

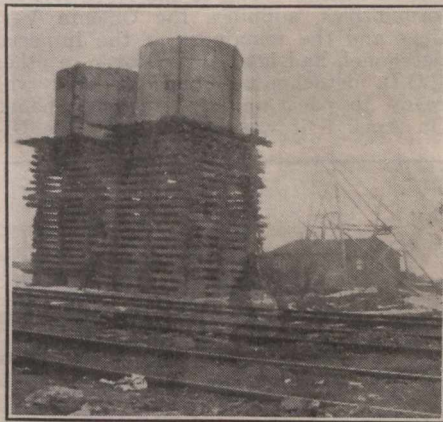
army area. At this time the Merris depot was being subjected to a bombardment of shrapnel, high explosive and gas shells, and the track had been destroyed up to that point. The last train to leave was loaded with personnel of the unit. It was followed up immediately by an R.E. demolition party which destroyed the track and bridges west to Carlyle Junction. In less than an hour after the unit left, the enemy had passed through Merris depot, but was driven back later and the east leg of the Y formed a section of the British front line for the next few weeks.

By this time the units' living quarters at Berguette had been turned over to the Army Medical Corps for use as a field dressing station, and the railway lines and bridges had been destroyed up as far as St. Venant. On April 13, 1918, 1st Army Headquarters ordered the Berguette detachment to evacuate, and it moved only a couple of miles away to Isbergues. From this point locomotives were supplied to three siege batteries, and the steel plant at Berguette, light railway depot at La Laque, inland water transport depot at Aire, and the ammunition dump at Robeque were evacuated. Robeque dump was only 1,093 yards from the front line, and the unit was asked by Army Headquarters if we could evacuate it. A reply was given immediately in the affirmative, but there was some hesitation on the part of the army in ordering the work to be done, as there was some doubt on their part as to the advisability of having a locomotive handling traffic so near the line. The order was given, however, and the work was successfully accomplished. Over 200 cars of ammunition were taken out at night.

Ammunition, troop, supply trains, etc., were being worked continuously from base ports to Berguette, and forwarded to Bethune, Lillers, and other points along the main line, which was now continuously under shell fire. The Berguette detachment remained in the vicinity of Isbergues until June 5 1918, when the work being done by them was turned over to the Ballastiere detachment. After the evacuation of Merris, the personnel from that area was employed at Audruicq. The running men were used

handling ballast trains construction troops, etc., and when the line was near completion a small number of leave, ambulance, ammunition trains etc., were handled. We also had fifteen 2-8-0 type Baldwin locomotives handling main traffic out of Abbeville.

On Aug. 8, 1918 His Majesty King George, desiring to see Canadian construction and operating troops at work, honored the line with a visit, and the unit made up and handled a special train for his accommodation from Conchil to Legiscourt. On Aug. 27 the unit turned over the operation of these lines to the 59th Broad Gauge Operating Company (Australians), and on the following day the unit proceeded to Chemin Vert British railway depot (Wiencourt Nord sta-



Two 20,000 gall. capacity water tanks at Omiecourt, used by 58th Broad Gauge Operating Co. (Canadians). The water was pumped from 5 artesian wells bored to a depth of about 850 ft.

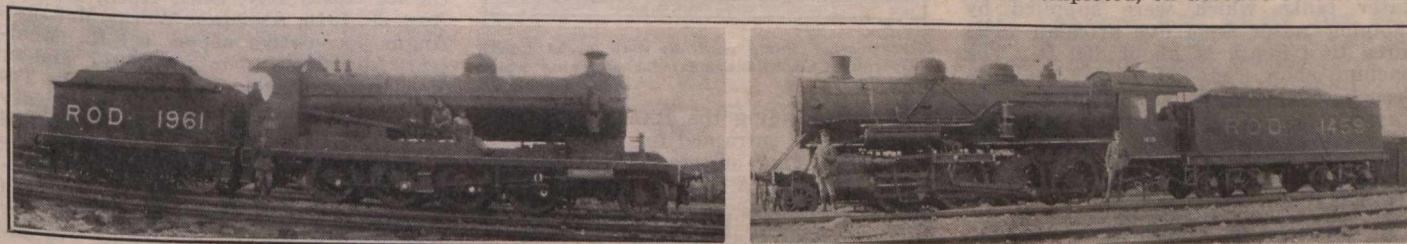
tion) on the Amiens-St. Quentin main line, and was there attached to the Fourth Army.

