

MANY TROOPS PARTICIPATE WITH CANADIANS IN GRIM FIGHTING ON YPRES SALIENT

Full Text of General Haig's Despatch Covering Six Months' Operations Tells of Desperate Attacks

The Germans Held at Hooge, St. Eloi and Along Ypres-Comieres Canal All Winter—British Take Over New Portions of French Line—General French Saw Balance Swing Steadily to Side of Allies.

(London Times, May 30.)

We publish below the first despatch penned by General Sir Douglas Haig as commander-in-chief of the British forces in France and Belgium. It is dated May 19, and covers the period from December 19, 1915, when Sir Douglas Haig was appointed successor to Field Marshal Lord French.

War Office, London, SW., May 29, 1916.

The following despatch has been received by the secretary of state for war from General Sir Douglas Haig, G.C.B., commander-in-chief, the British forces in France:

General Headquarters, Ypres, 19, 1916.
My Lord—

I have the honor to report the operations of the British forces serving in France and Belgium since December 19, 1915, on which date, in accordance with the orders of his majesty's government, I assumed the chief command.

During this period, the only offensive effort made by the enemy on a great scale was directed against our French Allies near Verdun. The fighting in that area has been prolonged and severe. The results have been worthy of the high traditions of the French army and of great service to the cause of the Allies. The efforts made by the enemy have cost him heavy losses both in men and in prestige, and he has made these sacrifices without gaining any advantage to counterbalance them.

During this struggle my troops have been in readiness to co-operate as they might be needed, but the only assistance asked for by our Allies was of an indirect nature—viz., the relief of the French troops on a portion of their defensive front. This relief I was glad to be able to afford.

Its execution on a considerable front, everywhere in close touch with the enemy, was a somewhat delicate operation, but it was carried out with complete success, thanks to the cordial co-operation and goodwill of all ranks concerned, and to the lack of enterprise shown by the enemy during the relief.

A Continuous Struggle.

2. On the British front no action on a great scale, such as that at Verdun, has been fought during the past five months, nevertheless our troops have been far from idle or inactive. Although the struggle, in a general sense, has not been intense, it has been everywhere continuing, and there have been many sharp local actions.

The maintenance and repair of our defenses alone, especially in winter, entails constant heavy work. Bad weather and the enemy's constant efforts to destroy our trenches, dug-outs, and communications; all such damages must be repaired promptly, under fire, and almost entirely by night.

Artillery and snipers are practically never silent, patrols are out in front of the lines every night, and heavy bombardment by the artillery of one or both sides takes place daily in various parts of the line. Below ground there is continual mining and counter-mining, which, by the ever-present threat of sudden explosion and the uncertainty as to when and where it will take place, causes perhaps a more constant strain than any other form of warfare. In air there is seldom a day, however, when the weather, when aircraft are not busy reconnoitering, photographing, and observing fire. All this is taking place constantly at any hour of the day or night, and in any part of the line.

8. In short, although there has been no great incident of historic importance to record on the British front during the period under review, a steady and continuous fight has gone on, day and night, above ground and below it. The comparative minor nature of this struggle has been relieved at short intervals by sharp local actions, some of which, although individually almost insignificant, would have been thought worthy of a separate despatch under different conditions, while their cumulative effect, though difficult to appraise at its true value now, will doubtless prove hereafter to have been considerable.

One form of minor activity deserves special mention, namely, the raids of "cutting out parties" which are made at least twice or three times a week against the enemy's line. They consist of a brief attack, with some special object, on a section of the opposing trenches, usually carried out at night by a small body of men. The character of these operations—the preparation of a road through our own and the enemy's trenches—the hand-to-hand fighting in the darkness and the uncertainty as to the strength of the opposing forces—gives peculiar scope to the gallantry, dash and quickness of decision of the troops engaged; and much of the daring and frequently displayed in these minor operations.

The initiative in these minor operations was taken, and on the whole has been held, by us; but the Germans have recently attempted some bold and well-conceived raids against our lines, many of which have been driven back, although some have succeeded in penetrating, as has been reported by us from time to time.

