Preparations for War and the Australian Military Campaign at Gallipoli

History

The 25th of April 1915 is forever etched into Australian history as ANZAC Day, and commemorated annually to remember the soldiers who paid the ultimate sacrifice. When hostilities were declared on the 4th of August 1914, Australia greeted the news with enthusiasm and quickly announced their support for England, promising a first contingent of over 20,000 soldiers.

After training in Egypt, the Australian soldiers were sent to Gallipoli, their first battle as soldiers representing the young Australian nation. With the merging of the Australian Imperial Forces with the New Zealand contingent, they were quickly nicknamed "ANZAC"s, a name that is perpetually linked to the fight at Gallipoli. The Australians fought hard and furiously, earning a fierce reputation throughout the Empire, and a high level of respect from their enemies, the Turks. With the evacuation in December 1915, the Australians returned to Egypt before embarking either to the Western Front in France and Belgium, or the Light Horse campaign in Palestine.

Purpose and scope

This exhibit of the Australian Military Campaign at Gallipoli examines the nation's preparation and engagement from a postal and social history perspective. The postal history is represented by the postal markings in Australia and abroad throughout the Dardanelles campaign with references to key texts published on the subject. Many of the military cachets are rare with as few as ten or less recorded for many of these handstamps. Important extracts from the soldiers are highlighted in italics and convey the personal feelings of the troops, the hopes of the soldiers and those of a nation. In addition, there are photographs and maps which provide further insight to this iconic campaign. Those items which are boxed in bold represent items of rarity or historical interest.

Treatment

An arrangement of this exhibit in chronological order would provide a disjointed representation of the material which would be difficult to interpret. A more realistic approach was defined featuring eight main categories comprising:

1. The Military Training Camps
2. The Troopship Convoys
3. The Australian Imperial Force in Egypt
4. Lemnos Island
5. The Gallipoli Campaign
6. The Hospitals and Convalescent Homes
7. Prisoners of War
8. The Legacy of the Gallipoli Campaign

Relative rarity of the material

Australian mail from the Training Camps, Egypt, and the Gallipoli Campaign is relatively scarce when compared to Great Britain, the leading nation who participated in the conflict. By way of comparison, 58,000 Australian soldiers served on the Peninsula, whereas 489,000 British troops were involved in the campaign. The survival rate of letters, postcards and photographs reflect this statistic.

When the Australians landed at Gallipoli, the terrain was so inhospitable that the soldiers had to dig into the hillsides to protect themselves from the Turkish bullets. They quickly became known as "dugouts" and at the left is an original photograph illustrating the appalling conditions in which they lived for the eight months of the Gallipoli campaign.

Principle references:
"Australian Imperial Forces Postal History 1914-18" by Bob Emery (1983) and the supplement (1988)
"British Empire Campaigns and Occupations in the Near East, 1914-1924" By John Firebrace (1991)
"Gallipoli, the fatal shore" by Harvey Broadbent (2005)
The Australian War Memorial Archives

This exhibit is dedicated to my grandfather, Lieutenant Norman Tutton, who was born at Northcote, Victoria in 1893, one of six children. He was a member of the 55th Infantry, a local militia group, and worked in a factory prior to the outbreak of the First World War. He joined up immediately, and was drafted into the 6th Infantry Battalion as a Sergeant and sent to the Broadmeadows Training Camp.

The Landing

He embarked on the troopship A20 "Hororata" on the First Convoy which left Melbourne on the 19th of October 1914, arriving in Egypt on the 2nd of December. The 2nd Infantry Brigade trained at the Mena Camp before sailing to Lemnos Island in early April 1915. He was part of the first landing at 9:00 am on the 25th of April. Alighting from the longboat, the 6th Battalion was under heavy fire from the Turks. His best mate, Lance Corporal Ray Wasley, was by his side when he was killed at the landing. Finding his pack heavy and cumbersome, my grandfather ditched it (with his new camera) on the beach, grabbed his rifle and sprinted to the cliffs for protection. The pack was retrieved by some troops following the landing and sent to his parents in Northcote. Since the postal facilities at Gallipoli were non existent at this time, his parents assumed that he had been killed at the landing.

Award of the Military Cross at Gallipoli

A month later, a letter arrived from him, stating that he was alive and well. He was promoted to Sergeant Major following the battalion's heavy losses at Krithia and was awarded the Military Cross for bravery during the feint on the German Officers Trench on the 7th of August 1915. The citation reads:

"He displayed great coolness and courage as leader of one of the attacking parties. When the officer commanding was badly wounded he took command and continued the advance under heavy fire from rifles, MG's and bombs. When the attack failed he got the remnant of the party to our own trench, but himself remained outside and kept the enemy trenches under observation for about three hours, being under heavy fire the whole time. When a second attack was attempted, Lt. Tutton led another party with great gallantry. His courage and devotion to duty in this critical situation, and under very depressing circumstances, are deserving of special recognition".

