

THE  
1ST CANADIAN DIVISION,  
IN THE  
BATTLES OF 1918.



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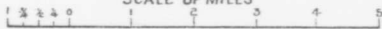
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# BATTLE OF AMIENS



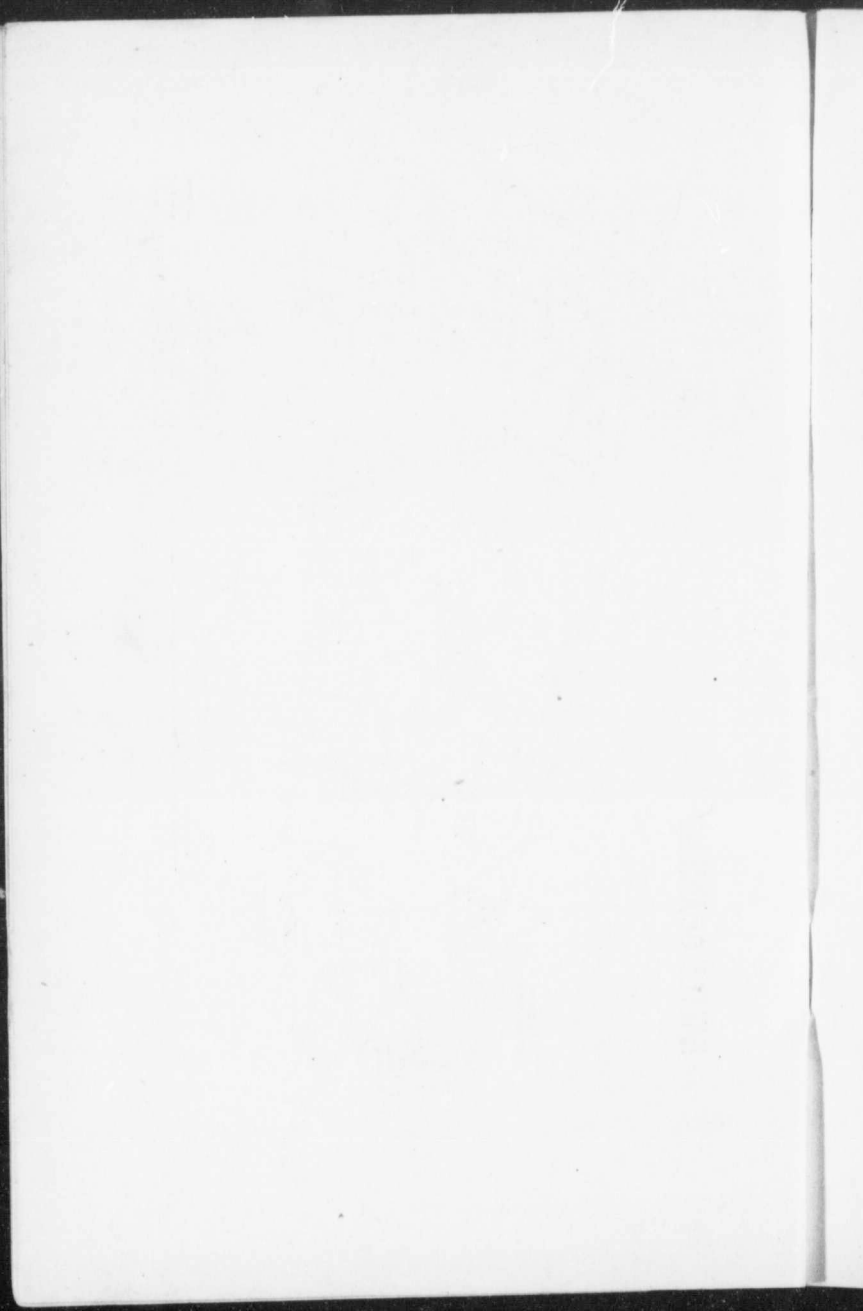
SCALE OF MILES



## REFERENCE

TRENCH SYSTEMS  
 NEW LINE AFTER ATTACK  
 DIVISIONAL BOUNDARIES





## Foreword.

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As I explained in my various talks to units, I am anxious that the man in the ranks shall not feel that our fighting is a "blur" to him. As a great tapestry is woven of many threads, so a great battle is built up by the fight of the individual—by his section or his platoon. In the desire that each might trace his own work through the larger pattern designed by brigade or division or corps, arose the idea of publishing the following sketchy account of the work of the 1st Canadian Division, which aims at merely giving, in most general terms, descriptions of the recent battles.

To condense three great battles within the small compass of a volume such as this, means that only the barest narrative of the actual fighting can be given. As an inevitable result, no mention whatever has been made of the gigantic efforts of the administrative services—no credit given to the vital work of the supply trains, of the medical services, of the railway and labour troops, of the Chaplain Services, of the Y.M.C.A.—of all those many branches of the service "behind the line" whose harmonious and efficient work is necessary to ensure the success of the man with the rifle. Nor has any attempt been made to detail the many instances of individual and collective gallantry on the part of the fighting troops—artillery, engineers, infantry, machine gunners and tanks—nor of those whose aid was so powerfully felt, but whose work was controlled by others than the division—such as the airmen and cavalry.

While emphasis is laid on the great battles, the hard work broken by dashing raids during the winter months of 1917 to 1918

in the Avion, Lievin, St. Pierre and Hill 70 Sectors, must not be forgotten; nor the sudden rush in March to the Arras front to stem the Hun advance; nor the succeeding days of outpost fighting and almost continuous raiding—brilliant, successful raids.

This preface would be incomplete did it not place on record the grateful thanks of all ranks of the division to our chief, the Corps Commander, Lieut.-General Sir Arthur W. Currie, G.C.B., K.C.M.G., for the extraordinary skill and ability with which he conducted these battles. And especially do we wish to place on record our appreciation of the care and solicitude which he has evinced at all times for our lives and general well-being.

\* \* \* \* \*

To the Officers, Non-Commissioned Officers and men of the 1st Canadian Division, this little book, compiled by Captain J. D. Craig, M.C., of the General Staff, is dedicated.

*A. B. Macdonell*

Major-General,  
Commanding 1st Canadian Division.

# The Battle of Amiens,

## August 8th & 9th, 1918.

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The Battle of Amiens was the first of the great counter-offensives in which the British armies were engaged during the latter half of 1918. It was launched by the Fourth Army in conjunction with the French on the right, the troops engaged in the attacks on the 8th and 9th of August being the French, on the right, the Canadian Corps, in the centre, and the Australian Corps, on the left.

The primary object of the attack was to free the Amiens-Paris railway.

To Canadians, however, the battle was an opportunity to revenge the sinking of the Canadian hospital ship "Llandoverly Castle"—and hence the official designation of the battle as the "L.C. operations."

The country over which the engagement was to be fought was admirably suited to the rapid advance of all arms. A few trench systems of no great strength, only moderately wired, constituted the first obstacle. An advance of 5,000 yards would not only clear these trenches, but would overrun the enemy's gun positions to a great extent. The next 18,000 yards was over a rolling, open country with only one old and disused trench line running through



it. Advances beyond this, however, would encounter the well-established, well-wired trench systems built up prior to the opening of the first battle of the Somme on July 1st, 1916.

#### THE FRONT OF ATTACK.

The initial attack was launched on a front of eleven miles, from Moreuil, on the south, to the Somme Canal in the neighbourhood of Sailly-le-Sec, on the north, although the battle rapidly extended beyond these points. The battle-front allotted to the Canadian Corps was from the little village of Hourges, on the south, to Villers-Bretonneux, on the north, the right boundary of the Corps being the Amiens-Roye road and the left being the railway line running from Amiens to Chaulnes.

Absolute surprise, and an initial thrust of such weight and speed as to overrun the enemy's gun positions, followed by a rapid and relentless pursuit, were to be the chief factors in forcing a complete break-through. All arms were to be employed—infantry, artillery, cavalry, tanks, and air services. The initial attack was to be made under cover of a rolling barrage, with a smoke-screen, supported by tanks, and with cavalry, whippet tanks and motor machine-guns following the infantry closely, and ready to exploit any success.

The attack of the Canadian Corps was commenced by the 3rd, 1st, and 2nd Canadian Divisions, from right to left. The objective to be tried for on the first day constituted an advance of 14,000 yards. The Corps' frontage was approximately 7,000 yards. The 3rd Division had slightly over 2,500 yards, the 1st Division 3,000 yards, and the 2nd Division under 1,500 yards from which to launch their attack. After the 3rd Division had advanced a distance of approximately 7,000 yards—or to the Red Line (the second objective)—the 4th Division went through it. The 1st and 2nd Divisions were each to advance the whole 14,000 yards on their respective fronts.

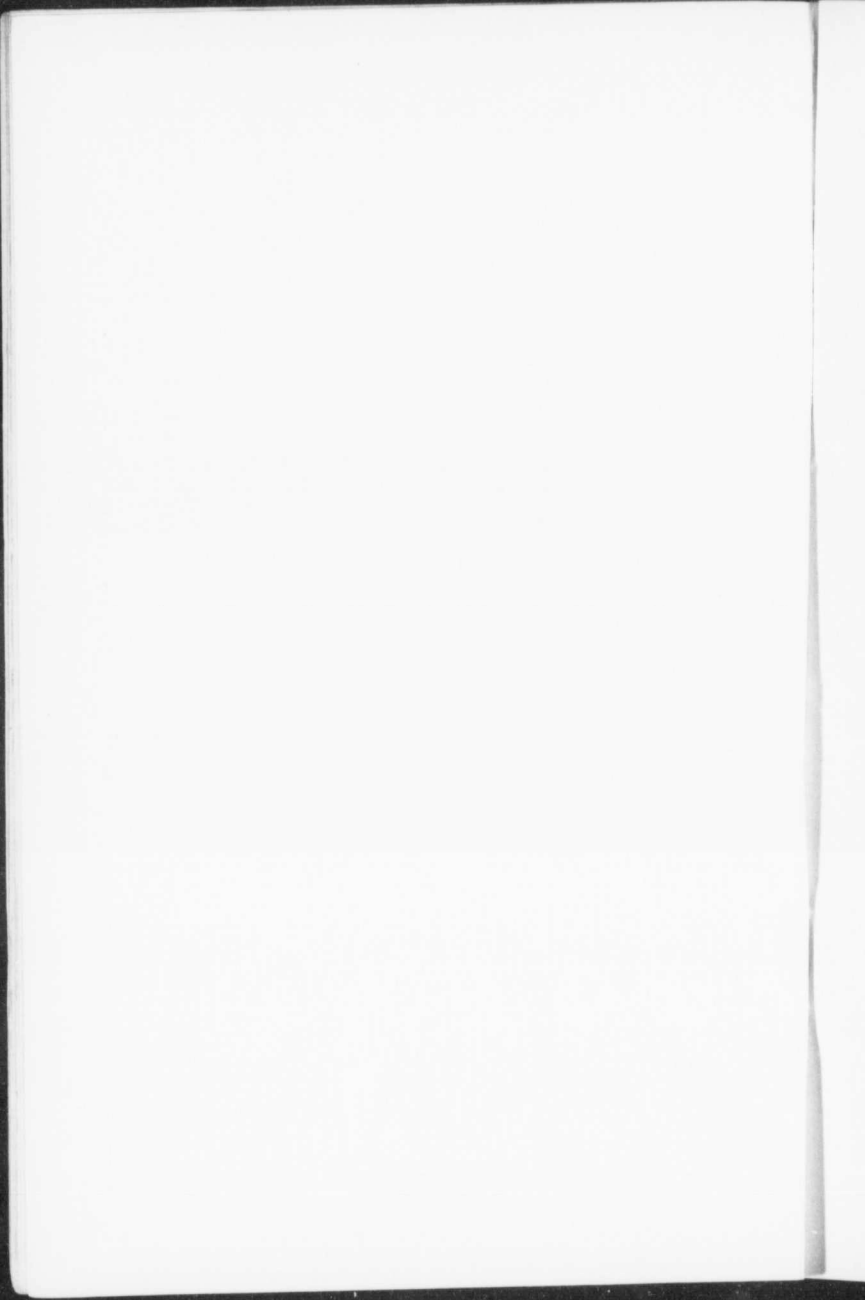
#### OBJECTIVES FOR AUGUST 8TH.

