



Pte Albert Watt 'Bert' Fox - Pte Albert Watt (Bert) Fox in discussion with Bob Briggs of time with the Canadian Forestry Corps WW2

Prior to enlistment, Bert worked on Texada Island, BC for the Pacific Lime Company, as a sawyer making barrel staves which was made into barrels and the lime was loaded into it. He hailed from Claybank a small town south of Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan. He had come out to BC upon an invitation from one of his half brothers. His friend Fred O'Gorman was an oiler in the same plant. Bert and Fred and another friend that worked at Pacific Lime Company were in Vancouver and had heard about recruiting for the armed forces. They did have a great job and good pay but realized they were ready for some adventure. They went to the old Vancouver Hotel to enlist in the Motorcycle Corps but Bert was declined because of poor sight in left eye. His friend Fred O'Gorman was also declined. They went down the hall and joined up with the No. 10 Coy Canadian Forestry Corps. There were about a dozen soldiers working in the recruitment office. No. 10 Coy was formed up at the Government work camps at the university. The 2 IC was Capt Pierce Pearce, Harry John Leslie Lt M.C. 10th Coy CFC A Private Goldie was killed in Vancouver.

The No. 10 Coy travelled by train from Vancouver, BC to Valcartier, Que in Oct 1940. It took 6 days of travelling. The seats at night would fold into bunks at night time. There was a kitchen car where they were fed on the way. When they arrived there the accommodations that awaited them were bell tents. There was no room at the inn. The tents were bitter cold and it was October. Huts were finally made available. The outsides were covered with a tar paper to keep out the wind. There was sleeping quarters at each end with washrooms and showers in the middle. There was a wood stove at each end with one in the middle. There would be fire watch each night.

It was in Valcartier Camp, Quebec that because of his occupation was invited to transfer to No. 6 Coy. This company was short of men. His friend Fred O'Gorman and a number of other men transferred as well. The officers of No. 10 Coy were not too happy about that. One day on a route march, the Lt. that was leading them got the whole company lost. It was only by asking a farmer that they found they were going the wrong way. It late at night that they finally arrived back at camp with a lot of rifles, equipment and clothing left behind along the way. Once a week they

had to change the old straw with fresh straw in their mattresses. Bert remembers doing rifle practices and digging trenches while they were there.

While here he got a week's leave to visit an aunt in Ontario.

There was a French unit that was being shipped out the next day and they had orders not to go out of camp that evening. Bert among a number of men from his unit was on guard duty that day. The whole unit came marching out to get together with their wives and fun night out on the town. The guard was overwhelmed; they had no chance of stopping them. The unit's Colonel was quickly advised of the situation and he went out of camp and got them back in. Meanwhile the rest of CFC thought their men on guard duty were in a fracas with this unit and came marching out to the gate half dressed ready for action and help there men out. But it had all been settled.

March 19 they trained to Halifax, Nova Scotia to board the ship SS Oronsky. SS Oronsay was an ocean liner built for the Orient Steam Navigation Company. It was launched by Viscountess Novar in 1924. They were in a convoy of 7 or 8 ships. It was very stormy that first night and Bert remembers being very sea sick. The convoy got broken up but their ship arrived safely after 14 days sailing at Greenock in the Firth of Clyde, Scotland. They then boarded a funny looking little train to Fortrose and then were trucked to their camp Bog O'Shannon which was the property or estate owned by Mrs. Fletcher. She said there were 20 deer on her estate when they arrived and that there better be 20 deer when they leave. She had a large stand of timber that was 90 to 100 years old. The Black Isle was mostly surrounded by water consequently it was warmer than most other areas.

They arrived at the train station about 2200 hrs and there was a large gathering of the local Scottish folks to greet them at the train station. Private Fox said he still remembers one little boy in his Scottish accent saying 'they look just like us' which made him laugh. The boy probably had only heard about the Indians in Canada.

