

# WORLD WAR 1

## AN COGADH MÒR

RESOURCE PACK FOR TEACHERS  
PASGAN STÒRASAN DO THIDSEARAN



ARCHIVE SERVICE  
LEARNING AND OUTREACH

IONNSACHADH IS FOR-RUIGHEACHD NA SEIRBHEIS TASGLAINN

## Keeping in touch with people back home

The selection of documents in this folder has been made from many relating to the Great War which are preserved in the safe keeping of the Highland Archive Service. The documents all relate to the theme of keeping in touch with people back home.

Highland soldiers living in the trenches, those who were injured and in hospitals and those captured and in prisoner of war camps kept in touch with their families and other people back home by writing letters. All letters were censored to prevent information being given to the enemy.

This folder contains copies of original letters, which were written by Highland soldiers and sent to their families and other individuals in the Highlands:-

Official postcard written by Lance Corporal William John Wilson of Inverness to his wife on 21 April 1918 from the prisoner of war camp Munster Two in Germany.

Letter written by David Barrogill Keith of Thurso in Caithness to his mother on 4 November 1915 whilst on active service.

Letter written by Lieutenant Allan Macdonald of Waternish, Isle of Skye, to his mother on 14 November 1916 whilst he was on active service.

Letter written by Private James Cameron whilst based in Invergordon, to Mrs Allan Cameron on 31 March 1915 describing the grave of Captain Allan Cameron of Achnacarry Castle near Fort William, who was killed on 26 September 1914.

The last letter is unusual in that it was written by a Belgian soldier who had been nursed in the Highlands.

Letter written by a wounded Belgian soldier, Charles Broodthaers, on 11 April 1915 from Wissant in France, to one of the voluntary nurses at Fort Augustus Abbey Convalescent Hospital, Mary Angelo, who had nursed him.

## The Curriculum for Excellence

The activities and educational resources produced by the Highland Archive Centre are designed to meet the Outcomes and Experiences of the Curriculum for Excellence.

This particular resource has been designed for classes p5-p7 as well as s1-s2 and meets the following outcomes and experiences of the Social Studies area of the CfE:-

### P5-p7

- SOC 2-01a “I can use primary and secondary sources selectively to research events in the past.”
- SOC 2-03a “I can investigate a Scottish historical theme to discover how past events or the actions of individuals or groups have shaped Scottish society.”
- SOC 2-04a “I can compare and contrast a society in the past with my own and contribute to a discussion of the similarities and differences.”
- SOC 2-06a “I can discuss why people and events from a particular time in the past were important, placing them within a historical sequence.”

### S1-s2

- SOC 3-01a “I can use my knowledge of a historical period to interpret the evidence and present an informed view.”
- SOC 3-02a “I can make links between my current and previous studies, and show my understanding of how people and events have contributed to the development of the Scottish nation.
- SOC 3-05a “I can describe the factors contributing to a major social, political or economic change in the past and can assess the impact of people's lives.”
- SOC 3-06b “Through researching, I can identify possible causes of a past conflict and report on the impact it had on the lives of people at that time.”



## Documents and Suggested Activities

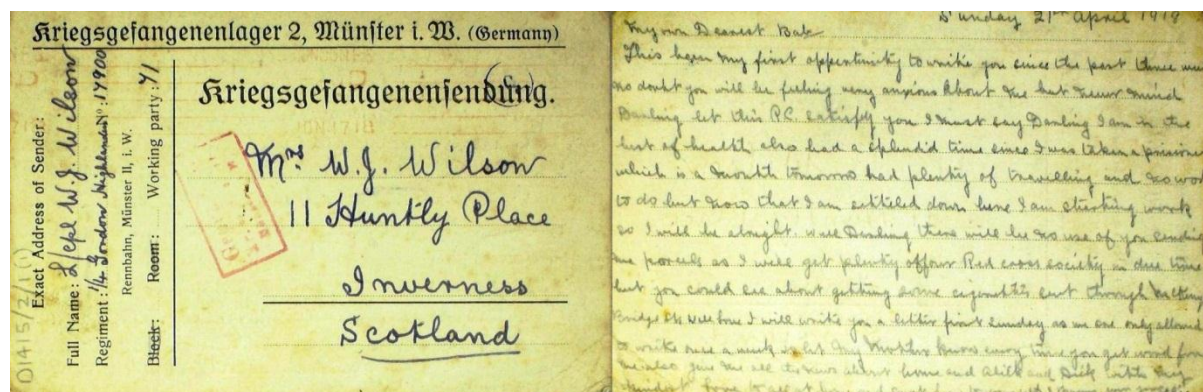
The activities suggested are designed for p5-p7 but could be adapted for older, or younger, age groups.