4. Of the numerous local actions alluded to in the total number, omitted—viz., the minor raids, attacks, and counter-attacks, since Dec. 19, of which the most important have been:

The operations at The Bluff, the Hooge salient, and the Ypres-Comieres Canal, and the Vimy Ridge; and the hostile gas attacks north

of Ypres in December, and opposite Hulluch and Messines in April.

The most recent local operations worthy of mention are the capture of some 600 yards of our trenches by the Germans at the King, on May 11, and the capture by us of 200 yards of their trenches near Cabaret Rouge, on the night of May 12-13.

5. As an illustration of the nature of these local operations, it will suffice to describe two or three of the most important.

Ypres and The Bluff.

During the period Feb. 8 to 19 the enemy displayed increased activity in the Ypres salient, and carried out a series of infantry attacks, preceded, as a rule, by intense bombardment, and by the explosion of mines. These attacks may, no doubt, be regarded as a subsidiary operation, designed partly to secure local points of vantage, but probably also to distract attention from the impending operations near Verdun, which began on Feb. 21.

After several days' heavy shelling over the whole of our line in this area, the first attack took place on Feb. 8, on the extreme left of our line to the north of Ypres. A bombing attack was launched by the Germans in the early morning.

Our counter attack, however, was immediately organized, enabled us to clear our trenches of the enemy, and to pursue him to his own. After a period of further bombardment on both sides, the German fire again increased in intensity against our trenches and the French line beyond them; and in the evening a second attempt was made to rush our extreme left—this time entirely without success. Smaller attacks against other trenches in the neighborhood were made, but these were immediately repulsed by rifle and machine gun fire. Throughout the operations no trench in this part of the line remained intact except two isolated trenches of no tactical importance were captured by the enemy a day or two later; they were subsequently obliterated by our fire.

Throughout this fighting the French on our immediate left rendered us the prompt and valuable assistance which we have at all times received from them. Another series of German attacks was launched about the same time in the neighborhood of Hooge, to the east of Ypres. The enemy had pushed forward his saps in front of his trenches, and connected them up into a firing line some 100 yards from our lines. During the whole of Feb. 18 he heavily bombarded our front line trenches in this neighborhood, and completely destroyed them.

In the following afternoon an intense bombardment of our line began, and the enemy exploded a series of mines in front of our trenches, simultaneously launching infantry attacks against Hooge and the northern end of the Ypres-Comieres Sanctuary Wood. Each of these attacks was repulsed by artillery, machine gun, and rifle fire.

Further to the south, however, the enemy was more successful. On the northern bank of the Ypres-Comieres Canal there is a narrow ridge, 80 to 100 yards wide, and covered by a line of trees. The enemy had pushed forward his saps in front of his trenches, and connected them up into a firing line some 100 yards from our lines. During the whole of Feb. 18 he heavily bombarded our front line trenches in this neighborhood, and completely destroyed them.

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GENERAL SIR DOUGLAS HAIG.

without much opposition, swept on past it and seized the German trench line at the eastern side of the salient. This line was not suitable for holding permanently, but it proved useful as a temporary covering position while the captured trenches in rear were being consolidated, and at nightfall the covering party was withdrawn unmolested. The later waves of our attack met with a stiffer resistance, several lightings, several German counter-attacks, and at nightfall the covering party was withdrawn unmolested. The later waves of our attack met with a stiffer resistance, several lightings, several German counter-attacks, and at nightfall the covering party was withdrawn unmolested.

7. On the night of April 29-30 the enemy carried out a gas attack on a considerable scale near Wulverghem, on a front of 8,000 yards. The operation was opened by heavy rifle and machine-gun fire, and was followed by a gas attack. The gas was released in a cloud which penetrated the German trenches, and at nightfall the covering party was withdrawn unmolested. The later waves of our attack met with a stiffer resistance, several lightings, several German counter-attacks, and at nightfall the covering party was withdrawn unmolested.

