

## WWII D-Day Sapper Veteran Making Plans for Visit to Normandy



Serendipity has recently played its part in presenting us an opportunity to get a Sapper to France to participate in the D-Day 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary activities this June. An unexpected opportunity arose to select a veteran when the regional government in Normandy, France, offered to fund the travel and accommodation of a Second World War Sapper Veteran.

LCol Ken Holmes (Ret'd) works with different high schools in to assist them in their endeavours on **Lest We Forget** projects [see [Collections Canada](#)]. Ken mentors primarily as an expert on how to conduct military and family research but also provides particular expertise on Sappers. Last year we worked with the Almonte High School and helped one of those students get his research on Sapper Stewart published to John Macpherson's [CME History Blog](#).

This year we are assisting Blake Seward, a teacher at Smiths Falls District Collegiate Institute in an expanded Lest We Forget project that aims to research all the Canadian Army D-Day fatalities. Blake Seward has been the driving force behind this **Lest We Forget** project and several schools have combined their efforts on this major undertaking for the D-Day Anniversary.

We are fortunate in Ottawa to have a WW II veteran, Cpl Stanley Fields of the 5<sup>th</sup> Field Company RCE. Stan is 95 years old but in remarkable healthy shape and possessing an excellent and detailed recollection of the WW II-era. Over the years Stan has provided the leadership to the 5<sup>th</sup> Field Company Veterans Association, he wrote the unit's WW II history book: "*History of the 5th Field Company, Royal Canadian Engineers, 1941-1946*" and has been instrumental in keeping the remaining few vets in contact.

We were about to make arrangements to have the students meet Stan Fields as part of their research when the organizers were pleasantly surprised to be invited by the local government in Normandy to send a delegation of a Vet, students and teachers to participate in the D-Day ceremonies as their guests. This is essentially an all expense paid trip for all participants and that includes the vet and two family members. They will fly over on 31 May and return on 9 June. French officials will cover costs of flights, accommodation, and train from Paris to Caen return.

On 13 March 2014 we able to introduce Stan to some of the students who filmed an interview with him to share with French officials as part of their 70th anniversary program. The teacher summarized the successful session: "... Stanley captured everyone's attention today with his incredibly detailed recollections...."

At the closing of the activities, Stan presented the school with a copy of "Vol II -The History of the Royal Canadian Engineers" on behalf of the Military Engineering Institute of Canada and The Canadian Military Engineering Association.