14-2	Cloudy and mild - O.C.'s parade of all N.C.O.'s in Mess Hall at 09:5 hours.	
15-2	Light rain - inspected lines 0930 hrs. - fell in 1100 hrs - truck convoy moved off 1200 hrs. Entrained Debert 1230 hrs. XXXXXXXX Arrived Halifax 1540 hrs - detrained 1600 hrs. Embarked S.S. Oronsky 1645 - supper on board ship.	
Halifax N.S. 16-2	Cold - snow flurries & ship's orders published - Col. Gardner CFC BQ., O.C. Troops on ship.	
17-2	Cloudy and cold - H.M.S. Revenge arrived in port - Group station assembly 0930 hrs. - Convoy sailed at 1415 hrs escorted by H.M.S. Royal Sovereign - Group station assembly 1600 hrs. Bearing N.E. 2200 hrs.	
At Sea	18-2	Rain squalls - gale - very rough sea - parades cancelled - ship's furniture damaged to the extent of more than £ 1000.- several minor injuries - many seasick - ships carried riding lights at night - No. 6 Coy. supplied ship's guard.
	19-2	Sunshine a.m. cloudy afternoon - rain 2200 hours - rough following seas - no parades - Free issue 50 cigarettes to each man - fairly calm at night - clocks one hour ahead at midnight.
	20-2	Rain and mist - fairly calm sea - convoy formation practice 1130 a.m. - group station parade 1430 - Coy. warned of discipline etc.

Library and Archives War Diaries - No.6 Coy War Diaries

The food was not all that good, mostly English hard rations. Bert developed lumps on the backs of his hand. It was suggested that he drink a bottle of stout a day. It did the trick, the bumps disappeared. He did contract mumps as well. One morning his mouth was quite sore and couldn't eat. He reported to the Medical Sgt at sick bay who instantly commanded Bert to get his razor, etc and some clothing and he was quarantined.

One evening something was spotted dropping from the sky near the camp. The alarm was raised, guns and rounds were issued and the search was on. Turned out it was a weather balloon that had lost its air and came back to earth.

One evening Bert and buddies, 15 to 20 men led by a Lt. slept on the floor of a large mansion in front of a huge mansion. When the mail train arrived the Lt stopped it and ordered his men aboard. The conductor said you can't ride on the mail train, the Lt said the hell we can't we are in a war. The train dropped them at the next train station Inverness - hotel whence there was quite some astonished maids at the train station. They got back as well. The Lt said that when they got back there was to be a ration of rum for each man. However, when they got back the rum had been consumed by the men in the camp.

When No. 6 Coy arrived in their camp, everything was set up ready to go. The two mills in the camp consisted of two Scottish mills each. They would require four men to push the cradle along. The men were not in favor of them. There no ponds required with these mills as the logs were brought in from the forest nearby and very clean.

Bert was a millwright in B Mill which was on the camp site and received an extra 50 cents per day. He could have been made a Corporal but that meant taking on other responsibilities of which there was no extra pay – you never volunteered for anything. His job was to change the teeth in the saws, maintain all the mill equipment, oiling and greasing and any repairs. A Mill was at another location in the forest a fair distance away.

There was a lot of sawdust from all the cutting. It was loaded in a large bucket and taken out of the mill by a wire rope tied to a large high tree outside and dumped. This was done by a motor with pulley and conveyor belt from a diesel engine.

One day the sawyer Private Gould asked Bert to take his place as he had to go to the latrine outside. It was windy and wet and Gould put on a heavy rain coat. When he came back inside the conveyor belt had come off the equipment that removed the sawdust. The power had shut off. This was Bert's job to fix it but Gould went to put it back on but with the sloppy rain jacket the sleeves got caught in the pulley. He didn't stand a chance. He got slammed to the concrete floor many times.

Saturday mornings the men would be training with rifles, marching and map reading. Saturday afternoons and Sundays were time off.

The first dance Bert attended, soon after having arrived in Scotland he met a young nurse who took a shine to each other and a date was made for Bert to meet her in town Saturday morning. He had to wait for the pay master to arrive in order to get his leave pay. The pay master was very late. Bert missed his date with her. The next time there was a dance he sure heard from her about being stood up. There was no way of letting her know what was happening, why he was late.

One day the Major decided that they needed a water tower in case of a fire. Bert help to make it using green lumber, using 4x4's and tarred it. Bert was surprised it worked.

