

Canadian Lumber Camp Eartham and Slindon:

1917 till 1919



<http://www.archives.gov.on.ca/en/explore/online/posters/recruitment.aspx>

By Rodney Gunner

The Canadian Forestry Corps.

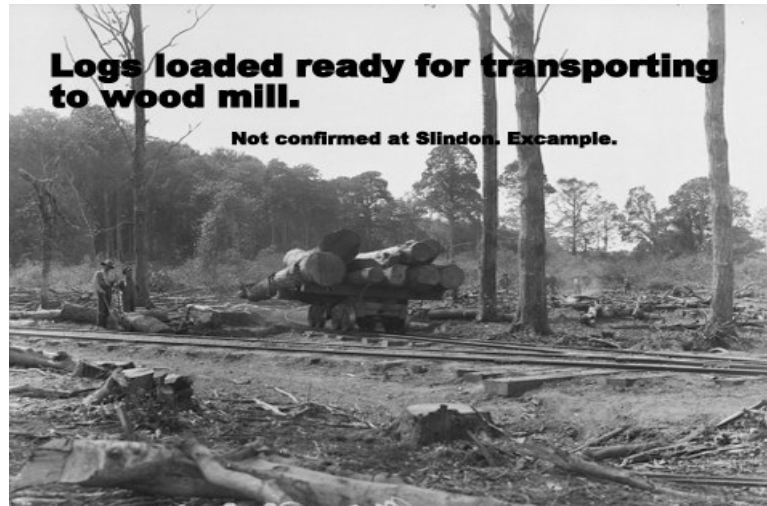
The Canadian Forestry Corps was formed following an appeal from Britain on February 14, 1916 for troops to undertake lumbering operations overseas. The Canadian Forestry Corps assumed various tasks, including clearing land for airfields, preparing railway ties and lumber for use in trenches, building barracks and hospitals as well as farming. During the critical days of 1918, the Corps also supplied 1,280 men to the infantry.

The Canadian Forestry Corps operated in both Britain and France. In France, The Corps often worked under fire from both artillery and the air. In some cases, they had to abandon their mills when the German army overran their operations during an advance. France awarded the Croix de Guerre to members who had experienced heavy artillery fire. (Luckily they did not come under fire in England)

In Britain there were more than seventy forestry operations that were fully funded by the Canadian Government. The Canadian Forestry Corps produced 70% of allied lumber used during World War I. The Base Depot for the Canadian Forestry Corps was located on Smith's Field in the Windsor Great Park. Windsor Great Park is the estate that surrounds Windsor Castle, and is famous for its 8,000 acres of forest which includes plantations of ancient oaks first planted by Queen Elizabeth I. The Canadians were amazed at the size of the trees found on the estate. One tree cut down by the Canadians was the William the Conqueror Oak that stood beneath the King's window. The tree had a circumference of over 38 feet and, since no saw was long enough to cut through the tree, the Canadians cut a hole into the hollow trunk which enabled a man to pull the saw from inside.

On the Slindon estate there was a large base, the numbers of personal was around 100 men, many would have moved from camp to camp , there was about 20 skilled woodsmen based there at all times.in addition some 300 German prisoners of war were available for use, being based in a camp on the estate. There is little to see on the ground now, but if you visit the area one can imagine the site there, the area can still be located

The trees there cut down would have been used for pit props, and trench reinforcements on the front lines, as well as for building materials.



Ref. Canadian Archives- Photos archive Mikan 3522850 Logs to the Mill.

The Railway .

Through his agents, Messrs Power & Company. F .J.Wootton Isaacson sold timber on his estate(now owned by the National trust) to TSD.The contact is dated 26th September 1917, but the 114th Company of the CFC (Canadian Forestry Company) are recorded as being there from 16th August, having completed a contact in Esher.

The timber was standing in Eartham and North Woods and also in the adjacent, but rather smaller, St.Marys Wood.

