

*BARRIEFIELD CAMP
SUMMER of 1916*

*156TH
LEEDS & GRENVILLE OVERSEAS BATTALION C.E.F.*

The 156th Leeds & Grenville Battalion Headquarters was located at the armouries in Brockville, Ontario. Recruiting stations were set up in Gananoque, Mallorytown, North Augusta, Prescott, Cardinal, Kemptville, Merrickville, Spencerville, Toledo, Athans, Delta, Lyndhurst, Westport, and Elgin and commanded by Lieutenant-Col. Bedell. At local fairs, military officers were busy signing up recruits right through the summer and into the fall of 1916.

LEAVING FOR CAMP

The recruiting in South Crosby totaled 50 men, the majority of whom were from Elgin. This portion of the 156th, who spent the winter in the village, left for Barriefield Camp on May 29, 1916. The local platoon of the 156th that was recruited in Gananoque and spent the winter there drilling left on the 30th. The Morrisburg platoon left on May 31st, and in Delta, before they left for Barriefield Camp, a banquet was held by the village for the 156th battalion, which had been drilling there.

By June 2nd, there were 9,188 overseas infantry soldiers at Barriefield Camp and, in total, 11,000, including the departmental corps. The battalions were 93rd Peterborough, 109th Lindsay, 130th Perth, 136th Port Hope, 139th Cobourg, 146th Kingston, 154th Cornwall, 155th Belleville, and 156th Brockville. Brig.-General Hemming intended that one battalion shall march to the city every day, and once each week the entire camp population shall march through the city to allow citizens, tourists, and visitors to see the fine material the 3rd district had secured for overseas service. This was an essential part of a soldier's training; it prepared him for the arduous duties of the field when sent to the front.

UNDER CANVAS

Each battalion had its own band, bugle band, and section in camp. The camp was a 788-acre facility that housed the soldiers in tents. The 156th settled in a corner near the old artillery grounds. When they arrived, the camp was muddy but drying up fast, but that didn't last. An all-night thunderstorm on June 3rd had the men waking up to the grounds covered with mud and pools of water. Most of the tents had been floored by the men themselves and at their own expense, so they would not suffer the inconvenience at night by becoming compelled to sleep on the wet ground.

By the middle of June, the mud holes were drying up, giving every battalion a chance to clean up its lines and give a touch of order and neatness to the camp grounds.

So far, the use of the whitewash brush has been impossible, but hopes of continued good weather would see them come out. In the following weeks, the 156th put up a mess tent, installed shower baths, and decorated the centre of the front line with a large mound with the numbers 156 in large figures, marking out the official title of the Brockville and District Battalion.

On June 9th, Major-General Sir Sam Hughes, Minister of Militia and Defence, came to Barriefield Camp and announced that the camp would lose several battalions. Some would go to Camp Borden and others to Valcartier, reducing the camp population to three battalions. Those remaining were the 154th, 155th, and 156th. It was his impression that the grounds at Barriefield Camp were far too small to handle so many men and do the work justice. He said, "Men must be trained and well trained to equip them for their serious responsibilities at the front."

THE BANDS

The bands of the 156th Battalion often took part in church services. The men were called up to play on numerous occasions at lawn socials and other public gatherings. In September, they played at the Kingston Fair for three days.

CAMP RULES

There were rules in camp; all ranks were forbidden to bring intoxicants of any description into camp or to consume any intoxicant there.

Officers were not going to stand for men taking "French Leave" A year or two sentence would soon put the idea of deserting out of the minds of such men. It was generally believed that deserters who were caught and given terms of imprisonment by the civil authorities were free from further service on completion of their term of imprisonment, but this was not so. Just as soon as the term of punishment was over, the deserter was taken in charge by the military authorities and was compelled to complete his term of service. At Barriefield Camp, it had been suggested by Provost Marshal Lieut. Jim Graham that all deserters be taken and placed directly on board ship and then sent directly to the trenches and made to fight in the hottest part of the battle line.

It was made clear by an order issued on July 21st in the daily orders of camp that men who were declared medically unfit to accompany a C.E.F. unit overseas could not claim a discharge from the service. When he enlisted, it was for the period of the war, and when considered unfit for one class of service, a soldier could be held for another during the period of the war. The government intended to make some use of these men with slight defects that preventing them from going overseas.

Every man wearing the King's uniform at camp either had been or would be given a full medical fitness examination for service at the front, and all had to be inoculated.

