

# Wartime Remembrance

## A Hooked Tribute to Honor and Glory

by Frances Ennis



A group of women from Newfoundland have found a unique way to remember the events of July 1, 1916. These women, who are members of the Holy Heart of Mary Alumnae Choir, designed and hooked rugs that tell the story of the soldiers of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment.

On that day—the first day of the Battle of the Somme in France—the Regiment was part of a huge allied offensive to break through German lines near the French villages of Beaumont and Hamel. As the soldiers emerged from behind their lines, they ran directly into enemy fire. Of the 881 men who fought that battle, only 68 answered roll call the next day.

This tragic loss, which is said to have occurred within a 30-minute period, was devastating for those who survived. As the news trickled home to the families, this small island colony was wrapped in grief. Few were untouched by the tragedy.

### *A Tribute to My Grandfather*

24" x 35", #6- to 8-cut wool on primitive burlap. Designed and hooked by Gerri Fleming, Salmonizer Line, Newfoundland, 2007.

LEO TERRY, GERRI FLEMING'S GRANDFATHER, JOINED THE ROYAL NEWFOUNDLAND REGIMENT November 1, 1915, at age 18 and was almost immediately deployed to Europe. The strong facial features in *A Tribute to My Grandfather* offers a striking resemblance between grandfather and granddaughter.

ANNE MARIE MURPHY





## Hooking History

The project started in March 2007 with choir members Frances Ennis, Barbara O'Keefe, and Anne Marie Murphy. It was intended to be an opportunity for others to learn a new skill and, at the same time, contribute to the choir's fundraising efforts for a trip to Europe where they are scheduled to sing at a commemorative ceremony in Beaumont-Hamel later this year.

One of the places they will visit during their trip is called No Man's Land, the only commemorative site in France that has maintained the original trenches. Two of the women, Janet Lacey and Glenda Bursey (*No Man's Land*) created a vivid image of two soldiers crawling out of the trenches and moving onto the battlefield. Their rug portrays the hardships and obstacles soldiers had to overcome and celebrates the bravery with which the soldiers supported each other.

Once the call went out for artists who were interested in capturing the Regiment's story in wool, it quickly became apparent that the project would become much bigger than anticipated. Thirty-four women became actively involved in hook-

## What a March That Was

40" x 28", #6- to 8-cut wool on primitive burlap. Designed and hooked by Frances Ennis, St. John's, and Anne Marie Murphy, St. John's, Newfoundland, 2007.

**I**N A LETTER WRITTEN TO HIS FAMILY IN JULY 1916, the young soldier Howard Morry said: "After the 1st of July, about the 6th I think, we left for a rest and what a march that was. All our chums gone. We were just dragging along the road when Sergeant Major Hicks brought a couple of accordions and put one in front and one in the rear. They started up *The Banks of Newfoundland* and we all cheered right up."

These words, recounted in the video *I Remain, Your Loving Son*, resonated with Anne Marie Murphy and Frances Ennis. It prompted them to model and adapt an image from a Veteran's Affairs Canada poster for their rug, which they named *What a March That Was*.

ing 25 rugs. Many women, like Anne LeMessurier Lilly (*Hope for the Wounded*), had a direct family connection to the losses. Her mother's uncle was killed in October 1916 and her father's father was badly wounded in the Battle of the Somme.

The women began their tribute with an evening session where the women were given an overview of the rug hooking process and viewed *I Remain, Your Lov-*

*ing Son*, a locally produced documentary based on letters and memoirs between members of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment and their families and friends back home. A week later, the women participated in a daylong workshop that drew on their response to the video, their individual research, and personal family artifacts to create ideas for their rugs and transfer them to burlap.





### *A View of Peace*

19" x 32", 3-ply yarn and #6-cut fabric on primitive burlap.

