

2311 Shakespeare St.,
Victoria, B. C.
December 2nd, 1962.

Mr. T. H. Raddall,
44 Park St.,
Liverpool, N. S.

Dear Sir:

With the annual circular recently received from the 8th (Ovseas) Battalion Association, was a copy of your letter and poem, sent to Mr. Stevens, last April. I found both very interesting. Your address was not given, so I looked it up through the local Library.

I remember your father very well. I think he came to the 8th originally as a QMS-I, but was soon commissioned, and given charge of the so-called Machine Gun section, though it is my understanding that the Colt is not really a machine gun in the proper sense, but a "light automatic". I don't think your father thought much of them.

Being able to type, and write shorthand, also to operate a mimeograph, I was "drafted" as the first Battalion Orderly Room Sergt. Could I have foreseen what I was letting myself in for? I had only one clerk to help me, only one typewriter, and at first, no files. The correspondence was massive, and literally mountains of paper descended upon me in forms of one kind or another, most of which I had to find out what to do with. The "nice" adjutant I had in the beginning was soon replaced by a sour old bully of a Scotch policeman. He was a trial in himself, but in addition I was working for the most part around the clock, and more often than not went without my meals. After about two weeks of this, I threw in the sponge and asked to be returned to ordinary duty. I think both the O. C. and the Adjutant resented my defection, and later made me aware of it.

Your father often came to the Orderly Room to consult on matters relating to his Section, and our relationship was always cordial, though after he was commissioned, they became more formal.

During the time at Valcartier, there were three great reviews of the whole Contingent, on a plain about a mile south of the camp. I was in you father's company, on two of these occasions, when we were both privileged to be spectators.

The first of these reviews was a heart-breaker. The troops went by on a battalion front, with coloured uniforms from various Militia regiments, and not a few in denims and straw hats. The last review did credit to old Sir Sam, as all were then in new, clean khaki with uniform caps. The Scottish of course retained their traditional garb, but even they had new khaki jackets.

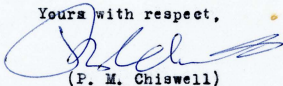
Your father was a forceful personality, and during the time he was adjutant in '16, the troops used to get a great kick out of seeing him inspect the groups of new draftees that were continually taking the places of those who had fallen by the wayside. These groups of draftees, were usually timed to be sent to the battalion, the day after we came out of the line. The first day out in billets was usually devoted to resting and "cleaning up" on accumulations of mud and vermin.

When the draftees arrived, they were usually formed up at some convenient location, and your father and the R. S. M. would inspect them. Your father gave each individual a real "going over", to the no small amusement

of the troops gathered at a respectful distance to "watch the show".

I, myself, left the Battalion at Vimy, where I had "copped a packet" which caused me to be invalided. After that I never saw your father again in the flesh. He was a soldier's soldier, and I hold his memory in affectionate remembrance.

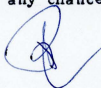
Yours with respect,



(P. M. Chiswell)

Formerly Reg'l No. 802, Sergt., 8th Battalion.

P. S. May I inquire if you were old enough to remember your father at all, and is, by any chance, your mother still living?



Dec. 6, 1962

Mr. P.M. Chiswell,
2311 Shakespeare St.,
Victoria, B.C.

Dear Mr. Chiswell,

Thank you for a most interesting letter. I can remember my father very well indeed. I last saw him when I was 12, when he came home on convalescent leave after his wounds sustained at Ypres. My mother died in 1959. On my visit to Manitoba Cemetery in 1958 I brought away a plastic bagfull of earth from Father's grave, together with a sprig of the London Pride growing there. My mother kept these in a small flowerpot until her death, and I placed them on her grave in Halifax.

As you say, Father had a low opinion of the Colt machine gun, and for that matter, of the Colt automatic pistol, with which many Canadian officers armed themselves in 1914-15. (It seems quaint to reflect that an officer's side-arm was optional in those days, so long as he paid for it himself.) For the rest of the war he carried the cumbersome but reliable Webley, which would fire regardless of mud etc. I still have the one that was taken from his body, together with his field-glasses, through which he had taken his last look in life.

Before the war, as an instructor at Hythe and later in various militia centres in Canada, he had made a specialty of the machine-gun, and had submitted to higher authority a number of carefully written reports or essays on the role it should play in future warfare. Of course, Authority in those days still thought two Maxims enough for one regiment. After 1914 many of his predictions came true.

In the winter of '16-17' he was posted to Brigade staff to work out the operational role of the m-g's in the forthcoming Vimy attack. After the die was cast, on the morning of Vimy, he made his way up to the fighting troops and remained with them, roving up and down to inspect the siting of the guns in view of the expected German counter-attacks. He was never really happy away from the Regiment, and after he recovered from his wounds sustained in June '17 he was glad to return to the 8th as second-in-command. His letters and diaries reveal his pride in the LBD's, their record throughout the war, and the great things they would yet do.

It is a matter of great regret to me, as I know it must be to veterans like yourself, that no real and detailed history of the Winnipeg Rifles in War One was ever written. About 1930, after enquiry at Ottawa, I located the officer who was supposed to write the regimental history; but he confessed he was a busy lawyer and would never be able to find the time. By then, of course, most of the officers and men had scattered to various parts of Canada, with addresses unknown.

Sincerely,
L.A.R.

2311 Shakespeare St.,
Victoria, B. C.,
December 17th, 1962.

Mr. T. H. Raddall,
44 Park St.,
Liverpool, N. S.

Dear Mr; Raddall:

Thank you for your kind acknowledgment of my previous letter. Yes, it was unfortunate that the Battalion history never got written. The parent Militia unit issued two souvenir booklets, one in 1933, and another in 1958, for the 50th and 75th Anniversaries. Both these contain "thumb-nail" sketches. Your father's picture is included in the 1933 Edition. I don't know if you have seen either of these booklets. The earlier edition is hard to get now, but if you do not have one, there is a chance one might be got (perhaps from the effects of some deceased), by advertising in the Winnipeg papers.

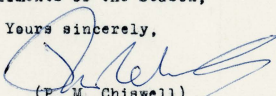
You will no doubt have one of the group photographs of the officers taken at Valcartier, in which your father is the only one wearing "cotton kit" - the rest all being in serge.

There is an officer at the extreme right of the group, a rather "skinny" man. He was Capt. Eadie, and for some reason, he did not go with us from Valcartier, but joined in the field some time later as a reinforcement officer. I remember with horror, the shocking fate which befell him. He was sitting in a latrine "up the line", one of those open-to-the air affairs, when a shell came and blasted him. He fell, mortally wounded into the filth below, and we had to fish him out, with the filth seeping into his open wounds. Ugh! He died about two hours after we got him onto a stretcher, and out of there.

Incidentally, in that officer-group mentioned, I only know of one who is alive now. The front row is all gone, without exception!

Compliments of the Season,

Yours sincerely,


(P. M. Chiswell)