

Daily Mail Official War Post Cards by Jeff Briggs

The Daily Mail Official War Post Cards (Crown Copyright Reserved) were produced from photographs taken by official war photographers based on the Western Front. They did not show the true horror of trench warfare, but they did provide a pictorial record for the public.

The cards were released between 6th September 1916 and April 1917. There were 176 cards in 22 sets, each of 8 cards. Within this total of 176 cards, 105 different photographs were used, mostly of images from the Battle of the Somme which raged from July through November 1916.

The cards were printed in three finishes:

- 1) colour – 56 cards
- 2) silver print – 32 cards
- 3) photogravure – 88 cards

Seven photographs were produced in all three versions, 53 in two different versions, and 43 in one version only. The Daily Mail did not explain why it reproduced some of the photographs two or three times, but it did say that the repeated pictures were in different types of printing to satisfy all tastes.

It has been reported that there were four postcard printers used. I contacted Tony Allen, author and producer of the e-book “The Daily Mail Official War Postcards”, and he replied “I tried for some time to find out who the four printers of the cards were – but with no success. Neither did I find out the number printed for each set.”

So there were four printers, but a record of who they were has yet to be found! Did each of the four printers print all 22 sets? Can four different versions of each set be identified? When a set has both Roman and Hindu numeral versions, were they printed by two different printers?

My own interest began through series 20 (cards 153 – 160) featuring New Zealanders, and series 19 (cards 145 – 152) featuring Australians. Both sets have a secondary title “ANZACS IN FRANCE”. For the Empire minded, Australians also feature on cards 40, 113 and 117, with the same images duplicated on cards 80, 137 and 141, respectively. Canadians only feature on card 25, duplicated on card 50, and Indians on cards 18 & 110, duplicated on cards 78 and 134.

When I decided to collect other cards in the complete series, I discovered that there were obvious variations in the printing. Some of them are touched on in Tony Allen’s e-book, but I have been unable to locate any other reference to the variations I have observed. This article is, therefore, a consideration of the card’s printing variations I have found.

Due to this lack of written guidance I have made the assumption that if at least two different cards show the same type of variation, then both cards were printed by the same printer, whoever that may be. Validation of this is eagerly sought, so I would love to hear from anyone who has been studying these cards and can provide me with additional information and/or agreement.

The first major variation is the actual designation used for each series, using either Roman or Hindu-Arabic numerals:

- 1) Series 2 & II, 13 & XIII, 14 & XIV, 15 & XV, 20 & XX, use both symbols,
- 2) Series 1, 4, 5, 6, 16, 17, 18, 21, 22 I’ve only found with Hindu-Arabic symbols, and,
- 3) Series III, VII, VIII, IX, X, XI, XII, XIX I’ve only found with Roman symbols.

Series 1 (cards 1 – 8) the name of the card on the front is printed in capitals. On the reverse side, full stops are printed after the series number and the card number, and the “Passed by Censor” box is fixed in the corner. There does not appear to be a Roman numbered series. Refer to “Highlanders Pipe Themselves Back From The Tranches.”

It seems that the location of the words “Series” and “No” may in fact indicate a variation as I found this on four cards of Series 1, and also in Series 5 and Series 6. These variations are also accompanied by a distinct difference in the colour of the front image, see “Church Service Before Battle”.

There also seems to be a variation in the size of the “Passed by Censor” box, 21mm x 20mm, or 25mm x 21.5mm.

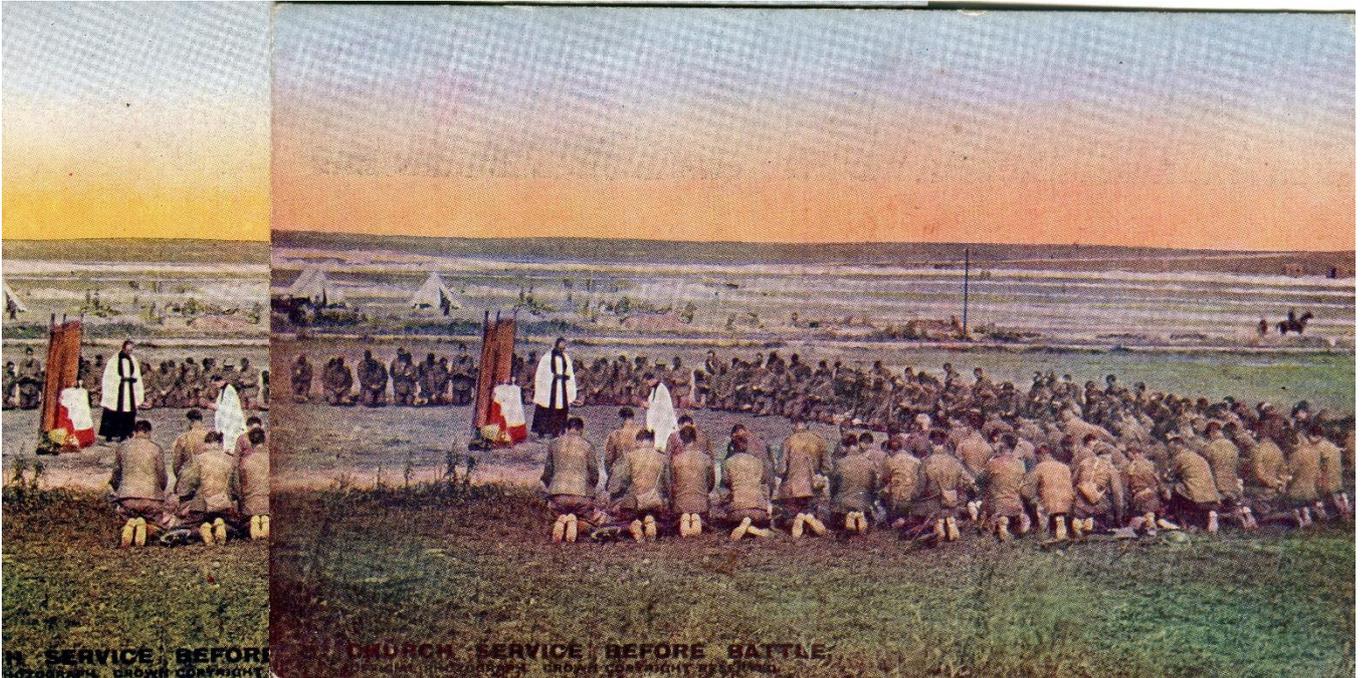
Series 1, Card 2 HIGHLANDERS PIPE THEMSELVES BACK FROM THE TRENCHES



