

November

Southwold Remembers: An Historical Record

Origins and Founding Gesture

On November 12, 2000, a pivotal moment of remembrance took place in Southwold Township, Ontario. Following official welcomes and opening remarks from dignitaries, Southwold's first Remembrance Day Services began at the Keystone Complex, in Shedden.



Guided by the haunting tones of piper James Carmichael, Southwold veterans, Legion members, Colour Guards, military personnel, cadets, and guests solemnly paraded to the newly constructed Memorial Site on the grounds of the Keystone Complex.

Master of Ceremonies, Lolly Marshall (*right*) of St. Thomas presided over official duties at the Memorial Site. Colour Guards from St. Thomas and Pt. Stanley elevated the ceremony with quiet honor and solemn respect.



Playing an historic role in the proceedings was Southwold Veteran, Bill Crabe, a Conspicuous Gallantry Medal award winner for an act of heroism in World War II. Mr. Crabe unveiled the plaque listing the sixty-six "Sons of Southwold" who perished in the two World Wars.

The official dedication of the Memorial Site was led by Padre D. Roushorn, whose words resonated deeply with all in attendance. In his address, he reflected on the purpose behind Southwold's Remembrance Day initiative:



“As we gather on this beautiful occasion, we contemplate the many comforts and blessings of our lives, and the well-being of our great nation—Canada. And, as we reflect on these things, we pause and we remember those who gave the supreme sacrifice to protect the values that give meaning to our lives.”



With solemn dignity, broadcaster Al McGregor then read aloud the names of the sixty-six men from Southwold who perished in service to their country and community—a moment of profound silence and collective remembrance.

A procession of federal, provincial, and municipal leaders, veterans associations and special guests participated in the ceremonial presentation of wreaths.



Southwold tributes were presented by two long-time residents. The Silver Cross wreath was dedicated by Dora



McArthur (*right*) who honoured the memory of her brother Murray Chamberlain, lost in service following World War II. Southwold Township's Remembrance wreath was presented by Southwold Mayor, Perry Clutterbuck (*left*).



Quietly stepping forward after the official wreath presentations was Maurice McLellan who placed two red roses in memory of his brothers, Eugene and Ross—both Southwold veterans lost in World War II.

From this quiet act of tribute, the Southwold Remembers service was established, drawing nearly 1,000 attendees in its inaugural year. The service has evolved into a cornerstone of the township's annual commemorations, marking a renewed civic commitment to preserving local military history and honouring those who served.



Dignitaries presenting wreaths at the inaugural service in 2000

Genesis: Origins of Southwold Remembers

It all began at Stan's Total Tire in Fingal.

A simple tire repair sparked a conversation that would eventually shape the landscape of the Southwold Keystone Complex in Shedden—quite literally.

“It was late August 1998. I'd stopped in to have a tire repaired, and while the technicians got to work, I found myself in a friendly chat at the counter with Stan Lidster, a Southwold Councillor, and fellow customer Deputy Mayor Jim McIntyre. The conversation drifted toward the newly built Keystone Complex. As the neighbour directly east of the facility on Talbot Line, I casually tossed out an idea:

‘Why not landscape the Complex grounds and create a passive park across the property?’

We bantered back and forth, tossing around possibilities that might enhance the community centre's surroundings. Eventually, the tires were fixed, and Jim and I said our goodbyes to Stan, each heading off to continue our day.

Normally, that would've been the end of it. Most ‘great ideas’ fade as quickly as they arrive—forgotten by dinner. But after lunch, I wandered out to the Rhubarb Patch behind the Complex and struck up a conversation with Lorne Spicer.

And that's when everything changed.”

Len Lynch, Southwold Remembers

That casual chat in the Rhubarb Patch planted more than just an idea—it set real action in motion.

Two weeks later, the Lynch telephone rang. It was Lorne:

“Council wants you to go ahead with your park. Rosy Rhubarb will pay for it, and you can pick your own committee.”

Game on!

Those two chance encounters—one at Stan’s Total Tire and the other at the Rhubarb Patch —sparked the formation of the Keystone Landscape Committee. The first meeting took place on September 19, 1998, with an interested group around the table.

Len and Karen Lynch, Lorne Spicer, Kathy and Maurice Nesbitt, and Leo Lynch embraced the opportunity wholeheartedly. Len took on the role as chair of the committee. Here was an opportunity to make a positive impact in the Southwold community.

Tossing around early ideas, it quickly became clear: “... we needed a professional touch to bring this vision to life.”

By October 1998, Catharine Spratley, a landscape designer with the City of St. Thomas, accepted the challenge. She had previously collaborated with Lorne on a Heritage Tree project and brought both expertise and heart to the table. Her thoughtful design sensibilities were the perfect match for our enthusiastic committee.

The landscaping initiative took three years to complete and the committee included a War Veterans Memorial Site as part of the project.

That vital component ultimately led to Southwold Remembers.

Tires to trees to timeless tribute!

The Memorial Site

As the vision for the Keystone Complex began to take root, the next chapter unfolded with clarity and conviction. The newly formed Landscape Committee set forth a series of objectives that would guide the creation of a meaningful and enduring tribute:

- To establish a site that honours the service and sacrifice of Southwold residents who served in the First and Second World Wars as well as the Korean War.
- To symbolize remembrance through two large granite stones, each representing one of the World Wars.
- To install a bronze sundial, a timeless emblem of reflection—“remembering for eternity.”
- To pay tribute to the RCAF Training Facility Fingal No. 4 Bombing & Gunnery School, a vital part of Southwold’s wartime legacy.
- To erect three flagpoles, standing tall as sentinels of: Canada, Ontario, and Southwold Township.

In May 1999, a public request was published in local newspapers seeking two large granite rocks to anchor the War Memorial site. The response was swift and heartfelt.

On June 7, 1999, Albert Auckland of Talbotville generously offered a striking granite boulder for the memorial—an act of community spirit that perfectly reflected the values the site was meant to honour.

As it turned out, this three-ton stone had long been a thorn in the side of Albert’s farm equipment, stubbornly resisting every attempt to be moved

or ignored. Its relocation to the memorial wasn't just symbolic—it was practical.

A fitting tribute for the township and a relief for the farmer, the gesture from a former Southwold Reeve was a win-win for both family and community.

The “Auckland Rock” was moved into position at the Memorial Site by Southwold Township Works Department in September 1999.

Albert Auckland passed away in February 2000 and never saw the finished Memorial Site. His family gathered at the granite boulder after the first Southwold Remembrance Day service in November 2000.



THE AUCKLAND ROCK



THE JENNER ROCK

On October 8, 1999, a second granite boulder—this one weighing in at five tons—was generously donated by Larry and Linda Jenner of Boxall. With precision and care, Township crews moved the stone into position, further anchoring the vision of the Memorial Site in place.

(Left – right) Troy, Larry and Mark Jenner pose with the five ton granite boulder donated from their Boxall farm.
(November 2000)

Throughout October and November 1999, contractor Classic Concrete brought the design to life, installing the sidewalks and Memorial Circle. These additions not only shaped the physical space but also laid the unifying foundation, linking the second phase of the landscape project with the original “Pergola” phase. A third landscape phase, a Memorial Forest, would be developed in 2003 and the final sidewalk link installed.

Finding an appropriate tribute for **RCAF Station Fingal No. 4 Bombing and Gunnery School** was something the Landscape Committee knew was extremely important. The former air base was an identifying element of Fingal’s history and an important era in Southwold’s history. As a component of the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan, the base had an international reputation.



In search of a solution, Len and Lorne paid a visit on January 3, 2000 to the home of John and Lois Kruppe, just east of Fingal. Time was of the essence—and if anyone could turn an idea into reality, it was John Kruppe. He had a well-earned reputation for getting things done... and done right.

John was raised on Fingal Line, just a stone's throw from Fingal. He attended the red brick S.S. #12 Fingal School, continuing his education at high school in St. Thomas. He attended university the first year Western offered a mechanical engineering program. A natural “deep thinker,” John had a sharp eye for detail and a mechanical mind that could unravel just about any puzzle.

As Lois graciously served coffee and cookies, Lorne pulled out an old book on military aircraft design. The visitors from Shedden had already settled on the Westland Lysander as the ideal symbol to represent No. 4 Bombing & Gunnery School. Unfortunately, the best reference Lorne could offer was a humble “stick drawing” with dimensions—hardly a blueprint, but enough to spark John's imagination.

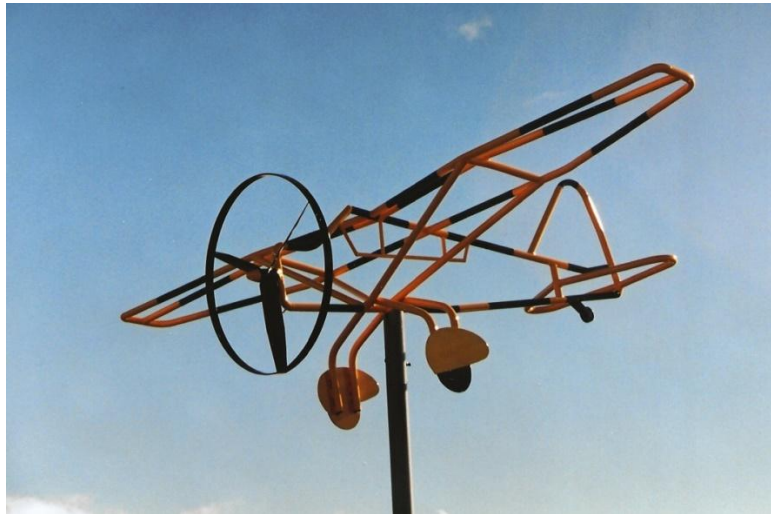


John & Lois Kruppe (2021)

John studied the drawing carefully. With pencil in hand and paper spread across the kitchen table, he began sketching and calculating. Within moments, he determined that a $\frac{1}{4}$ scale silhouette replica of the aircraft could be constructed—feasible, functional, and fitting.

And true to his reputation, John didn't just nod politely—he committed. He offered to do his very best to bring the RCAF Station Fingal tribute

to life, transforming a rough sketch into a lasting symbol of service and remembrance.



The steel tube structure was brought to life with a professional finish thanks to Bill Feairs of “Willy’s Auto Body” in Fingal, whose skilled painting gave the tribute its final polish.

Positioned with intention and care, the Lysander silhouette was angled to replicate a symbolic flight path—from the RCAF Station Fingal airbase to the heart of the Memorial Site. It stood proudly in place for the November 2000 Southwold Remembrance Day Service, a striking and meaningful addition to the ceremony.

True to their word and reputation, John Kruppe and his son Stuart delivered the tribute with precision and heart. Their craftsmanship and commitment ensured that the legacy of No. 4 Bombing & Gunnery School would be remembered not just in words, but in steel and silhouette.



In order to provide a balanced symmetry to the Memorial Site, the Landscape Committee set about commissioning a bronze sun dial to sit between the stones.

In July 2000, a beautifully crafted bronze sundial was produced by Sundials of Distinction in Richmond Hill, Ontario. The piece was designed to complement the two granite stones anchoring the Memorial Site. The sundial would serve as a symbolic centrepiece—“remembering for all time.”

Funding for the sundial came in part from a spirited community event: the “Dial into Style” Fashion Show, held at the Keystone Complex. Featuring local “models” and plenty of good humour, the show was a hit! Winston’s Fashions of St. Thomas generously provided the clothing and oversaw the presentation, adding a touch of elegance to the fundraising effort.

The Sundial Committee, chaired by Karen Lynch, included Pat Palmer, Catherine Koyle, and Susan McKillop-Harris, who also served as Master of Ceremonies. Their dedication ensured the sundial would be more than just a fixture—it would be a lasting tribute.

The enthusiasm of Southwold volunteers in the fashion show added to the community spirit that was taking hold in Southwold during the fall of 2000.

Adding to the spirit was the benevolence of George and Frances Stiffel. The Southwold residents made a generous donation in honour of George’s brother, John Stiffel. Their contribution helped elevate the Memorial Site from meaningful to magnificent.



Lorne Spicer and Pat Palmer with the sundial



THE BRONZE SUNDIAL

The centrepiece of the Memorial Site, mounted on a pedestal, was placed into position by volunteers in September 2000.

An inscription cast in the base pays tribute to Canadian Army Surgeon Lieutenant-colonel John McCrae who penned the poem, *In Flanders Fields*, following the Second Battle of Ypres in May 1915.

“To you from failing hands we throw the torch. Be yours to hold it high.”

Three new flagpoles were proudly installed, flanked by newly planted trees that gracefully frame the Memorial Site. To mark the entrances from the west and east sidewalks, striking oak gateways were constructed—serving as symbolic thresholds into a space of reflection and reverence.

