

Wartime West Sussex 1939 – 1945 CANADIANS

Letters to Mrs Wardle

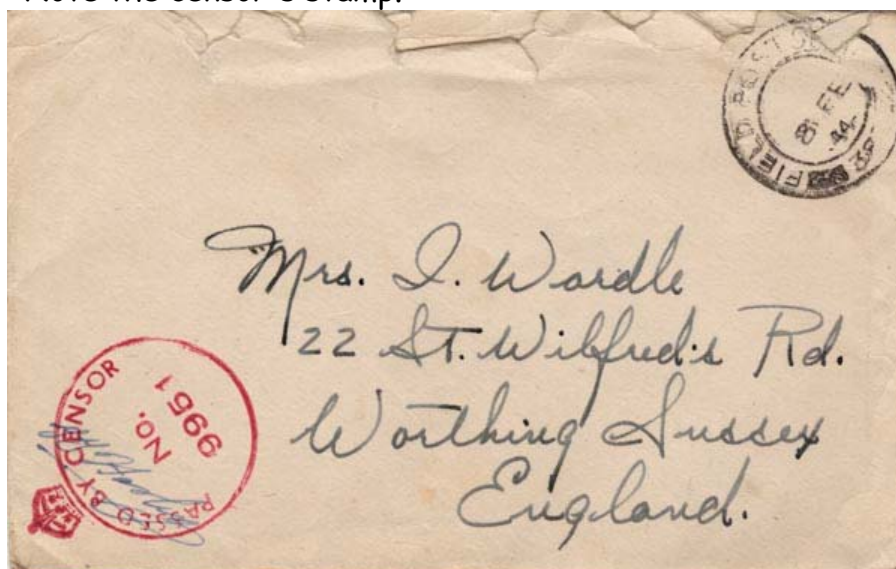
Like many families in Worthing and other West Sussex towns, the Wardle family did their best to make Canadian soldiers who were stationed in the county feel at home. Mr and Mrs Wardle and their daughters Irene ('Rene') and Chris welcomed many Canadians to their home and accompanied them on outings and visits. They also kept in touch with them by letter once they had left Worthing.

Canadian soldier Jimmy of the Camerons (c), and 'Desert Rats' Frank (left) and Ron, pose with Mrs Ida May Wardle (2nd from left) and her daughter Irene outside their home in St Wilfred's Road, Worthing, on June 4th 1944 – two days before D-Day.



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Courtesy of Mrs Irene Clarke

Envelope of the letter written by George Merritt.
Note the censor's stamp.



Courtesy of Mrs Irene Clarke

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CANADIANS

From Canadian soldier Harry

1/5/41
In the field

Dear Mrs Wardle,

Thank you ever so much for your lovely and trusting letter which I received yesterday. It made me feel so much better and happier to know and realize the way you and the family have taken George and I into your hearts. I don't think for a minute that we can ever repay you for the way you have treated us, in and out of your home.

As I have told you before, it has meant a great deal to me to know that in Worthing, I have found a home so much like my own, and that the people in it are the tops.

I'm not much of a hero Mrs Wardle, but I do understand things which I don't think Geo. does, and as long as I have the understanding and will-power that God gave me, I know that I'll be all right.

The time is now 10.05 in the morning and as I have completed my work on my trunk, I felt that such a lovely letter, deserved a speedy answer, and altho' it is quite chilly, I am endeavouring to get it written, so I hope you will excuse the writing as it certainly isn't my best.

I wrote to Chris yesterday and I hope she received it OK. I am enclosing Mother's letter so you can see just why I worry. Also some pictures of our "Western Canada".

I hope you are getting much better by now, and lots of fresh air and sunshine won't do you a bit of harm.

In your letter Mrs Wardle, you said that you knew that Chris was safe with us, and believe me, that is the loveliest compliment that I have ever received and I want you to know that no matter where I am asked to go, I will remember you and your family's kindness.

Now I must close, but I will write again soon. Please give my love to the Paines and I hope that they are well. Tell Chris that we won our game yesterday 13-8.

Goodbye for now
I remain your Loving "Son"

Harry

Wartime West Sussex 1939 – 1945 CANADIANS

From the parents of Canadian soldier George Merritt

5 Elgin Court
Norwich
Ont
[Ontario, Canada]
May 15, 1942

Dear Mrs Wardle,

Your good letter of Apr 26 arrived today, and I am answering for Mrs Merritt that our reply may reach you as quickly as possible.

We had two letters from George yesterday – the first to reach us in four weeks – and a wire today. So between his messages and yours we are very happy.

It has been a particular comfort to us to know that George has such a good "home away from home", and the significance is not lost upon us that the place where he met the right kind of people was at church.

He was not one to say very much about spiritual things, but his army experience seems to have brought out what was within, so that in most of his letters there is something about his faith and experience. The last war left men either better or worse, and with George in this war it seems, thank God, to be the former. And I know that during this past winter, the influence of a good Christian home has been a potent factor in keeping him in the right way. For that we do not fail to thank Him, too, and do hope, with you, that he will continue to visit you, especially when he is so near. We looked up Horsham on the map. We have had a map on England, on the wall, with a little red seal at "Worthing".

Mrs Merritt wrote you about the cards you sent, and as I told George, while we do admire the beauty pictured in the others, the spot that reaches closest to our hearts is the window under the "X"

It is very thoughtful and kind of you to advise us so promptly of George's having moved to another place. Your letter dated Apr 25 reached here May 15, that is fast mail service these days. George's two letters are dated Apr 10 and 19 and came just one mail ahead of yours. He said in one of them that he expected he would be moved soon. Evidently it was just after he wrote.

Again, from the bottom of our hearts we do thank you for opening your home to our only son, and

numbers 6 24-26 ¹

Very sincerely yours
Harvey Merritt

¹ Refers to the Bible, Numbers Chapter 6 verses 24 to 26:

The Lord bless thee, and keep thee:

The Lord make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee:

The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.

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From Canadian soldier George Merritt

18th January 44

Dear Mrs Wardle

I have now received your airgraph and two letters plus a card for Christmas, and want you to know that they were all thoroughly appreciated. As you so well know I only say "thanks" when I really mean it and this time I do.

Yes Don is here with me and we often talk of the good times we spent at your home and wish we were back there for Christmas.

Sorry to hear that Chris has had a dose of bronchitis. I've had it myself and know it's not so pleasant. However tell her that I think it will do her a lot of good to be still for a while. That ought to make her mad enough to write and tell me a thing or two.

I was rather counting on coming to see you all over the Christmas season and take Rene skating again. I know she is just learning but I honestly had a lot of fun that last time we went together to Brighton and Rene learns very quickly. Also I wanted to have a fireside chat with Mr Wardle and yourself – you both remind me so much of my own parents. Then too I would enjoy taking your pretty school-teacher for an evening's dancing.

I am now allowed to say that my unit landed in Sicily some time ago. Since then I've seen a great deal of this island and its people and am slowly learning enough of the language to make myself understood. The climate (unlike England) is very warm during the day and cold at night. This island is really a series of mountains, some of which are so high they are capped with snow. I've been to the top of some of these and the view from such a height is truly magnificent.

Well I must close before the light goes out so good-bye for now and love to all the family.

George

Bdr Merritt G W
B-28715
"Q" Battery
1st Sry. Regt. R.C.A.C.A.O.C.M.F.