Nursing Sister's World War I Belt with Memento Badges

B.C. History of Nursing Society
Online Exhibit

Prepared by Glennis Zilm

September 2010

Updated March 2014

World War I Belt with Badges

This Nursing Sister's leather belt, studded with 17 brass badges from patients, belongs to the B.C. History of Nursing Society's Archival Collection.

The belt was donated to the Society in 2003 by **Marian Buechert**, Langley, BC. She had been given the belt years before by Helen Wickham, a former neighbour. The belt had belong to an older (unnamed) relative of Wickham's, who had served in Africa as a nurse during the Great War. Unfortunately, Buechert knew no further information about this Nursing Sister.

Background

In World War I, Canadian Nursing Sisters wore brown leather belts as part of their uniforms. As the War neared its end, patients often donated badges to the nurses as mementos. Some of these badges are from South African regiments, which supports the assumption that this nurse may have served in Africa. Several badges show the King's Crown, which was worn by British and Canadian regiments serving in the area.

Glennis Zilm, of the BC History of Nursing Society, would be pleased to hear from anyone who can add further information. Please get in touch with her through "Contact Us."

Front

Back

Front and back views of belt -- 19-inch waist

Buckle – shown closed and open

Badge 1

Royal Army Medical Corps (British)
Beret Badge
(1 7/8 inches)

King's Crown - the crown on badges and other military insignia changed depending on who was on the throne; between Queen Victoria and Queen Elizabeth II, badges of the military units of the British Empire used this design.

Laurel leaves surround the caduceus with serpent (representing medicine) above a banner with ROYAL ARMY MEDICAL CORPS.

Badge 2

Grenadier Guards Beret Badge
(1 ¾ inch high)

The motto, which surrounds a rose of the
Order of the Garter, reads HONI SOIT QUI
MAL Y PENSE ("Shame to him who evil thinks");
this is the motto of the Grenadier Guards,
an historic infantry unit.[1]

The form represents an exploding grenade
or mine, and usually represents Engineers.

1. Retrieved from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grenadier_Guards July 22, 2010

Badge 3

Royal Army Medical Corps Badge
Collar badge
(1 3/8 inch high)

Similar to the badge shown above, but smaller.

Referred to as a "collar dog" and in this case
 would be worn on the left collar

Badge 4

Collar Badge or possibly Shoulder Bar
(1-inch high)

IX is possibly a regimental unit number.

Possibly African corps , based on the
  animal shown.

Badge 5

Suffolk Regiment Beret Badge
(1 ¾ inches high)

The crown sits atop a circular band
with the motto MONIES INSIGNIA
GALPE; this surrounds the badge
of the Rock of Gibraltar, and shows
the castle and a key[1]; oak leaves
wreath the motto and the banner
scroll reads THE SUFFOLK REGT.

The regiment, originally raised in
1685, was stationed in Gibraltar from
1769 to 1783, at which time it took its
badge as part of the regimental crest.[2]

1. Retrieved July 22. 2010 from http://www.suffolkarmycadetforce.fsnet.co.uk/sacf_photographs/
sacf_archives/suffolk_regt_cap_badge.htm

2. Retrieved July 22, 2010 from http://www.stedmundsbury.gov.uk/sebc/visit/sufreg.cfm

Badge 6

Engineers' or Fusiliers' Beret Badge
(1 3/8 inches high)

UNKNOWN REGIMENT

Represents an exploding grenade
(but different from badge 2 above).

Centre of badge shows a Sphinx
over the word EGYPT surrounded
by laurel leaves.

Badge 7

Possible Collar or Epaulet Badge
(1 ¾ inch diameter)

Difficult to make out wording below crown: HONI.SOIT.QUI.MAL.Y.PENSE; this appears to be the British Royal shield[1] and coat of arms, including the motto at bottom: DIEU ET MON DROIT with the lion and unicorn rampant and lion over the George V crown.

No stud backing; appears this was sewn on.