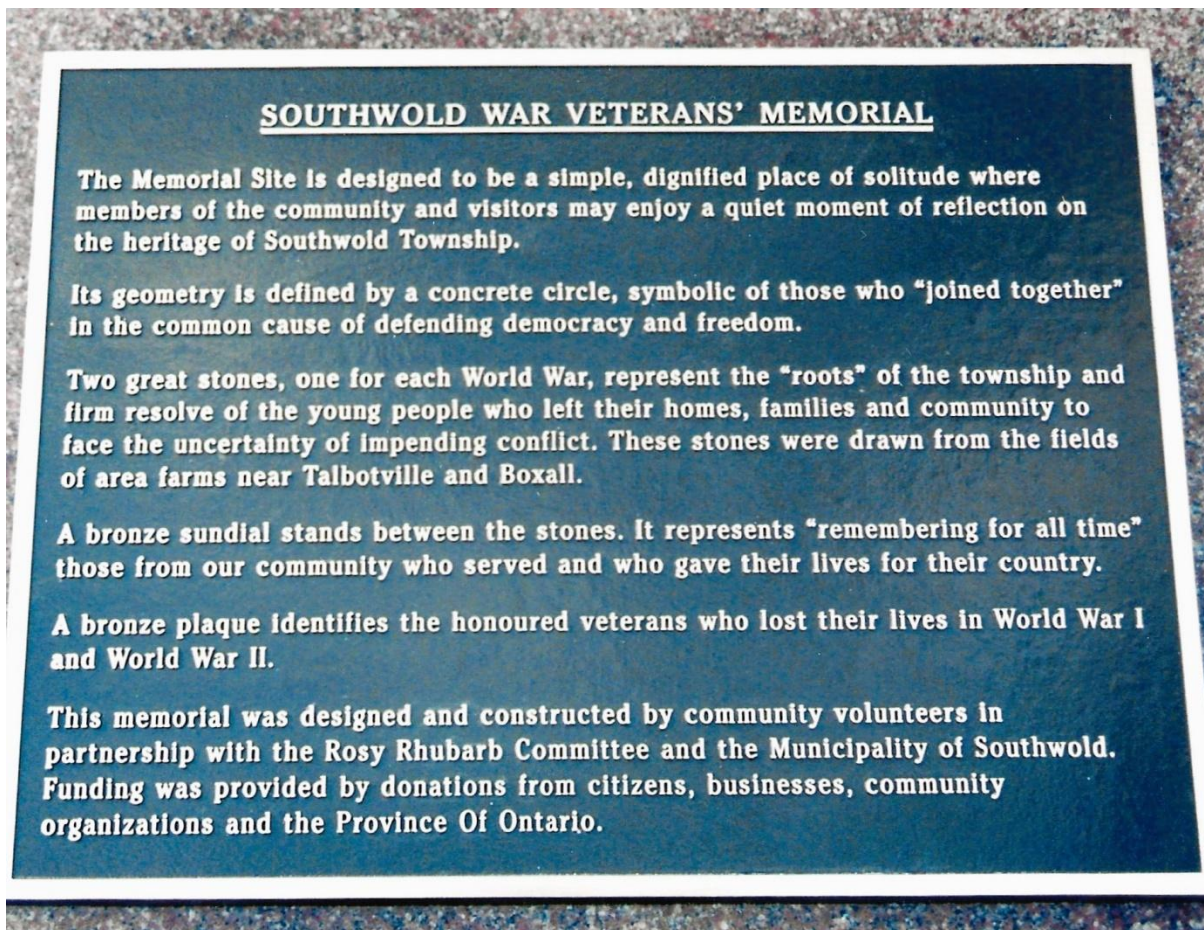
The final step in completing the site was to thoughtfully interpret its central elements: the granite boulders, the replica steel Lysander aircraft, and the bronze sundial. That meaningful task was entrusted to Len Lynch, Chairman of the Landscape Committee.

Len carefully composed the inscriptions for two bronze plaques:

- One describing the symbolism of the Memorial Site itself,
- And one paying tribute to No. 4 Bombing and Gunnery School, a vital part of Southwold's wartime legacy.

The plaques were expertly cast and mounted by Strath Craft Limited, a respected awards and engraving company based in London, Ontario. Adding a personal touch to the project was Don Daniels, the company's representative—and a proud resident of Shedden.





From tires to trees to timeless tribute, the Southwold Remembers project continued to grow—rooted in remembrance, nurtured by community, and destined to endure.

The autumn of 2000 was a season of purpose and pride in Southwold Township. As volunteers rolled up their sleeves to shape the new park—digging, planting, and nurturing the landscape around the Keystone Memorial Site—another devoted group had already been hard at work since November 1999.

While the physical elements of the site took form, one final tribute remained: a third bronze plaque. But this inscription called for something more than craftsmanship—it required the heart and insight of a special team of Southwold volunteers.

Catching up with Southwold's Past

The final bullet had been fired, and the last bomb had fallen. World War II officially came to an end on September 2, 1945, with Japan's formal surrender aboard the USS Missouri in Tokyo Bay. Projecting a Southwold Remembrance Day service in November 2000, exactly 20,214 days would have passed since the end of the war. Southwold, it seemed, had some catching up to do.

The Southwold Veterans Research Committee was established in November 1999, during the development of the Memorial Site by the Keystone Landscape Committee.



Southwold Veterans Research Committee

(Front row l – r) Pat Temple, Dora McArthur, Karen Collard, Melba Marr
(Back row l – r) Jack Cummings, Fred Temple, Brenda & Jamie McArthur.
(Absent) Stanley Jones

Jack Cummings, Pat Temple, Dora McArthur, Fred Temple, Brenda McArthur, Jamie McArthur, Stan Jones and Melba Marr came together to form a dedicated and intrepid research team. United by purpose and driven by respect for Southwold's fallen, they poured countless hours into uncovering the stories and service records of local veterans.

The first meeting of the Research Committee was held at the Marr home on Talbot Line near Frome. Len Lynch, Chair of the Landscape Committee welcomed the group and identified the task that lay before them.

To guide their work, the committee set out two key objectives:

- ***Identify all Southwold residents who served in the two World Wars and the Korean War***
- ***Determine which of those individuals died in service to their country***

Eligibility was based on a clear criterion: veterans must have either been born in Southwold or resided in Southwold at the time they enlisted for military service.

The members of the committee had been assembled because each had a keen interest in local history. They also represented specific segments of Southwold's community locations. Boxall, Fingal, Frome, Talbotville, River Road, Shedden and Lawrence Station representation was important.

The other prominent factor was the presence on the committee of Stan Jones.

Stan grew up on the family farm on Lake Road, in the Boxall area. As a young man, Stan had the opportunity to watch activities at nearby RCAF

Station Fingal. The Jones farm was only about a mile from the base. In November 1942, Stan Jones enlisted in the RCAF.



Following the usual training schedule, Stan earned his wings as an air gunner and was subsequently sent overseas. On a training exercise on October 31, 1943, Stan's plane crashed in the North Sea. He was the only survivor.

Having survived his first air crash, Stan Jones returned to active duty with quiet resolve. He was soon assigned to No. 4 Group, 158 Squadron, joining his crew as a rear air gunner. On June 2, 1944, their Halifax bomber took part in a strategic raid targeting a railroad marshalling yard in France. During the mission, the aircraft was intercepted by a German Messerschmitt Bf 110 night fighter and shot down.

Stan and the six other crew members managed to bail out—marking the second time the young man from Southwold's Lake Road had survived the downing of a military aircraft. Evading German capture, Stan remained behind enemy lines sheltered by a French family. He was rescued two months later, following the Allied D-Day invasion on June 6, 1944. Stan Jones was returned to England and resumed his service with the Royal Canadian Air Force until the war's end.

Like many veterans, Stan Jones carried his wartime experiences quietly. Even his own children knew little of the dangers he had faced. But at the first meeting of the Southwold War Veterans Research Committee, Stan chose to speak. As he shared his memories, the room fell silent—spellbound by the courage, resilience, and humility of the man before

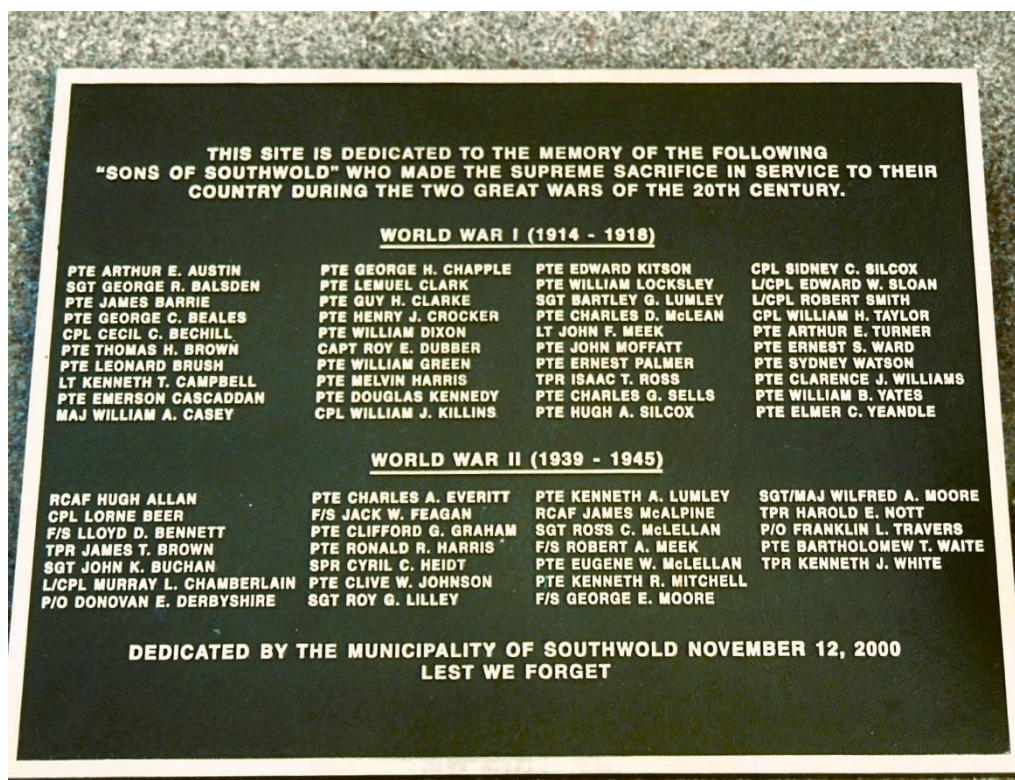
them. If anyone present needed a reason to pursue the work of remembrance, Stan Jones had just given it to them.

Under the direction of Melba Marr, the committee researched diligently until September 2000 and determined that 546 Southwold volunteers served in the great wars of the 20th Century.

They further recorded 40 men from World War I and 26 men from World War II representing Southwold paid the supreme sacrifice. There were no casualties in Korea.

The Research Committee rose to the occasion, completing their vital work in time for the inaugural Remembrance Day Service in 2000. A bronze plaque bearing the names of sixty-six “Sons of Southwold” who gave their lives in service was unveiled with solemn pride.

Yet even as the plaque was mounted and the names etched in memory, the journey was far from over—there was still much to be done.



Southwold War Veterans Memorial Committee

As the Memorial Site continued to take shape, Len Lynch and Lorne Spicer—armed with valuable insights gathered by the Veteran’s Research Committee—approached Southwold Council in September 2000 with a proposal to launch Southwold’s Remembrance Day services that November.

With just two months to prepare, the Council acted swiftly and thoughtfully in forming a dedicated committee. The idea to incorporate a Memorial Site at the Keystone Complex originated from the Landscape Committee. The inclusion of Len Lynch and Lorne Spicer on the new initiative maintained that continuity. Lorne also served as a representative of the Rosy Rhubarb Committee, whose generous financial support had been instrumental to the project’s development.

Lorne Spicer was a deeply respected figure in Southwold’s volunteer community. In 1943, at just sixteen and a half years old, he famously forged his birth certificate to enlist in the Royal Canadian Air Force. Reflecting on his decision, he once said, “I joined the service because deep down, I figured that everybody had to do their duty for their country.” His unwavering dedication and heartfelt reverence for veterans made him a natural champion for the Memorial Site and its mission.

The War Veterans Research Committee, formed by the Landscape Committee, had distinguished itself through exemplary work. At the helm was Chairperson Melba Marr, a highly respected Southwold educator known for her deep passion for local history. Her dedication to community initiatives made her a natural choice for this meaningful project.

Joining Melba from the Research group was Pat Temple, an accomplished genealogist whose expertise in cemetery research and local historical documentation had earned recognition. Pat's quiet, meticulous contributions added depth and authenticity to the committee's efforts, helping preserve Southwold's rich heritage.

As a young boy, Perry Clutterbuck watched in awe as aircraft from the Fingal Bombing and Gunnery School soared over his family's farm—an early spark that would later shape his deep respect for military service. Years later, as Mayor of Southwold, Perry gave his full support to the creation of the Memorial Site and the establishment of Remembrance Day services in the township. His involvement was both fitting and heartfelt.