Three objectives were laid down on the Corps front for the opening day of the attack. These were the Green, the Red, and



BATTLE OF AMIENS.

*The Valley of the Luce as seen from an aeroplane. Only a portion of the ground over which the 1st Canadian Division fought can be seen on the left of the picture.*



the Blue Lines. The first objective, the Green Line, constituted an advance of roughly 5,000 yards on the whole Corps front. A brief description of the country within this area, the natural obstacles, and the enemy organisations is necessary. On the extreme right the river Luce ran through our front-line system, evenly dividing the 3rd Division front. To the left of the river the front line ran along the forward slopes of high ground for a distance of 2,000 yards, then through a large tract of scrub and brush known as Hangard Wood West, then open country again, still on high ground, until, on the left, it ran through the forward edge of Monument Wood, and to the northern boundary.

The valley of the Luce, after bisecting the 3rd Division front, ran in a generally easterly direction for 2,500 yards, made a sharp bend to the north-east for 1,000 yards, and then east again to its source, approximately 14,000 yards from our front line, or practically on the final objective for the first day. Immediately within the German lines on the north bank of the Luce was the village of Hangard, built in the valley and on the slopes running north. Fifteen hundred yards north of this village was Hangard Wood East, running 1,000 yards north and strongly fortified. Two thousand yards east of Hangard village, and also in the Luce valley, was the village of Demuin, with the river running through it. Two deep valleys ran to the south from Demuin, and one ran north, while between this valley and our front line still another valley ran to the north from the Luce. The Green Line ran roughly a thousand yards east of Demuin, in a north-easterly and south-westerly direction.

On the 1st Division front, therefore, to reach the Green Line meant attacking down a slope, on which was Hangard Wood and the German front and support line trenches, across a wooded valley known as Morgemont Wood, then capturing the high ground on which was sited the German main line of resistance, then through a sharp valley known as Pantaloon Ravine and in which were many enemy gun positions, and finally on to the forward slope of the north bank of the Luce. On the extreme right, and just a

thousand yards short of the Green Line, was the little village of Aubercourt.

#### FROM THE GREEN TO THE RED LINE.

The country between the Green and the Red Lines was marked by high ground, almost a hill, on the 3rd Division front; on the 1st Division front was the valley of the Luce, quite heavily wooded, with sharp ravines running off it, particularly to the north, and with the small village of Ignacourt, on the river, 1,000 yards beyond the Green Line; and on the 2nd Division front high ground alternating between two valleys, sloping off to the south, with the villages of Wiencourt and Gillaucourt on the extreme left flank, on the railway line. The advance here averaged 3,000 yards.

The Blue Line followed the old Amiens Defence Line, a single trench line, disused and shallow for the most part. On the 1st Division front, between the Red and Blue Lines, the frontage narrowed to approximately 1,200 yards, and meant an advance of 5,000 yards. For the first 3,000 yards was the stream, with fairly steep and wooded slopes on each side; then the large town of Caix, and 1,000 yards east of Caix the old Amiens Defence Line.

The 1st Division attacked on a one-brigade front, the tasks allotted being the capture of the Green Line by the 3rd Brigade, the Red Line by the 1st Brigade, and the Blue Line by the 2nd Brigade. The 1st Division attack was to take the form of three separate, distinct blows. Each brigade had its own task, and was not to support an attacking brigade until its own work was completed.

#### PREPARATIONS FOR THE ATTACK.

Before following the progress of the battle it will be of interest to trace briefly the preparations for it and the preliminary moves of the division.

On August 1st the 1st Canadian Division was still in line in front of Arras, in the Telegraph Hill sector. At that time it was generally understood that the Canadian Corps was to be transferred to the Second Army. To such an extent was this "camou-

flage" carried out that two Canadian battalions were actually on their way north at this time, and a few days later went into line in the Kemmel area. Canadian wireless sets, using Canadian Corps calls, Canadian casualty clearing stations, and Canadian railheads in the Second Army area all strengthened the impression. Prior to August 1st the G.O.C. and the G.S.O.I. were the only persons in the division that knew the actual destination and task of the Canadian Corps. On August 1st, however, the C.R.A., C.R.E., and brigade commanders were told of the plans.

The relief of the 1st Division was completed at 10 a.m. on August 2nd, and the division was moved by bus and light railway to the Le Cauroy area. On this same date the move of the division by strategical train, bus, and road to the assembly area south-west of Amiens (a distance of 40 miles) was commenced, and was completed in the early morning of August 5th. From this point to the forward assembly area at Gentelles Wood and in the trenches in front of it all moves were made under cover of darkness only. Extraordinary precautions were taken to prevent the slightest suspicion being aroused in the minds of the enemy. Reconnaissance parties were limited to not more than two officers or N.C.O.'s at a time, and these had to travel by trench wherever possible. Artillery positions and ammunition dumps were carefully camouflaged, work being done only at night. No guns, other than those normally holding the front, fired a single round before zero hour. The repair of roads was cut down to a minimum, and by the exercise of care and attention the concentration of this huge force—four divisions of infantry, one cavalry corps, two motor machine-gun brigades, four battalions of large tanks, two battalions of whippet tanks, seventeen brigades of field and ten of heavy artillery, and a brigade of horse artillery—representing an actual fighting strength of 30,000 rifles, 2,500 machine-guns, including Lewis guns, 10,000 sabres, 450 field guns, 160 heavy guns of all calibres, and 300 tanks of various kinds—was completed on a frontage of under 7,000 yards without the enemy becoming aware that anything untoward was happening.

Seven brigades of field artillery supplied the barrage on the 1st Division front—or about 40 yards of front per gun. Only the divisional artillery and one brigade of heavy artillery were under the orders of the division for the advance. In addition, one battalion of tanks was allotted to the 1st Division.

The assembly of all those taking part in the attack was completed early on the night prior to the opening of the battle. The 3rd Brigade was in the front-line system; the 1st Brigade was concentrated immediately in rear to a depth of 1,000 yards, while the 2nd Brigade was in rear again, being distributed 1,500 yards in depth. The assembly positions were in front of Gentelles Wood.

#### THE OPENING OF THE ATTACK.

Zero hour was at 4.20 o'clock on the morning of August 8th.

Promptly to the minute the barrage opened up, and the infantry and tanks crossed the jumping-off line and moved forward to the attack.

At this hour a very heavy ground mist shut off all observation. While this made it very difficult to keep direction, it was the very thing needed to ensure the success of a tank attack on a large scale. The ground was dry and not seriously cut up by shell-fire. Everything favoured the attack.

The 3rd Brigade attacked with the 16th, 13th, and 14th Battalions in line and the 15th and 5th Battalions in support—one, the 5th Battalion (not to be used unless absolutely necessary), being attached from the 2nd Brigade, detailed to take the final objective. Twenty-two tanks supported the 3rd Brigade in its attack. Three batteries from the Machine-gun Battalion advanced with the infantry, and at 5.20 o'clock the 2nd Brigade of Canadian Field Artillery followed in support. Little serious fighting took place until the main resistance line was reached. Here in his trenches the enemy put up a stiff fight, and casualties on both sides were fairly heavy. The Green Line, however, was reached along the whole front well on time.

The 1st Brigade began to move forward at 5.10 o'clock, and at 8.20 o'clock crossed the Green Line and carried the attack forward. This brigade also attacked with three battalions in line, the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th from right to left, but had only one, the 1st, in support. Its attack was carried out without artillery support, except for the bombardment of distant points by the heavy guns. Six tanks were allotted to it, but eighteen actually went forward in support of the infantry, as twelve of the twenty-two that attacked with the 3rd Brigade were still in action. Three machine-gun batteries and the 2nd Brigade of Field Artillery supported this brigade, but had few opportunities of coming into action, as the infantry were everywhere successful. The objective—the high ground east of Cayeux and the crossings of the Luce at this village and at Ignacourt—were secured on the right at 11 o'clock and on the left half-an-hour later.

In the meantime the 2nd Brigade had been marching forward, its troops moving off from the assembly area at 6.20 o'clock. This brigade attacked with the 7th and 10th Battalions on the right and left of the Luce river, with the 8th Battalion in support and the 5th in reserve. Three machine-gun batteries were attached to the brigade, one supporting the attack on the right, one on the left, and one being held in brigade reserve. Fourteen tanks advanced with the infantry, of which six reached the final objective. Except on the extreme left, little resistance was encountered by this brigade.

Infantry and machine-guns were disposed in depth on the night of the 8th-9th to cover the old trench line running east of Caix, and were supported by the field artillery of the division and one brigade of mobile heavy artillery.

#### PREPARATIONS FOR THE 9TH.

While the 1st and 2nd Divisions were able to reach the Blue Line, the 4th Division, which had passed through the 3rd Division on the Red Line, was not so fortunate on the right. The 4th Division not only had a frontage of 5,000 yards to cover, but also, as the French attack on the right did not commence until more



than two hours after the Canadian attack, the right flank was exposed. As a result the 4th Division had not captured the town of Le Quesnel and the large woods east of it by nightfall.

Orders for the continuation of the attack on the 9th were received very late on the night of the 8th. New frontages were allotted, and under the redistribution the 1st Division had to side-slip south a distance of about 5,000 yards. The 1st and 2nd Brigades were ordered to carry out the attack on the right and left respectively.

Several things had to be done before this attack could be launched. The 4th Division had to take Le Quesnel and establish itself on the Blue Line. The 2nd Brigade had to be relieved by troops of the 2nd Division. All troops of the 1st Division had to march to the new front. Artillery and tanks had to come up.

The first difficulty arose when it was discovered that the 2nd Division would not be able to relieve the 2nd Brigade before daylight. It was therefore decided that the 7th and 10th Battalions of the 2nd Brigade holding the line in front of Caix would remain there until the attacking troops of the 2nd Division had passed through them. Two battalions of the 3rd Brigade, the 14th and 15th, were therefore attached to the 2nd Brigade for the attack and placed under orders of G.O.C. 2nd Brigade.

During the morning hours of the 9th the 4th Division completed the capture of Le Quesnel. The actual situation on the remainder of their front was obscure. At one time it was reported that the village of Beaufort had been taken, but this was later proved an error.

After two postponements of Zero Hour, and after several changes in plans and orders, the attack finally was launched along the whole Corps front at 1.10 p.m.

#### THE SECOND DAY'S TASK.

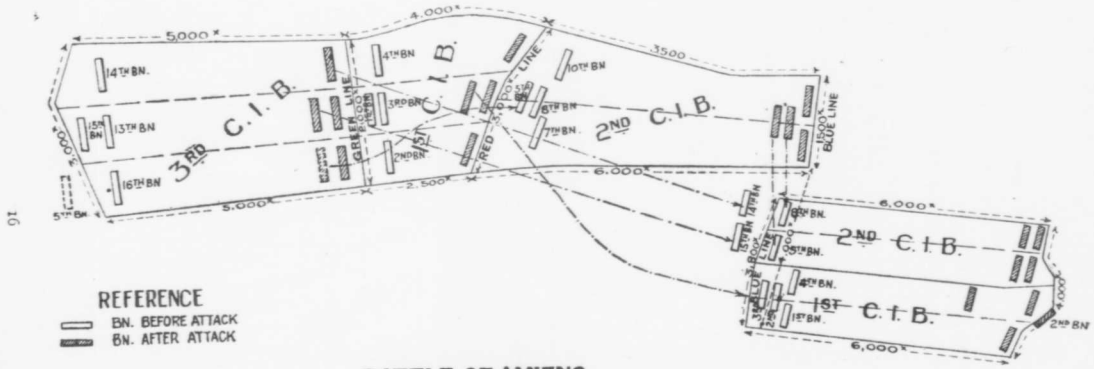
The task given the Canadian Corps on the 9th of August was not so formidable as that accomplished on the previous day. It

meant an attack on a five-mile front and an advance to a depth of about three and a half miles. The objective was the Bouchoir-Rouvroy—Meharicourt road. The country was almost flat, very open, with only a few villages and small woods scattered over it. The attack was to be carried out by the 3rd, 1st, and 2nd Divisions from right to left. The 3rd Division had to advance down the Roye road, and capture Folies and Bouchoir. The 1st Division had the villages of Beaufort, Warvillers, and Rouvroy on its front, while the 2nd Division was responsible for Vrely, Rosieres, and Meharicourt.

