



THE HISTORY OF THE
HOMESTATION OFFICERS' MESS
SUPPLEMENT TO
THE COMMUNICATIONS AND ELECTRONICS
BRANCH
STANDING ORDERS

Les recommandations pour les modifications
devront être envoyées au Capitaine-Adjudant du
Foyer officiel

Recommendation for amendments should be forwarded
to the Home Station Adjutant

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Article

CHAPTER 1 - GENERAL

- 1.01 Name
- 1.02 Authority for Establishment
- 1.03 Purpose of Operation

CHAPTER 2 - HISTORY

- 2.01 Background
- 2.02 The Beginning
- 2.05 Vimy Barracks 1933-1937
- 2.10 Vimy Barracks 1937-1950
- 2.15 Vimy Barracks 1950-1970
- 2.21 Vimy Barracks 1970-Present

CHAPTER 3 - MESS ENTRANCE AND ROOMS

- 3.02 Main Entrance
- 3.04 The Princess Royal Room
- 3.09 The Vimy Room
- 3.14 The Mercury Room
- 3.17 The Northwest Room
- 3.19 The Dining Room
- 3.24 The Lower Lounge
- 3.31 The Kingston Room
- 3.36 Old Bar
- 3.37 The Clinton Room

CHAPTER 4 - ANECDOTES

CHAPTER 5 - PROMINENT STAFF

CHAPTER 1

GENERAL

- References:
- A. RC Signals Bulletin 1928-1936
 - B. CFB Kingston Annual Historical Reports 1964-1990
 - C. CFB Kingston Officers' Mess Constitution and By-Laws (date unknown)
 - D. Inputs from many retired RC Sigs Officers
 - E. Canadian Forces Base Kingston Officers' Mess Constitution and By-Laws
 - F. Service Paper "A History of the CFB Kingston Officers' Mess" by Lt D.A. Cicci dated 24 Feb 92

NAME

1.01 The official name of the institution is "Canadian Forces Base Kingston Officers' Mess". It is also known as the "Vimy Officer's Mess" and as the "Home Station" Officers' Mess of The Communication and Electronics Branch and its founding elements.

AUTHORITY FOR ESTABLISHMENT

1.02 The Mess is established under the authority of QR&O 27.01. It is operated in accordance with regulations and orders governing the operation of messes in the Canadian Forces, the instructions contained in the constitution, and the By-laws which amplify it.

PURPOSE OF OPERATION

1.03 The Mess is operated for the purpose of building high esprit de corps and the fostering of good fellowship amongst the members. It serves as a repository for traditions, customs and memorabilia, thereby linking the past, present and future.

CHAPTER 2

HISTORY

BACKGROUND

2.01 Originally, Officers' Messes were formed to provide companionship, convenience, and for economy. During wartime, Officers' Messes provided respite from the war and rest and relaxation away from the troops for the officers. As well, it allowed junior officers the opportunity to observe their senior officers who provided an example for them in etiquette, procedures, and traditions of the Mess.

THE BEGINNING

2.02 The CFB Kingston Officers' Mess was originally the Royal Canadian Corps of Signals (RC Sigs) Officers' Mess which moved from the Depot, R.C. Sigs, Camp Borden in 1937. The Officers' Mess at Camp Borden came into being on 13 December 1929 and was the first permanent Officers' Mess for the Corps of Signals. The opening of this Mess was celebrated by a dinner on that Friday night and a dance on the following evening. The first official "at home" in the history of the R.C. Signals for the Officers of the Corps was held on 13 January 1930. Prior to this mess opening the RC Sigs Officers had messed at the RCAF Officers' Mess at Camp Borden.

2.03 The building that housed the Officers' Mess was a two story wood frame structure with clapboard siding which served as quarters for the single officers. In May 1930, improvements to the Officers' Mess proper and surrounding grounds were accomplished. The veranda was screened in and grass and trees were planted.

2.04 Very little information on the Camp Borden Mess has been found for the period 1930 to 1935 - however, it is understood the custom was for officers to live in tents during the summer which entitled them to draw field pay. The Mess was still used for dining. A further custom was a dining-in night once per week which all officers attended. The dress was blues and the dinner was a semi-formal affair. A mess dinner was held once per month.

VIMY BARRACKS 1933-1937

2.05 In 1933 construction began at Vimy Barracks, Kingston, Ontario on the future home of the Royal Canadian Corps of Signals. This project was accomplished by Colonel E. Forde, who was Director of Signals at that time. Through his efforts, the Canadian Corps of Signals was maintained during the interim between World War I and World War II.

