

As the Governor of the Bank of England marks the first anniversary of his tenure next week, **York Membery** goes in search of his old haunts in the Canadian capital

LEGEND has it that Queen Victoria decided the future capital of Canada by sticking a pin in a map.

Whatever the truth of the matter, 150 or so years later Ottawa repaid the favour by letting the former governor of the Bank of Canada, Mark Carney, head across the pond to help “the old country” get its economy back on track.

Next Tuesday, which coincidentally happens to be Canada Day, marks his first anniversary as Governor of the Bank of England but I’m interested in Mark Carney’s Ottawa – the “hometown” he left behind when he took up his current appointment.

On touching down, it’s immediately obvious that Ottawa is a very different sort of place to London. But at the same time, there are eerie echoes of the British capital.

Take the climate: summers are hot and winters are cold. As one Ottawa-based friend observes: “Temperatures can hit 40 degrees in July and plunge to below 40 in January.” It’s a lot smaller than London, lies on the edge of a vast wilderness area and has a reputation as a pretty straight-laced kind of place.

On the other hand, the striking Gothic revival Houses of Parliament in the heart of the city, dating back to the mid-19th century, were inspired by our own Palace of Westminster and even have their own Big Ben-like clock tower, the Peace Tower. A Buckingham Palace-style Changing of the Guard (featuring soldiers dressed in red tunics and bearskins) takes place daily on Parliament Hill in summertime.

Come Canada Day, Parliament Hill takes centre stage in the national celebrations – with the grounds playing host to a flag-raising ceremony, and an all-day concert featuring live bands, singers and dance troupes, culminating in a spectacular late-night firework display.

However, the focal point of Mark Carney’s Ottawa was the Bank of Canada, just across Wellington Street (named after a certain British duke) from Canada’s Parliament building. It was there that he made his name as arguably the most brilliant central banker of his generation during his five-year (2008-13) stint as governor.

Architecturally, the Bank is an eclectic, curious mix of old and new, consisting of a 1930s granite neo-classical cube and a modern wrap-around Arthur Eriksson-designed glass complex, complete with a ground-floor garden.

During his lunch break, Carney’s predecessor as governor, David A. Dodge, could often be found “walking around Parliament Hill and along the Ottawa River smoking his pipe”, says one long-time bank employee.

In contrast, Carney was more likely to be found going for a lunchtime jog in the summer months when he had the time, like many downtown office



Capital view: Ottawa’s Rideau Canal, flanked by the Parliament buildings, left, and the Fairmont Château Laurier hotel, right. Inset, Bank of England Governor Mark Carney

# CARNEY’S OTTAWA



City limits: top, the “Diefenbunker” complex; above, the ceremonial guard band plays on Parliament Hill

workers do today in this health-conscious city. That said, taking a David A. Dodge style stroll around Parliament Hill should be on every tourist’s itinerary, along with going up the 300ft-high Peace Tower, with its magnificent views over the city.

Of course, even top bankers have to eat and one of the restaurants where Carney was known to dine, along with the city’s other movers and shakers, was the trendy Play Food & Wine, specialising in “small plate” servings, which might help account for the governor’s trim figure.

He was also a regular sight at Ottawa’s most famous hotel, the 102-year-old Fairmont Château Laurier, next to the Parliament buildings, which has played host to prime ministers, presidents and royals over the years including our own dear Queen. The limestone, turreted behemoth was home for 18 years to the portrait photographer Yousuf Karsh, and a suite is named in his honour. If you fancy staying in the £1,500 a night Karsh Suite, you’ll need a banker’s salary.

Very occasionally, Carney would even pop into the Metropolitan Brasserie – a high-end pub a block away from the House of Commons and in effect his “local” – to have the odd beer. The economical among us should go during their Happy Hour, when drinks are cheaper.

As you might expect, the 49-year-old lived in a pretty well-heeled part of town – Rockcliffe Park, an exclusive downtown neighbourhood which counts the American ambassador among its residents and is a stone’s throw from the Canadian prime minister’s official residence, 24 Sussex Drive – Ottawa’s

10 Downing St. Driving around its quiet tree-lined streets, you would be forgiven for thinking you were in the countryside. That said, some homes scream “money, money, money”. One clapboard house I passed had his ‘n’ hers black Range Rovers in the drive, another had a five-car garage. You don’t see many of those in London, do you?

But in his downtime, Carney liked nothing better than to head for the 20,000-seat Canadian Tire stadium to see the capital’s NHL ice hockey team, the Ottawa Senators. Apparently, Carney was a pretty mean ice hockey player himself in his youth. If you’re in town, catching a live game is sure to provide a real thrill, regardless of whether or not you understand the rules.

The last but perhaps most intriguing, and slightly sinister, venue with a Carney connection is the “Diefenbunker”, 20 miles outside Ottawa.

This extraordinary underground complex (named after the Canadian prime minister who commissioned it) was built in the late Fifties, during the height

of the Cold War, and was designed to become the seat of government for the country’s top politicians, bankers [among them the governor of the Bank of Canada] and military personnel should “the bomb” go off.

Descending into the four-storey concrete and steel bunker (now a museum) with its labyrinth of rooms is a real eye-opener – and a reminder of just how seriously governments of the day took the threat of nuclear war.

Thankfully, of course, those days are long gone. So should Carney return to Ottawa when his five-year stint as Governor of the Bank of England comes to an end, he’ll hopefully never have to hole up in this claustrophobic and now rather musty-smelling Cold War relic.

## DETAILS: CANADA

**Air Canada** has returns from Heathrow to Ottawa from £753.95, [aircanada.com](http://aircanada.com)

**Fairmont Château Laurier**, doubles from £142 B&B, [fairmont.com/laurier-ottawa](http://fairmont.com/laurier-ottawa)

■ [keepexploring.ca](http://keepexploring.ca)



**Business bites:** Play Food & Wine, in Ottawa’s ByWard Market, pairs small plates with exceptional wine