On the 1st Division front the 1st Brigade was ordered to capture Beaufort and Rouvroy. The 2nd Brigade was responsible for Warvillers.

The 1st Brigade attacked with the 1st and 4th Battalions in line, the 2nd Battalion in support and the 3rd in reserve. The attack was supported by two batteries of machine-guns, while one was held in brigade reserve. The 1st Brigade of Field Artillery covered the advance. From the outset the attacking troops came under heavy machine-gun fire. This came from the high ground on the right. In order to deal with it the right-flank troops of the 1st Division were deflected south. This resulted in the 2nd Battalion pushing forward to fill the gap and fighting right through to the objective. The 1st Brigade completed its task by the capture of Rouvroy, the 3rd Battalion relieving the 2nd Battalion at 9 o'clock that evening.

The 2nd Brigade was able to make rapid progress in the early stages of the attack, outstripping the troops on its right by the time Warvillers village was reached. This village and the woods immediately to the north of it, as well as several bits of old trench in which the enemy attempted a stand, were captured by the aid of tanks with little difficulty. It was only on the extreme left, in the early portion of the attack, that serious resistance was encountered. This came from a nest of machine-guns in a little wood called Hatchett Wood. The 2nd Brigade attacked with the 5th and 8th Battalions, with the 15th and 14th in support.



**BATTLE OF AMIENS**  
 DIAGRAM SHOWING EMPLOYMENT OF INFANTRY

Twelve tanks supported the 1st Division attack on this day, six going forward with each brigade, and all doing valuable service. In addition, the Divisional Commander secured some whippet tanks from the Cavalry Corps, and these were of assistance to the right brigade in clearing Beaufort Wood.

In this battle the 2nd and 3rd Field Ambulances cleared the forward area, while the 1st ran a corps main dressing station.

#### A BATTLE OF TANKS AND INFANTRY.

It is interesting to note that this great Battle of Amiens, fought on the 8th and 9th of August, was almost entirely a battle of tanks and infantry against a machine-gun defence. The artillery played its part in supplying the barrage for the first 5,000-yards advance. Beyond that point, however, on only a few occasions did the artillery, advancing behind the infantry, come into action.

Conditions throughout these two days of fighting were ideal for both tanks and infantry, and both exploited to the full every opportunity that presented itself, each working in close co-operation with the other.

The fighting on the second day was entirely an infantry battle, supported by tanks. The most rapid advance was made on the centre of the Corps front. In fact, at 4 o'clock on the afternoon of the 9th the advance was echeloned from the centre to the right. By 6 o'clock the 3rd Division, using only one brigade, had captured Bouchoir. At this time the right flank of the Canadian Corps ran straight down the Roye road, our front line being just three and a half miles in front of the French line. Soon after 6 o'clock the French attacked, and captured Arvillers, thus bringing their line up level with that on the Canadian front.

Cavalry and motor machine-guns also had several opportunities of coming into action on the 9th, the former assisting the infantry to some extent in the centre of the Corps front.

On the morning of the 10th, 3rd Division troops took the village of Le Quesnoy, and shortly afterwards the 32nd Division, with the 4th Canadian Division, continued the attack.

Opposition now began to stiffen, as the enemy were once more in the old trench systems of the Somme days, and the fighting for the next ten days was bitter, and took on the character of a series of minor operations.

On August 20th, troops of the Canadian Corps began to move northward again, in order to take part in the operations east of Arras—operations that were but the beginning of a battle that lasted for more than two months and ended only when the armistice came into force.

#### SOME STATISTICS OF THE BATTLE.

Fighting strength, 1st Division .....	452 Officers.
	11,072 other ranks.
Casualties, 1st Division only .....	170 Officers.
	3,148 other ranks.
Prisoners captured August 8th and 9th .....	4,214
Material captured—	
Artillery of all calibres .....	82 pieces.
Machine-guns, all kinds .....	210
Trench Mortars .....	53

## The Battle of Arras, August 26th—September 4th.

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The Battle of Arras, which lasted from August 26th until September 3rd, 1918, was the next great battle in which Canadians took part. It was the third of a series of hammer-blows struck by the British armies between August 8th and November 11th, and was carried out under the orders of the First Army.

The situation at the time of the opening of the Battle of Arras was one of great possibilities. Hardly had the impetus of the fighting east of Amiens died down when the great Battle of Bapaume was launched by the Third and Fourth Armies on a front of twenty-two miles, from just south of Albert to Neuville Vitasse, about five miles south of Arras. It opened on August 21st, saw bitter fighting for the next ten days, and resulted in the tremendous total of 34,250 prisoners and 270 guns captured. Strategically, it turned the enemy's positions on the Somme and caused him to retire east of that river.

The Battle of Arras was launched with a twofold purpose—to protect the flank of the attack of the Third Army immediately on the south and to turn the enemy's new positions from the north by breaking through the right flank of the Hindenburg Line, and possibly pushing through to Cambrai.

Cambrai was not reached in the first rush. This had hardly been hoped for, but the immediate and most important of the objectives were successfully accomplished. This battle, as distinguished from the Battle of Bapaume, which was being fought simultaneously on the right flank, was unique to Canadians in that

it was carried out by the Canadian Corps Commander alone, who had under him for this operation a total of six divisions—the four Canadian Divisions and the 4th and 51st British Divisions—all ranking as “shock troops.”

The battle was opened by the 2nd and 3rd Canadian Divisions and the 51st Division attacking on a front of 10,000 yards. These two Canadian divisions had been “spirited” away from the Amiens front, making the trip by bus and train at night. On the 20th, for instance, the 3rd Canadian Division was at Le Quesnel, south-east of Amiens. Four days later they were in the line east of Arras, and forty-eight hours later they were three miles east of what had been the German front line for practically five months.

The initial attack was launched by the 2nd and 3rd Canadian Divisions on the front from Neuville Vitasse to the Scarpe river, a distance of 6,000 yards, the 2nd Division attacking on the right and the 3rd on the left. The battle began at 3 o'clock in the morning in inky blackness, and with a driving rainstorm from the west. In spite of the adverse conditions the attack was completely successful, and by that evening our troops held Heninel, Wancourt, Guemappe, and Monchy-le-Preux, and controlled the high ground on the right known as the Wancourt Ridge. The attack was continued the next day, and by nightfall our line ran just east of Cherisy and just west of Vis-en-Artois, Remy, and Boiry-Notre Dame. This was “virgin soil,” as it was farther east, on this front, than British troops had been since 1914.

In the meantime the 1st Canadian Division was moving north from the Amiens front. It was relieved by the 126th French Division, commencing on the evening of the 19th of August, and by the evening of the 22nd the division was concentrated in the area between Gentelles Wood and Hangard. The next move was made to the area immediately south of Amiens, and on August 25th the division began to entrain for the north, the last unit moving off on the 27th. The infantry of the division completed its detrainment on the afternoon of the 26th, and was moved forward by bus at once into the area just south of Arras, with divisional headquarters

in Arras itself. On the 27th the infantry moved to the Neuville Vitasse-Telegraph Hill area, while the artillery detrained at Dainville.

Orders were issued by corps that the 1st Canadian Division would relieve the 2nd Division on the night of the 28th, the 4th British Division relieving the 3rd Canadian Division on the left at the same time. During the day of the 28th, while the 1st Division was moving into the forward area preparatory to taking over the line, the 2nd and 3rd Divisions continued the attack. The 2nd Division was successful in pushing forward its line towards the Fresnes-Rouvroy trench system, but failed to capture the system itself. The 3rd Division, however, succeeded in taking this trench on its front, and by nightfall had captured the villages of Remy and Boiry-Notre Dame.

On the night of the 28th-29th August the 1st Division relieved the 2nd Division, the G.O.C. of the 1st Division taking over command of the line at midnight. The relief was most difficult. The position of the 2nd Division front line was uncertain, and it was necessary for the relieving troops to form up in extended order and march forward until the foremost troops of the battalions in line were reached. The 3rd C.I. Brigade took over the right sector, the 2nd Brigade the left, and the 1st Brigade came into divisional reserve.

The next day, the 29th, passed without incident, except for fairly heavy shelling that was maintained on forward areas and roads. On this day the plans of the Corps Commander for an extensive operation, tentatively set for September 1st, were communicated to the division. This new attack was to be made by three divisions, the object being to break the Drocourt-Queant line, overrun the crossings of the Canal du Nord, and seize Bourlon Wood and the high ground to the north of it. In the meantime the divisions in line were ordered to secure by a series of minor operations a "jumping-off line" running from Chateau Wood, on the right, crossing the Vis-en-Artois Switch, and to the village of Eterpigny, on the left.



In order to understand the task before the corps as a whole, and the 1st Canadian Division in particular, a brief description of the ground and the enemy defences is necessary.

#### THE COUNTRY TO BE TAKEN.

On the evening of the 29th our front line followed roughly the valley of the Sensee river from Fontaine-les-Croiselles to Hautcourt, where it bent back over the small ridge between this river and the valley of the Cojeul, then over the high ground east of Boiry-Notre Dame, and continued in a general north-westerly direction to the valley of the Scarpe. North of the Scarpe the operations were carried out merely to protect the flank of the main attack south of this stream, and need not be considered here. While the valley of the Scarpe began to bend to the northward practically at our front line, the valley of the Trinquis river began almost at once, and ran due east, joining the Sensee valley 5,000 yards east of our line.

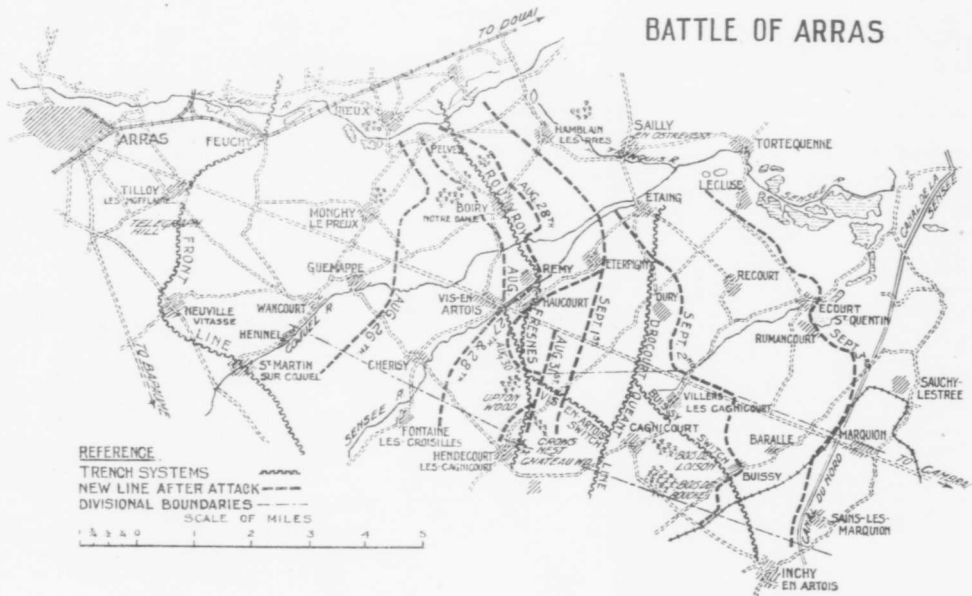
From ten to twelve thousand yards beyond our line was the valley and the waterway of the Canal du Nord, running almost due north and south. Cutting the Canadian Corps front in halves and running in a south-easterly direction straight to Cambrai, a distance of thirteen miles, was the tree-lined Arras-Cambrai road.

The natural features, then, were these: Two valleys converging on our northern flank, forming an isolated triangle of ground to be dealt with; then two more convergent valleys, those of the Sensee and the Canal du Nord, with the high ground between, forming a plateau on the right flank, with a distance of 10,000 yards to go before the canal was reached, and on the left breaking into more sharply defined valleys and ridges as the junction of the valleys was approached.

With the exception of one small jog, the Arras-Cambrai road formed the left flank of the 1st Canadian Division. The right flank ran 3,500 yards south of and parallel to this road.

On the front of this division, therefore, the ground features were simple. First came the gradual upward slope along the crest

# BATTLE OF ARRAS



of which ran the Hendecourt-Dury road, and roughly paralleling our front line. Then came a gentle valley, and in this depression was the village of Cagnicourt on the right and Villers les Cagnicourt on the left, each being about 6,000 yards from our front line. Immediately east of Cagnicourt were two small woods—the Bois de Bouche and the Bois de Loison. Then another ridge, and a sharp valley running in a north-easterly direction, with the villages of Buissy and Baralle straggling through it practically across our entire front. And finally the wooded valley of the Canal du Nord.