Mary Clutterbuck joined her husband on the original War Veterans Memorial Committee, not merely as a partner, but as a respected community leader in her own right. A long-time contributor to the Women's Institute, Mary had also played a key role with the Elgin Historical Museum and recently chaired the Southwold 150th Anniversary Committee. Her dedication to preserving local heritage was widely acknowledged.

Together, Perry and Mary brought not only passion but credibility—earning the trust of Elgin County's historical and civic communities and helping to anchor the Memorial Site project in both legacy and leadership.

Southwold Councillor Stan Lidster was appointed to represent the Township's interests on the committee. A successful business owner and long-standing resident, Stan had been involved in the earliest conversations that laid the groundwork for both the park's development

and the eventual establishment of Remembrance Day services in Southwold.

To support the committee's work, Southwold Township also designated Michele Drewitt as the staff resource person. Her involvement ensured a strong link between the committee and municipal operations, helping to guide the project with professionalism and continuity.

The final seat on the War Veterans Memorial Committee was filled by Noble Tufford, a former Southwold Reeve and one of the 546 Southwold veterans who had proudly served King and country. In 1940, while hoeing beans on his family farm near Middlemarch, Noble witnessed a distressed aircraft make an emergency landing in a nearby pasture. Driven by curiosity, he approached the scene and met a student pilot who had run low on fuel and was forced to land. The encounter left a lasting impression, and within a year, Noble enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force.



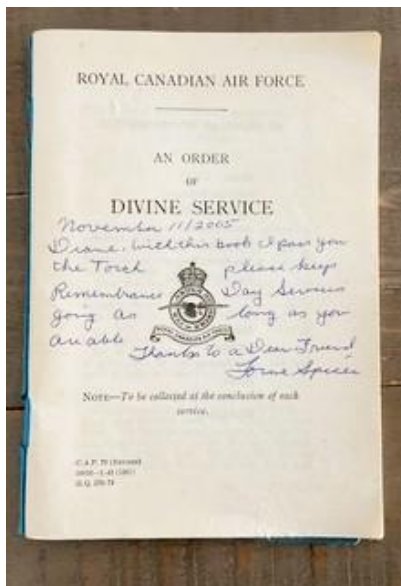
With both Noble Tufford and Lorne Spicer—RCAF veterans and pillars of the community—on the committee, the group embarked on planning Southwold's inaugural November Remembrance service. Their presence was not only symbolic but deeply inspiring, anchoring the project in lived experience and heartfelt reverence for those who served.

The presence of veterans Noble Tufford and Lorne Spicer left a lasting impression on many, including Diane (Auckland) Macpherson, who would later join them at the boardroom table of the Southwold War Veterans Memorial Committee. As a pastoral leader, Diane played a meaningful role in the early Southwold Remembers services, offering spiritual guidance and solemn reflection during the ceremonies.

Inspired by the veterans' stories and the community's commitment to remembrance, Diane later reflected on the experience as one of profound connection—between generations, between history and hope, and between service and gratitude.

“I did not have the personal connection to wartime and service that many of my generation had through family members.

However, that changed for me, in the early 2000's, when I became a member of the Southwold War Memorial Committee. Veterans Noble Tufford and Lorne Spicer were members of that committee and greatly influenced my understanding of wartime service. In addition to their personal stories, Lorne's attention to the details of protocol for the outdoor service was not just about doing things in proper order, but most importantly, it was a sign of respect for those who served with him. And respect for his fellow servicemen who paid the supreme sacrifice, with their lives. Through Noble and Lorne, I caught a glimpse of the patriotism and service that makes our nation great.



In 2005, Lorne gifted me with his 'Royal Canadian Air Force - An Order of Divine Service' booklet used during the war. He wrote this inside the book. 'With this book I pass you the Torch. Please keep Remembrance Day Services going as long as you are able.'

May we honour Lorne and all those who served and serve our country by holding the Torch, high.”

*Rev. Diane Macpherson
Southwold Remembers Committee 2025*

“If You Build It... They Will Come”

In the 1989 sports fantasy film *Field of Dreams*, a mysterious voice urges the protagonist to build a baseball diamond in the middle of a Nebraska cornfield. Driven by faith and determination, he does just that—and in time, the players come. The newly formed Southwold War Veterans Committee carried a similar hope as they set out to establish Southwold’s first Remembrance Day Service in 2000: that if they built it, the community would come.

Creating a meaningful Remembrance Day Service was no small feat. More than fifty-five years had passed since the end of World War II, and many neighbouring communities had long-standing traditions of remembrance. Securing the essential elements—government representatives, Legion colour guards, a Parade Marshall, Cadets, and musicians such as a Piper and Bugler—proved challenging, especially for November 11, a date already committed across the region.

With limited availability, the committee chose the next best option: Sunday, November 12, 2000. It was a leap of faith. Committee members crossed their fingers and pressed forward, trusting that the spirit of remembrance would unite the community—and that, like in the film, those who were meant to be there would come.

Invitations were extended to community leaders across neighbouring municipalities, including Federal and Provincial representatives. Local Legion branches were contacted, and outreach was made to nearby Army, Navy, and Air Cadet groups. Gradually, encouraging responses began to arrive at the Southwold municipal office—each one a sign that the vision for a meaningful Remembrance Day service was beginning to take root. It all culminated with that inaugural Southwold Remembrance service on November 12, 2000. And they did all come to Southwold!

The Legacy Years: 2000 – 2004

Drawing on extensive research compiled by the Southwold Research Committee, it became clear that a lasting tribute to Southwold's veterans was long overdue. By the early 2000s, only a handful of Canadian World War I veterans remained; none in Southwold. Those Canadians who had served in World War II had been seniors for many years. The urgency to preserve their legacy and recognize their service could no longer be ignored.

Building on the success of Southwold's inaugural Remembrance Service in 2000—and having honoured the local men who made the ultimate sacrifice—it was resolved that all Southwold residents who served in 20th-century conflicts deserved lasting recognition.

Between 2001 and 2004, the War Veterans Memorial Committee undertook the meaningful task of creating permanent memorials—ensuring that the sacrifices of Southwold's veterans would be remembered for generations to come.

At the second Southwold Remembrance Service on Saturday, November 3, 2001, Mayor Jim McIntyre and War Veterans Memorial Committee Chair Stan Lidster unveiled a commemorative plaque bearing the names of Southwold's veterans. The unveiling ceremony drew a full auditorium, with an especially heartfelt turnout from World War II and Korean War veterans, whose presence added profound meaning to the occasion.



Just days after the unveiling, the impressive tribute plaque was installed for permanent display in Southwold Township's most prominent public space—just inside the main entrance of the Keystone Complex.



One of the most cherished aspects of Southwold's early Remembrance Services was the deep camaraderie shared among the veterans. It echoed the bond of a championship sports team—like Stanley Cup winners—but with far greater stakes. These men and women had triumphed, forged lifelong friendships, endured heartbreaking losses, and experienced both the exhilaration of victory and the sorrow of sacrifice.

They had done something extraordinary—something that changed lives and shaped history. In the twilight of their years, the Remembrance Services became more than a ceremony; they offered a moment of reflection, a celebration of legacy, and for many, a final farewell.

For Southwold's individual veterans, seeing their names permanently honoured within their own community brought a quiet reassurance: they would not be forgotten.

“Following the 2001 service when we unveiled the large plaque listing all Southwold veterans, I was approached by one of the veterans in attendance. With tears glistening in his eyes, Colin O’Brian reached out to shake my hand. In a voice shaking with emotion, he said, ‘I can’t believe this is happening!’ He then pressed a cheque for \$200 into my hand explaining it was ‘... towards the expenses of the service’.

It was at that point I realized the magnitude of our project. Initiating our own Southwold Remembrance Day Services meant something very special to our veterans... they would be remembered.”

Len Lynch - Southwold War Veterans Committee



**Lorne Spicer, John Neill and Noble Tufford
resume acquaintances at the 2006 Southwold Remembers service.**

Southwold Remembers... The War Years (2002)

As the Research Committee diligently gathered data and personal recollections from late 1999 through September 2000, it became clear that the material was far too meaningful to be left untouched. The stories, insights, and memories held a depth that demanded to be shared. And so, the idea of publishing this collection—of giving it a voice beyond the archives—began to take root.

In early 2002, the War Veterans Memorial Committee learned of a compelling book titled, *Tales Worth Telling*, published by the Veterans Arts Program at Parkwood Institute (part of St. Joseph's Health Care London). Released in 2000, the book featured a moving collection of veterans' personal stories, brought to life through interviews conducted by writer Pamela Walsh.

Inspired by the project, the committee reached out to Pamela—and she enthusiastically accepted the invitation to take on a similar role, this time capturing the voices and experiences of Southwold's own veterans. Her involvement marked the beginning of a deeply personal storytelling journey that would preserve the legacy of local heroes for generations to come. Susan Scott who had edited the Parkwood publication also agreed to participate in the Southwold venture.

The process of selecting Southwold veterans to be interviewed and profiled was both demanding and deeply thoughtful. Through careful examination of personal histories and archival military records, twenty-one individuals were chosen. Each had served Canada during times of war—whether on the front lines or in vital support roles.

The hope was that their stories would offer a meaningful cross-section of the 546 men and women from Southwold who had answered the call during the global conflicts of the twentieth century. Their voices would

stand as a tribute not only to their own service, but to the collective legacy of a community shaped by courage, sacrifice, and resilience.

With no opportunity to interview World War I veterans directly, the committee turned to personal records to preserve their legacy. Among these, the diary of George Simkins stood out—a firsthand account of life during the “Great War.” Through his writings, George was chosen to symbolically represent all Southwold veterans who served in World War I, ensuring their voices would not be lost to time.

It was important that all branches of the Canadian Armed Forces—Army, Navy, and Air Force—were represented in the collection. While the stories naturally leaned toward a male perspective, the committee was committed to ensuring that the contributions of Southwold’s women were not overlooked. Flossie Trimble was thoughtfully selected to represent the many women who served with dedication and distinction, both at home and abroad.

The toll of war on Southwold families and the wider community is powerfully illustrated in the story shared by Dora McArthur. She recounted the heartbreaking moment the Chamberlain family received word that her brother, Murray Chamberlain, had been killed in service in 1946.

His loss, like so many others, rippled far beyond the battlefield—leaving behind grief, pride, and a legacy of sacrifice that continues to shape the fabric of Southwold’s history

Stanley Jones’s remarkable wartime experiences were brought to light through a heartfelt college video project created by his grandson, Chris Jones, and through interviews with Stan’s widow, Anna Jones.

Tragically, Stan—himself a dedicated member of the War Veterans Research Committee—passed away on December 6, 2000. Just one

month earlier, he had proudly taken part in Southwold's inaugural Remembrance Day Service.



Stan Jones presenting the wreath on behalf of the Southwold War Veterans Committee - November 12, 2000



The final chapter of the book highlights a unique story—that of Lorne Spicer, the only profiled veteran who was not a Southwold native or resident at the time of his enlistment in the Royal Canadian Air Force. Raised in Gobles, Ontario, near the Paris–Woodstock area, Lorne served as an RCAF navigator, completing seven trips over Germany during the war.

Though his military journey began elsewhere, Lorne's postwar life became deeply rooted in Southwold, where his extensive volunteer work left a lasting impact. His story stands as a powerful testament to the

enduring contributions of veterans—not only in times of conflict, but in the quiet, vital work of building and enriching their communities long after the guns fell silent.

As the structure of the book took shape, visual storytelling became an essential component. Archival photos of each veteran in uniform were carefully sourced from the veterans or their families. Pamela Walsh captured contemporary portraits during her interviews. These “Before” and “After” images frame each profile chapter, offering a powerful visual narrative of service and time.

Southwold resident Kim Poole contributed her graphic arts talent to the project, creating the book’s cover art and designing a detailed Map of Southwold Schools—an invaluable tool for identifying the hometown roots of each profiled veteran. Additional photographs were generously provided by Ian Raven and the Elgin Military Museum in St. Thomas, enriching the Index of Veterans with authentic imagery that deepens the historical connection.

To help readers navigate the complexities of military language, a carefully curated Military Glossary was included, offering essential clarity and enriching the context of each veteran’s story.

On November 2, 2002, a full auditorium gathered for the launch of **Southwold Remembers... The War Years**. The Keystone Complex brimmed with anticipation as families and friends of the profiled veterans filled every seat—and even stood along the walls—to witness the commemorative service.



