



*Preserving, promoting and developing Wellington North's unique cultural resources to build a vibrant community and a prosperous economy.*

The Arthur & Area Historical Society are researching and collecting stories of local veterans to help celebrate Canada's 150<sup>th</sup> birthday. These stories are being brought together, into a Veterans Book to be published later this year. Our **Cultural Moment** this evening presents one of these stories....

### **LIEUTENANT ROSS SAMUEL: FIRST SPECIAL SERVICE FORCE**

David & Florence Samuel, along with their three sons, Allan, Ross and Keith, farmed in West Luther near Arthur from 1937. The two older boys attended Arthur High School and Ross enlisted in Stratford on Oct. 1<sup>st</sup>, 1939, eight days before his 18<sup>th</sup> birthday.

He trained in Cambridge, was sent to England and was soon a full-fledged Lieutenant. He then joined the First Special Service Force, and by 1944 was in southern France, having fought the entire way with the elite First Special Service Force, which was made up of both American and Canadian soldiers. A sign of its success was that the Germans called it the "Devil's Brigade".

One of Ross' letters home tells of fighting at Cassino, Italy and he also proudly writes of being part of the first troops to march into Rome after its liberation. The most hard-fought time was at Villeneuve-Loubet in southern France on Aug. 26, 1944. This was the day Ross was fatally wounded. Late Sept. the family received a telegram however did not know how severely Ross had been injured. The final letter from the Department of National Defence was received late October.



A memorial service was held for Ross at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Gordonville. While the service was being held, another telegram arrived giving the terrible news that Ross' brother Allan was missing in action, only to be reported killed a short time later.

In August, 2007, Betty-Anne Samuel in Arthur received a call from France from a young man, Jean-Loup Gasset, who was writing the history of his village, Villeneuve-Loubet, near Nice. Since Ross was the lieutenant leading the troops that liberated his village, he was able to tell the family the story. The Special Service men were moving into the villages of southern France to liberate them from the Germans. Lieutenant Ross Samuel was leading his group of men across the bridge into the town when a sniper shot him in the left leg, above the knee. His men immediately shot the sniper. Ross was taken quickly to

the medics after a tourniquet was applied to his leg. None of his men thought he was fatally wounded but he died the following day, possibly from shock.

The sacrifices of Ross Samuel and the other members of the First Special Service Force have not been forgotten. In February 2015 forty-two surviving Canadian and American members of the Devil's Brigade were honoured with the Congressional Gold Medal.