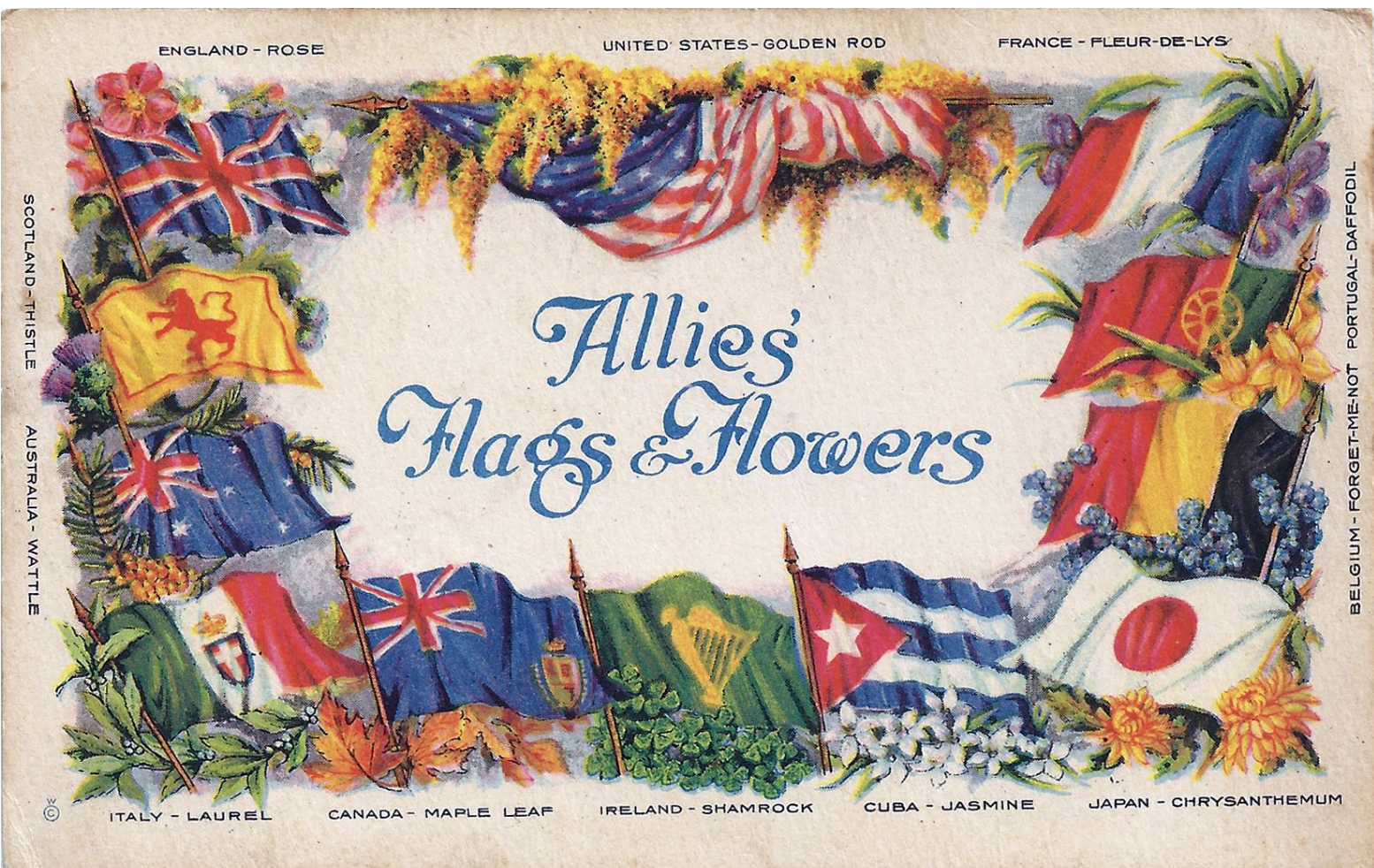




When Great Britain and Germany went to war on 2 August 1914, Canada (like the rest of the British Empire) was automatically at war too. Our politicians had no chance to debate the situation or come to their own decision. Not that it really mattered. Canadians from all parts of society – churches, labour unions, industry, teachers, Indigenous groups, recent immigrants, French-Canadian nationalists – came together behind the war. Nor did Canadians think about its long-term causes: industrial competition between the great powers, disputes over imperial expansion, an arms race, struggles with ethnic separatist groups, extreme forms of nationalism. Most Canadians focused on one thing: Germany had invaded neutral Belgium, and the civilized nations had to come to its aid or risk being conquered themselves. It was about preserving freedom and democracy from the barbarism and militarism of Germany and its allies.

Canada immediately began to build an army, with recruiting in full swing before the war was a week old; by November 1918, over 620,000 Canadian men and women had served in uniform. At first, these numbers came from voluntary enlistment. However, as volunteers became more difficult to find, conscription became a reality for many Canadian men through the Military Service Act (MSA) of 1917. This postcard was sent by Grant Dean to Frank Glassford in Wallaceburg. When Dean was drafted into the CEF on 19 April 1918, he was a twenty-three-year-old salesman living in Wallaceburg with his family. Upon his enlistment, he became a member of the 1st Depot Battalion of the Western Ontario Regiment and arrived in England on 18 October 1918. Dean was discharged as a part of general demobilization on 18 July 1919.



Dear Capt. London
4-29-18
Just a line to give you my address and to let you know I'm right on the job down here. Write to Pte GS Dean #3132735 E. Co. 1st Depot Batt. W.O.R. Best regards to all. Yours truly, Grant Dean

London 4-29-18

Dear Capt.

Just a line to give you my address and to let you know I'm right on the job down here.

Write to Pte GS Dean #3132735 E. Co. 1st Depot Batt. W.O.R Queens Park

Best regards to all

The last tradition before going overseas was the embarkation leave, given to all soldiers to allow them to spend a few days with their family and friends before leaving for England. During this time, it was very common for soldiers to have photographs taken, to give to their families to hold onto while they were separated. This is a portrait of Merlin resident Robert Shanks, likely taken under such circumstances. Shanks was drafted under the MSA on 15 July 1918, at which point he became a member of the 1st Depot Battalion of the Western Ontario Regiment. He survived the war and was discharged as a part of general demobilization on 1 January 1919.



