

pal, Fred H., on fighters had paid the supreme sacrifice on Saturday — one gets calloused in this business, death being so commonplace — still, the opportunity is not given to every generation to lay down their lives for such an all embracing cause and so we carry on” . . . Joe Ready, pilot officer (September 1940)

BY WAYNE YOUNG

KENSINGTON — When a young pilot from Kensington, P.E.I. boarded a cattle boat bound for Great Britain in the spring of 1939, it would be the last time he would see the native land and people he loved.

Six months after recording the above excerpt in his diary, Officer Pilot Joe Ready would lay down his own life in the line of duty.

And although he never had the chance to return to his home, a kindly family in Cambridge, Britain provided him with the next best thing — a refuge steeped with affection and hospitality which came to be known as Little Kensington.

Forty years later, that family is still fondly remembered by the Island soldiers who found a “home away from home” there. So it’s not surprising a visit to this province by a member of the family brings a reminder of at least one pleasant side of an otherwise horrible war.

OPENED THEIR HOME

It was Margaret Harrold’s parents, the late Florence and Fred Harrold, who opened their home to the Island soldiers after their own son (the Fred H. referred to in earlier in this story), and his best friend Officer Ready, became victims of the war.

After their son’s death, the Harrolds showered the Kensington boy with every affection and hospitality. But on April 18, 1941 they were grieved to learn the war, too, had claimed their Island guest.

Having lost their only son and the young man they had come to love as a son, the Harrolds’ might well have become disillusioned with the war. But not so. They resolved to open their home to all the other boys from Kensington, P.E.I. A new chapter in their lives had begun and over the next several years, many servicemen from the Island province came to know their hospitality and warmth.

‘VERY SPECIAL PERSON’

“My brother was a very special person to us,” Ms. Harrold said in a recent interview. “For awhile we thought mother would never be the same but Joe Ready was there and he helped so much . . . really, the boys from P.E.I. and Kensington really helped save my mom, they treated her as a mother and she treated them as her sons.”

At the time a nursing sister in the Royal Air Force, Ms. Harrold had come to know Officer Ready on several occasions when he accompanied her brother to their home in Cambridge, England.

“He had a great sense of humor, a great sense of fun,” she recalled. “It always struck me that he was a genuinely good person . . . he was so wonderful.”

By a special dispensation, Officer Ready’s body was laid to rest alongside his friends in Cherry Hill Cemetery, Cambridge, En-



MARGARET Harrold, LEFT, a British nurse spending a week on Prince Edward Island, reviews some old photographs with a close friend, Elizabeth Johnson, during a visit to Kensington. Ms. Harrold recalls when her parents opened

their home in Cambridge, Britain to the young Island soldiers during the Second World War. For this hospitality and affection towards the soldiers, their home came to be known as Little Kensington. (26-8-87-5-3)



YEARS EARLIER, Margaret Harrold and her mother, Florence, paid frequent visits to the graves of her brother, Fred, and Joe Ready, a pilot from Kensington, P.E.I., who had grown close to the family. The friends, one Catholic and one Protestant, were allowed to be bur-

ied side by side in Cherry Hill Cemetery, Cambridge, only when a special dispensation was arranged by a Kensington clergyman, Capt. Reggie MacDonald. They were both killed in the line of duty during the Second World War.

gland. The service was conducted in the protestant cemetery by Fr. MacDonald, a Roman Catholic chaplain and Officer Ready’s hometown pastor.

ONLY P.E.I. VISIT

In 1968, Mr. and Mrs. Harrold made their only visit to Prince Edward Island and their daughter says it was a highlight of their lives.

“That was the most marvellous thing that ever happened to my parents,” she said. “It was a dream they had had for years, but they never really thought it would come true . . . it really was magical.”

The Harrolds were honored by the lieutenant-governor, and pre-

mier of the day and everywhere they went, the hospitality they had shown to the soldiers years before was returned by many Islanders who remembered their caring ways.

Accompanied on her week-long visit to Prince Edward Island by two nursing friends, Pauline Solberg and Amy Mustill, Ms. Harrold said she is being received with the same hospitality this time around. They are staying with Evelyn Warren in Margate.

“I feel part of the Island,” she said. “Everyone that has met me has helped restore my faith in human nature through their genuine caring . . . it comes straight from the heart.”

15