

The Fire Mark

The Newsletter of the Canadian Fire Fighters Museum

PORT HOPE, ONTARIO • JULY 2022

Greetings from the Chair of the Board

Welcome new and returning members. It is my pleasure to update you on activities since our Dec/21 AGM (via Zoom). At that meeting, we welcomed a new Board member, John Doorley. John is a newly retired Fire Captain (see profile below) and is filling the long-vacant Firefighter Liaison role. Recently, we benefitted from John's network as he was able to secure volunteers from our local and volunteer fire department to help move heavy artifacts to a new storage facility. We have an ongoing need for occasional work crews to help with similar jobs (clean the fire trucks, move artifacts et) and are building a volunteer roster. If this is of interest, please reach out.

The board has several vacancies including Secretary, Membership Convenor, and Members at Large. We meet monthly for two hours, and you'd be welcome to visit as a guest to learn more about the Museum's business and the work of its committees. I'd be grateful for the opportunity to chat about your ideas and questions.

The museum has been networking to build new and nurture existing relationships. Through [our email](#), we heard from fire enthusiasts across

Canada. Some are family members who find artifacts when packing their parents' homes and write to learn more about badges, 70-year-old departmental documents, and even a helmet from the late 1800s.

We were contacted by the Chelsea and Area Fire Department enquiring about the history of Ronald's Steam-powered fire pump and another wrote asking about the history of fire sirens. In the past 6 mos. we have liaised with the Toronto Fire Historical Society, the Six Nations Fire Department in Brantford, the new Nova Scotia-based Canadian Museum of Fire Fighting History, and Ingenium, Canada's Museum of Science and Innovation. These relationships help pique our interest and knowledge but more importantly allow us, through our loan agreements, to share CFFM's artifacts with new audiences.

Our search for a new home continues and considerable work has been undertaken. At the AGM, you will have heard about our collaborative venture with Hope Agricultural Heritage Committee and some local businesses about the vacant site in Welcome. This site is owned by the Ministry of Transportation (MTO). Our local MPP, David Picinni facilitated meetings with MTO and its Minister, Carolyn Mulroney about a severance of the lot. With recent

election results returning both involved MPPs, we are interested in a return of the talks.

Additionally, the Site Selection Committee (under Chair, Will Lambert) and members of the Board toured a nearby arena that has been decommissioned. As you can imagine, the former ice pads are quite suitable for our truck collection. More on this in the future.

The Municipality of Port Hope has continued to be a support to the museum particularly through the safe storage of our collection during our closure.

Please come see us at the Lent Lane Market and our Golf Tournament, on September 1st, Port Hope Golf and Country Club (see article)

Stay safe and please consider lending your talents to the museum.

Michelle Haney-Kileeg, Chair



Above: Museum volunteers carefully move the Amoskeag Steam Pumper into new storage.

Site Selection Update

The number one question I used to get asked about the CFFM was “Have you found a new home yet?” These days, the most common question is “Have you given up looking for a new home” OR “Is the museum dead now?”

It's time to set the record straight; the CFFM is most definitely not dead, in fact, we have been quite active of late taking on new additions to the collection and moving stored items from place to place to make room for the new acquisitions.

Over the years while the CFFM has been closed and in storage, the Site Selection Committee (made up of myself, Chris Terry, and Dennis Waddington) has looked carefully at more than 50 properties in and around Port Hope. We actually looked at many more than that, but these were the ones that seemed possible and worthy of in-depth investigations. We would contact the owner or Realtor to get all of the pertinent information and then put the facts through a scoring grid which we designed with the specific needs of the museum in mind. If the property scored well enough (i.e. met the needs of the museum) we pursued it with more fact-

New Board Member

Hi, my name is John Dooreleyers. I am the Firefighter Liaison on the CFFM Board. I'm hoping to be an effective member of the board by combining my experiences; 37 years of service plus some additional insight into various items in the collection as I have used many of them (with a variety of enthusiasms).

I retired recently as a Captain with Toronto Fire Services. My career started as a 2-year volunteer with Ilderton, Ontario followed by a military firefighter career doing both structural and aviation firefighting. I moved to the Scarborough Fire Department which amalgamated into Toronto Fire Services at the end of the 1990s.

finding and discussions about buying, renting, or leasing it.

