

A Second Strike

Baseball and the Canadian Armed Forces during World War Two

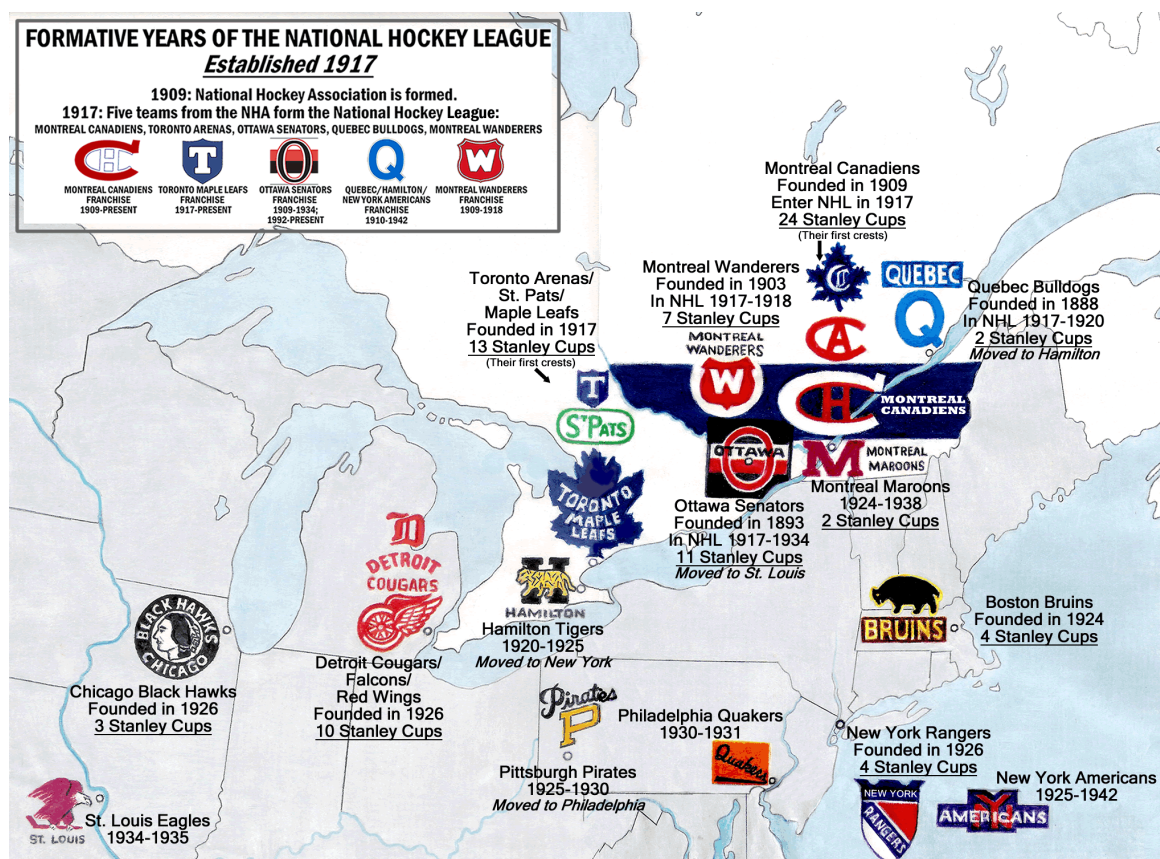


During the First World War, baseball was Canada's national game. Baseball was officially sanctioned as part of the Dominion war effort. The Canadian government believed that baseball built better soldiers and that no other sport was better suited to teach teamwork, sacrifice or individual responsibility. Canadian soldiers so loved the game that they played it on rest, in reserve and within striking distance of German artillery. Military hospitals organized baseball leagues to rejuvenate physical bodies and heal war scarred souls. Some enlisted men spent their time away from the front establishing a Patriotic Tea House in England. The profits from that soldier-run enterprise were spent exclusively on the purchase of baseball equipment. Curious locals, King George V himself and paying crowds in the tens of thousands watched Canada's soldiers play ball. Baseball's ability to recall a peaceful homeland comforted men while its expressions gave them a vocabulary with which to express and suppress their experiences at the front. Canadians played other sports during the war, but none so often as baseball.¹ The story of Canadian baseball during The Great War is

¹ Horrall, Andrew. *'Keep-A-Fighting! Play The Game' Baseball and the CEF during WWI*. Pg. 12

examined in *Batted Balls and Bayonets* available through the Centre for Canadian Baseball Research² or via <http://baseballresearch.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Dame17.pdf>.

By the time Canadian soldiers arrived overseas to fight a second world war, baseball's relationship with the average fighting-age Canadian was significantly different. The National Hockey League was organized seven months after the battle of Vimy Ridge. By the mid 1920s, the N.H.L. had established itself in the population centres across Ontario and Quebec. Regional challengers for the Stanley Cup, from cities as dispersed as Victoria, Winnipeg and Sydney, strengthened the pan-Canadian appeal of hockey. During cold winter nights and the long, dark stretches of The Great Depression, families gathered around their radios as hockey stitched itself into the Canadian cultural fabric. Hockey, like other games, was no longer just a way to pass the time in the great outdoors, compete for good-natured civic superiority or simply stay fit and have fun. The commercialization of sports and entertainment was now in its nascent stages. Hockey promoters, having pioneered Saturday night broadcasts, relayed by



² <http://baseballresearch.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Dame17.pdf>

echoing radio affiliates across the country, had turned their game into something to be followed and consumed by the masses. Canadians could follow their favourite baseball teams on the radio too, but far fewer people were drawn to their Crystal Sets on sunny, summer afternoons. Coupling that exposure with the construction of newly possible refrigerated indoor rinks, ensured that hockey would usurp baseball to become and remain Canada's national game. Canadians still played baseball as a recreation, but that too was facing new, softer competition.

Amateur recreational sporting culture in Canada and the United States was turning away from baseball and towards softball in the years between the wars. Softball gained popularity in North America shortly after the end of the First World War. The growth of Big Softball³ as a competitor to baseball on the lawns, sandlots and diamonds across the continent is often linked to a tournament held at the 1933 Chicago World's Fair. Organized by sports writer Leo Fischer and sporting goods salesman Michael Pauley, the event garnered media attention and led directly to the creation of the American Softball Association in 1934.⁴ Pauley's sporting goods outfit became a leading retailer of softball equipment. Unlike the days preceding the First World War, mass production, retail chains and a boom in consumer culture made it possible for working class Canadians to buy sporting goods whenever they so desired. The first Canadian Tire outlet opened in Toronto in 1923. By 1934, their national expansion had begun. The Eaton's catalogue, as close to a universal aspect of Canadian life as perhaps there ever was, made buying baseball and softball equipment convenient across the country. Whereas the government had great



³ <https://theolballgame.com/2015/05/21/the-1933-chicago-worlds-fair-and-the-birth-of-big-softball/>

⁴ Ibid

difficulty finding, acquiring and shipping an adequate amount of baseball equipment to the Canadian Expeditionary Force,⁵ many members of the Canadian Forces embarked for the Second World War with the softballs and baseball gloves they had long ago purchased themselves.

Movies, gymnasiums and more frequent leave to the English seaside also drew men away from baseball. An entry in the Queen's Own Rifles regimental diary reveals that men were stationed for a time near a brewery in Wykehurst, England.⁶ During the Second World War, baseball would have to compete with a more diverse array of options for soldierly rest and relaxation. Soldiers, airmen and sailors in uniform still organized many athletic pursuits during wartime. Baseball was among them but was no longer paramount, to either players or spectators, as it had been two decades earlier.

Regardless of the type of ball, the frequency with which games were played, or its place in the recreational pecking order, Canadian boys and men still had a place in their hearts for baseball. Members of the Canadian military brass still understood the value of baseball, both as a training tool, and as a way to occupy the time of troops awaiting battle. The first organized Canadian baseball games, after the declaration of war in September of 1939, took place in Sturgeon County, Alberta, Val Cartier, Quebec, Gagetown, New Brunswick and the other permanent homes to the Canadian Army. On the first Dominion Day of the war, Camp Borden, west of Barrie, Ontario, held a sporting carnival which featured a tug of war and baseball game as the main events. These home front baseball games often pitted the enlisted men against their superior officers. A record of the Camp Borden game does not include a final score, but concludes that the infantrymen demonstrated "a lack of training."⁷

The first Canadians arrived in Greenock, Scotland on December 25, 1939. The "phony war" early months of the conflict created similar conditions to those which allowed baseball to flourish during the First World War. A sedentary army needed to do something to pass the time, stay in shape and maintain their esprit de corps. John Maker, of the Laurier Centre for Military, Strategic and Disarmament Studies wrote that "because soldiers were forced to 'hurry up and

⁵ <http://baseballresearch.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Dame17.pdf> Pg. 2

⁶ <https://qormuseum.org/>

⁷ Ibid

wait,' many for 42 months or more... sports served as an essential tonic to the soldiers who were eagerly awaiting action."⁸ Baseball and other games mitigated discipline and morale problems. Lieutenant Erik Peterson stated that "softball was a lifesaver for our troops in England."⁹



The Canadians arriving in Britain during the winter of 1939/40 had an older generation of Britons recalling their sporting escapades from the previous war. It was assumed that Canadian military baseball would again be played. The *Daily Mirror* noted that qualified opponents would be needed, and so "men of the RAF... are to spend their winter evenings studying the rules and tactics of baseball which will be played behind the lines in the spring."¹⁰

◆ ◆ ◆
MEN of the R.A.F. in the units attached to the Army in France are to spend their winter evenings studying the rules and tactics of baseball which is to be played behind the line in the spring.
 A splendid supply of sports kit has just arrived for these units. It is the first free issue of such kit to the B.E.F., and includes 1,000 Soccer balls, 1,000 Rugger balls, hockey sticks and balls, deck quoit and basket ball sets.
 The kit was given out by the N.A.A.F.I. funds, amounting to £120 for every 400 men.