2.06 On 15 June 1935, the Chief of the General Staff, Major-General A.G.L. McNaughton and Colonel E. Forde turned the sod at the location of the present day CFB Kingston Officers' Mess. The story has it, that the location of the Officers' Mess was selected when Major-General McNaughton, Colonel Forde, and their wives were having a picnic along the shore overlooking the St Lawrence River in front of where the present day Officers' Mess is located. The topic of where to locate the Officers' Mess came up and Major-General McNaughton said, "Why not right here!" or words to that effect and that is how the location for the Officers' Mess was selected.

2.07 The construction of Vimy Barracks was helped immensely by the depression of the 1930's. The Officers' Mess was constructed as part of a work programme sponsored by the Federal Government to support the unemployed. The workers were paid ten cents per day and fed lunch. At that time only the exterior shell of the building was provided by the government. This meant that from the impressive stone facing of the bare walls to the elegant interior finishing and furnishings, the serving regular officers of the day paid for it out of their own pockets. It is also important to note that it was their intention that it be recognized as the Home or Corps Mess of the nationwide Royal Canadian Corps of Signals as a whole, Regular and Militia, and not just the preserve of the school officers, although the latter would, of course, be the principal users.

2.08 While still at Camp Borden in 1920, the RC Sigs set up a fund to be used to properly appoint a mess when one came into existence. Officers of the Reserve and Regular components donated a portion of their pay each month to this fund. As well, in 1935, the Corps regular officers donated an equal number of days pay by rank totalling \$47,500. The combined total of the fund and the donations was over \$100,000 in 1935.

2.09 Although similar to the layout of other army buildings, such as the Officers' Mess in Currie Barracks, Calgary, the St. Andrew's Cross design for the Signals mess was adapted, in scaled-down form, from that of the elegant clubhouse of the Royal York Golf Club in Etobicoke (Metro Toronto) built around the same time, eliminating the clock tower and, interestingly, the glassed-in room facing Islington Avenue which, in modified form, would eventually appear in the Officers' Mess as the Kingston Room -- overlooking in this case the St Lawrence, an infinitely superior view. The nearby and contemporary Single Officers' Quarters, built to a matching high standard, were dubbed "The Royal York", after the 1929 top-drawer CP hotel in Toronto. The northeast wing housed the kitchen facilities and bar, the southeast wing housed the dining room, the southwest wing was divided into two rooms, the main Ante-room and the Library, and the northwest wing was two stories and was divided into quarters for living-in officers. The centre area was called the foyer. Along the south side of the mess was a screened veranda that overlooked the St Lawrence River. This area was furnished with wicker furniture. The history of the individual rooms is detailed later in this paper.

VIMY BARRACKS 1937-1950

2.10 The interior of the mess was furnished in a very opulent manner as the task of finishing the interior was given to Morgan's of Montreal. Their representative made water colour paintings of each room; then took the paintings back to Montreal to be used for interior decoration. The carpets in the Mess were ordered through Morgan's, and were woven in Iran. Two polar bear rugs, that came from the Northwest Territories, were positioned in front of the fireplace. These polar bear rugs eventually deteriorated and were not replaced because of the cost. Craftsmen from Italy were engaged to sculpt the ceilings in plaster.

2.11 On 15 August 1937, when the RC Sigs officially took over Vimy Barracks, the Vimy Officers' Mess was not quite completed. The officers shared messing facilities with the Warrant Officers and Sergeants until 1939 when the mess itself was completed.

2.12 The grounds surrounding the Officers' Mess were completed over an extended period of time. During World War II, personnel on defaulters parade and German POWs, who were interned at Old Fort Henry, were brought in to work on the grounds. This area was terraced going down towards the shore and fountains were built. The first fountain was located approximately where the stage in the Kingston Room is currently situated. The second fountain was located approximately where the patio flower beds are now and the third fountain was located further out. An indentation in the ground still exists where the third fountain was located. The fountains were interconnected via pipes buried in the ground and the first fountain was stocked with gold fish every summer. There were also plans to have a summer mess built down on the waterfront but with the ending of the war the plan was abandoned.

2.13 At the end of World War II, the POWs were repatriated before the grounds surrounding the Officers' Mess were completed. No funds had been made available to complete the improvements themselves. During the summer of 1946, officers gathered at the mess every evening to form work parties and completed the grounds improvements. In 1949 the COTC troops volunteered to break up rocks and carry them to the rivers edge to form the base for the dock.

2.14 To summarize then, by 1949 the Officers' Mess at Vimy Barracks had been completed.

VIMY BARRACKS 1950-1970

2.15 During the 1950s, there were some improvements to the grounds. A boat club was started and the boats (rowboats and sailboats) were constructed by mess members and apprenticed tradesmen. The boats were docked where the Officers' Mess beach is located and could be signed out for use by mess members. Patio stones were also

laid on the grounds creating a paved terrace behind the mess overlooking Lake Ontario.

