

The Hall of Colours

A Tribute to Canada's Military Heritage



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The Hall of Colours: A Tribute to Canada's Military Heritage

The Hall of Colours at the Beechwood National Memorial Centre in Ottawa is a sacred and inspiring space dedicated to honouring the traditions and legacy of Canada's military.

This space serves as the final resting place for the retired Colours (ceremonial flags) of the Canadian Armed Forces.

Each of these Colours represents the history, honour, and achievements of their respective units, preserving their legacy for generations to come.

Historical Significance

The practice of retiring Colours has its roots in military history, where these ceremonial flags served as rallying points on the battlefield.

Bearing the battle honours and achievements of their regiments, they hold immense ceremonial and historical value. The dignified retirement of these Colours in the Hall ensures that their legacy is preserved for future generations.



The Hall of Colours: A Sacred Space

The Hall of Colours is a solemn environment, designed to reflect the dignity and sacrifice associated with Canada's military heritage.

Suspension of Colours

The Colours are suspended at ceiling level, adhering to a tradition that ensures they remain untouched.

Over time, they naturally disintegrate, symbolizing the passage of history. This practice honours the service and sacrifices of Canada's military personnel while preserving their legacy in a dignified manner.

The Granite Plinth

At the centre of the Hall is a stately black granite plinth. This monument represents the enduring strength, unity, and sacrifices of Canada's military forces, serving as a focal point for remembrance and reflection.



Memorial Window: “Hope in a Broken World”

A focal point of the Hall is the stained-glass window titled **Hope in a Broken World**, donated by the Canadian Military Chaplains’ Association.

This breathtaking work of art captures the journey of the Chaplaincy branch, from its Christian roots to a more inclusive representation of all faiths.



- **Central Figure:** The central figure depicted in the stained glass is Lieutenant H. Gordon Aikman, whose image is sourced from the Department of National Defence/Library and Archives Canada (PA-142245). It portrays **Chaplain H/ Captain Robert Seaborn of the Canadian Scottish Regiment**, giving absolution to an unidentified soldier of the 3rd Canadian Infantry Division near Caen, France, on 15 July 1944. This poignant moment reflects the vital role of chaplains in providing spiritual support during times of war.

- **St. Martin of Tours:** The patron saint of chaplains is also depicted, symbolizing Christian heritage and selflessness. His presence reflects the historical foundation of chaplaincy work.
- **The Tree of Life:** This element symbolizes inclusivity and the interconnectedness of life, representing the diversity of spiritual and cultural backgrounds served by the Chaplaincy.

The interplay of sunlight through the stained glass creates a serene and reflective atmosphere, enhancing the solemnity of the space.



The Laid-Up Colours

The Hall of Colours houses an impressive collection of retired Colours from Canada's military, each carrying the history and honours of its respective unit.

Second Battalion - Royal 22nd Regiment (R22eR)
Laying up of II R22eR Colours: November 28, 2007



Queen's Colour



Regimental Colour

Second Battalion - Royal Canadian Regiment (II - RCR)
Laying up of II RCR Colours: November 28, 2007



Queen's Colour



Regimental Colour

Each of these Colours represents the dedication and courage of the personnel who served under them, making their retirement a deeply symbolic act of respect.



The Laid-Up Colours

Maritime Command
Laying up of Colour: October 21, 2008



Queen's Colour

Note: The Navy does not have Regimental Colours

412 Transport Squadron - Royal Canadian Air Force
Laying up of Standard: June 18, 2011



Squadron Standard

The Royal Canadian Dragoons
Armoured Regiment
Laying up of Guidon: April 27, 2012



Regimental Guidon

436e Escadron de transport - Royal Canadian Air Force
Laying up of Standard : July 11, 2012



Squadron Standard

Each of these Colours represents the dedication and courage of the personnel who served under them, making their retirement a deeply symbolic act of respect.

The Laid-Up Colours

Les Fusiliers du St-Laurent
Laying up of colours: May 19, 2012



Queen's Colour



Regimental Colour

Second Battalion Canadian Guards
Transferred from Notre-Dame Cathedral, Ottawa: July 19, 2015



Queen's Colour



Regimental Colour

Each of these Colours represents the dedication and courage of the personnel who served under them, making their retirement a deeply symbolic act of respect.

The Laid-Up Colours

400 Tactical Helicopter Squadron
 Royal Canadian Air Force
 Laying up of Standard : August 28, 2013



Squadron Standard

411 Tactical Helicopter Squadron
 Royal Canadian Air Force
 Laying up of Standard : October 7, 2013



Squadron Standard

Third Battalion
 Royal Canadian Regiment (III - R CR) Laying up of III
 RCR Colour: March 5, 2014



Regimental Colour

Second Battalion
 Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry (II - PPCLI)
 Laying up of II PPCLI Colour: September 21, 2014



Regimental Colour

Note: the United States Presidential Unit Citation blue ribbon, awarded for the Korean War battle of Kapyong.