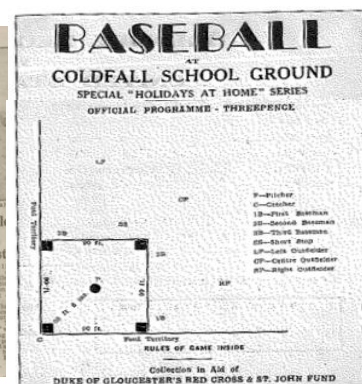
⁸ Maker, John. *Sports and War – A Winning Combination*. Pg. 2

⁹ Bedingfield, Gary. *Baseball in World War II Europe*. Pg. 5

¹⁰ The Daily Mirror. *Sports Notes*. Sept 13, 1939. Accessed via britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk

headline “The Canadians Give us a Brand New Game,” The *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News* provided detailed instructions on how to play the game, “first cousin to baseball,” and pointed out that soldiers and school boys may find these details helpful. The game was presented as a lighter, less serious version of baseball, wherein the pitcher was encouraged to “adopt any attitude he pleases in an attempt to bamboozle the batsman.”¹¹ The first Canadian Infantry Division were featured playing the game across two full broad-sheets in a photographic spread. As training continued and fighting remained elusive,

CROWD SEE SOFTBALL FOR FIRST TIME IN THEIR LIVES



¹¹ The Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News. *The Canadians Give Us A Brand New Game*. April 12, 1940.

exclaimed the *Worthing Gazette*. “They came, they saw, they listened, and at the end of the hour and ten minutes, the Canadians were hoping they were beginning to understand the game. The rules are really not so complicated as the Canadians imagine, but to the majority gathered at the Farm Recreation Ground on Saturday, softball needed some explaining.”¹²

More than 330,000 Canadian troops passed through Aldershot for training before being deployed across the United Kingdom. From the autumn of 1941 until early 1944 the defence of the U.K., and particularly the Sussex coast, was in the hands of the 1st Canadian Army. This was the largest force of British Commonwealth troops to ever be quartered in the U.K. at one time.¹³ Playing baseball, and re-educating the locals on the finer points of the game, was not an uncommon duty for Canadian soldiers.

It was popular for U.K. press covering Canadian military baseball to include the fact that an explanation of the game was necessary for the spectators. This could reflect a journalistic trope, perhaps representative of British class structure, whereby baseball played the role of new-fangled concept and the men and women of the countryside played the part of rubes in need of a lesson. It may also reflect the fact that baseball truly did not *stick* in the British consciousness after the First World War. Whatever the reason, and despite the vast number of Brits who had watched soldiers play ball two decades earlier, journalists often included a sentence or two about Canadian tutorials, held before or even during games, in their baseball stories. On August 23rd, 1940, two teams of Canadian soldiers, one representing Montreal and the other Hamilton, played a game at the East Surrey Sports Ground in order to raise money for the building of Spitfire airplanes. The *Mirror and County Post* wrote that “before the game commenced the rules were explained. During its progress spectators found Canadian soldiers ready with further explanations and descriptions of how in Canada, crowds of 75,000 shower “pop” bottles on the pitch when disgusted with the umpire.”¹⁴ The team of soldiers from Montreal defeated their Hamiltonian rivals by a score of 18-16. The reporter also noted that one of the Canadians “displayed a real baseball cap” and that the crowd found its greatest amusement when the umpire “received a blow

¹² *Worthing Gazette*. *Crowd See Softball For First Time In Their Lives*. December 17, 1941

¹³ <http://www.canadianrootsuk.org/historycanadiansuk.html>

¹⁴ *Surrey Mirror and County Post*. *Baseball Match Aids Fund*. Aug 23, 1940

on the shin and hopped laboriously, rubbing it for all he was worth.”¹⁵

Two months later in Tadworth, England, a team of Canadian Highlanders played against a team of British Home Guards in another fundraising baseball match. The *Illustrated and Sporting*



Right : A **BASEBALL** match between the **Canadian** Highlanders and a Home Guard team (in aid of “Daily Sketch” War Funds) was played on the peaceful village green at Tadworth, generally the home of cricket. Here Col. W. W. Sowtham is pitching the first ball. The Home Guards had previously been coached by their opponents in the local village hall.



News provided images of the Highlanders “coaching” their opponents and educating curious locals before the game.¹⁶

Dick Fowler, the Toronto born Philadelphia Athletics pitcher who would return from service and throw a no-hitter against the St. Louis Browns, was serving with these same Highlanders.¹⁷ Fowler, however, served entirely in Canada because of chronic sinus issues. On May 28th, 1941, General Andrew McNaughton, Commander-in-Chief of the Canadian overseas forces, explained the game of baseball to Princess Mary and assembled British soldiers during an intra-squad game played between members of The Royal Canadian Corps of Signals at a military hospital near London.¹⁸ During August of 1942, Canadian troops “learning of the mediocre success which attended the introduction of baseball into this country, are hopeful that their exhibition games will help to further popularize it.”¹⁹ Even as late as 1943, when thousands of innings had been

¹⁵ Ibid

¹⁶ *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News. A Baseball Match.* Oct 25, 1940

¹⁷ Humber, William. *Diamonds Of The North.* Pg. 161

¹⁸ *Globe and Mail. Princess Royal Watches Canadian Troops Playing Baseball.* May 29, 1941

¹⁹ *Trinity Mirror. New World Baseball in Manchester.* Aug 13, 1942

played on British soil by North American soldiers, the quirks and qualities of the game were apparently still being taught. On May 19th at the Braunton Road Grounds, the game was described as “a development of rounders, with which we were familiar in our youthful days, but it has evolved into a vehicle for the display of astonishing skill of which accurate catching and fielding are prominent features.”²⁰ In August, near Burgess Hill, the Queen’s Own Rifles made use of a public address system while they played a game against the 12th Field Regiment. Major Sutherland served as a play-by-play man to “explain the game to spectators and give running commentary of the play.”²¹

As soldiers trained in Britain and awaited deployment to Nazi occupied Europe, the government encouraged sport as a way to toughen Canadians for their coming crucible. “Senior officers plan to get them into shape for expected combat in the spring and aren’t wasting any time,” wrote the *Globe and Mail*. “They’re being hardened up physically by calisthenics and baseball.”²² The game continued to be a preferred pastime for soldiers as well as a valuable method of maintaining corps readiness for commanders. “There is a strong and reciprocal historical relationship between sports and the military,” wrote John Maker. He explained that softball was among the sports which also helped bridge the cultural divide within the Canadian forces:

In Canada at the beginning of the Second World War, sports positively reflected the nation’s cultural desires and pastimes. These patterns were reflected in the army overseas. In the army, some sports were differentiated according to English- and French-Canadian cultural preferences... troops representing both language groups professed a keen interest in hockey, softball and skating. These sports occupied a space of cultural consensus between English and French speaking Canadians overseas and differentiated them both from the British.²³

Throughout the war, there are records of Canadian soldiers playing baseball games informally, in intra-squad affairs or challenging local teams all over Britain. The spread of baseball culture in Britain, led by Canadian troops, could be seen on

²⁰ North Devon Journal. *Savings For Victory*. May 20, 1943

²¹ <https://qormuseum.org/>

²² The Globe And Mail. *Sports Toughen Canadians for Expected Spring Battle*. Mar 16, 1941

²³ Maker, John. *Sports and War – A Winning Combination*. Pg. 2

the sports pages of many local dailies. On March 14, 1942 “a famous Canadian regiment,” likely the Queen’s Own Rifles, gave “a demonstration baseball game at the Recreation Grounds in Storrington” reported the *Worthing Gazette*. “The regimental band,”²⁴ likely the Canadian Armoured Corps Band, also entertained the crowd at the site where, as of 2018, an abandoned Canadian tank still sits. In Jedburgh, the local newspaper recalled that “during the Great War, quite a few baseball matches were played by Canadian forestry units situated at Birkenside and elsewhere.” The report further noted that the return of Canadian baseballers to the area had inspired local resident James Elliot to create a six team baseball league for local youth. On July 6, 1942, The Queen’s Own Rifles played a men vs sergeants game in Willingdon before a crowd of locals. The senior officer keeping the War Diary wrote “the former were victorious for once.” 20 months later, after a similar game was played in Bournemouth, the diary keeper remarked that “much to the senior ranks disgruntlement, the men were victorious by a score of 24-8.”²⁵ In Tunbridge, a few hundred Canadian soldiers and 1,950 paying locals, turned out at the Nevill Cricket Ground to watch two touring Canadian youth teams on September 19. The Ontario All-Stars and Western Canada Select teams played to raise funds for the Red Cross.²⁶



BASEBALL
(HARDBALL)
on **THE NEVILL CRICKET GROUND**
Saturday, September 19th, at 3 p.m.
All Proceeds to **THE RED CROSS AND ST. JOHN**
Mayor of Tunbridge Wells Supporting Fund.

CANADIAN ONTARIO ALL STARS
v.
WESTERN CANADA SELECT

International Stars of the New World's Most Popular Game.
The Band of a well-known County Regt. will play from 2.15.

Pavillion Seats (including admission to ground)	10/-
Covered Stand	5/-
Admission to Ground	2/-
" " " H.M. Services in uniform	1/-
Children under 16	1/-

Tickets from Assembly Hall, Tunbridge Wells.

²⁴ Worthing Gazette. *Baseball Match*. Mar 11, 1942

²⁵ <https://qormuseum.org/>

²⁶ The Courier. *Tomorrow's Baseball Match*. Sept 18, 1942

On August 14, 1943, two teams of Canadian soldiers played a game before 2,000 paying spectators in Canterbury. Players from Toronto formed their own team, dubbed the “Wild Cats,” while soldiers from other parts of Canada formed a team called the “Canadian Sloggers.” The Sloggers triumphed 17-11. The game was used to raise funds for the Merchant Navy Comfort Service. The players were drawn from Canadian regiments stationed nearby and hailed from “Central Canada, Western Prairies, Maritime Provinces and also the French Canadian Provinces. One player, Private C.M. Kratz, comes from Michigan, U.S.A. and is serving with a Canadian regiment.” The Mayor of Canterbury, Frederick Charles Lefevre, threw out the first pitch and then invited both teams to “the pavillion” for tea afterwards. The mayor praised the Canadian troops for “their magnificent work being done in Sicily.”²⁷ Baseball games were even staged in Shoreham, England, while Canadian troops there prepared for their ill-fated invasion at Dieppe. On October 16th, 1943, the Cameron Highlanders of Ottawa were observed playing baseball outside Hursley Camp. They were defeated by a team of soldiers from Toronto by a score of 13-3.²⁸ The Torontonians may have been Conn Smythe’s 30th Battery.



Smythe, the hockey impresario who had served with the Canadian Army during the First World, recruited his own group of sportsmen-soldiers while training Officers in Toronto. Toronto Argonaut stars Ted Reeve and Shanty McKenzie, who would later pioneer film study in sports, joined up to fight and play with Major Smythe. Eventually, the men of the 30th Battery were incorporated into the 7th Toronto Regiment. They were first stationed in Victoria and then later shipped to the U.K. where they spent months training and hosting softball games. Smythe’s 30th Battery Bombers challenged locals to various sporting events, including baseball and softball games, throughout their service in both Europe and the U.K. In 1944 they were tasked with taking Caen, France, an

²⁷ The Whitstable Times and Tankerton Press. *Canadian Baseball*. Aug 21, 1943

²⁸ <https://qormuseum.org/>

action Smythe nearly missed due to a softball injury. In the days after the successful D-Day landings, Smythe organized a softball tournament in Caen. He played third base and claimed to have been visited by Winston Churchill after a game.