Series 1, Card 3 CHURCH SERVICE BEFORE BATTLE

(see image below – two cards)

This church service for the British 89th Infantry Brigade took place on 29 June 1916 in Carnoy Valley, Flanders.



Series 2 (cards 9 – 16) and Series II not only have the difference in the numeric symbol, but also on the picture side.

Series 2 has the heading “Daily Mail WAR PICTURES”, and has the name of each card printed in 3mm high black capital letters.

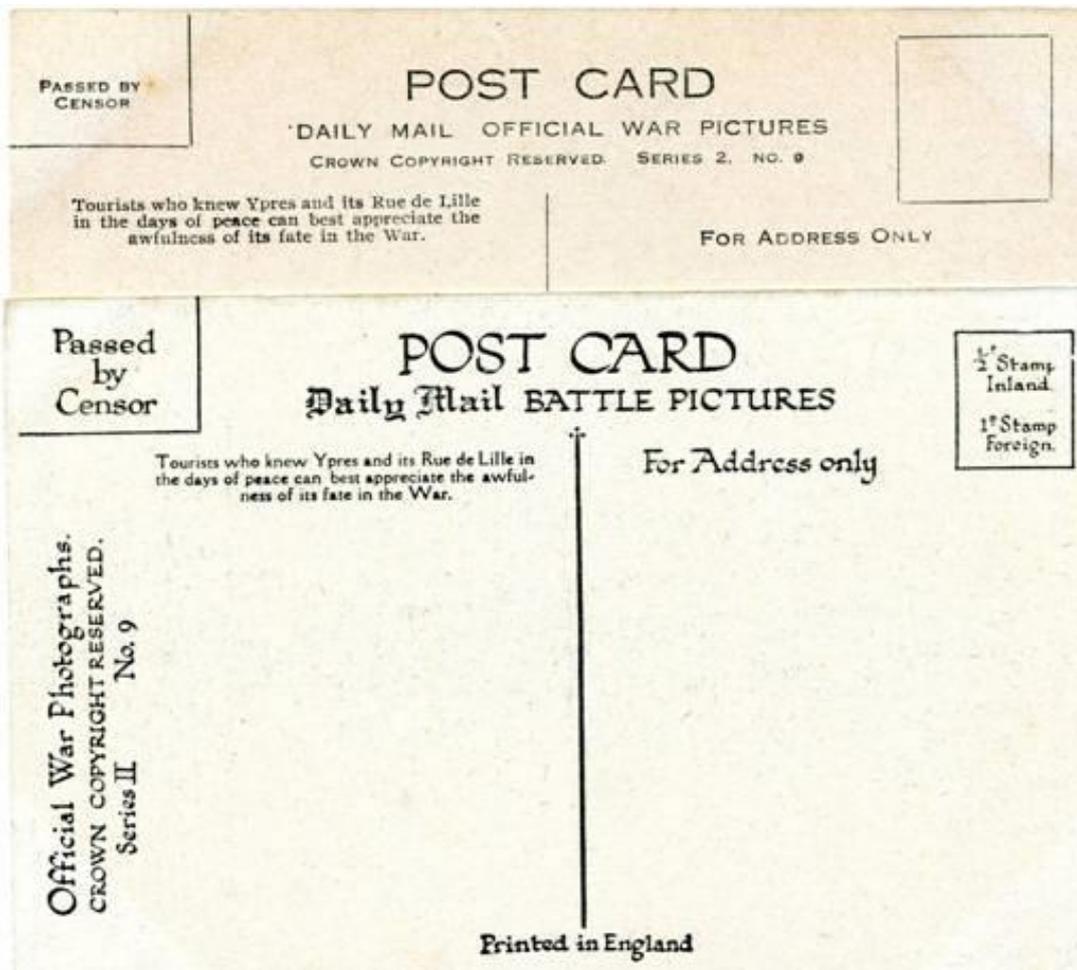
Series II, however, has the heading “OFFICIAL PHOTOGRAPH, CROWN COPYRIGHT RESERVED.”, and has the name in 5mm high white capital letters.

