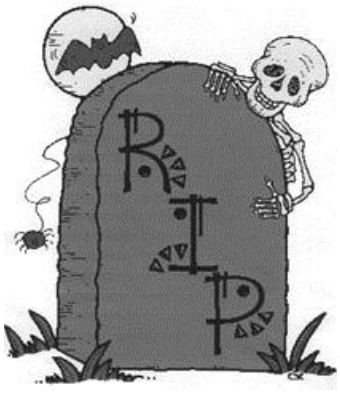


A German Prisoner of War Camp

In the early 1940s, prisoners from Europe were sent to various locations across Canada, including the military barracks on the Plains. Some of those incarcerated here were captured German soldiers (POWs), but most were Jewish refugees.

The temporary camp at Cove Fields (also known as Camp L) was guarded by 11 officers and 172 soldiers from the Canadian army. According to some leaders, these men were badly armed and poorly trained.

With the camp located just outside the city centre, the contiguity was so severe that at one point, tourists and inmates were passing notes to each other over the camp fence. This caused quite a commotion among the camp's authorities: could enemy agents infiltrate tourists group to take photos of the camp?

There were very few escape attempts, but one of them did end with the death of a fleeing prisoner at the hands of a guard.

The residents of Quebec City never knew just how inadequate security actually was at Camp L, which closed down in fall 1940. A mass prisoner revolt would have been catastrophic, but most of the detainees were civilians, not pro-Nazi soldiers.

DISCOVERY PAVILION
OF THE PLAINS OF ABRAHAM

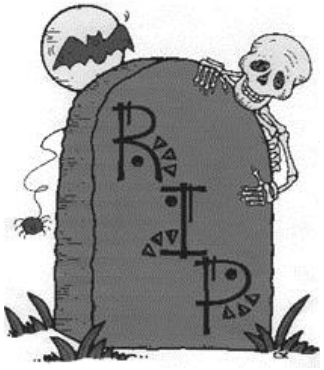
Call the number below to find out more and take part in the *Park's guided lantern tour* for Halloween (in French only).

Information and reservations: 418 649-6157

Government of Canada
The National Battlefields Commission

Gouvernement du Canada
Commission des champs de bataille nationaux

Canada



Halloween lives on

The 31st of October marked the end of the summer for the Celts. Then began an important period of time (the Samhain) during which the frontier separating the worlds of the living and the dead disappeared. According to this belief, the god of the Dead gave the ghosts permission to go back among the living. Those people who feared that the ghosts would take their revenge on this occasion tried to protect themselves by putting on makeup, dressing up as ghosts and witches and carving faces of demons on turnips and placing a candle inside. At the same time, other people called at the villagers houses to offer prayers for the dead in return of food.

Circa 840 AD, the practice of Samhain was integrated into the Catholic calendar by Pope Gregory the Fourth. He decreed that believers should observe All Hallows' Day (November 1st) as well as the evening preceding it. Hence the name All Hallows' Eve, which later became known as Halloween.

The tradition of Halloween was brought over to North America in the mid-nineteenth century by masses of Irish immigrants who fled the famine in their homeland. Several Halloween customs and symbols have survived to the present day. The ghosts in search of rest gave way to little monsters scouring for candies and sweets.

DISCOVERY PAVILION
OF THE PLAINS OF ABRAHAM

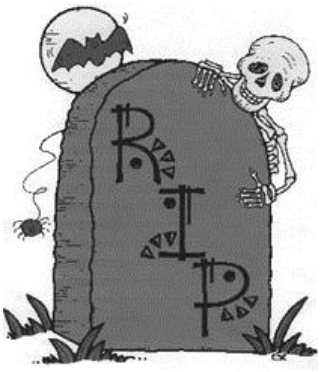
Call the number below to find out more and take part in the *Park's guided lantern tour* for Halloween (in French only).

Information and reservations: 418 649-6157

Government of Canada
The National Battlefields Commission

Gouvernement du Canada
Commission des champs de bataille nationaux

Canada



Human Bones Resurface

In spring 2008, heavy equipment doing excavations along Taché Avenue for a public washroom facility unearthed two human skeletons laid side-by-side.