Two of the more notable games played in the U.K. during the Second World War have links to the story of Canadian baseball during the First World War. The most renowned game played by Canadian soldiers between 1914 and 1918 was a match played before King George V at Windsor Great Park. It featured an integrated team of men from the black Construction Corps and the white Forestry Corps dramatically defeating a team of doctors, orderlies and recovering soldiers from Orpington Hospital by a score of 2-1. When the Forestry Corps returned to Britain, they were noted as “baseball players of repute”²⁹ by the Yorkshire press before they played an intra-squad game in Scotland during September of 1941. Yet, it was a game played, not by soldiers, but by war correspondents, on the hallowed grass of Lord’s Cricket Grounds which literally had the newspapers screaming (at least in print). “Egad! Most Extraordinary! What! Baseball at Lord’s?”³⁰ was the Associated Press headline on May 10, 1941. Canadian newspapermen (who had watched Canadian soldiers play baseball at Lord’s multiple times during the First World War) defeated their still neutral American counterparts using “the sacred sod for a baseball game.”³¹

Egad! Most Extraordinary! ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ **What! BASEBALL at Lord's?**

(By EDDIE GILMORE.)
(Associated Press Staff Writer.)

London, May 9 (AP).—The keepers of Lord's Cricket Ground in snooty St. John's Woods reeled as if the Empire had been struck a solar plexus blow today when American and Canadian newsmen asked use of the sacred sod for a baseball game.

The near international incident happened thusly:

Associated and Canadian Press reporters, inspired by the arrival of home newspapers giving details of the first major league openers, arranged the game.

The situation looked desperate when a search of London's sports stores revealed no baseballs or bats. Finally The Canadian Press war correspondent, Ross Munro, produced the equipment, thanks to the Canadian Army. The place of the proposed game turned out to be the Royal grounds of some kind of a Royal Regiment and the man with the keys said permission, if given, would take a week to get.

We then tried diplomacy.

"Look," we said. "America is lending and leasing, how about Lord's just lending the field one morning?"

"Quite," said the official.

"What?"

"This is very extraordinary," he said in a pained tone. "Look here, you shout, pop about and have all sorts of doings in these baseball contests, don't you?"

"Oh this is not a regular game," we told him, remembering the sign on Lord's fence reading: "No unnecessary noise."

"This puts us in a deuce of a fix, old boy," the man finally said.

There was another silence, broken by whispers at the other end of the wire.

"I say," the man finally said, "I'm dreadfully sorry, but there's a game here tomorrow between a team and the metropolitan police."

"Who's that last team?"

"Police, constabulary."

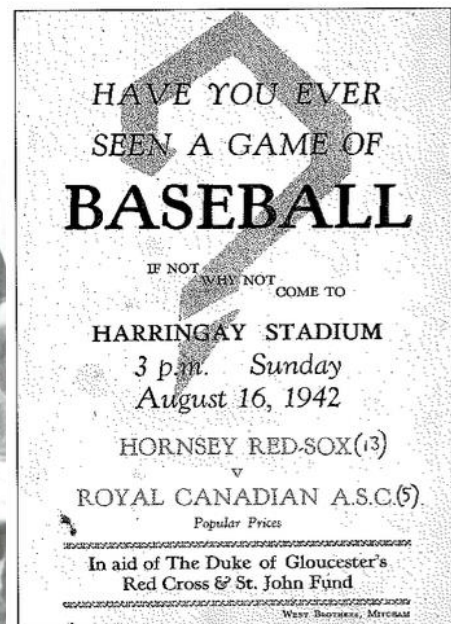
"Okay, huh," we said. "We understand."

²⁹ Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer. *Axes In The Highlands*. Sept 11, 1941

³⁰ The Globe and Mail. *Egad! Most Extraordinary! What! BASEBALL at Lord's?*. May 10, 1941

³¹ Ibid.

In addition to the pick-up games, charity benefits and informally organized baseball occurring wherever Canadian soldiers were spread across the U.K., organized league games picked up steam with the arrival of more and more Canadians. Initially, in order to relieve boredom and fill spare time, Canadians joined existing British baseball teams.³² The DeHavilland Comets, The Standard Telephone and Cable squad, and the Ford Motor Company in London team, all employed the services of Pete Giovanella from Kirkland Lake, Ontario during various games in 1940. Highly successful amateur teams, like the Liverpool Baseball Club and the Hornsey Red Sox, hosted Canadians as teammates and played against teams of Canadian soldiers stationed nearby. The Midlands League consisted primarily of British teams representing manufacturing plants involved in essential war work. The locally based Canadian Army team, and later U.S. military teams, were invited to join the league.³³ The Canadian Army team went all the way to the Midlands World Series before losing the final 13-0 to a team representing the U.S. Army 10th Replacement Depot.³⁴



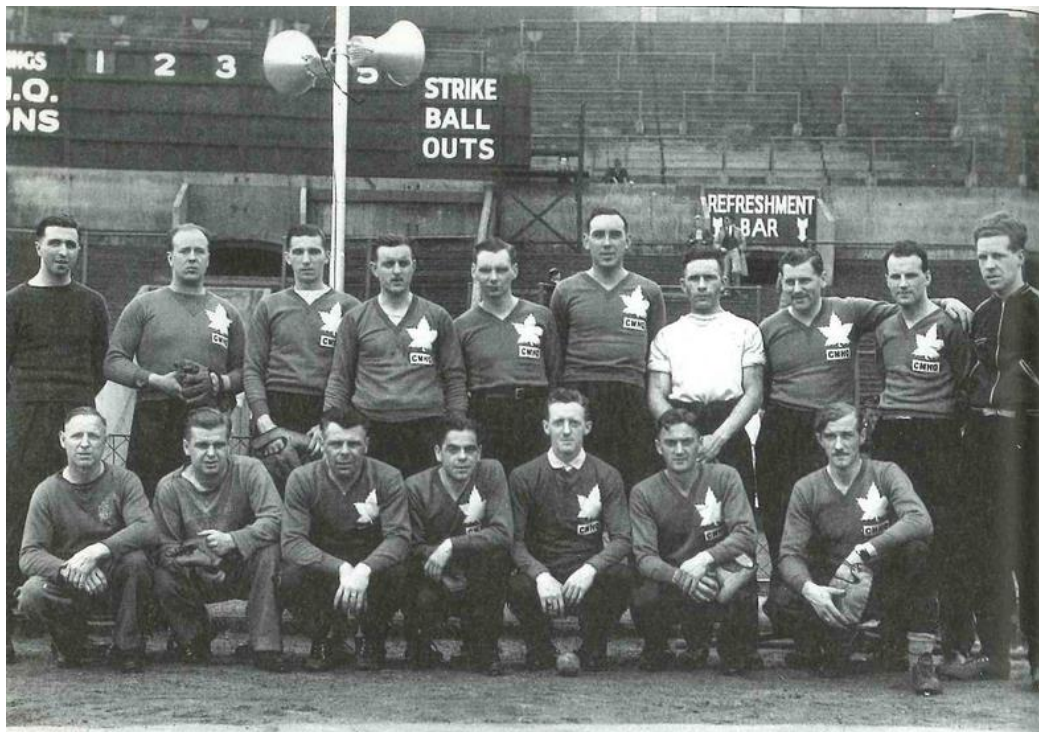
Crowds attending league baseball games only grew as the war went on. With professional sports on hold in Britain for the duration, locals who were seeking diversion and distraction from the daily threat of war could gather at the

³² Bedingfield, Gary. *Baseball in World War II Europe*. Pg. 87

³³ Ibid., Pg. 44

³⁴ Ibid., Pg. 51

cricket pitch-cum-baseball field. With the arrival of American soldiers in Britain during 1942, the amount and quality of baseball games being played advanced rapidly. The London International Baseball League was created in 1943 as a recreational league for Canadian and American troops stationed around the British capital. The league provided a way to organize and structure the thousands of soldiers playing informal forms of baseball across Britain. It also provided relief from the inaction and tedium which affected many men as they impatiently awaited the invasion of Europe. Both Canadian and American military brass understood the value of baseball as a necessary spectator sport, morale booster and occupier of idle men. The LIBL consisted of eight military teams, two of which were Canadian. The most competitive teams in the league were the U.S. 660th Engineers, the U.S. 827th Signal Battalion Monarchs, the 1st Canadian General Hospital and the team representing the Canadian Military Headquarters. The 1stCGH team featured Leo Curtis of Orange, Massachusetts. Curtis, an accomplished semi-pro pitcher, joined the Canadian Forces at the outbreak of the war and played for 1stCGH during his entire stint in the service.³⁵ Curtis led his hospital team into the LIBL championship on June 25 and 28, 1943. The Canadian team was swept two games to none in a best of three series by the Signal Monarchs.



³⁵ Bedingfield, Gary. *Baseball in World War II Europe*. Pg. 87

The London International Baseball League championship games were held at the legendary Stamford Bridge Stadium, home to the Chelsea Football Club. The site was, and remains, a significant historical landmark in the history of Canadian baseball. It was there, in 1917 that a game between “Team Canada” (staff and soldiers from Epsom Military Hospital) and “Team U.S.A.” (the London Americans, a group of ex-patriot U.S. citizens living in London) took place in June during a military sports festival.³⁶ As Canada had yet to field a baseball team at the summer Olympics, and Baseball Canada was still forty plus years away, this may in fact have been the first Team Canada baseball squad to ever compete internationally in Europe. The enlisted Canadian men of the First World War defeated the American civilians 10-6.³⁷



With so many North American baseball players in action, and in keeping with European sporting custom and the precedent set in 1917, a series of International Friendlies was scheduled between Canadian and American baseball teams. Three games in particular were promoted and covered as all-star, all-soldier affairs, which pitted the best players against each other in a best-of-three series. On July 4, 1942, a Canadian military baseball team took on its U.S.

³⁶ Leeke, Jim. *Nine Innings For The King*. Pg. 16

³⁷ Dame, Stephen. *Batted Balls and Bayonets*. <http://baseballresearch.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Dame17.pdf>

counterpart in England for the first time since the conclusion of the Anglo-American Baseball League's 1918 campaign. Selhurst Park in London, home to the Crystal Palace Football club, hosted the game and 6,000 fans. The United States Army Air Force all-stars triumphed over the Canadian Army all-stars in a "homerun fest"³⁸ by a score of 19-17. The second game of the series took place on August 3rd at Wembley Stadium and featured another crowd of around 6,000 spectators.



CANADIAN WIN AT WEMBLEY
Canada beat the U.S.A. in a baseball match at Wembley Stadium last night by 5 runs to 3.
Mrs Churchill was among the 7000 spectators. The match was played in aid of the Red Cross, and during the play a running commentary was given by Flight Sergeant Jack Lutes, of the Royal Canadian Air Force, who explained the complexities and rules of the game for the benefit of the uninitiated.