This action represents one of the forty-eight Military Crosses awarded to Australian soldiers at Gallipoli

The Western Front

After the evacuation in December 1915, the 2nd Infantry Brigade was sent to the Western Front in France in March of 1916. Promoted to Lieutenant, my grandfather was awarded a bar to his Military Cross on the 23rd of August 1918 at the battle of the Herleville Wood where he led the platoon on an attack of the German trenches. After the Company Commander was wounded, he took command of the unit. They suffered a gas shell bombardment for five hours where all the officers except one was killed. He took command of the remaining companies and evacuated the position. Only 77 men survived.

Life after the war

After the war, my grandfather became a District Commissioner in New Guinea from 1919 to 1928. Marrying Gwendoline in 1926, he established a printing business with his brother in law in Northcote which lasted almost fifty years. He bought a house in Ivanhoe and had two children, Bill and Elizabeth (my mother). He became the Honorary Secretary for the 6th Battalion RSL and marched every year on ANZAC Day leading the battalion up St Kilda Road to the Shrine of Remembrance. He died on the 12th of February 1978.

The Call to War

Great Britain declared war on Germany on the 4th of August 1914. The Commonwealth of Australia announced a separate declaration of war the following day, and a commitment was made to provide the First Division ready to embark by the 21st of September. With the declaration of war, patriotic fervor gripped many young Australian males, with thousands enlisting in the Australian Imperial Forces in the following days. Amongst them was my grandfather Norman Tutton, who was involved in the Victorian Militia when the war broke out.

First Expeditionary Force Marching to Camp.

A picture postcard of the "First Expeditionary Force Marching to Camp", with a scene of the new recruits marching up Elizabeth Street, near the corner of the Bourke Street GPO.

My grandfather recalled *"when we all joined up at the Victoria Barracks in St Kilda Road, we were marched off late in the day to the Broadmeadows Training Camp. One enterprising young chap with a horse and cart was selling pies and cold beers to the new conscripts on the way and did a roaring trade".*

A real photo postcard of the Koondrook Railway Station and the departure of the 17th Light Horse Regiment off to camp in 1914.

Recruitment Campaigns

The first wave of volunteers 1914

The Australian government's promise of 20,000 troops on the 5th of August 1914 created a swell of volunteers across the country. The task of raising and mobilising the enlisted recruits was given to William Bridges, Inspector General of the Australian Military Forces, who was to become its commanding officer. Bridges structured the force according to national demographics: New South Wales provided battalions 1 to 4 of 1000 men each; whilst Victoria provided the same number of troops with the 5th to 8th Battalions. A third brigade was to be drawn from the remaining states: Queensland (9th), South Australia (10th), Western Australia (11th) and Tasmania half the 12th, the remainder coming from Western Australia and South Australia.
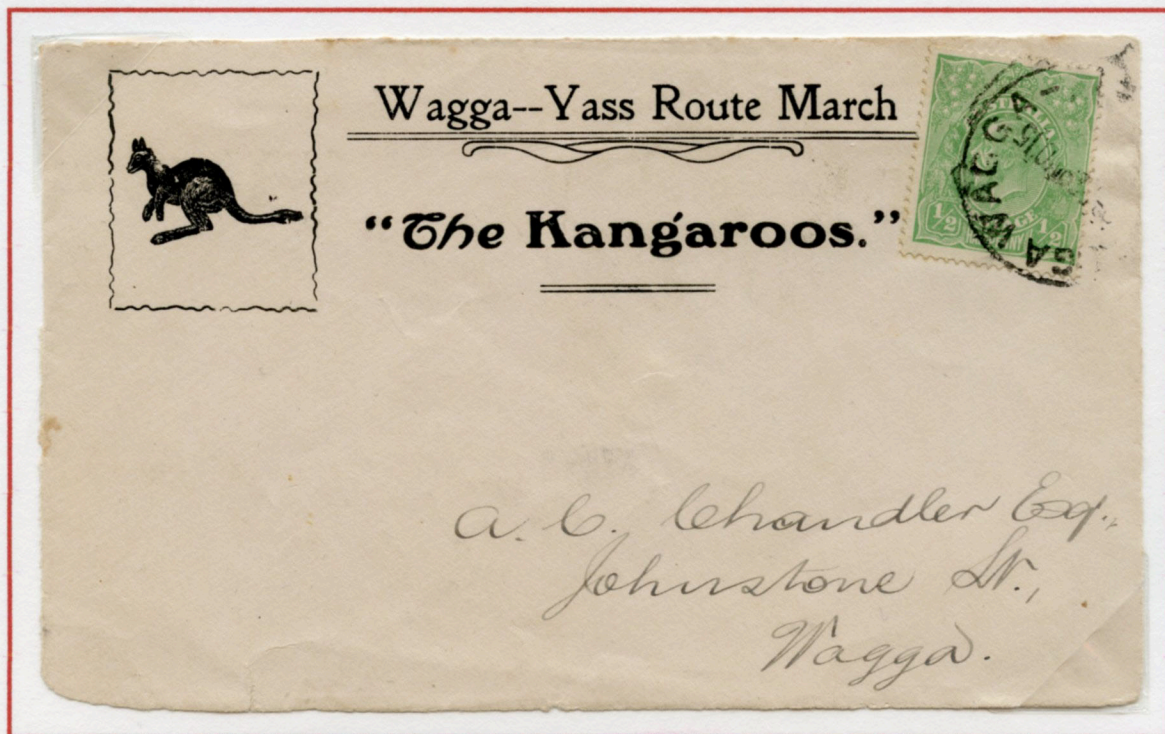
Recruitment of reinforcements for the Gallipoli campaign 1915

