

Remembering the Canadian Forestry Corps

Below is a section of oak that was cut by the Canadian Forestry Corps whose Base Depot was located on Smith's Field in Windsor Castle's Great Park during the First World War.

Over the course of the war, 35,000 Canadians served in 101 companies (Britain – 41, France – 60) with the Corps. The experience of the “bushmen and sawmill hands” and the effectiveness of their equipment brought praise for their role in the war effort. In all, they produced 70% of the timber used by the Western Allies.



Gerald Wellburn Collection, BC Forest Discovery Centre

Included with the board is a handwritten note.

Supposedly a section of the last "Norman Oak" – ie one of those planted by Wim. (the B.....) Conqueror.

Cut into sections for distribution to all V.I.P.s etc, by a brigade of the Canadian Forestry Corps who were operating a small sawmill in Windsor Park, England, in 1917 or 1918.

Presented by Mark Swan then attaché to Can. F. Corp., who knew the sawmill foreman sufficiently well.

Windsor Great Park is the estate that surrounds Windsor Castle, and is famous for its 8,000 acres of forest which includes plantations of ancient oaks first planted by Queen Elizabeth I. The Canadian Forestry Corp's claim to have cut down the "William the Conqueror's Oak". The tree had a circumference of over 38 feet and was estimated to be 1000 years old. No saw was long enough to cut through the tree, and so a hole was made in the hollow trunk which enabled a man to pull the saw from the inside.

Most likely though, the oak board was cut from one of the Park's other ancient oaks as the Conqueror Oak's (aka King's Oak) is still standing.





William the Conqueror's Oak.



W.R.SMYTH, LT. COL.
OFFICER COMMANDING

HEADQUARTERS
43 BANK ST. OTTAWA

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Members of the Canadian Forestry Corps pose for a photo while loading timber in Gérardmer, France, in February 1919, just after the First World War. *Department of National Defence photograph courtesy of Library and Archives Canada*