The Canadian Army Headquarters team defeated the American Army Headquarters squad by a score of 5-3. Lady Clementine Churchill, wife of the British Prime Minister, was in attendance and met with both teams during a pre-game ceremony. The game raised nearly \$4,000 for the British Red Cross. The rubber match for these North American neighbours would take place on August 22nd at the Memorial Sports Ground in Red Hill. After falling behind by 6 runs, the Canadians rallied to tie the game at 9 in the 6th inning and then win it 12-9. The Canadians won the game with a 3 RBI hit of some kind in the last frame by Ed Smith of Kingston. The *Surrey Mirror and County Post* notes only that no homeruns were hit in the last inning but that "through skillful hitting and pitching, Sgt. Eddie Smith brought the Canadian score to twelve and the Americans were put out without adding to their total."³⁹ The Canadians won the series two games to one. Smith, the hero of this wartime series between Canada and the United States, was a renowned two-way player in Kingston. Smith and his father had both been stars with the Kingston Ponies amateur team. Canada vs. U.S.A. games continued into September of 1942. "An American baseball team beat a Canadian side 9 runs to 5 at Finchley, London."⁴⁰ The Americans continued their winning ways when an Air Force team beat a Canadian Army unit by 2 runs at the

³⁸ Ibid., Pg. 87

³⁹ *Surrey Mirror and County Post. Canadians Rally To Win Rubber.* Aug 28, 1942

⁴⁰ *The Scotsman. U.S. Beat Canada* Sept 21, 1942

Hounslow Cricket Grounds on October 3rd. 4,000 people watched the game, including 1,000 boy scouts. All monies raised were donated to the Bridge Road Rescue Depot.⁴¹

At least eleven other Canada vs U.S.A. baseball games were staged, usually for the purposes of raising charitable or war funds. Though they didn't always garner the attention of the 3-game series in 1942, the games continued to be a significant draw across the U.K. During the early summer of 1943, the Royal Canadian Air Force was defeated by the United States Army Air Force by a score of 7-2 in Sutton, Surrey. 5,000 fans were in attendance.⁴² On June 6, 1943 at Hounslow Cricket Ground near London, a "Return Challenge Match" was promoted to assist the British Red Cross and the St. John Prisoners of War Fund.⁴³ No score is known. On August 7, 1943, a softball game between the U.S. Army and Canadian Army served as the preliminary attraction at Wembley Stadium

Price 2d.

BASEBALL CHAMPIONSHIPS
AMERICA v. CANADA
 FRIDAY, JUNE 26th

R.F. SUMMERHILL	R.F. RICHARDSON
C.F. KELLY	C.F. EREMLAN
2 B. KORISHER	2 B. CLELLAND
SS. FARRELL	SS. FERRY
1 B. STODDARD	1 B. RANGER
C. PARTKA	C. MACDONALD
P. EISENMANN	P. CURTIS
L.F. BRANDT	L.F. THORNE
3 B. ROBERTS	3 B. POLLACK
U. FERRANS	U. LEFT
U. MCGOWAN	O.F. JACK
U. KUSCAR	U. GUYETT

Official Scorer: Spt. REGAN
 (Mr. MOFFETT (Eng.)
 Umpires: Mr. MCKENZIE (Eng.)
 Cpt. SHEARER (USA)
 Managers: Lt. EISENMANN (U.S.)
 Major QUINN (Canada)
 Commentator: Capt. WILLIAM STERNES

AMERICANS	
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
HITS	
RUNS	

CANADIANS	
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
HITS	
RUNS	



before an advertised "all professional" baseball game between the U.S. Air and Ground Forces. 21,500 paying customers saw both games and supported the Red Cross. It was the largest crowd to see baseball in Britain since the First World War.⁴⁴ The U.S. "pro" teams featured Joseph Rundus, billed of the Brooklyn Dodgers, Peter Pavich of the New York Giants, Paul Campbell of the Boston Red Sox, Jack Gaston and Louis Thurman of the Washington Senators, Ralph Ifft of the St. Louis Browns, Stanley Stuka of the Boston Braves and Richard Catalano of the

⁴¹ Middlesex Chronicle. *4,000 spectators at baseball match*. Oct 3, 1942

⁴² The Globe and Mail. *Sports Shorts From Britain*. Aug 9, 1943

⁴³ The Middlesex Chronicle. *Baseball*. May 31, 1943

⁴⁴ Bedingfield, Gary. *Baseball in World War II Europe*. Pg. 74

St. Louis Cardinals. The Canadian team featured Ed Smith of Kingston, Don Price of Kirkland Lake, Al Fleming of Halifax and Leo Curtis of Orange, Massachusetts, the American who had joined the Canadian Forces.

1944 featured perhaps the most dramatic Canada vs. U.S.A. game since the 3 game series of two years prior. Amazingly, the same hero would again work his magic for the Canadian side. On June 3 at Wembley Stadium, 18,000 people watched the Canadian Military Headquarters take on the United States Central Base Section Salons. The U.S. team took a 1 run lead into the bottom of the seventh and last inning. With two out and the bases loaded, Ed Smith, who hit the series winning 3-RBI shot in 1942, stepped to the plate. With two strikes and all hope seemingly lost

for the Canadians, Smith hit a walk-off, game winning grand slam to claim the match for Canada by a score of 4-1. Smith had played amateur softball and baseball



in Kingston, Ontario, where he was renowned for his pitching and power hitting. He also played hockey and football and is remembered as a good amateur boxer. Smith remained in the Canadian Army after the war and eventually retired to Florida.⁴⁵

Later that week another international friendly was organized south of London in Sevenoaks. The *Sevenoaks Chronicle* covered it as such:

“A surprise tea, organized by Dr. and Mrs. Spon, was held at the Post Office on Wednesday. Following this, the address by Col. Ponsonby attracted a large crowd to the Green, where they later saw a baseball match between Canadian and American teams. The Canadians won by 5 runs to 2. Capt. Harrington, U.S. Army, provided a running commentary.”⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Bedingfield, Gary. *Baseball in World War II Europe*. Pg. 89

⁴⁶ Sevenoaks Chronicle and Kentish Advertiser. *A Surprise Tea*. June 9, 1944

Another narrated game occurred between Canada and the United States at Pontefract Cricket Ground on August 22.

1945 saw the end of the war and the last official Canada-U.S.A. friendlies. Heighington Carnival Week saw all-star teams of Canadian and American troops play ball on July 16. The Chalfont Fair on July 28 featured its “greatest attraction,” a game of baseball played between “experts of U.S.A. and Canada, and the latter will have with them the full pipe band of the Canadian Scottish Highlanders.”⁴⁷ The next issue of the local paper featured even greater hype for the approaching game, stating “this is likely the last game they will be able to play prior to their return to their respective countries, so no quarter will be given.” Yet, even at the completion of the war, the game of baseball remained a mystery to some. “To aid we folk on this side who have little or no knowledge of the game, the full rules and a description is being printed in the programme. An expert has been secured to give an introduction to the match and also an explanatory running commentary by microphone.”⁴⁸ Of the fourteen known baseball contests in Britain billed as “Canada vs U.S.A.” during the war, available scores provide us with a draw. Teams representing Canada had five victories, as did teams from the United States. The ultimate victor in this best-of-fourteen wartime world series remains a mystery.

The end of the war did not mean the end of competitive baseball for Canadian soldiers in Britain. The Canadian Army (England) Baseball League was created as a way to occupy time and alleviate home sickness for soldiers awaiting passage home. At the end of the First World War, Canadian soldiers had rioted at Kinmel Park as they impatiently awaited discharge. At the conclusion of the Second World War, with even more men eager to see their families, baseball was again called into action to serve as a necessary salve.

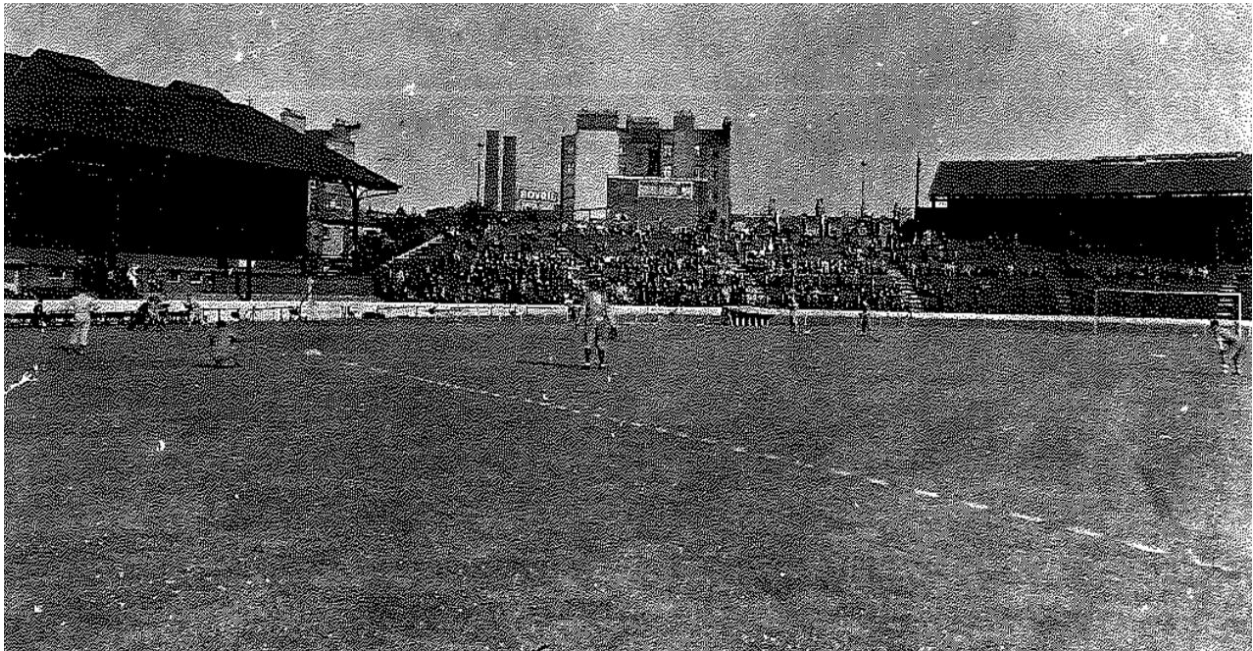
On June 26, 1945, the Canadian Army England Sports Committee of the Auxiliary Services, under the chairmanship of Brigadier J. E. Sager, announced an extensive summer of sports. “For five years we have been conditioning these men for war. Now we’ve got to condition them in how to live, how to relax and enjoy themselves,” explained Brigadier Sager. “All personnel of the Canadian Army are encouraged to compete,” reported soldier newspaper *The Maple Leaf*.⁴⁹ *The*

