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The 13th Canadian Light Railway Operating Company's Organization and Work in the Field, With a General Description of the Entire Light Railway System in France.

By Captain R. McKillop, Officer Commanding the Company Throughout Its Services.

In October, 1916, the Militia Department at Ottawa received a request from the British Government, through the Right Hon. A. Bonar Law, to recruit all available railway operating men, and authority was at once granted to organize the first company, known as the 1st Section Skilled Railway Employees. On Feb. 15, 1917, authority was granted by the Adjutant-General for the formation of the second section, and the following article refers to the latter company's work. The authority for its formation was contained in order in Council 261, dated Jan. 27, 1917, and among other things, it provided for "working pay" being allowed all officers and men doing "skilled" railway work. In the case of officers this extra pay amounted to \$1 a day and as regards the men, the officer commanding was empowered to establish the rates, which varied from 60c to \$1 a day. The establishment was rather an unusual one from a military standpoint, being composed of 3 officers and 266 other ranks, the latter only having 112 privates, the remainder being non-commissioned officers. This establishment was, however, changed in England to 5 officers and 271 other ranks, the latter having 179 privates, instead of 112.

The author was given command of the company on Feb. 17, 1917, and recruiting was carried on throughout Canada, men being drawn from all the railway companies, which had previously been requested by Ottawa to assist in the prompt releasing of men. The Canadian Government Rys. took an especially keen interest in this recruiting, by arranging to choose full train crews, consisting of one locomotive man and fireman, one conductor and two brakemen, from the various districts. The assistance of the various railway companies was so generous that the entire company was recruited in one month at a cost of only \$500, which was donated by the Ontario Government. Guy St. Barracks, Montreal, was chosen as the concentration center, where manual drill was carried on until April 13, 1917, on which day the unit entrained for Halifax, and embarked for England on April 16, on the R.M.S. Grampian, arriving at Liverpool on April 29, after an uneventful passage. Longmoor Camp was the base in England for operating troops, but owing to congestion, the unit was first sent to Purfleet, Essex, and then to Aldershot, where overseas leave was granted, military training continued and other arrangements made for dispatch to the front.

The company was originally intended for broad gauge operating work, as only the best main line men were chosen by the recruiting officers, but the light railway organization was developing to such an extent in France, and there was such a demand for personnel to fill it, that the unit was ordered for light railway work

and re-named the 13th Canadian Light Railway Operating Co. In order to train the unit for this class of work, 39 men, with ability to operate gasoline power

electric and simplex petrol power to fit them for their work in France.

The main body were inspected by General Turner, V.C., G.O.C. Canadian troops in the British Isles, on June 8, 1917, and proceeded to France the following day, via Southampton, and Le Havre; the Longmoor detachment following one month later. The unit rested in Le Havre for 3 days and then moved forward via Rouen and Calais to Dunkirk, where it arrived on June 17, 1917, and awaited orders to proceed up the line.

Before dealing with the unit's active work in France, it would seem advisable to explain the fundamental principles of light railways, the method of operation adopted by the British authorities, and other details, so that the reader will be in a better position to understand the whole situation.

General—The primary object of light railways was to relieve traffic on the heavily travelled roads, deliver the army supplies by rapid dispatch to destination, and with less loss from enemy action. The tracks could be advanced rapidly, following a general advance and laid to points inaccessible by roads. Also evacuation could be accomplished much faster by rail.

A very complete system of connecting transportation systems between the British Isles and the firing line was established by the spring of 1917, consisting of:—1. Steamship lines to various ports in France. 2. Standard gauge railways from the ports to forward railheads all along the front. 3. Inland water transport routes, via rivers and canals, to serve the lines of communication and the forward areas. 4. Light railways, from standard gauge railway connections and barge routes to the trench tramways systems. 5. Trench tramways to the rear defensive systems, operated by small tractors, horses or man power. Road vehicles and fatigue parties to the firing line. The light railway system was not the least of these, although each separate system played a most important part in the feeding of men, animals and guns. When it is considered that for every 30,000 tons handled on the light railways, 10,000 three ton lorries, with full loads, were kept off the roads, its significance in this regard at any rate can easily be appreciated.

Organization—The light railway system, with its complex activities, carried on over wide areas by a small army of officers and men, required, above all, careful organization to perform its services with precision, to maintain discipline and to ensure thoroughness and satisfaction in every detail of its work. There had to be an unbroken line of responsibility from the sapper to the general; provision had to be made for the building and maintaining of a track system; arrangements had to be perfected



Captain Robert McKillop.

units, had to be chosen and sent to Longmoor Camp, where they underwent special training in the operation of petrol