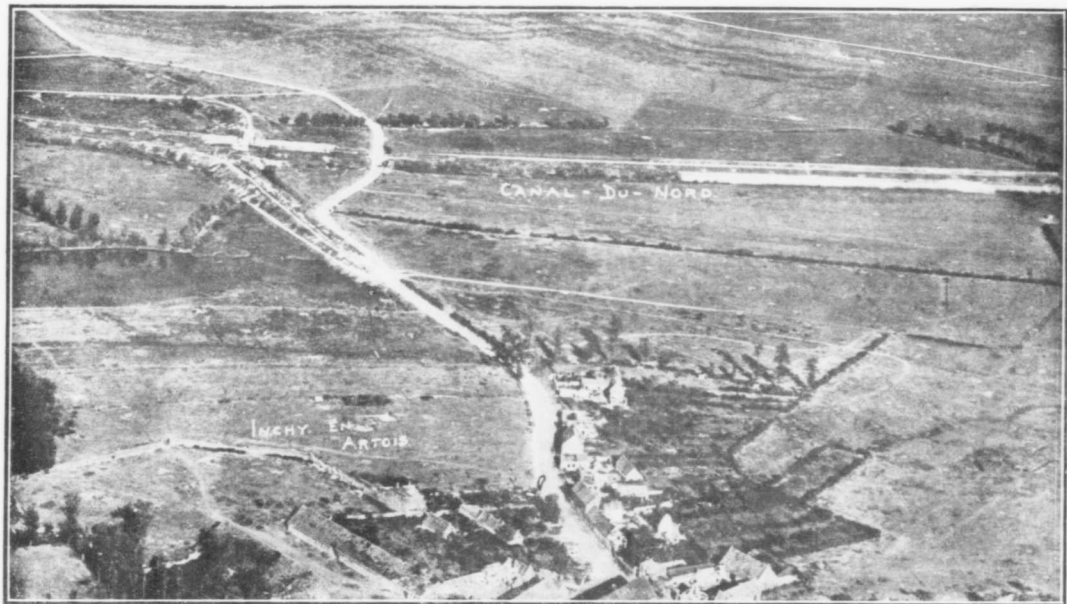
While the natural features presented no great difficulties, the enemy had strongly fortified this ground, and it was these heavily-wired and strongly-held trench systems that formed the great obstacle.

Immediately in front of our position was the Fresnes-Rouvroy line, sited on the slope leading up to the Hendecourt-Dury road. Two to three thousand yards east of this line was the famous Drocourt-Queant line, a switch off the Hindenburg line, which at this point ran in a general south-easterly direction some 1,500 yards south of our frontage. Running in a south-easterly direction from Vis-en-Artois, and connecting the Fresnes-Rouvroy and the Drocourt-Queant lines, was the trench system known as the Vis-en-Artois Switch. And, beginning at the point where the Drocourt-Queant line crossed the Arras-Cambrai road, and also running east, was a fourth line, known as the Buissy Switch. This system of trenches ran immediately south-west of the villages of Villers and Buissy, joining the Hindenburg line in the vicinity of Inchy-en-Artois, a village situated near the canal and just south of our boundary.

It will be seen, therefore, that the trenches to be taken by the 1st Canadian Division ran, in zig-zag fashion, practically to the canal.

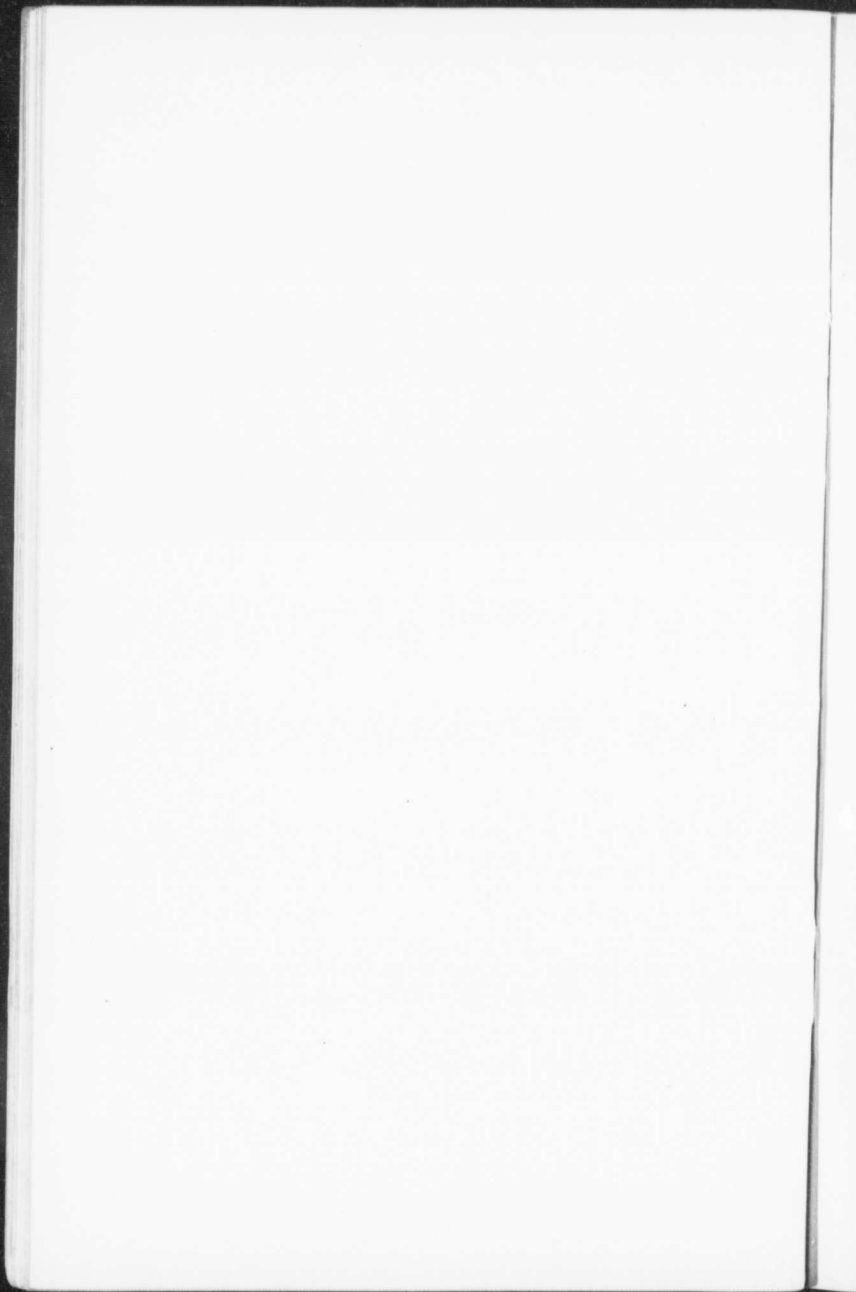
#### PRELIMINARY OPERATIONS.

It will be remembered that the Canadian Corps plan for an attack on the Drocourt-Queant line depended on the divisions in line securing a jumping-off position within reasonable distance of



BATTLE OF CAMBRAI.

*Showing the assembly area for the attack by the 1st Division on September 27; the Canal du Nord and the difficult country and trenches beyond it.*



this objective. The first thing, therefore, that the 1st Canadian Division had to do was to take the Fresnes-Rouvroy line, the greater part of the Vis-en-Artois Switch, Upton Wood, and the two strong obstacles known as Château Wood and the Crow's Nest, or, in other words, to advance its line some 3,000 yards before launching the big attack.

As the Divisional Commander did not wish to incur any risk of dissipating the strength of the two brigades earmarked for the breaking of the Drocourt-Queant line, he decided that the 1st Canadian Infantry Brigade—in divisional reserve—should carry out this preliminary operation. The date set was at dawn on August 30th.

The task confronting the 1st Brigade was no light one. There was the strong Fresnes-Rouvroy trench line that already had stopped one attack by Canadians; there was the Vis-en-Artois Switch line, cutting this system diagonally; there was the fortified obstacle presented by Upton Wood, lying between the Fresnes-Rouvroy line and the Hendecourt-Dury road, and there was Cemetery Trench, running in a north-easterly direction from our right flank and passing just east of Upton Wood.

At first it was decided to attack this area frontally. Later, however, when the Brigade Commander heard that British troops had captured the village of Hendecourt, thus breaching the Fresnes-Rouvroy system just to the south of his right flank, he evolved a daring plan for the attack. Two battalions—the 1st and 2nd Battalions—were to assemble in the vicinity of Hendecourt and attack north-east and north respectively, the first going up Cemetery Trench and the other “rolling up” the Fresnes-Rouvroy Trench from the south. The 3rd Battalion was ordered to attack astride the Vis-en-Artois Switch and burst the Fresnes-Rouvroy line at its junction with that trench. The artillery then worked out a complicated barrage, or rather two, one protecting each of the attacks from the flanks, and then merging together and sweeping eastwards.

The attack opened at 4.40 o'clock in the morning. All went smoothly and the objectives were taken. Heavy fighting continued

through the greater part of the day, however, for soon after noon the enemy launched a determined counter-attack under cover of an organised barrage, and penetrated some portions of Upton Wood and Cemetery Trench. A portion of the 2nd Battalion in the Fresnes-Rouvroy line at once started another counter-attack, and so brought the enemy to a standstill, but did not drive him out completely. An attempt on the part of the 3rd Battalion patrols to take the remainder of the Fresnes-Rouvroy line that lay between the Vis-en-Artois Switch and the Arras-Cambrai road was not successful, owing to the strength with which the enemy was holding it. Towards evening a portion of the 4th Battalion was thrown into the fight to re-establish our new line. By nightfall this was accomplished, and the enemy driven out of those positions he had secured as a result of his attack at mid-day.

The next day, August 31st, the 2nd Brigade, using the 8th Battalion, completed the capture of the Fresnes-Rouvroy line as far north as the Arras-Cambrai road, and then in daylight and in the face of heavy machine-gun fire patrols were pushed out well forward of the captured line.

Owing to the strength of the wire in front of the Drocourt-Queant line, the date for the major attack was postponed for one day, in order to give the heavy artillery further time to carry out wire-cutting operations. In order, also, to thicken the infantry attack, the frontage of the 1st Division was reduced by some 1,500 yards on the night of August 31st, the 2nd Brigade side-slipping south. The 1st Brigade was relieved during the night, the 3rd Brigade taking over the right sector with the 15th and 14th Battalions, and the 2nd Brigade the left sector with the 5th Battalion. On the same night the 4th Division came into line between the 1st Division and the 4th British Division.

Once again, at dawn the next day, the whole infantry line on the corps front moved forward. This time the advance on the 1st Division front was only for a distance of a thousand yards, the new line being established within the same distance from the Drocourt-Queant line—a suitable striking distance for the great attack set

for September 2nd. The operation on the 1st was carried out by the 3rd Brigade on the right with the 15th and 14th Battalions and the 2nd Brigade on the left with the 5th Battalion.

In spite of the short advance the fighting was of the most bitter character. As soon as the protective barrage died down the enemy commenced a series of determined counter-attacks down an old trench against the 14th Battalion. Four such attacks were beaten off by the garrison of the trench during the day, captured stick grenades and Stokes mortars being used freely.

On the left, on the front captured by the 5th Battalion, the enemy flung two battalions against the position at 11.30 that morning, a heavy machine-gun and artillery barrage being used. The two companies in the forward positions were slowly forced back to their original line. The Battalion Commander, however, at once counter-attacked with his remaining two companies. After four hours of heavy fighting the whole position was regained and 125 prisoners captured. The enemy was not satisfied, however, and once again, at 6 o'clock in the evening, he developed a strong attack. This effort was beaten off except on the extreme left, where two posts were captured by the enemy. Fighting in this area continued intermittently throughout the night, and, as a matter of fact, when the barrage opened in the morning for the major attack on the Drocourt-Queant line, and the 7th Battalion passed through, the 5th Battalion was even then engaged in hand-to-hand fighting for the possession of these posts.

