

dump, about a quarter of a mile from the car yard, a dump which was then one of the largest British dumps and which

amounting in all to about 70 miles of railway. In this work they were for the first time assisted by considerable

up advanced railway work in the Fifth Army area.

During the late autumn attacks of 1916 by the British army in the Somme area, owing to the lack of proper railway facilities, practically all the roads had broken down under the heavy motor and team traffic, and in consequence the transportation of ammunition in sufficient quantities for further attacks was an impossibility. In view of this condition of affairs, and taking into consideration the contemplated 1917 spring attack, a very extensive railway programme was decided upon, and this work, in addition to the maintenance of such railways as already existed in that area and which in the majority of cases were in very bad shape, was taken over by the C.O.R.C.C. The contemplated extensions amounted to about 60 miles.

Considerable labor was supplied and work was pushed rapidly on these extensions until Feb., 1917, at which time the German retreat from Beaumont, Hamel and Serre started. In view of this retreat, which rapidly developed, work in the back areas was to a great extent abandoned, and all available forces were pushed on to the extension of the Candas-Acheux line, to a connection with the Nord Ry. main line from Albert to Arras at Achiet-le-Grand, the reconstruction of the Albert-Arras Ry. and also the reconstruction of the lines through Bapaume and easterly to Ytres and the Nord Canal, as well as the line from Boisleux-aux-Monts to Croisielles.

The reconstruction work was of the utmost urgency, and several units of the Canadian Railway Troops, then beginning to arrive in France in considerable numbers, as well as British and French troops, were for a short time employed upon it. All the bridge work, however, during the retreat in this area, was done by the C.O.R.C.C. forces, which also supplied the necessary ballast, and they eventually took over the completion, maintenance and further extensions of these lines, continuing with same until Nov., 1917.

Among the features of interest during this period, from Nov., 1916 to Nov., 1917, were the following: The maintenance and operation, without serious interruptions, of, 1st, a rail head at Aveluy, 4 miles from the front line, for am-



Team Outfit, grading for railway, near Canal du Nord, Nov., 1917.

was set off by German bombs, the explosions throwing shells in some cases nearly a mile and continuing for three days.

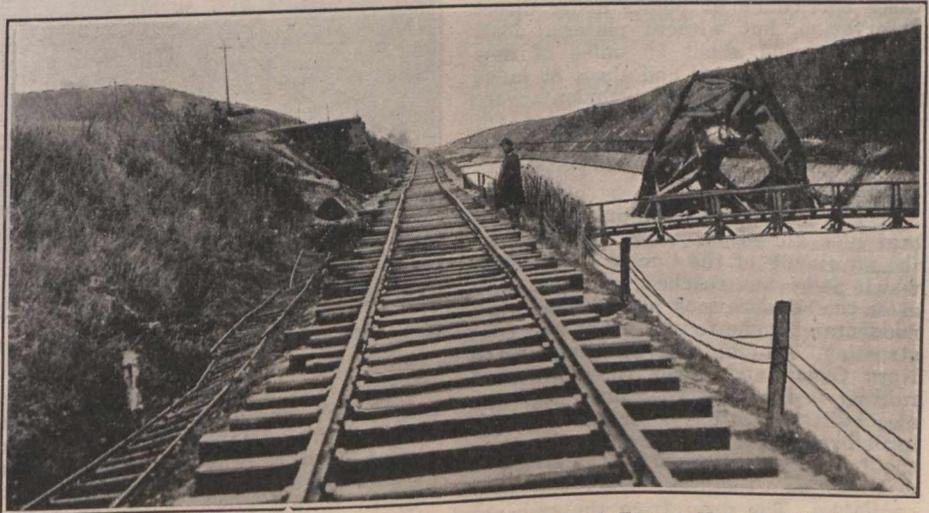
As railway work progressed in this area the need of steam shovels, track pile drivers and the usual standard gauge equipment became at once apparent, there being no modern railway construction equipment available in France. Ballast for railway construction was one of the most vexing problems, there being no good ballast available, the material used being principally the refuse from coal mines, which was both difficult to handle and unsuitable for track work, the supply being also very uncertain. After extensive representations made on this subject, permission was finally obtained for the acceptance of two 70 ton steam shovels and two standard gauge track pile drivers, and these were supplied by the Canadian Government through the C.P.R., and arrived in June, 1916. These shovels, which were worked incessantly from the summer of 1916, until the signing of the armistice, in many instances 24 hours a day, to a great extent saved the situation as far as ballast was concerned for the British railways, supplying the greater part of the material used for this work. This material consisted of sand and chalk. The track pile drivers were also incessantly employed, particularly in the German retreat, driving the great majority of new pile bridges from the Somme to the coast.

During the period referred to above, viz: from Nov., 1915 until Aug., 1916, the work of the corps may be briefly summarized as consisting of, 1st, the introduction of some, if insufficient, modern railway construction equipment in France; 2nd, the construction of the first advanced railways for both 2 ft. and standard gauge, showing to some extent the possibilities of such a means of transportation. The actual work consisted of the construction of some 60 miles of railway line, the erection of 1,300 steel box cars, the supply of ballast and construction of bridges for various lines, miscellaneous field engineering work, such as artillery positions, etc.

In Aug., 1916, the corps undertook the construction of a large railway yard at Zeneghem, some 12 miles from Audruicq, for an ammunition dump, etc., and shortly afterwards the construction of the ammunition yards at Dannes-Camier as well as various minor railway works,



Colonel C. W. P. Ramsey, C.M.G.  
Officer Commanding Canadian Overseas Railway Construction Corps.



Newly Laid Railway Track along path of Canal du Nord, France; Nov. 27, 1917.

quantities of labor and the works were completed in Dec., 1916, at which time the corps moved to the Somme to take

munition supplies and R.E. stores for four divisions; 2nd, a line between Acheux and Albert for gun spurs and