8. While many other units have done excellent work during the period under review, the following have been specially mentioned in the despatches issued in carrying out or repelling local attacks and raids:

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2nd Battery, 158th Brigade, Royal Field Artillery.
89th Battery, Royal Field Artillery (Lancashire).
1ST CANADIAN DIVISIONAL ARTILLERY.
62nd Brigade, Royal Field Artillery.
2nd Battery, 158th Brigade, Royal Field Artillery.
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BRIGADE (HOWITZER).
24th Heavy Battery, Royal Garrison Artillery.
122nd Heavy Battery, Royal Garrison Artillery.
2nd Siege Battery, Royal Garrison Artillery.
12th Siege Battery, Royal Garrison Artillery.
9th Field Company, Royal Engineers.
50th Field Company, Royal Engineers.
70th Field Company, Royal Engineers.
77th Field Company, Royal Engineers.
1st (Cheshire) Field Company, Royal Engineers.
170th Tunnelling Company, Royal Engineers.
12nd Tunnelling Company, Royal Engineers.
173rd Tunnelling Company, Royal Engineers.
250th Tunnelling Company, Royal Engineers.
12th Divisional Signal Company, Royal Engineers.
2nd Trench Mortar Battery.
70th Trench Mortar Battery.
No. 2 Squadron, Royal Flying Corps.
No. 6 Squadron, Royal Flying Corps.
1st Battalion, Grenadier Guards.
2nd Battalion, Irish Guards.
1st Battalion, Welsh Guards.
1st (Service) Battalion, The Royal Scots (Lothian Regiment).
1st Battalion, The Queen's (Royal West Surrey Regiment).
7th (Service) Battalion, The King's Own (Royal Lancaster Regiment).
3rd April. The report, probably due to old craters having been mistaken for

new ones, was subsequently found to be incorrect. The new craters, being exposed to the enemy's view, and the full weight of his artillery fire, have proved untenable, and at the present time our troops are occupying trenches roughly in the general line which was held by them before the 29th.

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series of bombing raids on hostile aerodromes and points of military importance. A feature of the period under review has been the increased activity of the enemy's aircraft, in suitable weather. But the enemy's activity has been mainly on his own side of the line, and has aimed chiefly at interrupting the work carried out by our machines. In order to carry out the work in spite of this opposition, which was for a time rendered more effective by the appearance in December of a new and more powerful type of enemy machine, it has been necessary to provide an escort to accompany our reconnaissance aeroplanes, and to engage in the air, which was formerly exceptional, has now become an everyday occurrence.

The observers, no less than the pilots, have done excellent service, and many fine feats have been performed by both. Developments on the technical side of the air service have been no less remarkable and satisfactory than the progress made on the purely military side. Much of the credit for this is due to the inventive genius which has been displayed in our equipment for photography, wireless telegraphy, bomb-dropping, and offensive action generally, and has been immensely improved, while great skill has been shown in keeping the flying machines themselves in good flying condition.

12. The continuance of siege warfare has entailed for the Royal Engineers work of a particularly arduous and important kind extending from the front trenches to the base ports.

In the performance of this work the officers, non-commissioned officers and men of the field companies and other units of the corps have continued to exhibit a very high standard of skill, courage and devotion to duty.

13. The work of the tunnelling companies calls for special mention. Increased mining activity on the part of the enemy has invariably been answered by enterprise combined with untiring energy on the part of our miners, who in carrying out their duties always full of danger have shown that they possess in the highest degree the qualities of courage, perseverance, and self-sacrifice. Their importance in the present phase of warfare is very great.

14. The excellent work done by the corps of military police is worthy of mention. This corps is inspired by a high sense of duty, and in the performance of its share in the maintenance of discipline it has shown both zeal and discretion.

15. All branches of the medical service deserve the highest commendation for the successful work done by them, both at the front and on the lines of communication. The sick rate has been consistently low; there has been no serious epidemic, and enteric fever, the bane of armies in the past, has almost completely disappeared, owing to preventive measures energetically carried out.

