

# Kenneth Walter Foster

**Kenneth Walter Foster** was born to Walter and Alice Foster in England on 11 May 1898. The family came to Canada in 1906 and settled in Saanich, living first at Portage Inlet and later on Hastings Street.

Kenneth Foster was 16 when the First World War began in August of 1914 and the following year he was still under-age when he enlisted and was assigned to the 50<sup>th</sup> Gordon Highlanders. In September 1915 Private Foster left British Columbia for England with the 62nd Battalion.

After training in England he was sent to France as a gunner and was wounded in the Battle of the Somme. He spent several months recovering from his injury at a hospital in Cheshire, England before returning to the battlefield. He was recommended for the Military Medal for bravery during the battle for Hill 70 near the French city of Lens.

At the end of the war Private Kenneth Foster received a discharge and returned to Saanich where he married Jessie Thorpe. The couple built a home on Pipeline Road and had two children, Barbara and Daryl. Kenneth's health suffered greatly from his war injuries and he died in 1947 when he was just 49 years old.

The photographs and documents included below were generously shared with Saanich Archives by Kenneth Foster's children, Daryl Foster and Barbara Hourston.



# Kenneth Walter Foster



**Some of the Foster children in front of the Bennett family home at 20 Quincy Street in View Royal.**

The Bennett's were close friends of the Fosters and remember attending many parties at the Foster's home on Hastings Street during the 1920s. George Bennett was in a dance band with the Foster boys and they often played for dances at the Strawberry Vale Community Hall. Kenneth Foster had also been a Victoria Boy Scout for five years before enlisting.

# Kenneth Walter Foster

✓ **ATTESTATION PAPER** No. 463067  
Folio 08/28529

**CANADIAN OVER-SEAS EXPEDITIONARY FORCE**

**QUESTIONS TO BE PUT BEFORE ATTESTATION.**  
(ANSWERS)

1. What is your name? Kenneth Walter Foster
2. In what Town, Township, or Parish, and in what Country were you born? London, England
3. What is the name of your next-of-kin? Mr. K. M. Foster "Father"
4. What is the address of your next-of-kin? Maywood P.O. Victoria
5. What is the date of your birth? June 11<sup>th</sup> 1897
6. What is your trade or calling? Clerk
7. Are you married? no
8. Are you willing to be vaccinated or re-vaccinated? yes
9. Do you now belong to the Active Militia? yes 50th Hvy Bn
10. Have you ever served in any Military Force? no
11. Do you understand the nature and terms of your engagement? yes
12. Are you willing to be attested to serve in the CANADIAN OVER-SEAS EXPEDITIONARY FORCE? yes

K.W. Foster (Signature of Man.)  
Ernest S. Nicholls (Signature of Witness.)

**DECLARATION TO BE MADE BY MAN ON ATTESTATION.**

I, Kenneth Walter Foster, do solemnly declare that the above answers made by me to the above questions are true, and that I am willing to fulfil the engagements by me now made, and I hereby engage and agree to serve in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force, and to be attached to any arm of the service therein, for the term of one year, or during the war now existing between Great Britain and Germany should that war last longer than one year, and for six months after the termination of that war provided His Majesty should so long require my services, or until legally discharged.

K.W. Foster (Signature of Recruit.)  
Date July 23 1915 Ernest S. Nicholls (Signature of Witness.)

**OATH TO BE TAKEN BY MAN ON ATTESTATION.**

I, Kenneth Walter Foster, do make Oath, that I will be faithful and bear true Allegiance to His Majesty King George the Fifth, His Heirs and Successors, and that I will as in duty bound honestly and faithfully defend His Majesty, His Heirs and Successors, in Person, Crown and Dignity, against all enemies, and will observe and obey all orders of His Majesty, His Heirs and Successors, and of all the Generals and Officers set over me. So help me God.

K.W. Foster (Signature of Recruit.)  
Date July 23 1915 Ernest S. Nicholls (Signature of Witness.)