HANK BOWLBY

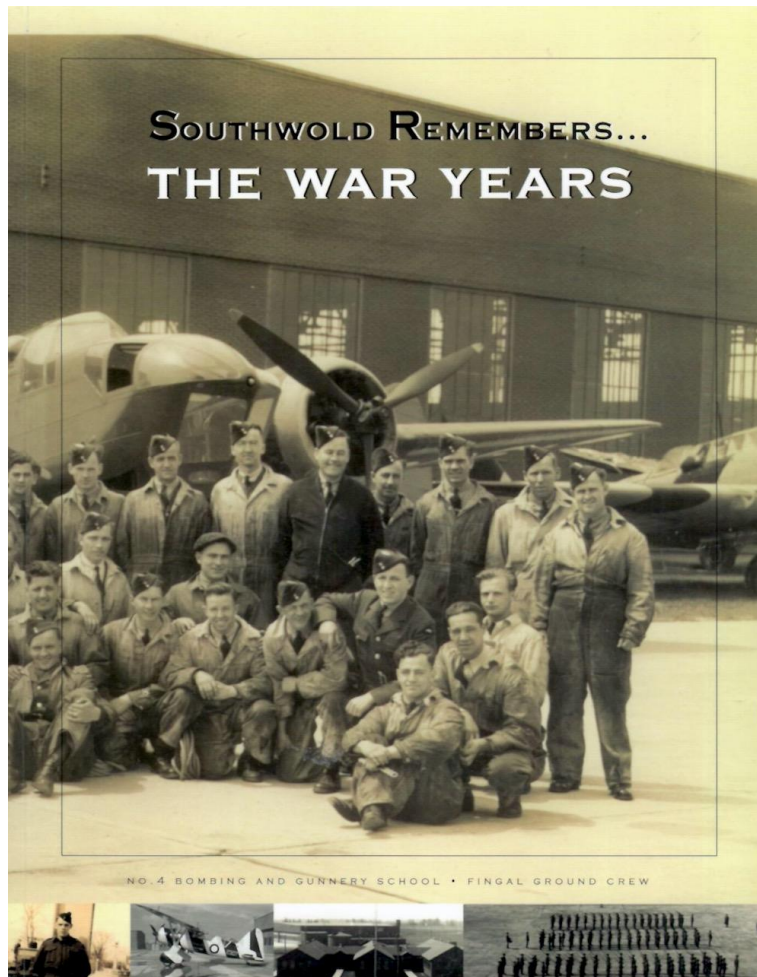
Following the solemn wreath presentations at the Memorial Site, attendees eagerly lined up to purchase copies of the book and collect autographs from the honoured veterans. The response was nothing short of extraordinary. Veterans were celebrated with the admiration usually reserved for movie stars—surrounded by gratitude, pride, and awe.



SOUTHWOLD REMEMBERS... THE WAR YEARS

Front (l – r) James Bogart, Lloyd Smith, Flossie Trimble, Reginald Firby, Dora McArthur (Murray Chamberlain), Murray Smith, Noble Tufford, Sharon McCormick

Rear (l – r) Franklin Small, Clarence Cummings, Lorne Spicer, Anna Jones (Stan Jones), Lawrence Silcox, Bill Crabe, Ken Williams, Stewart J. Brown, Hank Bowlby



“James Bogart (profiled in book) sought me out after the 2002 service. With his hand extended, Mr. Bogart thanked the committee for initiating Southwold Remembrance Services and the honour of being included in the book. Mr. Bogart repeated the gesture every year for as long as his health permitted him to attend the service. When no longer able to attend, Mr. and Mrs. Bogart came out on their driveway to watch the Harvard air tributes fly over. James Bogart passed away in August 2015.”

Len Lynch - Southwold War Veterans Committee

Southwold Remembers... # 4 Bombing & Gunnery School Fatalities 1940 – 1945 (2003)



Pat Temple, a respected member of the Southwold Research Committee, also served as one of the founding members of the War Veterans Memorial Committee. Her meticulous work as a genealogist was widely admired for its precision and depth, bringing family histories and military records to life with unwavering accuracy.

After the positive reception of *Southwold Remembers... The War Years*, Pat began work in 2003 on a second book, focusing more closely on Southwold's World War II history. Her efforts to record the township's military past helped ensure that the experiences of those who served were available to future readers and researchers.

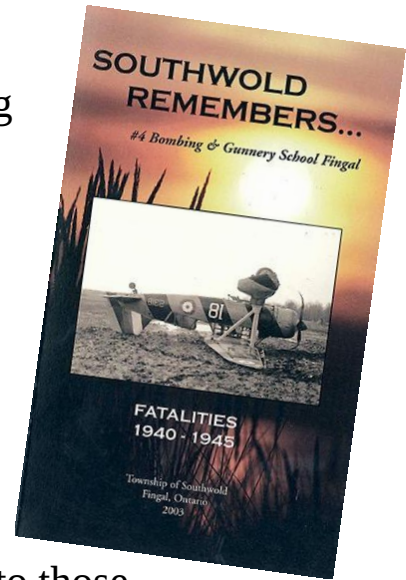
Using borrowed microfilm from the Elgin Military Museum, along with extensive research through obituaries, newspaper reports, and military archives, Pat documented the fatal accidents that claimed the lives—and aircraft—of nineteen airmen stationed at RCAF Fingal during World War II. Her work carefully reconstructed the circumstances surrounding each tragedy, preserving their stories with clarity and care.

From 1940 to 1945, Fingal earned a solid reputation as a Bombing and Gunnery School. During that time, more than six thousand non-pilot airmen were trained as air gunners and bomb aimers. While the school played a vital role in preparing crews for combat, the risks of training were significant. The combination of live ammunition, complex equipment, and powerful aircraft made for a hazardous environment—even outside of battle operations.

A handful of personal recollections from local residents and former air personnel who trained at the base provided Pat with valuable insights

and reflections. These firsthand accounts were carefully incorporated into the manuscript, adding depth and authenticity to the historical record.

Although none of the nineteen airmen lost at RCAF Fingal were Southwold residents, Pat Temple's thoroughly researched volume holds lasting value for families, military historians, and genealogists alike. Her work ensures that these lives— cut short in service — are not forgotten and that their stories remain accessible to those seeking to understand the broader legacy of Canada's wartime training efforts.



In his remarks, keynote speaker Ian Raven of the Elgin Military Museum emphasized the international scope of the training program at RCAF Fingal and the significance of documenting its history. The book, he noted, serves as an important tribute to the diverse group of airmen who lost their lives in training accidents—twelve Canadians, three Americans, three Australians, and one Englishman. Their stories reflect the global commitment to the war effort and the risks faced even far from the front lines.

“It is a wonderful thing the Southwold community has done to honour their (Southwold) veterans and now include nineteen friends from near and far who, for a brief time, knew the peace and beauty of Southwold; and whose memory we now honour and thank once again.”

Ian Raven - Elgin Military Museum (November 2003)



The silhouette of a Lysander aircraft represents RCAF Fingal Station No. 4 Bombing & Gunnery School at the Keystone Memorial Site

Southwold Remembers... The Fingal Observer, No. 4 B & G School (2004)

Blair Ferguson was raised in Port Stanley, married a young woman from Fingal and had a keen interest in local history. A resident of Wallacetown, Blair was, at the time, the largest dealer of military artifacts and memorabilia in Canada.

Influenced by his father, a former RCAF pilot during World War II, Ferguson initially considered a military path. However, his father—keen to dissuade him—jokingly warned that he'd shoot him in the foot if he tried to enlist in the Canadian forces. The remark, though blunt, reflected a deep desire to steer his son away from the hardships of military life. Ferguson once quipped, "I am the first generation of my family – ever and I mean *ever*, not to serve. Military history means a lot to me."

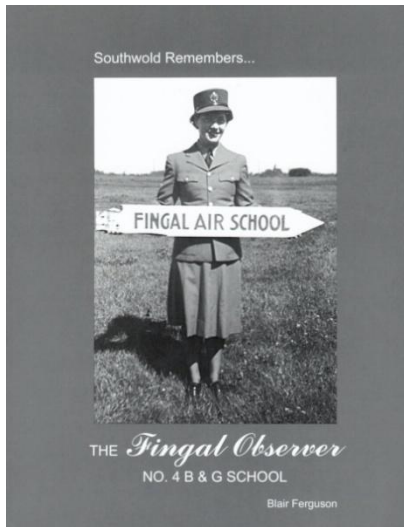


Through his military contacts, Blair met Lorne Spicer and became an integral part of the Southwold War Veterans Memorial committee for several years, beginning in 2003.

In 2004, Blair Ferguson compiled a collection of personal memories from fifteen individuals who trained or worked at Fingal's No. 4 Bombing and Gunnery School. The book also features a selection of articles sourced from The Fingal Observer, the official news magazine of RCAF Station Fingal. Blair received nearly a complete set of the publication from Christena McGregor, whose father, Cpl. Duncan McGregor, worked in the postal service and was attached to No. 4

Bombing and Gunnery School. He had carefully preserved his monthly editions, creating a valuable archive that greatly enriched Blair's project.

Blair also had the good fortune to encounter **Ruth Ralston Stuart** who worked as a Women's Division photographer at Fingal. Ruth made her collection of photos from the base available to Ferguson.



The treasure trove of material was enlarged through various other contributors with ties to the air base.

Southwold Remembers... The Fingal Observer No. 4 B & G School includes some never before published photographs taken at the facility. The book was released at the Southwold Remembrance service in 2004.



Ron Jewell presents the wreath for Korea War Veterans (2004)

Legacy Projects Accomplished

The work completed between 2000 and 2004 fulfilled the legacy goals envisioned by Southwold's War Veterans Memorial Committee. Their long-standing dream of establishing a Memorial Site became a reality. After almost sixty years, the community had formally identified and commemorated those who had died in service.

In the following four years, from 2001 to 2004, a plaque honouring all Southwold veterans was installed, and three books documenting the township's military history were published. Through these efforts, Southwold volunteers achieved meaningful milestones and demonstrated a deep commitment to honouring their veterans with dignity, care, and lasting respect.



Fred and Pat Temple set up shop for the Southwold War Veterans Memorial Committee.

Featured are the three "Southwold Remembers..." series of books produced by the committee from 2002 – 2004.



Colour Guard Dismissal 2000

Development and Evolution of the Ceremony

Over the years, the Southwold Remembrance service has become an integral part of the township's cultural identity. What began as a local initiative steadily grew into a widely recognized tradition, marked by its sincerity and community spirit.

Media coverage played a key role in shaping this identity. In the early years, News clips broadcast by the local television station helped raise awareness and draw attention to the service in Shedden—often described as “something special.” Print coverage from outlets such as The London Free Press, St. Thomas Times-Journal, Dutton Advance, and others further reinforced the growing recognition of “Southwold Remembers”.

A number of factors likely contributed to this recognition: the consistency of the ceremony, the involvement of local veterans and families, the thoughtful planning by volunteers, and the township's commitment to honouring its history with dignity and respect.

The Keystone Complex: A Cornerstone of Community Remembrance

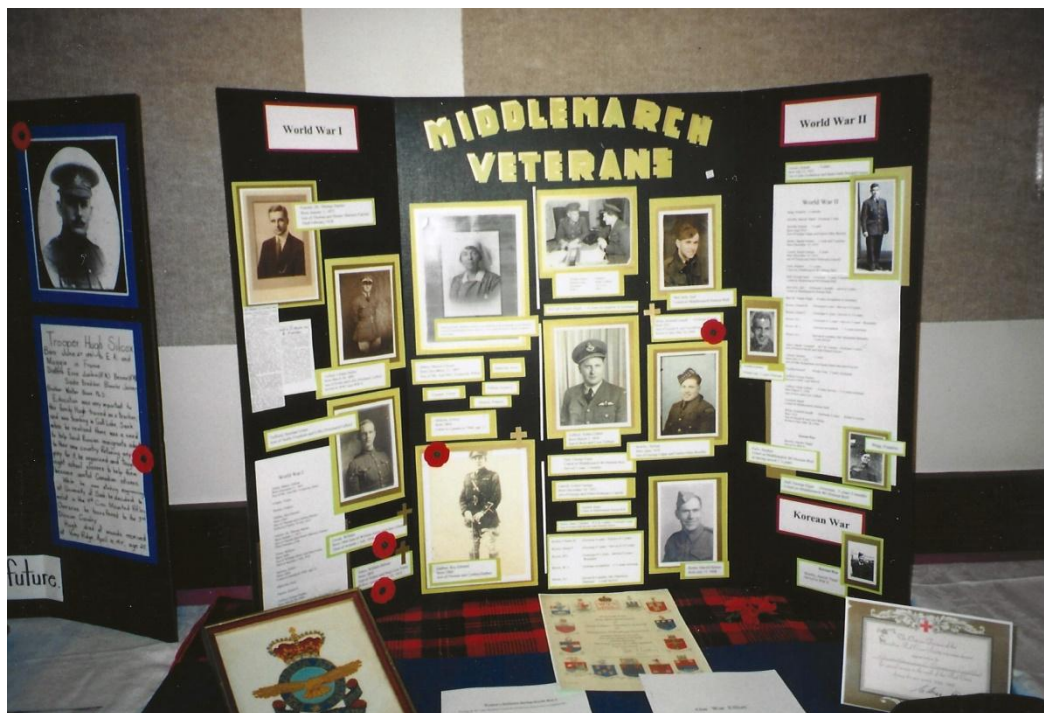
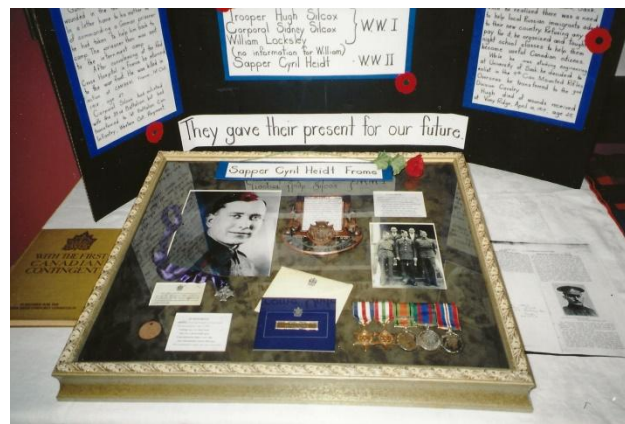
Access to the Southwold Keystone Complex has been a key asset for the Southwold War Veterans Memorial Committee. Since the inaugural service in 2000, the Complex has served as both a gathering place and a welcoming venue for the community and visitors. Each year, the Southwold Remembers program begins indoors before transitioning to the Memorial Site for the formal military service.