Series 2 & II, Card 9 YPRES AFTER TWO YEARS OF WAR





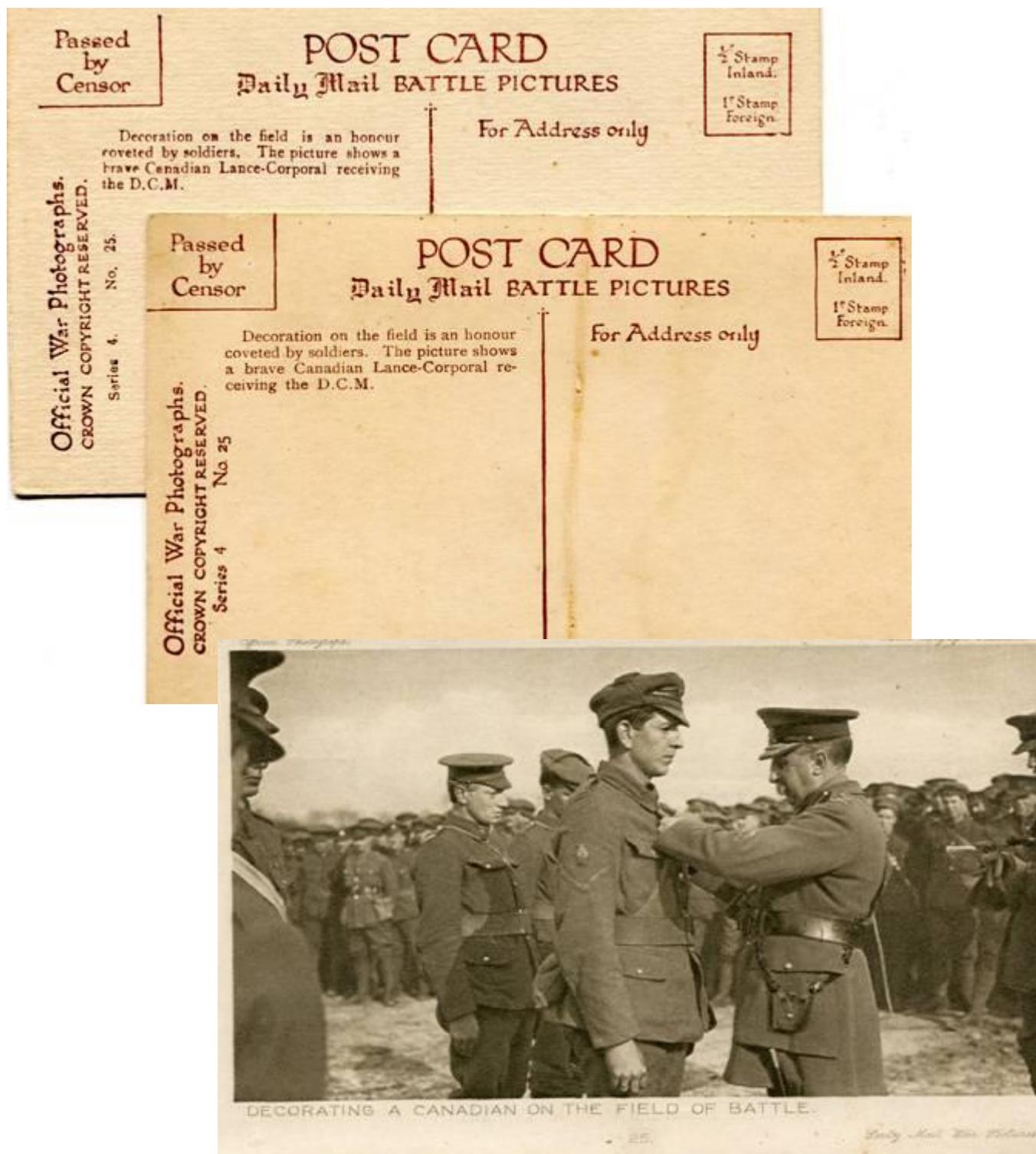
Major variations continue on the reverse, with Series 2 being called “OFFICIAL WAR PICTURES” but Series II are called “BATTLE PICTURES”. Series II shows postage details, and has the series and No. details printed in a different place to Series 2. Both use different fonts, so the explanatory text is set out quite differently on both cards. I have found instances of distinct colour variations, but have not seen enough cards to draw any conclusion.



Series III (cards 17 – 24) has not provided me with any variations, to date. Like Series 1, all cards are printed in colour, there is no front heading, and the title is printed in capitals. On the reverse side, there are full stops after Series III, and after the card number. There may be a variation in the reverse side text being printed in a grey shade on some cards, and a bluish shade on others, but I would need to see more cards to confirm this. There does not appear to be a Hindu-Arabic numbered series.

Series 4 (cards 25 – 32) variations appear to be only on the reverse side. The majority of cards show Series number (no full stop) No (full stop) numeral (no full stop), and the location of “Passed/ by/ Censor” box mainly tied to the corner. However, I have found two cards with variations in Series 4 (full stop), No (full stop), and the numeral (full stop), with the “Passed/ by/ Censor” box floating quite freely. The lettering on the “stop” cards is smaller and thinner.

Series 4, Card 25 DECORATING A CANADIAN ON THE FIELD OF BATTLE



Series 5 (cards 33 – 40) and Series 6 (cards 41 – 48) are similar to Series 4 in that all three series have the same full stop or no full stop variations. I have assumed that as Series 4, 5, and 6 exhibit these same stop/ no stop variations, they were printed by the same two printers. It is interesting that these three series were printed in sepia brown on both sides. Furthermore, the three series do not appear to have a Roman number series. The variations with the stop also show the different position for the S in Series and the N of No.

Series 5 Card 20 AUSTRALIANS PARADING FOR THE TRENCHES



AUSTRALIANS PARADING FOR THE TRENCHES.