The Sgt of his mill first name Ed was using the swing saw which was used to cut the timber in lengths. Somehow or other it swung around when it was not suppose to and it took all the toes off the Sgt.

There were two brothers from Kamloops, last name Robb who were very short 5 feet 4 inches.

The last year No 6 Coy was in a camp on the Spey River.

There were 2 Goldie brothers from Vancouver. One was using Bert's bike and lost control of it on a gravel road and broke his arm. One of the brothers was killed in Vancouver after the war. They were blowing up stumps and one time the charge didn't go off so he went to check, it blew up killing him.

There were 2 soldiers who were Scotsmen from WW1. One, Cpl Monroe, had a tin cap in his skull and once and awhile he would lose it. He went off mad and broke one soldiers arm and it took 6 men to hold him down. He was yelling all the time.

There was a Lee McGilles who met a nurse in Scotland and fell in love with her. When he came home to Vancouver he had a wife and 2 children at the train station waiting for him. He didn't want to get off the train, but Bert talked him into getting off, they lived happily ever after.

The first CSM was CSM Nelson a WW1 vet from Britain. When he went back to Canada they got another CSM. He was not very well liked. One time Bert was using one of the stalls in the washroom and the CSM another stall and there were a number of men washing up and spoke very crudely about this new CSM.

The quarters were H huts. The source of heat was wood stoves which was a barrell turned on its side with a door on the end and a hole on the other end.

The men that were on the fire picquet would make sure the fire was kept burning and that it was kept safe. They would work in shifts of 2 hours on 4 hours off.

In Valcartier during the training there the companies took turns supplying the men to be the fire picquet for the entire CFC unit keeping the fires burning and making sure they were safe. It was wood they used for fuel. However Bert said that when they were in Camrose they had wood and coal. At one point it was minus forty below and they had big parkas and hats and by the end of their shift it was frosted all over from going in and out of the buildings.

There were 3 CFC soldiers that decided they wanted to become a pilot. Two did make it. One, Private Squipp finally past all his tests etc and on his first flight he was shot down He was a good friend of Bert – full name was Harold Edward Squibb nick names Ted. He had been sent back to Canada for his pilot training and health test etc.

Also knew Private David Evans well, he was Welchman and knew he had died from colitis.

Also knew Private Thomas Hillary Erwin, they looked quite identical and sometimes Bert would be in trouble and it was Thomas who made the trouble. Bert said his last name was Erwin as in pay parade he was paid after Thomas – pay parades were done alphabetically in the army.

Sometimes the Sgt – cook would come looking for Thomas and grab Bert by mistake – funny thing they both would end up working in the kitchen.

He didn't remember Privates Gordon Ewart Mallory, William Hilder, Earl Thompson Cushing or George Lynn McParlon other men of No. 6 Coy that had died during the war.

When I asked Bert about whether they had a wet canteen on camp he said there was and run by NAAFI and in fact that the young lady who worked it was engaged to Private Lloyd George Gould (his nick name was lefty as he was left handed) who was killed in Mill B which was on the camp site.

The toilets in the Camp at Black Isle were pretty comfortable. They were in each of the huts and were flush toilets however the mills had outdoor ones which were just a hole in the ground. At the camp on the Spey River they were a seat on a five gallon pail. There was one soldier whose job all day long to empty them and wash them out.

The CO of the camp Major Armstrong was not a believer in churches and when the chaplains came to his camp they were not invited to stay in the officer's quarters. Bert, said when whenever there was a church parade, he would volunteer to work in the mess hall.

One day a soldier was going to Inverness and asked Bert if he would like to go with him. Bert went to the office to ask the CSM if he could have a pass to do so. The CSM said he was not issuing anymore passes. As Bert turned around to leave the Adjutant of the camp Captain A. Gordon came in and then asked Private Fox what he was after at which he replied a pass to go Inverness, the Captain said no problem and issued him a pass which made the CSM face thrn red.

Bert said the officers were great for the most part but one a Lt. H.A Spalding was very lazy and wondered how he ever became an officer.

Cpl Courtenay was one of the men who worked on the Davies Raft and is sixth from right in 1941 company photo. They were friends after the war and worked at MacBlodell sawmills.