After enlisting, Canadian soldiers were sent to training camps to prepare for the conditions they would soon experience at the front. This postcard was sent by Wallaceburg resident George Dean, the younger brother of Grant Dean who is mentioned elsewhere in this collection. It includes both a picture of tents at Camp Petawawa, a training camp near Ottawa, and a mention of camp activities in its message. When Dean enlisted in the Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF) on 2 May 1918, he was a twenty-year-old jeweller with three years' experience in Canada's navy. He became a member of the Canadian Field Artillery and was sent to Camp Petawawa for his initial training before travelling overseas. He served until he was discharged on 8 January 1919.



Sunday 15/18

Dear People

Received your letter O.K. and will answer it as soon as possible we are packing up but we don't know whether we are going to London or into the Ottawa or to Siberia but it is all the same to me. We have had some very good saddle rides latley away out into the country but there is no farm houses or farms around here. We got the spurs o.k. But there were only some of the tomatoes we could use the rest were all squeezed up. Write soon George.

Soldiers overseas relied on mail to maintain connections with home, and the army in turn devoted significant resources to ensuring that postcards and letters travelled safely. Though its original contents are missing, the markings on this envelope, sent to Wheatley resident Arthur Lamarsh from his son, Wilfred Lamarsh, communicate valuable information regarding the process of handling letters. One element is of particular importance: the right most circular stamp, which indicates that the letter was censored by the Field Post Office. However, it was not censored by one of the soldier's own officers, which would normally have been the practice. By using a green envelope like this, known as an "honour envelope", a soldier who was reluctant to have private matters read by an officer he knew could instead have his letter go directly to a rear-area censor, to be read and passed by a stranger. All he had to do was sign on the left of the envelope to verify that the letter contained only personal matters.