2.16 Following WW II, the Kingston Military Hospital was moved from its location at the then Eastern Ontario Area Headquarters (Army) on King Street, Kingston, and settled in converted and modified H-Huts in the area occupied by the RCEME School in Barriefield. There was no Officers' Mess for the medical staff and the Royal Canadian Medical Corps Officers became dues paying and full members of the Officers' Mess.

2.17 In 1951, Army Headquarters (as it was known then), decided that The Royal Canadian Army Pay Corps (RCAPC) Training Wing should be located at Vimy Barracks. The RCAPC officers became paying members of the mess. They were entitled to vote on Mess, but not Signals matters. The RCAPC officers were very active members of the mess until their Training Wing moved to Camp Borden in 1968.

2.18 One very very important person (VVIP) visited the Officers' Mess in October 1955 - Her Royal Highness, Mary, The Princess Royal, Colonel-in-Chief of The Royal Canadian Corps of Signals. This was our Colonel-in-Chiefs first visit to Canada and it culminated in the most grandiloquent mess dinner in the history of the Mess; and the first attended by royalty. In 1962 The Princess Royal again visited the School of Signals to break ground for The Royal Canadian Signals War Memorial. Mess events included the unveiling of the portrait of Lieutenant-General S.F. Clark, a tea and reception on the mess lawn and a formal mess dinner.

2.19 The 1960s brought great change to the Canadian Forces and this change also affected the Vimy Officers' Mess. In 1966, the Eastern Ontario Area Headquarters closed and Colonel H.W.C. Stethem became the first Base Commander. Base Headquarters, Service Corps and Pay Corps Officers became members of the Vimy Mess while Ordnance, Engineer and RCEME Officers were messed in the RCEME Officers' Mess in McNaughton Barracks. The two messes were run as annexes of one another until November 1969, when, under Base Commander Colonel A.L. Maclean, the RCEME Officers' Mess in McNaughton was finally closed. The building is now the Base Warrant Officers' and Sergeants' Mess. The lances in the Lower Bar are an item of memorabilia from the RCEME Mess. The Vimy Officers' Mess became the present CFB Kingston Officers' Mess.

2.20 The Corps had always been very proud of the Vimy Mess. It was an integral part of the regimental system. There had been a great effort made and the results were outstanding by any measure. It isn't surprising that there was a widespread nervousness amongst the members, serving and retired. The Director of Signals position had disappeared. As an interim measure an appointment, Head of Corps, was established. The School Commandant accepted in this capacity. All Corps matters were referred to that office. The changing role of the mess continued to be a prime concern of the School Commandant up to the time the RCEME mess annex was closed. At that time the responsibility for the mess became exclusively that of the Base Commander. Through 1968 and most of 1969 the School Commandant was very much involved in the operations of the mess. As Head of Corps he received letters, phone calls and visits from concerned serving and retired Signal Corps officers. There were quite a few suggestions that the memorabilia in the mess should refer to the donors, or just be taken into homes for safe keeping. In an effort to stabilize this intense situation several steps were taken. First, a catalogue of all Corps artifacts in the mess was produced, complete with coloured photographs of all items. Then, the Museum was designated the custodian. Unofficially this had been the case for some time - items would come out of the Museum for display in the Mess and others would go back to the Museum for safekeeping. Finally, out of the existing RC Sigs organizations an Institute was created and registered as a non-profit organization in the Province of Ontario. The Colonel Commandant of the Corps, later the Branch, became the President. The documentation showed the Association, the Museum, the Welfare Trust, the Memorial Gates Fund and other features of the regimental structure were all under the central authority of the Institute. This greatly strengthened the position of the Corps/Branch in discussions of ownership.

VIMY BARRACKS 1970-PRESENT

2.21 The effort to combine schools and messes into one efficient establishment was well underway by mid-1969. It was recognized that the mess would be too small to accommodate the Base staff and the new school officers. The first agreement reached in the discussion of a renovation program was that there would be no visible evidence of change from the front of the building, or from the street when approaching by car. This was accomplished, along with the impressive interior alterations, much to the credit of Colonel Don Pruner. In late 1970 a proposal was made to expand the mess - the proposal was approved and construction began in January 1972.

2.22 The last function held in the Vimy Officers' Mess before renovations began was the New Year's Eve Ball of 1971. The Levee on 1 January 1972 was held where the Martello Club was housed (at that time the Junior Ranks Club).

2.23 The renovations were completed in late 1972. The screened porch overlooking Lake Ontario and the three fountains were removed. A bar and lounge were constructed to accommodate the large membership of the Mess. The lounge was constructed in such a way as to maintain the panoramic view of Lake Ontario. The kitchen facilities were extended between the northeastern and southeastern wings to increase its capability and efficiency. The opening ceremony for the renovated Officers' Mess was held on 10 November 1972 with over 400 personnel in attendance.

