



Newsletter for April 2026

The Ontario Model Soldier Society

Founded 1962



Brig. Gen. Darrell Dean (Ret'd)
Honorary President

2026 Executive

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Ottawa Chapter Chair

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Annual Show Chair

Andy Traverse
Program Chair

VACANT
Technical Committee Chair

Toronto Chapter meeting Sunday, April 12, 2026

Doors open at 11:00 am, meeting starts at 12:30pm

Branch 643 Royal Canadian Legion, 110 Jutland Road, Etobicoke

This month's guest speaker is Victor Rudik
Victor's presentation is the story of Giant Plastics Corporation. The toys and the interesting stories associated with the company, including the unethical business practices, family feuds and more.



OMSS Virtual meeting

Tuesday April 21st, 2026 @ 7pm

Virtual meetings are open to all OMSS and BMSS members

The topic is "Easter"

contact Bob Thompson at thompson_robert@rogers.com



Ottawa Chapter meeting

Tuesday April 28th, 2026 @ 7pm

The Barley Mow, 1541 Merivale Road, Ottawa

The topic is "Anti-Tank" followed by "Unidentified"



International Toy Soldiers Club Virtual Meeting

Friday April 10th, 2026

@ 7pm GMT

(that's 2pm for most of us in Ontario)

Contact HQ@replicametalsoldiers.co.uk for an invitation

Or check out www.internationaltoysoldier.club



BMSS Monthly Virtual meeting

Friday April 17th 2026 @ 7pm GMT

(that's 2pm for most of us in Ontario)

This month's topic is "Honorable and Dishonorable"

Contact: Jamesopie@yahoo.co.uk for more de-



Please Welcome our new Vice President

As a result of Victor Rudik assuming the position of president due to the passing of David Dorward, a vacancy for 1st Vice President was created.

At the March meeting of the Toronto Chapter Eric Shaw was nominated and accepted the position of 1st Vice President.

The club is appreciative that Eric has agreed to step up and volunteer to fill the vacancy and the executive committee wishes to welcome Eric to the team.





President's Message

Hello OMSS Members!

It is my pleasure to spread the word that we have a new 1st Vice President, Eric Shaw. If you were at the last meeting, you already know it. You also know that he is a passionate advocate for this club and a great source of historical knowledge, especially Napoleonic era.

At the last meeting, I was also honoured to take possession of the President's kukri and will keep it safe and sharp. How sharp? As Witch Hazel cackled while chasing Bugs Bunny, "Sharp enough to split a hair...Split a hare? Teehee-hee!" The last meeting also had great presentation on the Border Reavers, and the crime and chaos that stalked the border between England and Scotland. Having visited the area as a teen, I could see how roving bands had their own ways for a century.

Speaking of presentations, I also recall another presentation (from February) from Andy Traverse, who told us of the importance and evolution of the Dental Corps in the British Army. How good was it? Well, I recently found myself telling my friends about a Napoleonic soldier being fit for duty if he had at least two teeth with which he could rip the powder cartridge open, how at least 25% of soldiers were always unfit for duty due to dental issues, and how it finally came down to Haig needing dental work that caused the creation of the Dental Corps. My friends were flabbergasted that it had taken 'til mid-WW1 for the British Army to come to that realization.

I hope that my upcoming presentation will also stick in people's heads. I previously mentioned that I was going to show some of my rarities. How better to start off than with the story of Giant Plastics Corp! It's a story of family feuds, a fun date night, government lawsuits, mass juvenile delinquency, arson, oh...and lots of toy soldiers! Hope you can make it and hear about one of the great copycats of the toy soldier world, and how they got away with it.

One last item: I was at HeritageCon in late March and thoroughly enjoyed myself. There were hundreds of models on display and in competition, and a good variety of items for sale. I saw a couple of our members there and I am sure we will have all picked up some good stuff for future dioramas. This year, there were also a fair number of tables with useful books for sale and, of course, the excellent Canadian Warplane Heritage Museum to wander.

Onward!

Victor Rudik



On the right is **Major Hogan** in Latvia debriefing a Spanish forward observer following a live-fire event with the Battle Group.

Welcome Home Brendan Hogan

Following the return from his overseas deployment, the OMSS wanted to show our appreciation to Brendan with a small welcome home package.



Thanks to the initiative of Jeff Duncan, the package was pieced together with items from the club's donation table, direct donations from members and a couple minor purchases from the club table proceeds.