Passed
by
Censor

POST CARD
Daily Mail BATTLE PICTURES

$\frac{1}{2}$ Stamp
Inland.
1st Stamp
Foreign.

These are the men who shortly after midnight of Sunday, July 23, 1916, took Pozieres by a splendidly dashing advance through shrapnel, shell, and machine-gun fire.

For Address only

Official War Photographs.
CROWN COPYRIGHT RESERVED.
Series 5 No. 40

Passed
by
Censor

POST CARD
Daily Mail BATTLE PICTURES

$\frac{1}{2}$ Stamp
Inland.
1st Stamp
Foreign.

The first desire of German prisoners brought into camp is to quench their thirst, and the picture shows how they rush to the water tanks.

For Address only

Official War Photographs.
CROWN COPYRIGHT RESERVED.
Series 5 No. 38

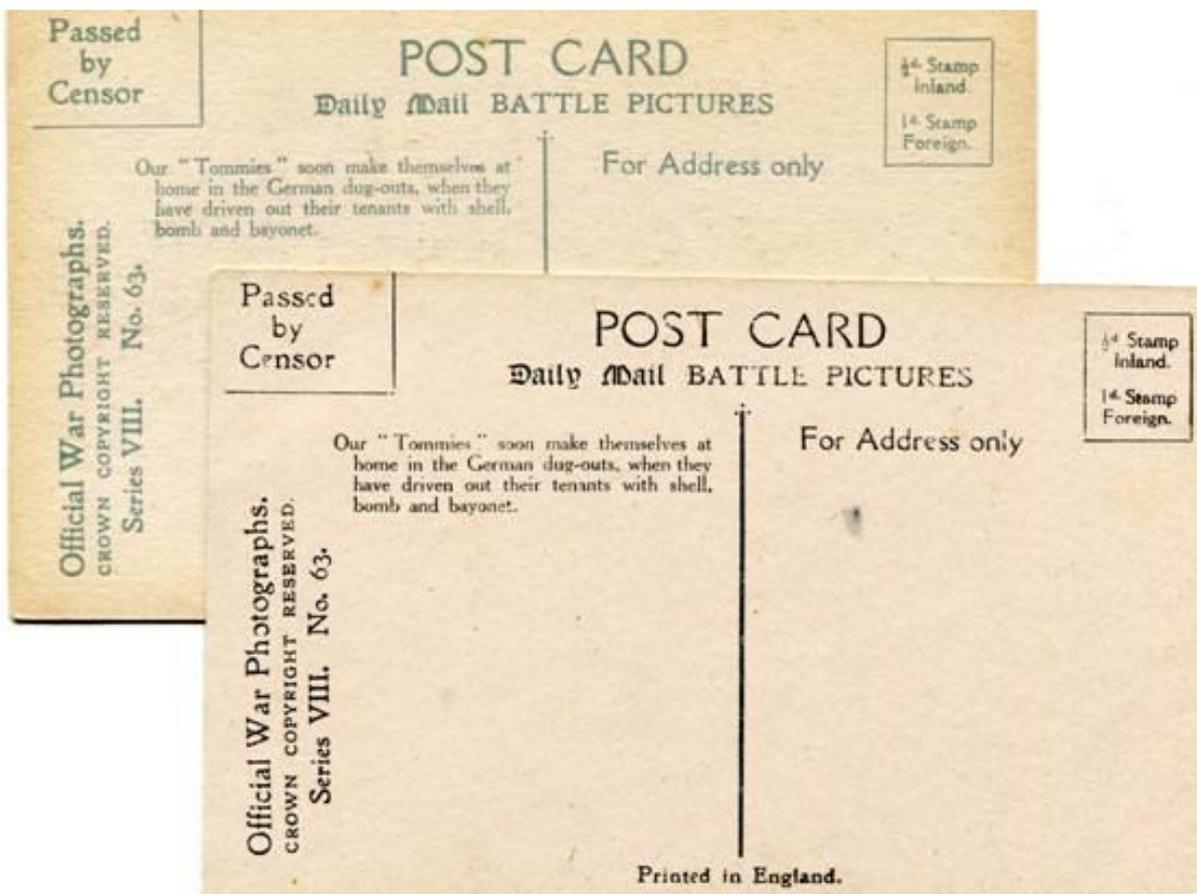
Printed in England

Series 6, Card 45 **HELPING AN AMBULANCE THROUGH THE MUD**



Series VII (cards 49 – 56), Series VIII (cards 57 – 64), Series IX (cards 65 – 72), and Series X (cards 73 – 80) only appear to have a Roman numeral series. On the reverse side they are all headed “Daily Mail BATTLE PICTURES”, and there is a set of each Series printed in a blue colour, and a set of each printed in black.

