

Bishop's Fighting Men: The Shock of War

By: Erika Mailhot and Rachael Smith

Abstract

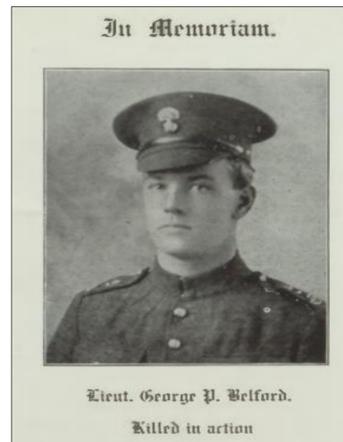
The Great War brought about much loss and despair. Families were torn apart, losing sons, fathers, brothers and friends. The pain and suffering was immense. An entire generation paid the price around the world. Canada was no exception. From the small town of Richmond QC, the Belford family experienced personal loss themselves. Both the death of their son George, and also the “mental loss” of another son, Franklin. Following these two brothers war experience will introduce the subject of Shellshock. This presentation will touch on topics such as what is shellshock? How was it diagnosed? And how was it treated?

George Percival St. John Belford

September 12, 1896 - August 30, 1918

As an undergraduate student at Bishop's University, George was a avid member of the football and basketball team, a committee member of the debate club and the basketball club secretary in 1913.

On October 4, 1915, George enlisted in the “Western Ontario Regiment” (1st battalion of the Canadian Infantry).



“The subject of our notice fought in many severe engagements and for a time seemed to bear a charmed life. Now he has “Gone West” with tens of thousands of other gallant fellows . . . all of whom have made the supreme sacrifice.” (Mitre)

1. NO.	2. RANK OR RATING	3. SURNAME	4. CHRISTIAN NAMES
	Lieutenant	BELFORD	George Percival St. John
5. UNIT OR SHIP	6. DATE OF CASUALTY	7. H.Q. FILE NO.	8. RELIGION
1st Battalion	30-8-18	649-B-5262	Church of England
9. CIRCUMSTANCES OF CASUALTY		10. NAME, RELATIONSHIP AND ADDRESS OF NEXT OF KIN	
"Killed in Action" This officer was instantly killed by a bullet from the rifle of an enemy sniper during the attack in the neighbourhood of UPTON WOOD.			

Franklin R.W. Belford

Date of Birth/Death: August 27, 1894 - March 15, 1938

Franklin was a student at Bishop's University with his brother George and was also on the football team. After graduation he worked at the Bank of Commerce in East Angus before joining the army.

On December 11, 1915 aged 21, Franklin enlisted in the war with his brother Henry in the Western Ontario Regiment (1st Battalion of the Canadian Infantry). He was at war for 20 months before going on leave.



“Corpl. F. Belford, who was invalided home several months ago, suffering from shell shock, is now returning to England in the ranks of the Forestry Battalion, raised by his father Capt. (Rev) J.B Belford” (Mitre).

What is Shellshock?

Shellshock, also known as post-traumatic stress disorder, is defined in the Oxford English Dictionary as “a psychological disturbance caused by prolonged exposure to active warfare, especially being under bombardment”. Previously known as hysteria, Charles Myers coined the new term in 1915 of “shellshock”.

Freudian Psycho Analysis

In “Beyond the Pleasure Principle”, Freud explores the phenomena now known as shellshock. Having undergone many name changes, ranging from hysteria to shellshock, Freud refers to it as ‘traumatic neurosis’ (Freud, 9). He explains that ‘traumatic neurosis’ is very similar to hysteria however, the symptoms are stronger and more subjective including hypochondria (refer to Symptoms and Diagnosis) and depression (what was then known as melancholia). A general weakness and a disturbance of mental capacities were also symptomatic At the time of his research, there had yet to be a proper or concise explanation for the war type traumatic neurosis. The occurrence of more cases of ‘traumatic neurosis’ allowed the finding that it is not directly damaging to human DNA, as was believed during the earlier stages of research (38). Research shows that, a patient returning with both mental and physical trauma would fare better than one returning with only mental trauma. The physical injury works as a catalyst of sorts, to project the trauma, to give it life outside of the patient. This explains roughly why a patient with no real physical trauma may present outward symptoms of traumatic neurosis.

Symptoms & Diagnosis

Shellshock was hard to understand and thus difficult to diagnose. The symptoms also presented themselves in a numerous and depended on the individual. Some of the common symptoms are: anxiety, muscle contractions, paralysis, nightmares, sleep disturbances, heart palpitations, dizziness, depression, and hysteria (Innovate Us).

Treatment

Medical treatment for shellshock varied from gentle to cruel. Freudian techniques were very popular in healing victims through talk and physical therapy.

There were also more extreme methods involving electric shock therapy which involved electrocuting patients. The hope was to stimulate paralyzed nerves, vocal chords, or limbs. This short-term fix was often more effective at quickly returning soldiers to the front, however; it is unknown how many relapsed after re-entering combat (Canadian War Museum).

Post-War Trauma

Frank Belford was one of the almost 10,000 Canadians diagnosed with shellshock (Canadian War Museum). Although it is unclear what treatment, if any, he underwent, what is known is that he returned to the front merely months after having been incapacitated. The question remains if Frank managed to receive treatment for his shellshock, if it was effective, or if he simply did what was expected of young men at the time: to suck it up and go back to war. Able bodied men were expected to fight, it was the honourable thing to do.

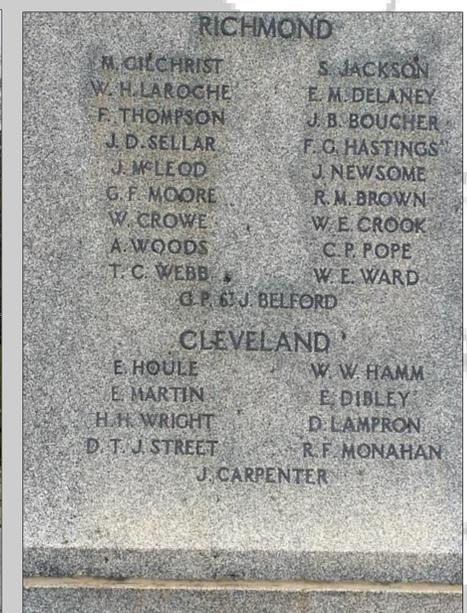
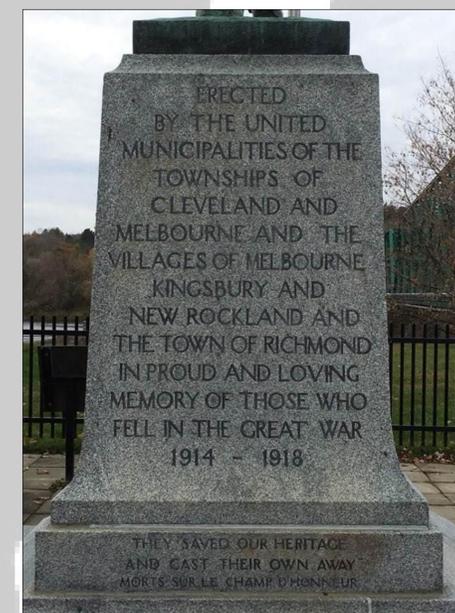


At the Movies

By: Florence Ripley Mastin

They swing across the screen in brave array,
Long British Columns grinding the dark grass
Twelve months ago they marched into the grey
Of battle; yet again behold them pass!

One lifts his duty cap; his hair is bright
I meet his eyes, eager and young and bold.
The picture quivers into ghostly white;
Then I remember, and my heart grows cold!



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