**CERTIFICATE OF MAGISTRATE.**

The Recruit above-named was cautioned by me that if he made any false answer to any of the above questions he would be liable to be punished as provided in the Army Act.  
The above questions were then read to the Recruit in my presence.  
I have taken care that he understands each question, and that his answer to each question has been duly entered as required, and the said Recruit has made and signed the declaration and taken the oath before me, at Victoria, B.C. this 23 day of July 1915.

[Signature] (Signature of Justice.)

I certify that the above is a true copy of the Attestation of the above-named Recruit.

[Signature] (Approving Officer.)

M. F. W. 22.  
250 M. 252.  
N.O. 3792-28-21.  
Commanding 62nd (Overseas) Batt., C. E. F.

**DESCRIPTION OF Kenneth W. Foster ON ENLISTMENT.**

Apparent Age 18 years 1 months. (To be determined according to the Instructions given to the Recruiting Officer for Army Medical Services.)

Distinctive marks, and marks indicating congenital peculiarities or previous diseases. None

Should the Medical Officer be of opinion that the recruit has served before, he will, unless the same acknowledge to any previous service, attach a slip to that effect, for the information of the Approving Officer.

Height 5 ft. 6 ins.

Weight 156 lbs.

Complexion Ruddy

Eyes Brown

Hair Brown

Religious Denominations: Church of England yes, Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist or Congregationalist, Other Protestants (Communication to be named), Roman Catholic, Jewish.

**CERTIFICATE OF MEDICAL EXAMINATION.**

I have examined the above-named Recruit and find that he does not present any of the causes of rejection specified in the Regulations for Army Medical Services.

He can see at the required distances with either eye; his heart and lungs are healthy; he has the free use of his joints and limbs, and he declares that he is not subject to fits of any description.

I consider him fit for the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force.

Date JUL 23 1915 1915

Place Victoria, B.C.

[Signature] Medical Officer.  
C. P. Higgins

**CERTIFICATE OF OFFICER COMMANDING UNIT**

Kenneth W. Foster having been finally approved and inspected by me this day, and his Name, Age, Date of Attestation, and every prescribed particular having been recorded, I certify that I am satisfied with the correctness of this Attestation.

[Signature] (Signature of Officer.)  
Major

Date SEP 1 1915 1915

On his attestation papers Kenneth Foster gave an incorrect birthdate to appear older than he was. He enlisted in July 1915 and entered his father as his next-of-kin ([Library & Archives Canada](#)).