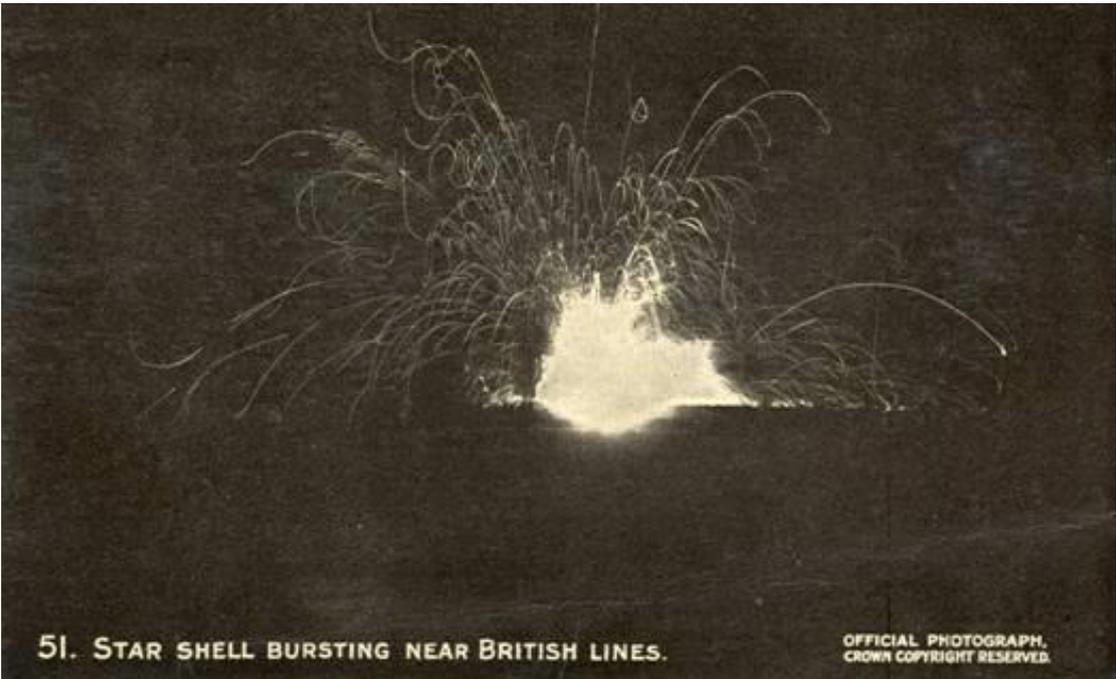
For Series VIII, IX, and X, but not VII, there are cards with a front heading of ‘Daily Mail’ WAR PICTURES, but this may not prove to be consistent.



Series IX, Card 70 BRITISH INFANTRY PRACTISING AN ATTACK



Series VII, Card 51 STAR SHELL BURSTING NEAR BRITISH LINES



Series XI (cards 81 – 88) and Series XII (cards 89 – 96) both have an overall title of “THE KING AT THE FRONT” with the former series in colour, and the latter in photogravure. Both series use the same eight photographs, but the coloured series, to various degrees, were touched up prior to printing. Both of these series only seem to appear with a Roman series number.

Series XII, Series XI THE KING AT THE FRONT. King George and King Albert enjoy an amusing anecdote



Cards 90 and 82 show several instances of being amended – leg & foot on the left deleted; the number of windows on the house reduced, chimneys removed altogether; and the post to the right removed. It was later discovered that the figure to the right was not a post, but in fact was a sentry box.

With the issuing of the King’s visit series, the first half had been released. The second series of 10, series 13 to 21 were issued in October 1916

Series XI, Card 84 THE KING AT THE FRONT. The King meets a hospital matron



Card 84 is the first to show one of the nurses: at Lapugnoy (west of Lille)

Series 13 (cards 97 – 104), Series 14 (cards 105 – 112), and Series 15 (cards 113 – 120), are all printed in colour, and all have the front title in mixed upper and lower case letters. On the reverse side the text is printed in brown, the main title is printed with serifs, and “PASSED/ BY/ CENSOR.” is printed in three lines. **Series XIII, Series XIV, and Series XV** use similar coloured images, but with variations, and have the front title printed in capital letters. On the reverse the text is printed in black, the main title is printed without serifs, and “PASSED BY/ CENSOR” is printed in two lines.

Series 13 Card 100 The King inspecting R.N.A.S Officers



SERIES XIII Card 100 THE KING INSPECTING R.N.A.S. OFFICERS



100. THE KING INSPECTING R.N.A.S. OFFICERS

OFFICIAL PHOTOGRAPH. CROWN COPYRIGHT RESERVED.

Daily Mail WAR POSTCARDS

PASSED BY CENSOR.

POST CARD

Daily Mail OFFICIAL WAR PICTURES

CROWN COPYRIGHT RESERVED. SERIES XIII, No. 100.

Among the King's meetings with his troops on the Western Front was this quiet inspection of a number of officers of the Royal Naval Air Service.

FOR ADDRESS ONLY.

PASSED BY CENSOR.

POST CARD

"DAILY MAIL" OFFICIAL WAR PICTURES

CROWN COPYRIGHT RESERVED. SERIES XIII, No. 100.