The hard truth is that suitable properties and/or buildings are in very short supply in this area and when we have found one, they proved to be unattainable. The basic requirements are three acres+; minimum of 10,000 sq. ft., preferably 25,000; single-story preferred; truck access a must, accessible for the differently-abled; 16 ft. or higher ceiling height; in a visible and easy-to-find location with decent traffic flow and foot-traffic. We would prefer an existing building because building to suit is both an expensive and long-term proposition, but one we have been forced to seriously consider.

Bottom line, there are not many large, vacant, facilities or properties in the area. Those that do exist have either not met one or more of our basic needs, or they were simply much too expensive to consider. It has been a long and frustrating search, but we have not given up and you may rest assured that we will not give up until a suitable new home is found for the CFFM. The history of fire fighting in Canada deserves to be told and we have amassed a large and high-quality collection, along with the human resources and expertise, which will enable us to do so.

As for a new home, we have yet to find one, but the efforts to do so are very serious and ongoing. At this point in time there are two serious contenders, both held up by political decision-making at the moment but looking very promising.

Stay tuned and do not give up hope, the right location will be found...

Will Lambert (Chair of Site Selection)

A small mystery in the collections uncovers a larger story of industrial firefighting



A miniature copy of the Low Moor firefighters memorial at West Yorkshire Fire & Rescue headquarters.

Visitors to CFFM's old shop on Mill Street South, Port Hope, might have noticed in a glass case on top of a display cabinet, a small black statuette of a British firefighter of yesteryear, a statuette of a type referred to as a "coal carving". The case bears a small brass label stating "*Presented by Rod Ainsworth on Behalf of West Yorkshire Fire Service*". Little has survived in the institutional memory of how he came into the CFFM collection except that he was donated by a visitor. Something that was once known and obvious has become a mystery as the years passed.

The challenge, therefore, was to try to learn more of the provenance and significance of this

little fellow, sometimes affectionately referred to as “Anthracite Man”.

The memorial itself honours the six fire service members who lost their lives fighting the industrial-scale fire and subsequent Low Moor Explosion disaster of 1916. It was originally erected in 1924 in Scholemoor Cemetery by the Bradford Council, but over the years fell into disrepair and was even being scavenged for building stones until intervention was organized to rescue it. In 1999 the City Council decided to move the memorial from the cemetery to its present site at the West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service headquarters in Birkenshaw, now part of Bradford.

Bradford is a city that expanded exponentially in response to the Industrial Revolution as steam power underpinned its pre-eminent position in wool weaving.



The Low Moor firefighters memorial after restoration at West Yorkshire Fire & Rescue headquarters

Low Moor lies south of the original Bradford and is now part of the city. It had a long industrial history of iron mining, coal mining, and steel

production. The Low Moor Chemical Company also started a chemical works in the late 19th century to make dyestuff for the woolen industry. One chemical they made was picric acid which was a yellow dye but also used in manufacturing high explosive shells, for which they first obtained a license in 1898. When World War One began, the company was renamed the Low Moor Munitions Company and its production expanded to maximum capacity.

Some 250 employees produced picric acid in a process that involved several steps. Nitric acid (produced on-site) was combined with phenol to make yellow crystals of picric acid which were filtered out of the liquid and then moved to the drying sheds to be spread onto steam-heated drying tables, then finally moved to magazines where the crystals were crushed and packed for shipping to the shell manufacturers. Some care was apparently taken in the design to avoid hazards but there was a lot of heat required at the various stages and it came from furnaces and boilers around the property. Some minor fires had been reported in the six months leading up to August of 1916, but nothing was viewed as “serious” in the context of the all-important war effort.

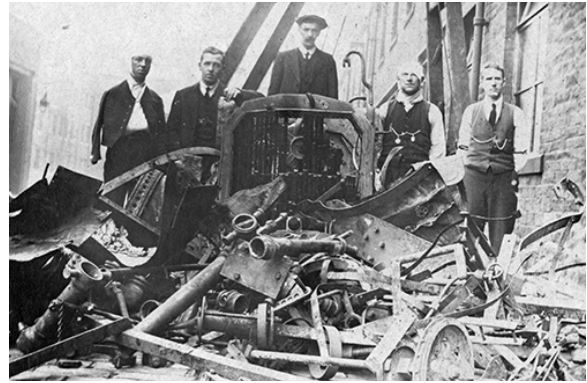
On August 21, 1916, the day of the disaster, there was a finished product inventory of 30,000 pounds in the magazines awaiting shipment and more in the production line. Details were hard for historians to work out because of wartime secrecy but there was ultimately a coroner’s inquest. Although he could not locate the inquest records, Ronald Blackwell published a brief history of the disaster events in *The Bradford Antiquary*, the third series, in 1987, excerpts (edited and adapted) of which follow.

