

191 Chatham Ave.
Toronto, Ont.
Oct. 8, 1932

Dear Mr Raddall,

I am glad to hear from a son of my old Battalion Commander, Col. Raddall, and to pass on some information about the battle of Amiens.

We had been near Arras and on Sat. evening we took the train, slow moving, and it was Sunday when we reached Etaples on the sea and turned south that we knew we were to be engaged in that direction and not north. In the afternoon we detrained at a small place and started to march east. It was Monday morning early when we came to the village where our billets were and everybody was dead tired after the long march. After resting a day or so we moved forward always at night and on the 7th Aug. were in position S.E. from Amiens. The attack was a ~~com~~ complete surprise. We started from near Demuin and there were three waves of attack each having its own objective to reach, the wave behind coming up and carrying on to the next objective. The 8th Battn was in the last wave and carried the attack to the final objective of the day at Caix, which we entered sometime after noon. Our unit had very little fighting to do the first day.

west ~~east~~ A little river with a swampy flat, the Luce, runs ~~east~~ from Caix. East of Demuin we struck this stream on the north side and followed it, crossing to the south side I am not sure whether any of our men were on the N. side as we reached Caix but the Company I was with was S. Soon after reaching Caix the enemy began to shell the place and kept it up all night. In the afternoon I saw Col Raddall in the village on horseback. He was discussing the defence of the village in case of an attack. We spent the night there and in the morning sideslipped to the S. going down a valley from Caix. two miles or so to a place we called Hospital Wood because the Germans had a tent hospital there. This wood lies between the valley and a road that runs from Caix, and at the south end where the wood ends and the road meets the valley Battalion H. Q was established and there Col. Raddall directed the attack. The Battalion was in the wood.

About noon the Germans put down a heavy barrage on the wood with great accuracy and many casualties were sustained. Also from the vicinity of Les Quesnel they were able to spray the valley with m. guns. Out in front of the

wood perhaps a quarter of a mile on ground quite open the Germans had manned an old line of trenches overnight and had numbers of machine guns with which they largely fought the battle. The open space had to be crossed before they could be dislodged and it was here that our casualties took place in a short time.

It was I believe to see about some hitch that had taken place, or to direct personally something important - I cannot be just sure what it was- that Col Raddall went out. He knew the danger and gave directions before he went as to what should be done in case he did not carry on. I cannot say how long he was out before he was hit nor do I know who saw him fall. It would be all in a second or so. Very seldom was there much to say about the way a man fell. He fell in the moment of victory and the attack swept on for miles and that night we were in the village of Warvillers some four miles east.

About five oclock having attended to all the woundd we moved east with the dressing station. It was a clear evening, the day had been typical of August, and the larks were singing above the field as we crossed- there seemed to be so many of them too. An utter peace, added to it seemed by the singing in the sky, had fallen on the field of sacrifice and brave deeds.

It was next day that I began plan the burials. But it was difficult getting a party for the work and I had determined that our men would lie in a proper cemetery with a name to their graves. After a week this was finally accomplished. Col. Raddall lies with the other officers in, I think, the first row, and the cemtry is close to where he fell. It is a war time cemetery and the rows are not just parallel nor of the same length, but that is no demerit

Two years ago myself and family were there. We went to Amiens and hired a taxi, following the Luce up to Caix, and from there we went to Hospital wood (much of which had been cut down, though there are young trees I think) Behind Battn. H. Q. during the battle, on the east side of the valley was a German Cemetery and some of our men were buried there too, though we did not visit it this time. The country over which the battle was fought is now back to farm lands and was growing crops- it was all bare in 1918.

