

The Military Tradition

General Information: Published after 2000

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Just over ten years after it was founded, London, then a settlement of about 1000, became an Imperial Army post, which saw 500 troops arrive following the Rebellion of 1837. The town's economy benefited greatly through the building and supplying of the base. As well, the troops assisted with clearing stumps from the streets and fighting fires. Soon after their arrival, the officers built a theatre where the first plays to be staged in London were performed. Sports, horse racing and regimental games were all part of garrison life in London until the withdrawal of the British troops from Canada in 1869.

Many British soldiers retired and farmed in the London region and often assisted with the training of the local militia which was formed soon after the area was settled. Two of London's current militia units can trace their origins to the 19th century. The 1st Hussars, a cavalry troop, was raised in 1856, and 7th Fusiliers [now the 4th Battalion, Royal Canadian Regiment (RCR)] was formed in 1866. The 7th participated in both Riel Rebellions, the Boer War, and composed a large part of the 1st Battalion, 1st Division, and Canadian Expeditionary Force in WWI. The 7th, has been part of the reserve corps of the RCR since 1954.

The RCR itself started its existence as "D" Company of the Infantry School Corps established in the 1880s as Canada's first permanent army. Several name changes later it became known as the Royal Canadian Regiment. It operated out of Wolseley Barracks from 1888 to 1992. A detachment still occupies the barracks today.

1st Hussars Museum

1 Dundas Street

www.firsthussars.ca

Located in one of the last remaining original buildings located at the Forks of the Thames, the 1st Hussars Museum tells the history of the regiment during the South African War, the Great War, the Second World War and the War in Afghanistan.

Beginning as a troop of cavalry, the unit became a regiment of cavalry in 1872. The regiment earned its first battle honour during the Boer War. It next served during the Great War when Billy Bishop was temporarily a member of the unit. During World War II the Regiment was one of the formations which landed at Normandy on June 6, 1944, and became the only Allied Regiment to reach its first day objective. Since the Second World War the Hussars have participated in a number of Peacekeeping actions including Bosnia. Exhibitions highlight the Regiment's involvement in the Boer War, The Great War and World War II.

Royal Canadian Regiment Museum

750 Elizabeth Street 519-660-5102

www.rcrmuseum.ca

The Royal Canadian Regiment Museum depicts the history of Canada's oldest regular infantry regiment by taking the visitor through a time line starting with the establishment of the regiment in 1883 and ending with current operations throughout the world today.

Specific galleries throughout the museum are dedicated to the various campaigns in which the regiment has taken part beginning with the early years when they saw action in the Northwest Rebellion, the Yukon and the South African War. The focus of the World War I exhibit is a full size depiction of a section of a typical trench where visitors can experience the sights and sounds of the war in 1918.

During the Second World War the regiment saw action in Italy and here the gallery includes a street fighting scene from the town of Ortona. The RCR saw active service in Korea as well, and a special section is dedicated to this conflict.

The museum also houses an extensive archival collection consisting of prints, photos, scrap books, letters war diaries and rare books. This collection is of immense value to any researcher of military history.

Eldon House

481 Ridout Street North

(519) 661-0333, www.londonmuseum.on.ca

Built in 1834 for John and Amelia Harris, Eldon House is the oldest surviving residence in London. In the 1840s and 1850s, many of the officers of the various regiments posted to London paid frequent visits to Eldon House to court the many eligible Harris daughters, four of whom eventually married officers and returned with them to England.

John Harris, a Royal Navy veteran, whose life was threatened during the Rebellion of 1837, took part in the destruction of the rebel supply ship *Caroline*, at Niagara, several weeks after the rebellion was quelled. A number of artifacts used by members of the London garrison are on exhibit in the Interpretation Centre next to Eldon House, along with specimens recovered during a series of archaeological excavations of the former Imperial Army barracks site in Victoria Park.

Secrets of Radar Museum

*Commissioners Rd., East of Wellington Rd., behind Parkwood Hospital
www.secretsofradar.com*

This museum is dedicated to preserving the experiences, stories, and histories of the men and women who helped build, develop, operate and maintain Canadian Radar, here in Canada and abroad. In particular it honours those Radar veterans who were held to a 50 year oath of silence following WWII, and only recently have been allowed to speak of their experiences.

Delta London Armouries Hotel

325 Dundas Street

The London Armouries opened on February 1, 1905 with a grand ceremony that included guests such as Lord Aylmer, Inspector General of the Canadian Forces, Sir John Carling, Sir Adam Beck and Colonel Peters. While the Armouries was designed to house unit quarters, a shooting gallery, gunnery shed and parade square, it also provided an impressive location to accommodate the Seventh Fusiliers, 1st Hussars and 6th Field Battery. During its time, the Armouries was also the centre of London's social scene, hosting grand military balls and visiting officials. Since its opening in 1987 as a full service, 4-diamond hotel, the Armouries has again opened its doors to many special guests including Prime Ministers, celebrities and dignitaries.

Famous People

Major Sir Frederick G. Banting, KBE, MC

Sir Frederick was awarded the Military Cross for actions in WWI and was killed while on a secret mission during WWII. The Banting House National Historic Site holds various service medals, service books and army officer medical gear.

Lt. Col. Woodman Leonard, DSO

Lt. Col. Leonard commanded the 3rd Brigade, Canadian Field Artillery, during WWI and was killed during the Vimy Ridge offensive. The wheel of a gun carriage, shipped back to Canada by Lt. Col. Leonard, can be seen in the lobby of the Delta Armouries.

Famous Collections

*The University of Western Ontario Archives & Research Collections Centre
519-661-2111 ext 81111*

Among the thousands of records held at the University Archives are those of the 10th Stationary Hospital, a WWI unit whose personnel was drawn mainly from the UWO Medical School and the former Victoria Hospital's School of Nursing. There are also records from No. 10 Canadian General Hospital, a 1200 bed hospital in the field in Normandy and Belgium during WWII, most of whose medical personnel were professors at or graduates of the UWO Medical School.

Famous Places

St. Paul's Cathedral

Richmond Street at Queens Ave.

The colours of the 7th Fusiliers and those of several regiments of the Canadian Expeditionary Force (WWI) can be seen in St. Paul's Cathedral along with several plaques honouring members of the British Garrison.

Victoria Park

Garrison Plaque

Following the 1837 rebellion, the British government reinforced the Imperial Army in Upper and Lower Canada. One result was the building of a barracks in London on the site of what is now Victoria Park. For the next 30 years about 500 soldiers were stationed here at any one time.

Large Russian guns mounted in the park are reminders of the Garrison era. They were captured by the British during the Crimean War, where many of the regiments, who were once garrisoned London, served. An Ontario Heritage Foundation plaque marks the site of the Barracks.

Landmarks London – Heritage and Museum Network – Discover Our Heritage