Bioarchaeological analysis and research into historic burial practices revealed a number of significant facts. We know, for example, that the bodies were those of civilians buried at the same time at the end of the 18th century or in the beginning of the 19th, that they might have been Protestant, at that they were probably of relatively high social status. One was a woman between the ages of 25 and 35, and the other was a young man aged 18 to 20. The young man had a very prominent facial pathology, most likely caused by a cyst that must have been extremely painful.

Many more questions remain unanswered, however. Who were they? How did they die? Why were they buried here? Were they connected in some way to the surrounding buildings at the time?

The remains are currently in Ottawa where they can be used for research. After the bones are returned, they will be interred in a Protestant cemetery with a plaque indicating their original place of burial**.**

DISCOVERY
PAVILION
OF THE PLAINS OF ABRAHAM

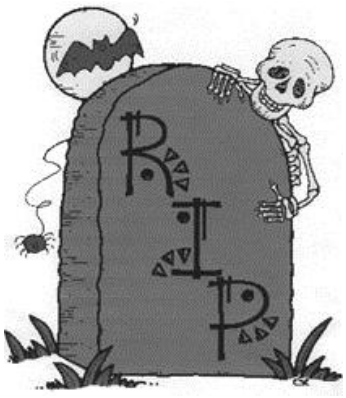
Call the number below to find out more and take part in the *Park's guided lantern tour* for Halloween (in French only).

Information and reservations: 418 649-6157

Government of Canada
The National Battlefields Commission

Gouvernement du Canada
Commission des champs de bataille nationaux

Canada



On My Signal, Turn and… Fire!

There was a time when one way to resolve a dispute or defend your honour was to challenge your enemy to a duel. The Plains were the setting of a number of these unusual—and illegal—encounters.

The April 2, 1767 edition of the Quebec Gazette reported the following:

“On Monday, a duel took place between an officer of the army and a lawyer near the gallows on the Plains of Abraham. However, neither man was injured; both men wisely stood down after firing one single shot each.”

This is the earliest known example of a duel on the Plains. It would not be the last. At the end of the 18th century and during the 19th, this desolate area on the edge of town continued to draw local duellists.

There seems to have been a disproportionally high number of poor marksmen among their ranks, however. Out of all the duels known, only one produced a victim. It occurred in 1811, and the unfortunate man’s name was William Hacquette, a doctor by profession. He was wounded by one Captain Powiss. History does not reveal whether Hacquette survived his injuries… or the humiliation!

DISCOVERY PAVILION
OF THE PLAINS OF ABRAHAM

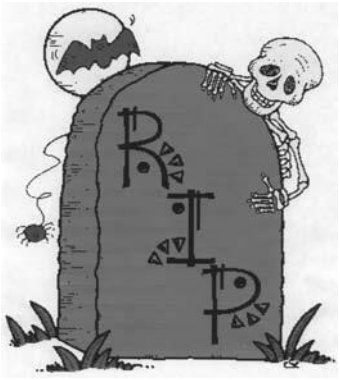
Call the number below to find out more and take part in the *Park’s guided lantern tour* for Halloween (in French only).

Information and reservations: 418 649-6157

Government of Canada
The National Battlefields Commission

Gouvernement du Canada
Commission des champs de bataille nationaux

Canada



Phantoms behind bars

The Québec Prison (1867-1967), built on the Plains of Abraham, was often the place where convicts were executed. For instance, hangings were set for 8 a.m. A few hours before the execution, condemned convicts (men or women) would be visited by their family and a priest. After breakfast, they attended low mass and were freshened up by the executioners. Fifteen minutes before the hanging, a black flag was hoisted to the top of the prison flagpole, and the city bells tolled the death knell. A hundred people or so gathered in the area reserved for witnesses. Thousands of bystanders crowded the fields and trees surrounding the prison.

The raised platform, just like a real stage, stood within the courtyard for convicts sentenced to death. Below it, a coffin would already be waiting. The cortege, which included the prison chaplain (who performed the convict's final rites), the prisoner and the executioner, headed on to the platform. The latter, dressed in black, paced about on the platform. He placed the rope around the prisoner's neck with one hand and held the trapdoor mechanism with the other. His goal was to keep the victim's suffering to a minimum, ideally, killing him instantly. Then, he activated the trapdoor mechanism. The convict's jerky movements proved that death sometimes came slowly. A doctor checked the pulse of the hanged person. When there were no longer any signs of life, the body was placed in the coffin and returned to the family once they claimed it. Executioners, witnesses and bystanders left the premises. Thus the criminal's debt to society was paid.