To get to Manitoba we had to come back to near Caix and get the second class road that leads to Beufort on which road, midway between the places stands Manitoba Cemetery. It is well kept, with a dwarf stone wall around

There is a large cross, the headstones are in order with the names and a maple leaf. Maple trees have been planted, and the old time English garden plants, thyme, lavender, pansies rambling, and other kinds of roses are there. The grass is trimmed and we thought Manitoba one of the nicest kept cemeteries. We stood at Col. Raddalls grave which is in the S.E part of the plot next to the wall. The cemetery is rather out of the way and will not be visited much, but it is typical of the way the men made their sacrifice- not in the glare of publicity and they sleep in quiet places. There is a fine view of the country around, woods, farm lands between, and villages beyond. Picardy is a richer looking part than some parts we knew.

A map of Manitoba and other cemeteries near was published. It contains a plan of the cemetery and the names of the dead. You may be able to get it by sending ^{about 10 cts} 2/6 and a few extra cents for postage giving them location of cemetery. I think

Imperial War Graves Commission, London, Eng. I do not have the address further. Or write to Mr Bowler, Secy, Canadian Legion, Ottawa, asking if they have the book or if they could direct you where to get it.

In the book the credit for Manitoba Cemetery is given to the Burial Officer of the First Can. Div. I took this up with them and they found I was correct, and said in future all issues would say the Cemetery was made and named by the Chaplain of the 8th Canadian Battalion. Let me know if this is so.

Enclosed are negatives of some snaps. When you are through with them you can send them back. One shows a road with wood and telephone pole. This is Hospital wood and the Battn H.Q. was close to the near corner on the ^{looking N. to East} right. Col. Raddall crossed this road when he went out and fell about a quarter of a mile in front.

Another shows Man. Cem. looking to the S.E. the corner in which your father is buried. One shows myself standing in front of the cross at the entrance to the Cemetery view again looking S.E. Mrs Whillans, our boy and girl are shown in the pictures.

I trust I have given your mother and yourself something new about the battle and what happened as well as something personal about your fathers story on Aug 9th.

Yours sincerely,

J. W. Whillans

J. W. Whillans

Last year we came back from Liverpool, Eng. where we were for 6 years.

1943

46 Brae Road
Duncan, Vancouver Island B.C.

April 16.

Dear W. Raddall:

The enclosed clipping will interest you. I hope before long the flag will be flying in Hope. I have the your poem "Mauritius" which was seen by Col. Dudley in an English mag. & he had it typed & framed & hung in the mess. When the letter was burned I was able to replace the poem for the new Hope. I have been here since last fall.

Your stories are very fine - your pen is genuine & has excited pleasure amongst you fathers & friends.

If you want to send any message of the unveiling I would be glad to have it. I am keeping in the plans.

With the best of wishes

Yours sincerely

J. W. Whillans

Replied, air mail, April 21.
& enclosed an autographed copy of "Where the Dead Lay Shooked"

J. W. WHILLANS, FATHER
OF 8 TH. BN. WINNIPEG RIFLES
WHO BORN MY FATHER
AMIENS, AUG. 9
1886

Ans'd Feb 1948
I returned M/S
of Kelsey article

New Year Day
Jany 2nd '48

235 West 12th Ave
Vancouver B C

Mr T H Raddall Jr
Liverpool N S

Dear Mr Raddall;

Last time we exchanged letters I was at Duncan Van. Island. However I became ill and was a long time in hosp and now am taking it easy with a number of hobbies to take up my time.

was present

The flag we wrote of was hung a year ago in First Presbyterian Ch Winnipeg. Five Colonels and Ex Cols of the regiment. The flag is in a prominent place in the church and well mounted. It is there for generations to see and mark the sacrifice of the men for whom it formed a pall. May it speak to them the message of those who are long silent now.

I am enclosing an article on Henry Kelsey. My sole reason for sending it to you is to bring this forgotten man to your notice. With your historical sense you might do justice to Kelsey in some story of which he could be the centre. You may not know the country up there where he discovered the prairies but a summer moving around there would give you the atmosphere And I know that you could do justice to the theme and the man. Some day some one is going to make this thrilling drama live. I know of no man or exploration so completely forgotten in our nistory. The prairies is the country of your rathers regiment He fell ~~at~~ leading prairie men and he lies in Manitoba Cemetery in France.