FEEDING THE MEN

Feeding the men had been organized in such a way that there was never a day that a soldier did not get everything and as much as he wanted to eat. In the government books that were seldom read by anyone and were for the most part only used as a reference in the correction of figures, may be found the dry statement that the following is the daily ration for one man. Bread 1 lb, meat 1 lb, potatoes 1 lb, bacon 2 oz, beans 2 oz, split peas 1-2 oz, coffee 1-3 oz, pepper 1-3 oz, jam 2 oz, butter 2 oz, white sugar 2 oz, vegetables (fresh) 6 oz, cheese 1 oz, salt 1-2 oz, tea 1-4 oz, milk powder 1-2 oz. The men had chlorinated water to drink and milk from cows that had made their way onto the camp grounds.

PETS IN CAMP

Each battalion had a mascot or several. The 154th had "Teddy," a big black bear, and "Daddy," a wolfhound, as well as a list of other breeds that would fill a dog show. The 155th had three pet bears and "Qunite," the dog owned by Lieutenant-Col. Adams. The 156th had "Bruin," the brown bear, who for more than a year had been doing guard duty at Morrisburg and who had enlisted just a few moments before it departed for Barrierfield Camp. "Major," the wonderful old military Collie, "Laddie," the Boston Terrier owned by Lieutenant-Col Bedell, and "Buster," the dog. The 156th even had a pet goat owned by Cpl. Joseph Henry Mallette, whose younger brother had put an ad in the Kingston Whig-Standard after the men left for England stating that he would like to have "Billie" as a keepsake while his brother was overseas. At Headquarters, "Ken" the Airedale was owned by Brig.-General Hemming, "Ponto" the Spaniel was owned by Lieutenant-Col. Brown, and "Nig" was owned by Sergeant-Major Groom.

TRAINING, DRILLS, SCHEMES & MARCHES

When it came to training, the soldiers of each battalion were divided up into smaller groups so more personal instruction could be given. Each soldier attended the bombing and grenade school and the trench warfare and military engineering school, where trenches were dug to mimic the ones used in France and Flanders. They took a course on signalling and machine guns. Each soldier was taught musketry and rapid loading and firing using dummy cartridges, where they were taught to count the rounds as they were fired so that in battle, with all the excitement, time wouldn't be lost for reloading. Cooking and first aid were also taught to the men. Physical drills, nighttime tactical schemes, and daily marches were performed by each battalion.

SPORTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Life at camp wasn't all work and no play. Each battalion had its own baseball and football team, and track and field events were often held. The 156th baseball team

couldn't be beat, and in football, they gave the other battalions a run for their money. Entertainment often came to camp. Many ladies and others had given so many concerts. On August 12th, the Philharmonic Society of Utica, New York, put on a concert. It was on August 27th that John Brown, an ex-policeman of New York City, told the story of his life to a large crowd in the big tent of the 156th. All listened intently to the thrilling story of this man's remarkable career.

The men were allowed to leave camp to go into the city in the evenings, making sure they were back before lights out. In July, there were over 200 men of the 156th on farm furlough. They were still paid the \$1.10 a day offered to them on enlistment, and the farmers gave them room and board along with a bit of pocket money.

GIFTS

The soldiers were given many gifts. The 156th Battalion received pocket-size testaments sent to the camp by Lady White, the wife of the Minister of Finance. James Mackenzie of Brockville sent a box of magazines and 20 gramophone records. At their colours ceremony in Brockville, Mrs. G. T. Fulford presented the men with 600 packages of Players cigarettes, and Mr. J. Gill Gardener presented them with 600 cigars. Sir Thomas White presented the 156th with 1200 copies of the New Testament. The I.O.E.D. national women's charitable organization presented Lieutenant Col. Bedell with a check for \$150 to buy comforts for the boys once they were overseas.

156TH COLOURS PRESENTATION

The presentation of colours to the 156th Battalion in a ceremony on August 17th in Brockville was a splendid one. At 4 a.m., every man was ready for his breakfast, and a little after 5, the battalion marched out of Barriefield camp and proceeded to the R.M.C. dock, where they embarked on the "America". It only took the six hundred men a few minutes to embark, and the steamer lost no time swinging out from the dock and heading for the river. Before long, the men were settled on board, and some began to sing, and the band played an occasional selection. They were welcomed along the St. Lawrence by hundreds of campers in tents and cottages. The boys waved handkerchiefs, hands, and flags along the way. The river was full of boats of all sizes and capacities, and the steamer was kept busy answering with three whistles.

