

VIMY REVEILLE

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My last year as president of the Society for the Study of Architecture in Canada/Société pour l'étude de l'architecture au Canada overlapped with the ninetieth anniversary of the Battle of Vimy Ridge (9 April, 1917). To mark that solemn occasion I conceived the idea of guest editing an entire issue of the Society's *Journal* devoted to the Vimy Memorial. I am grateful to Luc Noppen and his editorial staff for encouraging the idea, and for publishing it in good time for the ninetieth anniversary of the armistice that ended the First World War on 11 November, 1918.

Apart from celebrating in words and images two special anniversaries and the recent painstaking restoration of the monument at Vimy (figs. 1 – 3), my motivation behind this commemorative issue is to bridge what I see as an artificial divide separating scholarship on World War I monuments. Each country engaged in that Great War seems to have celebrated its own chosen battles, monuments, and memorials to the missing. Rarely, however, do nationals cross the line into other nationals' research fields – as if those fields were somehow a no man's land full of unexploded scholarly ordnance. This state of affairs contradicts the spirit of camaraderie that characterized the soldiers engaged in the conflict, and that sometimes extended to fraternisation with the enemy. With timely advice from Julie Harris, the SÉAC/SSAC's former Treasurer, I therefore invited an international and diverse spectrum of contributors. (As it turned out all six, including myself, happen to have some association past or present with Queen's University.) In my

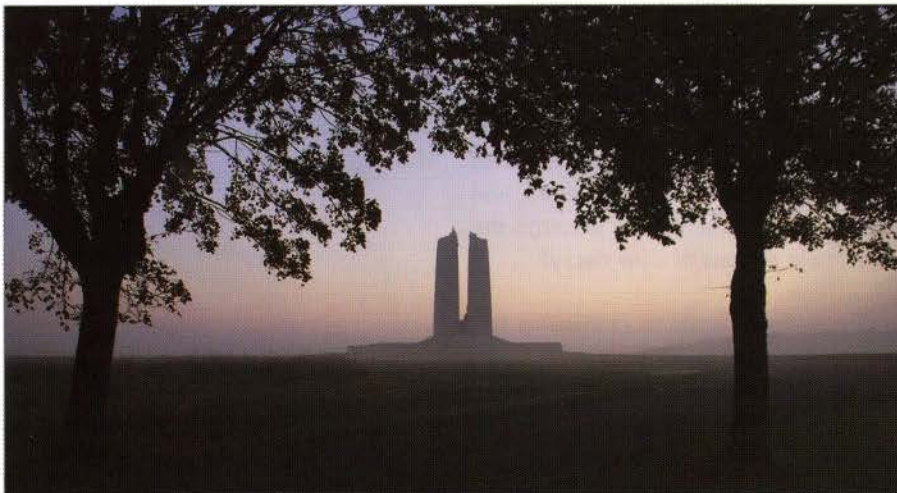


FIG. 1. THE RESTORED VIMY MEMORIAL: WALTER ALLWARD'S MONUMENT ONCE AGAIN RISING UNBLEMISHED FROM THE BROODING LANDSCAPE OF VIMY RIDGE. | BLAIR KETCHESON, FOR PHILLIPS FAREVAAG SMALLENBERG, JULY 2007.



FIG. 2. PART OF THE STATUE OF PEACE BEING LIFTED OFF THE WEST TOWER, PRIOR TO REALIGNMENT AND REINSTATEMENT. | PHILIPPE FRUTIER, ALTIMAGE, FOR VETERANS AFFAIRS CANADA, OCTOBER 2006.



FIG. 3. WALTER ALLWARD, CANADA (BORSTAD CATALOGUE #539), 1936. | LANE BORSTAD.

postscript – a kind of taps or last post to balance this introductory reveille – I focus on certain sculptural elements that summarize for me the poignant message the preceding articles convey.

Gavin Stamp opens the discussion by examining the work of the Imperial War Graves Commission, the topic of his recent book on the Thiepval Memorial, discussed at the end in Joan Coutu’s review of the monograph. But in this issue he expands his scope by comparing IWGC cemeteries with their French, German, and Canadian counterparts. Lane Borstad’s article illuminates the design process behind Walter Allward’s Vimy Monument. A careful analysis of Allward’s previous war memorials and his personal, deeply-felt preparatory drawings adds new lustre to the self-styled architect/sculptor’s competition-winning solution for Vimy. The political vicissitudes and practical problems that beset the subsequent construction of the monument at Vimy form the subject of Jacqueline Hucker’s text. She furthermore contextualizes Allward by placing him alongside other modernists like Rodin, Nietzsche, and the stage designer Edward Gordon Craig. Restoration architect Julian S. Smith brings a

special perspective to Vimy in the last article. Not only does he understand intimately the strengths and weaknesses of the monument, having studied its deterioration, but he grasps the depth of Allward’s vision that prevailed unaltered from beginning to end and permeated even the minutest details. One general observation links the contributors: like a foreboding chant from ancient Greek tragedy, each raises his or her voice in chorus. How, they repeatedly ask, can we keep alive the prophetic warning message of World War I, and of Vimy in particular, when memories fade with the passing of the last living veterans, and the monuments themselves undergo the irreversible process of slow decay?

In conclusion I wish to commend the contributors for their dedication and their patience with my editorial suggestions. I also wish to acknowledge the financial support of the Queen’s Research Chairs Programme, which made possible the

colour illustration of this issue. Regarding access to the Allward Fonds, several of the contributors and I owe a debt of gratitude to Queen’s University Archives. Finally, with respect to preparing the illustrations for publication, I would like to thank Heather McArthur of Julian Smith Architects and Dr. Peter Coffman, Assistant Editor of the *SÉAC/SSAC Journal*.