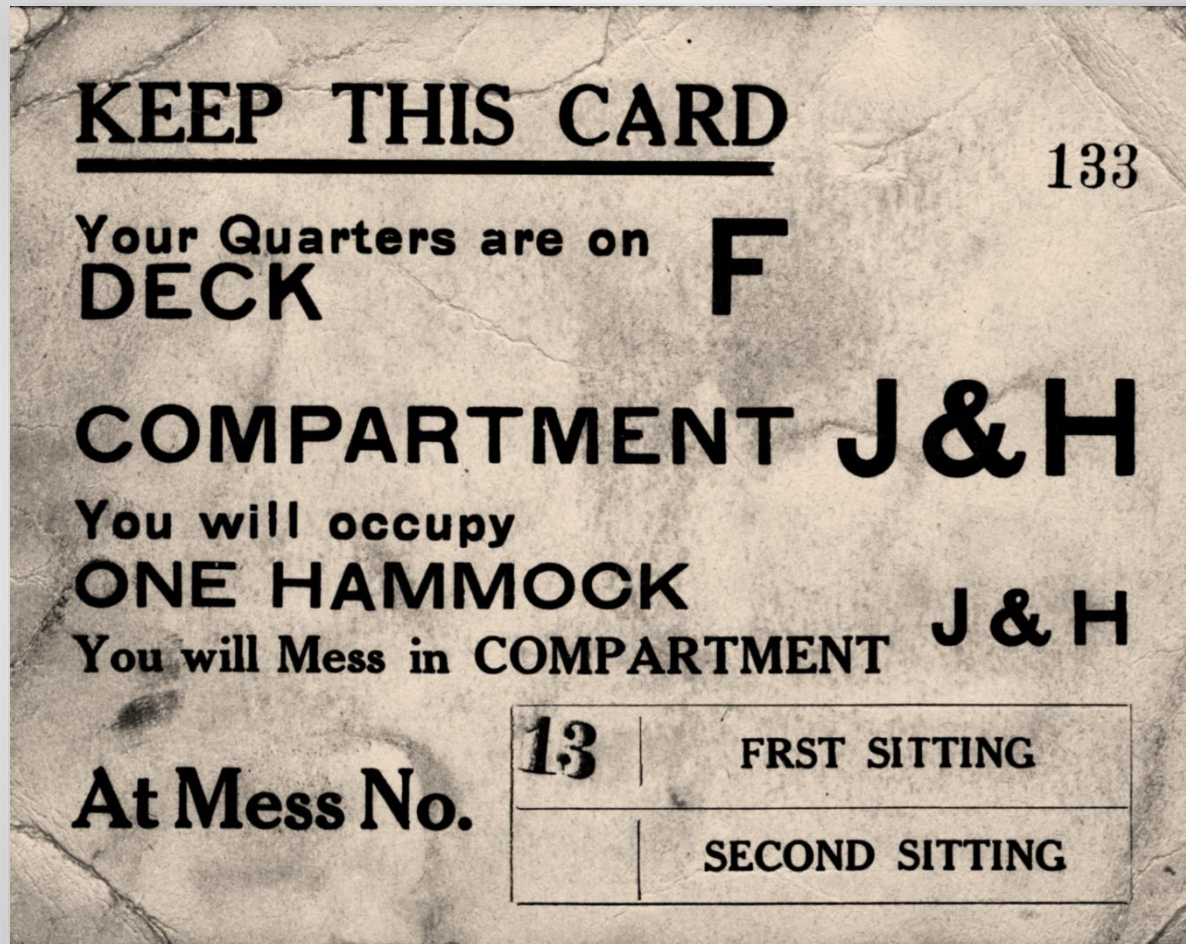
# Kenneth Walter Foster

Kenneth Foster's younger brothers Alan and Phil also served in the Canadian Expeditionary Force.

The photograph on the right shows Kenneth Foster with his young brother Maurice, prior to deployment overseas.



# Kenneth Walter Foster



In September 1915 Private Foster left British Columbia for England with the 62<sup>nd</sup> Battalion.

# Kenneth Walter Foster



Private Foster (far left) training in Bramshott England, 1915

# Kenneth Walter Foster



Private Kenneth Foster, 1915

# Kenneth Walter Foster

Extracts from Private Kenneth Foster's letters home were printed in The Daily Colonist on 27 May 1916.

