

Ex-patriot Canadian Women Look After Their Own

Left Photo: Stanley Stacey (right) and his brother Edward (left) (British Army) on leave together in France. Stanley served with the Royal Canadian Army Service Corps and No. 8 Canadian General Hospital from 1941 to 1945. Photo Credit: Courtesy Stanley Stacey.

Right Photo: Remembrance Day Service in UK. Stanley is 84 years old and says how much he and his wife value the letters, help and contact from CWC. Photo Credit: Courtesy Canadian Women's Club of London.



Canadian Vets Not Forgotten

Stanley Stacey, an 84-year-old Canadian Veteran, knows that he and his fellow veterans now living in the United Kingdom have not been forgotten as ex-patriot Canadian women have been looking out for them ever since the end of the Second World War.

The Canadian Woman's Club (CWC) in London was founded in 1932 as a social club to connect Canadian women throughout the British Isles. These women soon found another purpose at the outbreak of the Second World War—driving ambulances and organizing canteens for Canadian service personnel. In the waning days of the war, committee members visited soldiers and veterans in the hospital, bringing them Canadian magazines, newspapers and cigarettes. Afterwards, the CWC set up the Welfare Committee to continue to help members of the forces and veterans.

The Committee carried on through the years and still operates today reaching out to those veterans who need help. Needy Canadian servicemen, from both World Wars, living in the UK were often ineligible for the War Veterans Allowance as they did not meet residential requirements and found themselves in very difficult financial circumstances especially as they aged and became infirm. Now called the Veterans Support Committee (VSC), the group currently supports 69 individuals consisting of veterans and their dependents.

At the beginning, in 1950, the CWC sent out food and clothing parcels to veterans and their widows. Food parcels were purchased, packed and mailed by committee members containing a packet of tea, biscuits, tins of fish or meat, a bar of chocolate and maybe a tin of fruit.

An increase in needy veterans and their dependents in addition to increasing postal costs necessitated replacing parcels with monthly or bi-monthly cheques in the 1970s.

Known as the Service Committee in the 1980s, members found that demands increased over the years as the veterans of the Second World War began to age and fall on hard times. Today the Veterans Affairs Division at the Canadian High Commission continues to notify the Committee of those veterans who need help—if a veteran dies, the Committee continues to support his widow.

Today, the Veterans Support Committee is supported by the Maple Leaf Trust in London (the fundraising arm of the Canadian Women's Club), the Canada Club (the oldest dining club in London), the Canada UK Chamber of Commerce, and from Canada, the Independent Order of the Daughters of the Empire (IODE) and the Royal Canadian Legion.

Quarterly cheques, bonuses at Thanksgiving and Christmas, as well as cards sent on birthdays, Easter and Canada Day let Stanley and his fellow Canadian veterans know that Canadians care and remember. In some cases, the mail they receive from the Committee is the only mail they get.

The Veterans Support Committee of the Canadian Woman's Club is a group of loyal, hardworking ladies, of Canadian and British descent, who between them have over 100 years of service to the VSC. Sadly, more names are being crossed off the Committee's list than are being added these days. However, the Committee intends to be there to the last name. ❧

Jennifer Tripp Black, Chairman of the Veterans Support Committee, Canadian Women's Club (London, England)