⁴⁷ Advertiser And Gazette. *Chalfont Fair Includes Baseball Match, U.S.A. v Canada*. Jul 21, 1945

⁴⁸ Ibid.,. *A Galaxy of Film Stars For Chalfont Fun Fair*. Jul 28, 1945

⁴⁹ Bedingfield, Gary. *Baseball in Wartime*. <http://www.baseballinwartime.com/canuck.htm>

Maple Leaf, a newspaper distributed to Canadian troops in Britain, would not only chronicle the new Canadian Army League, but also provided soldiers with baseball scores from home. The league would feature 14 teams of soldiers, playing between 14 and 16 games each, in various locations around southeastern England during the summer of 1945. The season was kicked off with a special exhibition game played between the 1st Canadian Central Ordinance Depot and a visiting team from the United States Army Airforce. 1,500 Canadian and American soldiers watched the game on what was billed as “North American Day” at Peper Harrow in Surrey. The Americans won the game 2-0. On July 13, another visiting team of American airmen again challenged the 1stCCOD. En route to a 2-0 victory, the 1stCCOD turned the only recorded wartime triple play. With the bases loaded in the fourth, American batter Bob Froelich hit a line drive to Canadian third baseman Johnny Sefton. Sefton caught the fly ball for the first out, stepped on the bag before the runner could scramble back for the second, and then threw to first baseman Tommy Marshall for the third.⁵⁰



On September 8, 1945, eight teams qualified for the playoffs of the Canadian Army Baseball League. An eight team single elimination tournament format was used to determine the winner. They were ranked according to their performance during the regular season:

⁵⁰ Ibid.

#1 Administration Transport
#2 Canadian General Reinforcement Unit
#9 Repatriation Depot
#1 Canadian Central Ordinance Depot
#5 Repatriation Depot
#10 Repatriation Depot
#1 Canadian General Reinforcement Unit
#1 Chemical and Biological Warfare

The finals, between #10 Repat Depot and #2 GCRU, were held at Farnborough, with the Repatriation Depot taking the league title. While the Canadian Army League was operating southwest of London during the summer of 1945, Royal Canadian Air Force personnel in Torquay, England created their own baseball league. The RCAF repatriation depot was divided into three sites, so naturally a three team baseball league emerged. Exhibition games were also arranged with nearby American teams.⁵¹

Baseball was favoured by the Canadian Forces as a sport which built better soldiers. Baseball taught sacrifice and individual responsibility while still stressing the necessity of teamwork. Using the game to train and engage their troops was not the only benefit the military derived from baseball. No sport was used to raise funds for Canada's two world war efforts more than baseball. Nearly all of the major international friendlies between Canada and the United States were fundraisers of some sort, be it for new ships, local home defence groups or spitfire airplanes. Baseball truly re-established itself as a large scale spectator sport in Europe as American and Canadian service teams became the main attraction at fundraising events. According to British baseball expert Gary Bedingfield, "during 1943, teams played in aid of "Wings For Victory," a National Savings campaign designed to build warplanes. The campaign was staged in almost every city, town and village, and baseball became an integral part of the proceedings."⁵² Canadian soldiers played baseball in Storrington during March of 1942 in order to drive dollars "towards the aim of £120,000, the cost of a new

⁵¹ Bedingfield, Gary. *Baseball in Wartime*. <http://www.baseballinwartime.com/canuck.htm>

⁵² Bedingfield, Gary. *Baseball in World War II Europe*. Pg. 101

corvette.”⁵³ The August 22, 1942 game between Canada and the U.S.A. in Surrey was a fundraiser for the “Tanks For Attack” fund.⁵⁴

The image contains three separate newspaper clippings. The left clipping is a baseball program for a game at Wembley Stadium on August 7th, 1943, at 2.30 p.m. It features a challenge match between the U.S. Army and Canadian Forces, and an all-professional game between the U.S. Air Force and U.S. Ground Forces. It includes a diagram of the field of play. The middle clipping is a headline from the Rural Warship Week in Chanctonbury, stating it raised £18,000 on the first day. It mentions a meeting by Misses Pyffe and a speech by Commander Trill. The right clipping is a program for a 'Wings for Victory' Grand Baseball Match on Saturday, June 12th, 1943, at 3 p.m. It is between the 8th American Army Air Force Team and the 1st Canadian General Hospital. It also mentions a silver cup will be presented to the winning team.

“Holidays At Home” were a fundraising and morale-boosting event staged by communities in Britain. A week of entertainment was held for civilians who, due to the war and gasoline rationing, were unable to travel or enjoy any kind of vacation.⁵⁵ Baseball games were almost always a part of these festivities.

On May 22, 1943 a game was held to coincide with the Spring Bank Holiday. The game was played at Giant Axe stadium, home to the Lancaster Football Club, and featured “teams representing the United States and Canada.”⁵⁶ Local attendees were promised that a Lancaster bomber would also be on hand. Those interested could purchase stamps and then place them on a bomb that would be later dropped on Germany.⁵⁷ In 1943 alone, the fundraising efforts of Canadian and American soldiers raised and estimated \$344,000USD. Adjusted for inflation, that’s over \$5.5million in 2018 Canadian dollars. The following year, service teams supported the “Salute the Soldier” campaign all over Britain. Canadian, American and British airmen took part in a softball and baseball exhibition in Darlington on May 26, 1944. Monies raised went towards the Mayor of Darlington’s War Fund.⁵⁸

⁵³ Worthing Gazette. *Baseball Match*. March 11, 1942

⁵⁴ Surrey Mirror. *Tanks For Attack*. Aug 7, 1942

⁵⁵ Bedingfield, Gary. *Baseball in World War II Europe*. Pg. 101

⁵⁶ Lancaster Guardian. *Tomorrow’s Parade*. Mar 21, 1943

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Newcastle Journal. *Darlington Baseball*. May 25, 1944

During the Second World War, the re-introduction of baseball by Canadian troops, later bolstered by their American counterparts, had a profound effect upon the sporting interests of young Britons. Many youngsters flocked to baseball games to seek autographs and handle the big bats and gloves. When American and Canadian forces left Britain at the end of 1945, they had contributed to wartime fundraising in a significant way and laid the foundations for baseball in Britain to enjoy a post-war boom.⁵⁹

Canadian troops continued to prepare for their attack on Dieppe from Shoreham, England during the summer of 1942. A mock Canadian invasion of Europe was staged there on July 13. The drilling Canadians were said to have “terrified the inhabitants of the district with the realism of their dress rehearsal.”⁶⁰ The actual assault in August would of course be terrifying for Canada. Of the 5,000 Canadian troops attacking the heavily fortified highlands above Dieppe, 3,367 were killed, wounded or taken prisoner. A casualty rate of over 80%. “They were waiting for us,” was the common response of newly captured Canadian Prisoners Of War according to the *Globe and Mail*.⁶¹ Interviewed from a German P.O.W. camp, Toronto soldier Carl Scott was happy to see the arrival of Canadian newspapers in the Y.M.C.A. aid packages sent from home. Under a sub-headline which read “Wanted Baseball News,” Scott was quoted as saying, “excuse me while I see how the Leafs are doing.”⁶² The *Belfast News-Letter* reported that the Y.M.C.A. had started sending baseball equipment into the POW camps where the Dieppe raiders were being held. The equipment was coming “especially from Canada.”⁶³



⁵⁹ Bedingfield, Gary. *Baseball in World War II Europe*. Pg. 102

⁶⁰ The *Globe and Mail*. *Report English Terrified by Realism of Canucks*. Jul 14, 1942

⁶¹ The *Globe and Mail*. *'Were Waiting For Us.'* August 22, 1942

⁶² The *Globe and Mail*. *Wanted Baseball News*. August 22, 1942

⁶³ *Belfast News-Letter*. *A Pep Talk*. Jun 12, 1942

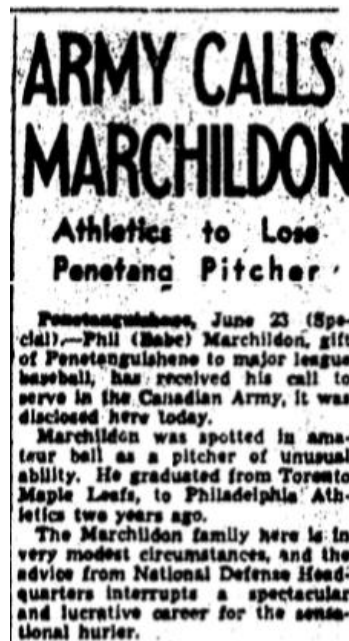
R.P. Hall, of the Royal Rifles of Canada, was imprisoned in Stalag 9C. "He reported the Canadian prisoners there were all of good heart and were playing baseball."⁶⁴ Stalags (German slang for prison camps) were a common site for



Canadian military baseball during the war. Captured soldiers often played the game under the supervision of their Nazi captors. Private Taylor wrote to his mother from Stalag 4B and told of participating in baseball games there.⁶⁵ Some Canadians, captured by the Japanese in Hong Kong, were imprisoned in Yokohama baseball stadium. The ballfield was converted into a prison camp. Japanese camps, notoriously cruel, did not feature sports of any sort.