The results of exposure incidental to trench warfare during the winter months were to a very great extent kept in check by careful application of the precautions recommended and taught by regimental medical officers.

The wounded have been promptly and efficiently dealt with, and their evacuation of the base has been rapidly accomplished.

The close co-operation which has existed between the officers of the regular medical service of the army and those members of the civil medical profession, who have patriotically given their valuable services to the army, has largely contributed to the prevention of disease and to the successful treatment and comfort of the sick and wounded.

As part of the medical services, the Canadian Army Medical Corps has distinguished itself by its devotion to duty, and its high standard of efficiency. This will offer some relief to bankers and merchants, who have experienced delay with bulky documents.

16. The commission of graves registration and inquiries has, since its first undertaking this work eighteen months ago, registered and marked over 50,000 graves. Without this work, many of these graves would have remained unidentified. It has answered several thousand inquiries from relatives and supplied them with photographs. Flowers and shrubs have been planted in most of the cemeteries which are sufficiently far removed from the firing line, and all cemeteries which it is possible to visit during the day, the time are now being looked after by the commissariat officers and men of this unit.

Work of the Chemists.

17. The valuable nature of the work performed by the officers of the central laboratory and the chemical advisers in the army is well known. It is the nature of the gases and other substances used in hostile attacks, and in deriving and perfecting means of protecting our troops against them, is a continuous work. During the periods of relief from the front, the chemists have been engaged in the study of the various phases of warfare. A large number of schools also exist for the instruction of individuals especially in the use and theory of the less familiar weapons such as bombs and grenades.

There are schools for young staff officers, for regimental officers, for candidates for commissions, etc. In short, every effort is made to take advantage of the closer contact with actual warfare, and to put the results of the experience after actual experience in the trenches, to the training received at home.

18. During the period under review the forces under my command have been considerably augmented by the arrival of new formations from home, and the transfer of others released from service in the Near East. This increase has made possible the relief of a French army, which I have also referred to at the time of the battle of Verdun.

Among the newly arrived forces is the "Flanders" Corps. With them, the Canadians and a portion of the South African overseas force which has also arrived, the dominions now furnish a valuable part of the imperial forces in France.

Since the date of the last despatch, but before I assumed command, the Indian Army Corps left this country for service in the East. They had given a year's valuable and gallant service under conditions of warfare which they had not dreamt of, and in a climate peculiarly difficult for them to endure. I regret their departure, but I do not doubt that they will continue to render gallant service wherever they are sent, as they have already done in this country.

The Royal Flying Corps.

11. I take this opportunity to bring to notice the admirable work which the Royal Flying Corps has continued to perform, in spite of much unfavorable weather, in carrying out reconnaissance duties, in taking photographs—an important part of reconnaissance which has been brought to a high pitch of perfection—and in assisting the work of our artillery by registering targets and locating hostile batteries.

In the performance of this work they have shown in weather when no hostile aeroplane ventured out, and they have not hesitated to fly over the enemy's guns, when their duties made it necessary to do so. They have also carried out a

series of bombing raids on hostile aerodromes and points of military importance. A feature of the period under review has been the increased activity of the enemy's aircraft, in suitable weather. But the enemy's activity has been mainly on his own side of the line, and has aimed chiefly at interrupting the work carried out by our machines. In order to carry out the work in spite of this opposition, which was for a time rendered more effective by the appearance in December of a new and more powerful type of enemy machine, it has been necessary to provide an escort to accompany our reconnaissance aeroplanes, and to engage in the air, which was formerly exceptional, has now become an everyday occurrence.

commissioned officers and men whom I wish to bring to notice for gallant and distinguished service.

23. I cannot close this despatch without some reference to the work of my predecessor in command, Field Marshal Viscount French. The Field Marshal, starting the war with our small Expeditionary Force, led an enemy far superior in numbers and fully prepared for this great campaign. During the long and anxious time needed for the improvisation of the comparatively large force now serving in this country, he overcame all difficulties, and before laying down his responsibilities he had the satisfaction of seeing the balance of advantage swing steadily in our favor. Those who have served under him appreciate the greatness of his achievement.