- Eleven open drums (they were supposed to be covered but in practice, this was only when the weather was bad) of dried picric acid were being moved into the lower magazine in mid-afternoon.
- The first barrel seems to have caught fire while in the entrance to the magazine.

- The fire probably spread quickly into the magazine due to the dust-laden air from the crushing equipment, and possibly to the other drums as well.
- About 20 minutes later the whole magazine building exploded, with one piece of metal debris landing over a mile away.
- After another 30 minutes, a double explosion destroyed another company building, debris from which hit a gasometer which also exploded creating a huge fireball.
- The first fires inside the plant were tackled by the works' own brigade.
- Firemen from Odsal were next on the scene, and as they approached, they were greeted by the first explosion.
- The alarm sounded at the Central Fire Station in Nelson Street, Bradford, about 10 minutes after the fire began and eighteen men set off in their newly-acquired fire engine, 'Hayhurst'.

'Hayhurst' was stationary about thirty yards inside the gate, and just as the crew was preparing to connect the hose to the hydrants the next explosion occurred. This killed six firemen, two from Odsal and four from Nelson Street. The 'Hayhurst' was completely destroyed and parts of the engine were found in Heckmondwike railway station, many miles away.

Multiple detonations continued and at about three and a half hours after the fire started, the second magazine exploded. The explosions went on for two days. There were about twenty-two on the 21st, and the fires had not all been extinguished three days later. Damage to surrounding buildings and infrastructure was extensive. In spite of rumours of sabotage, the conclusion was that an adverse chemical reaction in worn-out drums being used to improperly transfer the acid crystals was the cause. In spite of several license expansions to cover higher quantities during the war effort, the lower magazine had actually contained more than twice its licensed capacity.



Above: Remains of Bradford's fire engine "Hayhurst" lost in the Low Moor disaster of 1916

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Forty people including the six firefighters lost their lives in the disaster. Over a hundred are thought to have been injured. Mary and Geoff had to work hard to identify the workers who were victims of the Low Moor Explosion from documentary sources because due to the sensitive wartime secrecy around munitions industrial activity, not a lot was made public at the time and there was no public memorial for them. The Twentymans' work was fundamental to a number of events marking the centenary of the disaster in 2016, including finally a memorial plaque to all worker and firefighter victims.

One fascinating but undocumented item in the CFFM collection opened a story of industrial firefighting and disaster that transcends time and space. What others might there be?

Dennis Waddington

The CFFM's Living Collection

Museum collections are similar to gardens. They need to be looked after with care, added to judiciously, documented, cleaned, transplanted from time to time and sometimes weeded.

The Collection of the Canadian Fire Fighters Museum is no different. Although we have no permanent home yet in which to show and interpret our collection, much "gardening" work has happened behind the scenes to preserve and enhance it in 2022.

We have accomplished a lot. Of great significance is the decision by Ingenium, Canada's National Museums of Science and Technology in Ottawa to select CFFM as the new home for six fire trucks deaccessioned from its collection. These vehicles are surplus to Ingenium's requirements and they fit holes in our collection. They range from a 1914 American LaFrance Combination truck originally with the Toronto Fire Department to a 1956 Thibault operated by the Val David Fire Department in the Laurentians. The vehicles will be arriving during the summer and will be held in storage pending their display in due course.

We have also received from a donor in Winnipeg an archival collection featuring the donor's uncle, a member of the Canadian Corps of Fire Fighters who served in the UK during the Second World War. This material complements other artefacts in the Museum's collection dealing with this now forgotten chapter in Canadian history.

As reported elsewhere, we have loaned artefacts of great local significance in the last few months, most notably the Weddell Hose Reel Trophy. It is the third Fire Service in Ontario with which CFFM has artefact loans.

The care and maintenance of our Collection over the last few months have involved an inspection of artefacts at the Hub and the Waste Water Treatment Plant courtesy of the Municipality of Port Hope and our various storage locations in the surrounding area. We were able to clean off the vehicles as we did in 2021 on our last visits, ascertain that no damage had occurred to anything and renew covers over the artefacts as required.

