

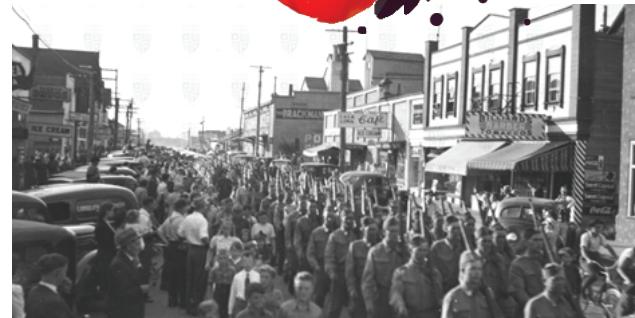
# Langley Prairie Goes to War



Langley Advance staffer Fred Cox (2nd from right) and fellow Westminster Regiment trainees, 1940. Credit: *salishan Place by the River*

Civilians also did “their bit.” Chaired by farmer and Mayor Robert Wark, the Langley branch of the Canadian Patriotic Fund provided support to financially distressed families of local men in uniform. Local women sent their knitting, baked goods, and preserves to soldiers overseas. Underage boys joined the “Soldiers of the Soil” to augment the workforce on local farms.

Langley residents followed the progress of the war in New Westminster’s newspaper, the *British Columbian*, anxiously scouring its lists of casualties. Fred Roberts and John Carvolth were two who did not make it home, being killed in action within nine months of each other. George and Harriet Timms’s grandson George would join the ranks of the fallen two years later. Hostilities concluded with an



Langley’s “C” Company, 2nd Battalion of the Westminster Regiment parading on the Fraser Highway, 1940. Credit: *salishan Place by the River*

**W**hen war broke out between Britain and Germany in August 1914, Canada was automatically thrust into the conflict.

Recognizing the nation’s status and role within the British Empire, Prime Minister Wilfred Laurier had declared some years earlier, “When Britain is at war, Canada is at war. There is no distinction.” It would have been difficult to find many in English Canada who disagreed with Laurier’s assertion. Support for the Empire’s war with Germany was especially pronounced in British Columbian communities like Langley, where much of the population was British in origin. Langley’s backing of what most saw as “the mother country” led to the expansion of a pre-existing section of the “B.C. Horse”, a militia unit tasked with protecting the community from potential enemy agents.

Residents also enlisted in the regular army. Notable recruits from Langley Prairie included Vivian Timms, a veteran of the South African War and son of Langley businessman George Timms; Fred Roberts, the only son of the village’s postmaster; and cobbler Pete Prytherch. Others who joined their ranks included multiple members of the Mableson, Logan, Stovell, Blacklock, and Gueho families. By the end of the war over 50% of the community’s adult male population had served in uniform.



Armistice in November 1918. The community responded with a combination of relief and reflection, its celebrations tempered by the significant losses sustained overseas. The Armistice proved an uneasy one. The peace treaties that followed met widespread dissatisfaction throughout Germany. In 1933, a fascist government replaced the fragile democracy established in 1919. Germany rearmed, and war broke out again in 1939. This time, instead of fighting for King and Empire, Canadians fought for King

and Country, viewing Nazi aggression as a direct threat to national security. Once again Langley men enlisted in their hundreds, their ranks supplemented by scores of young women who served in non-combatant roles as nurses, cooks, radio operators, secretaries, drivers, mechanics, and cleaners. Just as they had done a generation earlier, women on the home front prepared parcels of “home comforts” for shipment overseas. Children planted Victory Gardens to increase local food stocks, freeing up commercial supplies for shipment overseas. Adult civilians joined the Air Raid Precaution (ARP) to ensure that windows were blacked out at night. Others served as airplane “spotters” charged with reporting suspicious aerial traffic to the appropriate authorities.

Once again the community mourned its losses, the *Langley Advance* providing weekly reports of those wounded, killed, or missing in action in places ranging from the North Atlantic to the Sudan. The majority of casualties would have been familiar to all. Although most of their names are little-known today, the family names of pilots Jack Sendall and Lorne McBurney are still preserved in Langley City place names. The fallen of both world wars are currently remembered each November 11 at the City’s cenotaph in Douglas Park as well as at war memorials throughout the neighbouring Township.

*-Warren Sommer*



Langley Prairie Wartime Fatalities: Fred Roberts, John Carvolth, Jack Sendall, Lorne McBurney, Jack Frisby



Credit: Warren Sommer



Langley’s “C” Company, 2nd Battalion of the Westminster Regiment parading on the Fraser Highway, 1940. Credit: *salishan Place by the River*