The distinction of being the best known P.O.W. baseball player from the Second World War belongs to Phil Marchildon. Marchildon was a

Penetanguishene born pitcher who had worked his way up from the Toronto Maple Leafs to the Philadelphia Athletics. After the conclusion of the 1942 Major League Baseball season, Marchildon joined the Royal Canadian Air Force and refused an opportunity to stay in Canada, saying he did not want special treatment. Marchildon was



assigned to a seven-man Halifax bomber crew. On the crew's 26th mission, they were shot down over northern Germany on August 17, 1944. Marchildon was sent to Stalag Luft III, a prison camp for airmen:

⁶⁴ The Globe And Mail. *Prisoners in Good Heart*. Nov 29, 1943

⁶⁵ The Globe and Mail. *Baseball in Stalag*. Oct 12, 1944

“Some of the better German Prisoner Of War camps were known to have had multiple leagues operating. In Stalag Luft III, during the peak summer of 1944, there were probably 200 teams active. This is an astonishing number especially considering that the 1943-44 off season at Stalag Luft III had been considerably disrupted by the Great Escape.”⁶⁶

Marchildon did not speak often or reminisce about his time in a Nazi prison camp. While imprisoned, he was fed a diet of watered down soup and bread mixed with sawdust. He survived long enough to be liberated by British soldiers on May 2, 1945.⁶⁷ He spent nine months in captivity and remains Canadian baseball’s greatest war hero. He returned to the Majors, but displayed the nightmares and physical ailments that we would today identify as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.⁶⁸

Most Canadian soldiers continued to train and play sports in Sussex in preparation for D-Day. The Canadian troops who would successfully invade and capture the Italian port city of Ortona, left for Sicily from England on June 28, 1943. They arrived in Italy on July 10. The nature of the Italian campaign, with its mouse-holing through cities and traversing of mountain ranges made finding time for baseball more difficult. It is believed that Canadian soldiers played baseball informally in Italy, and all the evidence of baseball elsewhere serves to support this notion, but no specific game details are known. Modern Italian baseball credits the introduction of the game there to the games played by American and Canadian occupying armies. The Canadians were present in Italy for 19 months.⁶⁹

When soldiers in Italy were moved out and joined the First Canadian Army in the fight to liberate the Netherlands, they brought baseball along with them. The *Liverpool Daily Post* reported on April 2, 1945 that German resistance had cracked. There was “carnage on the roads as Germans race out of Holland.”⁷⁰ A reporter embedded with the Canadian forces wrote that “German artillery fire

⁶⁶ <http://www.efqreview.com/NewFiles/v19n2/books-baseballbarbedwire.html>

⁶⁷ Glew, Kevin. *Remembering Phil Marchildon: Canadian Pitching Ace and War Hero* <https://www.canadianbaseballnetwork.com/canadian-baseball-network-articles/remembering-phil-marchildon-canadian-pitching-ace-and-war-hero>

⁶⁸ Ibid

⁶⁹ https://www.baseball-reference.com/bullpen/History_of_baseball_in_Europe

⁷⁰ *Liverpool Daily Post. German Resistance Cracks In The West.* Apr 2, 1945

has slackened considerably, and on the west bank of the Rhine, north of Cleve, Canadian soldiers are playing baseball where just days ago German shells were falling.”⁷¹ To celebrate the German surrender, the Regina Rifles played softball near Rotterdam against a team of female Canadian Armed Forces personnel calling themselves the “Eager Beavers.”⁷² After the conclusion of the European war, a Canadian Armed Forces Softball Championship was organized in Utrecht. Some of the same teams that competed in the Canadian Army Baseball League took part. On October 3, 1945, the Queen’s Own Rifles defeated #2 Canadian General Reinforcement Unit by a score of 3-0 to take the championship.⁷³ After the Germans were defeated, the Canadian Army remained in Holland and Belgium and played a great deal of softball:

“On the continent, softball was the main game of Canadian servicemen. The (Conn Smythe) 30th Battery Bombers of the 6th Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment in Belgium set all kinds of records with 110 wins in 114 games. The 2nd Canadian Advanced Base Workshop team settled for a draw after 18 scoreless innings against an American service team in Antwerp. Baseball did also occur on the continent in the form of exhibition games. On September 6, 1945, the powerful U.S. army 29th Infantry Division team defeated the 2nd Canadian Division All-Stars, 5-0, before a crowd of 8,000 at Soesterberg Airfield in Holland. But Canadian servicemen were not limited to bringing baseball to Europe. Wing Commander G. N. Parrish, of Listowel, Ontario, introduced the game to India. “I found a dozen Canadians on the squadron willing to play,” the *Simcoe Reformer* reported on June 15, 1944, “and I persuaded even Australians and British crews” to play baseball.”⁷⁴

It is difficult to prove definitively, but a mountain of circumstantial evidence suggests that everywhere Canadian soldiers went during the Second World War, they played baseball.

The author has created an interactive map from the records of all documented Canadian military baseball games during the First and Second World

⁷¹ Liverpool Daily Post. *Baseball Now*. Apr 2, 1945

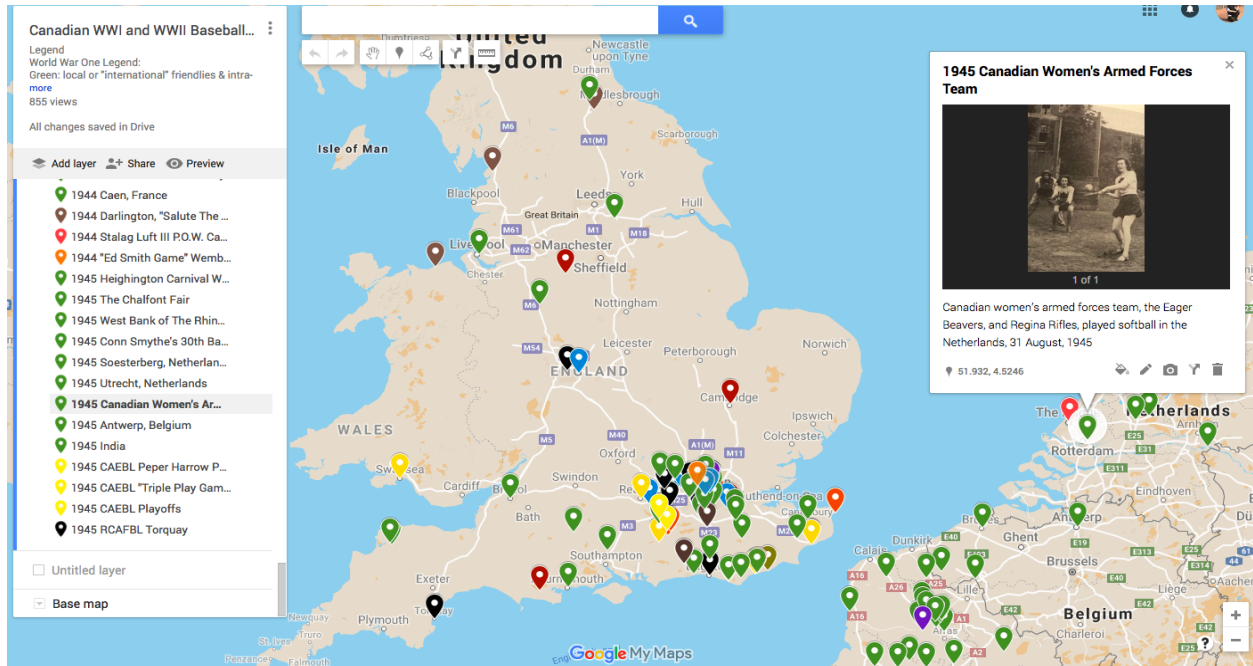
⁷² Humber, William. *Diamonds Of The North*. Pg. 10

⁷³ Bedingfield, Gary. *Baseball in Wartime*. <http://www.baseballinwartime.com/canuck.htm>

⁷⁴ Ibid.

Wars. That map may be accessed at www.hipmuseum.com/greatwarbaseball or via its original Google map at:

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=1UBe1lnU0igmiMIJ9EnfG5udulqg&usp=sharing>



The story of Canada, baseball and the Second World War would not be complete without an examination of the home front. No other organization did more to support baseball both “over there” and at home than the Toronto based Sports Service League. Toronto City Councillor and Controller Fred Hamilton, who would eventually lead the successful fight to allow sports to be played on Sunday in “Toronto the Good,” organized and was elected head of the S.S.L. Hamilton had dedicated a great deal of his public life to enhancing facilities, particularly Toronto’s parks, sports sites and playgrounds for the benefit of young people.⁷⁵ Hamilton brought together concerned parties to a meeting at the Royal York hotel on October 10, 1939. There it was decided that the S.S.L. would promote sport for the troops in barracks at home and abroad. The group was, according to the *Toronto Star*, “chomping at the bit and raring to go.”⁷⁶

⁷⁵ <https://roxtonroadparks.com/2012/11/05/who-is-fred-hamilton-now-we-know/>

⁷⁶ *Toronto Star*. *Proposal To Provide Sports Gets Impetus*. Oct 11, 1939

Within a month of its formation, the S.S.L. had been “authorized by the War Charities Act to carry on its work. The Sports Service League has already spent around \$300 in purchasing sports equipment for soldiers.”⁷⁷ The League solicited donations from the public and Canadian corporate citizens. Unlike the government sponsored purchase of equipment during the First World War, organizations like the Y.M.C.A. and citizen run efforts like the S.S.L. would be required during the Second World War to fulfill the soldierly baseball fix. Major Megaffin, sports director of Military District No. 2 in Toronto said that “the Sports Service League was the only sport organization to come to the help of the soldiers.”⁷⁸ The Sports Service League would eventually begin to hold their own charitable events with proceeds going towards the purchase of a wide variety of sports equipment which would then be shipped to soldiers overseas and in Canada. Baseball games featuring soldiers, local fastball leaguers and the occasional celebrity were held at the Canadian National Exhibition, Beaches, Acorn and Dentonia Parks in Toronto to benefit the S.S.L. On August 15, 1941, the S.S.L. employed the gimmick of the Maple Leafs playing baseball, except this time it was the famed Toronto Maple Leafs National Hockey League club playing against a team of N.H.L. all-stars on a diamond in the Beaches neighbourhood. The Maple Leafs, including Hap Day, defeated the all-stars by a score of 6-3. The S.S.L. raised \$368 through ticket sales.⁷⁹ By 1944, the S.S.L. was also sending records and movie reels overseas.⁸⁰ In July of 1944, 700 people attended an S.S.L. softball tournament held in High Park, including war casualties who were convalescing at three Toronto area hospitals.

The S.S.L.’s most successful sports equipment fundraiser happened on November 3, 1944 when 6,000 competitors descended on Maple Leaf Gardens in Toronto for “Monster Bingo.”⁸¹ The event, the S.S.L.’s last major fundraiser, raised over \$600 in a few hours. The last donation from the Sports Service League was

⁷⁷ Toronto Star. *Sports Service League*. Oct 6, 1939

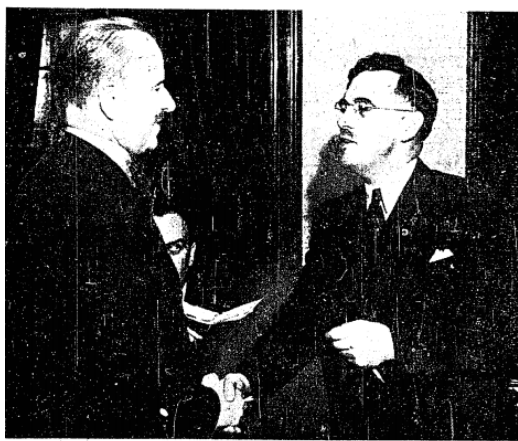
⁷⁸ Toronto Star. *Proposal To Provide Sports Gets Impetus*. Oct 11, 1939

⁷⁹ Toronto Star. *Hockey Stars Play Ball And Aid Charity Again*. Aug 15, 1942

⁸⁰ Toronto Star. *Records For Troops Overseas*. Mar 6, 1944

⁸¹ Toronto Star. *Monster Bingo – Sports Service League*. Nov 2, 1944

made on May 1, 1945 when Fred Hamilton presented a cheque for \$6,000 to help build a new War Amputations building in Toronto.⁸²



A CHEQUE for \$6,000 toward the War Amputations buildings fund was presented by the Sports Service League through Fred Hamilton, president, to H. S. Baxter, Dominion secretary of the Amps clubs, at a banquet in the Royal York hotel Tuesday night.