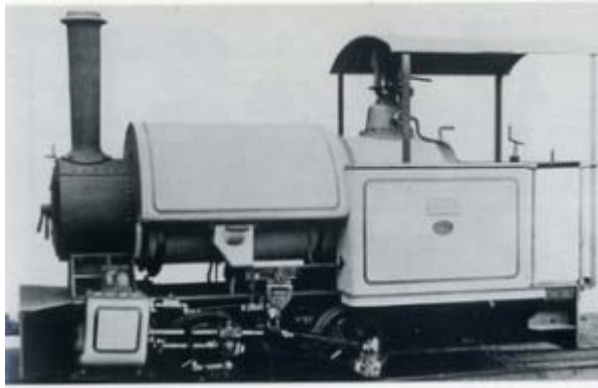
The plantations stretched from just north of Slindon to Eartham and to the south and west of Gumber Farm.

North Wood was intersected by the old Roman Road as Stane Street.

The central part of Eartham Wood had been previously been sold to Messrs Louis Blackman Ltd., but this was purchased by the TSD about 3 weeks later for £4735.2s.7d.

A 3ft gauge tramway one and half miles long , but the total length was to have been six miles long the line was worked by two steam locomotives, was laid by the CFC, all this plant was up for sale on 29th May 1920.

The two locomotives were 0-04-OST Bagnall 2059 and another loco carrying a J.F.W.Wake plate.



One of these Engines can be seen in steam at the Sittingbourne & Kemsley Light Railway, in Kent.

Photo, Bagnall Archives.

<http://en.wikipedia.org>



The Wood Mill, located at North Wood. The mill was one of the largest built in Great Britain, by the Canadian's.

Copyright Robin Upton. Private collection. Slindon Sussex.



Photos are taken from glass plates, quality is poor at times.
Burning waste wood: .

Copyright Robin Upton Private collection. Slindon Sussex.



At the start of the logging horses were used to transport the timber, as the operation grew rails were laid, making it easier.

Ref. Canadian Archives- Photos archive MIKAN [3522868](#): (W.W.I - 1914 - 1918) Canadian Forestry Corps in England: Returning for another load.



The Canadian Lumber Jack was a very skilled man, he could fell large trees with just an axe in a very short time, and this shows a logger working at a logging operation similar to the one at Slindon.

Ref. Canadian Archives- Photos archive MIKAN [3522526](#): (W.w.I - 1914 - 1918) Canadian Forestry Corps Company H.Q. in woods. February, 1919.



Bush clearing and burning:

Ref. Canadian Archives- Photos archive .Not referenced :



Private Collection Robin Upton. Slindon Sussex.

Taking a rest posing for a photo:



As part of the British attempt to keep up more Copyright Asch publications 2015, company on a light railway in the final stages of the war in August 1918.

Ref: Private collection, postcard dated 1918. blank on back.

Photo of the King George V on a visit to a logging Camp, it is thought to be at Slindon On the new railway, date 1917.

The Eartham / Slindon Camp. Established 1917, closed early 1919, for military use, continued in use for a short while by private company.

The Camp 54th district headquarters Southampton.

Trees felled to provide pit props in England, and trench supports in France.

Some timber mainly, making use of the small branches and off cuts, transported by overhead railway to Goodwood for the production of cordite, used in the munitions production at a factory in Goodwood.

Leading Woodsmen based at Slindon /Eartham camp.

Camp Commander.

Lt. Col. F.W.G. Anderson.

Leading woodsmen.

In charge of main unit below, Lieut William Gilbert Stewart.

D. S. Urquhart Sawman.

| | | |
|-----------------|-------------|---|
| C. Scott | Edgerman | responsible for final condition of planks produced. |
| H. Harris | Millwright. | |
| J. A. Johnston | Millwright. | |
| J. B. Baird | Engineer. | |
| J. E. Steel | Setter. | Responsible for setting up saws |
| C. Miller | Cook. | |
| R. J. Armstrong | Edgerman. | |
| W. R. Wedlock | Setter. | |
| E, D. McGowan | Cook | |
| A. Coulsen | Engineer. | |

The camp commander was required to keep a daily diary of all operations at the camp, the diary is very informative about the time the Canadian's spent in Sussex, and it records everything from amounts of timber cut each day, transportation reports, sick reports, and leave reports. Lists all social activities, including a local cricket match; with other units based within the area.

The camp was in part self-sufficient; they grew vegetables, raised pigs, chickens, and hunted local rabbits and deer, the latter being not totally approved of.