A.F.W.3078.

[Crown Copyright Reserved.]

ON ACTIVE SERVICE

NOTE.—

Correspondence in this envelope need not be censored Regimentally. The Contents are liable to examination at the Base.

The following Certificate must be signed by the writer :

I certify on my honour that the contents of this envelope refer to nothing but private and family matters.

Signature }
(Name only) }

W.L. Lamarsh

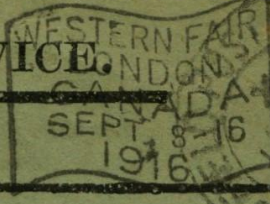
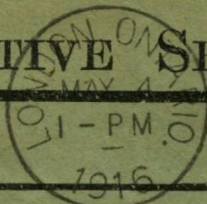
Address—

Mr. Arthur Lamarsh

Wheatley

Ontario

Canada



This is an example of a Field Service Postcard (FSP), sometimes referred to as a “whizz bang,” that was sent from a soldier identified as Sid White to Miss F Myers in Dresden. FSPs, relying on strict rules and predetermined text options, were intended to be a quick and easy way for soldiers to communicate with their loved ones without the need for as many censors as would be required with ordinary postcards or letters.

NOTHING is to be written on this side except the date and signature of the sender. Sentences not required may be erased. If anything else is added the post card will be destroyed.

[Postage must be prepaid on any letter or post card addressed to the sender of this card.]

I am quite well.

I have been admitted into hospital

{ sick } and am going on well.

{ wounded } and hope to be discharged soon.

I am being sent down to the base.

I have received your

{	letter dated <u>May 1st</u>
	telegram „ <u> </u>
	parcel „ <u> </u>

Letter follows at first opportunity.

I have received no letter from you

{ lately.

{ for a long time.

Signature
only

D. 26/5/18

(1195) Wt. W1566/R1619. 4,000,000. 12.17. H. C. & L., Ltd.

F.A. 2042.
114/Gen.No./5248.

FIELD



SERVICE

POST CARD.

The address
only to be written
on this side.
If anything else
is added the
post card will
be destroyed.

[Crown Copyright Reserved.]

*Mrs. F. Myers,
Dresden,
Ontario,
Canada.*

While postcards were perhaps the most popular method of communication between Canadian soldiers overseas and individuals back home, letters, which often contained much more detailed information regarding the soldiers well being, were desired and not sent infrequently. This is a letter sent from Harry Farnsworth to Mrs. Frank Megers, who resided in Dresden. At the time of writing, on 7 August 1917, Farnsworth was completing training at Bramshott Camp in England. His letter contains insight into not only the activities and lifestyle that soldiers at Bramshott experienced, but also into the attitude of one young soldier who was likely away from home for the first time.

I
 Bramshott Camp
 Aug 7/17

Dear Friend:-
 I suppose you will be surprised to hear from one of the young ruffians that used to cause so much trouble in the D.C.B.
 I have been going to scribble off a few lines ever since we landed here but as you likely have heard we have been kept pretty busy here except for the last week or two.
 I suppose you heard of the little accident we had on our way across the briny sea. I suppose things are pretty dull in Dresden but believe me I only wish I was there.

II


I hope you will not notice the mistakes in the letter but you know I am not been to school for a fortnight or twenty months and a person soon forgets.
 We had some trip but as luck would have it I was not sick at all and was able to eat my share and part of the fellows that was sick.
 This is some country here. All hills and valleys but believe me there is some fine scenery here just the same.

III


We hadn't had hardly any rain except last week and then it rained all week. I was up to the big city on my landing leave & I certainly had some time I got lost about every ten minutes and had to ask a cop where I was but towards the last of the six days I could find my way about pretty good. I don't know when we will go to France but expect it won't be long and believe me I will be glad because I am getting fed up of this country.

IV


I suppose you know what that means but don't take it that we are getting overfed because it is just the opposite. Well, I guess I had better ring off for the time being.
 From your old pupil
 H. F. F.