PROPOSAL TO PROVIDE SPORT GETS IMPETUS

Assistance Already Given by Service League Praised By Major Megaffin

HAMILTON IS HEAD

When executives of the Sports Service League called a meeting in the Royal York last evening to promote sport for the troops in barracks at the Exhibition grounds, they little anticipated that they would meet such a representative group who were "champing on the bit and vying to go".

Major Megaffin, sports director of Military District No. 2, said that the Sports Service League was the only sport organization to come to the help of the soldiers. Sports at the camp yesterday were due entirely to its assistance, he added.

A motion was passed that the president of the S.S.L., Con. Fred Hamilton, represent the league at a meeting of the citizens' committee tonight to explain the complete setup.

A meeting of the executive will take place in the Royal York on Thursday evening to hear Con. Hamilton's report.

Other officers of the Sports Service League are: Honorary president, Col. R. H. Greer, Tom Flanagan, John DeGruy, vice-president, John J. Carrocan; second vice-president, Ernie E. Ray; third vice-president, Miss Rosey Alkins; secretary, Dr. E. B. Byle; and recording secretary, Miss Peggy Conley.

HOCKEY STARS PLAY BALL AND AID CHARITY AGAIN

Maple Leafs Defeat All-Star Aggregation by 6-3 Score —For S.S.L.

TIP TOPS PLAY, TOO

Toronto football fans turned out in force again last night in support of the Beaches Major Football League's program in aid of the Sports Service League. The result of the evening's entertainment saw the Toronto Maple Leafs' hockey team outscore the N.H.L. All-Stars 6 to 3. Tip Tops trimmed Peoples 8 to 6, and the Sports Service League collected \$200.

The All-Star-Leaf game was a surprisingly well-played contest, in which the ice stars battled through five innings with the score tied at 2-2 before the Toronto representatives forged to the front. With two runs in each of the last two frames, The Maple Leaf crew, led by Coach Nap Day, impaled All-Star Grant to pitch for them and the "Great One" showed plenty of his old stuff in outpitching "Pea-see" Summerhill by a slim margin. Leafs got but eight hits off Summerhill to nine off Grant, but the latter was strong in the pinches.

Tip Tops were just plain too good for a weakened Peoples team, the latter being forced to play short-handed through players not being able to get off work.

MAHERS BLANK MORSE IN LIGHT-HITTING TILT

George Pzyer Limits Losers to Four Hits, Strikes Out Seven

The leading Maher squad of the Earlscourt Park Senior Baseball Club...

British Home Children, often traumatically separated from their families, and in many cases harshly treated in Canada, would sometimes mention baseball in their correspondence home. British newspapers would publish positive excerpts from these letters. The *Middlesbrough Daily Gazette* often used the introduction of Home Children to local sports as a sign of successful integration. "John Whenray of 47 Thornfield Road, is in Winnipeg" wrote the *Gazette*. "John

Canadian Thrills For Evacuees

SOME of the Middlesbrough children who have been evacuated to Canada are meeting millionaires, bankers and "Mounties," and, judging by the letters which are reaching home, they are generally having a rollicking time in a heat wave.

Here is a typical letter from John Whenray, of 47, Thornfield-road, Middlesbrough, who attended St. Mary's College, and who is with Aileen Dickenson, also of Thornfield-road, and who attended Linthorpe Schools. They are at Winnipeg, and John writes to his parents as follows:—

for the entire Community

BINNS LTD; M

Also at Sunderland, Darlington, West

know a banker, a Mountie, and a city "cop." I have been given eight shillings, a baseball bat, two ice hockey pucks, and a baseball.

Another Tees-side child to reach Canada is Thelma Burton, aged 12, whose parents live at 6, Exeter-road, Middlesbrough. They have just received a letter from her, after anxiously waiting since July 10.

Member Of "M.C." Children's Corner Club In Winnipeg

Mr. C. L. Crawshaw, of 96, Woodland Gardens, Isleworth, writes to the Editor:—

"Sir,—I thought your readers might be interested to hear that the first party of seavacuees from this borough are settling down in their new homes. I have heard from my son (aged 11) that he is at Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, and has started school. He seems to have been very fortunate in his 'foster parents,' since, from his and their letters, he is having a good time and is busy learning baseball and other Canadian games. Having been a

writes that he has been given eight shillings, a baseball bat, two ice hockey pucks and a baseball."⁸³ The *Middlesex Chronicle* reported that an 11 year old boy was very fortunate to be learning baseball and other Canadian games.⁸⁴ The

⁸² Toronto Star. *A Cheque For \$6000*. May 1, 1945

⁸³ Middlesbrough Daily Gazette. *Canadian Thrills For Evacuees*.

⁸⁴ Middlesex Chronicle. *Children's Corner Club in Winnipeg*. Oct 12, 1940

Newcastle Journal reported that recently evacuated children, “mostly orphans,” (in reality, only 2% of 100,000 Home Children were orphaned), were enjoying life in the new world and receiving baseball gear. “Their foster parents provide everything-board, clothes, education, pocket-money, music lessons, skates and baseball equipment.”⁸⁵

One of the better known Canadian baseball stories during the Second World War is the tragedy of the Vancouver Asahi. The Asahi were a successful amateur team dating back to 1914. Because they chose to play baseball, a sport deemed to be ‘Caucasian’ by local consensus, they faced racism long before Canada went to war with Japan. Managers from opposing teams, and even the *Vancouver Sun* and *Daily Province* newspapers, would use terms like “Japs,” “Nips” and “Little Brown Men” when referring to Asahi players. On February 23, 1942, just 12 weeks after the attack on Pearl Harbour, the federal government of William Lyon Mackenzie King bent to pressure based on jingoism more than merit and prepared to lock up its own citizens without cause.

Ill will towards Japanese Canadians was fermented by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police who harassed and mistreated Japanese civilians and business owners. False rumours spread that Japanese radio stations were inciting rebellion. Some B.C. politicians spoke of Japanese Canadians with an irrational rage. “In the way the Nazis would have spoken about the Jewish Germans, when they spoke I felt the physical measure of evil,” said Canadian diplomat Escott Reid.⁸⁶ The government used the War Measures Act to order the imprisonment of Japanese Canadians residing within 160 kms of the Pacific Coast. The Asahi team was broken up, its members sent to various prison camps. Over 20,000 men, women and children were imprisoned in the rural British Columbia interior. 75% of those jailed were Canadian citizens, none of whom posed any real threat to Canada or her war effort. Their homes and businesses were stolen and sold for which the owners received nothing.⁸⁷ In 1946, nearly 4,000 of the imprisoned Japanese Canadians were forcibly deported to a bombed-out Japan. 1,300 of the deportees

⁸⁵ Newcastle Journal. *Everything Free*. Oct 28, 1941

⁸⁶ Yarhi, Eli. *Japanese Internment*. www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/japanese-internment-banished-and-beyond-tears-feature/

⁸⁷ Pellerin, Christopher. Yarhi, Eli. *Vancouver Asahi*. www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/vancouver-asahi/

were children under the age of 16 who had been born in Canada.⁸⁸ The senseless act of nativism was the subject of a 1988 formal apology and subsequent compensation for survivors by the Government of Canada.



During the period of imprisonment, many of the Asahi and their fans brought baseball equipment with them to the interior. Asahi veterans formed teams, built baseball diamonds and played baseball with fellow prisoners and guards.⁸⁹ Teams from different prison camps in the Slocan Valley were eventually allowed to play against each other, their fans allowed to travel between camps to cheer them on. In 1943, a league was formed for the baseball teams being kept in prison camps near each other. The Lemon Creek All-Stars, coached by Asahi pitcher Ty Suga, won what is likely Canada's only Internment World Series. One team, imprisoned near Lillooet and coached by Asahi infielder Kay Kaminishi, was allowed to play baseball against residents of the nearby town who were bussed

⁸⁸ Yarhi, Eli. *Japanese Internment*. www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/japanese-internment-banished-and-beyond-tears-feature/

⁸⁹ Pellerin, Christopher. Yarhi, Eli. *Vancouver Asahi*. www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/vancouver-asahi/

into the prison camp.⁹⁰ Highlighting the short sighted and irrational nature of the internment policy was the story of Toru Iwaasa. An amateur ball player of Japanese descent, Toru joined the Canadian Army Engineers at Lethbridge on June 10, 1941. During the time that his own government was imprisoning Japanese Canadians at home, Toru loyally and ably served Canada in the U.K. and Europe until February of 1946.

From shameful to inspiring, our story of Canadian baseball on the home front takes a positive turn with the tale of the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League. Chewing gum magnate and Chicago Cubs owner Philip Wrigley thought an all-female softball league would be a profitable endeavour at a time when so many ball players had become soldiers and so many women had stepped up to fill the factories that kept the war machine humming. After scouting trips to Ontario and Saskatchewan, the A.A.G.P.B.L. featured a good deal of Canadian content. In total 64 women, more than 10 percent of the participants, hailed from Canada.⁹¹ Margaret Callaghan, Helen Callaghan, Evelyn “Evie” Wawryshyn, Olive Little, Helen Nicol Fox and Dorothy Hunter were some of the Canadian stars of the league. When Columbia Pictures Corporation decided to produce a fictionalized version of the A.A.G.P.B.L. for the big screen, one Canadian woman stood out as the basis for the main character.

Mary ‘Bonnie’ Baker of Regina, Saskatchewan was everything Philip Wrigley could have hoped for in a star for his new league. She modeled on the side, represented the league on the popular television show *What’s My Line*, and was a rugged catcher who once nearly came to blows with fellow Canadian Gladys “Terrie” Davis over a strike call. “[Baker], as much as any other player,” wrote historian William Humber, “inspired the composite character played by Geena Davis in *A League Of Their Own*.”⁹² “She was a trailblazer [who] showed that women were capable of being tough and being professional athletes.”⁹³ Baker was often used in publicity photographs for the league. In 1945, she even made the cover of Life magazine.⁹⁴

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ <http://baseballhalloffame.ca/inductees/aagbpl>

⁹² Humber, William. *Diamonds Of The North*. Pg. 80

⁹³ Huck, Nichole. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatchewan/regina-ball-player-helped-inspire-geena-davis-character-in-a-league-of-their-own-1.3182928>

⁹⁴ Ibid.