In addition to the leading men, some 100 others were based there at times, plus they had access to over 300 German prisoners of war who were encamped close to the lumber camp.

The Attestation papers (Call up) have been obtained for all of the men who worked at the camp, from its start to closer in 1919.

These records give full information about the home town in Canada, families, any previous military service,. Postings to other units; training programs.

Over the period the men were posted at Eartham/Slindon there general welfare was good, but there were accidents with the felling of large trees, and the working of large band saws in the saw sheds.

3 men who died at the camp were buried at Seaford Cemetery in East Sussex.

It has not been possible to trace all the deceased who passed away at the camp,

Extracts from camp diary dated 9th December 1917.

War Diary 114 company Canadian Forestry Corps Eartham Sussex.

The camp is located on the South Downs in the county of Sussex a area noted for its historical facts in that the old Roman Road runs through the property and the ground has been fought in the great Civil Wars and in other various combats.

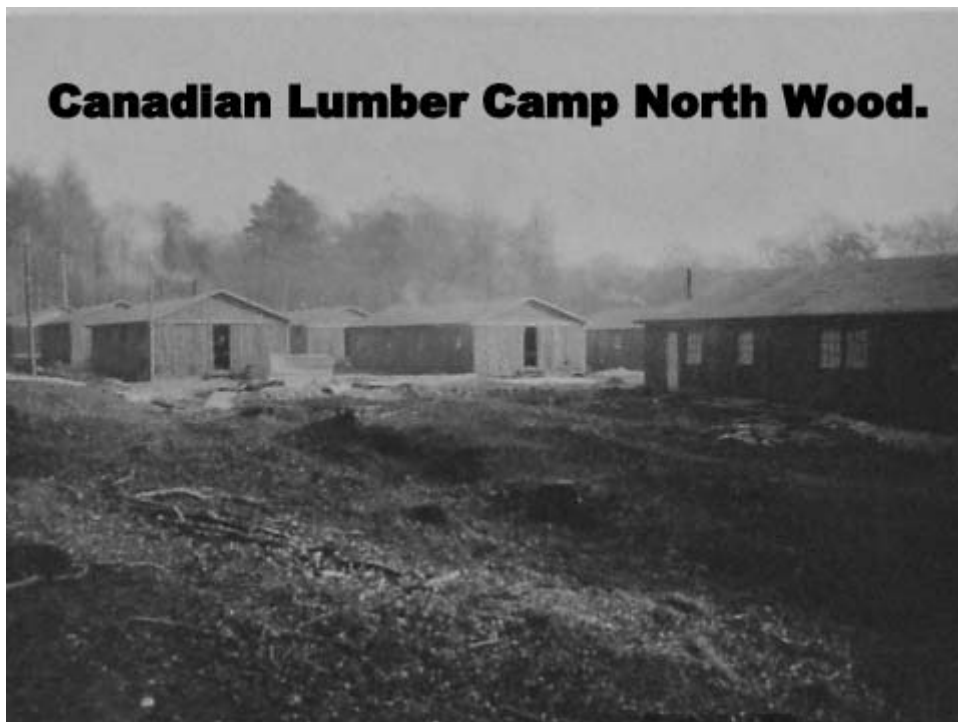
The Camp is situated in the North Woods the Slindon Estate being owned by Mr. Isaacson of Slindon and was formally the property of the Duke of Newburgh.

The nearest railway station being Barnham junction on the London and Brighton and South Coast Railway, from which all timber will be shipped.

The transportation being of mechanical means; horses only being used in the bush. (Further research on the rail link being undertaken.)

The erection of the mill was commenced on September 17th and completed on October 9th.

The buildings erected consist of eight huts, one dining room, one officers mess, and orderly room, quartermaster's stores, canteen, bath house, kitchen, in addition for P.O.Ws six huts additional bathhouse latrines and hut for guards.



Ref: private collection F .J.Wootton Isaacson, deceased owner of Slindon Estate.

It is intended to employ three hundred German Prisoners of War for the purpose of bush work and clearing the ground.

Timber production is commenced October 1917, the monthly production required will be 350,000 F. B. M.