Sgt Gerald Cecil Murphy was the saw doctor in the camp.

CQMS S. C Nicholls used to go riding on his bike quite often and it always seemed as his tunic was filled out a little more than it should, goods with which to barter with when amongst the local folks.

When the unit started out they had Canadian uniforms but along the way they used British uniforms. When Bert got married he asked CQMS Nicholls if it was possible to get a Canadian uniform which were smarter looking and he got one.

Whenever someone from the unit had to go to Fort George which was across the Firth of Moray the had to travel down to Inverness and then come back up the other side.

After they arrived in their camp in Scotland the men were rotated through for Landed Leave of a week. Every 3 months they were granted a week's leave. To go to London by train would take 7 hours. They still had to take their gas mask and helmet and a bandage kit with them.. They would be attached to a web strap that they wore over the shoulder and carried on their back. They were always paid in advance of going. Every pay day so much was put aside for this purpose. One soldier had his gas mask stolen and when he spied a British gas mask lying about he was quick to grab it up. Later on back in camp when there was gas mask trail he took out this longated thing and he was quickly given another Canadian gas mask.

Private Frank Larsen was driving a cat on the mainland with the blade in front of him and the Germans firing at him as he continued on running them over.

Private Hopkins one soldier he remembers

There were two brothers who joined up from northern Canada, they had no schooling and couldn't read or write.

Sgt Lajeunesse, Sooke, BC on duty with him at dances

No. 10 CSM George Stiles was in the Vancouver Police. He transferred to an infantry unit and won a medal for saving of his men at Dieppe.

Les Shepherd was a Sgt who Bert knew on Texada Island, he was 19 years old when he signed up. Remembers Les was due to go to a course in London but he was so drunk that Bert had to give him a hand to get him on the train. Years later after Bert had come to Canada and then transferred to the Scottish outfit – infantry and was sent to MWE to guard German prisoners he ran into Les at a seaport town of Ostend, Belgium. Les was working loading and unloading Canadian ships

There were about 40 CFC soldiers that transferred from No.10 Coy to No. 6 Coy while they were in Valcartier.

Smokey Leroy Alexander and his son Robert Alexander. Smokey was the nickname he got from working in Swift meats in Vancouver – smoking hams.

Another father and son sign ups were James Wilson and his son John. There were a number of father and sons that had signed up with the CFC

Al Morfitt married a Scottish lassie from the local village of Avoch. (*He also had a son that signed up with him*). Al looked after the crosscut saws the fallers used. He lived in the Fraser Valley after the war and worked in the dockyard in Vancouver.

Harold Astrophe also married a Scottish girl. He was from Northern Alberta, an older man, very quiet, would simply lay on his bed in his cabin when not working. He was in the same cabin as Bert. Bert was quite surprised when he learned that Harold had met one of the local girls and was to marry her.

Jim Bruce and his cousin Don Bryon were 2 more of these soldiers. After the war Bert attended the wedding of Don Bryon in Vancouver.

Remembered the name of Samuel Duerksen but didn't really know him.

Brant and Kenneth Little were identical twins. Ken married a Scottish lassie as well in lived on Hasting St Vancouver after the war. Brant was a runner of Olympic caliber and ran in the 1939 Olympics in Holland. While these men were in No. 10 Coy Brant was the athletic Sgt and he would led the men through their exercises. One time Brant was getting himself in trouble and his brother Henry being an identical twin took the blame so Brant wouldn't lose his Sgt's strips.

Brant went from Vancouver to Vancouver Island as an Olympic instructor for the next Olympics.

Ken went on to work in an office job on Hasting St

When Lefty Gould was killed – the first man they lost- there was a parade and he was buried in a local cemetery about 10 miles away. He was reburied later in the Military Cemetery in London.

We talked how the men that was of Scotland origin or had married a Scotland girl and died – for most part was buried in Scotland.

Bert talked about his eyes, skin on his face being quite yellow. One of the truck driver by the name of Don, pointed it out him and remarked then while in town he would pick up some Dodd's Kidney pills and they sure worked.

The Sgt who was a head cook had been a farmer and blacksmith. One day in the kitchen he reached up for something on a shelf and a knife fell down cutting a piece of his tip of the nose.