2.24 There was initially a great deal of opposition to the proposed expansion of the Vimy Officers' Mess. However, the expansion was completed in such a way as to maintain the historical integrity of the mess. Mrs E. Forde was invited to the opening ceremony to bless the renovation and upon seeing the new room, declared it magnificent.

2.25 During the 1970s, there was a sense of apathy prevalent among the members of the Officers' mess and a great deal of effort was expended to bring the membership back into the fold. Many of the officers not affiliated with Signals felt that the mess was too much a "Signals Mess". The lower lounge area was declared a neutral area (no plaques, etc) and decorated with a Spanish theme. The entertainment budget was increased which allowed the Mess to book rock bands in an effort to influence the membership to seek their entertainment in the mess, rather than downtown Kingston.

2.26 Under Base Commander Colonel A.C. Brown, many of the Officers' Mess artifacts were auctioned away. This was done in an effort to make the mess less a Signal Corps Mess and more of a CFB Kingston Officers' Mess. During this time frame, most associate and honorary members, because they were affiliated with Signals, were not encouraged to attend the Officers' Mess.

2.27 Her Royal Highness, the Princess Anne, who was appointed Colonel-in-Chief of the Communications and Electronics Branch in June 1977, visited CFB Kingston on 13 November 1979. A formal dinner with a

reception afterward was held to honour her. The VIP Suite in the northwestern wing was renovated for her use during the visit. However, the Princess Royal chose to stay at the Holiday Inn because the Officers' Mess could not accommodate her entourage.

2.28 In early 1985, Colonel Troughton, Base Commander, recognized the historical roots of the Officers' Mess and its present function. The Mess was declared the "Home Station Mess" of the Communications and Electronics Branch as well as being the Canadian Forces Base Kingston Officers' Mess.

2.29 During the 1980's, it was noted that the interior of the Officers' Mess was deteriorating. In some areas the plaster had rotted. The ceilings were washed, repainted and in some areas repaired. The murals on each end of the dining room were repaired. All the chandeliers were refurbished and coated with a preservative to reduce tarnishing. The walls were repaired, painted or wallpapered. During this refurbishment the individual rooms were named to reflect their use, the artifacts in the room or the decor. All the work done in refurbishing the Mess was done using local talent which existed at CFB Kingston in the CE Section.

CHAPTER 3

MESS ENTRANCE AND ROOMS

3.01 Over the years the members of the Officers' Mess have tried to maintain the historical integrity of the building. The rooms inside the mess have seen varied uses that have reflected the changing needs of the mess. The history of the entrance and the rooms as well as artifacts contained in the rooms is detailed in the following paragraphs.

MAIN ENTRANCE

3.02 The origins of the CFB Kingston Officers' Mess are perpetuated in a bronze rendition of the Royal Canadian Corps of Signals badge over the door, made by the unofficial 'Corps Carver', the late Sgt Gus Abolit of Ottawa, who was also responsible for presentation plaques and many of the statuettes of Mercury. In the lobby is an artifact of special interest: A three-foot bronze Mercury presented to the 1st Canadian Lines of Communication Signals in 1944 by the Burgomeister of Antwerp in appreciation of the restoration of telephone service after the devastation of war (the fleeing Germans had done all they could to immobilize the harbour and its facilities, including communication links).

3.03 In 1985 a Communications and Electronics Home Station fund raising under the auspices of the C & E Museum was initiated. The plan was to create a Home Station Fund which could be used to improve the visibility of the C & E Branch at CFB Kingston. The Officers' Mess project involved restoration of the exterior porch area, insulation and refinishing of the interior entrance walls and installation of a new door area. This includes a new oak door opening outward plus a window on each side. The C & E Museum's Home Station Fund contributed the three glass panels for this front entrance. The glass panels were executed in 3/4 inch smoked glass plate with bevelled edges. On each panel the C & E Badge and a surrounding strip were sand blasted into the glass. The doors were officially opened in October 1986.

THE PRINCESS ROYAL ROOM

3.04 The Princess Royal Room was originally known as the foyer but has been known by other names over the years. At present, it is commonly referred to as the Panel Room because of its distinctive panelling.

3.05 In the early 1930's, while preparation for the construction of Vimy Barracks was coming to fruition, a Reserve Signals officer from Montreal, who was a contractor, stored away the wood panelling that was used in the Princess Royal Room. This panelling came from a building that was being demolished on the grounds of McGill University, Montreal,

Quebec. There were also several dining tables constructed from this wood.

3.06 The Princess Royal Room has also been called the Band Room. Formal dining was accompanied by a live band whenever possible and the band often set up in this room. It has been used as well by senior officers to get together for a drink before joining the remainder of guests at a function.