Rumour has it that the corridors of the prison, which has now been converted into a museum, are haunted. Some people have claimed to hear strange noises or see objects moving by themselves. Perhaps that the souls of those sentenced to death are still looking for eternal rest?

DISCOVERY
PAVILION
OF THE PLAINS OF ABRAHAM

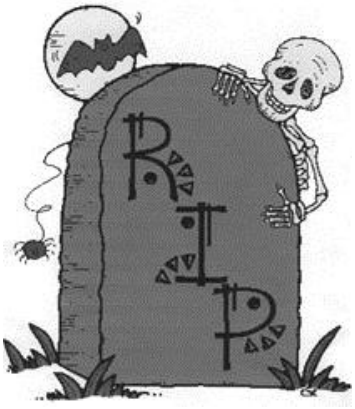
Call the number below to find out more and take part in the *Park's guided lantern tour* for Halloween (in French only).

Information and reservations: 418 649-6157

Government of Canada
The National Battlefields Commission

Gouvernement du Canada
Commission des champs de bataille nationaux

Canada



Public Executions

Between 1763 and 1810, some ten executions were carried out in front of large crowds gathered on the Plains. Prisoners were executed by hanging —including the woman known as La Corriveau—at Buttes-à-Nepveu. Deserters were executed by firing squad near the fortifications. Capital punishment was the penalty for murder, but also for the theft of religious items. Condemned criminals often addressed the crowd before their sentence was carried out. Sometimes, they would ask for forgiveness and implore young people not to follow their example.

It was often a macabre spectacle. For example on July 7, 1797 David McLane, having been found guilty of high treason, was condemned “to be hanged by the neck, but not until death…” The rest of the sentence was described in horrendous detail, but we will only relate the end: “…and your head and limbs will be at the disposition of the King.”

Another notable case was that of Alexander Webb, a black man who was pardoned at the foot of the gallows on June 15, 1784.

Perhaps not surprisingly, the executioner hanged himself in the prison!

DISCOVERY PAVILION
OF THE PLAINS OF ABRAHAM

Call the number below to find out more and take part in the *Park’s guided lantern tour* for Halloween (in French only).

Information and reservations: 418 649-6157

Government of Canada
The National Battlefields Commission

Gouvernement du Canada
Commission des champs de bataille nationaux

Canada

The Corriveau from Québec

On April 15, 1763, Marie-Josephte Corriveau was found guilty of the murder of her second husband, Louis-Étienne Dodier, a resident of *Saint-Vallier de Bellechasse*. The new British administration was anxious to clearly establish its power and therefore delivered a harsh sentence to make an example of this woman. The murderer was to be executed. On April 18, 1763, Marie-Josephte Corriveau was hanged on the Plains of Abraham, more precisely on the *Buttes-à-Nepveu* (the very ground on which you are standing now).

In accordance with British tradition, the body was put in a human-shaped cage made of chains and iron circles hooked onto a gibbet. The body was exhibited at a busy crossroads in *Pointe-Lévi* for forty days or so. The Corriveau was already considered a witch, a poisoner and a bloody murderer in the collective imagination. Therefore, the cage and site became a topic of terror. At night, the Corriveau gets out of her cage, gathers werewolves and demons, chases after lost travellers, desecrates cemeteries and starts a row with the witches of the *Ile d'Orléans*.

When the cage vanished, some people considered it to be the work of the devil. Others saw it as the intervention of parishioners who wanted to reassure visitors and thereby boost the local economy that had been slowed down by the incident. In 1830, the cage and bones were found outside the wall surrounding the *Saint-Joseph de Lévis* cemetery. The rest of the story is rather hazy. After being stored in a sacristy basement, the Corriveau's tomb was supposed to be exhibited again at the Barnum Museum in New York and the Boston Museum accompanied by the following simple inscription: "From Québec".

DISCOVERY PAVILION
OF THE PLAINS OF ABRAHAM

Call the number below to find out more and take part in the *Park's guided lantern tour* for Halloween (in French only).

Information and reservations: 418 649-6157

Government of Canada
The National Battlefields Commission

Gouvernement du Canada
Commission des champs de bataille nationaux

Canada

The Sabbath

The Sabbath was a kind of night time gathering with sorcerers and witches invited by Satan. Its origin goes back to Medieval times.