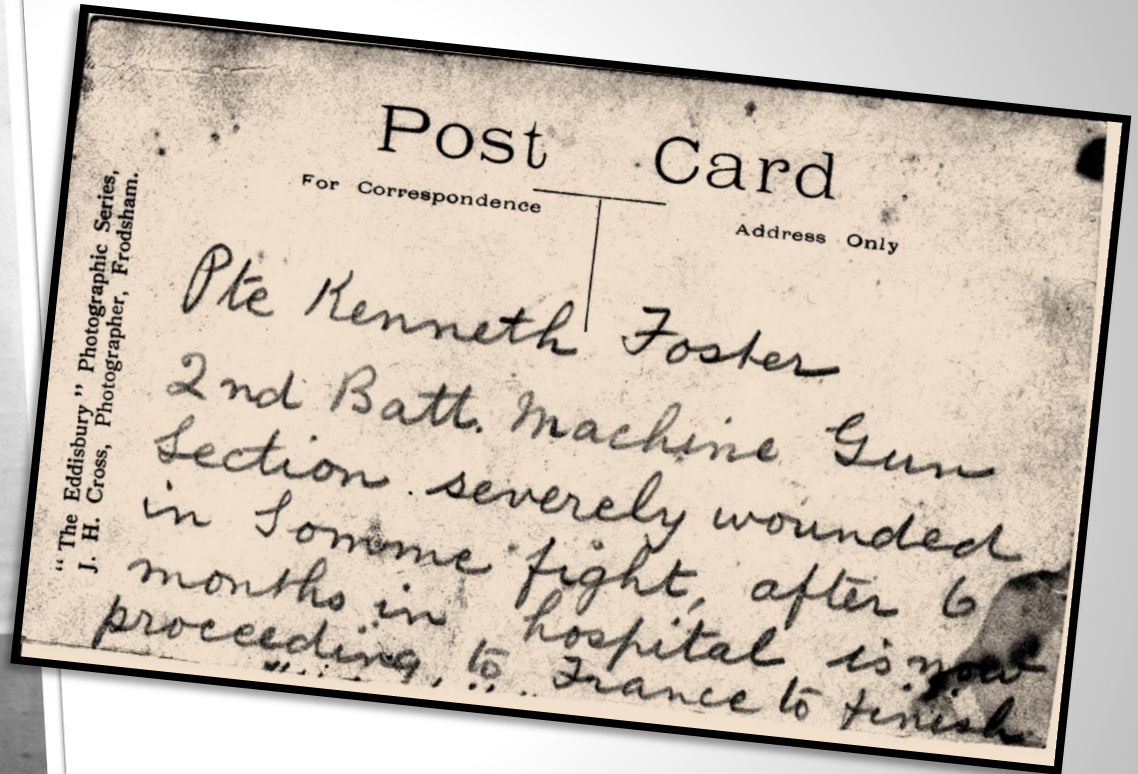
On 1 October 1916 The Daily Colonist reported on Private Foster's injury.

"Pte. Kenneth W. Foster – Who is now lying in a hospital at Liverpool with a gunshot wound in the chest. He is a son of Mr. Walter Foster, of Marigold, who has two other sons on active service, one with the 103<sup>rd</sup> and the other with the 143<sup>rd</sup> Battalion. Pte. Foster joined the 50<sup>th</sup> Gordons in July 1915, and left with the first draft of the 62<sup>nd</sup> for the front in September of that year. When wounded he was serving in the machine gun section of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade."





# Kenneth Walter Foster



Private Kenneth Foster spent several months in England recovering from a gun shot wound he received during the Battle of the Somme in 1916. He was treated at Frodsham Auxiliary Military Hospital near Chester, England and returned to active duty in 1917.

# Kenneth Walter Foster

April 12-1917.

In the event of  
my death, I give the  
whole of my Property  
and effects to: Mrs  
W. M. Foster of  
Marigold P. O.  
Garden City  
Victoria B.C.

Signed: Kenneth Foster  
Private #63067

Dated: the 12<sup>th</sup> day of  
April 1917.

MILITARY WILL.

Will extracted from Pay Book and forwarded to the  
Paymaster, Canadian Troops, Seaford Area, on April  
15th, 1917.

463067 Private. Kenneth Foster.

*W. Kennedy* ..... Captain.  
Paymaster, 6th. Can. Reserve Battalion.

In April 1917 Private Kenneth Foster made a will, leaving his personal property to his mother in the event of his death.

# Kenneth Walter Foster

The Daily Colonist, 30 September 1917

## Pte. Kenneth Foster Tells Part He Played during the Recent Fighting – Long Service With Machine Guns

For bravery during the recent fighting around Lens, Pte. Kenneth Foster, of Marigold, has been recommended for the Military Medal. He is the son of Mr. Walter Foster, and he has been serving with the machine guns in France for twenty-six months, barring six months in hospital as a result of gunshot wounds received on the Somme. Here is his modest account of the fighting in which he sustained his latest injury, and, incidentally, the recommendation for war honors.:

“You will, no doubt, have heard about the advance, when we took Hill 70. I was not over the bags this time, but put in one of the hardest trips that the battalion has ever experienced. Out of my platoon (forty men) there were only five who came back. I was one of the lucky ones.