The package is already on it's way to Brendan via the OMSS Underground Railroad and should arrive anytime.

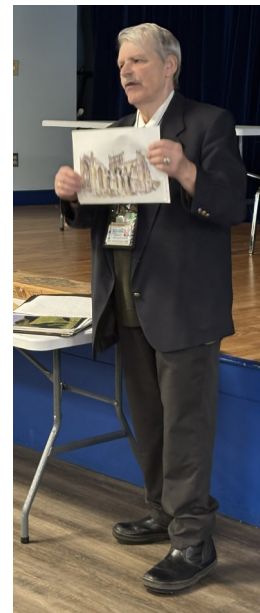
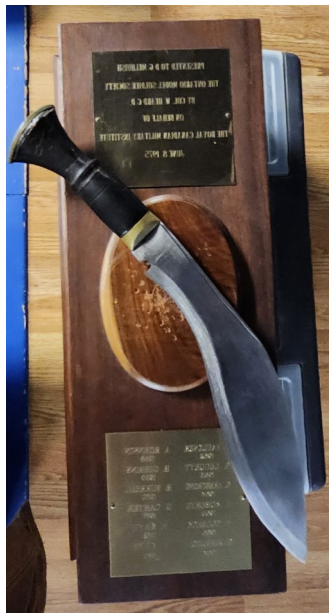
Toronto Chapter's March Meeting

Thanks to Jeff Duncan for the photos



The March meeting kicked off with Duncan Johnstone, OMSS president for 2025 presenting the OMSS Kurki which is the symbol of the office of the president to incoming president Victor Rudik

See later in the newsletter for the history behind the OMSS Kukri.



Norm White gave an interesting presentation of the British Badlands—the history of the disputed border between England and Scotland



The vendor tables were full with lots of good deals



Dan Stapleton regaled attendees on the first toy soldiers he received as a gift when he was a child and how that was just the start of things!



John Hambly did an interesting talk on the different ways you could display a small grouping of model soldiers





Ottawa Chapter's March Meeting

Thanks to Bob Thompson for submitting this report

Our recent March in person meeting in Ottawa was busy, varied, and interesting.

On a unusual topic, Bob gave a (relatively short?) presentation on German Regimental Beer Steins (a topic that only 2 weeks ago he knew absolutely nothing about ... but after purchasing 26 of them and research he became an "instant expert").



Show & Tell topics of "Dioramas" and "Flame Throwers" drew an interesting mix of presentations on both including:



On the left, Juan chose "Flame Throwers" and gave a talk on an amazing array of WW2 1/6 scale flamethrowers (most designed and 3D printed by Juan).

On the right, Steve Hammond showed us the latest evolution of his custom made 1/32 scale model machine tools series into a full fledged beginning of a German WW2 tank production factory diorama.



Sylvain had some fantastic single figure "Vignettes" including a Canadian Voltigeur I had never seen before



On the right, Bob brought a couple of mini "dioramas", and a vintage made in Canada toy gun with toy soldier targets

At the end of presentations there was a lively discussion trying to define "vignettes" vs "dioramas" vs full fledged "exhibits" vs temporary tabletop battlefield setups.

The Show & Tell topic voted on for the April 28 Ottawa Meeting will be "Anti Tank", with "Unidentified" and "Horses" close behind.





OMSS Zoom Meeting for March

Thanks to Bob Thompson for submitting this report

The March OMSS Zoom meeting had 9 participants (5 Ottawa, 1 Toronto, 2 Quebec, 1 Montreal).

The Show & Tell Topic was “Your Canadian Collection”, with “Marching” as a second runner up topic.

Aside from Bob’s usual monthly presentation of “Humour/WOW/&Wow Toy Soldier” photos scooped from the Internet, other presentations included;

– A great presentation from Eric Shaw on the History of Canada using toy soldiers.



Above: A small sample from Eric’s presentation on the History of Canada through Toy Soldiers

- David & Jani from the Toy Soldier Club gave a presentation of periods of Canadian history featuring King & Country and John Jenkins figures.
- Brendan gave an interesting presentation on his recent trip to Ireland where he visited the Prince August store/Factory.
- Bob T. showed photos of Steve Alexander’s toy soldier sales booth setup at 613flea in Ottawa
- Bob’s “Canadian Collection” presentation focused on Canadian toy soldier manufacturers.
- There was a lively discussion regarding Canadian Toy Soldier manufacturers, and Bob suggested we should have an OMSS project to research and document Canadian manufacturers ... in particular to document the output of “Spirit of the Empire” and Scott Dummitt’s “Pride of the Nation” series.