A steady stream of volunteers maintained the flow of new recruits for the Gallipoli campaign. Most of these soldiers did not see themselves as future killers, maimed or dead, but as returning heroes. Once the stalemate and slaughter of the Dardanelles campaign was reported in the media, the numbers of enlistments gradually began to fall.

Recruitment marches during the Gallipoli campaign   October - November 1915

One method of stimulating recruiting was for a small body of volunteers to start from a country town, with the party growing in size as it marched on to the capital city. These bands of volunteers were given patriotic names such as "The Kangaroos", "The Waratahs", "The Coo-ees", etc.

A December 1915 cover front locally addressed within Wagga Wagga promoting "The Kangaroos" recruitment march to Sydney, a distance of 350 miles. The march started with 88 men, and ended with 230 soldiers enlisting.

Ex Emery

The only recruitment march envelope recorded
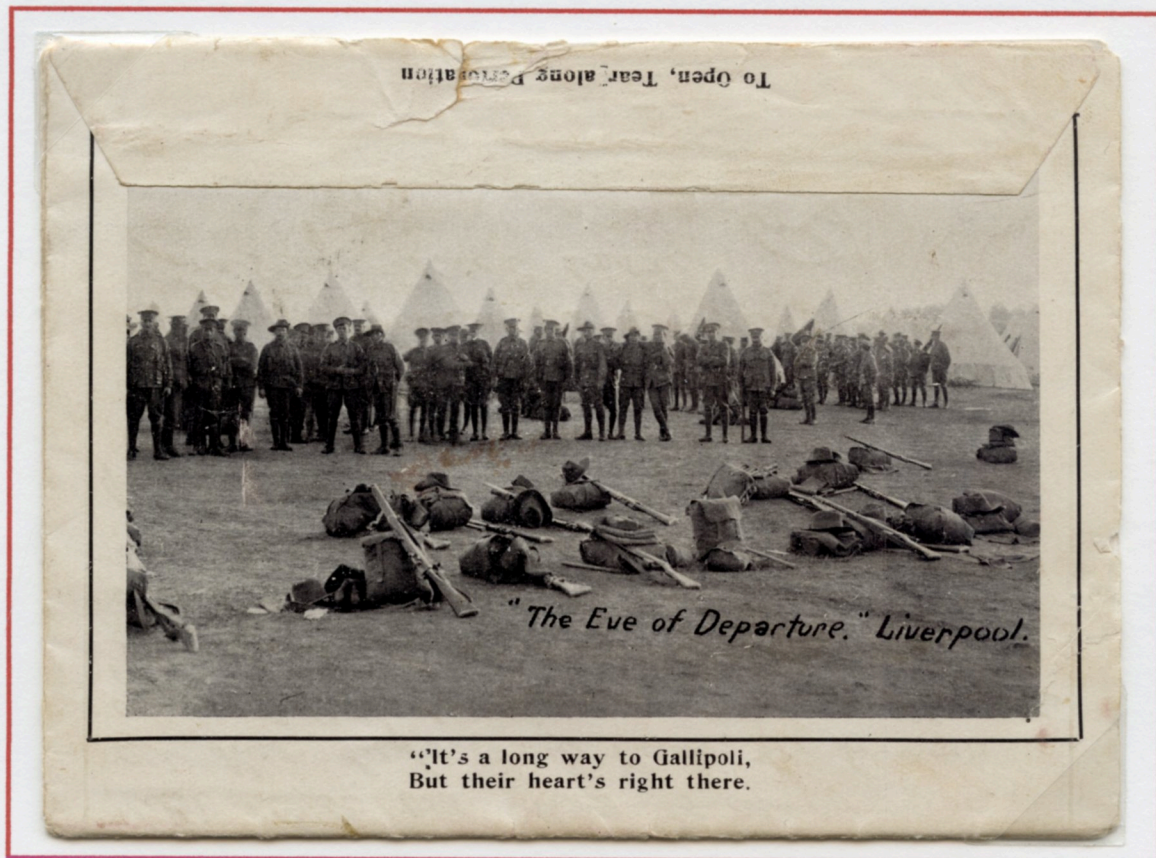
1. The Military Training Camps