The acts committed during these gatherings were intended to desecrate the Catholic religion.

Those who wanted to “run the Sabbath” put a grease of dubious mixture over their body. This compound made them invisible and allowed them to cover long distances in a very short time. On Saturdays at the midnight hour, participants were carried away to a remote place, often located by a mill near a forest, where they performed indescribable acts of depravity under watchful eye of Satan, often represented by a billy goat or a dog.

It is said that Sabbaths occurred in New France, at Cape Diamond, near a mill that was then located on the cape, just a few acres away from the fortifications…very close to where we are standing right now.

DISCOVERY
PAVILION
OF THE PLAINS OF ABRAHAM

Call the number below to find out more and take part in the *Park’s guided lantern tour* for Halloween (in French only).

Information and reservations: 418 649-6157

Government of Canada
The National Battlefields Commission

Gouvernement du Canada
Commission des champs de bataille nationaux

Canada

The truth at the end of the tunnel

The Martello Towers have always raised many questions. Who built these monsters? For what purpose? Why in this peculiar architecture? Why in Québec City? All these questions may be answered now. The exhibition on the three levels of Martello Tower 1 reveals the answer to all these.

Yet, a doubt still remains; some people wholeheartedly believe that there are tunnels connecting the towers. Some even claimed to have seen the tunnels and walked inside them when they were kids. Did they get confused with one of the tunnels in the Québec Citadel? Or with the construction of the city's water system? Or were the tunnels just simple air ducts? "No way", they firmly reply. When we tell them the original plans show no sign of the tunnels, they retort that since the tunnels are a government secret, it's quite normal for them not to appear on the plans. Here is the clincher: archaeological digs around the tower in 1992 showed no sign of tunnels whatsoever. "Of course, they were filled up a long time ago in order to keep the tunnels top secret."

Even though the British authorities who ordered the towers' construction wanted them to be isolated from one another to prevent the enemy from having access to them all if one was captured, and despite the fact that the four Martello Towers were built on rock with picks and shovels in record time (and the use of dynamite, if it even existed then, would not have gone unnoticed), some people still believe the tunnels exist.

It should therefore come as no surprise that legend has it that the six Martello Towers built in Kingston, Ontario, (where one is built right on Lake Ontario) and the some 100 such towers found along the English coast are all connected by the same tunnels.

DISCOVERY PAVILION
OF THE PLAINS OF ABRAHAM

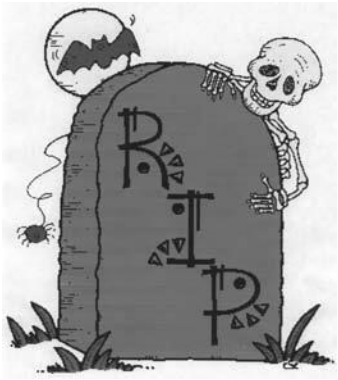
Call the number below to find out more and take part in the *Park's guided lantern tour* for Halloween (in French only).

Information and reservations: 418 649-6157

Government of Canada
The National Battlefields Commission

Gouvernement du Canada
Commission des champs de bataille nationaux

Canada



The voices of Joan of Arc

Joan of Arc was 13 when she first heard a voice telling her that she had been chosen to carry out God's will. As time went by, the voices multiplied, became clearer and were even accompanied by visions. Saint Michael, Saint Margaret and Saint Catherine gave Joan a mission: to drive the English out of France. Supported by the dauphin Charles who became Charles the Seventh, the Maid of Orleans distinguished herself through exceptional feats of arms. Her voices kept guiding her on the battlefields and at court: "God, the King of Heavens, so willed it."

However, she was captured by the *Bourguignons* (the enemies of the Duke of Orleans) and sold to the English. Her trial began in February 1431. She was accused, among other things, of superstitious activities and witchcraft. According to her judges, she practiced divination and allowed herself to be worshiped. She called forth demons and evil ghosts, consulted them and made pacts with them. In a word, she was a witch. She underwent exhausting interrogation, yet refused to give in. Her voices had prepared her for the ordeal of her captivity and promised her that she would soon be liberated. The court found her guilty of heresy, schism and idolatry. She was burnt at the stake on May 29, 1431. Was death the liberation the voices had promised?

