

Kirkland Lake honours its veterans

Major Francis Moreau

Commanding Officer, 34 Combat Engineer Regiment

On July 1, a commemorative ceremony was held in Kirkland Lake, Ontario, for the town's World War II veterans who served in the Canadian Army Tunnelling Companies. 34 Combat Engineer Regiment took part in the ceremony.

This ceremony was made possible through the valuable assistance of retired Lieutenant-Colonel Ken Holmes and the mayor of Kirkland Lake, Bill Enouy, and his team. Without their efforts, it would have been difficult to find and recognize the veterans' names. The ceremony took place at the magnificent Sir Harry Oakes Chateau at the Museum of Northern History. A plaque was also presented in order to highlight the men's significant accomplishments.

During WWII, residents of Kirkland Lake enrolled in the armed forces to assist with the war effort. Because of their miner training, they were assigned to the Canadian Army Tunnelling Companies. They did excellent work overseas, particularly in Scotland where they built a tunnel in order to provide electricity to an aluminum smelter supporting aircraft production, all over England where they built fortifications, in Gibraltar where they supported the Allies in the Mediterranean and North Africa, and on D Day when they supported the Allies' campaign in Italy.

The Canadian Military Engineers asked 34 Combat Engineer Regiment to lend a hand with the ceremony. Major Francis Moreau, Commanding Officer of 9 Engineer Squadron in Rouyn-Noranda, was designated to represent the Canadian Military Engineer Branch. This was a wise choice because members of 9 Engineer Squadron, like the troops from Kirkland Lake, served honourably in the Canadian Army Tunnelling Companies. After fighting in the war and returning to Canada, 3rd (Reserve) Battalion Royal Canadian Engineer, the predecessor of 9 Engineer Squadron, relied on those veterans. Furthermore, 3rd (Reserve) Battalion Royal Canadian Engineer had three companies, and sections of the Noranda (Quebec) company were located in Kirkland Lake, Virginia Town and Larder Lake, Ontario.

These acts of recognition help us not to forget our history and Canada's contribution to major overseas conflicts. At the time of writing this article, retired Lieutenant-Colonel Ken Holmes had already found over 86 sappers from Kirkland Lake and Rouyn-Noranda who served in this remarkable group. We are very grateful for his efforts; may their memory live on through the ages.

CHIMO!



Karl Ozols, Pat Hastie and Major Francis Moreau