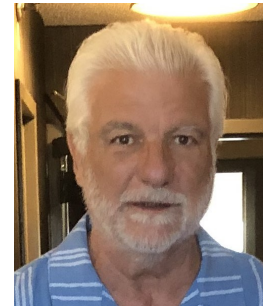
Above: A few of Bob’s Toy Soldiers made in Canada or distributed exclusively in Canada

Recent releases from W. Britain Ltd

William Britain has released the model soldiers in the likeness of our friends, **Stuart Hessney** and **James Opie** that were announced in late 2024. (Refer to the December 2024 newsletter for the background story of these pieces.)



wbritain.com 31497 ©2025 W/Britain Model Figures



Stuart Hessney, editor of Toy Soldier Collector and Historical Figures Magazine and a long time OMSS member is the model for Britain's new 'Union Light Artillery Driver 1861-1865' figure, which is part of Britain's **American Civil War** collection.

Britains number 31497 retails for approximately \$77.00 Cdn.



wbritain.com 35058 ©2025 W.Britain Model Figures

James Opie is also well known to OMSS members. James is an executive member of the **British Model Soldier Society** and host of BMSS Zoom meetings, author of 'Talking Toy Soldiers' articles in TSC&HF magazine, in addition to preparing catalogues for toy soldier auctions for over 45 years was the model for Britain's new 'The Village Peddler, 1790-1820' which is part of Britain's 'Village Green' collection.



Britains number 35058 retails for approximately \$85.00 Cdn



Billy Bishop, WW1 Canadian Ace

It is not very often we see a model figure of a famous Canadian produced.

Air Marshal William Avery "Billy" Bishop, VC, CB, DSO, MC, DFC, ED was credited with 72 air victories and declared Canada's official "war hero" in 1918. A plaque honouring Billy Bishop on the Wall of Honour at Royal Military College in Kingston is inscribed "WW1 flying ace and war hero, pioneer of the RCAF, Commonwealth Air Training Plan and International Civil Aviation Organization".

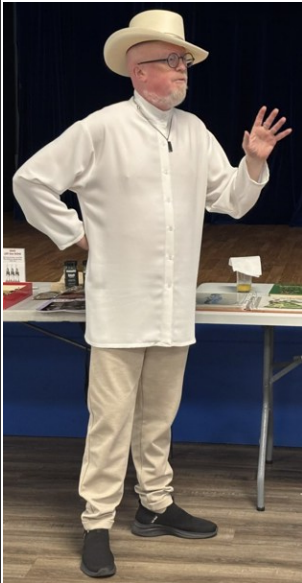
Britains number 10211 retails for approximately \$71.00 Cdn.

Look for an article later in the newsletter about Billy Bishop's life.



All 3 pieces are now available now at your authorized W. Britain Ltd. retailer.

Eric's Travels and Collection *(thanks to Eric Shaw for this story and photos)*



I have a vast and diverse collection and an equally vast number of well staged photographs of my armies and it is about time that I started to share with the membership to enjoy and hopefully inspire. I have been involved with this hobby nonstop since I was three years old and I am sure that I will be until I am incapacitated or dead. So I am going to start a section for the newsletter that I will call ***Eric's Travels and Collection***. I hope you enjoy reading my stories.

The first photo is of the Queen's Rangers by John Jenkins that I bought from Scott Dummitt. I am collecting the whole range and plan on staging more pictures. I always liked their simple and practical uniform. One of the focal points of my collection is figures related to Canada and since these fellows were some of the soldier founders of Ontario, they fit the bill!



I have been collecting and painting the Compagnies Franche de la Marine for quite some time. I think that the series put out by Britains is one of the most beautiful ever released and when you have a goodly number, they are very impressive! I am still looking for more of the marching and kneeling and firing figures if anyone has any. The first officer standing with his hat on is my favourite figure in my collection.



These two beautiful French Napoleonic officers I found in Woodstock at One Of A Kind Antiques And Collectibles last year. I'm sure many of you are familiar with it, as you can't miss it when you drive downtown. I always find treasures there. Be prepared to spend the day there if you go. These two figures were amongst a bunch of not very good Imperial Guardsmen. I automatically gravitate to the highest quality and most beautiful items unless it is something that I feel I can turn into something eye catching.