After a delightful run of five and a half hours, the "America" reached Brockville at 11:30 a.m. The dock and the riverfront were lined with people cheering them on. Across the water came the sound of their voices, and the boys of the 156th sent back their greetings.

The battalion disembarked in quick time and marched to the front of the courthouse, where Mayor Wright read a brief address of welcome and handed over to Lieutenant Colonel Bedell the keys and freedom of the city.

After the ceremony at the courthouse, the battalion marched to the fairgrounds, where a bountiful dinner was waiting for them. After dinner, the men were allowed to rest until 2:30 p.m., when they fell in for the afternoon parade. The grandstand and every inch of space at the fairgrounds were crowded with people, and hundreds of automobiles and vehicles of all kinds lined the race track.

The altar of drums was prepared in the centre of the grounds and was draped with the Union Jack. The ceremony opened with the singing of the good old hymn "Onward Christian Soldiers," led by the band of the 156th. Lady White, wife of the Minister of Finance, and Mrs. Jackson, Regent of the I.O.D.E. of Brockville, took up a position in front of the altar of drums, each handing to a kneeling subaltern the Regimental and King's colours. In the formal presentation, Lady White said, "Colonel Bedell, officers and men of the 156th of Leeds and Grenville, I have been invited by the Brockville Chapter of the Daughters of the Empire to present to you on their behalf these beautiful flags. These flags represent the loyalty, devotion, and affection of all who have contributed toward their production, and I'm sure they will forever be prized by you and cherished by your battalion. It is my earnest hope that these colours may accompany you always in honour and victory and float proudly over you when you return to Canada, which we shall look joyfully forward to. I have very much pleasure now in formally asking you to accept these colours for the 156th battalion." As Lieutenants Rowe and Woodcock rose from their knees with the beautiful colours waving in the slight afternoon breeze and faced the battalion, they were given the Royal Salute and then, in the usual way, marched slowly through the lines of the 156th and were saluted again by each company.

Following the presentation, the 156th marched passed in columns of companies and columns of platoons, with Brig-General Hemming receiving the salute. As they passed the saluting point, they were the admiration of all. Lieutenant-Col. Bedell had every reason to feel proud of his men, and they received a tremendous ovation from the thousands of people who witnessed the ceremony. At 4:30 p.m., the battalion marched back to the boat where they left their rifles and were dismissed until 7:30 p.m., giving them a chance to visit with family and friends.

At 7:30 p.m., the battalion paraded on the market square, and every man was on hand to answer the roll call. At 7:40 p.m., the buglers sounded "retreat" and the bugle band gave it a touch of ceremony, which has been a part of camp life since June. An immense crowd gathered to see the boys parade, and after several blocks of the main street, the 156th embarked for Barriefield Camp, landing back at the R.M.C. dock at an early hour.

INSPECTIONS

There were weekly inspections at Barriefield Camp. The men lined up and marched past Brig-General Hemming and his staff, with each battalion headed by their

brass band, bugle band, and pipe band. Brig-General Hemming and staff received the salute as the platoons passed by.

The camp was inspected by Major General Lessard, Inspector General of the Canadian Forces for Eastern Canada. His inspection of the troops at Barriefield Camp on September 13th found him pleased and satisfied with the work of the C.E.F. He was struck by the keenness of the officers and the readiness of the men to respond to every command given.

On September 21st, Field Marshal His Royal Highness, the Governor General of Canada, visited Barriefield Camp and was very impressed by the smart appearance, steadiness, and cheerfulness of the troops. He thanked each commanding officer and officer for the good work done in the time that they had had and was pleased to learn that the discipline of the troops was generally very good.

LEAVING CAMP FOR OVERSEAS

Just as they did in 1915, the citizens of Kingston and the area came together to put on a Thanksgiving dinner for the men before they left Barriefield Camp. They wanted to show them how much they appreciated their sacrifice, patriotism, and loyalty to Canada and the Empire.

On Thursday morning, October 12th, the troops from Barriefield Camp were on their farewell parade on the streets of Kingston, where thousands of citizens came out to get that one last glimpse of them before they proceeded overseas.

On Saturday, October 14th, the 155th and 156th battalions marched in the early evening from the camp to the city, and each man was fully equipped, wearing his pack and his kit bag full of clothes and other things. The other things amounted, in many cases, to eatables and little extras that were gifts from family and friends. The two battalions left Kingston on four trains. The 156th was divided into two parts, and Lieutenant Col. Bedell took charge of the first train, with "A" and "B" companies. This long train pulled out, another backed in, and the remainder of the battalion "C" and "D" companies took possession, with Lieutenant Col. Wilkinson in charge.