The event traditionally concludes with a return to the Complex for refreshments and conversation. For many locals, it's not only a time to honour Southwold's veterans but also a chance to reconnect with neighbours and friends—some returning home specifically for the occasion.



Southwold Veteran Murray Smith (centre) is supported by his family at the conclusion of the inaugural Southwold Remembers in 2000

Between 2000 and 2019, the interior of the Complex was enriched by displays from area churches, Women's Institutes, the Elgin Military Museum, Elgin County Archives, and personal collections. These exhibits added depth and context to the ceremony, reinforcing the township's commitment to remembrance. However, the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and 2021, along with the natural aging of the volunteer base, led to a reduction in these displays—impacting a once vital element of the Southwold Remembers experience.



Keynote Speakers

Over the years, prominent guest speakers have brought depth and meaning to the Southwold Remembers services. We've been fortunate to welcome presentations from entertainer Don Harron, POW survivor John Harris, and the Hon. Steve Peters—local historian and former Speaker of the Ontario Legislature. Each brought a unique perspective, enriching the ceremony with personal insight and historical context.

Military historian Ted Barris has been a consistent and valued contributor. From his first appearance in 2006, Ted's extensive body of work and thoughtful presentations have become a hallmark of the event. Ted's enduring presence has earned him the informal distinction of being an institution within Southwold Remembers.



**War Veterans
Memorial
Committee member
Mary Clutterbuck
welcomes guest
speaker Ted Barris in
2009.**

Through their stories of war and peace, our keynote speakers have helped bridge generational divides—connecting younger attendees with the lived experiences of those who served, and reinforcing the importance of remembrance across time.

The “Missing Man” Flyover: A Lasting Tribute

From the inaugural Southwold Remembers service in 2000 through to the twenty-fifth anniversary in 2024, the township has consistently honoured its fallen with two “Missing Man” Flyovers during each Memorial Site program. This powerful aerial tribute has become a signature element of the ceremony.



**Canadian Harvard Air CRAFT
Association**



**Canadian Owners and Pilots Association
COPA - Flight 75**

The Canadian Harvard Aircraft Association and the Canadian Owners and Pilots Association – Flight 75 have generously participated in every service, with the exception of two years when severe weather forced cancellations. Their commitment has helped sustain a tradition that resonates deeply with attendees.

The Missing Man Flyover is a symbolic salute performed during a formation flyby, typically in memory of a fallen pilot. As the aircraft engines drone overhead, the flyover marks a poignant moment—punctuating the solemnity of the bagpipe and bugle performances, the Moment of Silence, and the wreath presentations. It is a stirring

spectacle that reinforces the gravity of remembrance and the enduring respect held for those who served.

“I think the outdoor part of the service is so very impressive. The bugler, the lowering of the flags, the minute of silence, followed by the piper and the bugler, the raising of the flags and the flyover never fails to bring tears to my eyes. I think of all the men and women of Southwold who answered the call to serve and to protect our freedoms.”

Pat Temple

(Former member of Research Committee and War Veterans Memorial Committee)



COPA Pilots celebrate a successful flight with cool refreshments at the Port Stanley Legion. Over the years, nineteen pilots have participated in Southwold Remembers flyovers. Ian Basson (right) initiated the Southwold tradition in recognition of his friend, Lorne Spicer.

Commemorative Themes and Milestones

Throughout its history, Southwold Remembers has commemorated key anniversaries and military engagements that shaped Canada's past—Vimy Ridge, D-Day, the Korean War, the stories of War Brides, and many other themes that have resonated deeply with local audiences.

Some programs stand out not only for their historical focus but for the emotional impact they generated. The early years, from 2000 to 2004, drew particular attention as the community embarked on a new journey of recognition—formally acknowledging Southwold's veterans and their legacy for the first time. With many World War II and Korea War veterans still living and eager to participate, the ceremonies became powerful expressions of gratitude and remembrance. The township embraced the opportunity to honour those who had served, many of whom had never been publicly recognized in such a way.

Over time, certain Southwold Remembers services have distinguished themselves—whether through the uniqueness of their themes or the individuals who made them especially meaningful. These moments continue to define the spirit of the event and its enduring place in Southwold's cultural memory.



Commencing in 2009, Ken Antone proudly represented Indigenous Veterans, honoring their service and legacy for many years.

Don Harron: A Touch of Laughter and Legacy (2004)

Don Harron was one of Canada's most beloved entertainers, with a career spanning live theatre, film, television acting and directing, playwriting, and stand-up comedy. He was also a published author, known for his wit and sharp cultural observations.

His signature character, Charlie Farquharson, became a household name—especially as a fixture on the American country music comedy show Hee Haw. With his folksy charm, malapropisms, and satirical takes on politics and culture, “Charlie” captured audiences across North America.

Beyond the stage, Harron was also an RCAF veteran who trained briefly at Fingal's No. 4 Bombing and Gunnery School. He often joked that his military career was “a flop,” and claimed his most notable achievement as an airman was enduring “continued bouts of air sickness.” His self-deprecating humour had the audience in stitches during his presentation at Southwold's Keystone Complex. Southwold native Ross Bugar speculated that Harron's time spent in the township may have helped shape the character's rural persona.

Harron captivated attendees with stories from his time at Fingal, seamlessly transitioning into his beloved “Charlie” persona on stage. His performance was a highlight of Southwold Remembers, blending history, humour, and heartfelt connection in a way only he could.



Reflection: A Journey with Don Harron



“Don Harron was honoured to present the wreath for the RCAF at the Memorial Site. Though known for his career in comedy, it was clear to me that he approached the moment with pride. He stood among men and women of his generation—those who had witnessed both the triumphs and tragedies of World War II. Don had lost a childhood friend in one of the nineteen training accidents at the Fingal air base, a loss that clearly stayed with him.

After the ceremony, Don and his partner—later his wife—Claudette Gareau joined Lorne Spicer, my wife Karen, and me at the pergola beside the Keystone Complex. During our conversation, Don mentioned that he had never returned to the site of the Bombing and Gunnery School. Sensing the significance of the moment, I offered to take him there. He accepted without hesitation, and the five of us climbed into my Dodge minivan.

From the moment we left the parking lot until we reached the gate of the Fingal Wildlife Management Area—the former RCAF base—it felt like a road trip with Groucho Marx, or maybe Eddie Murphy, John Candy, and Jerry Seinfeld all rolled into one. Don’s wit was relentless, one clever line after another. But as soon as Lorne unlocked the gate and we drove through, the mood shifted. Don fell silent.

At the site of the old Guard House, the concrete base that once held the security safe was still visible. Don quietly remarked that the guys used to leave their wallets there for safekeeping before heading into town on a night out—one of those small, human details that bring history to life.

It had been sixty years since Don last visited the base. As Lorne guided us through the grounds, pointing out landmarks Don would remember, the emotion on Don's face was unmistakable. The visit stirred something deep within him.

I've often reflected on that afternoon, and I'm deeply grateful that Karen, Lorne, and I were able to share that experience with Don and Claudette. It was a moment of connection, remembrance, and quiet reverence—one I'll never forget."

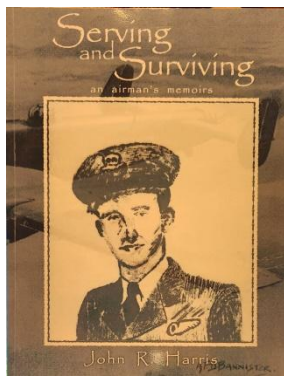
Len Lynch – Southwold Remembers



**LAC Donald Harron (*right*) with
his father, Lionel, in 1943**

The Great Escape: Truth Beyond the Screen (2005)

Most military film enthusiasts will be familiar with the 1963 blockbuster *The Great Escape*, a Hollywood classic that dramatizes the mass breakout by British Commonwealth prisoners of war from the German POW camp Stalag Luft III, near the town of Sagan—now Żagań, Poland. With an all-star cast including Steve McQueen, Charles Bronson, and James Garner, the film spared little expense in production but took considerable liberties with historical accuracy.



At the Southwold Remembers service in 2005, the community had the rare privilege of hearing the real story from someone who lived it. John Harris, a former RCAF navigator and prisoner of war, shared his personal account of the Great Escape—an experience he had documented in his 2004 memoir, **Serving and Surviving – An Airman’s Memoirs**.

Mr. Harris captivated the audience with his firsthand recollections, offering a sobering counterpoint to the Hollywood version. His presentation reminded listeners that while film can entertain, it often reshapes reality to fit a narrative. The truth, as Harris told it, was far more compelling.

Yet it was what happened after the formal service that left a lasting impression. The moments that followed—quiet, personal, and deeply moving—became a powerful extension of the day’s tribute. What unfolded underscored the emotional depth of remembrance and the enduring impact of a lived history.

Blair Ferguson, drawing from his extensive archive of military memorabilia, discovered a black-and-white aerial photograph taken by Allied Intelligence during the war. The image depicted a German POW

camp—seemingly random at first glance. Blair carefully framed the photo, wrapped it with care, and presented it to John Harris as a token of appreciation from an appreciative Southwold Remembers committee.

As Harris removed the packaging paper on the gift, his expression shifted from curiosity to astonishment. It was a photograph he had never seen before. His voice trembled as he said, “Oh my goodness... this is a picture of *my* camp!”

Peering closer, he noticed white lettering painted on the dark roof of one of the barracks. The letters “POW” stood out clearly. They were an important message to Allied bombers that friends were on the ground.

“I painted that on the roof. This was my building,” he said quietly.

Visibly moved, Harris held the framed image—a tangible link to a chapter of his life that few could truly understand. It was a moment of profound recognition, a gift he could never have imagined receiving during his visit to Shedden, Ontario.



**Blair Ferguson and John Harris
November 2005**



The Kids and Charley Fox (2007)

The 2007 Southwold Remembers Service stood out for two special reasons: local children played a central role in the ceremony, and a celebrated Canadian figure made a memorable appearance.

A tradition began in 2000, when World War II veteran Bill Webster handcrafted and donated a set of miniature wooden crosses to honour the sixty-six “Sons of Southwold” who gave their lives in the two World Wars. The crosses, mounted on solid wooden bases, are arranged in two neat rows in front of the commemorative stones and sundial. Webster’s heartfelt tribute has remained a fixture at every Southwold service since.



For several years, the committee explored ways to involve children in Southwold’s annual Remembrance Day services. The goal was twofold: to help younger generations understand the importance of honouring veterans each November, and to encourage broader family participation to ensure the long-term vitality of the event.

With the number of living veterans steadily declining and many seniors—those with personal connections to wartime service—growing

older, it was clear that community interest could wane without renewed engagement.

In its commitment to preserving the future of Southwold's Remembrance services, the committee introduced a meaningful new tradition in November 2007—one that quietly became a staple of subsequent ceremonies. Following the formal wreath presentations, children in attendance were invited to place a wooden cross at the Memorial Site. These crosses, modeled after those handcrafted by veteran Bill Webster, offered young participants a tangible way to honour the fallen and connect with the legacy of remembrance.



At first hesitant, some led by parents or older siblings, the children stepped forward to receive their cross from the Silver Cross Family representative seated at the memorial. The connection was made and young families have since participated annually in the tradition.



The second event that enriched the 2007 Southwold Remembers program was the attendance of Charley Fox.

RAF Spitfire ace, **Charley Fox** gained international recognition and Canadian adoration for his World War II experiences, including the historic strafing of German Field Marshal Erwin Rommel's staff car, in July 1944. Knocking Germany's most acclaimed General out of action was a huge boost to Allied moral.

Charley Fox earned the deep respect and affection of fellow veterans through his tireless postwar advocacy, humility, and dedication to remembrance.



RCAF Spitfire ace Charley Fox shares stories with (left) Michael Baker (Elgin Heritage Archives) Ted Barris (Keynote Speaker) and Former Southwold Mayor Perry Clutterbuck (right) at the Southwold Remembers Service in 2007.