("F. B.M stands for Foot, Board Measure a type of timber measurement. 1 FBM = 0.002360 cubic metre so 350,000 equals 8260 cubic metres of timber. It is not used by the timber industry in this country but would have been a standard measure at the time in North America.")

The roadwork's have started, being performed by Westhampnett Rural District Council and consisted of making practically the whole road from the camp through Eartham via Eastergate to Barnham junction.

The diary for this date continues with many statistics on the day to day running of the camp.

Later diaries give even more information as to the day to day running of the camp, from wood production, to food growing, Cricket matches, Baseball , Musketry, Farming, Y.M.C.A. .

1918.

General notes from the dairy.

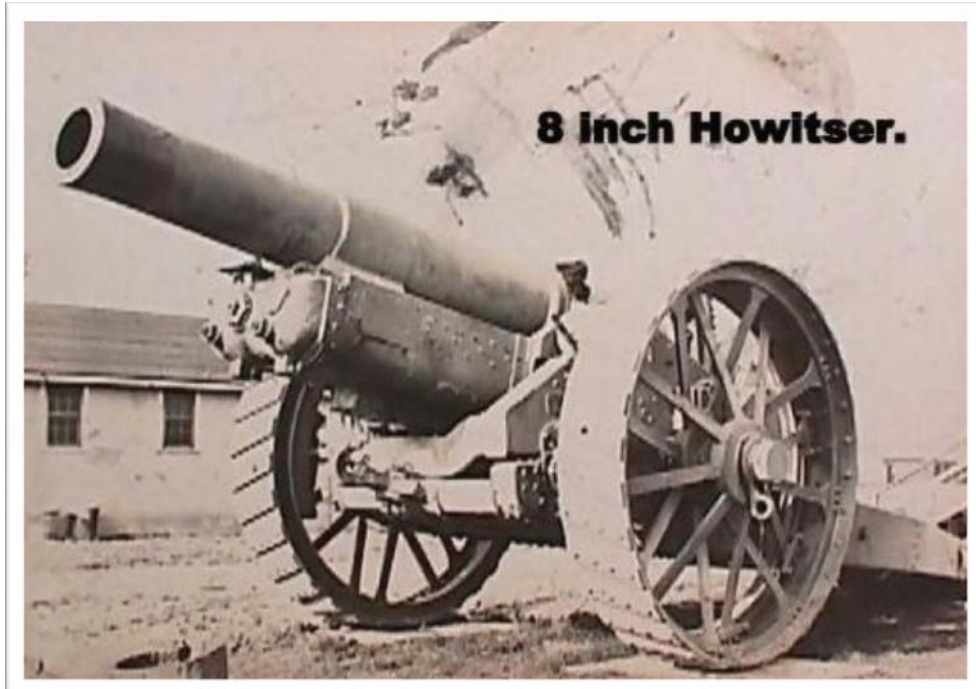
Per week production is 650.000 F.B.M. shipping a average of 60 waggons of timber per week to Barnham.

During this month have constructed two firing platforms for the Ministry of Inventions, and have put men and prisoner to work on the construction of an Aerial Ropeway between Mid Lavant and the camp at North Wood. (Distance 7 miles).

A new officer arrived at the camp to take charge of the prisoners, Lt. Col. Earl of Rothes.

(His wife Lucy Noël Martha, Countess of Rothes (née Dyer-Edwards was a survivor on the Titanic.)

Heavy guns arrived one 60 pounder and one Heavy Howitser, Lt. Col. Harvey being in charge.



Ref: Rodney Gunner .General WW1 Collection of photos out of copyright The Illustrated War News dated 1917.

Started transporting slab and limb timber by the ropeway; to Mid Lavant to be used at the cordite factory there; in the production of Acetone: Acetone being a component of cordite; a substitute for gunpowder.



Ref: Private collection copyright Rodney Gunner Photo Black and White dated 1918. No name ,no ref:

Outbreak of Swine fever we were forced to kill with few exceptions, all our pigs, we purchased 13 more and they are doing well.



MIKAN [3522863](#): (W.W.I - 1914 - 1918) Canadian Forestry Corps in England: 'Our profit'.

We purchased some 20 chickens and chicks, all doing well, have added to swarms of Bees which were taken from the bush, it's expected to have some honey from this source.

