

**Glenbow Archives**  
**M-7484-5b, Hugh Murray McQueen's First World War letters**

[letter from Marion Price to Murray's father, Alexander McQueen]  
[on letterhead: Canadian Medical Corps insignia]

No I Canadian General Hospt.  
B. E. F.

France  
Jan 16<sup>th</sup> 1918

Dear Mr. McQueen

This evening I had a letter from John Peat telling me the lad Murray was in this Hospt. I rushed to the registry office to locate him but also found he had been evacuated to England five days ago. And just to think of it, I had charge of the ward just next to him. To say I am grieved beyond words does not half express it. If he had only thought to ask the Sister on the ward for me. Of course as we have upwards of two thousand patients you can believe it is hard to know very many but as a rule we get in touch with a good many of our boys. I was a bit worried about "Paul Turnbull" (I think you may know him) but found a lad who has just left him was in the same draft, tells me he was O.K. when he saw him last.

I spent my two weeks leave in Oct. with Ed McCracken, he is expecting to come to France any time now. Also met young MacLean we had fun together such as "eats" + theatre.

I begin to feel anxious to get home, now almost three years. Will try for transport duty this summer. Had a talk with the Major who looked after Murray, says he had a mild dose of gas. No doubt you are quite re-assured ere this. Just wanted to tell you how I regret not having seen him here.

Sincerely  
Marion Price

[letter from the Red Cross to Murray's mother, Mrs. A. M. McQueen]  
[on letterhead: Information Bureau. Canadian Red Cross Society...]

21.1.18

Dear Madame

I beg to inform you that Private H. M. McQueen 124756 50<sup>th</sup> Canadians is now at Essex County Hospital Colchester, Essex, England where he has been seen by our Red Cross visitor who reports he was gassed + his Chest is chiefly affected. We are glad to be able to tell you she says she forced[?] him up + looking fairly well. He was sitting around the fire with the other men + was[?] very cheery and says he was surprised to find himself in England as he did not think he was bad enough to be sent over

Yours truly  
[illegible] Kathleen [illegible]

[on letterhead: Canadian Chaplain Service insignia]

C Div. Hut 31 Woodcote Park  
Epsom Surrey

[ca. 1918]

Dear Mother:

Rec'd Jean's parcel a couple of days ago + it was just fine. Had also a letter from Jean, Dad + Marj. I guess from now on you'd better write to Bishopsgate because I'll be moving around quite a bit until going back to France. Am feeling pretty much O.K. again. Some of the boys that got the gas the same time as I did are getting to Canada + I'm mighty sure they were no worse than I was. One in particular was not nearly so bad. But they have had to keep pestering the doctors + always going sick, saying there is something the matter with them whether there is or not until they get sent home. "Swinging the lead" its called in the army + its not my style, I can't go it. I'm not exactly anxious to get back to France but I'd sure like to be there when peace is proclaimed. Hughie is still over there + going strong.

Had an awfully nice letter from Jean Cameron yesterday. They seemed to have been having some trouble with the gas in Petrolea. Too bad about Eugene Fisher. Its pretty hard luck to get it before having at least a small crack at Fritz. And Don MacLean too. I remember seeing him just before we left Canada. Seems quite a while ago but its only two years. I was in London last week end + went up to the Hotel York + saw Mr Jim McClister for an hour or so. He had seen Dad only a short time before so we had a good talk.

Mac is a wise boy to go after his matric + if I were him (a fool's advice) I'd study my head off + when I got it I'd learn to play the piano if it took me 24 hours a day. That sounds funny after all the fuss I made but I sure do realize my mistake now.

I hope Marj's face is all better + that she's been able to have her much-looked-for trip to Petrolea + that you are fully yourself again Mother. It seems to me Dad's working terribly hard. I wish he'd sort of hang on to his ambition. He's bound to get there without working his head off. Mr. McClister thinks he's where he (Dad) should have been years ago.

I sent you a picture I had taken while in Hospital in Colchester, Mother. I'm glad Mrs. Fairbank got my letter from France. The safety razor she sent me is just the thing.

