris to rest in the chapel on the  
first floor of the Arc de Triomphe. There the coffin  
remained until January 28, 1921 at which time the  
Unknown French soldier was laid in his permanent  
place of honor at the base of the Arc de Triomphe.

On October 22, 1922 the French Parliament declared the eleventh day of November in each year to be a  
national holiday. The following year on November 11, 1923 Andre Maginot, French Minister for War, lit the  
eternal flame for the first time. Since that date it has become the duty of the Committee of the Flame to re-  
kindle that torch each evening at twilight.



Entrance to subterranean gallery used by soldiers at the Citadelle de Verdun



The eight coffins assembled in the subterranean galley before the selection

## Minutes of the last meeting

Minutes of the meeting of the **Calgary Military Historical Society**

**Meeting held on October 20th, 2015 at the Petty Officer's Mess, HMCS Tecumseh**

Meeting called to order by President Kevin R. at 7:00 PM 21 members in attendance. One Guest present. **Minutes** of previous meeting. Discussed and call for approval by Bob McP. Seconded by Barry E.

**Treasures Report.** *Due to absence of Treasurer Report is don by Pres. Kevin R.* Lists of monies collected from book auctions, donations etc. Listing of expenditures. Pres. Kevin R. moves that his report be accepted as reported. Seconded by Member Floyd S. Unanimous

**Membership.** Report by the Pres. Kevin R. . Membership totals 35 members. Accepted  
**Correspondence.** Email Correspondence received through web site. Quarry from Alberta Family Histories Society. Request to attend one of their meetings and give instructions and ideas of how to research the military history of relatives. Discussion amongst members as to how we can help. Members Dave L, Darrel K. and Mike C will contact and see if they can possibly attend and give help. Member Bruce G. suggests that we could use this to find new members. Correspondence # 2 Group invites members to attend or exhibit at conference about CWAC. Discussed.

### Old Business

Mike C. announces that the auction that he mentioned last month of "Shackleton's Medals" had taken place and someone paid 540,000 Pound Sterling for them.

### New Business-

Member Darrel K introduces his guest, Mr. Reid Fisher. And discusses his interests.  
 David S. reports that Military Museum will hold event Oct. 29th. Speaker is Ross Ellis. RSVP to attend.  
 Darrel K. reports on his attempts with EBay to remove advertisements by UK firm selling unregistered garments with Canadian military logos.  
 Kevin R. reminds all that Edmonton Gun Show goes this weekend.  
 David S. reports on problems with web site; Upgrade went bad but all is fine now.  
**Break** then auction of books by Ticketmaster Neil

### Annual General Meeting.

President Kevin R. discusses Maurice Harvey award and members pick member to receive.  
 President Kevin R. gives his address. Discusses and thanks members for interest and help. Discusses problems "Membership" and what can be done about it. Offers some ideas and members discuss. Discusses Show and Tell problems and members ask that people who hit the "5 minute mark" could be told in some circumstances that they have 1 more minute to wrap up their talk.

## Election of Officer's of the Calgary Military Historical Society.

President Kevin R. appoints Dave L as **Director (Historian)**, Floyd S. as **Director** and David G. as **Editor of Newsletter.**

Calls for nomination for **Treasurer**, Member Floyd S. is nominated, accepts and is unanimously elected.  
 Calls for nomination for **Secretary.** Member Martin U. is nominated accepts and is unanimously elected.  
Member Bob McP. calls for nomination of position of **President.** Member Kevin Roberts accepts and is unanimously elected.

Bob McP. Thanks him for his work.

Motion to Adjourn. By Floyd S. and seconded by everyone.

## October 1415 —600 years ago—The Battle of Agincourt



Soon after his accession, Henry V laid claim to the French crown. Stern and ruthless, Henry was a brilliant general who had gained military experience in his teens, when he fought alongside his father at the battle of Shrewsbury. In 1415, Henry set sail for France, capturing Harfleur. His offer to the French Dauphin of personal combat was refused; he therefore went on to defeat the French at the Battle of Agincourt.