The authorities rehabilitated Joan of Arc in 1456. It was rather embarrassing for Charles the Seventh to owe his crown to a woman who had made a pact with the devil. For some, it was a case of hallucinations, hysteria and neurosis, for others supernatural and miraculous phenomena. Joan of Arc's voices, visions and premonitions raise a lot of questions. Whether Joan of Arc's inspiration was authentic or imaginary, she set a concrete example of courage and patriotism.

DISCOVERY PAVILION
OF THE PLAINS OF ABRAHAM

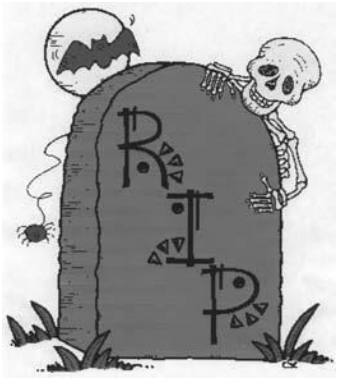
Call the number below to find out more and take part in the *Park's guided lantern tour* for Halloween (in French only).

Information and reservations: 418 649-6157

Government of Canada
The National Battlefields Commission

Gouvernement du Canada
Commission des champs de bataille nationaux

Canada



The white lady of Cape Diamond

In the early days of New France, Éloïse de Volayne, a dazzlingly beautiful but despotic tempered orphan, used to live high atop Cape Diamond. Laughing at her suitors, she declared that she would be willing to marry the one who climbed the cliff on horseback. Two brothers who were madly in love with this beauty, Jean and Samuel de Rochebeaucourt, agreed to take up the challenge. The young woman watched indifferently as both horsemen failed and fell to their death. These failures discouraged others suitors.

A few seasons later, Henri de Villemontel, a young horseman interested in the challenge, showed up at the mansion. Handsome, charming and distinguished, the stranger impressed the young woman and she felt that love had won her heart for the first time. They kept each other company for three days, a fog prevented any climbing at all. As soon as the sun returned, Henri took off despite Éloïse begging him not to. In pain and anguish, she prayed for the man she loved and then watched with relief as her beau conquered the cliff. She rushed towards him but he pushed her away. The real name of Henri de Villemontel was Henri de Rochebeaucourt, brother of Jean and Samuel, who came from France to avenge them. He cursed Éloïse and her cruelty and then left right away. At that moment, death took hold of Éloïse's soul. From the top of the cliff, she watched Henri's boat sail away. Out of despair, she yelled and stretched out her arms. She then lost her balance and fell to the bottom of the abyss, right where her two previous victims had perished.

Since that time, from dusk to dawn in autumn, the ghost of Éloïse comes back to cry over the love she won and lost because of her cruelty. On November 1st, when the midnight hour strikes, one may hear Éloïse lets out a cry as her light and misty silhouette fades away along the cliff.

DISCOVERY PAVILION
OF THE PLAINS OF ABRAHAM

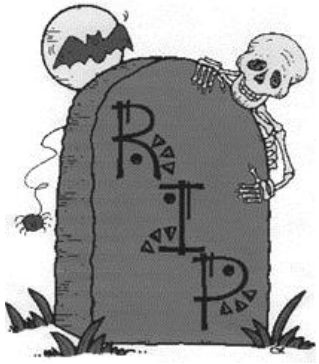
Call the number below to find out more and take part in the *Park's guided lantern tour* for Halloween (in French only).

Information and reservations: 418 649-6157

Government of Canada
The National Battlefields Commission

Gouvernement du Canada
Commission des champs de bataille nationaux

Canada



The White Stone

On the grassy ground stretching from George VI Avenue to the Edwin-Bélanger Bandstand lays a medium-sized white painted stone. Carved into the south side of the stone are a “cross”, the word “CREDO” (which means “I believe” in Latin) and the year “1941” and on the side facing north are carved the letters “FGS”.

Some said that a woman carved the stone as a symbol of her prayers. Others believed that the stone stands a figure from the past. In any case, the National Battlefields Commission has been ensuring its upkeep for decades.

Recently, someone unexpectedly came forth and shared an even more touching story. According to this source, the letters FGS are actually the initials of Frederick George Scott, a frequent visitor to the park, the rector of St. Matthew’s Anglican Church and the chaplain of the 8th Royal Rifles during the First World War. When Scott left home for the front lines, he was 53 years old. His brothers in arms, called to serve again in the Second World War, were captured and massacred in Hong Kong in 1941. This time, he had not been able to accompany his regiment because of his age. According to this same source, a family friend, Scott was devastated.