I'm going to Glasgow + Edinburg this time, Mother. I tried to get away on leave last week with a fellow whose home is in Edinburgh + who lives near Grosvenor Crescent, but the doctor wouldn't mark me out. so I don't know now when I'll be going. Probably several weeks

Tell Jean to give my best regards to Vera Wright + Mabel Kilner if she sees them + call up Floss + tell her you heard from me. I simply cannot sit down to write letters I haven't even as much patience in that way as I used to have. I guess I'm about 2¾ % more nervous than I was 'avant la guerre'

Dad wanted to know what engagements I had been in this last time over. I was in Belgium + at Lens but you tell Dad that that Passchendaele stunt was absolutely beyond description - the dirtiest job ever tackled in France. The boys at Cambrai had a picnic beside it.

Love to all  
Murray

[on letterhead: Eglinton & Winton Hotel]

Belfast, April 10 1918

Dear Dad:

We are over on leave where the shamrock grows + enjoying ourselves to the fullest extent. Myself, Sergeant Jack McCabe from Ottawa and Vic Tovell from St. Mary's. We stayed in London two days; have been here two days; and leave for Glasgow this afternoon. From there we are going to Edinburgh; then to a town called Bolton in the Midlands + from there back to Shornecliffe. If you are in Ottawa at all, Dad, please look up Mr. McCabe, Jack's father at 179-181 Wellington street.

I guess you've heard of 'Robinson + Cleaver's' linens? We were all through their place yesterday afternoon saw them making the linen + believe me its no wonder it costs so much.

Rec'd Jean's parcel just before leaving Epsom with the sweater she knitted me. Its just fine - I have it on now.

Love to you all.  
Murray

[on letterhead: Canada Y. M. C. A. insignia]

Shornecliffe April 17/18

Dear Mother:

Arrived back from my leave this afternoon + believe me it takes the heart out of a fellow to have to come back to this. I'm not at the reserve yet but at the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Command Depot. My category is DI which means a few weeks physical training to be fit. I'll be having it here.

I had a good leave with two mighty fine fellows. I wrote from Belfast telling you about it. We went from Belfast to Glasgow + I was out in the afternoon to see Mrs. Kay. Went down town with her as she was just going to her dress maker's as I got there. We went to Edinburgh that night + the next day I went up to see Mr. Peter Morrison. He is one of the finest men I ever met, Mother. He's about six foot three or four + built in proportion with a chest on him like the end of a box-car. He is awfully interested in everyone from home although he has never seen any of them. I showed him pictures of Jean + Margaret + left one of those of me taken in hospital with him. (by the way, Mother, I sent an enlarged one of those to you that they had in the window of the shop in Colchester where it was taken. I didn't know it was there until I saw it. We went down to Colchester for a day). We had expected to go back to Glasgow again from Edinburgh + had told Mrs. Kay so but Vic Tovell was very anxious to go to Bolton, in the Midlands of England, to see some friends of his, so we went down there + from there to London on Sunday.

Mr. MacKenzie, Mr. McClister + Mr. Van Sickle were up at the office when I first went up (the beginning of my leave) and Mr. MacKenzie let me have thirty pounds. I know its a lot, Mother, but its the last I'll get from him. Tell Dad that from now on I'm going to live within my eighteen dollars a month or such of it as they will give me.

Mr. Ronald Fraser came down to Epsom to see me + I had a day in London with him. He was to meet us when we came on leave but he didn't show up. He'll have some snaps to show you when he gets back. I only wish I was going back with him but I guess Mr. Armstrong Hanna or even Sir Robert Borden himself could do nothing now.

Love to all of you, Mother  
Murray

[P.S.] Write to Oil Well Engineering until I'm settled

[on letterhead: The Salvation Army]

April 20/1918

1<sup>st</sup> C. C. D. Shornecliffe Kent

Dear Mac:

Rec'd Jean's letter + snaps when I got back here off leave. They sure are fine + as far as style goes you've got a little on anything we see over here in male attire + the girls - well we can always pick the Canadian girls when we see them. Had a good time on leave Mac + saw a lot of the British Isles but, believe me, its a sun-of-a-gun to have to come back to boards + blanket. I'd like to get back home even for only a week before going back to France but its an impossibility; especially now with this scrap going on. I was talking to Frank Yerkes yesterday. He's a Sergeant here + the only Petrolea fellow I've seen.

I'm writing on this paper + mailing without a stamp, Mac, because I haven't a penny in the world. But I've turned over a new leaf - (day before yesterday) + from now on I'm going to quit spending + also quit drawing on Dad. When you write again you can send me some stamps (English) + a sixpence 'cause you've got a position + I've got a job.

Love to all.

Murray

[P.S.] Write to Bishopsgate

A Co'y 1<sup>st</sup> C. C. D.  
Shornecliffe May 4/18

Dear Mr. MacKenzie:

Back on the old job of physical training and forming fours.