Background

Great Britain declared war on Germany on the 4th of August 1914. The Commonwealth of Australia announced a separate declaration of war the following day and a commitment was made to provide the First Division ready to embark by the 21st of September. In August 1914, the armed forces mostly comprised of the local militia and rifle clubs.

The Australian Imperial Force and those who had volunteered for service abroad had to be trained in a totally different fashion. Enlistment centres and training camps were quickly established in each of the Australian States. Many of these camps were built at temporary sites such as race courses and show grounds.

Military camp postal services

Military postal services were slow to be organised and most camps used the civilian postal facilities. Gradually, as the camps became more permanent and established, postal facilities were made available at the camp post offices, each having their own cancellation. In all, 51 military camp post offices were opened during the course of the war.

A privately printed souvenir lettersheet comprising nine photographs of the Liverpool Military Camp in New South Wales (not recorded by Emery), dated 16th of September 1915 and addressed to Inverell. The text for the photograph on the reverse reads *"It's a long way to Gallipoli"*.

This is the only example recorded of this lettersheet

Ballarat, Victoria

The Military Training Camp at Ballarat in Victoria was only opened for a short period of time from the 11th of August 1915 until its closure on the 4th of December 1916.

Registered Mail

A registered envelope cancelled by the "MILITARY CAMP/ BALLARAT" cds dated the 23rd of August 1915 and addressed to Drysdale in Victoria.
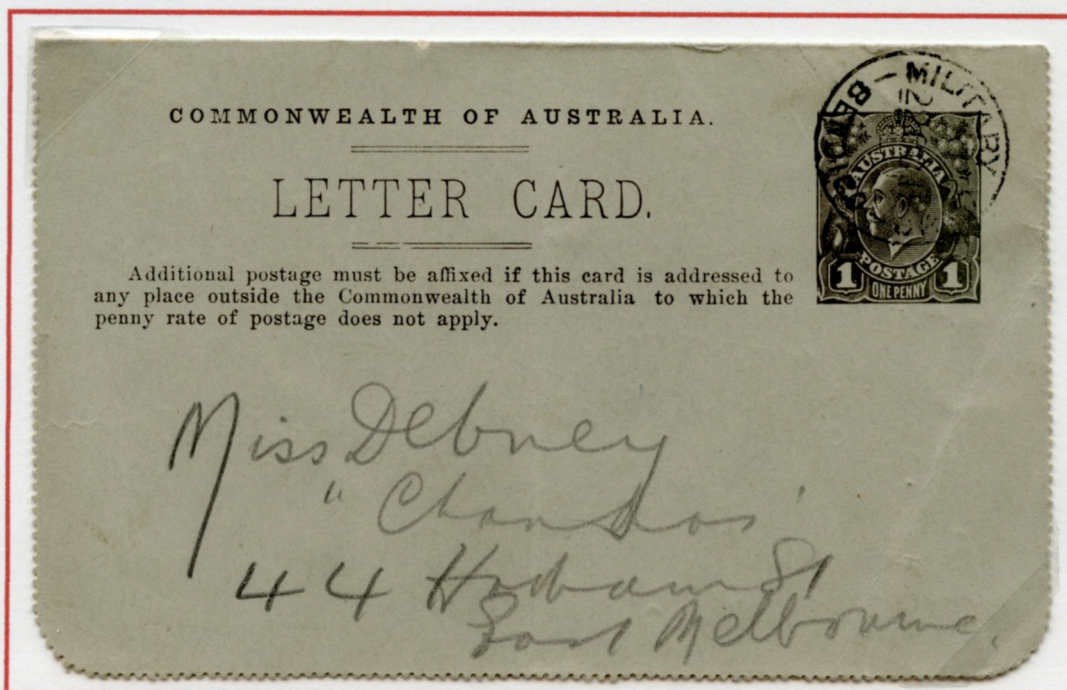
This envelope was posted less than two weeks after the opening of the camp.