### Lance Corporal William John Wilson of Inverness

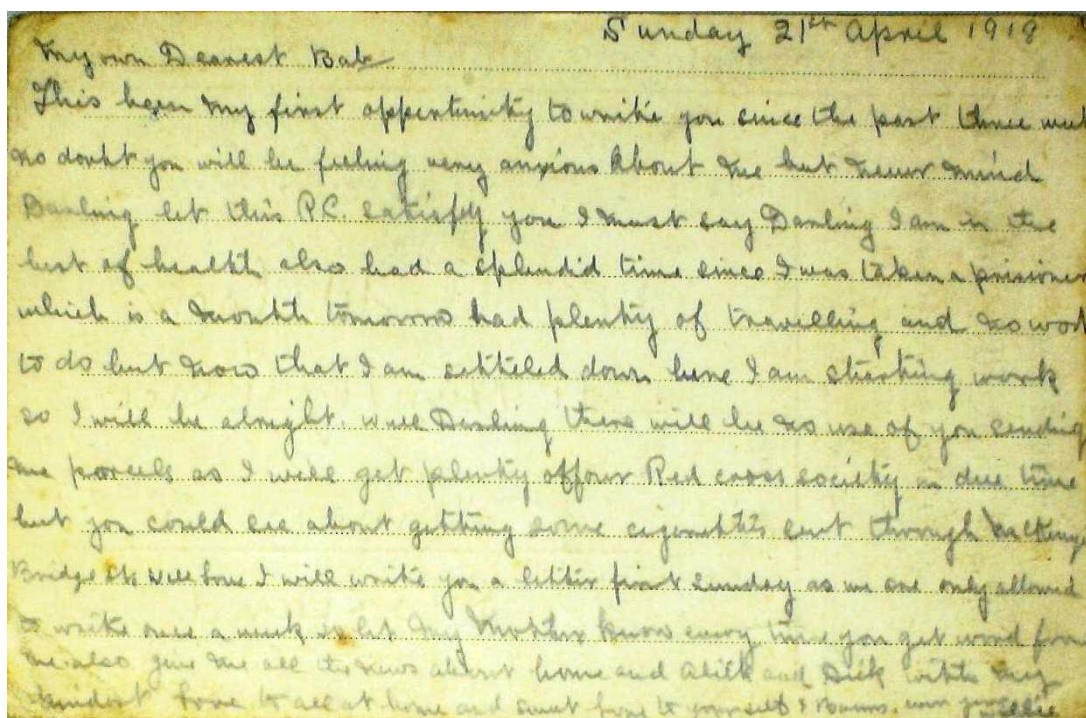


Highland Archive Centre. Reference HCA/D1415/4/1

Lance Corporal William John Wilson of the 1st Battalion 4th Gordon Highlanders, was born in 1891 and opened a hairdressing business in Inverness before the war. He fought at Cambrai where he was taken prisoner on 22 March 1918 and then sent off to a German prisoner of war camp. He kept in touch with his wife by means of official prisoner of war postcards, the document here, being the first of these. He remained a prisoner until the end of the war when he returned home to Inverness.



Highland Archive Centre, Inverness. Reference HCA/D1415/2/1.



