

## Scottish Group Honours WW II Heroism of RCE George Cross Recipient Corporal James Hendry



The wartime death of Corporal James Hendry who was killed when he tried to prevent an explosion during WW II was recognized on 14 August 2008 in the Scottish Highland community where he lost his life. LCol R.S. Martinell, our CME Exchange officer at the UK Defence Academy, represented the CME at the dedication ceremony.

James Hendry, serving with No 1 Tunnelling Company, Royal Canadian Engineers, died when a 'powder house' of stored high explosive was blown apart after a fire broke out during construction on a hydro tunnel in Scotland. The detachment was drilling a tunnel the diameter of a small railway tunnel to connect two lakes in order to increase electric power to the British Aluminium smelter works in Kinlochleven. That plant played a vital part in the supply network that built the RAF's fighters and bombers that were critical to the defence of Britain.

The 29-year-old Sapper was killed instantly in the blast of 13 June 1941 as he warned other workers to take cover and then tried to quell the blaze. One of his fellow Canadian soldiers, Sapper John Stewart, 28, also died and seven others were injured. Had Cpl Hendry not raised the alarm, quite a few more men would have been killed. Corporal Hendry's display of courage was recognized two years after his death when he was posthumously awarded the George Cross, the country's highest award for gallantry in non-military action. Canada remembers Corporal James Hendry through the naming of the Corporal James Hendry GC Building in Militia Training Centre Meaford.



The memorial cairn was officially unveiled in Corporal Hendry's honour near the tunnel at the head of Loch Laggan, near Newtonmore, where he died. It marks the culmination of a two-year campaign by Alister MacRae, 83, the only known local survivor of the explosion, and the Laggan Heritage Trust. The memorial was made possible by the help of the Ardverekie estate, Balfour Beattie (the construction company involved in the WW II tunnel project) and Rio Tinto Alcan, the company that now operates the smelter. The CMEA has assisted in the research of this event and help co-ordinate the CME input. The CME Museum assisted with the provision of some artifacts for a Time Capsule and MCE assisted with the crafting of a memorial booklet.