During the night of the 1st of September and in the early morning hours of the 2nd, while the front was in a turmoil of shell-fire and bombing, attack and counter-attack, swift rush or stubborn resistance, the infantry, artillery, machine-guns, and tanks were moving forward along the whole corps front into their assembly positions for the thrust that was designed to break the Drocourt-Queant line and secure the crossings of the Canal du Nord.

The attack was being carried out by the 1st Canadian Division on the right, and south of the Arras-Cambrai road; by the 4th Canadian Division in the centre, and the 4th British Division on the



left. Simultaneously with the attack of the Canadian Corps, the Third Army, on the south, was to advance along its whole front.

The attack of the 1st Canadian Division was carried out by the 3rd and 2nd Brigades from right to left respectively, the 1st C.I.B. being held in divisional reserve.

On the morning of September 2nd, at 5 o'clock, the artillery and machine-gun barrage opened, and the infantry at once began to move forward into what proved to be a day of bitter fighting.

The 3rd Brigade, at the time of the opening of the attack, had two battalions holding the line, the 15th and 14th. The two remaining battalions, the 16th and 13th, carried out the assault on the Drocourt-Queant line, and were then to be "leap-frogged" by the 15th and 14th Battalions, who were to capture Bois de Bouche, Bois de Loison, and Cagnicourt. The 2nd Brigade, on the left, were attacking on a one-battalion front, and were using two battalions—the 7th to capture the Drocourt-Queant system on their front, and the 10th to carry the attack as far as the western outskirts of Buissy. The 1st Brigade was to continue the attack from this point and secure the crossings of the Canal du Nord.

The attack proceeded rapidly, and according to plan up to the time of the capture of the Drocourt-Queant line on the divisional front, in spite of very heavy enfilade fire from the right flank, south-west of the village of Cagnicourt. The tanks, of which there were eighteen operating on the divisional front, did great service in the capture of the Drocourt-Queant system.

Strong resistance was met with by our troops east of this trench line, and the attack slowed up very considerably. The battle devolved upon platoon, company, and battalion commanders, and it was only by the initiative and determination of all ranks actually engaged in the foremost lines that the enemy was slowly but surely pressed back. On the right the chief obstacle was the flanking fire from the south; on the left the strongly fortified village of Villers les Cagnicourt and an isolated factory on the Arras-Cambrai road were the centres of resistance. By 4 o'clock that afternoon,

with the assistance of batteries of artillery attached to battalions, and under cover of machine-gun and Lewis gun fire, our line had been established east of the villages of Cagnicourt and Villers les Cagnicourt.

A supplementary artillery barrage was arranged for 6 o'clock that evening, and under cover of it the infantry again advanced. By this time the leading battalions of the 1st Brigade—the 3rd and 4th—had become involved in the fighting. The struggle for the capture of the Buissy Switch and for the sunken roads leading south from Buissy was long and desperate, but by individual perseverance our troops, at 11 o'clock that night, had reached a line running roughly north and south just west of the village of Buissy.

The 3rd Brigade had suffered very heavy casualties during the day, and were therefore relieved during the night by the 1st Brigade, the 4th Battalion going into line with the 2nd Battalion in support and the 1st and 3rd in reserve.

At dawn, therefore, of September 3rd our line ran along the railway and road east of Bois de Bouche, as far as the Buissy Switch, and then due north to the Arras-Cambrai road, with a defensive flank thrown back along this road for a distance of nearly 2,000 yards.

After a day of intense hand-to-hand fighting this was a result of which the division was proud. In spite of the fact that the enemy was very strong numerically—as witness the 2,746 prisoners captured in forty-eight hours of battle—and that he fought desperately—a fact amply proved by the 500 dead in the area in front of the Drocourt-Queant line and around the villages of Cagnicourt and Villers les Cagnicourt; in spite of these obstacles and the huge numbers of machine-guns with which the enemy was armed, the line reached by the leading troops of the division was well in advance of that reached by the flanking divisions. In fact, throughout most of the day the division fought with both flanks “in the air,” although troops of the 63rd Division succeeded in reaching Inchy that evening.

The infantry was well supported by all the other arms of the service. The artillery, both in its concerted barrage fire and in the work of its advanced batteries, was responsible for the creation of many openings in the enemy's defences. The attached machine-gun batteries operating with the leading infantry had many opportunities of inflicting casualties on the enemy; opportunities that were seized and made the most of. The tanks, too, were a great factor in the forcing of the Drocourt-Queant line. After our artillery barrage died down, however, every one of the eighteen tanks became a casualty.

So ended the fight for the Drocourt-Queant line. There still remained the Canal du Nord to be crossed.

Early in the morning of the 3rd of September aeroplanes reported that no enemy troops were to be seen west of the canal. This information was acted upon at once on the left, when the 2nd Brigade sent forward the 8th and 10th Battalions. These found that while the enemy had left behind him a screen of machine-guns, the resistance was not serious. By 5 o'clock the 2nd Brigade had reached the line of the canal. On the right, although patrols had been well forward, the 1st Brigade did not begin a general advance on its front until 1 o'clock in the afternoon, when the 4th Battalion went forward. Here the opposition was more pronounced. As the 4th Battalion was deflected to the left by the fighting, the 2nd Battalion was sent up later in the afternoon to work towards the right, and by 6.30 that evening these two battalions were on the western bank of the canal, and were everywhere held up by intense machine-gun fire from the east bank.

While the enemy was in great confusion to the east of the canal he had successfully destroyed the crossings of the canal on the front of the 1st Division. The Corps Commander, after unsuccessful attempts had been made to cross in the face of heavy machine-gun fire, ordered a general halt along the whole corps front. That night the 1st Division was relieved by the 2nd Canadian Division, the relief being completed by 2 o'clock in the morning of September 5th, the 2nd Division taking over command

of the line at 6 o'clock on the evening of the 4th, the 1st Division being withdrawn to the Warlus area.

This brought to a close the Battle of Arras—a battle fought by the Canadian Corps with six divisions for nine days, on a front of 10,000 yards, that resulted in an advance of nearly twelve miles straight down the Arras-Cambrai Road, that outflanked the enemy's defences west of Douai and caused a retirement from Arras to Armentieres, that protected the left flank of the great attack of the Third and Fourth British Armies, and that resulted in the capture of 18,850 prisoners and 200 guns. That the enemy put forth every effort to stop our advance on this front is shown by the fact that in the six days from August 29th to September 3rd the Canadian Corps alone met and defeated thirteen German divisions.

The Battle of Amiens, it will be remembered, was a battle of tanks and infantry—it was a break-through followed by a swift rush that was gradually stemmed by increasing enemy resistance. The Battle of Arras, on the other hand, was a battle of artillery and infantry, plus machine-guns. It was fought, for the most part, over shell-torn ground, and the fighting was uniformly severe. It was stopped, not by increasing enemy resistance, but by a natural obstacle reinforced by machine-guns.

#### SOME STATISTICS OF THE BATTLE.

Fighting strength, 1st Division, August 28th	429 Officers.
	12,431 other ranks.
Total casualties, 1st Division .....	163 Officers.
	3,224 other ranks.
Prisoners captured, August 28th-September 4th .....	4,019
Material captured by 1st Division—	
Artillery, all calibres .....	59
Machine-guns, all kinds .....	235
Trench mortars .....	14

## Battle of Cambrai, September 27th to October 2nd, 1918.

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After the Canadian Corps had reached the line of the Canal du Nord, fighting on a large scale ceased for nearly three weeks, although those divisions in the line still kept up a never-ending skirmish with the enemy outposts. In the meantime, the fighting to the south was being prosecuted vigorously, and on September 18th the Third and Fourth Armies once again went into action, launching the Battle of Epehy. In two days of fighting here 11,750 prisoners and 100 guns were captured and the outer defences of the Hindenburg Line in that sector were broken.

This brought the southern group of British Armies into position for the attack on the main defences of the Hindenburg Line—an attack that was launched on the 27th of September on a front of 30 miles and that, in four days of violent fighting, carried the line to St. Quentin and Cambrai, and resulted in the defeat of forty-five German divisions and the capture of 36,500 prisoners and 380 guns. This battle was continued a week later when in three days a further 12,000 prisoners and 250 guns were captured.

This great battle was known as the Battle of Cambrai—St. Quentin. It was fought by the First, Third and Fourth British Armies, was launched on a thirty-mile front from St. Quentin to the Valley of the Sensee and penetrated to a maximum depth of twenty miles. The official summary describes this battle as one






CROSSING THE FRONTIER.

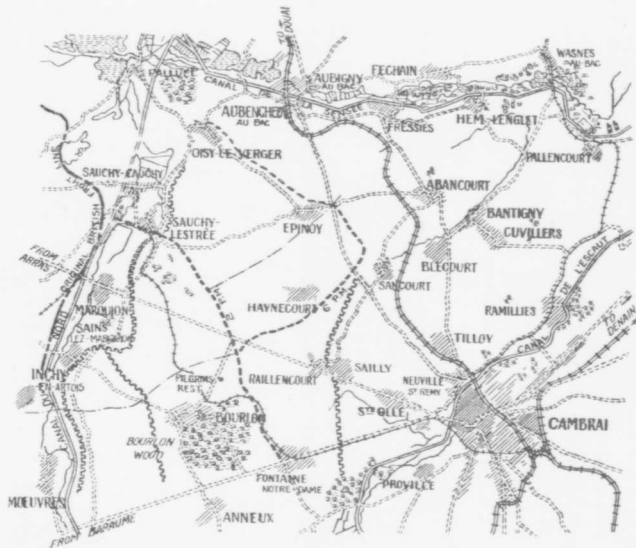
*The Corps and Divisional Commanders crossing the German frontier at the head of the 1st Canadian Division. At Poteau, December 4, 1918.*



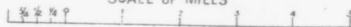
# BATTLE OF CAMBRAI

33

REFERENCE  
TRENCH SYSTEMS   
LINE AFTER ATTACK   
ON SEP. 27<sup>th</sup>  
DIVISIONAL BOUNDARIES 



SCALE OF MILES





which " in ten days of victorious fighting broke through the last and strongest of the enemy's prepared positions and opened the way to a war of movement and an advance on the German main lines of communication."

The battle was divided into three main phases :

First, on the left, the storming of the Canal du Nord and the advance on Cambrai ; followed immediately by the second phase, the great blow which shattered the Hindenburg Line and out-flanked the defences of St. Quentin ; and third, came the general attack on the whole front which resulted in the capture of Cambrai and St. Quentin, and forced the enemy to retire behind the line of the River Selle.

It was in the first phase of this battle that the Canadian Corps was chiefly interested, for to the Corps was given the task of forcing the Canal du Nord, capturing Bournon Wood and the high ground to the north of it, and then advancing on Cambrai and seizing the crossings of the Canal de l'Escault and the Sensee River to the east and north of that city. This would afford complete protection for the main attack to the south—and this was the real objective of the Canadian Corps.

At the time of the opening of the Battle of Cambrai the Canadian Corps had only the 2nd Division in line on the western bank of the Canal du Nord, the remaining three divisions being out-resting and reorganising. Immediately following the conclusion of the Battle of Arras on September 4th and succeeding days the 1st Canadian Division was relieved by the 2nd, and the 4th Division by the 3rd, while on the 19th of September the 3rd Division was relieved by the XXII Corps.

The 1st Canadian Division had moved to the Warlus Area, south-west of Arras, on September 5th. Training and reorganisation were carried out. On the 15th of September the 1st Brigade was placed under the command of the 2nd Division and moved to the neighbourhood of Cagnicourt.

On September 16th orders from the Canadian Corps for the attack on Bournon and Cambrai were communicated to the Divi-

sion. The attack was to be launched by the 4th and 1st Divisions, the former taking Bourlon Wood and the latter the high ground to the north of it. This was to constitute the first phase of the attack. The second phase aimed at reaching Cambrai, the Canal de l'Escault to the north and east of that city, and the high ground overlooking the Sensee River. This phase was to be carried out by the 3rd, 4th and 1st Canadian Divisions and the 11th British Division in line from right to left.