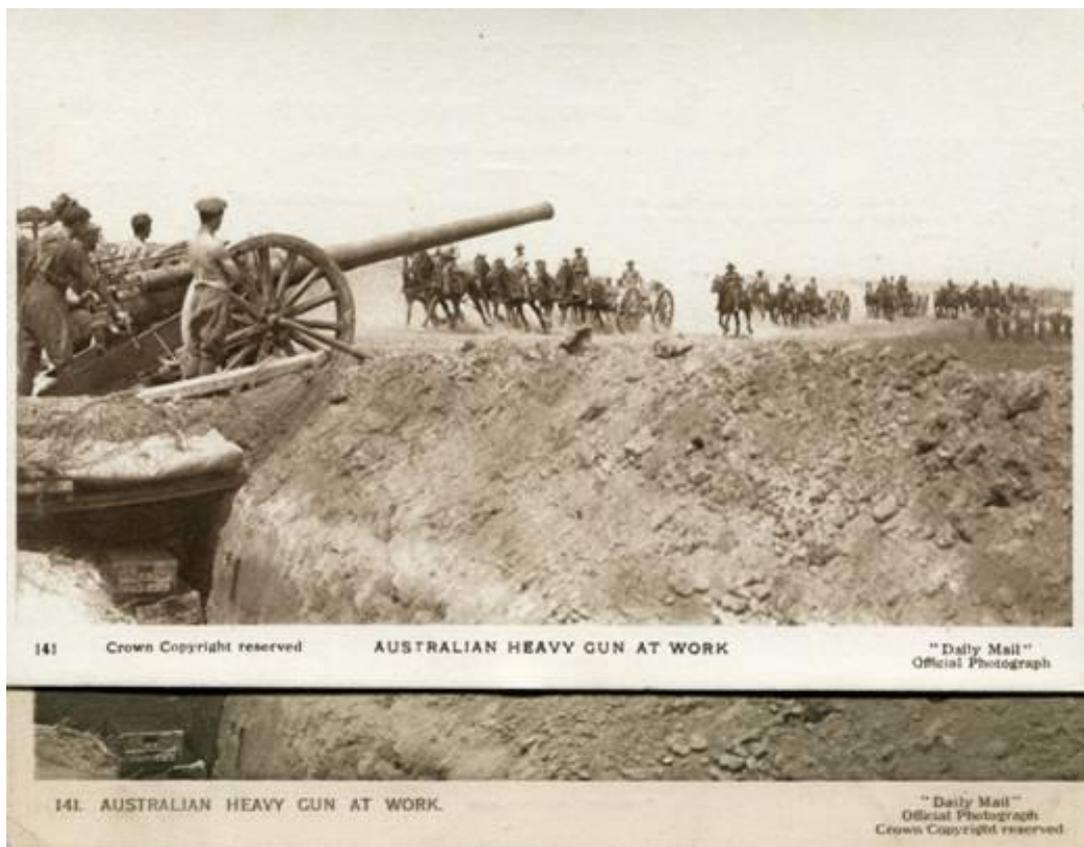
Among the King's meetings with his troops on the Western Front was this quiet inspection of a number of officers of the Royal Naval Air Service.

FOR ADDRESS ONLY.

PRINTED IN ENGLAND.

I think it is safe to assume that Series 13, 14 and 15 were printed by one printer, and Series XIII, XIV, and XV were printed by a different printer.

Series 16 (cards 121 – 128), Series 17 (cards 129 – 136), and Series 18 (cards 137 – 144) only seem to appear in series with an Arabic number, but they come in two different versions:



- 1) The front title is in capitals, but is preceded by "Crown Copyright reserved". On the reverse side "PASSED/ BY/ CENSOR." is in three lines, and there are stops after the series number and the card number.
- 2) The front title is in capitals but without Crown Copyright. On the reverse side "PASSED BY/ CENSOR" is in two lines and there are no stops associated with series or number.

In example 1 the reverse side title includes serifs, and the descriptive text is set out over three lines. Example 2 has the titles printed san-serif, and the text is set out over four lines.

Early January 1917 two new series of cards were issued, "ANZACS IN FRANCE."

Series XIX (cards 145 – 152) is the Australian version of "ANZACS IN FRANCE". The series title on the front is in capitals, but the card title is printed in a mixed font. On the reverse side the "PASSED/ BY/ CENSOR." box is in three lines, and there are stops after XIX, and after No.

To date I have only seen the one set of this series, but the cards all appear to be consistent.

Series XIX, Card no 148 Hot work in hot weather



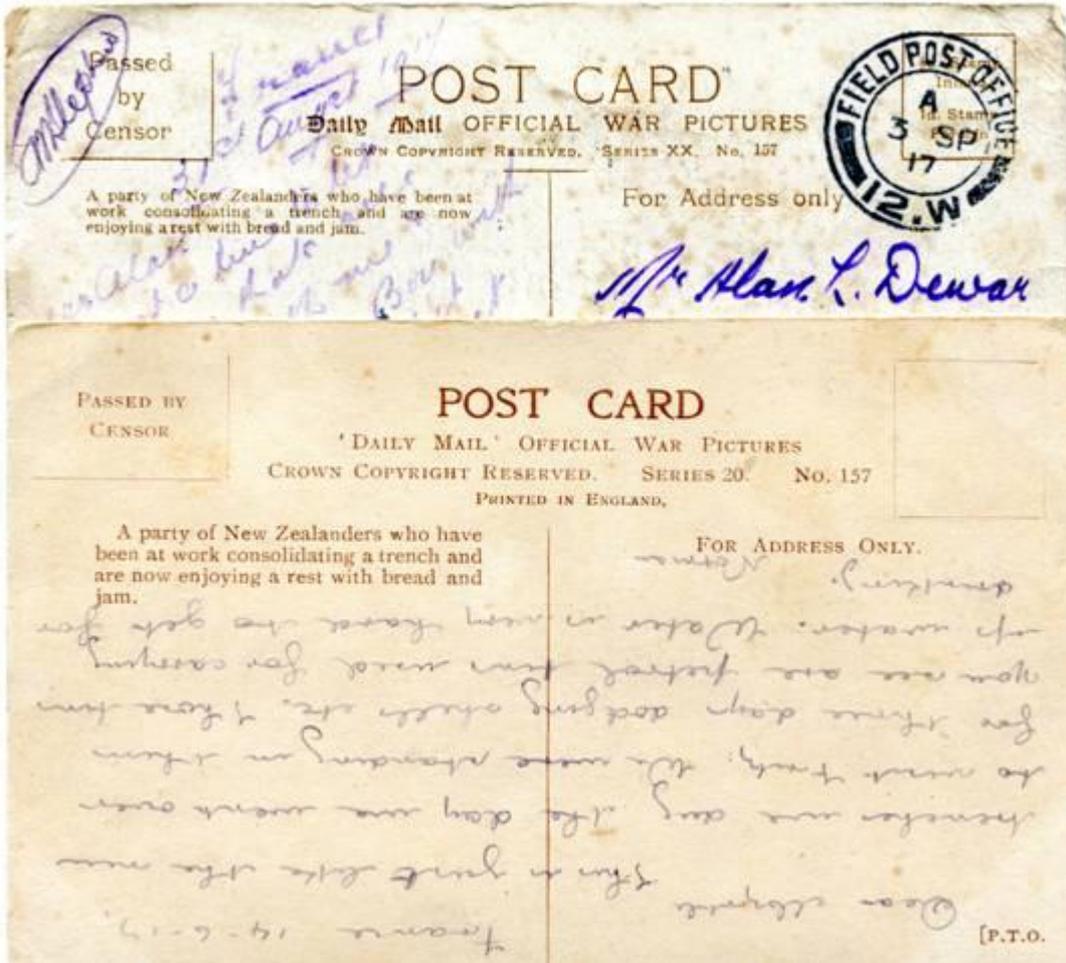
The men in this picture were supporting the attack on Pozieres on August 7, at the cost of 23,000 ANZAC casualties.