P.S. My address is:
 Mr. H. F. Farnsworth
 No 880955, Lf. Co.
 4th Res Btlt.
 Bramshott Camp
 Hants. Eng.
 c/o Army post office

Dear Friend –

I suppose you will be surprised to hear from one of the young ruffians that used to cause so much trouble in the D.CS.

I have been going to scribble off a few lines ever since we landed here but as you likely have heard we have been kept pretty busy here except for the last week or two.

I suppose you heard about the little accident we had on our way across the briny sea. I suppose things are pretty dull in Dresden but believe me I only wish I was there.

I hope you will not notice the mistakes in the letter but you know I am not been to school for about eighteen or twenty months and a person soon forgets.

We had some trip but as luck would have it I was not sick at all and was able to eat my share and part of the fellows that was sick.

This is some country here. All hills and valleys but believe me there is some fine scenery here just the same.

We haven't had hardly any rain except last week and then it rained all week.

I was up to the big city on my landing leave & I certainly had sometime. I got lost about every ten minutes and had to ask a cop where I was but towards the last of the six days I could find my way about pretty good.

I don't know when we will go to France but expect it wont be long and believe me I will be glad because I am getting fed up of this country.

I suppose you know what that means but don't take it that we are getting overfed because it is just the opposite.

Well I guess I have better ring off for the time being.

From your old pupil, H.G.F

P.S. My address is

Pte. H.G. farnsworth

No. 880455 H. Co.

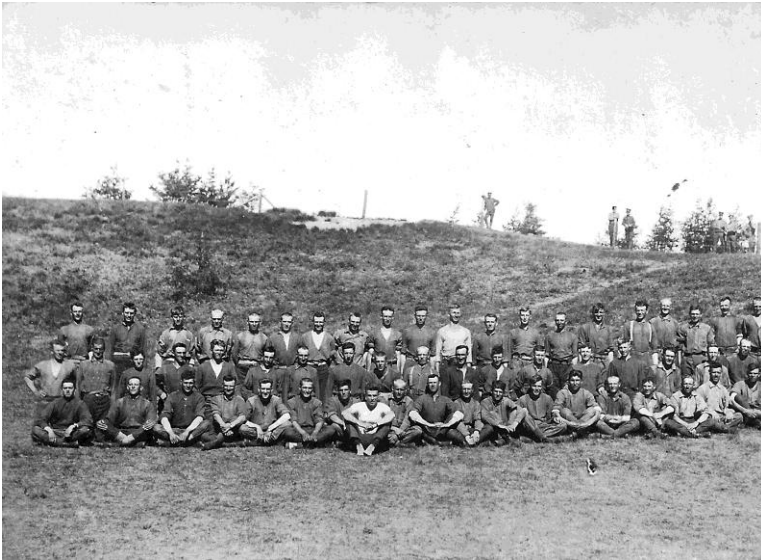
4th Res Batt

Bramshott Camp

Hants Eng.

c/o Army post office

The war wounded began to return to Canada in late 1915, and the federal government began organizing a string of military hospitals to provide both short- and long-term care. This is a postcard sent by Lloyd Derbyshire of Wheatley, a soldier who, though he had not travelled overseas yet, required hospitalization. In his message, Derbyshire mentions that he has contracted mumps while in training and is being moved to a hospital at Aldershot camp in Kings County, Nova Scotia. He recovered from his illness and was discharged as a part of general demobilization on 13 July 1919.