Registered mail from the smaller satellite military camps is very rare, this being the only one recorded from Ballarat.

Bendigo, Victoria

Established on the 17th of August 1915, the Bendigo Military Camp was open for 15 months before closing on the 30th of November 1916.

A lettercard cancelled by the "MILITARY CAMP/ BENDIGO" cds dated the 22nd of October 1915, two months after the camp opened.

Less than half a dozen covers are recorded from the Bendigo Military Camp.

Blackboy Hill, Western Australia

The Military Training Camp at Blackboy Hill in Western Australia was opened on the 29th of August 1914 and closed on the 31st of December 1918. This was the principal military camp in Western Australia. The civilian post office near the camp was reallocated as a military post office, using the civilian datestamp.

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

LETTER CARD.

Additional postage must be affixed if this card is addressed to any place outside the Commonwealth of Australia to which the penny rate of postage does not apply.

Mrs F. A. Stahl
74 Ward st
Kalgoorlie

A scarce lettercard cancelled by the "BLACKBOY-HILL/ WESTERN AUSTRALIA" cds dated the 5th of August 1915.

The lettercard was sent by Private Oscar Stahl of the 11th Infantry Battalion to his mother in Kalgoorlie. He died of wounds on the 25th of July 1916 at The Somme in France.

At the left is a photograph of Private Stahl taken in 1915 before embarkation to Egypt.

Below is his "dog-tag", which each soldier was issued with showing his name, battalion, and serial number.

Blackboy Hill, Western Australia

Stationery provided by voluntary organisations at the camp

The Perth YMCA lettersheets below were unknown to collectors until the discovery of the Oscar Stahl correspondence in 2014. Each lettersheet has the illustration on the reverse of "A part of the Perth Y.M.C.A. quota for the front". Only 6 lettersheets are recorded.

A PART OF THE PERTH Y.M.C.A. QUOTA FOR THE FRONT.

Both lettersheets are posted at Perth on the 12th of April and the 11th of May 1915 respectively, presumably when Private Stahl was on leave. The top lettersheet was taxed "2d" since it was sent without a 1d postage stamp. Private Stahl writes *"Posting without stamp…...have no money or stamps"*

Blackboy Hill, Western Australia

Stationery provided by voluntary organisations at the camp

The Perth YMCA lettersheets below were unknown to collectors until the discovery of the Oscar Stahl correspondence in 2014. Each lettersheet has the illustration on the reverse of "A part of the Perth Y.M.C.A. quota for the front". Only 6 lettersheets are recorded.

A PART OF THE PERTH Y.M.C.A. QUOTA FOR THE FRONT.
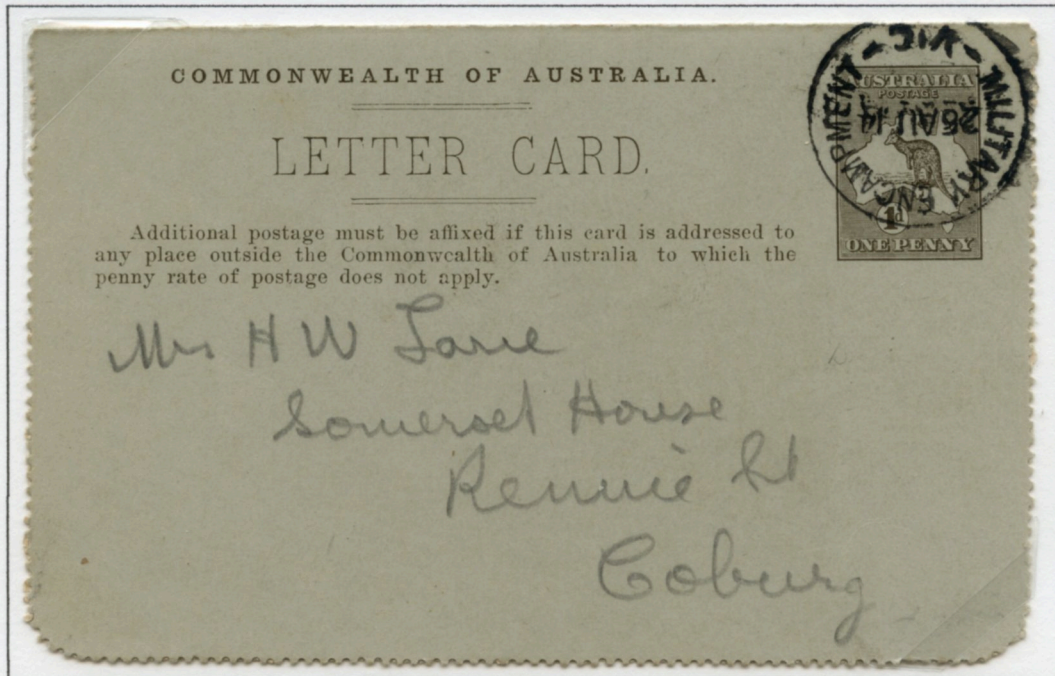
Photo—Lafayette.   Herald Print, Perth