“The first counter-attack commenced at 1 a.m. and lasted for one hour. I was on sentry when the barrage started and immediately opened up with the guns. The second attack lasted for three-quarters of an hour and the third about half an hour. That was when my corporal got killed. I was right beside him when he was killed, and the gun he was working went right up in the air. I thought that my face was blown off.

“By this time all the N.C.O.’s were either killed or wounded. I being No. 1 on the gun was left in command of the platoon – what remained of it. No. 2 and myself were the only men left in the trench after the third attack.

“Fritz got into the trench with liquid fire, but none of them ever got back.”



# Kenneth Walter Foster

Nothing is too good for the boys in the trenches.

DURING ARMY OF OCCUPATION AT COLOGNE GERMANY

Lieut. Col. L.M. Laughlin, D.S.O.  
Officers,  
Non-Commissioned Officers and Men  
of the Battalion  
Extend to you Heartly Christmas Greetings  
and  
Best Wishes for a Happy New Year

Xmas 1918

Private Kenneth Foster was discharged in 1919 and returned to Saanich.



## CANADIAN EXPEDITIONARY FORCE

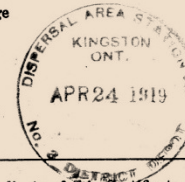
DISCHARGE CERTIFICATE Service Badge 246295  
Class "A" No. ....

THIS IS TO CERTIFY that No. 463067 (Rank) Pte.  
Name (in full) FOSTER Kenneth Walter enlisted in  
the 62nd Bn  
CANADIAN EXPEDITIONARY FORCE at Vernon B.C. on the 21st  
day of August 1915  
HE served in England & France 9th Battalion  
and is now discharged from the service by reason of Demobilization.  
Medical Unfitness.

THE DESCRIPTION OF THIS SOLDIER on the DATE below is as follows:—

Age <u>21 years</u>	Marks or Scars <u>One scar on back and one on left scapula</u>
Height <u>5'6"</u>	<u>4.1.20.1916.</u>
Complexion <u>Ruddy</u>	
Eyes <u>Brown</u>	
Hair <u>Brown</u>	
<u>x</u> <u>Kenneth Foster</u> Signature of Soldier	<u>G. J. Howlands Lt</u> ..... Captain for O. C. Dispensing Commission II

Date of Discharge



for O. C. Dispensing Commission II

Rank

Date ..... 19.....

N.B.—As no duplicate of this Certificate will be issued, any person finding same is requested to forward it in an unstamped envelope to the Secretary, Militia Council, Ottawa, Canada.

L.F.B. 39.  
049-D.P.-300M-11-18.  
I.Q. 1772-39-882.



# Kenneth Walter Foster



After his discharge in 1919, Kenneth Foster returned to Saanich.  
The photograph on the right shows Kenneth (centre, back row) with his parents and siblings, ca. 1920.

# Kenneth Walter Foster



After the war, Kenneth Foster married Jessie Thorpe and they built a home on Pipeline Road where they raised their two children, Barbara and Daryl. During the Second World War, Kenneth Foster worked for the Salvation Army, visiting military bases on southern Vancouver Island to help raise morale. His health continued to suffer from his First World War injuries and he died in 1947 when he was just 49 years old.

Left: Barbara, Daryl and Jessie Foster. Right: Kenneth Foster during the Second World War.

# Kenneth Walter Foster

Pte. Kenneth Walter Foster.

Memoir

MEMOIRS OF THE GREAT WAR 1915 - 1918

In the early part of 1915 I was operating an elevator in one of the larger buildings in the city of Victoria, British Columbia, for which I received the enormous sum of seven dollars per week, six of which went home to help feed the multitude (eleven all told) the remaining one being kept for myself. At this time the War was just getting underway very nicely and although we were thousands of miles from the battle fields of France there were many incidents which told us there was a terrific crisis going on over there.