The No. 6 Coy didn't have any vegetable gardens or pigs that some of the camps had. Mrs. Fletcher did have fields of turnips.

There was no dentist in the camp. They had to go to Beauvy for any dental needs. Bert had a decaying tooth that needed some attention and the dentist rather than repair it took it out instead. Bert was not happy about. He never went for dental repairs after that.

There was a medical Sgt in camp and there was a room with beds for medical patients if required.

One time sometime in Vancouver after his wife died he went out on a blind date – turned out it was Mrs Fletcher's niece – the lady who owned the estate in Scotland, where the No. 6 Coy camp was on. Major Armstrong og No. 6 Coy had assisted the neice and her mother to come to Vancouver from Scotland.

The food wasn't the best, one Irish Cpl pretty much lived on biscuits.

Bert went AWOL twice – once to avoid getting a good conduct hook and the other time he couldn't get the time to visit his wife and daughter so he went.

Henry and Walter Montgomery, brothers from a native reserve in BC brought their guitars and could sing as well and entertain the men in the recreation hall. The recreation hall was made from rough lumber.

There was one of the CFC soldiers in the Ardennes who drove ahead with the bulldozer blade running over Germans who had been firing their machine guns at him. He got a medal for that.

Never did meet Brig-Gen White while in Scotland. After the war Bert did run into one of the CFC Colonels at a coffee shop. The Colonel worked in a BC Logging camp. He was buying logs for pulpwood.

On one of his walks along one of the beaches he came across a number of beautiful blonde women in uniform. Turns out they were from one of the Norwegian Camps close by.

Payday was every two weeks. Leave was every 3 months. Bert would just take out what he needed, saved the rest for his leave.

There was a jail, one guy a nice fellow who one time he had to much to drink, he got to spend some time there.

He was never attached to other companies at other camps for work.

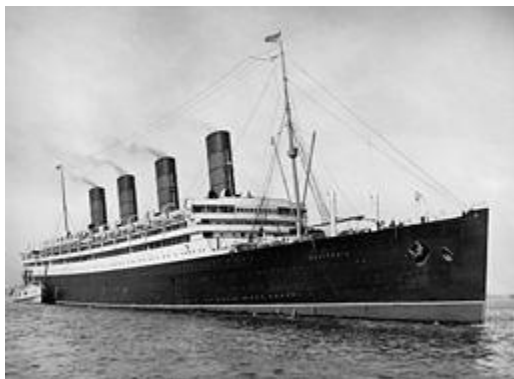
War Brides

Private Al Morfit married Isabella from Avoch

Bob Mitchell married Alice from Edinburgh moved to Avoch in work in working coy - lunch counter

Private Hugh Fitzgerald from the mail room married

He came back to Canada with the No 12 Coy aboard the RMS Aquitania



[RMS Aquitania - Wikipedia](#)

By Detroit Publishing Co. [Public domain], [via Wikimedia Commons](#)

Bert did not want to come to Canada and leave his wife and daughter behind. He went to see the Major asking why he a strong young man would be sent back at this time and not stay and continue working in Scotland. The Major said none of this made sense and there was nothing he could do as the decision was made in upper level of headquarters.

There were about 2000 CFC soldiers that arrived by train at Camrose, Alberta and were housed in a military camp there. The colonel, OC told them what he expected of them laying out the rules of the camp. The men by now were seasoned veterans and were not happy about coming back. The group in unison told him to f--- off. He did, he got the picture. Went back on the New Amsterdam and back to Canada on the Queen Elizabeth

Ph. D. 54
K99574
Nov. 7. 44.
Dear Phyllis and all,
Hope you have
a very enjoyable Xmas, but
it will be strange without
Tom, unless he can get home.
This is a picture of our Co.
but I was away visiting at
the time, so am not in it.
But perhaps that improves
the picture, eh? Hope you
are all fine, and I must write
to you soon, I'm getting
worse, I believe. Best to
everyone,
Love,
Albert.

Phyllis was his half sister who this letter is to as well as the company photos.

She had married a WW1 Vet last name Loftus. Hugh Fitzgerald was the postman at the camp.

There was always letters, care packages and cigarettes