While on the train, the Military YMCA representative distributed among the men 3,000 postcards, 1,500 sheets of writing paper, 700 envelopes, and \$43 worth of stamps. Despite the late hour, Brockville station was lined deep with people as the train stopped for a short while and huge mysterious boxes were loaded on. After travelling a short distance, the boys of the 156th soon found out that besides 850 luncheons and 850 pairs of socks, there were several other things, each to the number of 850, or one for each man, given to them by the residents of Brockville.

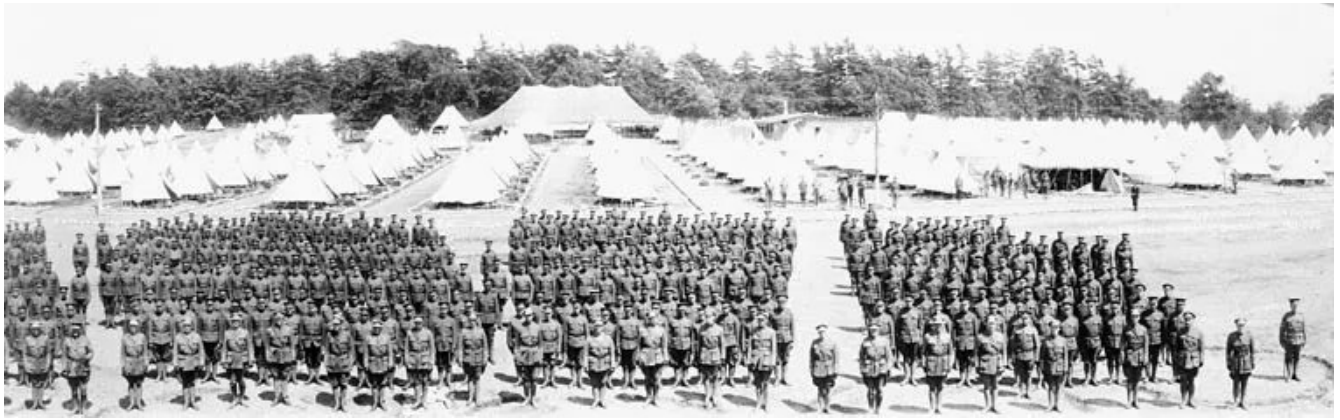
As a result of the splendid response given by the citizens of Brockville to the request for literature for the men of the 156th battalion, fourteen boxes containing hundreds of bound books, thousands of magazines, 5,000 envelopes, 10,000 letterheads, song sheets, songbooks, and games were collected. The shipment weighed one ton and was one of many shipments of this kind. It was made possible through the cooperation of individuals and organizations who collected, packed, and forwarded the community work of Brockville to the YMCA for use among the soldiers overseas in the trenches, rest billets, and hospitals. The Hon. J. D. Reid, Minister of Customs, gave a gift of \$500 to the 156th Battalion to supply comforts for the men during their journey to England.

The troop trains arrived in Halifax, Nova Scotia, on October 17th, and the men boarded the S.S. Northland. At about 5 pm the next day, the S.S. Metagams, the S.S. Northland, and the S.S. Cameronia were escorted by a cruiser from Pier 2 and headed for England. As the ships began to make their way out of Halifax harbour, the men of each battalion were called to "fall in" and were issued a life belt to be worn until they reached the other side. The orders were that they could only be removed when they slept, but they had to be within arm's length. The trip started with calm waters, but by October 24th, the seas turned very rough, and many of the men were sick. At night there were no lights on deck, and all port holes had to be closed so they would not be seen. On the afternoon of October 26th, the convoy was met with torpedo destroyers from England, who safely guarded them through to Liverpool, where they arrived the next evening. The following morning, the troops boarded trains for the 227-mile trip to Witley Camp in Surrey.

The 156th Canadian Infantry Battalion was absorbed into the 2nd, 21st, and 38th battalions, a draft was also supplied to Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, with the remaining men going to the 6th reserve battalion.

This was the second camp at Barriefield to be conducted since the war began in August 1914. The first camp was conducted in 1915 and over 6,000 men were trained on Barriefield commons for overseas service.

Barriefield Camp officially closed on Saturday, October 28, 1916.



Barriefield Camp



S.S. Northland



Witley Camp