

## THE ENEMY AIR RAIDS UPON CANADIAN HOSPITALS.

May, 1918.

### A Report to the D.C.M.S. Canadian Contingents.

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THE Report which follows is compiled from official communications received at the Office of the Director of Medical Services, Canadian Contingents, supplemented by personal knowledge of the hospitals and areas affected by the enemy air raids.

#### I. The Air Raids upon the Etaples Area, May 19 and 31, 1918.

On the outskirts of the old fishing town of Etaples there has been developed one of the largest hospital areas in France. Here, since the autumn of 1914, has been collected a large number of British General Hospitals with many thousands of beds. From its earliest days overseas No. 1 Canadian General Hospital has been established here—namely, since the spring of 1915; later, in 1917, No. 7 (Queen's University) Canadian General Hospital, which had returned from the East, took over another hospital site.

At the back of the area, in a hollow beyond No. — British General Hospital, No. 9 Canadian Stationary, transferred from St. Omer on account of its exposure there to shell fire, was, during the latter half of May, engaged in erecting a tent hospital. And lastly, pending allocation elsewhere after removal from St. Omer, the personnel of yet another Canadian Hospital (No. 7 Canadian Stationary) was at this same period distributed among the other Canadian units at Etaples.

Etaples, which is at the mouth of the little river Canche, is a town with a notable history. It was the plain lying below the sand dunes to the north that Julius Cæsar chose as his base for the invasion of England; here, too, eighteen centuries and more later Napoleon collected his troops for the same object, and on this plain it is that the hospital area has been established. Across the plain from north to south runs the National Road from Boulogne southwards to Dieppe. Between the road and the sea runs the line from Calais and Boulogne to Paris.

The hospitals are in the main strung along the landwards side of the high road. Most of them are now established in well-built and spacious huts. Furthest to the north is the hospital of St. John of Jerusalem, next to this No. 1 Canadian General, followed by three British and American units, and then, nearest to Etaples, No. 7 Canadian General. As already noted, No. 9 Canadian Stationary with its tents lies far back away from the road.

#### NO. 1 CANADIAN GENERAL HOSPITAL.

The wards and administration offices of No. 1 forming the hospital proper lie to the east of the road. Among these note must more particularly be made of the wards set apart for the treatment of cases of fractured femurs. This unit was specially selected by the British Service for the care of these grave cases. Almost always caused by shell wounds, these are in general compound and comminuted with extensive laceration. In the first years of the War the mortality in this class of cases was 40 per cent. Several hundred beds had been set apart at No. 1 for these fractured femurs, and, according to Sir Anthony Bowlby, No. 1 holds the record for successful treatment, with better results, and a smaller mortality than any hospital overseas—namely, 8 per cent, one-fifth of that it used to be.

Opposite to these, and on the other side of the road, between it and the railway, are the officers' mess and quarters (in Alwyn huts of light wooden frames covered by canvas), and still farther from the road, the nursing sisters' quarters. To the north of both are the quarters for the N.C.O.s and men of the unit.

Whit Sunday, May 19th, had been clear and bright. The sky at night was cloudless. By 10.15 most of the personnel not on duty were in quarters, many of them already asleep. There had been a concert at No. 7 Canadian General, and those of the unit who had attended had been back for a few minutes, when at 10.20 two shots were heard from the north,

followed by the sound of aeroplanes. These were invisible although judging from the sound at no great height.

The O.C., Lieutenant-Colonel J. A. Gunn, C.A.M.C., writes to the D.M.S.: "The first bombs that fell in our line, evidently incendiary, landed on our men's quarters, which were situated close to the railway. These were soon in flames, and afforded an excellent target for the enemy, who within a short time dropped eight or ten bombs in this area. The fact that most of the men were asleep accounts for the large number of casualties. More than half of the personnel indeed were casualties, with fifty-one N.C.O.s and O.R. killed and forty-five wounded, of whom six subsequently died. The fire picquets and the N.C.O.s and men who were unhurt set to work at once to rescue the wounded and tried to extinguish the fire. They were ably assisted in this by a number of Guardsmen, camped outside the hospital area, who came over immediately the place caught fire, and, regardless of danger to themselves, gave very valuable assistance in rescuing the wounded."

Another account mentions valuable assistance given by the personnel of the adjoining hospitals.

The O.C. continues: "Immediately following the dropping of the bombs on the men's quarters several were dropped in the neighbourhood of the officers' and sisters' quarters. One large bomb fell right behind the quarters of the officers' servants, and made a crater fully 25 ft. in diameter. Fortunately there were no casualties here. Another bomb fell in the midst of the officers' huts, levelling several to the ground and badly damaging others. Only one, in fact, was not damaged. Luckily no officers were in these huts at the time. Another fell at one end of the sisters' quarters and practically destroyed one wing. Fortunately this wing was mostly used by sisters who were on night duty, and so the rooms were empty at the time, otherwise the casualties among the nursing sisters would have been much greater. As it was, one sister was killed." This was Miss K. S. Macdonald, C.A.M.C. Seven were wounded, of whom two, Miss G. M. M. Wake and Miss M. Lowe, subsequently died from their injuries.

A small bomb fell in the centre of the officers' plot, and of several officers in the neighbourhood one, Captain D. E. Howes, C.A.M.C., was killed, and the O.C. of No. 7 Stationary Hospital, who happened to be attached at the time to No. 1 C.G.H., was wounded. Later in the raid a number of bombs fell into the hospital area proper, partially damaging a number of the wards and causing a number of casualties among the patients, six being killed and thirty-two wounded, all save one from among Imperial troops.

There were that night 1,156 patients in the hospital, 300 of whom were femur cases. The nature of the treatment for these cases demands that the patients have the leg fixed by bandages in an extended position to a firm immovable framework. These patients could not therefore be moved. They lay there helpless. Happily none of the femur wards were hit. Wherever possible the other patients were placed under the beds to afford them as much protection as possible. With the exception of one ward, which had been re-vetted, here at the base, many miles behind the shell-fire zone, no protection had been provided for either patients or personnel.

The raid lasted two hours. At least one aeroplane came down low and used machine guns upon those engaged in rescuing the wounded from the burning huts. Not one bomb hit the railway or fell on the other side of the tracks. The upper part of the hospital where the patients' tents and huts were destroyed is a very considerable distance from the railway, and even from the Boulogne road. It is impossible to contend that the enemy was aiming at the railway communication between Boulogne and Paris.

Appended is the list of casualties:—

(1) Nominal Roll of Members of No. 1 Canadian General Hospital KILLED by enemy air craft in the raid of May 19-20, 1918:—

Capt. Howes, D. E.	522730 Pte. Baird, J. J.
N/S. MacDonald, K. M.	50930 Pte. Barnsby, G. E.
50888 S/Sgt. Brown, G. H.	645865 Pte. Blatchford, G.
50837 Sgt. Smith, M.	529322 Pte. Chadwick, F. C.
50039 L/Sgt. Firth, H.	524518 Pte. Cuming, F.
50034 Cpl. Dickson, G. M.	34451 Pte. Davies, G. T.
34419 Cpl. Jardine, G.	32871 Pte. Dawson, J.
34491 Cpl. McKay, A. V.	164268 Pte. Findlay, J. B.
536312 Pte. Addison, H.	34462 Pte. Flanagan, T.
527533 Pte. Angus, H. G.	211141 Pte. MacKay, C. G.
466197 Pte. Allen, T. L.	10189 Pte. Forest, P. A.