Enlargement of right hand side of document

## Transcript of the postcard

Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> April

1918

My own Dearest Bab

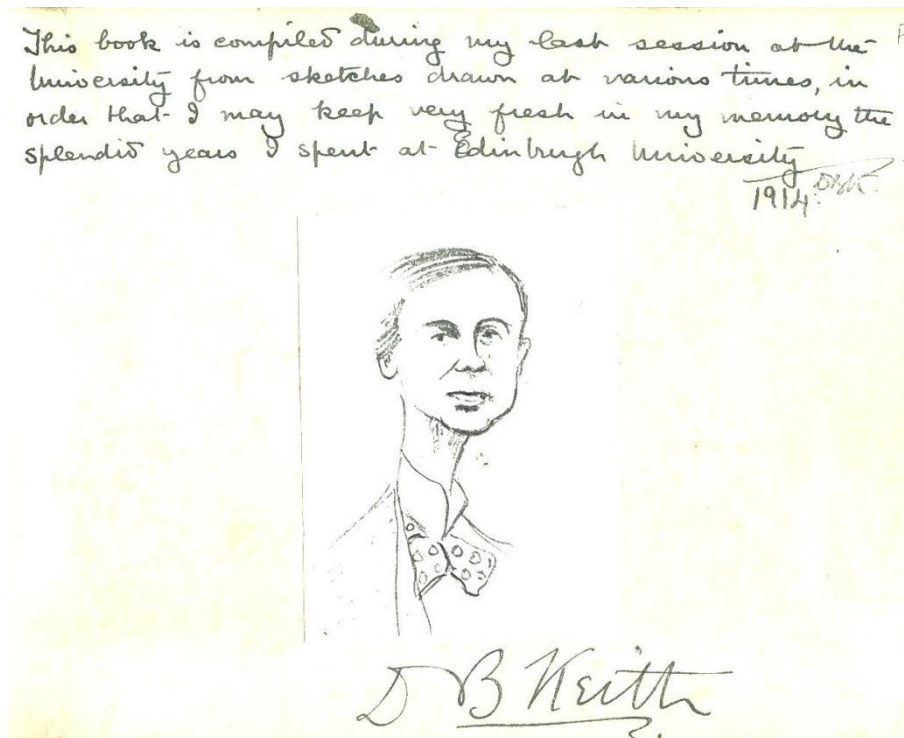
This been my first opportunity to write you since the past three weeks no doubt you will be feeling very anxious about me but never mind Darling let this PC satisfy you. I must say Darling I am in the best of health also had a splendid time since I was taken a prisoner which is a month tomorrow. had plenty of travelling and no work to do but now that I am setteled down here I am starting work so I will be alright. well Darling there will be no use of you sending ane parcels as I will get plenty off our Red cross society in due time but you could see about getting some cigarettes sent through MacKenzie Bridge St. with love I will write you a letter first Sunday as we are only allowed to write once a week so let my Mother know every time you get word from me also give me all the news about home and Alick and Dick. With my kindest love to all at home and sweet love to yourself & bairns. Ever yours. Willie

## Activity

William John Wilson was a married man when he went off to war. Imagine that you are William's son or daughter.

- Write a letter to him asking about how he is keeping, what happens in the camp and telling him some of your own news.
  - o Include some information about what your mother and grandmother have been doing as he mentions them.
  - o Who or what do you think Alick and Dick are. Are they family members or pets? Include some information about them in your letter.
  - o Imagine what you would send to him to help keep up his spirits and mention this in your letter.
  - o Include a drawing in your letter if you would like to.
- As a class contact the Highland Archive Centre to ask if there are any other documents relating to William John Wilson. Ask if a member of staff from the Archive Centre could bring along copies of some documents for you to see, or alternatively ask if you can visit the Archive Centre.
- As a class use the internet to see if you can find out where the prisoner of war camp was which William John Wilson spent time in.

## David Barrogill Keith of Thurso



Caithness Archive Centre. Reference C/P38/14

This is a caricature of David Barrogill Keith of the 12<sup>th</sup> Battalion Scottish Rifles attached to the 10<sup>th</sup> Battalion Cameron Highlanders, David drew this himself. He was born in 1891, the son of a solicitor in Thurso in Caithness. He wrote a series of letters home while on active service, of which this document is one. On 4 November 1915 D.B. Keith wrote a long letter home to his mother. Sometime afterwards he typed out the letter, the first page of which you are looking at here.

At the end of the war he returned to Thurso where he practised as a solicitor in the family's firm.



My Dear Mother,

You are no doubt wondering why I have not had time to write you, and what has been doing here.

Well to start from the beginning George left for home and I turned towards the firing line the morning after his departure. There I roosted for 12 days clad fully and never having clothes or boots off. Mostly it was wet mostly it was cold mostly it was slightly dangerous but it was grand.

Sleep of course was at a minimum on two days I had none at all on other days 4 hours or so. Yet it was an excellent experience. You would I am afraid have looked rather askance at me had you seen me on my way back to billets here. The trenches were muddy so muddy that even my knees were thick and at times it looked as if it would require some effort other than mine own to pull my huge feet out of the treakly toffee stuff.