Fox became one of the most active and beloved spokespeople for the Royal Canadian Air Force. He shared his wartime experiences widely—especially with younger generations—through school visits, public talks, and veteran events. His storytelling was vivid, honest, and often deeply moving, helping bridge the gap between generations and keeping the legacy of service alive.

He was known for his warmth, humour, and camaraderie—often seen laughing and reminiscing with fellow airmen at events. Charley Fox wasn't just remembered for his wartime feats—he was cherished for the way he lived afterward: as a teacher, a friend, and a tireless voice for Canada's veterans.

Following the official ceremonies, Charley Fox brought a warm and spirited presence to the Keystone Complex. With genuine enthusiasm, he greeted attendees, shared stories from his time in the air, and engaged with the crowd that gathered around him. Many sought a brief moment in his company—a handshake, a word, a smile—as they connected with a man whose legacy embodied courage, humility, and service.

Before departing Shedden that day, Charley Fox graciously accepted an invitation to return as keynote speaker for the 2008 Remembrance service. Tragically, Charley passed away in an automobile accident just weeks before the event, leaving the community to mourn the loss of a national hero whose presence had deeply touched all who met him.

Though fate intervened, Charley left behind a legacy of courage, humility, and connection that continues to inspire. As he once said, “We flew not for glory, but because it was our duty. The real heroes never came home.”

“Liberation of Holland” (2009)

The liberation of the Netherlands by Canadian forces during the final months of World War II stands as a powerful chapter in both Canadian and Dutch history—marked by heroism, humanitarian relief, and enduring international friendship.

Between September 1944 and May 1945, Canadian troops played a decisive role in freeing the Netherlands from Nazi occupation. After years of suffering under brutal control, the Dutch people faced their darkest hour during the “Hunger Winter” of 1944–45, when severe food and fuel shortages led to widespread starvation. The advance of Canadian forces not only broke the grip of tyranny but also opened the way for critical relief supplies, saving countless lives and restoring hope to millions.

This act of liberation forged a bond between Canada and the Netherlands that remains strong to this day. In the postwar years, thousands of Dutch immigrants found a new beginning in Canada, bringing with them a resilient spirit, rich cultural traditions, and a deep appreciation for the freedom they had regained.

In 2009, Southwold paid tribute to this legacy during its Southwold Remembers service, commemorating the Liberation of Holland. The Keystone Complex was filled with Dutch-Canadian families, many eager to express heartfelt gratitude to local veterans. Among the attendees was a newly appointed member of the Southwold War Veterans Memorial Committee, whose personal connection to the liberation added a poignant layer to the celebration—a reminder that history lives on not only in books and ceremonies, but in the lives of those who carry its memory forward.

Since 2004, Bill Aarts has been a familiar and respected presence at Southwold Remembrance services, serving as Master of Ceremonies at the Memorial Site. His steady voice and heartfelt delivery have helped shape the tone of these solemn gatherings. In 2009, Bill took his dedication a step further by joining the Southwold War Veterans Memorial Committee to help plan the “Liberation of the Holland” program—a tribute that carried deep personal meaning.

Bill was born and raised in De Peel, a rural region in southeastern Netherlands that straddles the provinces of North Brabant and Limburg. He was the fourth of eight children born in Holland; with two more siblings arriving after the family immigrated to Canada. During World War II, the Aarts family farm sat perilously close to danger. German occupation forces routinely scoured the countryside, searching for food and hunting down members of the Dutch resistance. The threat was constant and deeply felt.

Among the many stories passed down through the family is one involving Bill’s father and his prized motorcycle. When German soldiers took an interest in the vehicle, he managed to outrun them—his motorcycle proving faster than their own transport. In a bold move that surely tested nerves, he hid the bike inside the family home. Mrs. Aarts, understandably, was less than thrilled with the new living room décor.



Allied forces arrive to repel German occupying troops in the Peel region near Heusden, where the Aarts family lived. Photos: Courtesy of Bill Aarts

As Allied forces advanced into the Netherlands, the Aarts family found themselves caught in the crossfire of liberation. The region of De Peel, once a quiet farming community, became a battleground. Heavy fighting erupted near their home, and on one harrowing occasion, fifty German soldiers were killed in combat. The following day, Bill Aarts' father and several local men were forcibly conscripted by the occupying forces to help bury the dead—a grim task that underscored the brutal reality of war.

In late October 1944, the Germans launched a fierce counteroffensive. Under a hail of bullets, the Aarts family fled their home, seeking safety wherever they could. Weeks later, when they cautiously returned, they were met with devastation. Behind the house, a massive crater scarred the earth—evidence of an Allied aircraft that had crashed after being shot down by German artillery canons.

The damage didn't end there. Seven of the family's ten cows had been slaughtered and left to rot. Their crops were gone, furniture smashed, and the house no longer habitable. Forced to seek shelter, the family moved in with nearby neighbours who welcomed them with open arms. But even there, danger followed.

Just as the children were settling in for the night, gunfire erupted outside. Moments later, a grenade was hurled into the house. Miraculously, despite the explosion and considerable damage, no one was injured.

These moments—frightening, surreal, and deeply personal—remain etched in Bill Aarts' memory. They are a testament to the resilience of civilians caught in the chaos of war, and a reminder of the high cost of freedom.



The family of Jan and Miet Aarts pose after the conclusion of World War II. Bill Aarts (back row second from left) was fourth eldest.

Photo: Courtesy of Bill Aarts

In the aftermath of World War II, the Netherlands faced a daunting recovery. The war had left the country in economic ruin—unemployment was rampant, housing was scarce, and food supplies were dangerously low. With little money to rebuild and widespread devastation across the land, many Dutch citizens were forced to consider a difficult choice: to leave their homeland in search of a better future.

The Peel region, already known for its poor soil and modest farming conditions, had suffered particularly severe damage. Heavy fighting had destroyed homes, livelihoods, and entire communities. Recognizing the scale of the crisis, Queen Juliana made the extraordinary decision to encourage mass emigration, urging her people to seek opportunity abroad.

Australia, New Zealand, and the United States were among the possible destinations. But for many Dutch families, Canada stood out. In the

early 1950s, Canada was experiencing “rural depletion,” as workers left farms for jobs in offices and factories. The war had also taken a toll on Canada’s workforce, creating a pressing need for agricultural labour. Dutch immigrants, known for their resilience and strong work ethic, were a perfect fit.

Gratitude also played a role. The Dutch remembered Canada’s pivotal role in their liberation and the kindness shown when Queen Juliana herself found refuge in Canada during the war. Of seventy Dutch families who chose to emigrate, fifty-two families headed to Canada.

Among them was the Aarts family. On May 15, 1951, Bill Aarts, his parents Jan and Miet, and seven siblings boarded the ocean liner S.S. Volendam bound for a new life. Like many others, they settled in southwestern Ontario, drawn to the fertile lands between the Great Lakes. The London–Stratford region offered promise—and proximity to fellow Dutch families from the Peel region. As they liked to say, they’d still be close enough to “...get together for coffee!”

Jan and Miet Aarts chose to make their home north of St. Thomas, in Southwold Township. Their story is echoed by many others who arrived during that era. Dutch Canadians have since become vital contributors to Southwold’s growth, culture, and community spirit—proof that from hardship can come hope, and from displacement, a new sense of belonging.





Casper Vandenbroek, Joe Vandermaarel and Constant De Deckere were part of a large contingent of Dutch Canadians who attended the 2009 service. The men lived through German occupation of Holland. Following the war, their families immigrated to Canada.

The experience of the Southwold Remembers service was emotional for many of the audience attending that 2009 Moment of Silence and in particular the flyover tributes from the Canadian Harvard Air Craft Association.

“I remember seeing Joe and Willie Vandermaarel immediately after the service at the Memorial Site concluded. Poor Willie had tears streaming down her cheeks. The roar of the Harvard engines stirred unpleasant memories of her childhood when war planes regularly filled the skies over her family home. The terrors of the German occupation had been reawakened on that sunny day at Shedden. I don’t think Willie ever attended another service.

Len Lynch – Southwold Remembers



Abel Post and Joe Fohkens presented the wreath on behalf of the Dutch Canadian Legion at the Liberation of Holland celebration in 2009. The old friends performed the task at many of the early Southwold services.

The contributions of Dutch emigrants helped shape the cultural and social landscape of the country. Today, Dutch Canadians remain an integral part of communities across Canada—including right here in Southwold, where their legacy continues to thrive.



**Bill Aarts at the microphone
(Circa 2004)**

The year 2009 also marked a solemn chapter for Southwold, as the community mourned the loss of five cherished veterans: William Crabe CGM, Flossie Trimble, Hank Bowlby, Stewart Brown, and Noble Tufford. With their passing came a deeper awareness that Southwold's connection to the wartime generation—often called “the greatest generation”—was gradually fading. Their lives, marked by service, resilience, and quiet strength, left an enduring imprint on the township's history and spirit.



Southwold residents Kay and Carl Chamberlain attended the 2009 Southwold Remembers service at the Southwold Keystone Complex. Kay played O Canada on piano at Southwold services from 2000 - 2009. Carl lost his brother, Murray Chamberlain, in World War II.

“War of 1812: A 200 year anniversary” (2014)

Hon. Steve Peters gave the keynote address as Southwold commemorated the end of the War of 1812 with re-enactors participating as wreath presenters.



Long before World War I and II, Southwold volunteers stood firm against foreign aggression.

Southwold history includes several encounters between settlers and American Raiders:

During a raid on their property, John Barber and his young wife bravely hid their infant son Phineas from enemy raiders who burned their buildings and took John prisoner. After swearing not to take up arms against them, John was released and reunited with his family the same day.

That act of survival marked the beginning of Phineas Barber’s journey. He grew up to become a prominent figure in the Fingal settlement, where part of his land would later host the Fingal Community Hall and the current Municipal Buildings. Just west of the Hall stood the first Fingal School—evidence of the Barber family's lasting imprint on the area.

Cpl. James Burwell served under Captain Leslie Patterson, who led a company of local militia volunteers tasked with defending the Talbot

Settlement and surrounding areas from American incursions during the War of 1812. Their efforts helped protect the fragile frontier communities from invasion and disruption.

Col. James McQueen, originally from Niagara, fought under Major-General Sir Isaac Brock at Queenston Heights and Detroit, and was wounded at Lake Erie. In 1813, he led a daring mission near Chatham, capturing a larger American force and escorting prisoners through the forest to Burlington Heights. McQueen later settled in Southwold Township, where he became a respected community member. His grave remains a landmark on a hill near the front fence of the Fingal Cemetery.



Three generations of the Spicer Family participated in the 2014 Southwold Remembers Service. Steve Peters (left) sits with the Spicer family - Lorne Spicer, his grandson Jordan and children Brenda, Paul and Donald watching proceedings.



Piper James Carmichael led the parade of veterans for the 15th and final time in 2014. Mr. Carmichael passed away on Tuesday, September 6, 2022.



Elgin County Town Crier, Dave Phillips, was a frequent participant at Southwold Remembers Services. He attended the service in 2014.

Lord Bruce Visits (2015)

A highlight of the Southwold Remembers Service in 2015 was the attendance of Charles Edward Bruce (Lord Bruce), son of Lord Elgin.



Honorary Colonel Mark Sargent (The Elgins) and Lord Bruce (Scotland) present the wreath on behalf of 31 CER (The Elgins).

Lord Bruce participated in Southwold Remembers in his position as Hon. Maj. 31 Combat Engineer Regiment (The Elgins).

We honoured the passing of Tom Hawkins. From 2003 until 2014, Tom Hawkins generously financed the Canadian Harvard Air Craft Association flyover tributes as a memorial to his brother Edwin who



(L-R) F/O Tom Hawkins & SGT Edwin Hawkins

was killed August 12, 1944 in a tragic training accident at No. 4 Bombing & Gunnery School, Fingal. Mr. Hawkins has stated that this photo was the last time he saw his brother.



The Lilley Family (about 75 members) were out in full force as Southwold Remembers presented the Silver Cross Family wreath in honour of Sgt. Roy Graham Lilley B.E.M. (British Empire Medal).



While normally behind the camera as the official Southwold Remembers photographer, Mary Clutterbuck was thrilled to have her picture taken with Lord Bruce in 2015.

Mary served on the Southwold War Veterans Memorial Committee from 2000 – 2019.

The Vimy Oak

September 28, 2017 – In a tribute to the Battle of Vimy Ridge (April 1917), an English “Vimy” Oak was planted at the Memorial Site.

"Vimy" Oak refers to an English oak tree (*Quercus robur*) grown from acorns collected from the battlefields of Vimy Ridge, France, after a First World War battle.

Canadian Lieutenant Leslie Miller (Hamilton) collected these acorns and planted them on his family's farm in Ontario, naming them the "Vimy Oaks" to honour the soldiers who fought at the battle.

These trees are now part of a legacy project, with saplings and descendants planted in communities across Canada to commemorate the soldiers and serve as symbols of unity.