Both lettersheets are posted at Perth on the 12th of April and the 11th of May 1915 respectively, presumably when Private Stahl was on leave. The top lettersheet was taxed "2d" since it was sent without a 1d postage stamp. Private Stahl writes *"Posting without stamp…...have no money or stamps"*

Broadmeadows, Victoria

The Military Training Camp at Broadmeadows was opened on the 17th of August 1914 and closed on the 23rd of March 1919. It was the largest training camp in Victoria and used two types of military camp datestamps.

The Type 1 datestamp used at Broadmeadows

The first datestamp of this camp was initially used during the voluntary Easter Camps in Victoria in 1913. At the outbreak of the war it was transferred to the Broadmeadows camp.

A lettercard cancelled by the first type "MILITARY ENCAMPMEMT/ VIC" cds of the Broadmeadows Training Camp on the 26th of August 1914, the earliest recorded date of use. This cancellation was only in use for a couple of months before being replaced by the Type 2 datestamp.

The lettercard was written by 2nd Lieutenant Clement Lane of the 6th Infantry Battalion who was killed in action at the landing of Gallipoli on the 25th of April 1915.

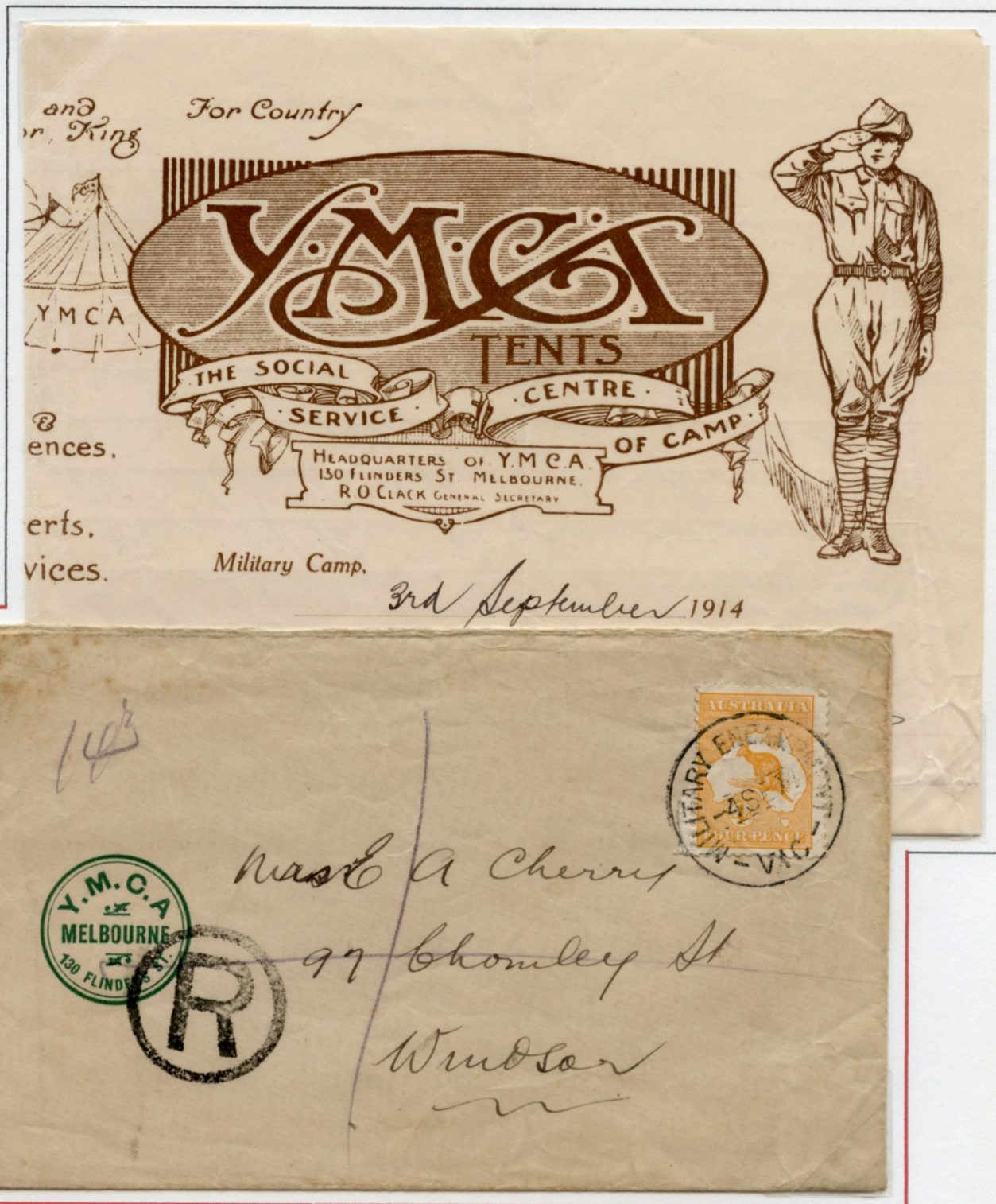## A photograph of my grandfather at the Broadmeadows camp