Assisted by his brothers (the Dukes of Clarence, Bedford and Gloucester), Henry gained control of Normandy in subsequent campaigns. By the Treaty of Troyes (1420), he gained recognition as heir to the French throne, and married Charles VI's daughter Katherine. Success was short lived and he died of dysentery in 1422 in Bois de Vincennes, France.

**The Battle;** After a gruelling march of 17 days, to the river Somme, the 28 year old King Henry V of England set up his camp in the fields and orchards near Agincourt, in France. The English Army numbering about 6000 men had marched most of it in the rain.. They were hungry, exhausted and many suffered from dysentery.

The much larger French Army of some 20000 to 30000 men blocked Henry's progress to Calais. On the evening of 24 October the French commanders made their first error. The battlefield they had chosen was narrow and flanked on each side by woods. Their position to the North had left the English the option to close their army up to the woods at the narrowest point of the site. This would make a flanking sweep by the French cavalry much harder to execute. Moreover, the chosen ground was heavy sticky clay, which was going to make it hard going for the cavalry.



The danger posed by English longbow men was well known. There seems little doubt that the French Commander, Boucicault in particular was aware and had favoured simply starving the English rather than to engage them in a pitched battle. The other French commanders may not have been fully aware that of the 6000 English, over 5000 were longbow men.

After a stand-off of some three hours on the morning of the battle, King Henry ordered his army to lift its stakes positioned in the ground and advance some 870 yards.

That brought it to within approximately 330 yards from the French position. Crucially this advance brought the flanks of the English Army right up to the woods on either side and did so at the narrowest point of the battlefield. King Henry had thereby used the opportunity the French commanders had given him. A cavalry charge could no longer turn the flanks of the English, but could only come head-on.

The English move and repositioning of the stakes was completed at about 11 o'clock. As the cavalry gathered pace the longbow men held their arrows. The order to shoot was given when the horses were within bowshot at 220 to 240 yards. From then on volleys of arrows were loosed. The wounded horses panicked, riders were thrown, killed or suffered agonizing wounds. The cavalry was thrown back and trampled into the tightly packed advancing footmen. The heavy churned-up ground slowed the advance of the footmen, critically lengthening the time they were exposed to the arrow volleys before they could lock into combat. Another error now became apparent.



The footmen were unsupported by the many longbow and crossbow men in the French army, which had been placed behind the front line. With the kinetic energy of the cavalry broken and the possibility of an offensive by arrow neutralised, too much depended on the footmen.

The narrowness of the battlefield pushed together the overlarge French Army as it advanced into the narrowest part of the battlefield between the woods of Tramecourt and Agincourt. That further aggravated the lack of arm-room the footmen had to wield the weapons of hand to hand combat effectively. The equipment was heavy and their field of view limited by narrow visors. The sticky churned-up ground sapped their energy.

A final error now unfolded with disastrous consequences. Men at the front were squeezed up to the English by their own lines pressing from behind them, trampling men underfoot and further inhibiting the ability of those still standing to wield their weapons effectively. Nevertheless, the English were pushed back some distance by the sheer weight of the French army.

Then came King Henry's order for the counter-attack, which restored the line at massive cost to the opposing forces. Prisoners were now being taken in many thousands. Suddenly news spread into the English ranks of an attack by French cavalry in the rear upon the largely undefended baggage train. At the same time the third line of the French army looked as though it was re-forming. With large numbers of French troops still in the field ahead, the unquantifiable severity of an attack in the rear and with large numbers of still partially armed French prisoners among the English; the order to kill the prisoners

It was obeyed reluctantly and was enforced by King Henry's personal body of archers. The killing ceased as soon as the attack on the baggage train could be quantified as a raid and the opposing force lost its cohesion. Chivalry played its role, but any unnecessarily killing of a large source of ransom money was without doubt a more pressing consideration.

Now the third French line began to leave the battlefield, the remains of the first and second lines were unable to reform. One-third of French nobility was dead or captured.

The commander Boucicault was made prisoner. Heralds were sent out to ask whether the battle was conceded. The answer came back that it was and that the nearest castle was called Agincourt. King Henry declared the battle won and that it henceforth be known as the **Battle of AGINCOURT**.