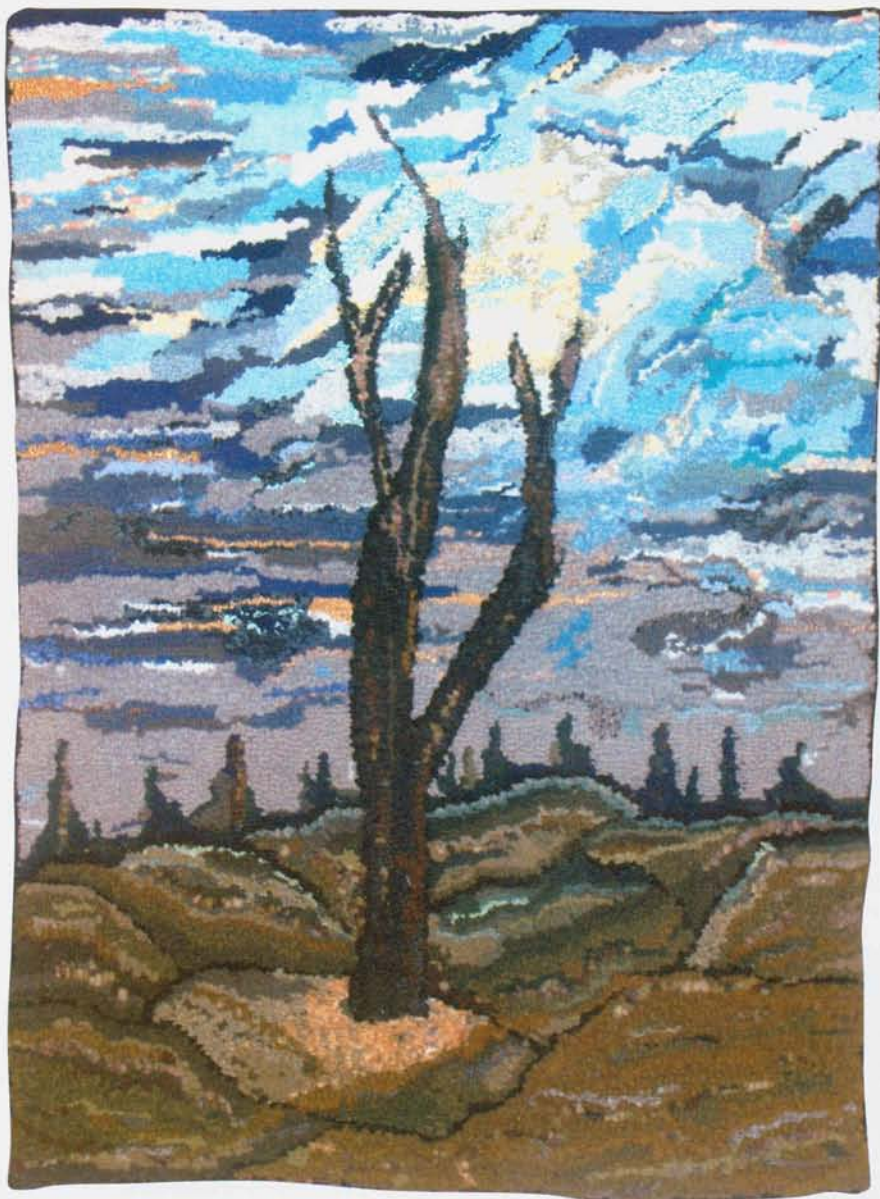
Designed and hooked by Elizabeth (Duggan) Matthews,  
Goulds, Newfoundland 2007.

ELIZABETH WROTE THIS PARAGRAPH TO EXPLAIN THE INSPIRATION behind the creation of her rug: "From the moment young men left their homes to fight in the Great War, one could almost hear a collective prayer for peace and the safe return of loved ones. Families left behind couldn't even imagine the hardship their soldiers would face in that far-away place. Many would feel powerless and the only way in which they could help was to offer a prayer. Some prayers were answered...many were not."

### Rugs hooked by members of the Holy Heart of Mary Alumnae Choir

- *A View of Peace* by Elizabeth (Duggan) Matthews
- *Hope for the Wounded* by Anne LeMessurier Lilly
- *A Tribute to My Grandfather* by Gerri Fleming
- *No Man's Land* by Janet Lacey and Glenda Bursey
- *The Danger Tree* by Noreen Grace
- *The Danger Tree* by Jo-Ann Clarke, Madonna Cole, and Donna Evans
- *Known Unto God* by Anne Marie Murphy
- *The Caribou* by Maxine Ennis
- *Forget Me Not* by Anne Donnelly
- *Regimental Colours* by Anne Marie Whelan
- *Royal Newfoundland Regiment Badge* by Bridget Woodrow
- *Regiment Cap Badge WWI* by Geraldine Sinnott
- *Victory Medal* by Helen Handrigan
- *Honour* by Marilyn Cameron, Barbara O'Keefe, and Sheila Power
- *Sable Chief* by Sheila Feaver and Pat Edney
- *Lest We Forget* by Sandy Nixon
- *Poppies* by Sheila Hynes
- *Untitled* by Moya O'Neill and Brenda Wolfe
- *Untitled* by Patsy Reddy, Joan Dawe, Helen St. Croix, Marguerite Peddigrew
- *A Pair of Grey Socks* by Brenda Wolfe and Moya O'Neill
- *Remember Me to the Little Ones* by Michelle Sullivan
- *My Boy* by Sheila Feaver and Diane MacDonald
- *My Mother* by Sheila Feaver and Diana MacDonald
- *The Kettle* by Pat Greene
- *What a March that Was* by Anne Marie Murphy and Frances Ennis





## *The Danger Tree*

24" x 33", #6- to 8-cut wool on primitive burlap. Designed and hooked by Noreen (Reardon) Grace, Goulds, Newfoundland, 2007.