3.07 The Princess Royal Room was so named because of the distinctive white roses in the ceiling and on the chandeliers. The white rose of York is the family flower of the first Colonel-in-Chief, Her Royal Highness the Princess Royal. The dedication was done under Base Commander Colonel Troughton in the early eighties.

3.08 There are several artifacts in the Princess Royal Room that have historical significance for the Communications and Electronics Branch. These are as follows:

- a.the chromed shovel that was used by Colonel E. Forde and General McNaughton to turn the sod when construction began on the Vimy Officers' Mess;
- b.a porcelain duck, a replica of the Corps first mascot Ermintrude rests in the Princess Royal Room. Ermintrude the duck was originally presented to the Corps by a young lady at the Signals Association meeting in Quebec in 1935. The duck was boarded out with a local farmer near Camp Borden and died during the winter of 1937-38. The mortal remains of Ermintrude were mounted and now rest in the C & E Museum. The porcelain replica was a gift from Her Royal Highness Princess Mary and is set on the dinner table at formal dinners; and
- c.the Ebony Elephants were presented to the Vimy Officers' Mess by Majors Macklin and Weeks who were the first two Canadian Signal Officers to attend the Indian Staff College. These artifacts are also placed on the dinner table for formal dining.

THE VIMY ROOM

3.09 The Vimy Room was originally the ante-room. This was where most formal functions were held. The doorway that leads to the Kingston Room originally led to the screened porch.

3.10 The original furnishings bought from Morgan's of Montreal are still in use, but the polar bear rugs are since gone. In the 1980's, the roof leaked causing the plaster in the walls to rot. The room is patterned after the Lincoln (Red) Room in the White House.

3.11 There are five portraits in the Vimy Room. These paintings are of senior distinguished officers of the Royal Canadian Corps of Signals or of the Communications and Electronics Branch. These include:

- a. Colonel E. Forde, DSO, OBE, VD, was Chief Signal Officer of the Canadian Corps in World War I; later Assistant Director of Signals and Commandant at Vimy Barracks. This painting was unveiled on 9 January 1943;
- b. Brigadier E. Genet, CBE, MC, served as Chief Signal Officer of the First Canadian Army during World War II and was appointed the first Honorary Colonel-Commandant of the Corps;
- c. Lieutenant-General S.F. Clark, CBE, CD, was the first Signal Officer to reach the top post in the Canadian Army, as Chief of the General Staff. On his retirement in 1966 he was appointed Colonel-Commandant. He was the first Colonel-Commandant of the C&E Branch; and
- d. General R.M. Withers, CMM, CD, the only Chief of Defence Staff from the Communications and Electronics Branch.
- e. Brigadier-General R.F. Mooney, OMM, CD, was the first general commanding CFCC, on 1 January 1977 and he replaced Brigadier-general Clement as Colonel Commandant.

3.12 These portraits were commissioned by Branch or Corps associations and all were painted by well known Canadian artists. No other portraits of the Communications and Electronics Branch or its founding elements are allowed to hang in the Vimy Room.

3.13 On the mantle in the Vimy Room there is an antique walnut casket containing a 1963 scroll which formally granted to The Royal Canadian Corps of Signals, the Freedom of the City of Kingston on the Corps 60th anniversary.

THE MERCURY ROOM

3.14 The Mercury Room was originally the reading room in the Mess. It was known as the library and only members of the mess were allowed in that room. In the mid-1970's this room was also known as the plaque room as all the plaques were moved from the lower lounge to this room.

3.15 With the renovations completed in the 1980's, this room was painted in the Branch colours. The furnishings for the most part are original. In one corner, near the fireplace, sits the refectory table. This table was presented to the Vimy Officers' Mess by Morgan's of Montreal and used to sit in front of the fireplace in the Princess Royal Room.

3.16 A portrait of Brigadier-General R.F. Mooney, OMM, CD, a

picture of Her Royal Highness the Princess Royal, the current Colonel-in-Chief of the Communications and Electronics Branch, and a painting of Mercury, messenger of the Gods and affectionately known as "Jimmy", painted by Capt Frank Pratt (Retd), are located in the Mercury Room. Two display cases contain awards presented to officers on course at CFSCE. They are located in each outside corner of the room.

THE NORTHWEST WING

3.17 This wing currently houses the administration offices, the washrooms, the cloakrooms, and the Princess Anne Suite. When the Vimy Officers' Mess was built this area was dedicated to quarters for the living-in members.

3.18 Over the years, this area has seen many changes. Originally, a women's washroom was located on the second floor and the administrative offices were located on the main floor. This was then changed so that the women's washroom is located on the main floor and the Administrative Offices are located on the second floor. The Princess Anne Suite was originally built on the second floor as VIP quarters in the mid sixties. It was then remodelled for the visit of Princess Anne in 1979 and christened the Princess Anne Suite. The area for the staircase to the Princess Anne Suite was originally a room for the Base Duty Officer.