Our largest task was to move our collection of fire hydrants, hoses and chemical carts from one storage facility on private property to another. This was accomplished over three hours one evening with the impressive assistance of volunteers from the Port Hope Fire Service and the generosity of Henderson Construction. It is calculated that the seven people who did it moved as much as 10 tons of material. Happily, it was accomplished with no injuries to anyone though some of us were stiff the next day!

Apart from preparing to receive the additions to the Collection, we are also doing housekeeping on the Museum's artefact records as much as circumstances permit.

Our first group of records to be upgraded is related to the vehicles. Beyond that, we have a database of all of our hydrants compiled by Dennis and the late Janet Waddington that can be added next. This will fill a large hole in our records. Should anyone reading this be interested in helping us to complete these tasks we would be delighted to hear from you.

Christopher Terry, Chair, Collection Committee

Historic Trophy Returned for Display at Quinte West Fire and Rescue Service

The Canadian Fire Fighters Museum was recently delighted to make a historic trophy available for display in the Heritage Room of Station 1 of the Quinte West Fire & Rescue Service.

The Weddell Hose Reel Race Trophy dates to 1910 and is named in honour of Robert Weddell, the first Fire Chief in what was then the Town of Trenton.

It was awarded to winners of competitions between fire brigades that involved pulling a fully loaded fire hose reel over stipulated distances. These competitions took place wherever there were groups of fire brigades, almost all of them manned by volunteers. The Trenton Fire Brigade team had a fine record of success in these races which were very popular in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

The Weddell Trophy was housed for many years at an earlier Trenton Fire Station until it was donated to the former Ontario Fire College in Gravenhurst. When the Fire College closed, the Trophy was passed on to the Canadian Fire Fighters Museum (CFFM) in Port Hope.

When contacted by the Quinte West Fire & Rescue Service about the Trophy, the CFFM was pleased to agree to a loan so that it could be exhibited alongside other fire-fighting artifacts from Trenton. Michelle Haney-Kileeg, CFFM's

Board Chair noted "We take very seriously the benefit of sharing artifacts from our collection. Fire fighting in Canada has a long history and its organization was a major element in the growth of our communities. We are pleased to be able to help commemorate the dedication of those who have served. And we are particularly pleased to see the Weddell Trophy finally displayed again in its brand new home Station."

Though it is temporarily without a permanent home, the Canadian Fire Fighters Museum has an active loan program for material from its extensive collection. Material is currently on loan for heritage and commemorative purposes to three fire services throughout Ontario



Above: Captain Chris Wigley, Division Commander Brad Graham, Christopher Terry CFFM, Will Lambert CFFM, Michelle Haney-Kileeg Chair, CFFM, Captain Scott Saylor (Ret'd), Mayor Jim Harrison, Deputy Fire Chief Rick Caddick, Fire Chief John Whelan.

Membership Report

- The month of June saw our first local membership drive for this year. With the benefit of some friends, we held a Membership/Beer Tasting at the Beamish House. I am very excited to welcome new members and see many previous members return. Membership does come with some great benefits this year
- 10% off your food order at Olympus Burger
- Discounts on museum activities such as the upcoming golf tournament on September 1st
- Members will have the first opportunity to promote their businesses by participating in our events, contact John Appleman for your opportunities.
- We will hold one more membership event on July 8th at the market in Lent Lane

We strongly encourage members to invite their friends to join.

Fundraising Report

In the coming months, fundraising will become paramount for the success of our museum. With our new member base, we are planning on hosting a golf tournament. The tournament is scheduled for September 1st at Port Hope Golf and Country Club. This Premier golf course will only have a limited number of tournaments to participate in this year. We are fortunate to have one of those spots. The tournament kicks off with a shotgun start at 8:00 a.m. there will be plenty of prizes to be won. And then we'll retire to the Beamish House after the tournament for a Beamish Burger/Beamish Decker Sandwich / Blue Cheeseburger. Members' prices for the golf tournament will be \$140 and \$150 for non-members. Membership does have its privileges at a Canadian Firefighters Museum event. To participate and register for the golf tournament contact John Appleman. Become one of the first sponsors!

P.S. – we have held some small, local fundraising events which have been solid earners. For example, on June 25th, we raised \$300 selling breakfasts at the Blooms Grove Ave Annual Street Sale. The sale of dahlia tubers raised \$150. We host a table at Lent Lane Market each month which generated \$210 in giftware sales and donations on June 9th. I am grateful for this support and the chance to remind everyone that we are HERE. However, growing our membership base and hosting larger events like the golf tournament is our priority direction.

John Appleman, Fundraising Chair



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