Series XX (cards 153 – 160) is the New Zealand version of "ANZACS IN FRANCE", but there is also a **Series 20**.

In Series XIX and XX the series title is printed in capitals, and in Series 20 the card title is also in capitals. On the reverse of Series XX "Passed/ by/ Censor" is printed in three lines, but in Series 20 "PASSED BY/ CENSOR." is in two lines.

Series 20 and XX have the reverse side descriptive text set out differently, and use a different font to each other.

Very few cards were postally used, but when posted, most seem to have originated in England and went to UK addresses. However, the card below was not only posted in France in 1917 but was posted to his brother, Alan Dewar, in Waimate, New Zealand.

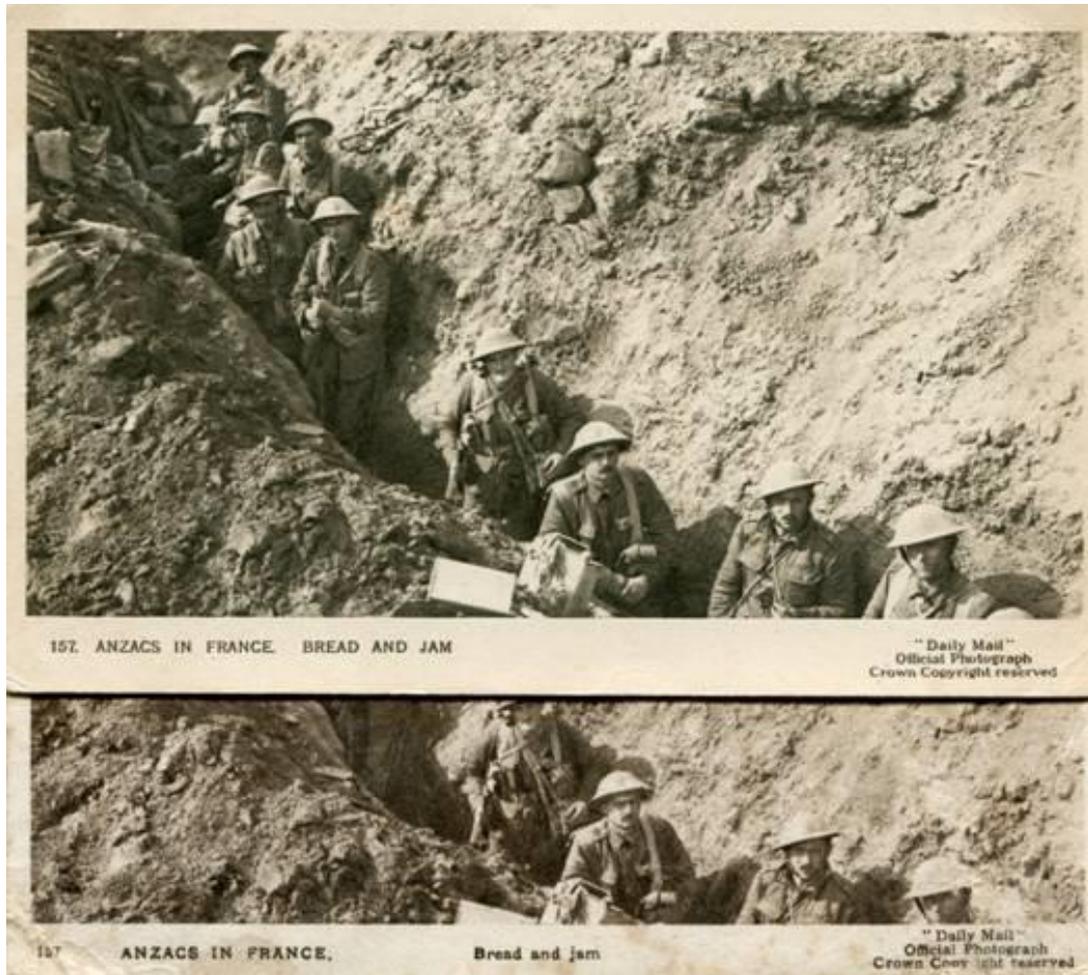


Series XX, Card 153 Off to the trenches



In my opinion the best variation in the entire series of 176 cards exists in this group. Card 157 in Series 20 is titled “ANZACS IN FRANCE: BREAD AND JAM”, and shows men of the Auckland Regiment in a trench, near Fler, with the man second from the right eating a slice of “bread and jam”.

