

damaged steel was used in the construction of new bridges. Owing to the extent of traffic over the existing bridge the crane and derrick could not be worked upon it, in removing debris and driving piles. Three other bridges of smaller size, also badly damaged, were similarly reconstructed without any loss of time for traffic. Sixty trains a day were at that time being worked over the line. For two weeks the line was operated by the battalion. The water stand-pipe in Marcoing yard was connected with the existing water tower, which necessitated the laying of 1,800 feet of pipe and the erection of a new water tank of a capacity of 8,000 gallons. Much of all this work had to be done by using night as well as day gangs.

November 5th, the battalion was moved to Honnechy near Le Cateau, and were allotted the construction of a diversion line between these two places. On November 11th at 7.35 a.m. the following joyful message was received from Advanced Headquarters, Fourth Army "Hostilities will cease at 11 hours today, November 11th. Troops will stand fast on line reached at that hour which will be reported by wire to Advance Headquarters as soon as possible. Defensive precautions will be maintained. There will be no intercourse of any description with the enemy until receipt of instructions from Army headquarters. Further instructions follow." But there was to be no immediate slackening of work for the railway troops. Work had to be carried on as usual in view of further advances. There was, too, great danger still attending their labours, from hidden mines, booby-traps, etc. Two sappers had already been injured, October 21st, by enemy bombs. In the same way twelve more were wounded November 17th, but six of these were able to remain at duty.

The Honnechy operation was discontinued on November 13th, and the battalion proceeded to Solesmes. There was urgent need of the completion of the Solesmes-Le Quesnoy line, to supply the troops in this area. Track-laying gangs were organized to work in three shifts. Seven 1,000 candle power acetylene reflector lamps and an anti-aircraft searchlight were used at night with complete success. A pioneer track-laying car was also used to hasten completion. With 1,200 attached troops the battalion in two weeks cleared debris from and repaired twelve miles of grade, laid nearly fourteen miles of track and ballasted eight miles. In addition to this five bridges were constructed and a water supply at Le Quesnoy installed. By employing an oxy-acetylene burner to cut the damaged ends off rails, and re-drilling these rails, a considerable length of line was laid from Le Quesnoy, thus saving much time. The battalion was responsible for the operation of this section of the line and was prepared to accept trains at Le Quesnoy, November 24th. Thereafter the work of the 7th consisted almost entirely of maintenance and operation of this line. The R.O.D. took over the operation December 9th. The 234th Royal Engineers were made responsible for maintenance, December 24th. "C" of the 7th Battalion, C.R.T. Company was ordered to Solre-sur-Sambre, December 14th, to carry out repairs on the line between Maubeuge