The lines taken over in this area, as fast as they were built, extended to Bray-Wormwood Scrubs - Peronne; Plateau-Trones Wood-Epehy; Peronne-Quinconce-Etricourt. These lines were single track, and notwithstanding the fact that they were constructed rapidly with the quickest available material, they were required to stand up under a tremendous volume of traffic. Numerous derailments

the usual gun movements, and locomotives supplied construction companies, the unit handled the following loaded cars.—Troops and remounts, 1,127; supplies, tanks ordnance, and general traffic, 3,894; construction material, 56; ambulance, 613; a total of 5,690 loaded cars.

As the armies advanced, and new lines were rapidly taken over, it was necessary to anticipate requirements in the way of additional personnel, locomotives, locomotive supplies, coal, etc. Arrangements were made in conjunction with the R.C.E., and the R.T.C. for water supplies, yard facilities and telephone lines. The traffic department at G.H.Q. was wired the furthest points to which traffic was worked daily, and the routing of traffic for the armies was arranged accordingly.

Early in September, 1918, a detachment was sent to Chaunles, to commence operating the double track line to Peronne. On Sept. 18, a control office was established at Peronne. Trains were run up this line to Marchepot, Sept. 3; Peronne, Sept. 12; Tincourt, Sept. 14, and Roisel, Sept. 16. On the night of Sept. 20, a heavy tank movement of 36 trains for Tincourt commenced. Although the enemy shelled the track, and broke the main line at Tincourt, the movement was completed successfully. On Sept. 21 a locomotive depot was established at Peronne. On Sept. 24, Peronne yard was in working order, but there was no switching lead. At that time 60 trains were being handled daily on that line, and traffic was steadily increasing. On Sept. 26, one 14 in. and one 12 in. gun, on railway mountings, were handled to Roisel, where they went into action immediately. Two locomotives stood by to make the necessary moves. On this date men were placed on the Etricourt lines to handle traffic from the Bapaume-Achiet le Grand direction. On Sept. 28, the double track was complete, and in operation as far as Roisel, and ambulance trains commenced to load at Tincourt. On Sept. 30, Peronne locomotive depot and yard were in full working order. On that date 128 trains were handled in both directions, which was the high water mark reached by the unit in handling traffic. Although Peronne had been completed, on account of the inade-



Locomotives used by 58th Broad Gauge Operating Co. (Canadians).

R.O.D. 1961 is a 2-8-0 type Great Central Ry. locomotive, used in handling ambulance trains and through traffic. R.O.D. 1459 is a 2-8-0 type Baldwin locomotive, used in through traffic.

in train and locomotive service out of that depot to forward areas, and various other places, such as Dunkirk, Rouen and Boulogne.

At this time although the majority of all the comparatively old established lines controlled by the British army had been captured by the enemy, new lines were constructed rapidly, and on June 5, 1918, the whole unit was ordered to proceed to Conchil-le-Temple, to operate for Canadian and R.E. construction companies, building the new double track line from Etaples to Conchil, and the new single track line from Conchil to Candas. This work consisted mostly of

were unavoidable, but the prompt and effective measures taken by the various construction units to repair the breaks assisted materially in reducing delays to a minimum. As no water was obtainable at Chemin Vert when that depot was taken over, two water tank trains, made up of 21 water tank cars each, were supplied. As one of these trains was made empty it was taken to Longeau, near Amiens, and refilled. A supply was later pumped from the Somme River, five miles away. Water was secured on the line by means of Merryweather pumps at various places. During the week ended Sept. 19, 1918, in addition to

quate facilities, arrangements were made for the construction of an up to date exchange yard, and locomotive depot at Omiecourt, near Chaunles.

From Roisel, the line through Templeaux to Bellicourt, and the line through Vermand to St. Quentin were taken over, also the line through Epehy, Gouzeaucourt and Marcoing to Cambrai. A locomotive depot, and sub-control were established at Marcoing, which was also an important junction with the line from Bapaume. When the line to Cambrai was workable, the control was moved from Marcoing, and established in the Gare du Nord at Cambrai. The loco-