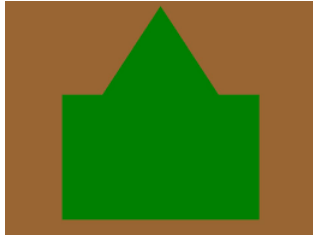


## #53 Private Bennett Lesley Fights for Canada, Part 2



47<sup>th</sup> Battalion Patch

Private Bennett Lesley arrived in England on the *HMS Olympia*. The June 16, 1917 letter published in the *Hutchinson News* goes on to describe his impressions of England and how different the country was from the wide spaces of Kansas and British Columbia.

*“England is a great country. It looks like a big park. Everything here is just as green as can be, that is everything but the inhabitants and they would skin a flea for his skin and tallow.”* (Note: This is an old expression meaning *stingy*).

*There is quite a food shortage here now. You can’t get any white bread in the country. It is all whole wheat flour that is used and that is not over plentiful, but it is all right at that.*

*I am in a military camp in the south of England right close to the seashore. They have the most comical railroad trains in the country that you ever saw. The cars are small and divided up into compartments that hold about eight to twelve persons each, depending on the size of the person. They are fitted up about as comfortable as a “box” car. The doors are on the side and the windows are small and cannot be opened. Why an alleged civilized people will ride in such trains is more that I can see. They don’t even carry a water tank in the passenger cars but they certainly run like a scared rabbit. We made about fifty miles per hour from where we disembarked to here. There is no use telling where we landed as the censor would blot the name out. That is to keep any information concerning the movements of the troops reaching the Germans.*

(Note: The military records show they disembarked at Liverpool. William Arthur Smy wrote about a transport a year earlier and recorded that the battalion “travelled by rail to the West Sandling Training Area in Kent, England, which it reached the next day. This training area stretched along the English Channel on a plateau overlooking the sea.” Soldiers trained in trench construction there could make the short hop over the channel and be fighting in France the next day. For pictures and more information about the Sandling camps visit this very interesting website <https://www.saltwoodkent.co.uk/discovery-of-ww1-practice-trenches> .)

Private Lesley continues:

*“England is a pretty country and is laid out just like a big park. You would laugh at the farms. The land is divided up into small plots of all sizes and shapes with hedge fences dividing each field and none of the fields are square with the world. They are all three, five or six cornered and the hedge fences take up more land than the fields so that out of a forty-acre field there are about thirty acres of useless hedge fences and ten acres of tillage land. No wonder there is a food shortage here. I was just watching a man plow. He used one horse and a little dinky plow about four inches wide. He might cultivate an acre a week. His plow was about the size that Doukhobor rancher (Spiritual Christian religious group from Russia) in Saskatchewan would harness his wife up to.*

*There are all kinds of airplanes here. You can see them flying around all the time and they sure can travel I am going to London next week for a few days and will let you know what the town looks like the next time I write. I am going to France in five months or more.*