**U**NDER THE SPREADING BRANCHES OF THIS LEGENDARY TREE, many Newfoundland soldiers were killed or wounded as they tried to funnel through a break in the barbed wire defenses. It is rumored the tree died on July 1, 1916; its bare withered skeleton still stands, forever reaching to the sky. Two renditions of *The Danger Tree* are included in the rug collection: one by Noreen (Reardon) Grace, shown here, and the other by Jo-Ann Clarke, Madonna Cole, and Donna Evans.

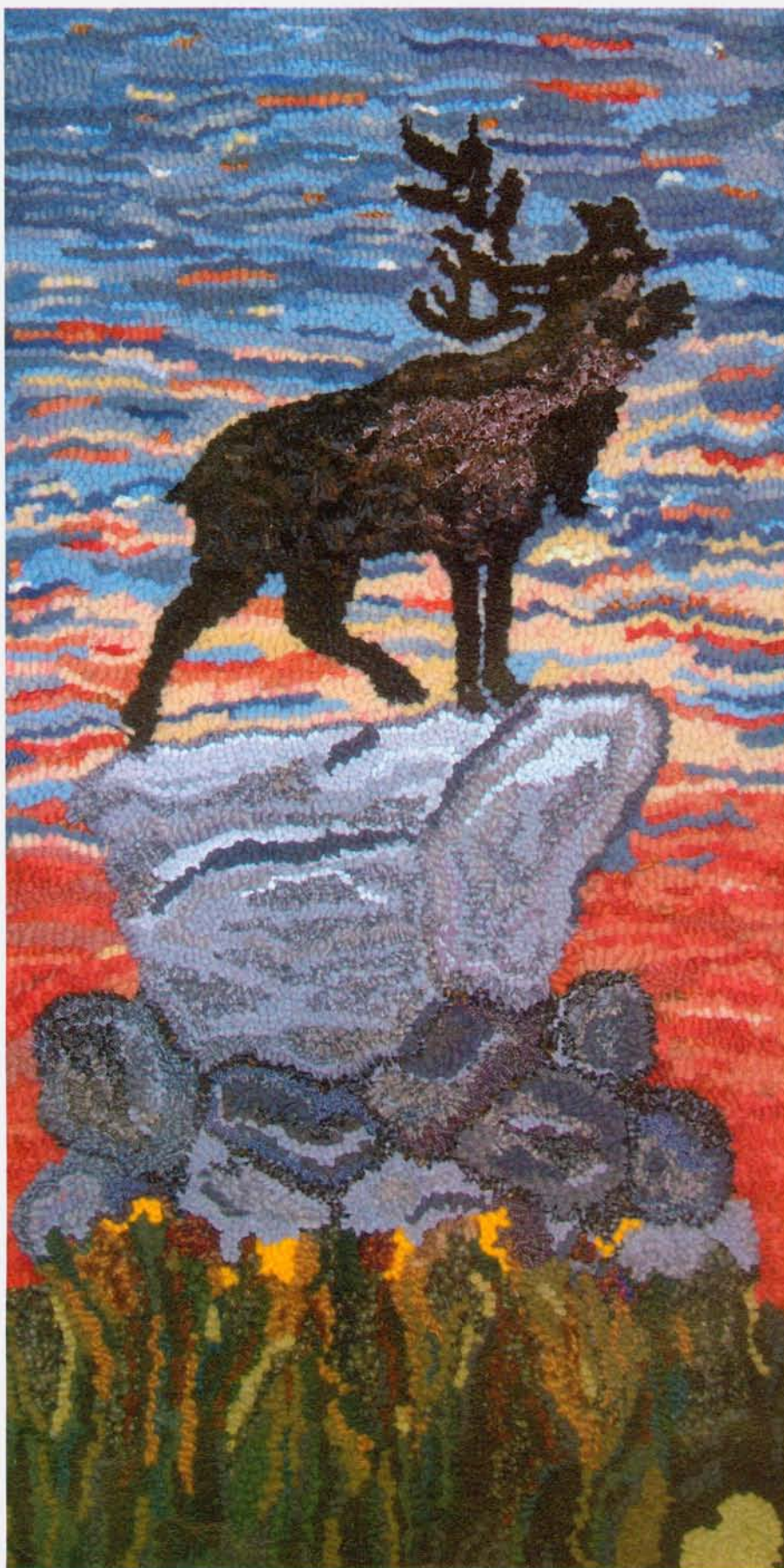
## *Honour*

27" x 40", #6- to 8-cut wool on primitive burlap. Designed and hooked by Marilyn Cameron, Mount Pearl; Barbara O'Keefe, St. John's; and Sheila Power, St John's, Newfoundland, 2007.