When I got back I wrote to Dad the first night + told him I was going to try to get along without any more money but we only get hospital pay down here so I'm writing now to ask you for a few pounds please.

We get from six to eight weeks training here. We have physical training - 'jerks' as we call it - for four and a half hours a day, so I guess a fellow ought to be either cured or killed by it.

Had a letter from home yesterday. They all seem highly pleased with a new McLaughlin-six, seven passenger car they have. I know young Mac will make it work overtime anyway. He'll probaly give up the idea of the army now.

In a letter from Petrolea I learn that Frank Pollard has been wounded. You'll probably remember him. He only went to France since this scrap started I think. Was an instructor in England for some time.

Hoping to hear from you soon I am

Yours sincerely  
Murray McQueen

[on letterhead: Canadian Chaplain Service insignia]

A Co'y 1<sup>st</sup> C. C. D.  
Shornecliffe Kent

May 7<sup>th</sup> 1918

Dear Dad:

Mothers + Marg's letters rec'd a couple of days ago +, as per usual, was delighted to get them. I guess I haven't written since I got the last letter from you either.

A new McLaughlin six - eh Dad. I wish to God you'd drive into this camp to-night + take me home in it. I hope the car has more attraction for Mac than the Army has, altho' I'd hate him to be a conscript.

I met Lloyd Lott of Sarnia when I was on leave. He was a Lieut. in the 149<sup>th</sup> + since coming over here has invented some petrol tank for aeroplanes + has made a fortune of it. When I saw him he had just returned from Italy. Been there in connection with his patent.

Say, Dad, did you know that Mr. Brown of Mr. MacKenzie's office in London was dead? He died last September but I didn't know about it till I went up to the office.

This place I'm in now is the Canadian Command Depot. You see I was marked Di out of Epsom which means six to eight weeks physical jerks. This is where we get it. We have no equipment or rifles + do jerks all day with no puttees or coats or caps on. Its not bad but the first three or four days makes a fellow sore all over. I don't mind a little of it but they give us too much.

I've been on quite a few funeral parties since coming here. I suppose you see them (mil. funer) quite often in Toronto now with so many of the boys back there. We buried a couple of fellows who died from wounds, rec'd in that Zeebrugge + Ostend naval raid, last week.

A military funeral is alright in some ways but its pretty hard for the fellows own people.

I wrote to ask Mr. Mack for a couple more pounds Dad, but as yet have had no reply. I haven't been out of the camp only on marches since coming almost a month ago. Have had no pay + have not been able to even get my laundry from the wash woman + she's been bringing it up every day. However I have no desire to go out anyway. I'm satisfied now. I've had my rest + my leave + that's all a fellow wants when he comes back to Blighty (which, by the way, seems to be getting quite a habit with me) so they can send me back whenever they want to now. I guess another little trip won't do us any harm.

Received the Posts Jean sent, on Saturday + every one in the hut has read them. All war stories now, like everything else

There was one in particular that I noticed in the Post of March 28<sup>th</sup> I think, entitled 'Going In' probably you read it. It was alright + I suppose, would pass Jake with people at home who don't know but some of the stuff is pretty raw. For instance the troops wearing their tin hats about twenty miles behind the line - nothing doing. At least we don't anyway.

Well Dad, paper is scarce altho' free so I'll have to close.

Love to all  
Murray

P.S. Address letters to Bishopsgate

[on letterhead: Canadian Y. M. C. A. Mother's Day. May 13, 1918.]

Sunday May 12/18

A Co'y 1<sup>st</sup> C. C. D.  
Shornecliffe Kent

Dear Mother:

The date printed on the top of this sheet is wrong but nevertheless it is alright of the Y to get it out isn't it? They were selling a big Carnation + three or four sheets of this paper to-day for fourpence. You know there are all sorts of Y M C A huts + Church Army huts + Salvation army huts + army Canteens around all the camps here. The Y here in our camp is very good. Concert parties from London Etc. or lectures of somekind every night. All of it is buckshee for the troops of course. The concerts now don't seem quite so good as they were when I was back here last year though. You see, Mother, I'm in the same camp altho' it isn't the 8<sup>th</sup> Reserve now. The 8<sup>th</sup> is now in Witley (near Bramshott camp) + I'll be going down there from here.