However at length we saw daylight, toddled over the open ground and it rained. By evening we were still toddling we splashed quite contentedly through two feet of water with light hearts but wet clothes and chilled stomachs.

But when we got back we had some feed I rather wished that I could have been photographed there tramping back in the darkness over what was once a road tho, now through ruts mostly a ditch.

But to return. The first thing that gave me the real sense of a nation at war was on the march to the trenches. There was the youth of France, lads of 12 to 15 with coats off digging holes at the roadside to drain off the water. There they were digging trenches. It is a marvellous war.

Comparatively small children whom one accustoms oneself to think of as always laughing and playing football, wee kids with serious faces and muddy legs dig dig digging for the war had made even them helpers of their country.

Well we got to behind the firing line, to see what was once a town about the size of Thurso. Houses clean and new looking but only irregular chunks of wall left standing. In the gardens behind open gates and painted railings were pear and apple trees, with foliage but no fruit. The fruit no doubt unripe enough in its early youth, had been plucked by a hungry Tommy to the disgust of the R&AMC. The church was still standing only half the tower was not. The door as open but I question if any had entered it for months. The windows were gone long ago and stones and masonry heaped the floor. Yet not so long ago some priest had it for his chapel. The Crucifix was visible through the open door. But there is neither priest nor populace there any longer. Instead Guns, Guns, Guns, and a RED x Ambulance and a British grave yard with its wooden crosses.

We got into the communication trench and passed on from dusk to darkness and we heard the rifle bullets singing and saw the flares and we knew we were in it at last. I slept in a small hole in the earthen 6x4 ft. There we messed and ate the grouse and partridges you sent and always watched for the Bosch.

I gathered lots of souvenirs. A German rifle with cartridges. An Austrian with fixed bayonet, an old battle bludgeon with its head studded with nails such as the sturdy yeomen of England went forth to

Caithness Archive Centre. Reference C/P38/10/11



## Activity

There is a great deal of information in the letter about life on the battle field.

- As a class divide up the letter into several sections.
  - In groups study one section of the letter each, then draw or paint a representation of the events described in the section.
  - Join up all of the sections to make a frieze to put on the classroom wall.
- As a class think about David Barrogill Keith, about the physical conditions on the battlefield and also about his inner feelings, as described in the letter. Working in pairs:-
  - Draw the outline of a figure and make sufficient copies for the whole class. Add the name of David Barrogill Keith to the figure.
  - On the outside of the figure write words which would represent his physical comfort/discomfort.
  - Inside the shape of the figure write words which would represent the feelings inside his head.
  - Come back together at the end and discuss your thoughts as a class.
- As a class write to the Caithness Archive Centre to find out if there any more records relating to David Barrogill Keith. Ask the staff in the Archive Centre if they can bring you copies of documents to see or ask the staff if you can organise a visit there to look at the documents.
- As a class use the internet to see if you can find out anything else about David Barrogill Keith.

## Lieutenant Allan Macdonald of Waternish, Isle of Skye



Skye and Lochalsh Archive Centre. Reference SL/D266/4/5/3

Allan R. Macdonald was born in 1897, the son of Allan and Edith Macdonald, owners of the Waternish Estate in Skye. He entered the war as a Second Lieutenant in March 1915, just after he turned 18. He was sent to France with the Cameron Highlanders and wrote a series of letters and postcards home while on active service. His younger brother, Donald, also served as a Lieutenant with the Cameron Highlanders during the war. As landowners, the Macdonalds were fairly well off, which meant that the extended family were able to send more expensive gifts to the boys in the trenches. By the end of the war, Allan had been promoted to Lieutenant and decided to stay in the army as a career, later serving in India with the Cameron Highlanders. He returned to Skye in the 1930s and inherited the estate when his father died in 1936. When the Second World War broke out, Allan was recalled to duty as a Major in the Lovat Scouts, where he was involved with recruitment.

The photograph and letter are included and reproduced courtesy of Allan R. MacDonald.