**T**his rug represents the four WWI service medals awarded to Staff Sergeant Major Cecil Green of Trinity, Newfoundland.







## The Caribou

23" x 46", #6- to 8-cut wool  
on primitive burlap. Designed and  
hooked Maxine Ennis,  
Goulds, Newfoundland 2007.

**N**AMES OF THOSE WHOSE FAMILIES HOPED AGAINST ALL HOPE that they were still alive in some foreign land were engraved in bronze on a giant plaque that rests beneath a spectacular statue of the caribou overlooking the fields of No Man's Land in France. This familiar image of home was a symbol used by the Regiment. Today it is surrounded with brush and hedge transported from our native Newfoundland.

Choosing the images for their rugs became intensely personal. Several women chose images of medals and badges for their rugs as a way of honoring those who served. Anne Marie Whelan (*Regimental Colours*) dedicated her rug to the memory of her mother as she waved goodbye to her father as he left to go to war. Geraldine Sinnott (*Regiment Cap Badge WWI*) drew on her memories of helping to polish her father's cap badge, uniform buttons, and belt buckle.

Other symbols incorporated into the rugs included the Newfoundland, a beloved dog that exemplifies the loyalty and bravery of the Newfoundland people, brilliant red poppies, and a caribou. Anne Donnelly (*Forget Me Not*) hooked forget-me-nots into her rug because these small flowers are worn every July first to honor the sacrifice of the soldiers, who were also known as "the Blue Puttees." Sheila Feaver and Pat Edney (*Sable Chief*) incorporated a strip of t-shirt fabric from Sheila's nephew, who's currently serving in Afghanistan.

Many ideas for rugs were based on family letters between soldiers with their loved ones. Shirley Moss (*A Pair of Grey Socks*) pays tribute to the women who knit wool socks for the soldiers, a greatly appreciated gift that was noted in many letters sent home to family members. Pat Greene (*The Kettle*) hooked an image of a kettle where her mother stored letters from her brothers.





## *Poppies*

26" x 28", #6- to 8-cut wool on primitive burlap. Designed and hooked by Moya O'Neill, St. John's, and Brenda Wolfe, St. Johns, Newfoundland, 2007.

**P**OPPIES ARE A POIGNANT SYMBOL OF WAR AND REMEMBRANCE, especially of World War I because it is said that they commonly bloomed on the battlefield of Europe during the war. The red color became a reminder of blood-drenched fields of warfare. Today, poppies are still worn to remember the soldiers who made the ultimate sacrifice during war, and they are often placed on graves during national days of remembrance.

## *My Boy*

35" x 28", #6- to 8-cut wool on primitive burlap. Designed and hooked by Sheila Feaver, Mount Pearl, and Diane MacDonald, Mount Pearl, Newfoundland 2007.

**S**HEILA FEAVER AND DIANE MACDONALD TOGETHER CREATED TWO MATS along this theme. Their explanation of *My Boy* is vivid: "In the peace and tranquility of her garden, a mother reads a letter from her soldier son. She longs to see his face and prays for his safe return." Similarly, *My Mother*, in the reverse, is described as: "In a war torn trench a young man reads a letter from his mother. He is filled with a sense of peace and love that her words bring."





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### The Last Goodbye

22" x 22", 2-ply yarn and #6-cut fabric on primitive burlap. Designed and hooked  
by Tina Murphy, Paradise, Newfoundland, 2007.

### A SOLDIER'S THOUGHTS

by Patricia Conway

### Inspiration for The Last Goodbye

Standing straight  
Head high  
Pride swells within me  
I gaze back on the rocky shore  
A hero for my country  
Stooped low  
In blood and filth  
On a battlefield I stand  
I close my eyes  
I yearn for thee  
My home, my Newfoundland.

By the end of one day of design work, the women had transferred 20 rugs to burlap. In the coming weeks, five more images were transferred, frames were purchased or borrowed, hooks were ordered,

rotary cutters and cutting boards were collected, and recycled fabrics were gathered. The women met every Tuesday night throughout the spring and summer to hook.

As the rugs were finished and displayed, the women realized that the collection of rugs had become much more significant than any of them could have imagined. Each rug tells its own story, and together they represent a sincere act of reverence to the individuals and families impacted by The Great War. The group hopes that these rugs will eventually find a permanent home on the walls of a new Veteran's Pavilion that is scheduled to open in St. John's in the summer of 2008. **RHM**

Frances Ennis last wrote for the Canadian Connection department on "Circle of Life" in November/December 2006 Rug Hooking magazine. She is a member of the Holy Heart of Mary Alumnae Choir and resides in St. John's, Newfoundland.