Sept 15 Sun

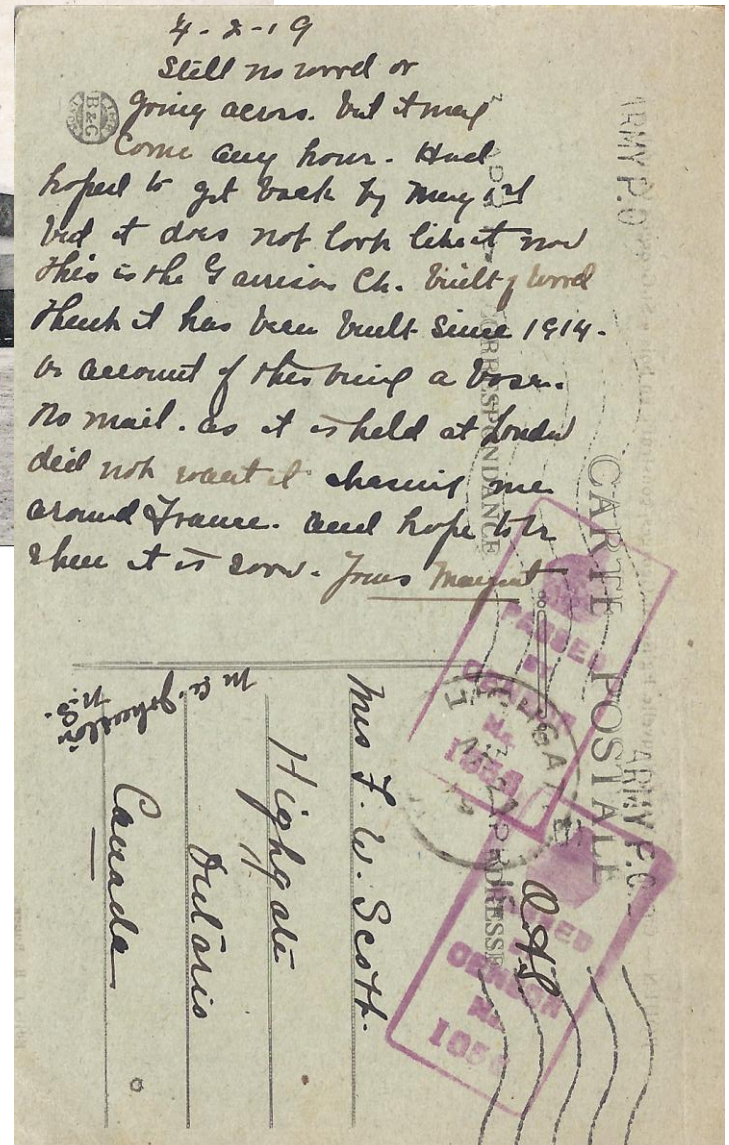
Hello Viola,

How is thing getting along at home a fellow gave me this card cannot wrote a letter to day I got the mups the other day. Friday I am sat now I am in the hospital to day I am in bed but not very sick if I was home and had them I would be running around but I getting ___ good you see I am getting along fine I will be here for two or three weeks yet

Some soldiers were injured to a degree that precluded them from serving. This is a photograph of one such individual: Joseph Darke of Bothwell. When Darke enlisted in the CEF on 22 January 1916, he was a thirty-four-year-old labourer, husband, and father of four young children. Prior to his immigration to Canada from Bristol, England, and his enlistment in the CEF, Darke had served in the British armed forces for seven years and fought in the South African War. On 18 August 1916, it was determined that he was “nervous” and “unable to perform his duties.” Accordingly, he was discharged from the CEF as medically unfit and returned to Bothwell, where he lived until moving to Vancouver in 1935.



Soldiers were not the only individuals who interacted with the medical system overseas. Over 2,000 Canadian nurses served in the military hospitals in Canada, England, and on the continent. This is a postcard sent from Jasper resident Annice Johnston, a professional nurse trained in Canada who enlisted in the Canadian Army Medical Corps (CAMC) on 10 April 1918. In this postcard written on 4 February 1919, she mentions a struggle that many Canadians overseas experienced following the signing of the armistice in November 1918: not knowing when they were going to travel home.