A photograph of the Sergeants of the 6th Battalion at the Broadmeadows Training Camp in October 1914.

Standing on the left is my grandfather, Norman Tutton.

A privately printed registered envelope for the YMCA in Melbourne and cancelled by the Type 1 "MILITARY ENCAMPMENT/ VIC" cds of the 4th of September 1915. The elaborate YMCA writing paper was purposely printed in Melbourne, and only known used from the Broadmeadows camp.

This letter was written by Sergeant Rod Cherry of the 5th Infantry Battalion who served throughout the war and returned to Australia on the 3rd of December 1918.

Registered mail from the military camps is very scarce, with five examples recorded from Broadmeadows.

Claremont, Tasmania

The Military Training Camp at Claremont was the largest training camp in Tasmania and was established in November 1914 and closed in November 1918. It replaced the original camp at Pontville opened in August 1914, which was considered unsuitable because of the lack of water.

Stationery provided by voluntary organisations to soldiers at the camp

A YMCA letterhead specifically printed for the Claremont Camp and dated the 3rd of August 1915. It was written by Private Archibald Batchelor of the 26th Infantry Battalion who writes:

"I am still kicking about, as lively as a cricket and as happy as a lark………the YMCA supply paper, envelopes, pen and ink free".

Private Batchelor was killed in action at Villers Bretonneux on the 13th of November 1916, just over fifteen months after this letter was written..

Young Men's Christian Association
FIELD SERVICE DEPARTMENT.

For God, for King, and for Country.

With his Majesty's Commonwealth Forces on Active Service.

FIELD SERVICE BUILDING,
Reinforcements Camp,
Claremont, Tasmania, Aug 3rd 1915.

Paper Supplied by The Stationery Co.,
125 Collins Street, Hobart, Tasmania.

Hello Uncle

How are you getting on, still

alive,
I am
and
the w

A real photo postcard published by H. Davis & Co. of Hobart depicting soldiers in training at the Claremont Camp.

Enoggera, Queensland

The military training camp at Enoggera was the largest training camp in Queensland. The post office was established in March 1915 and closed in October 1918, although it operated as a convalescent camp after the war.

Rare usage of the civilian postal cds before the issue of the military camp datestamp

An envelope cancelled at Enoggera on the 15th of March 1915 and addressed to the United States of America with the Brisbane censor datestamp of the same day in red.

The envelope was written by Private Douglas Arguimban of the 2nd Light Horse Regiment, who was wounded at Gallipoli, and returned to Australia on the 17th of July 1916.

Two envelopes are recorded bearing the postal datestamp for mail from the military camp, and before the issue of the military camp datestamp.

A rare colour real photo postcard of "Fraser's Camp".

Although the Enoggera district had been used by the militia since 1855, the site was only purchased by the Federal government in 1908. It consisted of four paddocks: Fraser's; Rifle; Thompson's and Bell's.