#### FEATURES OF THE ATTACK.

The attack presented many unusual features. In the first place the Canal du Nord was passable on the Corps sector on a front of 2,500 yards only. This meant that four divisions had to be got through this narrow "Defile," and in addition there were engineers, artillery, machine gunners and all the supply trains of various descriptions. To add to these difficulties the canal had to be bridged in many places, especially to permit the passage of guns and limbers. The next difficulty to be overcome lay in the conformation of the ground. Bourlon Wood and Village covered the crest of a dominating hill feature on the right, while on the left, all the valley of the Canal du Nord was overlooked by high ground in the vicinity of Pilgrim's Rest and the village of Epinoy. This meant that not only were all the forward assembly areas in full view of the enemy, but the entire attack would be under observation during most of its critical phases.

At the very outset, therefore, the success of the battle devolved upon the engineers. While the infantry, under cover of the artillery barrage, might carry the canal in the first rush, it was essential that guns and ammunition be brought forward across the canal as soon as possible. To do this bridges were a necessity. The task set the engineers was of vital importance.

In order to appreciate the task given the 1st Canadian Division a somewhat detailed description of the country is needed. The British front line on this front roughly paralleled the Canal du Nord, running north and south at a distance varying from fifty to 500 yards. The canal itself formed the first great obstacle.

It had an average depth of twenty feet between its banks. In some parts the canal was cut through high ground, while in others it ran between built-up banks. On the northern portion of the divisional front there was about four feet of water, leaving only a little over a thousand yards of dry canal bed on the southern half. The ground on both sides of the canal rose sharply. On the eastern side the slope continued in a general rise for a distance of from three to four thousand yards, ending on the right in Bourlon Wood and Village, and on the left in a clearly defined hill, on the crest of which was a shrine known as Pilgrim's Rest. Half way between the canal and Bourlon Wood was a patch of brush and scrub, called Quarry Wood. On the left, immediately east of the canal and in the valley, was the village of Sains-lez-Marquion. Continuing down the valley to the north were a series of woods, the most important named Keith Wood, and then the village of Marquion, lying astride the Arras-Cambrai Road. North of this road and further to the east, and lying on the forward slopes of the high ground leading up to the village of Epinoy, were three small woods—Leek Wood, Bois de Cocret and Dartford Wood. Four thousand yards north and east of Bourlon were the villages of Raillencourt and Saily, and twenty-five hundred yards due north of these villages was the little town of Haynecourt. A railway line, passing in many places through cuttings or over embankments, ran from Sauchy Lestree south to Bourlon, then swung east, skirting the wood and continuing to Cambrai.

#### TRENCH SYSTEMS.

Paralleling the canal, and running from two to five hundred yards east of it, was a heavily-wired trench system—the Canal du Nord line. About fifteen hundred yards further east, and half-way up the slope, was the Marquion line. Further to the east of this there was only one organised and systematically wired trench system—the Marcoing line—running north and south through the village of Saily, but between these trenches the enemy had organised many series of fortified shell-holes, protected

by " spider-web " wire. These, where fought to a finish by the enemy, caused the heaviest casualties to our troops.

The boundary between the 4th and 1st Divisions for the first phase ran due east of Inchy, just north of Quarry Wood, then, swinging slightly to the left, it ran from one thousand to fifteen hundred yards north of Bourlon. The 1st Division left boundary was the canal.

The 1st Canadian Division, then, had to cross the Canal du Nord, seize the high ground to the north of Bourlon Wood and " mop up " the valley of the canal as far north as the village of Marquion. Then, in the second phase of the battle, it was to capture Haynecourt and the high ground north and east of that village.

The 1st Division, therefore, in the first phase of the battle, had to attack from a front of eleven hundred yards, gradually extend this front until it became six thousand yards when the final objective was reached, and advance over six thousand yards.

The Divisional Commander decided to make the initial attack with the 1st Brigade on the right and the 3rd Brigade on the left. When the general line, Bourlon-Marquion, was reached, the 2nd Brigade would enter the fight between the 1st and 3rd Brigades, and would carry the battle right through the second phase to the capture of Haynecourt and the high ground north and east of that place. This meant that each brigade had before it three very different tasks. On the right, the 1st Brigade had before it a series of frontal assaults. First it must cross the canal, then capture the Canal du Nord trench, advance two thousand yards and take the Marquion line; then advance fifteen hundred yards to the railway cutting and embankment that formed a natural trench line, and then across open country to the final objective—a total advance of six thousand yards, ending with a frontage of fifteen hundred yards.

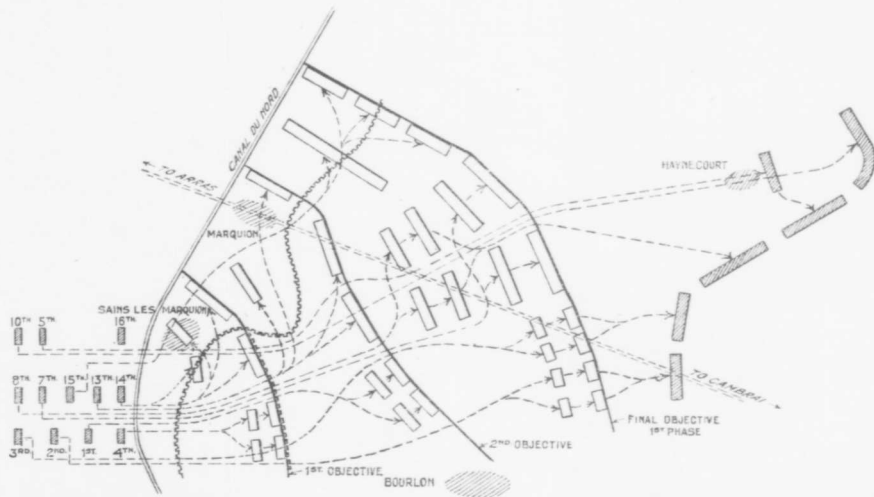
The 3rd Brigade attack on the left resolved itself into a series of out-flanking and turning movements. After the first rush across

the canal on a three hundred yard front, the brigade would break the Canal du Nord trench line and then swing north and even west in the attack on Sains-lez-Marquion, thus presenting the unique spectacle of our troops attacking directly toward our own lines. As a matter of fact, the artillery barrage here, first of all travelled forward in the usual way and then began to drop back towards the guns—the result being that our own barrage was between our infantry and guns. After the capture of Sains-lez-Marquion the brigade continued its “rolling up” tactics by taking the Marquion line in enfilade and attacking both Keith Wood and the village of Marquion from the east—in other words, taking the garrisons of these places in the flank and rear. After crossing the Arras-Cambrai Road the Brigade continued its flank attack on the Canal du Nord and Marquion lines as far as the final objective for the first phase—a total advance of six thousand yards, and an extension of front from three hundred to twenty-five hundred yards.




The 2nd Brigade had a still different task. Its Units had a four-mile march from the assembly position before they entered the fight. Once in the battle, it had practically open country before it, and attacked frontally, being required to make an advance of roughly thirty-five hundred yards on a front of eighteen hundred yards.

The Division, as a whole, staged forward on September 19th, and on the 24th and 25th completed the march to the assembly areas. On the night of the 25th of September the 1st and 3rd Brigades relieved units of the 2nd Division in the line, taking over their respective battle fronts. Divisional Headquarters moved on September 26th to battle headquarters in dug-outs in a railway cutting, twenty-five hundred yards west of Inchy.

September 27th was the day set for the attack. The ten previous days had been spent by all units in a careful study of the country, in planning their work and in out-fitting for the battle. The artillery were engaged in selecting battery positions and in getting ammunition forward, while the Engineers had to plan their share of the bridging of the canal.



## REFERENCE

-  BN. BEFORE ATTACK
-  COY. AFTER ATTACK
-  BN. AFTER ATTACK

**BATTLE OF CAMBRAI**  
 DIAGRAM SHOWING EMPLOYMENT OF INFANTRY

On the night of September 26th all units moved forward to their assembly positions. The night was exceedingly dark and a steady rain fell until nearly dawn, which not only added to the difficulties and discomforts, but made the going very slippery all the morning.

Owing to the extremely narrow front from which the Division had to "jump off," attacking infantry and machine gunners, supporting artillery and bridging details of Engineers, all had to be crowded into a small area. A heavy enemy concentration on this front would have jeopardised the success of the attack, but the enemy appeared to suspect nothing, and the night was "normal."

The 1st Brigade was assembled in depth on a front of about seven hundred yards. The leading Battalion, the 4th, was in the north-eastern end of Inchy-en-Artois. The 1st Battalion was in the lower end of the Buissy Switch, some eight hundred yards in rear of the 4th. The 2nd Battalion was behind the 1st and the 3rd behind the 2nd. The 3rd Brigade had to attack through a three-hundred-yard "defile," and so assemble on a one-battalion front. The 14th Battalion assembled in Paviland Wood, with the 13th a thousand yards in rear in the Buissy Switch. The 15th Battalion was north of the 13th, and the 16th was holding the front line north of the assembly area of the 14th. The 2nd Brigade, as it did not come into action until four hours after the opening of the attack, was assembled just east of Cagnicourt, some 3,000 yards in rear of the 3rd Brigade.

At twenty minutes after five on the morning of Friday, September 27th, the attack opened under cover of an intense shrapnel and smoke barrage. Some idea of the concentration of artillery may be gained from the fact that there was an 18-pounder gun to every 21 yards of barrage on the front of the 1st Division, and that there were ten brigades of Field Artillery alone whose 240 guns fired 118,062 rounds on this first day of the battle. Supporting this Division, in addition to this, there were 160 machine-guns firing in the barrage, while special companies of Engineers were projecting smoke and boiling oil into the village of Marquion, and on the high ground further to the north. The sight, when the first gleams of

daylight revealed the battle, was weird in the extreme. The horizon, as far as the eye could see, was nothing but masses and long lines of leaping, billowing smoke—dense white smoke shot through at intervals with the flicker of bursting shrapnel, or the black smudge of high explosive.

The battle, as far as it concerned the 1st Division, can be visualised best by following the fortunes of the individual brigades.

The 1st Canadian Infantry Brigade launched its attack with the 4th Battalion. The first rush of its troops to the Canal was covered by two guns of the 1st Battery of Canadian Field Artillery. This section, after a daring reconnaissance, was placed in position 150 yards from the enemy's front line during the night, and at zero hour fired 50 rounds at point-blank range into hostile machine-gun positions in the east bank of the Canal, effectively silencing them. The 4th Battalion advanced 2,000 yards and captured the Canal du Nord and Marquion trench systems on its front. The 1st Battalion then passed through it, taking up the fight and carrying the line forward a distance of 1,500 yards. Just as this battalion completed its allotted task, its right flank came under heavy machine-gun fire from the railway 1,000 yards north of Bourlon village. At this time the 2nd and 3rd Battalions, which had been following closely, passed through the 1st Battalion. They were held up almost at once by the enemy in the railway cutting and embankment, but by hard fighting managed to clear this obstacle without assistance other than that afforded by batteries of the Machine Gun Battalion that came into action at this time. Although the 4th Division on the right was held up more or less definitely on a line just east of Bourlon, the 2nd and 3rd Battalions pushed on to the objective set for the conclusion of the first phase, and even succeeded in working patrols forward to within a thousand yards of the villages of Raillencourt and Haynecourt.

The 1st Brigade was assisted in its attack by four tanks that did valuable service in the early stages of the attack, and had attached to it three batteries of No. 1 Company of the 1st Battalion Canadian Machine Gun Corps.



While the infantry, tanks and machine-guns were advancing along the whole front and while the canal was even under machine-gun fire, the Engineers were rushing the work of bridge building. With such speed was this done that at eight o'clock that morning batteries of the Divisional Artillery began to cross in support of the infantry. By 10.30 o'clock all batteries of both brigades were east of the Canal.

From Zero Hour on, the 1st Brigade C.F.A. was attached to the 1st Infantry Brigade, and advanced with it throughout the day.