THE DINING ROOM

3.19 The dining room was always used as such. The doors leading in to the Kingston Room originally led out into the screened porch. Doors leading into the newer section of the kitchen are located on the other side of the room. These doors were originally windows.

3.20 As was stated earlier, the ceilings were sculpted by Italian craftsmen. The ceilings were cleaned and repaired during the renovations of the mid-eighties. Murals are located near the ceiling on either end of the dining room.

3.21 The mural on the west wall depicts sculptor Walter Allward's heroic 1927 Canadian Memorial on the site of the 1917 Battle of Vimy Ridge, after which Vimy Barracks were named. It was the first major all-Canadian operation of the Great War, and succeeded where others had failed a significant event in Canadian military history. The mural on the west wall depicts a signalman using flags as a means of communications. The flags represent the letter L and also mean, "prepare to receive". Colonel W.W. Lockhart who was Director of Signals from 1948-1949, designed and used "L" (for Lockhart) as the signal because no decision could be reached on any other appropriate letter.

3.22 The mural on the east wall of the dining room depicts Vimy Ridge. Vimy Ridge was the scene of a battle during the first world war in which many Canadians took part. It is also a source of great sorrow

as many comrades gave up their lives in that battle. Both murals were cleaned in 1987 using the insides of loaves of bread. The results achieved were such that very little retouching of the murals with paint was required.

3.23 Many furnishings used in the dining room are reproductions of the original furniture. They were built by inmates at the local penitentiaries. Of the original dining room tables, four are still in use.

THE LOWER LOUNGE

3.24 Originally, the lower lounge was a very austere room and was known as the games room. The entrance doors to the Kingston Room did not exist and there was no bar.

3.25 During World War II, sabres were hung on the columns in the lower lounge. The sabres were taken down and replaced by muskets. This was done because young officers would have sword fights and it was felt that they might seriously hurt one another. The muskets were removed sometime in the late 1950's. The musket used for the Coady-Webber trophy, given to Colonel Coady in 1988 from Brigadier-General Webber's father's collection, was similar to the muskets used in the Officers' Mess which, after removal, disappeared.

3.26 The lower lounge was used for mess meetings and for TGIF. There was a small wet bar in the far left corner for these occasions.

3.27 The lower lounge was refurbished and the lower bar and kitchen facilities were added during the addition of the Kingston Room. The lower lounge was decorated in a Spanish theme and named the "Plaza del Toro". The west wall was decorated with a mural of a bull fight, painted by Frank Pratt.

3.28 The brand located on a beam in the lower lounge was the first presentation allowed in the lower lounge after it was renovated. This led to other plaques being returned to this area over a period of time.

3.29 There are many plaques and ornaments that have been presented to the Vimy Officer's Mess located in the lower lounge. These include presentations from international organizations, base sections, civilian and other military organizations.

3.30 Within the last two years a portion of the lower lounge has been closed off for use as a TV lounge. This area is linked to the lower kitchen and games area, forming the snake pit for the Officers' Mess.

THE KINGSTON ROOM

3.31 The Kingston Room was an addition construction in 1971-1972 to accommodate the larger membership when the other Officers' Messes on Base Kingston were closed. Everything in the Kingston Room is affiliated with the City of Kingston and the local Kingston area, including the Townships.

3.32 The brass chandeliers are on permanent loan from the City of Kingston. The arches in the chandelier depict the memorial arches of Kingston City Hall.

3.33 The crest of the City of Kingston is centrally placed on the south wall. Looking inward from the two wooden beams in the centre of the Kingston Room are brass rubbings that replicate the entrance of Kingston City Hall. When standing between the brass rubbings and looking at the crest, one would see the same view as if standing in the entrance to Kingston City Hall.

3.34 Hanging in the room are lithographs and painted scenes of Kingston's past and historical maps of the local area. There are also plaques with the crests of prominent local area families hanging in this room.

3.35 The Kingston Room was constructed by a Kingston firm and the furnishings and patio furniture were made in the Kingston area.

OLD BAR

3.36 Originally, in lieu of the convention stand-up bar, all service was by stewards responding to bell-pushes located throughout the Mess. Their orders were served from a hatch in the hall, near the dishwasher. Later, a modest bar half the size of a single-car garage was built in this area and, while cramped, did noble duty for a quarter-century, until the present facility was opened. While tiny, and out-of-bounds to ladies other than serving officers, it saw constant use and frequent overcrowding. Moreover, this was the scene of much inspirational and original thought and a launching pad for many a significant project (the Corps Museum, the Corps War Memorial, the great 1967 Signals Centennial Reunion and the LP recording by the then Signals Band all materialized out of thin air during commercial breaks in the unending war stories told over this bar). The bar phone carried countless original excuses why husbands would be late home. Many a reputation as a Mess Character was established in this fertile atmosphere.