4-2-19

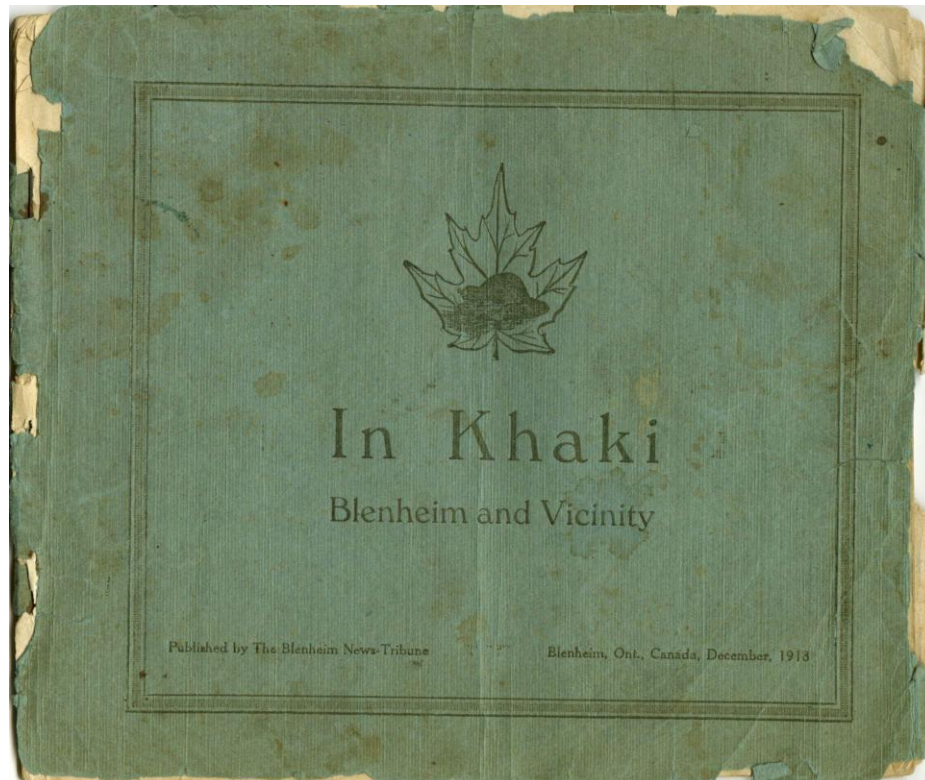
Still no word on going over. but it may come any hour. Had hoped to get back by May 1st but it does not look like it now this is the Garrison Church built of wood. Think it has been built since 1914. On account of this being a base. No mail as it is held at London did not want it chasing me around France. And hope to be where it is soon.

Yours, Margaret

Those soldiers who survived the war were discharged in waves through the process of general demobilization. However, approximately 66,000 Canadian soldiers died overseas, never to return home. This was the case for Thamesville resident Robert Bateman, who was twenty-one years old when he enlisted in the CEF on 5 January 1916. On 8 August 1918, he sustained a shrapnel wound to the head in battle that led to him being hospitalized in France. Unfortunately, four days later he succumbed to his injuries. Bateman left behind his parents, John and Mary Bateman, five siblings, and eleven half siblings.



After the war, communities went about celebrating their friends and neighbours who served in the First World War in many ways. This book, titled "In Khaki: Blenheim and Vicinity," contains portraits of soldiers from Blenheim and the vicinity who served overseas, both those who survived and those who did not. Of note is the fact that this book is dated December 1918, meaning it was published very shortly after the signing of the armistice.



A special emphasis is often placed on remembering those from a community who made the ultimate sacrifice to defend their countries. This is a photograph of a community cemetery containing the graves of individuals from Dresden. On these crosses, one can observe the names of soldiers from a variety of battalions who were killed in some of the most significant battles of the First World War, including Passchendaele and Ypres. Fallen soldiers from Dresden are also remembered on the Dresden Cemetery War Memorial located at 303 Trerice Street East.



Credits:

This exhibition was curated for you by Kaitlin Murray at the Ley and Lois Smith War, Memory, and Popular Culture Research Collection in the History Department at the University of Western Ontario in London.

All of the images are copyright-free, and you are welcome to reproduce them as you wish. All we ask is that you attach a credit line:

Courtesy of the Ley and Lois Smith Collection, History Department, Western University, London, Ontario.

We welcome feedback from anyone who enjoys this exhibition or has more information or images to add. Please contact us at: jvance@uwo.ca