Len Lynch, Pat Temple and Gord Longhurst planted the “Vimy Oak” at the Memorial Site on September 28, 2017. A second oak tree was also planted at the Fingal Wildlife Management Area. Photo: Brenda Longhurst



Weathering Change: Southwold Remembers 2017

For the first time in the event's history, severe weather disrupted the program. Torrential rain forced the cancellation of the much-anticipated Canadian Harvard Aircraft Association flyover. At 8:15 a.m., the decision was made to move the entire service indoors to the Keystone Complex—a swift pivot that ensured the day could still proceed.

Bill Aarts, ever reliable, contacted Ian Basson to officially call off the COPA Flight-75 air tribute. Though the skies didn't cooperate, the spirit of remembrance remained undiminished. The community gathered, sheltered from the storm, united in honouring Southwold's veterans with resilience.

In harmony of cooperation, Parade Marshall Ron Jewell, The St. Thomas Legion No. 41 Colour Guard and volunteer Tom Spicer worked with Army and Air Cadets to coordinate the normally outdoor portions of the program; Moment of Silence and wreath presentations.

Piper Bill McMaster and Bugler Allan Weatherall positioned themselves at the open EXIT door to perform required music tributes alongside pianist Debbie Logghe who performed the anthems.



Children lined up to pick up wooden crosses from the Silver Cross Family. (left – right) Don, Currie and Pauline Silcox represented Cpl. Sydney Silcox who perished in 1918. Rain didn't dampen anyone's enthusiasm.

Southwold Remembers: 20th Anniversary (2019)

The 2019 Southwold Remembers service stands out as a poignant moment in the community’s history—marking both a milestone anniversary and mourning a profound loss. It was a year of reflection and transition, a symbolic “changing of the guard.”

To honour the twentieth anniversary of Southwold Remembers, the War Veterans Memorial Committee sought a meaningful emblem to commemorate the occasion. Len Lynch collaborated closely with Southwold graphic artist Kim Poole and History Committee chairperson Ross Bugar to craft a design that would embody the spirit of remembrance and community pride.

After exploring several concepts, a commemorative lapel pin was unveiled at the November service. Its design weaves together three powerful themes:

- A stylized Westland Lysander aircraft pays tribute to the RCAF Fingal Station No. 4 Bombing and Gunnery School (1940–1945), echoing the steel silhouette displayed at the Memorial Site.
- Crossed flags of Canada and Southwold symbolize the enduring bond between nation and municipality in times of war and peace.
- The words “Southwold Remembers” affirm the identity and legacy of the November services, now a cherished tradition in the township.



Southwold Remembers marked the passing of Lorne Spicer in 2019 with quiet reverence. As a founding member of both the Keystone Memorial Site and the Southwold Remembers services, Lorne embodied the spirit of a Canadian veteran within our community.



His life reflected the broader legacy of Canadian service men and women who returned home after war—not only to rebuild their own lives, but to enrich the communities around them. Like thousands of others, Lorne came back to raise a family and contribute in meaningful ways.

Upon settling in Southwold, Lorne introduced a new business and helped establish Shedden Minor Hockey, offering local youth a chance to learn and grow through sport. His passion for photography blended naturally with his interests in wildlife, agriculture, sports, and the natural world. He generously shared his images and insights with service clubs, seniors in nursing homes, and school children alike.

In his later years, Lorne became a thoughtful voice for Canadian War Veterans, speaking openly about his experiences during World War II and helping others understand the sacrifices made.

With the earlier passing of Noble Tufford in 2009, Lorne's death marked a turning point for the War Veterans Memorial Committee. The two veterans who had inspired the founding group were now gone, and their presence—so deeply felt—could not be replaced.

Pandemic: Southwold Remembers 2020 – 2021

The global COVID-19 pandemic brought widespread anxiety and disrupted daily life throughout 2020. Southwold, like communities across the country, was affected—prompting the municipality to implement strict public health guidelines.

These restrictions posed a challenge for the Southwold War Veterans Memorial Committee. Cancelling the annual Southwold Remembers service in November was considered, but the committee was determined to find an alternative that would preserve the spirit of remembrance.

Out of this dilemma came innovation. Unable to welcome the community and dignitaries in person, Southwold Remembers was brought directly into people's homes.

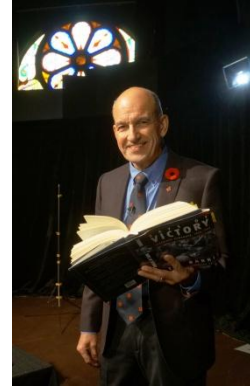
In November 2020, Southwold produced its first-ever virtual service—an adaptation that not only met the moment, but elevated the reputation of the event for years to come.

With thoughtful planning, the core elements of the traditional Southwold Remembers service were preserved. The first step was securing the expertise of Establish Media, a media company based in St. Thomas / Elgin. Grayden Laing and Marty Lewis took the lead in producing the virtual presentation, ensuring the technical quality matched the significance of the occasion.



Grayden Laing (*left*) and Marty Lewis (*right*) of Establish Media at The Princess Avenue Playhouse

Keynote speaker, Ted Barris pre-recorded his presentation “Days of Victory: Canadians Remember, 1939-1945” at the Princess Avenue Playhouse in St. Thomas on October 27, 2020.



At the same recording session, Sarah Emons, chair of the War Memorial Committee pre-taped her welcome and opening remarks. She referenced the desire to continue with Southwold Remembers despite the pandemic:



*“It is essential this year that we continue our annual Southwold Remembrance **Day Services**, here at the Keystone Complex, in Shedden. For the past 20 years, we have been blessed with the participation of government, municipal and community leaders at this service. We have had “full house” audiences and memorable speakers and displays. This year, we respect that you stay home and be safe as we present this scaled back tribute to our Southwold veterans. Southwold Remembers.”*

On Sunday November 8, 2020, the pre-taped material was broadcast virtually over the internet at 9:30 am. While the virtual introduction and Ted Barris presentation were being shown, the War Veterans Memorial Committee had sprung into action at the Memorial Site. Observing “safe distance protocols” and wearing appropriate masks, members of the group made preparations.

The “on air” presenters, Master of Ceremonies - Bill Aarts and presenters, Rev. John Brown and Rev. Diane Macpherson prepared to face the cameras while maintaining protocols. They were joined on site by Parade Marshall, Ron Jewell and the St. Thomas Legion 41 Colour Guard.



(left – right) Parade Marshall Ron Jewell, Rev. Diane Macpherson, MC Bill Aarts and Rev. John Brown observe safe distancing with the St. Thomas Legion 41 Colour Guard in background. (2020)



Bugler Allan Weatherall (left) and piper Bill McMaster (right) carried out their roles with the quiet excellence and professionalism that Southwold Remembers has come to rely on.



With members of the War Veterans Memorial Committee attending the flags and the obvious lack of the normally filled bleachers, Southwold Remembers continued the service, live at the Memorial Site.



Attention to detail was important in preserving tradition. Parade Marshal Ron Jewell CD, a Korea War Veteran presented the wreath representing all Southwold Veterans.

Participation of the children was not overlooked. Prior to the virtual service, Keegan and Coen Lynch had carefully placed wooden crosses at the Memorial Site.



Concerned that Maurice McLellan's heartfelt annual tribute to his brothers might be interrupted by safety protocols, the Southwold Remembers committee quietly ensured the tradition continued. Two red roses were placed in memory of Ross and Eugene McLellan —an enduring gesture of love, loss, and remembrance.



No Southwold Remembers service would feel complete without the solemn tribute of the Missing Man flyover. In 2020, both the Harvards and COPA – Flight 75 aircraft took part. The Harvards followed a specially planned route that passed over Fingal, Shedden, and Talbotville, allowing much of Southwold to witness the tribute from their own homes.

From their make-shift broadcast control area, Grayden Laing and Marty Lewis made sure the virtual production reached the extended Southwold audience.

In fact, the audience watching virtually extended far beyond Southwold Township. Following the conclusion of the virtual service, reports filtered in from across Canada: former Southwold residents in Whitehorse (Yukon), Ottawa and multiple locations across South-western Ontario had tuned in. Bill Aarts relatives in Holland had even streamed Southwold Remembers!



The first virtual Southwold Remembers service in 2020 proved that even in the face of unprecedented challenges, the spirit of remembrance could endure. Through innovation, collaboration, and heartfelt dedication, the community found new ways to honour its veterans and preserve tradition. Though the format had changed, the message remained the same—Southwold remembers, with gratitude, respect, and unwavering commitment.



2021

Building on the success of Southwold Remembers' live/virtual presentation in 2020, the War Veterans Memorial Committee chose to follow a similar format for the 2021 service. Although the COVID-19 pandemic was beginning to ease, it was still considered too soon to welcome a full house into the Keystone Complex without further guidance from public health authorities.

With a proven template in place, the committee developed a plan modeled on the previous year's approach. Pre-recorded segments were once again produced at the Princess Avenue Playhouse. Beloved educator, broadcaster, and author Ted Barris returned to Southwold Remembers with his signature polished presentation, this time focusing on his book **Deadlock in Korea: Canadians at War, 1950–1953**.



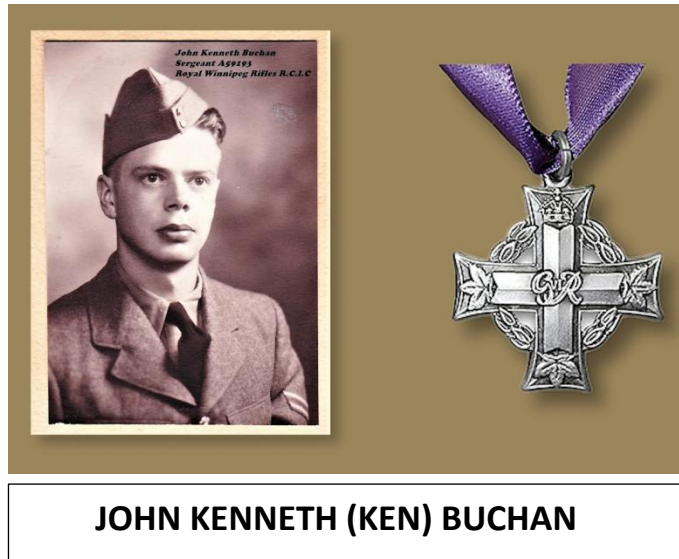
(Left) Ted Barris rehearses his presentation while adjusting to the bright lights in the Princess Avenue Playhouse.

Grayden Laing balances his camera before giving the cue to proceed.

(Right)

Ted Barris, Sarah Emons and Rev. Diane Macpherson pose before recording their portions of the 2021 Southwold Remembers virtual service.





To reflect the virtual format, a video biography was introduced to honour Silver Cross recipient Sgt. John Kenneth Buchan of Lawrence Station, who was killed in action on February 21, 1945, during the Battle of Moyland Woods near Kalkar, Germany.

A special video of O Canada in Southwold was also created to connect with the online audience.

The 2021 service included a Moment of Silence in memory of Rosa Spicer (wife of Lorne), committee member Hugh Orchard, and Melba and Bud Marr.

Melba had contributed to both the Research Committee and the original War Veterans Memorial Committee, while Bud Marr had served Southwold as a former reeve.

Parade Marshall Ron Jewell CD, a steady presence at Southwold Remembers since 2004, had been invited to join a Canadian delegation marking the anniversary of the Korean War. The event, postponed due to the pandemic, was held in 2021. After the service streamed, a message arrived from Mary Ann Jewell:

“Looking good. Ron and I watched the Service from our room in Seoul, South Korea.”

Tributes to A Queen and The Last Warrior: (2022)

By November 2022, the world had begun to steady itself, with science and health professionals making significant strides in managing COVID-19. In Southwold Township, this progress meant a welcome return to in-person gatherings—and Southwold Remembers was once again held at the Keystone Complex in Shedden.

Building on the success of the previous two years, the War Veterans Memorial Committee chose to continue with the live/virtual format. It was a joy to welcome the community back into the hall, while also offering the service to relatives and neighbours near and far through online streaming. Local senior facilities had been notified in advance, ensuring that those with mobility challenges could still take part in the remembrance from the comfort of their homes.

Remembering the Queen:

Though Queen Elizabeth II never attended a Southwold Remembrance Day service in person, her presence was always quietly felt. For many seniors in the room—and certainly for all the veterans of earlier generations—school days began with “God Save the King” or “God Save the Queen.” That tradition lives on in our Memorial Services, where we continued to honour the reigning monarch as part of our tribute.

As a young woman, Princess Elizabeth served in the British Army, joining the Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS) at age 18. There, she trained in vehicle mechanics and truck driving—an act of service that inspired many across the Commonwealth.



It's easy to imagine that Southwold's own volunteers during World War II drew strength from her example.

On V-E Day, May 8, 1945, she stood with the Royal Family on the balcony at Buckingham Palace. Later that evening, she famously slipped into the crowds to celebrate among the people—an enduring image of unity and joy.

With her passing on September 8, 2022, Southwold Remembers mourned Queen Elizabeth II; not only as a monarch, but as someone we regarded with deep affection—truly, one of our own.