THE CLINTON ROOM

3.37 The Clinton Room was originally called the card room or the green room. In the early years of the Vimy Officers' Mess, it was the only room in the mess where a member could bring a lady except for mess functions. When a member had a lady caller, they would use this room for tea and pastries.

3.38 The Clinton Room was dedicated in 1982 to represent the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) as part of the heritage of the Communications and Electronics Branch. Many of the artifacts deal with the RCAF. The plaques in this room have been donated by CELE Air officers who attended courses at Canadian Forces School of Communications and Electronics (CFSCE). The bells are from the Officers' Messes of Radar Stations from the now defunct Cadin-Pinetree Radar Chain.

3.39 The wooden ashtrays in front of the fireplace in the Clinton Room were "permanently" loaned by Canadian Forces Base North Bay Officers' Mess when an Air Basic course toured Canadian NORAD Region in the early eighties.

CHAPTER 4

ANECDOTES

4.01 The first Chief Steward of the mess was Sgt McCallum whom practically every mess committee member in the early days of Kingston, was indebted for the help he gave them. He ensured the continuity of ritual in this highly regimental organization. In fact one could have felt right at home attending a mess dinner at Catterick (Royal Signals) or Woolwich (Royal Artillery). The livery of the serving staff at Woolwich dates to the mid 1800s.

4.02 In the early days one could ring for bar service. A steward would then come out and take your order. He would then return with your drink and a chit for your signature. There was no exchange of money.

4.03 There are a number of stories about the chit system being used to keep track of the alcohol consumption of the young officers. One story tells how one became a "Century Club" member when their bar chits exceeded a hundred dollars in a month. A Century Club member was entitled to a personal interview with the Commandant to discuss his new found status.

4.04 When Colonel E. Forde was Commandant of Vimy Barracks, he promoted esprit de corps in the Officers' Mess. At many functions, as the evening drew on, he would send the bartender and stewards home and serve his officers from behind the bar himself.

4.05 There was also a bridge book which was used to record wins and losses for gambling in the mess. No money was to change hands and your wins and losses were applied to your monthly mess bill.

4.06 During World War II Vimy Barracks became a large Signals training establishment. The officer population rose to approximately 250. To avoid undue wear and tear and because the population using the mess was transient, the carpets, silverware and other valuable items were put away until the end of the War.

4.07 During that time period, the standard monthly mess dues were \$34.00, (more than today's charges), before drinks and damage to mess were figured in. By today's standard this is not a large sum of money but when a subaltern was only making \$150.00 per month it was quite a hefty amount. The explanation was that the mess was to be furnished in the proper manner and this had to be paid for. It was said that the Vimy Barracks Officers' Mess was the finest mess in the Dominion at the time and some said this extended to the British Empire as well.

4.08 The excellent reputation of the Vimy Mess had spread far and wide. The Commanding General at Fort Monmouth was sufficiently impressed that he sent up seeds to be planted along the walks in front of the veranda. They were annuals which Sgt Pavey maintained for several years. The bloom colour was Signals Corps orange.

4.09 The first fountain had a colourful history. On numerous occasions it was used to bath individuals at festive occasions and it was a weekly tradition that the course senior for the week was ceremonially dumped in the fountain every Friday. As was stated earlier, the fountain was stocked with goldfish and on one occasion the goldfish were invited into the mess for a drink. The next morning all the goldfish were found dead which created quite a stir and only occurred the one time. On another occasion, an individual was fishing on the shoreline in front of the Officers' Mess and caught a rather large pike. He decided to stop for a drink before he proceeded home and while he socialized, he confined the pike to the fountain. Upon retrieving his pike he noticed that the goldfish had all disappeared. It is still a mystery as to where the goldfish went.

4.10 For 20 years a lovely grand piano graced the anti-room, the gift of Colonel F.Y. Malloch, wartime commandant. Frequently it was a focal point for small groups of an evening. From time to time there were talented members who organized jazz sessions. Col Peck was a member of such a group when he was the Commandant. Much noisier was the crowd that assembled, tired from the games which followed dinner, but prepared to carry on with a sing along. They could easily be identified the next morning by their husky voices. Eventually, however, the ravages of boisterous clientele led to its demise.

4.11 This anecdote was discovered in a letter written by Major-General L.H. Wylie; "In 1946? I was at the entrance to the Vimy Room, serving in some capacity, when Lieutenant-General Simonds (former Commander of 2nd Canadian Corps), arrived. Col Forde, with some others, was receiving the guests. I was amazed to hear the Colonel say with some authority "Guy, do you not feel you are amongst friends?" Surprised, the General asked 'Henry' what he meant. It was explained to him that we do not wear Sam Browne belts in the mess. General Simonds quickly retired to shed the offending accoutrement, and I waited to hear the next exchange. When Guy Simonds returned the conversation showed clearly the respect for this elderly officer. While I had many opportunities to reminisce with Mrs Forde later on, this was the only time I ever saw Colonel Forde."