The Kelsey Papers are published by ~~the~~ the Public Archives of Canada and there is a lot of history in the introduction by Doughty and by Chester Martin. You too can link yourself to the prairies and give us a wonderful story of a stirring age there and on the Bay. Send the article back when you have read it No hurry though I have submitted it to Chambers s but it may be long for them.

I am always interested in your writings and you have done much to make Nova Scotia live for many people. I have an interest of my own down there for my boy is Prof of Pharmacology at Dalhousie He has been at Man Cemetery. You may meet him sometime.

Kind regards Happy New Year

Sincerely yours

J W Whillans

J W Whillans

I'm not a poet - I write very little

Ans'd.
Mas. 12/49

235 West 12th Ave
Vancouver B C

Dear Mr Raddall;

Here is a plaque I have made with you in mind. The two pieces of flint came from Manitoba Cemetery where Col Raddall fell and where he lies with the men he led. We got them during a family visit in 1930, also the piece of white stone from the Vimy monument which was being built then.

It has been a question as to how they could be used and finally something had to be done or they would be discarded. This is what turned out. There is no design, the pieces being put together in a symmetrical way so that they would not clash. They look something like a lighthouse or a marker of some kind.

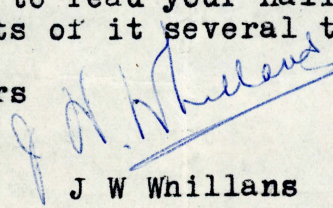
The underlying deposit there and up to the Channel and into Kent is chalk which has flint interspersed. The plaque is contained in the lid of a cold cream jar from Welwyn Garden City. Eng. The stones are set in plaster of paris which is wired. The fill in marble is from France and I got it here,

I have been slowly building up a lapidary outfit and have diamond saw by which I can slice a pebble, grinding wheels and lap. It is an interesting hobby. Most of the plaques I make are larger and I can use highly colored stones for flower and other designs.

My young people are both in Ottawa now and I am sending it to them as they are always interested in seeing the latest idea in my hobby. And they will be interested to see what I finally did with the little stones which I think they gathered during our visit to the old front. The plaque will be send on to you from Ottawa.

If you will accept the plaque and like it that is the only acknowledgement I want. It has been a pleasure to make it. I was the first to read your Halifax out of the library here and read parts of it several times.

Sincerely yours


J W Whillans

To hang, drive a medium sized small headed finishing nail in at an acute angle. Leave it out not more than half an inch

THE CHAPLAIN'S FLAG

Winnipeg Rifles 1917-18

Around you oft by blasted home and tree
Embattled men kept faith in hymn and prayer,
And from Christ's cross upon your folds so fair
They drank His cup and rose to meet, as He,
A morn that loosed hell's hate and agony;
Then, as the lark sang requiems in the air,
A holy pall o'er those He called to share
The death He died to make us whole and free.

Now, in this quiet lane you find a place;
The light of epics days, the blood that strong
Men shed their kiss in Honor's last embrace
Still on your faded fly; while round you throng
Triumphant hosts who matched their hour and trod
Death's shadowed way, to glory and to God.

J W W

DISCOVERY OF THE PRAIRIES

He came a stripling shy first of our race
From Hudson Bay by swamp and evergreen,
And stood amazed to see a new demesne
Of poplar grove, firm sod and open space;
Where red men roamed to join the chase,
Where deep rich loam and summer skies serene
Through ages gone had wrought a matchless scene-
The rolling prairies in their virgin grace,

In modest words that spoke the attless soul
He wrote of wanderings there, of hope and fear;
Long lost and scorned by jealous men the scroll
Now reappears a truth long dimmed grows clear,
And prairie rose and crocus twine to crown
Brave Henry Kelsey out of London Town.

J W W