Received a letter from Shin yesterday. Had a letter from Marguerite Cameron which I haven't answered either. I'll be writing to Marg. (ours) this week. I wonder if the Camerons ever got the photo I sent them; the same one as you have, taken in hospital. I went to Colchester for a day

when on leave + there was an enlarged picture of me in their window which I sent home but I guess you haven't gotten it. It's probably in the bottom of the Atlantic.

I've been feeling much better the last week than since coming out of hospital altho for the last four days I've had Marg's complaint - sore face. However its almost O.K. again. I guess a fellow's blood is bound to get out of order with the grub we get. You can send some sox when you aren't busy, Mother, with a few pairs of thin light ones mixed in now + then. That peanut butter of Jean's was the very best yet + comparing the cake from home with the cake here is like thick cream compared to skimmed milk. Paper finished, Mother, so must finish

Love  
Murray

[P.S.] Write to Bishopsgate

[letter from Kate A. MacLean to Murray's mother, Mrs. A. M. McQueen]

The Boar's Head.  
Colmonell - Ayrshire

15<sup>th</sup> May - 1918

My dear Sue,

It's several weeks since I had Jean's long delightful letter, telling me how much stronger you were + that you were fairly on your feet. I do hope you gain every day + that the summer will see you quite back to your old self - stronger indeed - sometimes one is in better health after a bad illness + you certainly had a hard time + all your family with you.

And Murray called on the Kays last month. (I have not been in Glasgow since early in March). Maggie was awfully pleased to see him, admired him immensely + wrote me how proud his father + mother would have been to see how nice he looked. He, with others, went on to Edinburgh that night + did not return by Glasgow. They were hoping to see them again + Allie Kay went to their Over Seas Club on the Saturday but no one was there. But probably you have heard all about it. The great thing to us was that he was not in France - France almost means death to us now, so many of our dearest friends have fallen this spring. These have been dark days + we feared the worst + every soldier I ever met said Amiens must go but so far we still hold it. And now some think the end will come this summer. One man who was home in March said the fighting would go on till Oct. 1919 has taken to writing his wife that it will soon be over - there are signs - he even regrets having to send for new clothes because he won't need them long. Of course he knows nothing about it really - but he has been out since 1914 - + this is the first time he has ever suggested such a thing.

I wonder if you remember the Fairbanks meeting friends of mine crossing to Vancouver. Roxburgh was their name + the boy was a great friend of Jack Kay. Well, he was sniped on the 23<sup>rd</sup> March - he was 6 ft 5 in. We have been heart broken about him - from the day he could walk he was out + in our house - except that he had all his education at a boarding school - + it came very near our own family.

I can't tell you how I felt Donald McLean's death. I did not know the boy except as a little child but knowing he was so near us in Scotland + expecting to see him gave us a special interest. Then he wrote me on the 24<sup>th</sup> Jan.[?] from Italy explaining how he had been sent off hurriedly + he would be killed before I got it - I answered it at once - but long after it was returned to me marked "Killed in Action." Even Maggie who knows none of them felt that keenly. He was so proud of being right in the fighting line + said he would have picked his Squadron out of all Europe if he had had his choice.

Cathcart Kay is still on light duty - has never been quite well since his Trench fever + Gassing in Sept. We are very content - his two years at the Front quite broke him down. Our prisoner still goes on as usual in Germany but we now know it's one of the worst Camps in the Country. In July he will be eligible for exchange + we earnestly hope he may have the luck to be sent to Holland or Switzerland. At very long intervals we hear from MacLean - he thinks in his last he may be transferred but did not really know anything about it.

I have been passing through rather trying times myself lately. Early in March I went to visit my friend Rena Vevers who has taken a house there - close by the Sea. Just a day or two after my arrival she took a very bad form of Influenza accompanied by a sort of Dysentery + then Diphtheria developed. It was an uproar. Her baby had to go out of the house with a trained nurse for he too had Influenza - then another nurse was got for her. She was so ill the Dr. wired to the Front for her husband who was fortunate enough to get away right in the midst of the Retreat. However she pulled through all right, though she had her nurse five weeks. When she had been ill a week I took the Flu - so did the cook though she kept on her feet all the time - + after being in bed two days my good friend Mrs. Colquhoun took me to the Manse, infection + all, + I lay there fully a week. When fairly on my feet I went to convalesce at Glen Alby then later met Rena Vevers here - an old resort of ours - + we are the only people in the Hotel - this being an off season. We both take life easy but I expect to return to Glasgow in a few days as Cathcart Kay thinks he may have some leave. Since joining the Army he could easily count his leave by days.