Each of these Colours represents the dedication and courage of the personnel who served under them, making their retirement a deeply symbolic act of respect.

The Ceremony for Laying Up Colours

In Canada, the ceremony for laying up Colours is a deeply symbolic and dignified event that honours the service and sacrifice of military units. The practice follows a rich military tradition in which Colours are retired when a unit is disbanded, reorganized, or when new Colours are issued.

- **Purpose and Significance:** The laying up of Colours represents the end of active service for a unit's ceremonial flags. These Colours, which often bear the battle honours of the unit, are entrusted to a sacred or historic place for safekeeping and remembrance.
- **Ceremonial Elements:**
 - The ceremony typically begins with a military procession, accompanied by the unit's band.
 - The Colours are carried with reverence and escorted by members of the unit, symbolizing their continued guardianship.
 - A religious or spiritual blessing is often included, reflecting the solemnity of the occasion.
 - The Colours are formally handed over to a designated institution, such as a cathedral, military chapel, or memorial site, where they will be displayed and preserved.
- **Tradition of Sacred Preservation:** Once laid up, the Colours are not touched or moved, following the belief that they should naturally disintegrate over time. This symbolizes the passage of history and the enduring legacy of the unit.
- **Locations for Laid-Up Colours:** In Canada, laid-up Colours can be found in places such as military chapels, national memorials, and institutions like the Hall of Colours at Beechwood Cemetery, ensuring their history is preserved for future generations.



Canada's Tribute: The Great War 1914-1919

The Hall of Colours also proudly houses the painting **Canada's Tribute: The Great War 1914-1919**, also known as **Placing the Canadian Colours on Wolfe's Monument in Westminster Abbey**.

This significant artwork commemorates the bravery, sacrifice, and service of Canadians during the First World War.

- o **Historical Context:** During the First World War, Canadian battalions deposited their flags (or colours) on Wolfe's monument in Westminster Abbey for safekeeping.

After the war, two colours were dedicated in 1922 and remain on Wolfe's monument today as a perpetual reminder of Canada's contributions to the war effort.

About the Artist: Emily Mary Bibbens Warren

Emily Mary Bibbens Warren (1869-1956) was a British Canadian artist and illustrator renowned for her work in ink, watercolour, oil, gouache, and graphite. She is celebrated for paintings that depict sunlight beaming through stained glass windows, as well as scenes of gardens, landscapes, and architectural interiors.

This painting is a true patriotic symbol of Canada's commitment and sacrifices during the Great War. Its depiction of the laying of the colours carries no overt religious symbolism, aligning with Beechwood's neutral, multi-denominational creed.



We would like to thank the Cameron Highlanders of Ottawa (Duke of Edinburgh's Own) Regimental Association and the Leadership of Cartier Square Drill Hall for providing this painting on loan to the National Military Cemetery and our Hall of Colours.



Broader Purpose and Accessibility

The Hall of Colours is part of the Beechwood National Memorial Centre, which also includes the Sacred Space—a multi-faith and multi-purpose facility.

Beechwood’s mission is to serve as a place of remembrance for all Canadians, catering to diverse communities and fostering inclusivity.

The Hall of Colours is integral to Beechwood’s commemorative activities, hosting ceremonies that honour Canada’s military heritage and the sacrifices of its personnel.

Its design and purpose encourage reflection, education, and tribute.

The Hall of Colours at Beechwood Cemetery is more than just a space; it is a living testament to the history, traditions, and sacrifices of Canada’s military.

Through its architectural features, symbolic elements, and collection of laid-up Colours, it preserves the legacy of those who served and offers a place for all Canadians to honour their contributions.



Whether visiting to reflect, learn, or pay tribute, the Hall of Colours stands as a beacon of remembrance and unity, ensuring that the stories of Canada’s military continue to inspire future generations



Questions?

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About us

Beechwood is the National Cemetery of Canada and is the home of the National Military Cemetery, the RCMP National Memorial Cemetery, the CSIS National Memorial Cemetery, the Ottawa Police Service Memorial Cemetery and many more organizations and religious groups. Beechwood has been proudly serving our community since 1873.

Take advantage of all the services offered by Beechwood Cemetery, including pre-arrangements, full service funerals, cremation, cemetery services and executor assistance. Beechwood Cemetery can meet whatever wishes you may have from visitations, informal gatherings, life celebrations, memorial services, catered receptions, to a custom monument or memorialization.

Beechwood Cemetery is here to provide you with everything you need to make the right decision for you and your loved ones.

Beechwood, Funeral, Cemetery and Cremation Services is owned by The Beechwood Cemetery Foundation and operates on a not-for-profit basis. Governed by a volunteer Board of Directors, it is the only organization of its kind in Ottawa. In choosing Beechwood, Funeral, Cemetery and Cremation Services, you can take comfort in knowing that all funds are used for the maintenance, preservation and enhancement of this National Historic Site. The Beechwood Cemetery Foundation was created for the purpose of safeguarding Beechwood's future and increasing public awareness of Beechwood, as well as the important historical persons buried within it.