Front and back photos of a Roman archer that I finished last year. These are produced by Expeditionary Force Soldiers. These are beautiful figures and fun to paint with pleasing results. Paint adheres well to the plastic they use and the figures are great for conversion possibilities. I have painted quite a few and will feature them in future short articles. I converted a good friend in Michigan and he has been busy working on a Crusades diorama using the appropriate figures. Go online and check out Expeditionary Force!



The story behind the OMSS Presidential Kukri *(compiled by Ian Pearson)*

The Ontario Model Soldier Society is unique in that we use a KUKRI as a gavel to open and close our general meetings.



In 1974, Don Melhuish was presented with a genuine Gurkha kukri knife during an OMSS meeting at the Royal Canadian Military Institute. Colonel Heard (Curator of the RCMI museum) suggested using it as a gavel. That's how the presidential kukri came into being.

A beautiful wooden chest was made to hold the kukri and Colonel Heard made a knock plate from the wooden gun carriage of the two cannons that were outside the RCMI for years. The guns were made in 1854 so that piece of wood adds to the historic value. Frank MacKay, during his term of office, enlarged the chest to facilitate more name plaques of each past president.

Since that day, the kukri has been the insignia of the President, theirs to wield and keep order at our often-boisterous meetings. Handing it over to their successor is a president's last duty. It is a unique item that the OMSS possesses and we are very proud to carry on this tradition.

When the King's kukri is placed on his throne by his ministers or members of his family, the knife is transformed from a weapon of war into an emblem of peace and enchantment.

The honour of the Kukri

The revered kukri is to Nepal and the Gurkhas what the Sword of Honor is to Britain and such military institutions as Sandhurst (where the Sword of Honor is awarded to top graduates). It is a symbol of great respect and high public regard for those fighting men who have passed with battlefield honors and special distinction in the military service of their regiments and country. For this reason the kukri has been adopted as the officer classes are distinguished in rank by differently graded kukris, and where a kukri is used to symbolize the King's presence.

For a soldier, to have a kukri, or to wear it in the form of an emblem, he must achieve more than other soldiers by getting into and distinguishing himself in the Gurkhas. He must be deserving of that honor and prove himself worthy of his kukri, from which in Nepal, he must never be parted, and he is under a moral obligation to use his kukri bravely in times of war.

The kukri is, in many respects, is the Gurkha soldier's honors degree. the kukri is such an honorable emblem or distinction through its legendary history that it is the stuff of legend and popular mythology, as well as a military distinction, and the spell that it casts is psychological. It is bigger than the man, representing much more than an all-purpose tool and military weapon.

When the King's kukri is placed on his throne by his ministers or members of his family, the knife is transformed from a weapon of war into an emblem of peace and enchantment.

www.thekhukurihouse.com/the-honor-of-the-kukri The spelling has been disputed (Kukri, Khukuri, Kukuri, Khukri, Kookuri etc) since someone first tried to describe this knife.

To learn more about the history of the Kukri , check out; <https://www.thekhukurihouse.com/the-honor-of-the-kukri>

What does the kukri knife symbolize?

"A man with a khukuri" represents a man with honor, dignity, courage, and loyalty. The shape of the blade represents the trinity symbols of "Brahma", "Vishnu" and "Shiva", the three most famous and influential Hindu Gods in Nepal. Kaudi (notch) signifies the powerful Hindu symbol "OM" and signifies the cow's hoof.



Air Marshal William Avery "Billy" Bishop, VC, CB, DSO, MC, DFC, ED



Introduction

Billy Bishop is widely known as the top Canadian Flying ace of the First World War, boasting 72 victories and numerous accolades. He was an Air Marshal and the recipient of many medals. During the Second World War, he was a key player in the implementation of the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan.

Young Billy

As a youth, Bishop had a reputation as a bit of a scrapper. He shied away from team sports, preferring solo endeavours like swimming, horse riding, and shooting. Foreshadowing his future love of flying, as a 15 year old he flew a makeshift "aircraft." Made from bed sheets, wooden crates and string, he tried to fly it off the third story of his house.

Royal Military College

Even though he was not much of a student, he attended the Royal Military College in Kingston. He had a range of reported efforts—working hard, a bit of failing, and some cheating.