We played a game of Baseball on Sunday afternoon July 21st, with the Americans located at Tangmere Aerodrome, at the Graylingwell Military Hospital, Chichester; the result was 15 to 14 in our favour.

The dairy for this date continues for several more entrees.

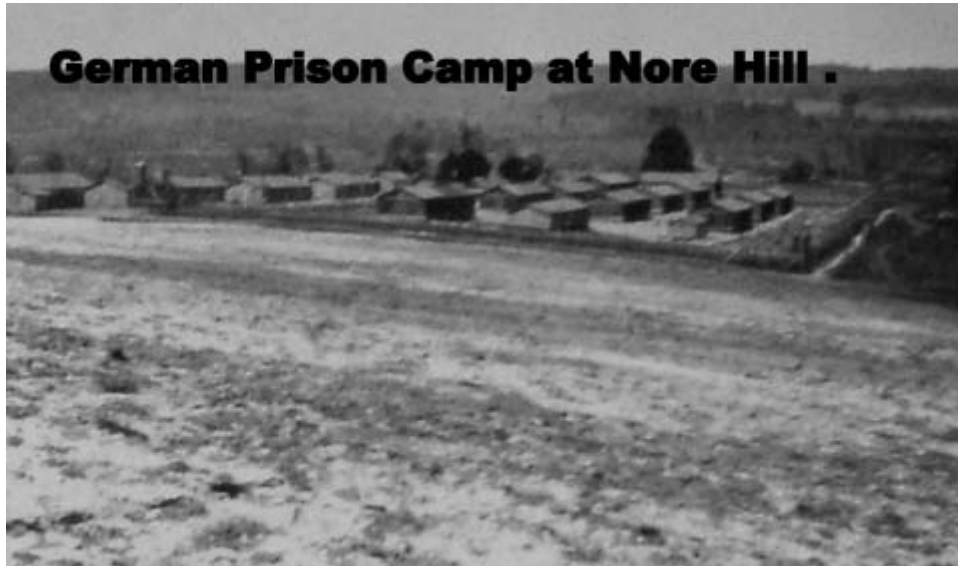
August 1918.

200 acres of land on the estate appropriated for the purpose of establishing an Air Ship Station.

(The Airship Station was built with the aid of the Canadians and Prisoners of War)

Timber production for this month is 610935 F.B.M sawn wood and 80975 lineal ft . Pit Wood.

Prisoners of war working at the camp at this time is 292 plus migratory gang of 20 prisoners assigned to farming work.



Ref: private Collection F .J.Wootton Isaacson.

The Canadians continued working on logging operations until mid-1919,

At this time all the equipment was put up for auction, but some continued in use until early 1921, the Ariel rope-way being used to transport small wood to a factory in Lavant, where **Lines Bros Ltd** Tri-ang Toys were making wooden toys.

German Prisoners of War were sent back to the main camp at Pattishall, from there they were repatriated over a period of time.

1914 - 1920 Eastcote POW Camp Pattishall

On the outbreak of war in August 1914 Britain interned civilian "enemy aliens" including thousands of men of military age with Germanic surnames. Amongst these were members of the National Sailors' and Fireman's Union working on British merchant vessels. The NSFU offered to accommodate these men at Pattishall in Northamptonshire. As the war progressed, combatant Prisoners of War, captured by British troops in mainland Europe were brought to POW camps opened in Britain to minimise their chances of escaping and re-joining the armies of Germany and her allies. In October 1915 the NSFU handed over to the British Government its facilities at Pattishall which were developed to hold many thousand German, Austrian, Bulgarian and Turkish POWs over the following four years. In this book Colin Chapman and Richard Moss tell the

amazing story of the First World War POW camp set in rural Northamptonshire in the heart of England.

Further information on this project can be found by visiting.

<http://slindonatwarmyblog.wordpress.com/>

<http://sussexthegreatwar.wordpress.com/>

References.

The Imperial War Museum. Data .

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The National archives of Canada. Photo References.

West Sussex Records Office. Slindon Estate records.

Prisoners of War Information Bureau, out of print publication, dated 1920.
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Roots Chat. General Research.

National Trust archives. General Research.