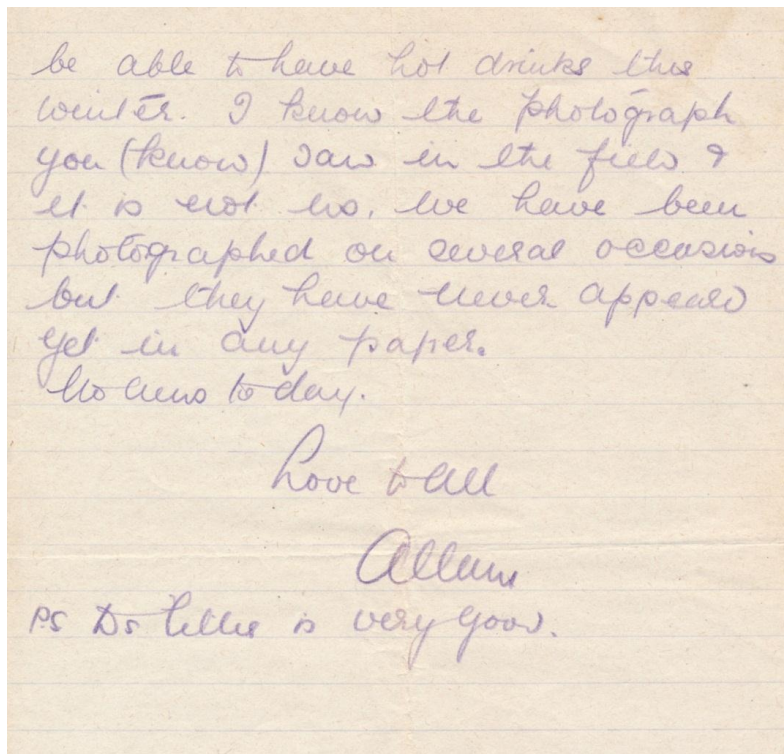
B. E. F  
France

14:11:16

My dear Mother

I was simply delighted to get the lovely puddings last night along with your letter dated Nov 8<sup>th</sup>. There were great Cheers from the rest of the Coy. Officers when they were produced. We had them for breakfast this morning & they were just splendid. at least we had some of them, the rest we will have tomorrow. a great Change indeed everybody enjoyed them. Aunt Florie sent me a small stove just the thing for the trenches it is just the right size & not heavy at all so we will



A photograph of a handwritten letter on lined paper. The text is written in cursive and matches the typed transcription provided below. The paper is aged and slightly discolored.

be able to have hot drinks this  
winter. I know the photograph  
you (know) saw in the field &  
it is not us. We have been  
photographed on several occasions  
but they have never appeared  
yet in any papers.  
No news today.

Love to all

Allan

P.S. Ds letter is very good.

Skye and Lochalsh Archive Centre. Reference SL/D266/6/4/4.

### Transcript of the letter

B.E.F.

France

14:11:16

My dear Mother,

I was simply delighted to get the mealy puddings last night along with your letter dated Nov 8<sup>th</sup>. There were great Cheers from the rest of the Coy Officers when they were produced. We had them for breakfast this morning & they were just splendid. At least we had some of them, the rest we will have tomorrow. A great change indeed everybody enjoyed them. Aunt Florrie sent me a small stove, just the thing for the trenches, it is just the right size & not heavy at all, so we will be able to have hot drinks this winter. I know the photograph you (know) saw in the field & it is not us. We have been photographed on several occasions but they have never appeared yet in any papers. No news today.

Love to all

Allan

P.S. Ds letter is very good

## Activity

Allan Macdonald was just 18 years old when he went to war, and 19 years old when he wrote this letter to his mother in Skye.

The letter is quite short but hints at an important aspect of daily life in the trenches.

- The letter was written in November when the weather would have been cold and Allan writes that Auntie Florrie's stove will enable the men to have hot drinks.
- Working in 2s or 3s think about how you would manage without hot water in your own homes:-
  - What would you find unpleasant to do?
  - What would you find difficult to do?
  - What would you find impossible to do?
- Come back together and discuss your findings as a whole class.
  - Try to imagine yourself in a trench in the war and what this situation must have been like for the men.
  - As individuals in the class each person either draw a picture or write a short piece about this aspect of life in the trenches.
  - Create an exhibition of the work.
- As a class write to the Skye and Lochalsh Archive Centre to find out if there are any more records relating to Allan Macdonald and Waternish. Ask the staff in the Archive Centre if they can bring you copies of documents to see or ask the staff if you can organise a visit there to look at the documents.
- As a class use the internet to see if you can find out anything else about Allan Macdonald's family who lived in Waternish on the Isle of Skye.