Because of the era in which she lived, Baker often had to deal with her baseball skills being overshadowed by her appearance. Reporters nicknamed her “Pretty Bonnie Baker.” Baker was more than just a pretty face. She played in more games in the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League than any other player and even broke into the leagues all-male managerial corps for one season with the Kalamazoo Lassies in 1950.⁹⁵ In August of 2015, the city of Regina honoured Baker with a painted mural in Central Park. Previous to her stardom in the States, Baker played regularly in Regina with the Army and Navy Store Bombers. Baker led the A&N Bombers to the Saskatchewan Softball Championship in 1941.⁹⁶

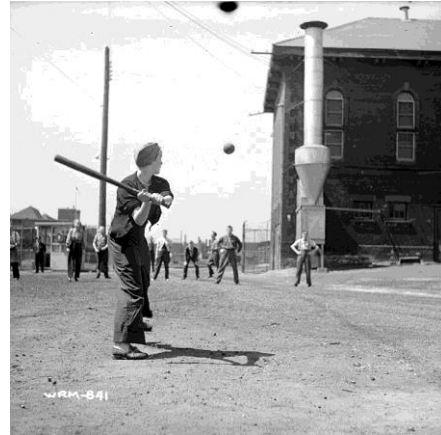
Despite her high profile, magazine covers and inspired Hollywood depiction, Bonnie Baker may not be the most famous baseball playing female on Canada’s home front during the Second World War. She most certainly did not inspire the most well-known fictional character. Both of those distinctions belong to Veronica Foster of Toronto. Foster is often incorrectly referred to as the ‘Canadian Rosie The Riveter.’ In fact, ‘Rosie’ is the American Veronica Foster. As men left the factories to fight on the front lines, women were recruited to take their place and begin turning out the ships, aircraft, artillery shells and machine guns that would eventually turn the tide against the Nazis.⁹⁷ Foster operated a lathe at the John Inglis Co. Ltd. plant in what is today Liberty Village in Toronto. She manufactured Bren machine guns. These weapons were essential to Canada’s

⁹⁵ Humber, William. *Diamonds Of The North*. Pg. 80

⁹⁶ Huck, Nichole. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatchewan/regina-ball-player-helped-inspire-geena-davis-character-in-a-league-of-their-own-1.3182928>

⁹⁷ Granatstein, Jack. *Our Rosie the Riveter in 100 Photos That Changed Canada*. Pg. 91

war effort. Each infantry platoon of thirty men had three Brens and Inglis turned out thousands of them.⁹⁸ In May of 1941, the National Film Board visited the Inglis factory for the purposes of making propaganda images to inspire women to help with the war effort. Foster was photographed at her lathe, cigarette dangling



from her lips, with her hair held up in a tightly knotted bandana. The photo became famous during the war and was distributed all over Canada. It was the indispensable image in the campaign of influence which eventually brought 250,000 women into the war machine work force.

Veronica became known as 'Ronnie The Bren Gun Girl' and her propaganda photo made her a celebrity. As the perfect blend of femininity and female liberation, Ronnie became the subject of public infatuation, so much so that the United States decided to create its own female war icon. Ronnie's head scarf and can-do attitude was transferred to the well-known American propaganda image of "Rosie the Riveter."⁹⁹ A second round of propaganda photos featured Foster outdoors, playing her 'favourite' game, baseball. The best known image of the set features 'Ronnie,' in her iconic coveralls and bandana, about to connect with an arcing pitch hurled her way by a male member of the Inglis crew. The use of baseball as a way to illustrate an all-Canadian girl speaks to the continuing presence of baseball in Canadian life and its lingering status as the National Game from just one war earlier.

Some of the venues which hosted Canada's national game during the First World War had been bombed by the Nazis during their attacks on Britain. Stamford Bridge, home to the first ever baseball game in Europe to feature a

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Campbell, Moira. <http://www.canadashistory.ca/explore/military-war/the-bren-gun-girl>

“Team Canada,” and one of the sites of the LIBL during the Second World War, was left with an unexploded bomb in the stands. Chelsea football club manager Billy Birrell defused it himself.¹⁰⁰ Highbury stadium, home to both the Arsenal football club and Canadian teams in the Anglo-American Baseball League of 1918, was so badly damaged that it could no longer be used for football or baseball games. Even Wembley Stadium was hit and damaged by bombs in 1944. Yet, it was a baseball stadium in Toronto which contributed most to the Second World War effort, giving refuge to an entire exiled air force.

Maple Leaf Stadium was built in 1926 along Lake Shore Boulevard in order to serve as a mainland home for the previously island dwelling Toronto Maple Leafs baseball club. The stadium hosted an assortment of wartime fundraising events, from film screenings, to ‘follies’ shows, to boxing matches and baseball games. In July of 1942, 15,000 people turned out to see a softball game between the Toronto Tip Tops and Detroit Briggs Bombers. That same month, an amateur baseball tournament featuring an RCAF team from Camp Borden raised even more money for the British War Veterans Fund. The stadium’s centre field wall was separated from Lake Ontario by only about 230 metres of open, undeveloped grassland. The Toronto Flying Club (today’s Billy Bishop Airport) stood another 130 metres across a narrow channel on Toronto Island. The open space between the stadium and the airfield would prove invaluable to a small Scandinavian



nation that was about to encounter the blitzkrieg. After the fall of Norway to the Nazis in June of 1940, General Ruge of the Norwegian Army Air Force ordered the evacuation of as many air force personnel as possible. Ideally, they were to take as many aircraft and materiel as they could to a European location. With the fall of France and Nazi occupation of Norway, this became impossible. No aircraft

¹⁰⁰ Whitlock, Flint. *Bombed Stadiums of Britain*.

<http://warfarehistorynetwork.com/daily/wwii/sports-during-world-war-ii/>

were smuggled out, but 120 members of the NAAF escaped to Britain and awaited further instruction. Negotiations between the governments of Canada and Norway concluded on September 7, 1940. The 120 NAAF officers and men would come to Toronto, make use of the Toronto Flying Club on Toronto Island and be housed in the open field beyond the centre field wall at Maple Leaf Stadium. Eventually, 17 buildings were constructed around, and in some cases touching, the outfield walls of the stadium. The Toronto Flying Club turned over its airport and training aircraft to the Norwegian authorities. The Norwegian airmen lived in the shadow of the ballpark in an area which is still known as “Little Norway.” From there, the NAAF concocted a plan to acquire aircraft. Norway had purchased combat planes from the United States before the war. The planes had not yet been delivered. Technically, those planes now belonged to the occupying German forces. The United States covertly sent \$20 million dollars worth of those airplanes to the airport next to Maple Leaf Stadium. The planes consisted of Fairchild PT-19 elementary trainers, Curtiss fighters, Douglas attack bombers and Northrop patrol seaplanes. The NAAF then launched a “Wings For Norway” fundraising campaign, which included events and theme-nights at Maple Leafs games designed to draw donations from baseball fans. The campaign raised an additional \$400,000. Eventually, the airmen of Maple Leaf Stadium flew to Iceland where they patrolled the North Atlantic for the remainder of the war. These same Norwegian flyers then escorted and assisted Canadian troops during the Dieppe raid, the Normandy landings and the liberation of Holland.¹⁰¹

Some Canadians spent five years in the UK in training, some married, many more had partners and some 22,000 children were born to Canadian fathers. Baseball was present through it all. On the European continent, as Canadian armies pushed forward through Italy and the Netherlands, baseball games were played. Records are scarce of baseball being played in India and Hong Kong, in Merchant Marine shipyards or on the airfields of the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan. Yet given the overwhelming amount of baseball played by enlisted men in the better documented theatres of war, including in captivity, it is very likely that baseball was played everywhere the Canadians went during the Second World War. Upon returning to Canada, many soldiers spoke fondly of the baseball

¹⁰¹ Ward, Geoff. *Little Norway*. <https://www.wwiinorge.com/notes/little-norway/>

games they played, and of course, continued watching and playing the game back home.¹⁰²

Much as it was during the First World War, baseball was a necessary bulwark against the horrors of war and a much needed distraction from the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder which affected every soldier in some way large or small. Baseball served as a morale booster, a spectacle for idle or healing soldiers and a way for commanding officers to maintain disciplined and contented soldiers. Canadian citizens unjustly interred, played the game freely and with dignity, even though their own government sought to deny them both freedom and pride. Women who were proving their merit and earning equality on the factory floor were doing the same at the hot corner and in the batter's box. The sustained success of baseball as a military fundraiser is perhaps unmatched in the history of the Canadian Forces. Even in the realm of propaganda, where images were used to inspire Canadians to give of their bodies or bank accounts for the war effort, Ronnie the Bren Gun Girl played baseball. In those harrowing and dangerous days,¹⁰³ Canadians from coast to coast to coast, and servicemen who stood a deep line-drive away from European battle fields, played baseball. The story of Canadian baseball in the Second World War is truly second to none.

¹⁰² Griffin, Kelly Anne. *From Humble Beginnings to Making History in Montreal*. <https://thediscoverblog.com/2018/03/20/from-humble-beginnings-to-making-history-in-montreal/>

¹⁰³ Maker, John. *Sports and War – A Winning Combination*. Pg. 2

The actual warfare of the Second World War is of course far separated from the recreational and supportive role baseball played during the conflict. Notable Canadian baseball players who died so that others might be free.¹⁰⁴

<u>Name</u>	<u>Experience</u>	<u>Service</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Date</u>
Don Stewart	Minor Leagues	Army	ETO	03/13/41
Liston Anderson	Amateur	Air Force	ETO	07/30/43
George Atkinson	Amateur	Army	MTO	08/04/43
Roger Carroll	Amateur	Army	ETO	03/08/45
George Dean	Amateur	Air Force	ETO	02/07/44
Thornton Doig	Amateur	Army	ETO	06/21/45
Robert Dubeau	Amateur	Air Force	ETO	01/14/45
Harold German	Amateur	Air Force	ETO	10/03/43
Herman Jonasson	Amateur	Air Force	ETO	02/20/44
Arthur Judges	Amateur	Army	ETO	12/11/44
Mike Moroz	Amateur	Army	ETO	08/09/44
Don Norton	Amateur	Air Force	ETO	06/08/44
Con Radocy	Amateur	Army	ETO	07/28/44
Stan Reid	Amateur	Air Force	ETO	03/05/45
Don Ross	Amateur	Air Force	ETO	03/05/45
Basil Smith	Amateur	Army	MTO	09/13/44
Albin Sumara	Amateur	Army	ETO	11/01/44
Charles Weatherby	Amateur	Air Force	ETO	04/11/44
Mike Zima	Amateur	Army	ETO	08/19/42

E(M)TO: European (Mediterranean) Theatre of Operations

¹⁰⁴ Bedingfield, Gary. *Baseball in Wartime*. <http://www.baseballinwartime.com/canuck.htm>

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Any errors or oversights are entirely my fault. Your corrections are encouraged at stephendame@gmail.com.

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