Exhibition Showgrounds, South Australia

The military camp post office at the Exhibition Showgrounds in Adelaide was opened on the 30th of August 1915 and closed thirteen months later on the 25th of September 1916. The datestamp is quite scarce, and covers are rare.

Stationery provided by voluntary organisations to soldiers at the camp

An Adelaide YMCA Army Tents front addressed to Adelaide and cancelled by the "MILITARY CAMP EXHIBITION/ S.A." cds dated the 31st of August 1915, the day after the military camp post office opened. *Ex John Bell*
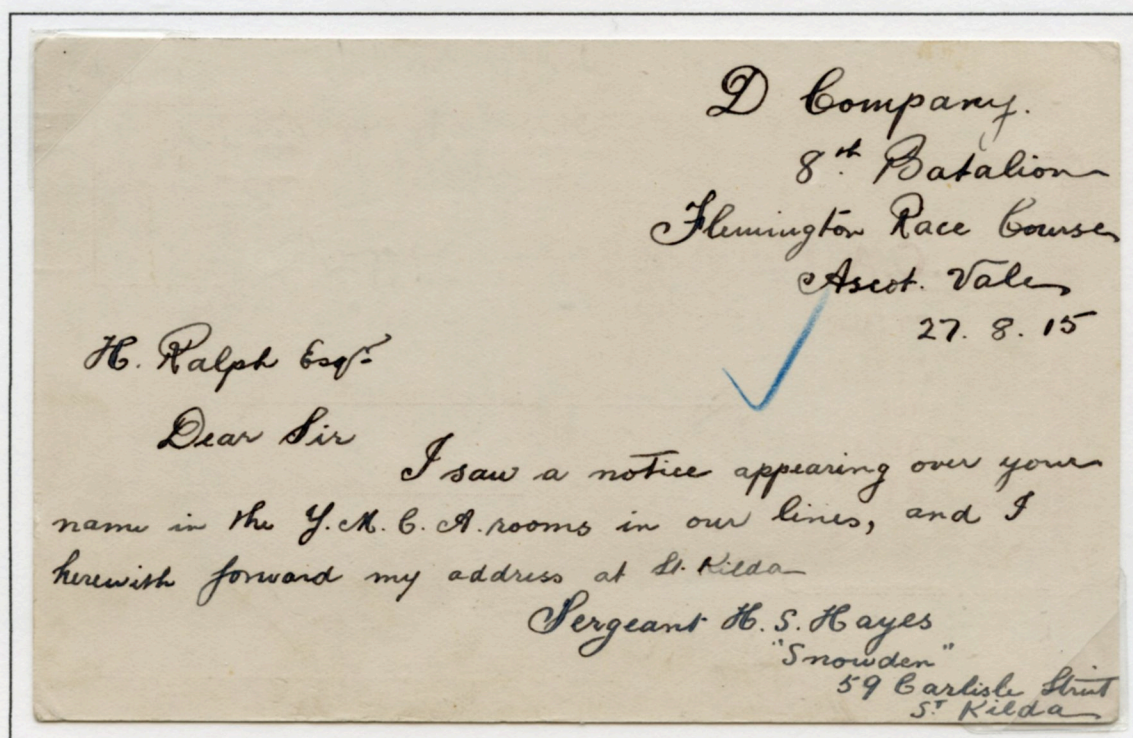
Flemington, Victoria

Stationery provided by voluntary organisations to soldiers at the camp

The military camp post office at Flemington was opened on the 26th of July 1915 before closing on the 23rd of June the following year. Although this office was opened for twelve months, the Type G datestamp is surprisingly rare.

A YMCA printed postcard written by Sergeant Hayes of the 8th Infantry Battalion to St. Kilda, Melbourne.

The card is endorsed "Flemington Race Course, Ascot Vale" and dated the 27th of August 1915, a month after the new Flemington Military Camp datestamp had been issued.

Geelong, Victoria

Another small camp was the Geelong Military Camp which was established on the 11th of August 1915 and closed on the 26th of November the following year. The Type G datestamp was used at this camp.

An envelope cancelled by the "MILITARY CAMP/ GEELONG" cds dated the 9th of September 1915 and addressed to Footscray in Melbourne.

A real life postcard sent under cover and addressed to my Auntie Claris

A real life picture postcard headed "Geelong Camp 26.10.15" and addressed to my Auntie Claris, my grandmothers sister.

It was written by Gunner Vernon Wilton (at the left) of the 4th Field Artillery Brigade. He was awarded the Military Cross after being severely wounded at Houquet Farm in France, and was repatriated back to Australia on the 22nd of February 1917.