4.12 In 1969 the staff looking after the grounds had been quartered. The greenhouse was closed and Sgt Pavey retired. The grass was to be cut by base contract and they ran out of funds in the middle of the summer. My feeling is that we hit bottom in so far as appearances are concerned in 1969. There was little change in 1970. Improvements began to appear in the maintenance of the property by 1971. Poverty was a very serious problem in the Department of National Defence in the late 1960s.

4.13 Concerning the boat club, there was also, in a sense, a mysterious submarine. An ungainly converted Great Lakes lifeboat with a plywood cabin and recycled Dodge motor passed through the hands of three successive captains courageous and docked at the Mess Pier. Named "Little Toot", it never made it far from home port and once grounded on a submerged rock off Cedar Island, there to remain had not the current skipper bravely stepped off onto the rock to give a push, only to be briefly marooned. Then, one morning "Little Toot" was found to have sunk neatly to the bottom at her moorings. Weeks passed without a workable rescue plan emerging from the combined engineering talent in the Mess. Then suddenly, submerged or not, she went missing, only to turn up months later, still submerged, miles away up the Cataragui River. To this day, another unsolved mystery.

4.14 In 1966 Colonel Forde's portrait painting sustained a mysterious neat puncture from a .22 bullet. The culprit remains on the most-wanted list, but under Mess auspices the painting was quietly taken to Ottawa in an unmarked car and restored by the head technician of the National Gallery.

4.15 It proved over the years to be almost impossible to agree on or maintain an adequate sound system in the mess. There were too many experts and too many ideas. In 1968 we installed another one and kept it under lock and key. When putting in the wiring in the attic they found the remains of a number of wiring jobs, including one which appeared to date from the original bar call system.

4.16 After the LORE officers had joined the Vimy Mess it was thought that they should have on the table a silver horse, matching in size the Jimmy that graced the head table at mess dinners. This interesting project was just getting underway when two changes interfered. The horse was removed from their badges. They were notified quite suddenly that their school was to move to Borden.

Anecdote - Right in the midst of the exciting events of 1969 there was one that we could have done without. The ebony elephants were stolen. It turned out to be a prank; they soon were returned but, one of the silver name tags was missing. I understand this has recently been replaced.

4.17 The Canadian Signals Association, founded in 1926, had a tremendous influence on the Mess. This nationwide body, concerned primarily with the communications elements of the Militia, met annually at Vimy and its Mess Dinners were addressed by Royalty; at least three vice-regal figures (Alexander, Massey and Vanier); several Chief Signal Officers of the US Army; and a host of other top-level luminaries. On many such occasions the Association contributed to the permanent improvement of the Mess. The name changed to the Communications and Electronics Association on integration and ceased to exist in 1990 on the formation of The New Communications and Electronics Association.

CHAPTER 5

PROMINENT STAFF

5.01 The Chief Steward throughout the 1940's, 1950's, and 1960's was WO2 G.E. ("Cutey") Haynes. As a soldier awaiting training at Vimy Barracks, he had been detailed to work in the Officers' Mess and never left. He felt strongly about the appearance and decor of the Officers' Mess and it is felt by some that he treated it as a shrine.

5.02 He was the bane of many young officers who tried to pull shenanigans in the mess. Once, there had been a mess dinner in which the participants became a little boisterous while playing games. This resulted in the destruction of a small serving table. WO2 Haynes was seen to beat the guilty individual with a broken table until he got his attention. The member then signed a chit to pay for the repairs.

5.03 Another instance was when some young officers scratched a table during an evening of entertainment. The Officers were so worried that they called out a tradesman in the middle of the night to have it repaired. Warrant Officer Haynes retired after 35 years of which most was spent looking after the Officers' Mess. The historical integrity of the interior of the Officers' Mess is due in great part to the efforts of Warrant Officer George Haynes.

5.04 Sergeant Pavey, the Grounds Superintendent, took great delight in supervising the officers as they moved dirt around to complete the improvements to the grounds. He would drive up with a load of dirt, drop it where needed, then shout at the work parties to get a move on, and drive away chuckling. It is noteworthy, that Sergeant Pavey kept the grounds immaculate and placed fresh cut flower arrangements throughout the Officers' Mess whenever possible. He was also the person who designed and built the Martin bird houses which stand outside the front doors of the mess, as well as on the back lawn and in the front of the Martello Club. These bird houses appear in the oldest photographs of these buildings.