It was in April of 1915 that the good ship "Lusitania" was torpedoed by a German submarine and many persons lost their lives and a lot of ill feeling was created amongst the people of Victoria against the German element residing there; for no sooner had the so-called victory been made known when they began celebrating on behalf of their fellow-countrymen, a very foolish thing to do for the troops stationed there were very indignant over the affair and proved that such a thing was quite out of order by raiding and putting them out of business forever.

It was now my one ambition to join up right away so that I could get to France before the war was over, so I went to the recruiting station and offered by services to my country and to help right a great wrong which we believe had been done by the War Lords of the warring nations. I was then seventeen years of age and was doubtful whether I would be accepted, being under age. My doubts were confirmed, for after passing the "Medical Officer" I was turned down for being under age, so a few days after to my sorrow. But I was determined to go, so a year older. This I returned much the same as before, but a year older. This time my efforts were a success for I was taken on and attached to the 50th Gordon Highlanders. And what a struggle I had to get those umpteen yards of kilt on the right way! I shall never forget it; and how chilly it was too. And believe me, I was some proud Kiltie when I finally got everything hooked on. It was an old saying later that we were just made to hang things on anyway.

I did my first sentry-go the very next night, with a feeling of importance mixed with nervousness and sleepiness; in fact, it was one of the longest two hours I had ever spent. For the next two months we did nothing but drill, with an occasional turn at "Cook house" fatigue; that was peeling spuds,

washing dishes, etc., a novelty at first which we soon became tired of.

In June I was transferred to the 62nd Battalion and sent to the training camp at Vernon, B. C., where several Battalions were in training. This camp was all under canvas, which was something new, as our previous one was composed of buildings. Here we were given a more strenuous training, long route marches with full pack, along dusty roads, and the thermometer reading around 90 in the shade, but we did not seem to mind that part of it for we knew we were on our way.

In the latter part of August volunteers were called for draft of a hundred men to be sent to England, of which I was one. Before going I was given six days leave to visit the folks at home. It took too days to get there so that only left me two days to spend at home, not very long when one has to say goodbye, perhaps for good; however, fate brought me back, whether for better or for worse remains to be seen.

Well, the time came when I gathered my belongings, said "goodbye" to the folks and my friends, but alas! I had left it a little late, for when I arrived at the depot the boat was just pulling out. I just stood there not knowing what to do, for I knew only too well that if I was late getting back the draft would be gone and I had visions of being court-martialed with a crime of desertion against me. However, I noticed a well-known clergyman amongst the crowd whom I knew, so I asked him to write a letter for me to the commander to the effect that I had missed the boat and would therefore be a day late. Naturally I was quite put out over the unfortunate incident, and there was nothing left for me to do but go back home and start again the following day. That night was the last time that I had the pleasure of sleeping in a real bed for almost two years. The following day I left in plenty of time so there would be no danger of repeating yesterday's performance, and finally did get away, without feeling the least bit homesick. Odd? Well, rather. The boat trip of four hours to Vancouver was always interesting to me, provided of course that the water was on its best behaviour, for I am a good sailor in port. Arriving in Vancouver about 8 P.M. we found the troop train already waiting for us. The trip to Vernon took only twenty-four hours and it seemed that no sooner had we got nicely settled when we had to disembark, having reached destination. Naturally, my first thoughts were--had the draft gone without me? But on reaching the camp I was told that it had not, but was scheduled to pull out the next day.

And so it was on the 26th of September, 1915, that I actually started on my long journey for parts unknown. The "Fall-in" was sounded and after saying goodbye to some of the boys we paraded for the final inspection by the Commanding Officer of the

Kenneth Foster recorded his experiences of the First World War in a memoir. The document is available to read at Saanich Archives.



# Kenneth Walter Foster



Documents and photographs for this presentation were generously provided to Saanich Archives by Daryl Foster and Barbara Hourston.

You can learn more about the *Saanich Remembers World War One* project by visiting our website at [www.saanich.ca/archives](http://www.saanich.ca/archives)

Or contact Saanich Archives  
**250-475-5494 ext. 3478**  
[archives@saanich.ca](mailto:archives@saanich.ca)