



Yorkton Film Festival

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FINDING THE FALLEN: Barnardo Boy

Yap Films

Category: Documentary History

Running Time: 46:25

Finding the Fallen is a television series which looks to tell the stories of First World War battles by creating deeply personal stories of those involved. The series' creators travel to the sites of battlefields of the First World War where archaeologists, forensic experts and historians excavate the past seeking to preserve the memories of the lives that ended there.

In that respect, the episode 'Barnardo Boy' is an amazing piece of documentary work. While archaeologists dig along the trench line of Hill 70, a site of a major battle in 1917, the filmmakers focus on one soldier, Sgt. William Maybury, a Canadian who led a mortar unit that fought in the battle. While the few artifacts unearthed tell a story of battle, that is not the strength of this fine film.

The compelling aspect is how much the filmmakers are able to find out about Maybury, who did not survive the war and died from wounds received later at Passchendaele.

Maybury was born in England. He and his sister and brother each ended up in Canada through the efforts of Dr. Thomas Barnardo, who was responsible for helping nearly 100,000 orphaned and impoverished English youth immigrate to Canada.

The siblings were separated in Canada, yet the three managed to stay in contact over the years until William's death in Europe.

The filmmakers do an impeccable job of digging through the records, from letters published in an Ontario newspaper to military documents, piecing together Maybury's story. The historic documentation is given a much more poignant face as the film also visits with living descendants of the three Maybury children.

History which is given a face is history made much more accessible to the viewer because we can begin to relate on some personal level.

We viewers are left feeling as though we have gotten to know this man, an orphan who found a new home in Canada and a man who would die protecting both the country of his birth and his new home. That is what makes this film so memorable. A film which comes highly recommended.

By Calvin Daniels