**Captain Allan Cameron of Achnacarry Castle, Lochaber, as a child with his two brothers, Ewen and Donald.**



Lochaber Archive Centre. Reference L/CL/B17/2

Captain Allan Cameron of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders, was born in 1880, the son of Cameron of Lochiel. He was part of the British Expeditionary Force and so was amongst some of the first British soldiers to fight in WW1. He fought in the first Battle of Aisne in September 1914 and was killed on 26 of that month when the Regimental Headquarters were hit and destroyed.

This document is the letter which was sent to his mother by Private James Cameron (not a relative so far as we know) in March of the following year. It describes the grave of Captain Cameron and his burial.



Mr Allan Cameron.

9463 The J Cameron  
A Company  
1st Cameron Highrs  
Invergordon

Dear Madam

30. 3. 15.

I received your letter dated 27<sup>th</sup>. You asked me to give an account of the burial of Mr Allan Cameron also the cave disaster. The cave was our regimental head quarters where the Colonel Adjutant Medical Officer, the wounded and orderlies were stationed.

Capt Miers sent down for Capt Allan Cameron to come up to see him as he was wounded and was going to hospital. Capt Allan wasn't long there when the cave was blown in. During the disaster I was in A Company No 4 platoon which was in reserved trenches lying along side the cave. When it became dark we started digging for the bodies but wasn't till the following night that they were found.

We carried the four Officers to a little village about four miles from the cave and buried them in a small cemetery off the main road.

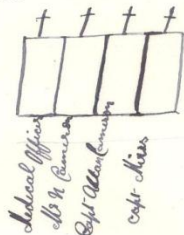
There was a cross put above each grave with the names of the Officers on them.

In mistake we put Mr Napier Cameron into Capt Allan's grave we then buried them in that order but

shifted the crosses. We then got a grave stone put up with their names and the regiment to which they belonged engraved on it.

The order in which they were buried was Capt Allan Cameron Mr Napier Cameron were in between Capt Miers and the Medical Officer

I am showing you a diagram of the way in which they were buried



P. S. The company to which I belong was not written on the Envelope. This is the reason it took so long in finding me

I remain

Yours respectfully  
James Cameron

## Transcript

9463 Pte J Cameron

A Company

1<sup>st</sup> Cameron Highlanders

Invergordon

Mrs Allan Cameron

31.3.15.

Dear Madam,

I received your letter dated 27<sup>th</sup>. You asked me to give an account of the burial of Mr Allan Cameron also the cave disaster. The cave was our regimental Head Quarters where the Colonel Adjutant Medical Officer, the Wounded and orderlies were stationed.

Capt Miers sent down for Capt Allan Cameron to come up to see him as he was wounded and was going to Hospital. Capt Allan wasn't long there when the cave was blown in. During the disaster I was in A Company No 4 platoon which was in reserved trenches lying alongside the cave. When it became dark we started digging for the bodies but wasn't till the following night that they were found.

We carried the four Officers to a little village about four miles from the cave and buried them in a small cemetery off the main road.

There was a cross put above each Grave with the names of the Officers on them.

In mistake we put Mr Napier Cameron into Captain Allan's grave we then buried them in that order but shifted the crosses. We then got a grave stone put up with their names and the regiment to which they belonged engraved on it.

The order in which they were buried was Capt Allan Cameron and Mr Napier Cameron were in between Capt Miers and the Medical Officer.

I am showing you a diagram of the way in which they were buried.

|                    |                  |                          |               |
|--------------------|------------------|--------------------------|---------------|
| +                  | +                | +                        | +             |
| Medical<br>Officer | Mr N.<br>Cameron | Capt<br>Allan<br>Cameron | Capt<br>Miers |

P.S. The company to which I belong was not written on the envelope. This is the reason it took so long in finding me.

I remain

Yours respectfully

James Cameron



Captain Allan Cameron was killed very early in the war when the make shift headquarters he was in was hit by a shell. The letter written by his comrade, James Cameron, to his mother is very poignant.