Nobody, not even his descendants, knows what inspired him to engrave this rock: the loss of those dear to him, the fact that he was not able to assist them at such a critical moment, or the fact that he had escaped a sure death. Whatever the reason, Scott died in January, 1944, without ever seeing the end of the war that took his friends away.

In 2009 the federal government inaugurated a memorial in Ottawa in honour of the Hong Kong veterans. This white stone is likely the oldest monument in the country commemorating the massacre of 1941. The year 2011 marks the battle’s 70th anniversary.

DISCOVERY PAVILION
OF THE PLAINS OF ABRAHAM

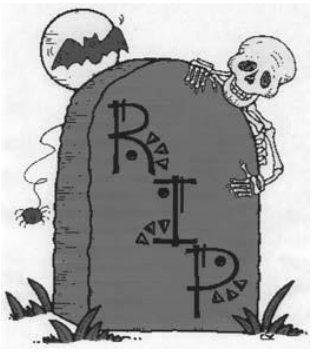
Call the number below to find out more and take part in the *Park’s guided lantern tour* for Halloween (in French only).

Information and reservations: 418 649-6157

Government of Canada
The National Battlefields Commission

Gouvernement du Canada
Commission des champs de bataille nationaux

Canada



The widow's walk

The widow's walk is a platform on the roof of a house, often found in coastal areas, from which it is possible to look out to sea and watch ships go by. But where did the name come from?

As one legend tells it, the wives of sailors used to pace these platforms, watching for the return of their husbands from the sea. Occasionally, the ocean would claim a sailor's life, leaving his wife behind to mourn. According to this story, the widow would return often to scan the seas from the rooftop, hoping her love would miraculously return.

Another legend suggests an origin for widow's walks found in towns. Rich widows and respectable single women who possessed such a walkway on the roofs of their houses could use them to enjoy the night air, thus avoiding the poorly lit and disreputable big-city streets. The walks also sheltered them from the gaze of passers-by, who unfortunately tended to associate women out alone after sundown with the world's oldest profession.

These hypothetical origins aside, it should be noted that these walkways were often built around chimneys to facilitate access in an emergency. In the event of chimney fire, sand could be thrown into the chimney in the hope of preventing the fire from spreading to the rest of the house.

DISCOVERY
PAVILION
OF THE PLAINS OF ABRAHAM

Call the number below to find out more and take part in the *Park's guided lantern tour* for Halloween (in French only).

Information and reservations: 418 649-6157

Government of Canada
The National Battlefields Commission

Gouvernement du Canada
Commission des champs de bataille nationaux

Canada

Underwater… treasures

A bit later after the French army's defeat on the Plains of Abraham, four warships carrying soldiers and rich bourgeois with all their belongings set sail for their mother country on the nights of November 22 and 23, 1759. Strong winds caused the ships to sink into the river sending their entire cargos of weapons, luggage, and, apparently, great riches to a watery grave near Saint Romuald. Over 150 years later on March 19, 1912, some Saint Romuald residents fishing on the St. Lawrence River noticed that an 8-to-10-foot long cannon had emerged from the water. Removing the cannon from the clutches of the mud was a delicate process. Other smaller cannons and cannonballs were also found and removed from the water. This was all that it took to revive the popular belief that fabulous treasures still lied beneath the depths of the majestic St. Lawrence River.

Underground … treasures

Another rumour going around in the 1950s had it that a treasure had been buried somewhere on the Plains of Abraham. Somebody was even caught digging a hole near *Musée du Québec* (now renamed *Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec*). Some people claim that this event was directly linked to the fantastic story of the Polish Treasures and the Honourable Maurice Duplessis, who was then Prime Minister of Québec. It is said that he had had the treasures moved inside *Musée du Québec* on the sly in the middle of the night a few years earlier.

DISCOVERY PAVILION
OF THE PLAINS OF ABRAHAM

Call the number below to find out more and take part in the *Park's guided lantern tour* for Halloween (in French only).

Information and reservations: 418 649-6157

Government of Canada
The National Battlefields Commission

Gouvernement du Canada
Commission des champs de bataille nationaux

Canada