

THE ROYAL SAPPERS AND MINERS CEMETERY NEWBORO, TOWNSHIP OF RIDEAU LAKES, UNITED COUNTIES OF LEEDS AND GRENVILLE, ONTARIO

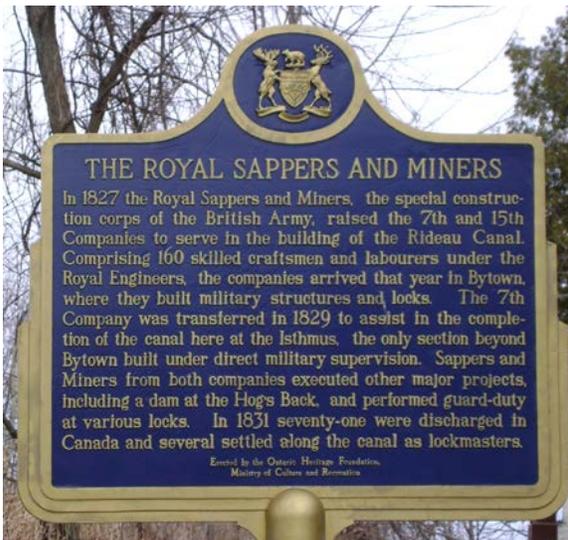
By Don Cooke

There is an old cemetery near Newboro, ON that is the resting place for a number of 7th Company Royal Sappers and Miners who worked on the construction of the Rideau Canal. In fact, in the center of the cemetery is an ordnance stone used to survey the canal. Based on the details of the Company disbandment in December of 1831 there are six Sappers and Miners whose death can be ascertained and were buried with wooden markers: **Thomas Simmons, Marshall Darling, Joseph Stuart, John Sanderson, John Blackwood, and John Richard.**



In 2014 a group of local volunteers formed the Royal Sappers and Miners Cemetery Committee and set about to clean up and restore the abandoned burial site that is adjacent to a work camp known as the "Isthmus". The Isthmus became the town of Newborough (later shortened to Newboro) in the Johnstown District, which, in 1849 became the County of Leeds. The area marks the watershed between waters flowing north to Ottawa and those flowing south to

Kingston and forms a key part of what on June 27, 2007 became the UNESCO World Heritage Site-designated Rideau Canal. Built between 1826-1832 the Rideau Canal has 45 locks stretching 202 kilometres (126 miles) from Kingston to Ottawa with 19 kilometres (12 miles) being dug by hand. To commemorate the 150th anniversary of the completion of the nearby Newboro Locks, veterans of the 5th Field Company RCE organized the unveiling of a plaque by Lieutenant-General Geoffrey Walsh, CBE, DSO, CD at these locks on 7 August 1982.



Since its creation, the Committee has undertaken a number of actions. Immediate steps were taken to erect a new township plaque and to relocate the original Ontario Heritage Plaque, erected on May 21, 1977, from the south side of County Road 42 to inside the entrance to the Cemetery on the north side.



To date, the group has expended approximately 500 hours to cut and remove trees, brush and unsightly perimeter fencing and to repair long neglected headstones in the burial ground.

Research has been completed on the full history of the cemetery site, the military establishment, and men and families who worked here during the canal construction. The Committee also arranged with Queens University, Professor Dr. Alexander Braun, and his team of graduate students (Natalie

Blacklock, Amanda Shevers, and Yasmin Fakli) to undertake a geophysical survey, using ground penetrating radar and magnetic survey techniques. The team used a proton precession magnetometer with a resolution of 0.1nT and a Malå ProEx 250 MHz GPR device with depth resolution around 2m. Seventy unidentified anomalies were found in the processed GPR data. Exploration further into the woods on the edge of the cemetery showed an old foundation and piles of loose rocks that may indicate that the cemetery limits were once broader. Accordingly the Committee has since cleaned up this area so that additional work can be undertaken to better define and locate burial sites. This historic site has been included on various on-line driving and cycling tours prepared by Rideau Lakes Township.

Work continues at the Cemetery as weather and volunteer time permits and the group is hopeful that a plaque commemorating the buried soldiers can be erected in conjunction with Canada's 150th birthday in 2017.