Series 20, Card 157 BREAD AND JAM



However, when Series XX was printed the photograph was incorrectly lined up, a slice of bread and jam can no longer to be seen.

Series 21 (cards 161 – 168), and Series 22 (cards 169 – 176), the final two sets, both have similar features of the card title printed in capitals, and “PASSED/ BY/ CENSOR” printed in three lines. I have only seen the one set of each series, but all cards appear consistent so they may have been printed by the one printer. To date I have not seen any of the cards with Roman symbols.

French publishers had released huge numbers of cards featuring shell-damaged towns, villages and hamlets. The cards were often in booklets of from 10 to 20 cards. The Daily Mail issued their own set, Series 21, which depict desolate scenes after the battle has passed.

The French cards show damage caused by German artillery, but the Mail cards depict damage caused mainly by British heavy artillery. Each card shows the date it was recaptured from the Germans, from July 1 to November 13, 1916

Series 21, Card 164 THE HIGH STREET OF GUILLEMONT (captured September 3rd 1918)

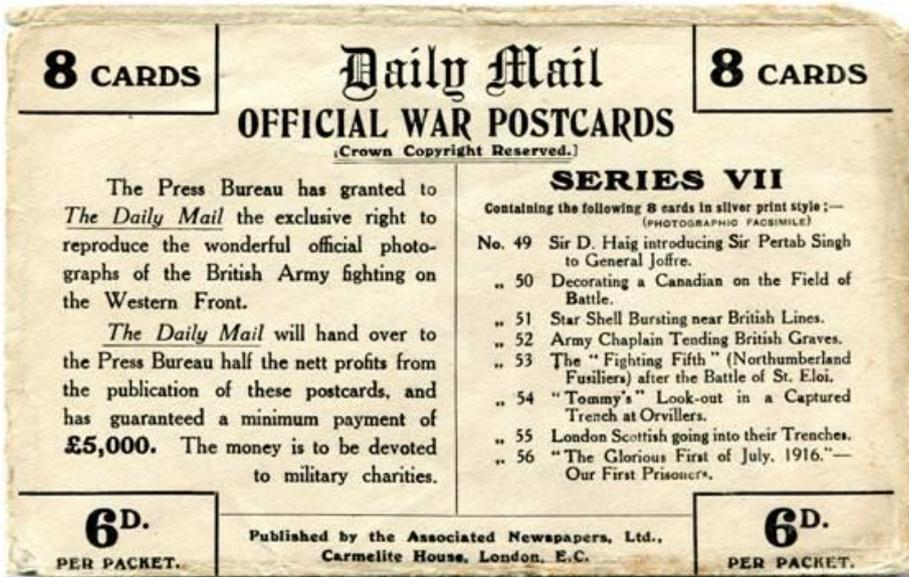


In April 1917 an advertisement in the Daily Mail revealed that Series 22 would “portray the principle phases of modern attack and form a most interesting insight to life at the front. However, the Mail did not say that this was to be the last series. Of course these were all censored, so nothing highlights how murderous the Battle of the Somme really was.

Series 22, Card 169 AN ATTACK: AWAITING THE SIGNAL



This photograph was described as “British troops waiting to attack on September 25 1916... one of the most successful days in the great Somme advance.”



As an added incentive for the collector there is also the envelope carrying details of the eight cards in the set, and the format in which they were printed.

It is known that each of the four printers designed their own envelopes, although the text for each series is similar.

Most of the cards appear to be reasonably easy to obtain, as long as you do not expect to obtain them quickly, or get them from

the one source. But the original packages do not seem to be so easy to acquire. They were produced to hold the eight cards and were sold in sets at 6d per set. The envelopes were often damaged when opened, and then probably discarded by the purchaser after the cards were removed. Remember, all this happened 98 years ago, in 1916, so we are probably lucky to have any examples at all.

There is also a "Daily Mail Official War Post Card Album" that was issued in October 1916. They were "on sale at stationers and news-agents throughout the country", cost 2/6 each, and were available in blue, red and green full cloth. They were advertised as holding 240 cards, but only 176 cards were ever issued.

By this time people were saturated with the war and hoping it would end. They were certainly buying less of the postcards than had originally done, so they were less profitable for the Daily Mail.

On 9 May 1917 the Daily Mail told its readers that the postcards "will in years to come form an interesting and historical record of the condition under which our Army fought in The Great War..."

All told there are the basic 176 numbered postcards to collect in 22 sets; there are 5 sets where there are

Arabic and Roman symbol series, for an additional 40 cards; then there are 7 sets where there is at least one apparent set of variations for each, for an additional 56 cards; then two sets where there appears to be three sets of variations for each, producing a possible 32 extra cards; and two sets where there appears to be four sets of variations for each, with another possible 48 cards. In total, there are possibly 352 cards to collect, but there may be more.

I would appreciate hearing from anyone else collecting these postcards, particularly if you are chasing variations also. I can be contacted at jeff.briggs@optusnet.com.au.

Reference: Allen, Tony – *The Daily Mail Official War Postcards* (e-book, 2011)

