



‘Writing Home about Mother’: Dominion Soldiers in the United Kingdom, 1914-1919

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The Humanities Research Centre
ANU College of Arts & Social Sciences

The unprecedented number of dominion soldiers who found themselves in Europe, Africa and the Near East between 1914 and 1919 is an excellent example of ‘global Britishness’ at work. Rather than undermining the imperial connection, this raised the consciousness of many of these men about their place in the Empire. This new interpretation challenges a longstanding tenet that the Great War broke or severely undermined old imperial ties between the dominions and the ‘old country’, which helped shape the contours of a new, more vibrant independent identity. Recent scholarship has challenged these assumptions suggesting a richer, more nuanced series of interpretations. How did the Great War shape or modify these identities?

Until recently, migration historians have not considered soldiers as a fruitful field of investigation. What is missing, and which this paper will address through a systematic mining of personal but unpublished soldiers’ letters in Australia, Canada and the United Kingdom, is to locate and chart strands of this particular element of the British diaspora. For those British-born migrants, their letters home allow the examination of the British connection: their thoughts about their hosts and dominion cousins, their growing sense of imperial pride and their impressions of life and interaction in the UK.

Details

Tuesday 4 October 2022. 4:30PM
CAIS Al-Falasi Lecture theatre,
Building 127, Ellery Crescent, ANU

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