The Last Warrior: Francis Newland

A total of 546 Southwold residents served Canada in World War I, World War II, and the Korean War. Their names are proudly displayed on the plaques at the front entrance of the Keystone Complex.

Since November 2000, we have gathered at the Keystone Complex to honour our veterans through the Southwold Remembers service. Those who made the ultimate sacrifice are remembered with a bronze plaque at the Memorial Site.

While exact records are difficult to confirm, it is the considered belief of the Southwold War Veterans Memorial Committee that Francis Lee Newland, who passed away on February 10, 2022, at the age of 99, was quite possibly the last surviving Southwold veteran of the twentieth-century wars.

At the 2022 service, we made our tribute to the final chapter of a remarkable generation—Southwold's 20th-century veterans.



FRANCIS LEE NEWLAND

A Celebration: Southwold Remembers 2024

The final tribute to this Southwold Remembers series centres on the November 2024 service—the twenty-fifth consecutive commemoration. And yes... it rained again. For only the second time in a quarter-century, the War Veterans Memorial Committee moved the entire ceremony indoors to the Keystone Complex.

This milestone event was elevated by the technical mastery of Grayden Laing and his team at Establish Media. The special tribute program honoured both the Twenty-fifth Southwold Remembers and the centennial of the Royal Canadian Air Force—a dual celebration of local and national legacy.

The program opened with a poignant look back on a video clip from the News Now (CFPL-TV) London newscast which aired on November 12, 2000. The footage featured interviews with Lorne Spicer and Maurice McLellan, capturing the spirit of the inaugural service. Viewers were struck by the transformation of the Memorial Site over time—the growth of surrounding trees, the evolving landscape, and most movingly, the presence of Southwold veterans who stood proudly at that first gathering.



On April 1, 2024, the Royal Canadian Air Force marked its 100th anniversary. Southwold shares a deep and enduring connection with the RCAF:

- 76 Southwold veterans served in the RCAF during World War II
- 8 Southwold airmen were killed in action



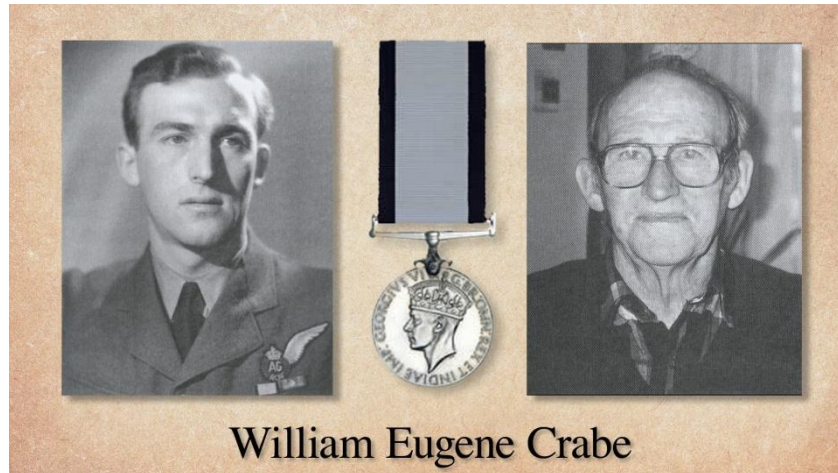
The British Commonwealth Air Training Plan brought the war effort directly to Southwold. From 1940 to 1945, RCAF Fingal Station No. 4 Bombing and Gunnery School trained over 6,000 “non-pilot” aircrews for Allied operations. The station remains a vital thread in the fabric of Fingal’s—and Southwold’s—identity.

Yet the cost of service was steep: 19 RCAF airmen lost their lives in training accidents at Fingal.



The service honoured two Southwold men who served the RCAF. Southwold volunteers contributed in vital operations and in one case, heroic service.

Fingal native, Bill Crabe was a mid-upper gunner in a Lancaster bomber. Mr. Crabe was one of only 12 RCAF airmen who were awarded a **Conspicuous Gallantry Medal** in World War II.



William Eugene Crabe

Shedden native **J.C. Clifton “Tip” Holborn** was one of the **Royal Canadian Air Force** pilots who flew high-ranking German officers to and from France to "sign the actual documents that laid out the terms and conditions of the surrender" to end World War II in Europe. He later transported a number of the accused German war criminals to Nuremberg for the war trials.



J.C. Clifton “Tip” Holborn

In honour of the RCAF centennial, keynote speaker Ted Barris delivered a compelling presentation drawn from his book, *Battle of Britain: Canadian Airmen in Their Finest Hour*.

The solemn “Moment of Silence” and the traditional wreath-laying ceremony were once again carried out with quiet dignity and precision. Memories of the 2017 rainout remained vivid for the War Veterans Memorial Committee, who ensured every detail was carefully managed. Parade Marshal Will Alden, the St. Thomas Legion Colour Party, and the Air and Army Cadets executed their roles with disciplined grace. Behind the scenes, volunteer Tom Spicer and committee member Karen Lynch worked diligently to coordinate wreaths and presenters, ensuring the ceremony unfolded seamlessly.

A highlight of the wreath presentations was the participation of Andrew and Kenneth Kennedy.

Both former RCAF pilots, the brothers presented the RCAF tribute in honour of their late father.

Wing Commander A.J. Kennedy was base commander of RCAF Fingal No.4 Bombing and Gunnery School (Oct 1941-May 1942).



Andy and Ken Kennedy

In the end, not even torrential rain could dampen the spirit or enthusiasm surrounding the twenty-fifth anniversary of Southwold Remembers. The auditorium at the Keystone Complex remained full. Legion veterans from St. Thomas and London made the journey. Army and Air Cadets carried out their roles with pride and precision. Ted Barris delivered a riveting keynote that held the room. As the program concluded, old friends reconnected over complimentary coffee.

It was a meaningful and memorable event, as usual.

Enduring Impact

Between 2000 and 2024, Southwold Remembers became more than an event—it became a legacy. The tradition served as both an educational tool and a moral compass for future generations. Its success lies in its ability to fuse personal memory with public history, grounding Southwold’s story within the broader fabric of Canadian military remembrance.

“I have long considered the annual Southwold Remembrance Service to be the most dignified and unifying day in our township’s calendar. It’s deeply moving to witness a standing-room-only crowd gather year after year at the Keystone Complex, united in solemn gratitude to honour the courage, sacrifice, and service of all those who have fought to preserve our freedom.”

Ross Bugar – Southwold History Committee 2025



A full auditorium welcomed the community for Southwold Remembers 2024.



A Personal Connection to Southwold Remembers

The story of Southwold Remembers holds a special place in my heart, shaped by personal memories and lived experience. My wife Karen and I have called Shedden home since August 1, 1980, when we moved in next door to the Keystone Complex—formerly the Shedden Fair Grounds—with our infant daughter, Lindsay. Our sons, Kevin and Thomas, were born here, and over the years, our family has built a deep connection to this space and the community around it.

When Karen and I became involved in the Keystone Landscape project in 1998, we had no idea how far that journey would take us. What began as a local initiative gradually evolved into something much more meaningful—a legacy project honouring Southwold’s war veterans. It was Lorne Spicer who helped guide that transformation.

There was something about Lorne Spicer that made you want to step up—not out of obligation, but out of admiration. His sincerity, boundless curiosity, depth of knowledge, and tireless energy had a way of lifting everyone around him. You didn't just want to help Lorne—you wanted to match his commitment. Most of all, you didn't want to let him down. His determination to see a War Veterans Memorial Site completed in Southwold wasn't just a goal—it was a mission. And once you saw how deeply he believed in it, you knew it had to be done.

I felt that same pull years earlier with my father, Jack, when we founded the Fingal Optimist Club in 1973. My drive to see the club succeed came from two places: a desire to serve the community, and a quiet, unspoken promise to my dad. His belief in the project became my own, and I couldn't imagine letting him down.

Lorne and I always travelled together to War Veterans Memorial meetings. Our shared passion for Southwold Remembers often led to long, meaningful conversations—many of them held in the quiet beauty of the Memorial Forest. I cherish those moments. They weren't just about planning; they were about purpose, legacy, and friendship.

In his final years, Father Time caught up with my friend. Lorne spent those days at Parkwood Veteran's Long Term Care in London, Ontario—a fitting place for someone who had dedicated so much of his life to honouring veterans.

One of our last conversations took place in June 2018. I called to let him know the community was buzzing with preparations for Rosy Rhubarb. We spoke about the Keystone grounds and the park we had helped build—how vibrant and welcoming it all looked. His voice was faint, but

his words were strong. “We did something pretty wonderful,” he said. I agreed wholeheartedly.

Lorne passed away on March 24, 2019, at the age of 92. My contribution to this chapter of Southwold’s 175th Anniversary is dedicated to his memory—a tribute to a man whose vision, kindness, and quiet determination helped shape our community in lasting ways.



Len Lynch
November 2025



Army and Air Cadets are valued participants at Southwold in 2024.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

As part of the research for this project, I was fortunate to secure a box of photo albums and scrapbooks from the Township of Southwold's "vault." Each founding member of the Southwold War Veterans Memorial Committee had gradually taken on distinct responsibilities for the annual services. Among them, Mary Clutterbuck was entrusted with the role of photographer, faithfully capturing each ceremony.

Inside the box, I discovered a meticulously curated archive: photographs from each of the first nineteen years complete with typed captions, and scrapbooks containing every newspaper article ever written about the services. These materials were lovingly assembled—each item carefully fastened, each memory preserved with intention.

We extend heartfelt thanks to Mary for this exquisite chronicle of Southwold Remembers. Our gratitude also goes to those who contributed to the collection over the years including Amy Gillard and Catharine Bogart. Ross Burgar, Leah Morise and Mike Bourgeault have each contributed photos in the ensuing years since Mary stepped back from those duties.

Brenda Longhurst and Tom Spicer generously provided access to Lorne Spicer's archives and shared some of their own photographs, enriching this legacy even further.

The work undertaken by the War Veterans Memorial Committee during Southwold's early "legacy years" remains a cornerstone of our archival record. The meticulous research and documentation provided by Pam Walsh, Susan Scott, Pat Temple, and Blair Ferguson continue to stand the test of time, offering invaluable insight into Southwold's wartime

history. Their dedication laid the groundwork for all who seek to understand and honour the sacrifices of our local veterans.

Southwold Remembers... The War Years, by Pamela Walsh and
Susan Scott (Editor) – 2002

**Southwold Remembers... # 4 Bombing & Gunnery School
Fatalities 1940 – 1945**
By Pat Temple - 2003

Southwold Remembers... The Fingal Observer No. 4 B & G School
By Blair Ferguson – 2004

Bill Aarts generously provided family histories and photos including:

Family Aarts – by Willy Aarts, December 2007

The Peelland Exodus – by Piet Snijders, November 2022
- The Netherlands

**S.S. Volendam May 15 – 25 1951,
Rotterdam, NL – Quebec City Canada**
By Arend (Harry) L. Kalsbeek

We're lucky to have our friend Tony Paul in our corner. Whether it's touching up photos or building composite images, Tony's always ready to jump in and help make things shine. His work is always spot-on, and we're grateful for his steady hand and sharp eye.

Throughout the Southwold 175 Anniversary Project, we've been fortunate to utilize resources at the Elgin Heritage Archives. Special

thanks to curator Madeleine (Maddy) Howard for her generous cooperation.

We recognize former curator Michael Baker, whose interest and input over the past twenty-five years have added depth and richness to Southwold Remembers. His legacy continues to shape the way we honour our history.

The Elgin Military Museum has been a valued resource from the initiation of Southwold Remembers services. Ian Raven and his staff at the Museum have provided information on military equipment and on Southwold veterans.

The St. Thomas Legion 41 Colour Party has been a steadfast presence at Southwold Remembers, participating in each of the first twenty-five years. Led by Sgt. at Arms Will Alden, their dignified bearing lends enduring stature to our services. Ron Jewell has served us with distinction as Parade Marshal. We have the deepest respect for Ron.



No. 741 Elgin Royal Canadian Air Cadet Squadron are essential contributors to Southwold Remembers Services.



No. 2884 Engineers Army Cadet Corps and No. 7 Army Cadet Corps are valued contributors to Southwold Remembers.

Community volunteers are essential to Southwold Remembers. Without this group of special people, nothing would be accomplished.

Karen Lynch and Tom Spicer ensure that wreaths are in sequenced order prior to the service.



Southwold volunteers Keith Orchard and Ken Humphrey confer with Grayden Laing of Establish Media during a Saturday night technical setup.

Everyone pitches in—Deputy Mayor Justin Pennings and volunteer Keith Orchard pause for a breather during setup at the Keystone Complex for Southwold Remembers.



Having the support from Southwold Council and staff has been a contributing factor to twenty-five consecutive Southwold Remembers events.



(Left to right) Mayor Grant Jones, Deputy Mayor Justin Pennings, Len Lynch, and Councillor Sarah Emons reflect on the success of the 2022 Southwold Remembers service.



Parade Marshal... March Off!