

Soldiers in the First World War were forbidden to keep diaries or journals that described the war. This was to prevent opposing forces from obtaining information about military operations if a soldier were to be killed or captured and his journal fell into enemy hands. In spite of this, many soldiers felt the need to record the things they were experiencing. Veterans Affairs Canada and the National Archives of Canada have transcribed some of these journals and diaries to help Canadians remember the personal human experience of war alongside the official documents.



The following text has been taken from the journal of Private Frank Walker (1893-1977), written during his service with the Canadian Field Ambulance, Canadian Medical Corps, from 1914 until 1919.

June 1916 Third Battle of Ypres, France

June 7 Advanced Dressing Station, "Railway Dug-Outs."

We arrived here — three stretcher squads of us — this afternoon. Along the Ypres road were scattered the debris of War — rifles, pieces of equipment, ammunition limbers, ration wagons, and dead horses. Guns of all calibre are massed hereabouts. The small guns are firing continuously. The Dressing Station is built into the Railway Embankment, and is practically shell-proof.

June 14

For 48 hours we have been working without a stop, and still the fighting is going on, and the wounded are falling faster than we can pick them up. It has rained all week. The trenches are knee-deep, — in some places waist-deep, with mud and water. The dead and wounded lie everywhere: in trenches, and shell pits, and along the sodden roads. Two thousand wounded have passed through our hands since the attack. Hundreds more are dying of exposure a mile away, and we cannot reach them. The wounded who are already here must lie outside the Dressing Station, in the open, under the rain, until their turn comes.

We shall be relieved tonight, for 12 blessed hours, by the 3rd Field Ambulance. We are all in.

Source:

Veterans Affairs Canada, The First World War, Diaries and Letters
First World War Journal and Poems of Pte. Frank Walker:

<http://www.vac-acc.gc.ca/youth/sub.cfm?source=history/firstwar/1Diary/walker/walker_journal>