Later on Mrs. Colquhoun + I are going to Folkestone to see her son who has been there for months. More than a year ago he was shot through the knee + it is still 30 per cent below normal.

You would see from the papers that my old friends the McCraes had lost their younger son in France. They are both old + this is a heart breaking blow - but they have taken up the burden + are facing life again - I had a letter from her the other day.

You have changed your address I see from Jean's letter although she says nothing of it. I had an impression that the house in Foxbar Road was not to be your permanent residence. I hope you have been successful in securing a suitable house - one that you like + will want to stay in.

I am so glad to think that Alex has done so well since going to Toronto. I should think he enjoys his life + business with a free hand, as he never did. And some one told me how much he had benefited by treatment from an Osteopath. I am certain he would. We are great believers in it + have often derived great benefit. The trouble is the cost the Glasgow men - who are Americans - charge awful prices. I'll need to be half dead before I ever go back for it would leave me destitute.

We had some lovely weather + now it is bitterly cold again - I live in my fur lined coat - + we have hot bottles every night in bed. There is a grey mist + rain hanging over the valley today - almost winter cold.

My love to all the family - + thank Jean for her nice letter - + with a large share to yourself

Yr. loving cousin  
Kate A. MacLean

Canadian Military Hospital  
Lyminge Kent

June 24/18

Dear Mother:

Still here but feeling fine. Expect to be in Bramshott within the next week at the 2<sup>nd</sup> C. C. D. Received letters from you + Dad also from Ronald Fraser. Pretty decent sort of a fellow + I was awfully sorry to have missed him at Charing Cross when on leave. However he + Jack McCabe + I had a pretty fair time when we were together. He wrote me from Jamaica on his way to Peru. I hope he sends me some of those snaps. Glad you like the enlarged photo. It was no Idea of mine to have it enlarged I assure you but saw it sitting in the window of the Khaki studio when I went back to Colchester on leave.

Some car mother. Have the snap of it that Jean sent to me.

By the way, I'm having the finest rest cure you can imagine, doing nothing except half an hours PT each day + getting good eats. If you happen to be sending anything put in some Mogul cigarettes + a few Murads. I've got a hunch for a few from smelling one in the Y. M. C. A. at a concert the other night.

Haven't heard from Hughie since leaving hospital But hope to be back in France within the next couple of months myself. Sounds funny saying I hope to be back but thats just the way I feel about it Mother. I'm pretty lucky I figure + have got just as good a chance the third time as the first. Always manage to have a good time also.

Love to all

Murray

Hut C3 C Co'y 2<sup>nd</sup> C. C. D.  
Bramshott Hants

[ca. 1918]

Dear Mother:

As you see I'm having a 'shott' at Bramshott now. I've been pretty well all over the place now + always run into somebody I know. This is a good camp + we get good treatment but there is absolutely no town for a fellow to go to to have any fun at all. Its a pretty country though + it seems theres a little wee village of some kind every few hundred yards.

Mackinnon, that used to be in the bank in Petrolea, was here but has gone on to his reserve. Young Deacon is here now They both went to the 18<sup>th</sup> in France but managed to get hit without having to wait around very long. I heard last night that Punk Pollard is back for a commission in the R.A.F. I wrote to the Camerons quite a while ago but as yet have had no answer. Received the two dandy parcels a few days ago from you, Mother + a fine pair of socks from Vic Fraser.

I've got a hunch that old Doug Grey that I was on leave with a year ago is going to marry a girl we met at that time. Anything liable to happen in this little old army, Mother. Don't even let it surprise you if I get married myself - nit!!

I suppose Dad is back from the west by this time. Is Terry McGowan + Con Peat up there dressing tools? I was surprised to hear of Dan Gallivan's death. I didn't even know he was in the army. I guess the people of Petrolea have disowned me as a native of the hard-oil town. I noticed a list of the 'Petrolea boys overseas to whom parcels were being sent' in a paper Jean Cameron sent me but mine was napoo fini. However, Mother, I'd rather not get parcels or even hear from anyone except you at home because I simply cannot write letters. I've even given up trying now. I think after a fellow has been kicking around in the army for a few years on active service he isn't just right. Well, Mother all my love to all of you at home.

Murray

[P.S.] (over)

Many thanks to Miss Margaret Murray for the box + to Vic Fraser for socks she sent.

Murray