Arriving in England

In 1914, he joined the Mississauga Horse cavalry regiment, and later transferred to the 7th Canadian Mounted Rifles. Frustrated with the mud of the trenches, he requested yet another transfer to the Royal Flying Corps. He figured the war would be much cleaner in the air.

Earliest flights

Even though Bishop had displayed great capabilities on the firing range and was very good with a gun, he rode along as an observer at first. However, he showed a talent for taking aerial photographs and so he soon began training others. On his first mission, he acted as an aerial spotter for British artillery. He continued to work on reconnaissance missions and bombing flights without ever firing a gun.

Becoming a pilot

After he injured his knee during a flight and his father suffered a stroke, he was sent home to Canada to recuperate. With the help of some influential friends he made during this hiatus, he was accepted for training as a pilot at the Central Flying School. Soon after receiving his wings, he had a crash landing resulting in an order to retrain. Luckily, Major Alan Scott vouched for him, and by chance, the very next day he saw his first victory, shooting down a German plane. They let him stay, and as luck would have it, the very next day he saw his second victory.

Becoming a flying ace

Bishop was often allowed to go on solo missions, deep into enemy territory. With his uncompromising approach, Bishop racked up his victories, becoming an ace. He got the nicknames "Hell's handmaiden" and "the Greatest English Scouting Ace" from the Germans. He specialized in the surprise attack, with victory after victory. He was awarded the Military Cross for his participation in the Battle of Vimy Ridge.

The enemy put a bounty on Bishop's head, yet he pushed on to acquire the Distinguished Service Order and Bar, the Distinguished Flying Cross, as well as the Victoria Cross. He was considered one of the top flying aces of the war.

Continued on the next page

Air Marshal William Avery "Billy" Bishop *(conclusion)*



Marriage and promotion

While on leave to Canada, he married his long term fiancée, Margaret Eaton Burden, and wrote his autobiography, "Winged Warfare." When he returned to Europe, he was promoted to Major and given command of No. 85 Squadron, "The Flying Foxes."

Recruitment icon

Billy Bishop had become an integral character/story in Canadian recruitment efforts. There began to be worry about what would happen to morale on the home front should something happen to him. He was moved and promoted to Lieutenant-Colonel. By the time the war ended, he claimed 72 air victories. Some historians believe the total could be lower. He seemed to have a tradition of circumventing the rules. Often victories were attributed in the absence of the usual need for witnesses, etc.

Death and legacy

Bishop went on to explore various business interests, mostly connected to aviation, and spent most of his remaining days between England and Canada. With the wars taking a great toll on his health, he died in 1956. Bishop and his wife, Margaret, had a son, William, and daughter, Margaret, both of whom went on to be excellent aviators in their own right.

Bishop is memorialized in streets, roadways, parks, a mountain, buildings, airports, and the list goes on. He also boasts a long list of medals and honours.

Source: <https://www.veterans.gc.ca/en/remembrance/people-and-stories/billy-bishop>

Visit the Billy Bishop Home and Museum

The museum is located in Owen Sound Ontario in the original Bishop family home until he left to join the military at the age of seventeen.

To find out more go to; <https://www.billybishopmuseum.org/>

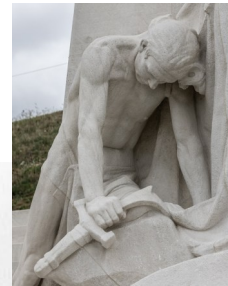
Billy Bishop and other Bishop family members are buried in Owen Sound in Greenwood Cemetery which is open for self-guided walking tours.





The Battle of Vimy Ridge proved to be a great success, but it came at a heavy cost. The some 100,000 Canadians who served there suffered more than 10,600 casualties, nearly 3,600 of which were fatal. By the end of the First World War, Canada, a country of less than eight million people, would see more than 650,000 men and women serve in uniform. The conflict took a huge toll with more than 66,000 Canadians losing their lives and over 170,000 being wounded.

Source: <https://www.veterans.gc.ca/en/remembrance/military-history/first-world-war/battle-vimy-ridge>



“No Man’s Land”, Vimy Ridge, April 1917



The OMSS was well represented at the celebration of life for David Dorward, which the family very much appreciated.



the last word

‘...Never be limited by other people’s imaginations “
Mae Johnson – NASA’s first black female astronaut

The newsletter is edited by Scott Milburn
News items, notices and upcoming events can be submitted to
omssnewsletter@gmail.com