#### HEAVY FIGHTING ON THE LEFT.

In the meantime the attack of the 3rd Brigade was meeting with stiff opposition on the left. The 3rd Brigade had only a narrow gap of 300 yards on its front in which the Canal du Nord could be crossed. The opening attack of this Brigade was made by the 14th Battalion. This battalion cleared the Canal on its front, and while one company advanced with the 1st Brigade the remainder swung to the left and cleared the Canal du Nord Line by attacking it in enfilade, and finally, following the local "backward" barrage already referred to, attacked the village of Sains-les-Marquion from the east, capturing it soon after nine o'clock. The 13th Battalion here took up the battle, following the same general plan put into operation by the 14th Battalion. The leading company carried on with the general attack to the east, while the following companies, turning to the north, attacked Keith Wood and the Marquion Line. The resistance was severe, the fighting very heavy and progress was slow. In fact, the 7th Battalion of the 2nd Brigade and the 15th Battalion, as well as a battalion of the 11th Division which were following in order to carry on the advance, became involved in the fighting here. Although the Marquion Line east of the village of that name was captured, the village itself was still in the hands of the enemy. As a result, the 15th Battalion and units of the 11th Division, as well as the Engineers engaged in bridge construction, came under heavy machine-gun fire in crossing the Canal north of Sains-les-Marquion. Eventually, however, all the area in the canal valley up to Marquion

was cleared by the 15th Battalion. A combined attack by the 13th and 15th Battalions then resulted in the capture of Marquion itself. The 15th then pushed on rapidly, and by two o'clock in the afternoon had reached the final objective of the first phase.

Four tanks assisted the 14th Battalion in the initial attack, but were unable to proceed beyond the Canal du Nord Line. Three batteries of the Machine Gun Battalion were attached to the 3rd Brigade for this operation.

While this fighting was going on units of the 2nd Brigade were marching forward ready to intervene in the battle at the appointed hour. The 7th Battalion, the first to enter the fight, had to leap-frog the 13th Battalion, after that unit had captured the Marquion Line. The 7th found the 13th hotly engaged, and assisted it in breaking the Marquion Line. By this time the artillery barrage had left the infantry far behind. A local barrage was arranged and supplied by the 2nd Brigade C.F.A., and under cover of this the 7th Battalion was able to move forward, the enemy's resistance rapidly weakening as our troops advanced. The chief resistance beyond the Arras-Cambrai road was met with from machine-guns just north of Bois de Crocrot. Patrols were pushed forward and reached a line over 2,000 yards north of the Arras-Cambrai road. During the afternoon a small counter-attack by the enemy on the centre was repulsed. The 8th Battalion had followed the 7th in support, but were not called on for help.

This ended the first phase of the battle. By two o'clock in the afternoon we had Bournon Wood, and our line then ran north and east from Bournon Village to within 500 yards of Raillencourt, then north practically to Haynecourt, and then swung back westward, meeting the Canal du Nord just south of Sauchy-Lestree.

The second phase called for an advance by four divisions in line, the 3rd, 4th and 1st Canadian and the 11th British Division from right to left being ordered to continue the attack. The 3rd Division on the right and the 11th on the left had followed the attacking divisions closely and were ready to carry on the fight.

The intervention of a new division on each flank meant that the 4th and 1st Divisions would have to close on the centre. It was found late in the afternoon that the 4th Division could not continue the advance that day. The 1st and 11th Divisions, however, attacked about four o'clock in the afternoon according to programme.

The continuation of the attack on the 1st Division front was carried out by the 2nd Brigade. The 5th and 10th Battalions had assembled ready to advance, and at 3.20 o'clock the 5th Battalion swept over the outpost line and advanced very rapidly, meeting with but little resistance. Haynecourt was soon captured. The 10th Battalion here continued the advance, but soon began to meet opposition. Owing to the fact that the troops on the right were not advancing, the 5th and 10th Battalions had a heavy enfilade fire poured into their flank. The enemy here were in great numbers apparently, and soon had field guns as well as machine-guns firing on our troops. In spite of this the 10th Battalion pressed forward until held up by a heavy and continuous belt of wire just west of the Douai-Cambrai Road. Patrols, although under heavy machine-gun fire, cut gaps through this wire by hand, and then, in a sudden rush, overpowered the gun crews and crossed the Douai-Cambrai Road. East of the road, however, five belts of wire were encountered, and, as the enemy fire was steadily increasing, the advance was halted.

The 11th Division had advanced on the left and had captured Epinoy, but on the right the situation was far from secure. Here the Brigade found itself with an exposed right flank of 4,000 yards. The responsibility of guarding this flank devolved upon the 5th and 8th Battalions, the 7th being in reserve. On the front of the 5th Battalion the enemy made three unsuccessful attacks at nightfall.

The 1st and 2nd Brigades of field artillery supported the 2nd Brigade throughout the afternoon's operations, and supplied protective fire throughout the night.

This concluded the actual fighting on the first day of the battle. But during all this day the engineers had been busy bridging the Canal. This task was entrusted to the 3rd Battalion Canadian Engineers. Five traffic crossings had to be constructed and four foot-bridges. The first traffic crossing was completed at 8.40 o'clock that morning. All bridges, with one exception, were completed by 6 o'clock in the evening. The early stages of the work were carried out under machine-gun fire, many casualties being suffered.

#### CONTINUATION OF THE BATTLE.

Fighting on succeeding days, while proving of the most costly character, can be described here only very briefly.

On September 28th the 3rd and 4th Divisions opened their attack on the right at 6 o'clock in the morning. The attack on the 1st Division front was set for 9 o'clock, and was to be carried out by the 10th Battalion. When 9 o'clock came, although troops on neither the right nor the left had caught up, and in face of very heavy artillery and machine-gun concentration on their front, the 10th Battalion went bravely forward and calmly commenced to cut lanes through the heavy enemy wire by hand. In spite of the thinning ranks, this unequal contest went on for two hours—hours illumined by many instances of the greatest courage and gallantry.

When it was found late in the morning that the 4th Division was held up some distance west of the Douai-Cambrai Road, the attack of the 10th Battalion was given up. That night the 8th Battalion relieved the 10th.

The next morning, the 29th, the attack was again carried forward on the whole Corps front. On the right the 3rd Division reached the outskirts of Cambrai, the 4th Division making slight progress to the north-east of Sailly. On the left, on the fronts of the 1st and 11th Divisions, the attack was generally held up. The attack of the 1st Division was carried out by the 8th Battalion. The right company made some progress in the face of heavy enemy

fire, and during the day three enemy counter-attacks were beaten off. That night the 1st Brigade relieved the 2nd Brigade.

Once again the early morning saw the whole Corps front in action. The fight on the 30th was for the villages of Sancourt, Blecourt, Cuvillers, Bantigny and Abancourt, and the high ground overlooking the Sensee River. The 3rd Division got east of Tilloy, but the 4th Division, after reaching Blecourt, were pressed back to their original line through Sancourt. It was therefore decided to cancel the proposed infantry action on the fronts of the 1st and 11th Divisions.

Orders were issued that night for a synchronised attack on October 1st by the four divisions in line. The 1st Division front was extended a thousand yards to the south, making a total front of attack of about three thousand yards. During the night the 3rd Brigade moved forward to the right and assembled behind the 12th Brigade, through whom they were to attack. The attack of the 1st Division was to be made by the 3rd and 1st Brigades. The barrage opened at 5 o'clock. On the right, the 13th Battalion attacked and captured Blecourt after very heavy fighting. On the left, the 1st and 4th Battalions launched the attack for the 1st Brigade. The 1st Battalion secured the line of the railway north of Blecourt, but were unable to get beyond owing to the intense fire from Abancourt. On the left the 4th Battalion got to within 200 yards of the railway, but were definitely held up there. Further on the left the attack of the 11th Division had been stopped at the very start. In the meantime, the 16th and 14th Battalions passed through Blecourt and attacked on the right and left. Cuvillers and Bantigny were captured by 8 o'clock by these battalions respectively. Enemy activity on the exposed left developed into counter-attacks against the 14th Battalion, three being driven off. Both battalions were now in untenable positions, enemy machine-gun concentrations on the high ground west of Abancourt sweeping their left rear and artillery firing at point-blank range from their front. Under the circumstances a retirement was ordered, the enemy being made to pay heavily for every foot of ground given up. A short stand was made at Blecourt, but fresh enemy attacks

forced our line back to just west of this village—a line held with the aid of artillery and machine-gun fire against continued enemy attacks.

That night the 6th Brigade of the 2nd Division relieved the 3rd Brigade, and the 2nd Brigade relieved the 1st Brigade on the left. The next day passed without incident, and on the night of the second the 2nd Brigade was relieved by a Brigade of the 11th Division—the relief of the Division being completed by 10 o'clock on the morning of the 3rd, the Division then coming into Corps Reserve.

Apart from minor attacks, no further serious fighting took place on this front. On October 8th the Third and Fourth Armies launched a great attack to the south, loosening the enemy's hold on Cambrai. On the morning of October 9th an attack on the whole Corps front proved most successful, the crossings of the Canal north-east of Cambrai being secured by the 2nd Division and Cambrai itself being captured by the 3rd Division.

This brought to a conclusion twelve days of heavy fighting, in the first six days of which twelve enemy divisions and eleven independent machine-gun units were decisively defeated by the four divisions fighting under the orders of the Canadian Corps, while over 7,000 prisoners and 200 guns were captured. This brought the total captures of the Canadian Corps since August 8th to 28,000 prisoners, 500 guns, and over 3,000 machine guns, while territorial gains included 69 villages captured from the enemy and over 175 square miles of French soil restored to its rightful owners.

#### SOME 1ST DIVISION STATISTICS OF THE BATTLE.

Fighting strength, 1st Division, Sept. 27th...	419 Officers.
	11,861 Other ranks.
Casualties, 1st Division ... ..	209 Officers.
	3,764 Other ranks.
Prisoners captured by 1st Division ... ..	3,264 all ranks.
Material captured :	
Artillery of all calibres ... ..	87 pieces.
Machine-guns, all kinds ... ..	145
Trench mortars ... ..	36

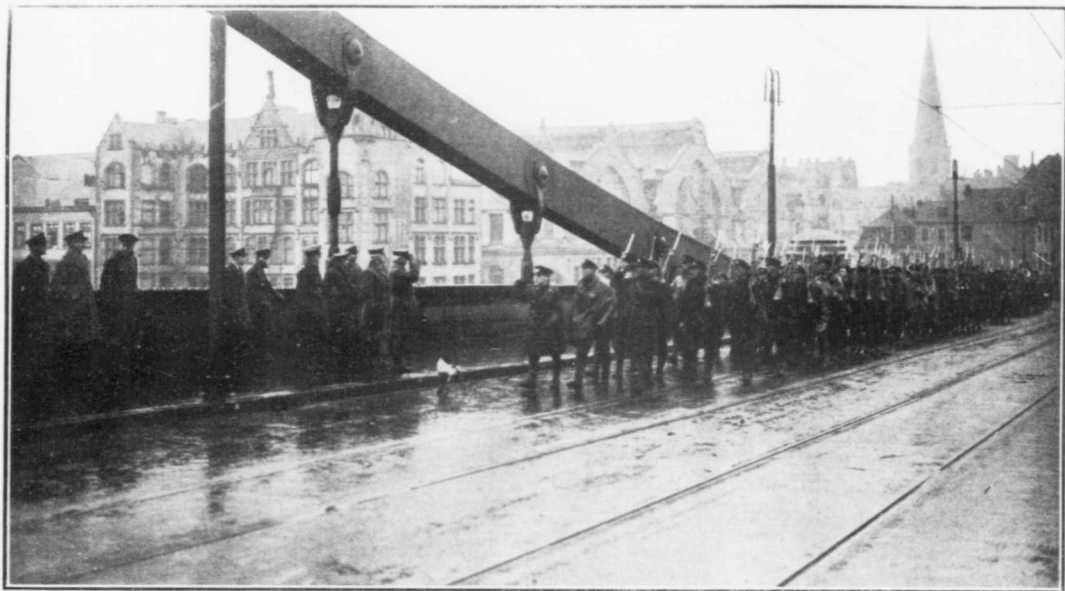
CAPTURES BY BRITISH AND ALLIED ARMIES,  
From July 18 to November 11, 1918.

	Prisoners.	Guns.
British Armies ... ..	188,700	2,840
French Armies ... ..	139,000	1,880
American Armies ... ..	43,300	1,421
Belgian Armies ... ..	14,500	474
	385,500	6,615
Total ... ..		

Captures by Canadian Corps from

August 8 to November 11, 1918...	31,200	500
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CROSSING THE RHINE.

*The 1st Canadian Division marching over the Neue Brücke at Cologne. General Sir H. Plumer, commanding the Second Army, taking the salute, with the Divisional Commander by his side.*





## Concluding Scenes.

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### The Last Fight—To the Rhine.

