

Submitted by 5611 Gerry Stowe (Class of 1962)

The Mystery of College Numbers

On 1 July 1876, **13 A.B. Perry** of Napanee, ON, arrived at the newly established Military College in Kingston, along with the seventeen other members of the Old Eighteen. His recollection of the day is noted in Richard Preston's "Canada's RMC":

There was no special ceremony for opening day and there were no distinguished visitors. ... On [the recruits'] arrival at the gate they were met by a resplendent figure in the full dress uniform of the British Army, Regimental **Sergeant Major Mortimer**, an old horse gunner who had served in the Indian Mutiny. At least one nervous young man saluted him in the belief that he was the commandant.... Mortimer led each awed recruit in turn to **Captain Ridout** who greeted him in a friendly fashion and then conducted him to the commandant [**Colonel E. O. Hewett**]... Perry recalled in later years that Hewett said to him, "Your back is a little hollow. You will suit the cavalry." Each cadet was given a number based on his standing in the obligatory subjects in the entrance examination.

In a footnote to the above item, Richard Preston stated that "Henceforward college numbers were issued to all successful candidates in the entrance examinations. As some did not take up cadetships, certain numbers remained vacant. Among Ex-Cadets college numbers have great significance. It is the custom for Ex-Cadets to identify themselves to each other by prefixing their number to their name."

The college number system continued with little change until the opening of Royal Roads as the RCN - RCAF Joint College in 1947. Cadets in this first class at Royal Roads were given numbers beginning with the prefix RRA; for instance, **RRA29 Bill Seath**. When Royal Roads became Canadian Services College Royal Roads in 1948, the Cadets there were given college numbers in a sequence with those allocated to their contemporaries at the Royal Military College in Kingston. Hence, **2829 Guy Arsenault** at Royal Roads and **2840 Don Strong** at RMC had numbers very close together. In subsequent years, the Royal Roads Cadets would be allocated numbers after the RMC Cadets had all received theirs. In 1952, upon the arrival of the first class, le College militaire royal de Saint Jean followed the same practice.

When it was decided, by the RMC Club, to offer membership in the Club to those who had attended other Colleges in Canada, the Club acquired members with numbers such as **RNCC43 Commander A.C. Wurtele** (Class of 1913 Royal Naval College of Canada); **RCNC280 Don Currie** (Class of 1946 Royal Canadian Naval College); **RCNSE100 VAdm D.S. Boyle** (RCN Special Entry); and **RCNVR3 Commander James Coulter** (RCN Volunteer Reserve at Royal Roads).

Over 30 years ago the University Training Plan for Non Commissioned Members (UTPNM) was established at the military colleges. The members of this group, mostly former corporals and sergeants, became full fledged members of the Cadet Wings at RMC, RRMC and CMR. They were given college numbers with the prefix "M", starting at MI R.R. Boychuk. At around the same time, the University Training Plan for Officers (UTPO) was started, with those members receiving college numbers with the prefix "B", except that at CMR in St Jean, they were given the prefix "O"; one such example is **B186 LCoI J.R. Giguere**.

The introduction of graduate degrees at RMC started a new series of numbers with the prefix “G”, exemplified by **G55 Valerie Keyes**, a former President of the RMC Club. This was followed by the “E” numbers, denoting those students who are completing an undergraduate degree as extension students, normally part time. **E3161 Victoria Edwards (RMC 2003)** who has been a big part of e-Veritas as a contributor over the past three years is in the “E” category.

It should be noted that people with “M”, “B”, “G” and “E” numbers may see their numbers written as, for example, M1 or M0001, and G55 or G0055. The zeroes are necessary to fill a 5 character computer field, but members may choose to disregard the zeroes.

Three other categories of numbers currently exist in the database of the RMC Club. They are “H” numbers, “S” numbers and “N” numbers. Gentlemen and Ladies who have at any time rendered outstanding and long term service or brought great honour to the Canadian Military Colleges or the Club may be elected to honorary life membership. They shall be granted an honorary college number, in the normal ROTP/RETP number sequence, with the prefix “H”. One such example is the late **H8829 Colonel the Hon. George F. G. Stanley**, former professor and Dean of Arts at RMC, and former Lieutenant Governor of New Brunswick.

Gentlemen and Ladies who have rendered special service to the Canadian Military Colleges or the Club may be offered Honorary Membership in the Club. They are granted a Special Club Number greater than 100 with the prefix “S”. Four members of the staff of Panet House have been so recognized: **S125 Bill Oliver**, his wife **S134 Rolande Oliver**, **S150 Peter Dawe**, and **S160 Mary Darlington**.

The Club has assigned deceased members’ college numbers to their widows and widowers, with the prefix “W”. This initiative has proven to be well received by the surviving spouses.

One final category, as of this writing, is that of Associate Member, which category comprises those who wish to be members of the Club but do not fit any of the groups listed above. Members of the Senior Staff of the College, members of the Board of Governors, staff officers of the Club or Foundation, and others who feel a strong affinity with the College or the Club may be offered such membership. Their numbers are 100 or greater with the prefix “A”, as in the example of A118 Raymond Dignum, former professor in Electrical Engineering.

So there you have it. We have members with numbers prefixed by RNCC, RCNC, RRA, RCNSE, H, S, G, B, O, M, E and A; and we have the “regular” numbers with no prefix, which started at 1 A.G.G. Wurtele on to the current “last-named Officer Cadet in the First Year Class. There really is very little mystery here, but there is often confusion. Let it suffice to say that we are delighted to have any and all, regardless of prefix, as members of the Royal Military Colleges Club of Canada.

Footnote: There has long been a custom whereby someone with a higher number, with the last two digits matching a lower number, is expected to host the lower numbered person with a suitable libation. Such was the case at the Old Brigade Dinner on 5 October 2002, when one of the guests, 22512 Cadet Wing Commander Blair McNaught, was introduced to 2612 BGen Mike Webber, Adjutant of the Old Brigade. It was the “12” that cost Mr. McNaught.