

THE INTRODUCTION

A hundred years after the armistice of World War One it is perhaps surprising to discover how that conflict continues to shape and influence studies at Bishop's University and the wider Lennoxville community. Bishop's location at the confluence of the Massawippi and St Francis rivers in Quebec, Canada, might tempt one to think that WWI barely disturbed our waters but this is not the case. Of the 117 names on the Bishop's Honor Roll of Service for World War One twenty-four members made the "ultimate sacrifice". The Chancellor, during his Convocation address in 1916, "referred most touchingly to the way in which the all-devouring war has claimed the sons of the University in ever-growing numbers, and of the cheerful manner in which they have offered themselves for freedom and the right" (*Mitre*, 23.5.2). Of the fifty-four students registered at Bishop's in September 1914, twenty-one enlisted, leaving just thirty-one students on campus – five in Divinity and twenty-six in the Arts. Three years later, during his 1919 Valedictory address, graduating student F. R Scott reminded those assembled how

On looking back over the history of the past year, the event which stands out pre-eminently as the central feature is undoubtedly the signing of the armistice... It marks a turning point in the history of the world; it marks a turning point in the history of each nation; and if education is to be the guiding principal of the future, the armistice must mark a turning point in the history of each University" (*Mitre*, 26.4.18).

Although the students praised their returning comrades as they all celebrated the Allied victory, a somber and reflective mood enveloped the University as people came to terms with the cost of war. The impact of World War One on Bishop's is harder for us to fathom separated as we are by a century. Bishop's is curiously changeless and ever changing. We walk through the same Quad, we study and reside in some of the same buildings (albeit renovated), we enjoy new facilities,

and walk by Divinity House which is currently a closed and silent mystery on the river's edge. The Bishop's "bubble" of 2019 is greatly expanded, with enrollment just under 3000 students, but the *esprit-de-corps* appears as vibrant and unique as ever.

The students in **Eng 241: War and Literature** (Fall 2018), with Dr. Claire Grogan, studied literature from and about WWI. The first two weeks of the class were spent reading earlier literary representations of war. Then each year from 1914-1918 was designated a two-week block of class-time. Reading material, provided an historical, political, and socio-economic perspective, with details about relevant technological advancements, as the class covered a large array of texts in order to note the shifts in tone, attitude, and form. We read Erich Maria Remarque's novel *All Quiet on the Western Front*, Bishop's Alumni Frederick G. Scott's memoir *The Great War As I Saw It*, and the trench newspaper *The Wiper's Times*. To facilitate a closer engagement with the war experience students "shadowed" a former member of the 1914 Bishop's community through the war. One class of every "year" was dedicated to "The Bishop's Fighting Men." Using the University's literary journal, the *Mitre*, as her main resource, Dr. Grogan delivered "mail" about our "shadows". These packages of mail included excerpted letters, poems, news from campus activities, photographs, and then telegrams and honorary mentions -- all published in the *Mitre* during the war years. Although a simulation, there was a pervasive sense of anxious excitement on mail day that surely reflects only a fraction of the sentiments family members and friends experienced one hundred years ago when the mailman or telegram boy was spotted. "Where and when were these letters written?" "Who was going to receive bad news?" "What were the telegrams not saying?" "Was it a cause for relief or anxiety to be injured? Worse yet, "what did Missing in Action really portend?"

As the semester went on the tonal shift in poetry moved from unquestioning valorization to a more resigned and often gruesome graphic depiction of warfare. The anxiety on “mail” day became palpable; students respected their shadows who went to fight, yet could not understand – perhaps as they themselves struggled to understand – the efficacy of war given the enormous casualties and distress that resulted.

The course culminated in a symposium on November 9th to mark the Centenary of the end of the WWI. In preparation students designed research posters highlighting both their shadow’s experience and a chosen aspect of war, such as the Military Chaplaincy, Field Ambulance Corps, Nursing, Gas attacks, Trench warfare, or specific battles. On November 9, after participating in the Remembrance Day ceremony in St Mark’s Chapel, students presented their research posters for faculty, community members and fellow students. Remarkably, several relatives of our shadows attended the symposium and this personal connection sparked many interesting conversations. The most common feedback was how immediate and personal the war now seemed; individual faces of Bishop’s Fighting Men replaced the almost meaningless statistics that often numb us to the cost of war keeping it somewhat impersonal and distant. Tracing our shadows through their varied war experiences provided a more personal and vivid connection. The symposium included two plenary addresses. The first, “World War One – A Good War?” delivered by Dr. Michael Childs, challenged assumptions that WWI was an unnecessary conflict. The second provided anecdotal insights about the Western Front from Geoffrey Kelley, who retraced his great grandfather Frederick G. Scott’s steps in a recent tour of Europe. The day ended with the official launch of the digitized *Mitre* (1893-2018) when former editors and contributors shared their experiences working with the *Mitre*.

Along with transcriptions of the two plenary addresses, and electronic copies of the student research posters, readers of this Proceedings can enjoy two essays I wrote as student intern of the Digitizing the *Mitre* project. The first, “The *Mitre*: Bishop’s University’s Literary Journal,” provides an overview of this remarkable university publication while the second focuses on “The Bishop’s Fighting Poet: The Role of Frederick G. Scott in World War One”.

Work for ENG 241 opened a unique window onto World War One and revealed the crucial role the *Mitre* played in connecting Bishop’s students, faculty and alumni. Mapping our shadows revealed the dramatic impact the war had on those who walked and shared the Bishop’s campus a century ago. It is a salutary experience for us on reading to recognize our own place along Bishop’s historical timeline. The hope is that this material will help us celebrate those individuals whose names are on the Bishop’s Honor Roll.

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