I have the honor to be Your Lordship's most obedient servant.

D. HAIG, General.
Commander-in-Chief, The British Forces in France.

MAJOR C. H. McLEAN
RECENTLY TO FRONT

New Commands for Canadian Officers—Parcel Post From Britain Via New York in Future.

London, June 18.—(Montreal Gazette Cable)—Lieut.-Col. Fisher, formerly of the 23rd Reserve Battalion, has been appointed acting camp commandant in the Canadian military camp.

Lieut.-Col. B. Campbell, formerly of the 23rd Reserve Battalion, who has been appointed temporary commandant of the Canadian military camp, has been appointed temporary commandant of the Canadian military camp.

Captain H. F. Walker, who was wounded at Festubert, has been appointed acting staff captain at the headquarters of the first training brigade. Among officers transferred to the front are: Major W. E. Nelson, Montreal; Capt. J. E. Gagnon, General Hospital; Capt. W. A. Claxton, No. 7 General Hospital; Major C. H. McLean, St. John (N.B.); to Mounted Rifles; Captain completely disappeared, owing to the 22nd French-Canadian Battalion.

Captains F. L. French and J. Elliott, chaplains, have been transferred overseas.

Hon. T. C. Casgrain, postmaster-general, will leave for Paris on Thursday, where he will co-operate with the trade commissioners there and in the provinces. The wounded have been promptly and efficiently dealt with, and their evacuation of the base has been rapidly accomplished.

The close co-operation which has existed between the officers of the regular medical service of the army and those members of the civil medical profession, who have patriotically given their valuable services to the army, has largely contributed to the prevention of disease and to the successful treatment and comfort of the sick and wounded.

As part of the medical services, the Canadian Army Medical Corps has distinguished itself by its devotion to duty, and its high standard of efficiency. This will offer some relief to bankers and merchants, who have experienced delay with bulky documents.

16. The commission of graves registration and inquiries has, since its first undertaking this work eighteen months ago, registered and marked over 50,000 graves. Without this work, many of these graves would have remained unidentified. It has answered several thousand inquiries from relatives and supplied them with photographs. Flowers and shrubs have been planted in most of the cemeteries which are sufficiently far removed from the firing line, and all cemeteries which it is possible to visit during the day, the time are now being looked after by the commissariat officers and men of this unit.

Work of the Chemists.

17. The valuable nature of the work performed by the officers of the central laboratory and the chemical advisers in the army is well known. It is the nature of the gases and other substances used in hostile attacks, and in deriving and perfecting means of protecting our troops against them, is a continuous work. During the periods of relief from the front, the chemists have been engaged in the study of the various phases of warfare. A large number of schools also exist for the instruction of individuals especially in the use and theory of the less familiar weapons such as bombs and grenades.

There are schools for young staff officers, for regimental officers, for candidates for commissions, etc. In short, every effort is made to take advantage of the closer contact with actual warfare, and to put the results of the experience after actual experience in the trenches, to the training received at home.

18. During the period under review the forces under my command have been considerably augmented by the arrival of new formations from home, and the transfer of others released from service in the Near East. This increase has made possible the relief of a French army, which I have also referred to at the time of the battle of Verdun.

Among the newly arrived forces is the "Flanders" Corps. With them, the Canadians and a portion of the South African overseas force which has also arrived, the dominions now furnish a valuable part of the imperial forces in France.

Since the date of the last despatch, but before I assumed command, the Indian Army Corps left this country for service in the East. They had given a year's valuable and gallant service under conditions of warfare which they had not dreamt of, and in a climate peculiarly difficult for them to endure. I regret their departure, but I do not doubt that they will continue to render gallant service wherever they are sent, as they have already done in this country.

The Royal Flying Corps.

11. I take this opportunity to bring to notice the admirable work which the Royal Flying Corps has continued to perform, in spite of much unfavorable weather, in carrying out reconnaissance duties, in taking photographs—an important part of reconnaissance which has been brought to a high pitch of perfection—and in assisting the work of our