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While the Battle of Cambrai was still at its climax, the Second British Army and the Belgian Army fought the Fifth Battle of Ypres on September 28 and 29, in which 4,800 prisoners and 100 guns were captured.

Two weeks later the Battle of Courtrai opened. It lasted from October 14 to 31; saw the capture of 6,000 prisoners and 200 guns; directly resulted in the capture of Menin and Courtrai; forced the enemy to clear the Belgian coast, whereby he was deprived from his important submarine bases at Ostend, Zeebrugge and Bruges; and, further south, caused him to retire to the Scheldt river, thus freeing Lille and the great industrial district of France in that area. A further echo of this thrust was seen still further south in the retirement of the enemy from Laon and his retreat to the line of the Aisne river.

Coincident with the Battle of Courtrai was the battle of the Selle river, fought by the First, Third and Fourth Armies on a twenty-five mile front, east and south-east of Cambrai. In this battle 26 British Divisions defeated 31 German Divisions, capturing 21,000 prisoners and 450 guns.

The last great battle of the war, fought by British arms, was that of the Battle of Maubeuge. This began on November 1, and was stopped by the signing of the armistice, after 19,000 prisoners and 460 guns had been captured. This battle, also, was

fought by the First, Third and Fourth Armies. In it 26 British Divisions defeated 32 enemy divisions. It was fought on a front of about twenty-five miles and penetrated to an equal depth.

After the Battle of Cambrai, the 1st Canadian Division was out of the line for only three or four days, relieving the 4th British Division in the flooded valley of the Sensee and Trinquis rivers by the morning of October 7, the division coming under the tactical control of the XXII. Corps. The next week was spent in outpost fighting, our line being advanced slightly.

\* On October 17, the enemy began to retire all along the front, closely pursued by our troops. By the night of the 21st our line ran along the Valenciennes—St. Amand Railway. In these few days 26 towns and villages with 13,000 inhabitants were repatriated.

On October 22, the 3rd Division passed through the 1st Division, and the latter went into billets in the Somain—Pecquen-court—Masny area, with Divisional Headquarters at the last-named village.

No further fighting was done by the Division. On November 11 the following historic message was received: "To 1st Canadian Division,—Hostilities will cease at 1100 hours on November 11th. Troops will stand fast on the line reached at that hour, which will be reported to Corps H.Q. Defensive precautions will be maintained. There will be no intercourse of any description with the enemy. Further instructions follow.—From Canadian Corps 0645."

And so the Great War ended.

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On November 13th the Division was informed it would take part in the march to the Rhine, and the move forward to the concentration area just west of Mons was commenced. On November 18th the march began, with the three Brigades in line. The route followed by the 1st Division ran roughly through

Soignies—Nivelles—Gembloux—Andenne—Huy—Modave—Trois Ponts—Grand Halleux—Petit Thier—and then across the frontier at a tiny village called Poteau.

The first troops of the Division entered Germany on December 4th, led by the Corps Commander and General Macdonell. The 3rd Battalion was the first unit in the Division to cross the frontier, all the 1st Brigade being on German soil by that evening.

The march through the country to the Rhine was uneventful. The route followed was Amel—Bullingen—Hellenthal—Wallenthal—Euskirchen—Brühl and Cologne.

Early in the morning of December 9th troops of the 3rd Battalion reached the western banks of the Rhine, being the 1st Canadian unit on that river.

On Friday, December 13th, the entire Division marched through Cologne and crossed the Rhine, marching over the Neue Brücke, where they passed in review before the famous commander of the famous Second Army, General Sir H. Plumer.

The 3rd Brigade Group led the march, followed by the 1st and 2nd Brigade Groups. Then came the Brigade of Engineers, the Machine Gun Battalion, and the Divisional Train.

By the night of the 16th December the Division was in position on the perimeter of the bridgehead—the outpost line being 30 kilometres due east of Cologne, with the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Brigades in line from right to left and Divisional Headquarters in Cologne itself.

The relief of the Division in the bridgehead area began on January 5th and ended two weeks later, Divisional Headquarters moving to Huy on January 12th. The Division remained in the Huy area until the 1st of March, when the move to England began.

At last—four years and eight months from the time it first came into being—the Division ceases to exist as an organised fighting unit. But its story, of which but the hundredth part has been told here, will live for ever, for it has been written in blood across many a league of France and Belgium in letters of glorious achievement. And in this glorious victory of Right over Might, this old 1st Canadian Division—the Old Guard Division of Canada—has been privileged to play no inconsiderable part.



# Milestones.

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## Important Dates in the History of the 1st Canadian Division.

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1914.

August 15-31.—Battalions concentrated at Valcartier Camp, Quebec.

September 22.—Official date of organisation as a Division—of four infantry brigades.

September 24-27.—Embarked at Quebec.

October 3.—Convoy left Gaspé Bay.

October 14.—Arrived at Devonport.

October 16-21.—Arrived at Salisbury Plains.

1915.

February 7-10.—Embarked at Avonmouth for France.

February 10-13.—Disembarked at St. Nazaire and entrained.

February 12-16.—Detrained at Hazebrouck and Strazele and billeted in area Caestre—Fletre—Meteren—Merris.

February 17-28.—Attached for training to the 4th and 6th British Divisions on Ploegstreet and Armentières front.

March 1.—Went into line for first time as a Division, relieving 8th Division. Div. Hqrs. : Saily-sur-la-Lys.

1st C.I. Brigade—In line on left, opposite Bois Grenier.

2nd C.I. Brigade—In line in centre, opposite Croix Marechal.

3rd C.I. Brigade—In line on right, opposite Laventie.

- April 15.—Relieved French troops in line north-east of Ypres.
- April 22.—
- May 3.—Second great German offensive against Ypres—checked by the 1st Canadian Division.
- May 20.—The Aubers Ridge offensive—1st Canadian Division attacked at Festubert.
- June 15.—Aubers Ridge offensive continued from the south—1st Canadian Division attacked near Givenchy.
- September 15.—Canadian Corps formed—1st Division begins instruction of newly arrived 2nd Division.
- September 25.—Battle of Loos—smoke and artillery demonstration along Canadian front.

1916.

- June 2-12.—The third Battle of Ypres, culminating in the recapture of Mount Sorrel and Torr Top by the 1st Canadian Division on the night of June 11-12.
- August 24-26.—Moved to the Somme battle front by rail and relieved Australian troops opposite Moucquet Farm.
- September 26.—Successful attack by 1st Division on Zollern, Hessian and Kenora trenches.

1917.

- April 9.—Took part in the great Canadian attack on Vimy Ridge.
- April 28.—Arleux captured.
- May 3.—Fresnoy captured.
- August 15.—Hill 70 captured.
- November 5-20.—Heavy fighting at Passchendaele.

1918.

- March 22-31.—Rapid moves to points south-east of Arras to line threatened by German offensive.
- August 8-9.—The great Battle of Amiens.
- August 26-September 4.—Battle of Arras and the breaking of the Drocourt—Queant line.

September 27-October 3.—Battle of Cambrai, with the crossing of the Canal du Nord, and the capture of Haynecourt.

October 17-22.—The pursuit of the fleeing enemy from the Sensee River to and through the Forêt de Vicoigne to the Valenciennes—St. Amand Railway. In this advance twenty-six towns and villages with 13,000 civilians were released from German rule.

November 11.—Armistice Day saw the Division concentrated in the Somain—Denain—Masny area.

November 13.—Brigades began to march to Mons area.

November 18.—March to the Rhine began.

December 4.—Leading troops of the Division crossed the frontier into Germany.

December 9.—Leading troops of the Division reached the Rhine.

December 13.—The entire 1st Canadian Division crossed the Rhine, marching through Cologne.

December 16.—The Division established its outpost line on its sector of the bridgehead, thus completing a 300-mile march from Masny.

#### 1919.

January 12.—The 1st Canadian Division handed over command of its sector of the Cologne bridgehead to the 41st Division, going by train to the Huy area.

February 4.—Special review of the Division in Liege, before Lieut.-General Jacques, K.C.B., commanding the 3rd Belgian Army Corps.

March 4.—The Division began to move to Le Havre, preparatory to embarking for England.

March —At Bramshott Camp.

March }  
April } —Sailed for Canada.

April —Landed in Canada.

April —Home.



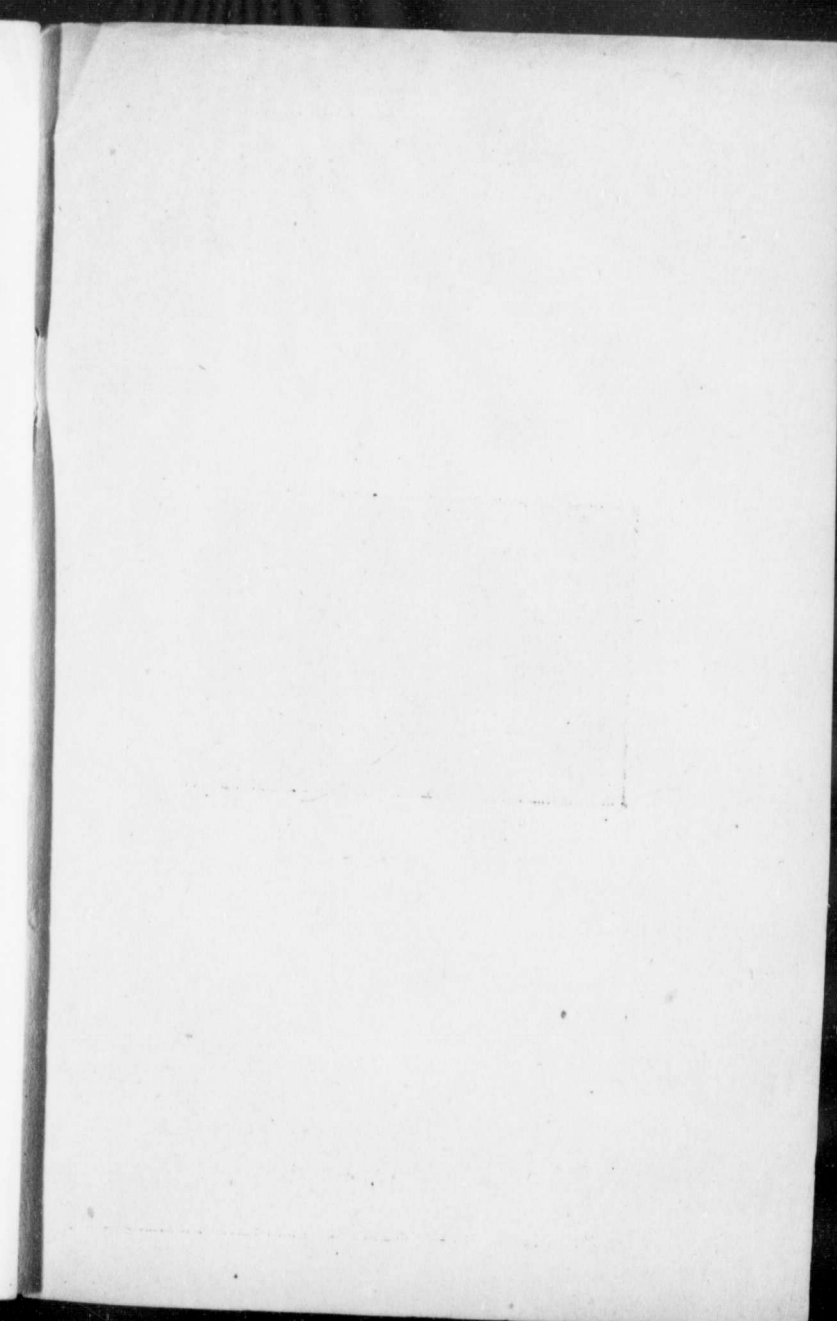
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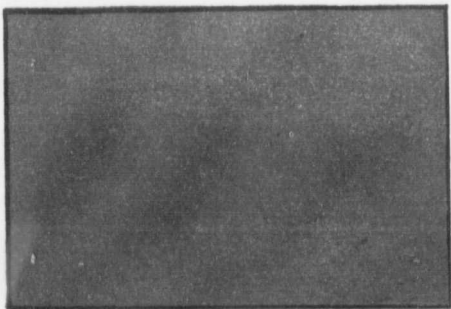
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**"THE OLD RED PATCH"**