- The letter contains a great deal of information about one event which happened in the trenches during the war however the information is not given in chronological order.
  - o Working as a class can you put together a time line of the events in their correct order.
  - o Read the letter again. Do you think that the letter was written in an appropriate, sympathetic way for the mother of Captain Allan Cameron to read.
  - o Discuss as a class whether you think it necessary for so much information to be given about the finding of his body and it being put in the wrong grave.
  - o Do you think that this would happen quite a lot during the war.
  - o Do you think the writer of the letter had become hardened to events such as the one he described.
- As a class contact the Highland Archive Centre and the Lochaber Archive Centre to ask if there are any other documents relating to Captain Allan Cameron. Ask if a member of staff from either Archive Centre could bring along copies of some documents for you to see, or alternatively ask if you can visit one of the Archive Centres.
- As a class use the internet to see if you can find out more about Captain Allan Cameron and where he is buried.

## Charles Broodthaers of Wissant in Belgium

This document is unusual in that it was not written by a Highlander to a relative back home but by a Belgian soldier. Charles Broodthaers was wounded on the field of battle and brought to the Highlands of Scotland to recuperate in the Convalescent Hospital in Fort Augustus Abbey. Charles was tended by nurses whilst a patient at the hospital and wrote letters to them when he was discharged. He wrote again to one of the nurses, Mary Angelo, who had apparently not received his first letter. He sent with the letter a drawing of himself being tended by voluntary nurse Angelo.

Charles expected to be going back to fight, according to his letter, but it is not known what became of him.

Wissant 11-4-15  
Mrs Angelo, Culachy, F.A.  
I am very sorry, I hear you didn't received  
my letter, I send one to every sister and the  
same day. I am still in the depot, but expect  
to go very soon, very likely this week, my side is  
very sore again, but it will go over when I shot a  
few Germans. I thank you very much, Mrs Angelo, for  
all the kindness and care you have had for me. Excuse  
me for all the trouble I caused you. My best regards  
to Mrs and Mr. Farrell and to all sisters and Fathers.  
Your grateful ch Broodthaers

Lochaber Archive Centre. Reference L/D/1075/7/4/8

## Transcript

Wissant 11-4-15

Mrs Angelo, Culachy, F. A.

I am very sorry, I hear you didn't receive my letter, I sent one to every sister on the same day. I am still in the depot, but expect to go very soon, very likely this week, my side is very sore again, but it will go over when I shoot a few Germans. I thank you very much, Mrs Angelo, for all the kindness and care you have had for me. Excuse me for all the trouble I caused you. My best regards to Mr and Mrs Farrell and to all the sisters and Fathers.

Your grateful

Charles Broodthaers



Lochaber Archive Centre. Reference L/D/1075/7/4/8

Drawing made by Charles Broodthaers to accompany the letter he sent to nurse Mary Angelo at Fort Augustus Abbey Convalescent Hospital

## Activity

Charles was a Belgian soldier who had been brought to Fort Augustus Abbey Hospital to recover from his wounds.

- Imagine that you are a young boy or girl living in the area of Fort Augustus at the time and you meet him out walking.
- What would you talk to him about:-
  - Would it be better to ask him about his experiences in the war or about his life at home.
  - Would it be interesting to ask him how he came to be in hospital in the Highlands.
- Working in pairs write down a couple of questions each, then as a class put together all of the questions into a big list.
  - Working as a class discuss the answers to the questions.
  - As a class use the questions and answers to create a drama about the meeting between Charles and a young person from the Highlands.
- As a class contact the Lochaber Archive Centre to ask if there are any other documents relating to Charles Broodthaers or to the hospital at Fort Augustus Abbey. Ask if a member of staff from the Archive Centre could bring along copies of some documents for you to see, or alternatively ask if you can visit the Archive Centre.
- As a class use the internet to see if you can find out anything about hospitals for wounded service men in World War One, especially the hospital at Fort Augustus.



## Contact details of the Archive Centres

### Caithness Archive Centre

**Tel:** 01955 606432

**Email:** north.highlandarchive@highlifelifehighland.com

### Highland Archive Centre

**Tel:** 01463 256444

**Email:** archives@highlifelifehighland.com

### Lochaber Archive Centre

**Tel:** 01397 701942/700946

**Email:** lochaber.archives@highlifelifehighland.com

### Skye and Lochalsh Archive Centre

**Tel:** 01478 614078

**Email:** skyeandlochals.archives@highlifelifehighland.com

[www.highlifelifehighland.com/archives-service](http://www.highlifelifehighland.com/archives-service)