1. Retrieved July 22, 2010, from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dieu_et_mon_droit

Button (badge) 8

Button
(3/4 inch diameter)

ROYAL ARMY MEDICAL CORPS
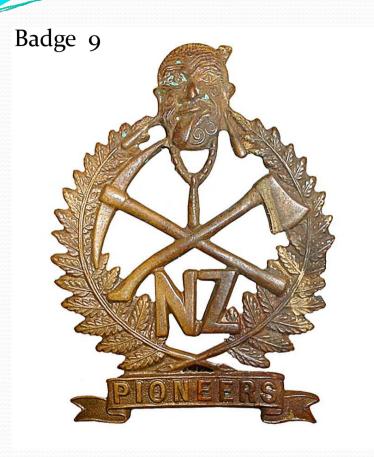
Stud backing is missing

Badge (button) 10

Canada General Service Button [1]
(3/4 inch diameter)

Centre shows a maple leaf, surround by
a motto that is unreadable; above
the motto is a crown, and above that
the word CANADA.

Stud back is missing.

1. Walter Brooks, Collection Manager, The Military Museums, Calgary. Email
communication, March 5,2014

Badge 9

**New Zealand Pioneers Engineers
  Beret Badge**
(2 inches diameter)

NZ PIONEERS

Pick and shovel indicate Engineers corps

Maori face at top of encircling leaves

Badge 11

Canadian General Service Cap Badge
(1 ½ inches high)

Stud backing.

South African Army Cap Badge
(2 inches)

1ST SA INFANTRY BRIGADE[1]

Stud backing

Outer circle around a pronged springbok contains the mottos UNION IS STRENGTH and EENDRACHT MAAKT MACHT (Afrikaans -- "union maketh might").

1. Retrieved from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_African_Army July 22, 2010

Badge 13

50th Battalion Shoulder Bar – Calgary Regiment, WWI [1]
(1 inch high)

Badge worn by non-commissioned members on the epaulet. (The unit later became the Calgary Tanks, currently the King's Own Calgary Regiment.)

Stud backing.

1. Walter Brooks, Collection Manager, The Military Museums, Calgary. Email communication, March 5, 2014.

Badge 14

Canadian Engineers (Army) Badge
Possibly a collar badge
(1 ¼ inches)

Maple leaves surround CANADIAN ENGINEERS
and a central beaver.

Safety pin replaces original stud backing.

Sources: Confirmed that this is the badge of the Canadian Military Engineers, formed 1903 to 1911, by Ken Holmes of the Canadian Military Engineers Museum [cmemuseum@forces.gc.ca], personal communication, July 24, 2010. Additional information from Sandra Johnson Penney, Curator/Conservatrice, CME Museum/Musée du GMC

**DLI [Durham Light Infantry]
Beret Badge**
(1 5/8 inches high)

The badge is similar to the cap badge of
various British Light Infantry regiments,
of which the DLI was one of the
earliest regiments.[1]

1. Retrieved July 22, 2010, from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Light_Infantry; and
from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Durham_Light_Infantry

Epaulet Badge
   [**?South African Engineers or Fusiliers?**]
(1 5/8 inches)

Similar to badges 2 and 6 in that it
   shows the exploding mine/grenade,
   but this shows an elephant and
   a cheetah (or other cat).

Stud back missing.

The Kings Beret Badge
(1 ½ inches high)

Prancing horse above a banner with
THE KINGS.

The badge is similar to the cap badge of
The King's Regiment (Liverpool) except
the word in that banner under the
"White Horse of Hanover" simply
reads "Kings".[1]

Part of the prong for the beret badge
shows below the banner.

1. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/King%27s_Regiment_(Liverpool)

NOTES:

Beret badges (also called "cap badges" in the UK) have a central "prong" on the back that fits into a slit on the beret or cap.

Collar badges have two small prongs on the back that fit through the collar and are held in place with stud fastenings; these were generally referred to as "collar dogs."

Epaulet badges were used by some countries; an epaulet (or epaulette) is worn on the shoulder and usually only bears the rank of the wearer. Epaulet badges were gradually replaced with embroidered badges, often made with metallic threads.

Buttons have one stud on the back rather than two.

ADDITIONAL REFERENCES

"World War I nurse's belt with badges." (2003, June). *History of Nursing News, 14* (1), p. 18. [Available www. bcnursinghistory.ca]

http://www.britishbuttonsociety.org/ButtonIdentification/index.htm